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„Gender and Other Issues in Young Adult Dystopian
Fiction: Veronica Roth’s *Divergent* Trilogy and Katie
Kacvinsky’s *Awaken* Trilogy“

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Katharina Oberhuber

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1. Introduction

Adolescence is a period during which young adults learn about the world, start to form opinions on important issues and try to find out more about themselves. Everything in the world around them influences them and contributes to the formation of their identities. While parents, friends and school play an important role during this time, literature is extremely significant as well. Protagonists in books can become role models that teenagers look up to and learn from, but the fictional world that an author creates may also inspire adolescents and teach them certain values and ideals.

The female authors Veronica Roth and Katie Kacvinsky of the two literary trilogies that will be discussed in this thesis, the *Divergent* series and the *Awaken* series, are both aware of the importance of young adult literature. They know that they have the possibility to teach adolescents important lessons by addressing various social issues in their narrations. Therefore, they use setting, plot and characters to present some new innovative ideas about society, while, at the same time, criticizing other aspects of it. Additionally, both women address gender related issues, which are definitely significant for young adults who are still trying to find their own identities.

Both dystopian trilogies that will be discussed in the course of this thesis have attracted the attention of a large number of adolescents, especially because of their fascinating and exciting story lines. Furthermore, the *Divergent* series, as well as the *Awaken* series both feature a female protagonist that narrates her adventures from a first person perspective, which makes it possible for young readers to identify with the heroines. Still, it needs to be kept in mind that, at the moment, Veronica Roth's dystopian trilogy is extremely well-known and popular, especially due to the fact that it is currently being adapted into a movie series, while only a smaller number of people are familiar with Kacvinsky's *Awaken*. Nonetheless, both female writers clearly have the intention of informing young people about a variety of social issues and of teaching them certain virtues.

In order to demonstrate the importance of young adult fiction and how Roth and Kacvinsky use this type of literature to make an impact on adolescents this thesis is divided into four main parts. The first part focuses on

the theoretical background that serves as a base for all of the other chapters. It introduces young adult literature and discusses the importance of this literary genre. Then, a characterization of dystopian fiction follows, as well as an attempt at explaining why adolescents seem to be so fascinated by this type of literature nowadays. The first part of this thesis finishes with a subchapter on gender. It contains several definitions of gender-related terms and lists stereotypical characteristics that are commonly associated with men and women. Finally, it proposes numerous ways to analyze young adult literature in terms of gender and suggests elements and aspects that may deserve closer attention.

The second main part of this thesis deals with Veronica Roth's *Divergent* trilogy. It starts with an introduction to the series and a presentation of the world in which the story is set. Then, a description of the faction system follows, along with an analysis of the various groups that society is divided into and the problems that come with this division. However, not only the five factions are discussed, but also the Divergent, the Factionless and the Bureau of Genetic Welfare. Afterwards, the most significant male and female characters are introduced and their role and importance in the narration is explored. Furthermore, the question whether they conform to existing stereotypes or whether they contribute to the reinvention of new gender roles is discussed.

Similarly, the third part focuses on Katie Kacvinsky's *Awaken* series. Again, the dystopian world and the main plot are introduced, before various significant social issues that arise concerning digital life are addressed. Then, the role of the protagonists and other important characters is described and analyzed, especially in relation to gender.

Finally, the fourth part of this thesis consists of a discussion of both dystopian trilogies, the *Divergent* series as well as the *Awaken* series. Various issues related to society and gender that Roth and Kacvinsky address in their novels are compared and contrasted. Additionally, the impact they might have on young readers is explored, and it will be shown whether the two female writers simply stick with existing gender stereotypes or reinvent gender roles and show some innovation.

2. Theoretical Background

A discussion of the theoretical background is absolutely necessary in order to analyze young adult dystopian fiction. Therefore, young adult fiction, dystopian fiction and the general role of gender in literature will be discussed on the following pages.

2.1. Young Adult Literature

“The gap between children’s literature and adult literature” (Cole 49) is bridged by young adult literature, which is aimed at teenagers and adolescents. Still, this does not mean that only people of a certain age range enjoy this kind of books. According to Meg Rosoff, a writer of young adult fiction, about 55% of titles for adolescents are actually bought by adults (qtd. in I. Williams). Still numerous people have a negative view of this genre and “some critics assert young adult literature is worthless and inferior to classical texts and adult literature” (Cole 57).

Whether one sees young adult fiction as inferior or not, it is highly popular and every year a large amount of books is sold, because there seems to be something about it that attracts people. The following section will give more insight on the characteristics of this genre and on prominent themes that are often dealt with in these novels.

2.1.1. Characteristics and Themes

Young adult fiction is positioned between literature and pedagogy, since it always pursues educational goals and tries to teach adolescents about morality (see Wildberger 79). This genre has the power to influence its readers and to teach them about social issues, such as discrimination and equality (see Pinsent 192), as well as all kinds of current and historical events (see Cevela 7). However, while this educational element is very strong in young adult fiction, the main character is usually what makes a story attractive for adolescent readers.

The protagonist is always a teenager who has to overcome a number of obstacles and problems while growing up, developing and trying to find his or her identity (see Mallan 7). While doing so, typical “coming-of-age issues” are addressed, including maturity, sexuality, relationships, drugs, and various others (Cole 49), all of which young people commonly have to deal with during adolescence, a period of stress, strain and rebellion (see Balswick and Ingoldsby 243). Patrick Ness, an author of young adult fiction, explains that for him, this genre is clearly about “finding boundaries and crossing them and figuring out [...] who you are and what shape you are” (qtd. in I. Williams). However, instead of only dealing with personal issues, “each protagonist [also] faces pressure to conform to a particular path or belief system” (Robinson 210). It is the combination of all of these aspects that leads to a “torturous journey of *becoming*” (Mallan 8). Thus, the main character has to become more mature, more powerful, more empathetic and more of a hero. Only when this has happened and the protagonist has achieved self-realization, narrative closure is possible (see Mallan 7).

Additionally, there are some other elements that are special and unique about young adult fiction. One of them is the fact that this type of literature shows adolescents that they have the chance and ability to make a change and to affect the world and people around them (see Robinson 214). Since the protagonists in the novels are always committed and active, they act as role models for the reader. Another distinctive feature of this genre is that it has the chance to hook young people who usually do not enjoy reading that much, by using simple language, pop culture references and exciting topics (see Cole 61).

While young adult literature may take on various forms, one of the most popular ones nowadays is dystopia. Therefore, the following chapter will introduce this type of fiction and elaborate on possible reasons for why adolescents are so fascinated by it.

2.2. Dystopian Fiction

Dystopian novels for young adults have been on the rise during the past decades, with authors writing a large number of books that keep

fascinating a wide readership. Veronica Roth and Katie Kacvinsky, the two female writers that will be discussed in this thesis, are only two among many novelists that enjoy great popularity nowadays. However, people do not only seem to be intrigued by dystopian fiction, but also by movies, which are frequently based on written works. Some of the most popular ones in the recent years were *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, or even *Divergent* by Veronica Roth. In order to understand all of these success stories, it is necessary to look at the dystopian genre in more detail, find out about its origins and characteristics and discover what it is that captivates young people.

2.2.1. Characteristics

The word 'dystopia' is closely related to 'utopia', which derived from Greek and means "no place". While 'utopia' is commonly known as an ideal and perfect society, the prefix "dys" can be translated as "bad" in English and since "topos" means "place", 'dystopia' clearly refers to a bad place. (see Pinsent 196). Thus, it seems to be the exact opposite of 'utopia'. Similarly, the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* describes the term as "an imaginary place or state in which everything is extremely bad or unpleasant" ("Dystopia"). It can therefore be said that dystopian narrations always take place in a rather negative setting that might even seem apocalyptic in some cases. According to Basu, Broad and Hintz, dystopias frequently function "as a rhetorical *reductio ad absurdum* of a utopian philosophy, extending a utopia to its most extreme ends in order to caution against destructive politics and culture of the author's present" (2). This means that dystopian literature is able to warn and to frighten readers by showing them how the future might be. Nikolajeva even refers to it as a "cautionary tale" (74). However, it needs to be kept in mind that a dystopian world only appears to be "the worst possible because we are outside it; but if we fall within a dystopian world, we may cherish its excellence" (Mihailescu 218).

There are many different aspects that characterize dystopian literature. One of them is the fact that, as mentioned before, they are set in future times. This temporal isolation distances the reader from the story and

creates alienation (see Nikolajeva 74), but Pinsent point out that, especially since the last decades of the twentieth century, dystopias tend to take place in the near, rather than in the distant, future (196). As a result, the reader is able to relate to the characters and the storyline in a more intense way. Still, the society that is described in a dystopian novel always differs significantly from the one the author experiences in everyday life (see Claeys and Sargent 1).

The author of a dystopian novel, and thus the creator of a dystopian world gets to set up a certain set of rules that are initially unfamiliar for the reader in the same way that “the characters [in the novel] are not aware of the ‘normal world’” (Nikolajeva 74). For them, everything in their dystopian setting feels ordinary, even though the protagonists usually discover at some point that there are some problems within their world that need to be solved. According to Nikolajeva, “totalitarianism is an indispensable feature of dystopia” (74), which means that the repressive state is the authority that has a lot of power over society. It controls all aspects of private and public life and even brainwashing is highly common. People are constantly monitored in order to make sure that they follow the rules that are necessary in order to maintain power and the questioning of these rules, as well as any other type of opposition or criticism is often punished severely (see Bradford et al. 111-119).

By depicting these kind of dystopian societies, authors may raise and discuss important “global concerns”, as well as “engage with contemporary and social questions” (Basu, Broad and Hintz 1-5). Themes like power, liberation and identity often play a significant role, but also environmental and technological problems are treated in various dystopian novels. Another highly important issue is morality, which is generally fundamental in the thinking of the twentieth century (see Mihailescu 215). There are certainly many other concerns that may be treated in this type of literature, but these are some of the most important ones.

It is also characteristic for this genre to subdivide communities and the people that live in them based on “ethnicity class and gender” (Nikolajeva 79) or to portray “powerful groups [that] cast out aged, disabled, or sickly members” (Bradford et at. 111). Exclusion and tyranny dominate these dystopian worlds and are often followed by the death of one or more characters. This however, is a common narrative trigger that makes the

protagonists realize that not everything is as perfect as they think at first and that change needs to happen (see Bradford et al. 111). In the end, it is always “the dialogic exchange across age, race, gender, nature, and culture” (Bradford et al. 182) that offers hope and leads to a solution of the society’s problems.

While these are all characteristics that apply to dystopian literature in general, there are some aspects that are particularly significant for young adult dystopian fiction. These will be dealt with in the following section and provide some insight on why this type of literature is so appealing for adolescents.

2.2.2. Popularity Among Young Adults

It is impossible to say with absolute certainty what it is that makes dystopian fiction so popular among young adults, but it is likely that one reason is that all types of utopia and dystopia are generally “hybrid genres” (Hintz 254). Young Adult dystopia especially draws on genres such as the romance, adventure and the Bildungsroman (see Basu, Broad and Hintz 7-8). Therefore, adolescents do not only get to read about political and social issues, but also about various problems that they might be facing themselves while growing up, especially in relation to family, friends and love. While they will possibly find it interesting to read about oppression, authority and segregation, the coming-of-age narrative actually lets them relate to the story and the protagonists.

Furthermore, the hero or heroine in this genre is usually an unlikely one, a normal character that has no inhuman or special abilities, thus, somebody an adolescent can identify with. The only thing that sets the protagonist apart from other characters is “an inner strength” and the capability “of bringing down the establishment, or defeating evil and restoring good” (M. Williams 20). Additionally, in most young adult dystopian novels the story is narrated from a first person perspective, which makes it even easier for the reader to feel close to the protagonist and understand what he or she is going through.

There are also some narrative aspects that may be responsible for the popularity of this genre. In young adult dystopias the problems are usually

created by the adult generation and it is their offspring's duty to overcome them and create a better future (see Bradford et al. 182; Hintz 254; M. Williams 20). According to Curnutt, the older generation fails "in their obligation to protect the innocence of youth, leaving their progeny vulnerable to the predatory violence of the world" (11), and instead the adolescent protagonists have to liberate humanity from oppression all by themselves, which makes freedom a prominent topic in dystopia. As a result, young readers get "to question the adults as a norm" (Nikolajeva 11). Also, the fact that the teenage heroes in dystopian novels are politically active and usually successful in what they do tends to flatter and inspire adolescents in real life (see Basu, Broad and Hintz 5).

One might also consider some further factors that contribute to the popularity of young adult dystopia, such as the timelessness of these narrations (see Miller) that help young readers "understand the world and their place in it" (Badu, Broad and Hintz 1). Additionally, there is always a lot of action and adventure that appeals to adolescents, and very frequently the stories "culminate in a showdown resembling the climax of an action movie (Miller). Finally, some authors themselves speculate on why their works are so attractive for young generations nowadays, including Scott Westerfeld, who jokingly states that it is "partly thanks to high school being a dystopia" (qtd. In Miller). Veronica Roth, on the other hand, assumes that there are uncountable reasons for why people are drawn to stories about dystopian societies. She says, however, that for her personally it is the fact that these narrations are "imaginative, yet grounded in the real world" (Q&A 5).

It is safe to assume that there are many more reasons young adults enjoy reading dystopian literature, but it would be impossible to list all of them. It is a fact, however, that adolescents frequently read books of this genre and are influenced by story lines, themes and characters they learn about while doing so. Therefore, it is important that authors are aware of what they expose young people to and what kind of role models they create. Particularly the aspect of gender comes into play here, which is why the next chapter will focus on this issue in greater detail.

2.3. Gender in Literature

Literature functions as the mirror of a culture and as such informs the reader about morals and beliefs of that culture (see Tetenbaum and Pearson 381). It is one of the most effective ways of transmitting social attitudes and values, and therefore, gender identity is one of the many aspects that adolescents learn about when reading a novel (see Kortenhuis and Demarest 220). It is absolutely crucial that authors of young adult literature are aware of this fact and that they deal with femininity and masculinity in their works accordingly, especially since fictional characters may serve as role models for teenagers, “with the capacity to influence both sex-typed and moral behaviors” (Tetenbaum and Pearson 381).

In order to find out more about the importance of gender in literature for adolescents, one needs to define this term and see what it implies. Additionally, the following sections will explore stereotypical gender roles that one inevitably comes across in real life as well as in literature and finally there will be an explanation on how gender might be analyzed and criticized in fiction for young adults.

2.3.1. Sex vs. Gender

In order to understand what gender means, one needs to distinguish this term from sex, a biological concept, determined at birth (see Romaine 1). Every human being is born as either male or female, which is indicated by chromosomes, hormones, genitalia and procreative organs (see Lorber and More 5). For a long time, scholars thought that sex was directly related to gender, based on the “biology-is-destiny formulation” (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 6), but it has been long since discovered that a clear distinction needs to be made.

The term gender is rather flexible and thus difficult to define, because it may have different meanings for and within different groups (see Mallan 11). Still, it can be said for certain that it is a cultural construct (see Butler, *Gender Trouble* 6). It refers to something that one does, even though “one only determines ‘one’s own’ sense of gender to the extent that social norms exist

that support and enable the act of claiming gender for oneself. One is dependent on this 'outside' to lay claim to what is one's own" (Butler, *Undoing Gender* 7). This means that there are numerous different factors that come into play concerning gender, such as society, other people, but ultimately also oneself.

Just like, when it comes to sex, one may distinguish between male and female, gender roles are typically split up into masculine and feminine. However, according to Butler, it is highly important to understand that gender cannot be seen as binary (see *Undoing Gender* 42). Instead, there are many different nuances that need to be taken into account. Still, masculinity and femininity produce "patterns of social expectations", concerning "bodies, behavior, emotions, family and work roles" (Lorber and Moore 5). These tend to not be fixed though, as they may change over time on individual, as well as on social levels (see Lorber and Moore 5).

According to various scholars, our present society is strongly gendered, meaning that all of the important areas of life, including work and family, tend to categorize people and divide them into men and women (see Lorber and Moore 2). This means either of these groups is typically assigned to different jobs and is associated with specific characteristics, which frequently leads to the creation and the enforcement of stereotypes.

2.3.2. Stereotypical Gender Roles

Stereotypes have always been existent and are part of any society, even though they do not always represent reality accurately. The biggest problem with them is that they can easily lead to discrimination and inequality, especially when it comes to gender. Males and females do not have the same privileges in societies all around the world, and they are generally treated in different ways. They have to fulfill certain expectations and take on predetermined roles. A statement by Key gives an excellent overview over the main differences that are thought to exist between men and women: "Boys do, girls are" (qtd. in Kortenhaus and Demarest 221).

Traditionally, men have more power and a higher status than women (see Spence and Helmreich 169) and they are associated with notions of

privilege and legitimacy (see Halberstam 2). Most character traits that come into people's mind when thinking about maleness and masculinity have positive connotations and are extremely desirable, such as competence and achievement orientation (see Kortenhaus and Demarest 220). Furthermore, men tend to be strongly business-oriented (see Appelbaum, Audet and Miller 48), which leads to a higher prestige and better payment at work (see Lorber and Moore 2). All of these aspects also contribute to the fact that in Western society, boys and men have a higher value than girls and women and "are intended to bring economic independence and political power" (Lorber and Moore 3). Finally, it is also important to note that the role of males, as well as their "location and activity in the public rather than domestic sphere has defined society as masculine" (Romaine 12).

Women on the other hand are seen as inferior. They have to assume a dependent and submissive role, especially when it comes to their relationship with men (see Spence and Helmreich 160). Often, femininity is associated with weakness, passivity and self-sacrifice (see Nikolajeva 133), as well as being "disempowered, oppressed, deviant and silenced" (Nikolajeva 105). Some cultures even have negative superstitions about women, who are believed to bring misfortune. An example is Japan, where it is bad luck for a family when a woman is the first person to enter their house in the beginning of a new year (see Romaine 50). However, there are also some positive qualities attributed to girls and women, such as strong interpersonal and communication skills (see Appelbaum, Audet and Miller 48), their importance for domestic harmony, as well as their role as nurturing human beings (Lorber and Moore 3).

These stereotypes reflect cultural expectations and it is up to narratives to "either sustain or challenge existing gender orders and configurations" (Mallan 3). This is highly important, because studies have shown that the portrayal of male and female protagonists in literature strongly impacts the achievement behavior of young people (see McArthur and Eisen 471). Still, Scholars have found out that female characters mainly appear in character-oriented narrations, while male characters can be found in action-oriented stories (see Nikolajeva 106). Moreover, protagonists who are women still have to "negotiate their power positions in compliance with patriarchal

rules” (Nikolajeva 105) in a variety of novels, while male protagonists do not have to deal with problems like these.

In real life there are definitely more men who are involved in public professional roles, such as professional sports, music, acting, and the government than women, and as a result, studies have shown that boys and girls are both more aware of male role models and heroes than of female ones (see Balswick and Ingoldsby 246). Therefore, a change in literature and the way females are represented in it may help young girls and women around the world in becoming stronger and in fighting stereotypes. A number of authors are already on the right path, such as the two female writers whose work will be discussed in the course of this thesis.

2.3.3. Analyzing Gender in Young Adult Fiction

As mentioned earlier, the representation of male and female characters in literature is highly important for adolescents since it can strongly influence the development of their social identities (see Wharton 238). For this reason, it is important to find out and analyze what different gender related notions there are and what impact they might have on young readers.

One aspect that may be analyzed in a narration is the number of male and female characters on the one hand and protagonists on the other. If there is a high deviation between those numbers, it is very likely that the novel could be referred to as sexist (see Wharton 238). However, one needs to keep in mind the gender of the author when looking at the number of men and women or girls and boys in a story. It is often the case that a male author focuses on male characters in his story, while a female author may concentrate more on female characters (see Nikolajeva 106). This does not immediately make all of these authors sexist, but still the distribution of gender is something that should be kept in mind when analyzing gender-related issues in young adult literature.

Additionally, it is important to look at all of the characters in more detail and to find out what their role in a story is. Whether a novel features a male or a female protagonist can make a significant difference, as well as the point of view from which a narration is told. Activity and passivity are two factors that

also need to be taken into consideration when analyzing a specific character, because while stereotypically males are active and females are passive (see Freud qtd. in Davis), these roles might be reversed. Female characters can also take action and do not necessarily have to be nurturing and caring at all times.

The gender of the author may also influence a novel in a few other ways. According to Nikolajeva, masculine writing is conventionally characterized by the use of “external focalization, open narrative space, goal-oriented plot, linear time, and logical, structured language”, while female writing “implies internal focalization, closed space, diffuse plot, circular time, and fragmentary language” (106). This aspect can also be analyzed when working on young adult fiction, since these traditional characteristics surely apply in some cases, while in other cases the complete opposite may occur.

Finally, Wharton suggests that in order to analyze gender in young adult novels one might look at the micro level or the macro level. Examining the micro level means analyzing clauses and sentences in order to find out what actions are performed and by whom. Studying the macro level on the other hand refers to finding out more about the roles of male and female characters and how they contribute to the development of a narration as a whole (see 238-239). While having a closer look at both of these levels, of course, stereotypical representations of men and women or boys and girls might be found.

All in all, there are numerous gender-related aspects that need to be taken into account. They might all have a strong impact on young readers and influence the way they perceive femininity and masculinity. While countless novels do not manage to present gender roles in an unbiased and stereotypical way, the following chapters deal with young adult dystopian literature that has the power to influence adolescents in a positive way. The two female authors, Veronica Roth and Katie Kacvinsky, whose writing will be discussed, both manage to reinvent gender and, for the main part, stay away from conventional representations of males and females.

3. The *Divergent* Trilogy by Veronica Roth

Veronica Roth's dystopian trilogy, consisting of *Divergent*, *Insurgent*, and *Allegiant*, is currently one of the most successful and best-selling novels for young adults. All of the books have been translated into numerous languages and are popular all around the world. The first novel in the series, *Divergent*, has even been adapted into a movie of the same name and producers are currently working on the other parts of the trilogy as well.

When looking at various aspects of the book series, it becomes obvious that the female writer manages to reinvent gender in relation to some of the characters, but also in relation to the different factions. Therefore, the *Divergent* trilogy is extremely relevant when it comes to the discussion of young adult dystopian literature. The next chapters will introduce and analyze the fictional world that Roth has created.

3.1. The World of *Divergent*

The *Divergent* trilogy takes place in a post-apocalyptic Chicago where society is divided into five factions: Abnegation- the selfless, Amity- the peaceful, Candor- the honest, Erudite- the intelligent, and Dauntless- the brave. Children grow up in their parents' faction until they reach the age of sixteen. They then have to take an aptitude test that shows them which faction they are best suited for. It is up to the adolescents, however, to decide if they want to remain with their families or transfer. In any case, an initiation period has to be passed and those who do not succeed become factionless, which means they have to live in poverty.

While most people fit into one of the five factions perfectly, there are some that have an aptitude for various groups. These people are referred to as "Divergent" (*Divergent* 22). The leaders of certain factions, however, do not accept people with inconclusive results and want to destroy them, especially since people with a divergence cannot be controlled and brainwashed as easily as the rest of the population. Therefore, the Divergent are advised to hide their true identities and be as inconspicuous as possible.

The five factions have been created to guarantee a peaceful society and to avoid war, but disturbances and turbulences keep arising nonetheless. There are many discrepancies between the groups and the leadership of some factions is questioned and critiqued by other factions. As a result, warlike events start occurring and uprisings start happening, where even the Factionless get involved.

However, it turns out later, in *Allegiant*, that this dystopian society has been created and controlled from the outside, by the Bureau of Genetic Welfare, an agency of the United States of America. It is explained that many years ago, the government believed that people's genes were responsible for war and all of the world's problems in general, so they started experimenting with genetic manipulation. The results were a disaster and led to a civil war, "the Purity War" (*Allegiant* 123), which resulted in the elimination of about half of the country's population. The government then decided to put all genetically damaged people into secure environments, locked away from the rest of the world, until some "reached the desired level of genetic healing" (*Allegiant* 126). Healed people would be referred to as divergent within the world of the factions.

The *Divergent* trilogy takes place on two different dystopian levels, but both of them are problematic. While on the faction level, people fight each other and are unaccepting of each other, on the level of the Bureau of Genetic Welfare the experiments on people never seem to find an end. Whenever something goes wrong in the world controlled by the Bureau, the staff that works there simply plans to use a memory serum to erase everybody's memories and start from zero. On both levels people are suppressing others as well as being suppressed, and there are numerous different aspects that come into play, one of them definitely being gender. The following sections will elaborate more on issues related to the various factions, the world around them, and finally some of the most relevant characters of the *Divergent* trilogy.

3.2. Factions

As mentioned before, there are five different factions in the world of *Divergent*, namely Abnegation, Amity, Candor, Erudite, and Dauntless, each of

them valuing a different character trait the most. They have been created to avoid war, which is explained by Marcus, the leader of Abnegation, on the day the 16-year olds have to choose a faction:

Decades ago our ancestors realized that it is not political ideology, religious belief, race, or nationalism that is to blame for a warring world. Rather, they determined that it was the fault of human personality – of humankind’s inclination toward evil, in whatever form that is. They divided into factions that sought to eradicate those qualities they believed responsible for the world’s disarray. [...] Those who blamed aggression formed Amity. [...] Those who blamed ignorance became the Erudite. [...] Those who blamed duplicity created Candor. [...] Those who blamed selfishness made Abnegation. [...] And those who blamed cowardice were the Dauntless (*Divergent* 42-43).

All of these factions differ from each other strongly, which will become more evident in the next chapters. Each faction contributes to a different part of society and fulfills different roles because of their characteristics, but even though their strengths help them in taking care of their tasks, every group also has weaknesses. “Every faction loses something when it gains a virtue: the Dauntless, brave but cruel; the Erudite, intelligent but vain; the Amity, peaceful but passive; the Candor, honest but inconsiderate; the Abnegation, selfless but stifling” (*Allegiant* 123). By focusing on only one main virtue, people are suppressing other qualities that do not fit into the ideology of their faction. This is highly unethical, because, as a result, hatred is fostered among the factions. There is barely any understanding between them, because everybody is too focused on valuing only one personality trait.

When looking at the factions, but also the Factionless, in more detail, one can notice certain characteristics that are closely related to gender. Each of these groups can, depending on their leader, their members, and their values and practices, be defined as either feminine or masculine. It is interesting that, just like gender serves as a means of categorizing people with regulations and norms (see Butler, *Undoing Gender* 55), certain character traits are assigned to certain factions in *Divergent* and people are expected to follow a set of rules.

When it comes to gender, most men and women conform to “appropriate masculine and feminine behavior because their identities and self-esteem are built on meeting social expectations (Lorber and Moore 2). Similarly, the characters in Roth’s dystopian universe do what is expected

from them in their factions, as Natalie Prior explains to her daughter Beatrice: “Every faction conditions its members to think and act a certain way. And most people do it. For most people, it’s not hard to learn to find a pattern of thought that works and stay that way” (*Divergent* 442). The people do not only accept the various categories they are split up into, but they actually embrace them. Everybody wants to be part of a group and not be excluded and Marcus Eaton even points out during his speech for the adolescents that are about to choose which faction they want to belong to: “In our factions we find meaning, we find purpose, we find life” (*Divergent* 43). Thus, in Roth’s fictional world “group membership –successfully fitting into a community- is the most desirable thing” for the majority of the characters, while the “expulsion from the faction system is a fate worse than death” (Basu 24). Moreover, the motto that the humans in Roth’s narration follow emphasizes the importance of belonging to either Abnegation, Amity, Candor, Dauntless or Erudite as well: “*Faction before blood*” (*Divergent* 43). On the following pages, all five factions, as well as the Factionless and the Divergent, will be introduced in more detail and then analyzed in relation to various gender-related aspects.

3.2.1. Abnegation

In Abnegation, people value selflessness, as the name of the faction already suggests. Selflessness is defined as “the act of not allowing yourself to have sth you want; the act of rejecting something” (“Abnegation”) in the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary. The members of this faction only serve others and reject the notion of selfishness by ignoring their own needs and forgetting about themselves. They are peaceful and calm and part of their manifesto pledges: “I will be my undoing/ If I become my obsession./ I will forget the ones I love/ If I do not serve them./ I will war with others/ If I refuse to see them (*Faction Manifestos* 35).

The character traits and beliefs of the Abnegation are reflected in their clothing as well as their behavior. Abnegation clothing is always simple and grey and while women wear their hair in a bun, men cut theirs extremely short. Furthermore, nobody is allowed to own any luxury items, which makes their houses look plain and all the same. In groups, people from this faction “sit

quietly and wait” (*Divergent* 9) until they are addressed, and as a sign of respect they always bow their heads when greeting one another. Also, looking into the mirror is seen as a sign of vanity and therefore not tolerated, just like showing physical affection in public is forbidden.

The initiation phase in Abnegation is rather simple and quiet and only very few people ever fail it. Before becoming a full member of the faction, initiates have to do volunteer work in order to serve their community. After this period, the teenagers all have to sit on a bench while one of the older faction members reads out the Abnegation manifesto. Then, the older members wash the initiates’ feet, which is followed by a meal that young and old members share. Traditionally, during this meal each person serves food for the person on his or her left. What happens to most Abnegation members after the initiation phase is unclear though, since Roth does not describe in detail what kind of work people from this faction do for a living.

Despite their goodness and selflessness, the Abnegation are often teased and made fun of by other factions. The most commonly used and derogative nickname for them is “Stiff” (*Divergent* 6). Moreover, people tend to criticize their supposed weakness and cowardice, especially because in Abnegation people are submissive by nature and they disapprove of violence and weapons.

All of their qualities, however, make Abnegation the perfect faction to form a government for the entire society they live in. This government consists of fifty council members that are “selected by their peers for their impeccable character, moral fortitude, and leadership skills” (*Divergent* 33). The council also leads the faction itself, but at times has to face harsh criticism from the outside. Especially the Erudite think that Abnegation should not be trusted with the governing of society and therefore publicly state that the problem lies “*in the corrupted ideals of an entire faction*” (*Divergent* 243). To back up these accusations, people refer to the fact that numerous Abnegation children chose to transfer to a different faction and they also gossip about Marcus Eaton, one of the council members, who maltreated and abused his own son Tobias.

Nonetheless, it can be said that, overall, Abnegation is presented in a rather positive way. The faction members are kind to one another, as well as to people from other factions and they never hesitate to offer anyone a helping

hand. In times of hardship, for example when Dauntless warriors attack Abnegation, other factions tend to sympathize with them and offer them protection. As a result, the reader also gets the impression that Abnegation members are good people whose values are important for society.

Even though one of the most influential Abnegation council members, Marcus Eaton, is male, the faction could still be defined as typically feminine. According to Hofstede, the “belief in group decisions” and the “stress on cooperation” (298) is typical of a female society, and since the council consists of a large group of people who make their decisions together, Abnegation would clearly classify as such. Additionally, empathy is highly valued in this faction, as well as sympathy for others, which are two further elements that characterize feminine groups. Abnegation is clearly an ego-effacing group, where individuals tend to downplay their own performances, while any masculine group or society would be more ego oriented (see Hofstede 299 and 306).

Even children in this faction learn how important it is to not express aggression and to be extremely modest (see Hofstede 306), so modest, in fact, that they are not even allowed to look into a mirror for too long, as mentioned previously. Instead, they learn that the poor and needy should always be helped, which is also typical of a feminine society (Hofstede 323), and Abnegation is well known for helping other factions, and most of all the Factionless. They give them food, because often the Factionless are close to starvation since they live on the streets of Chicago. The protagonist Tris even explains in the beginning of *Divergent*: “My father tells me to keep food in my bag at all times for exactly this reason” (25).

Moreover, in Abnegation there is a “minimum [of] emotional and social role differentiations between the genders” (Hofstede 299), another characteristic of femininity in a society. The perfect example hereof is the Prior family, consisting of the parents Natalie and Andrew, as well as their two children Tris and Caleb. Among these four family members it is common to split up all kinds of housework equally, including the cooking. Everybody knows when it is their turn, just like Tris, who reasons: “My brother made breakfast this morning and my mother prepared our lunches, and my father made dinner last night, so it’s my turn to cook” (*Divergent* 30).

Finally, Abnegation is a rather passive faction, especially compared to others, and according to Freud, passivity is a notion closely related to femininity (qtd. in Davis). This becomes particularly obvious when, at the end of *Divergent*, Abnegation is attacked by Dauntless soldiers. None of the faction member really know what to do, so a lot of them die while some manage to escape. However, even the people who are able to flee in time are still dependent on guidance and hardly make any decisions by themselves.

3.2.2. Amity

The most peaceful of all factions is Amity, where friendship, trust and kindness are valued. "A friendly relationship between people or countries" is what the name of this group stands for, according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary ("Amity"). In times of war, people from Amity are always neutral, even though they help refugees who are in need of a safe place. The key words in their manifesto are "trust", "self-sufficiency", "forgiveness", "kindness", and "involvement" (*Faction Manifestos* 36-38), but the last one from this list was removed at some point.

Amity members have a very positive attitude towards life. This is shown, for example, through the clothes they wear, which are always red and yellow. They enjoy games and laughter, as well as music and art and, as mentioned before, friendship is a highly important notion for the Amity, which is why they always greet each other with warm hugs. Since everybody is extremely trusting in this faction, their headquarters are never guarded or locked and everybody can simply walk in and out as they please. Therefore, one might easily assume that Amity members "often straddle between trust and stupidity" (*Insurgent* 5). However, in order to make sure that everything always stays so positive, the Amity use a so-called peace serum, which has a calming effect and is able to cheer people up. It is an ingredient in the bread that the faction eats every day.

One of the reasons that the Amity are so kind and peaceful is related to their faith. This faction believes in a "God who gives peace and cherishes it" and as a result the people "give peace to each other, and cherish it" (*Insurgent* 439). Religious ceremonies are performed regularly, where the faction

members get into pairs, look at each other, and sometimes smile or say something nice and kind. After a few moments, they get together with a new partner and repeat the entire process. This ceremony can go on for quite some time, but it strengthens their faith and helps them live in peace.

Numerous people from this faction work on the farms just outside of the city, which is one of the reasons why Amity is “completely self-sustaining. They have their own source of power, their own water pumps, their own filtration, their own food sources.... They’re independent” (*Insurgent* 35). Still, a lot of faction members also work as “understanding counselors and caretakers” (*Divergent* 43) that serve members of all factions and thus the entire city.

Leadership in Amity works in a very specific way that clearly reflects the faction’s ideals and attitudes. This faction does not recognize an official leader. Instead “they vote on everything, and the result is usually close to unanimous. They are like many parts of a single mind” (*Insurgent* 18). This means that absolutely everybody has a role in government, even though one woman, Johanna Reyes, acts as a representative and spokesperson. As a result of this form of leadership, the members of Amity all “feel responsible. And it makes them care; it makes them kind” (*Insurgent* 20).

All of the adjectives that the author uses to describe this faction, like “considerate” (*Insurgent* 7), “beautiful” (*Insurgent* 29) and “cheerful” (*Insurgent* 433), are positive. Accordingly, the impression the reader gets of this faction is also extremely positive. It can therefore be assumed that, for Roth, this faction and its values and characteristics are highly important. Throughout the entire dystopian series Amity is a sanctuary that promotes peacefulness, and even though this faction is mentioned less often than most of the others, most likely because of its rather passive role, it is still a stable constant that is always in the background ready to offer people a place of refuge in difficult times.

Much like Abnegation, Amity can be characterized as a feminine faction for a number of reasons, the most important one being the form of government described above. Everything is decided through group discussions and the importance of cooperation cannot be stressed enough in Amity. As Hofstede points out, these are aspects that typically appear in

feminine societies (see 298) and Appelbaum, Audet and Miller agree that femininity is always closely related to strong interpersonal skills (see 48).

As previously mentioned, in Amity aggression is avoided at all cost, even if this means drugging the bread. For the most part, this leads to an absence of conflict situations, and if by any chance problems appear, they are always solved through negotiation and compromise (see Hofstede 323), which is another aspect that distances Amity from masculine factions.

Lastly, the passivity that is present in Abnegation can also be detected in Amity. Since this faction cares more about peace than about anything else, they prefer to stay out of everything, which quickly makes them look like they do not care. Additionally, their independence concerning food, power sources, and a lot more, does not require them to be more involved in society and supports their passivity. This attitude has negative consequences, which can be seen, for example, when a new political system is about to be formed “that will exclude them from representation” which is the “punishment for failing to chose a side” (*Insurgent* 517) in the conflict between the other factions.

3.2.3. Candor

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Candor is “the quality of saying what you think openly and honestly” (“Candor”), which is a definition that absolutely suits this faction. Its members value honesty and consider this attribute to be essential for the creation of a perfect society. Therefore, they clearly state in their manifesto: “Dishonesty is rampant. Dishonesty is temporary. Dishonesty makes evil possible. [...] Dishonesty leads to suspicion. Suspicion leads to conflict. Honesty leads to peace. [...] Truth makes us transparent. Truth makes us strong. Truth makes us inextricable” (*Faction Manifestos* 39-42).

In Candor everything is black and white, since one is either honest or dishonest. This is also reflected in people’s clothing, because these are the only two colors members of this faction wear, often in the form of suits. Openness and honesty are indispensable for all Candor members and as a result, they can detect almost any lie, especially by reading body language.

Because of their directness and honesty, members of this faction are usually “trustworthy and sound leaders in law” (*Divergent* 43). Apart from this contribution to the society in Roth’s fictional world, there is not much that Candor provides for other factions, no “protection, sustenance, or technological innovation” (*Insurgent* 252). As a result, it is seen as “the only disposable faction” (*Insurgent* 252). This is reflected by the fact that Candor does not play a big role in Roth’s dystopia. The faction mainly appears in the background, which shows that its values, while certainly desirable, are not essential for maintaining a well-functioning society.

In order to become a member of Candor, initiates have to take numerous lie detector tests. The hardest part of the initiation period however, is at the very end, when potential members are injected with a truth serum that does not allow them to tell lies. They then have to answer personal questions in front of the entire faction. The belief behind this ritual is that if one reveals all of one’s secrets, there is no need to ever lie again, because everything is out in the open anyway.

Jack Kang is the sole leader of Candor and he tries to always act in the best interest of his faction. As the only decision maker, he has a lot of power, but the faction members have faith in him, especially because, just like a true Candor, he always openly states his opinion and is never dishonest. Since he always tells the truth, he expects his community to do the same, but there are always some exceptions. Some people manage to get away with lying and ignore the ideals and values of Candor, such as Peter. However, he decides to join a different faction after his sixteenth birthday.

This faction is more difficult to classify as strictly masculine or feminine than others, because certain aspects of both apply. The fact that there is only one leader is rather typical of a masculine society, where people strongly “believe in individual decisions” (Hofstede 298). On the other hand however, Candor does not differentiate much between genders, which suggests that there is a certain feminine aspect as well (Hofstede 299). It is also interesting to note that the clothes worn in this faction reflect this duality, because while men and women generally wear really similar clothing items, they usually all end up looking extremely androgynous. Nonetheless, it has to be kept in mind that Candor’s main virtue is truthfulness, a trait closely related to masculinity.

“Honesty is equivalent with manliness, integrity and truth” (Mavellian), thus one might conclude that Candor is a faction where masculine aspects dominate, but femininity is still present to some extent.

3.2.4. Dauntless

Dauntless values bravery, courage and resilience as the name already suggests, since the Cambridge Advances Learner’s Dictionary even defines it as “showing determination and a lack of fear” (“Dauntless”). When looking at an excerpt of their manifesto, it becomes clear what the members of this faction stand for:

We believe that cowardice is to blame for the world’s injustices. We believe that peace is hard-won, that sometimes it is necessary to fight for peace. [...] We believe in freedom from fear, in denying fear the power to influence our decisions. We believe in ordinary acts of bravery, in the courage that drives one person to stand up for another. [...] We believe that pain and death are better than cowardice and inaction, because we believe in action. [...] We do not believe that we should be allowed to stand idly by. We do not believe that any other virtue is more important than bravery” (*Faction Manifesto* 47-48).

Most of these ideals may sound extremely honorable, but after actually joining this faction, some members, including Tris, the female protagonist of Roth’s series, notice immediately that “Dauntless was formed with good intentions, with the right ideals and the right goals. But it has strayed far from them” (*Divergent* 206). Especially the influence of another faction, Erudite, is slowly turning the Dauntless into a group of violent murderers without compassion.

Members of Dauntless are all very wild and fierce. They jump off moving trains, climb buildings, and enjoy all other kinds of activities that make them feel a rush of adrenaline. Additionally, they enjoy challenges, especially amongst each other. Even their appearance shows that they are thrill-seekers. Lots of tattoos and piercings are common for members of this faction and their clothing is always black, tight and often rather revealing.

The Dauntless initiation phase is extremely hard and only very few manage to actually become members of this faction. Everybody who fails or is not among the ten best-ranked initiates is kicked out of the compound and has to live factionless. In some cases, teenagers even die trying to become a Dauntless. “Initiation is divided into three stages. [...] The first stage is

primarily physical; the second, primarily emotional; the third, primarily mental” (*Divergent* 76-77). Thus, during the first stage, initiates work on their combat skills. They have to practice shooting, boxing and many other ways of fighting by being paired up with another adolescent and going against each other. Based on their victories, initiates are scored and only the best ones get to proceed to stage two. There, they are put into a simulation where they have to face their worst fears. The Divergent tend to not have difficulties with the emotional phase, since they are aware of the fact that nothing is real and everything is just a simulation, but for all of the other initiates, stage two is extremely frightening. In the final stage, the teenagers have to go through fear landscapes, which combine all of their fears in one big simulation. This time however, all of the initiates are aware of the fact that nothing is real. When everything is over, “only the top ten initiates are made members” (*Divergent* 71).

The ranking during initiation is also significant for the job distribution in Dauntless. People with high scores get better jobs, which means they might end up as leaders or initiate trainers. Most faction members, however, end up working as fence guards, protecting the city from any possible dangers that might come from outside. Other possible work places for young Dauntless are in tattoo parlors, in weaponry, as well as in other types of security forces. All of these jobs are only temporary though, because “once the Dauntless reach a certain level of physical deterioration [...] they are asked to leave. In one way or another” (*Insurgent* 104). This means that old and sick people cannot stay in the compound. Instead they have two choices: to become factionless, or to die. Despite this rather negative outlook on the future, initiates do not choose Dauntless “because they are perfect, but because they are alive. Because they are free.” (*Insurgent* 283)

The faction is lead by a group of young Dauntless members, since their law states that they always “need more than one”, and that they “need an odd number” (*Insurgent* 265). During the time in which *Divergent* is set there are five leaders, but all of them turn out to be traitors that work together with Erudite and want to control and brainwash everybody. Hence, three new leaders are selected in *Insurgent*, especially because loyalty is an important virtue in Dauntless and betrayal is not tolerated.

In general, the image of Dauntless promoted by the author is neither completely positive, nor completely negative. While the faction promotes braveness, loyalty and the feeling of freedom on the one hand, it also supports the use of violence and brutality. After the events that take place in *Divergent*, however, Dauntless is split up into two halves, a group of loyal faction members, and a group of traitors who cooperate with Erudite. It can be said that one of these groups mainly represents the positive values and ideals of Dauntless, while the other one turns into a group of evil villains.

Due to the nature and characteristics of its members, this faction as a whole is an extremely active one, which relates to masculinity (see Freud qtd. in Davis). All of the Dauntless are brave and never hesitate to join a fight. They stand up for their beliefs and protect others. Nobody in this faction would ever just sit back and wait to see what happens.

Furthermore, as previously explained, training to fight is essential in order to survive in Dauntless. This applies to both, males and females. However, Halberstam states that usually “society tells girls in all kinds of ways that they must accept and take on femininity by giving up sports and active behavior in general” (267). Clearly, this is not the case in Dauntless. Instead, masculinity dominates, which means that the strong are supported (see Hofstede 323), while the weak are run over. Crying in particular is seen as unnecessary and sometimes even disgusting, for instance when one of the initiates in *Divergent*, Al, cannot stop himself from weeping at night.

Even though when it comes to fighting, boys and girls are treated equally, it is always harder for the females to actually be respected. In many cases, “Dauntless guys don’t see Dauntless girls as a threat during initiation” (*Insurgent* 173). This gender inequality is another characteristic for a masculine society, according to Hofstede (see 299). Moreover, their clothing style surely also provides some difficulty for women in this faction when it comes to being respected by the men. Since all of the outfits are extremely tight and revealing, there is a strong “focus on women’s physical aspects [that] causes both men and women to literally objectify women” (Heflick and Goldenberg 226). As a result, it is harder for Dauntless girls to win recognition, but it is certainly not impossible. Tori, a woman from this faction, proves that

even females can make their way in Dauntless and even become leaders, just like her in *Insurgent*.

Finally, even though there is always more than one leader, hierarchies are of utmost importance, as well as the status of a person. New members always have to follow orders without any objections or they immediately get into trouble. Also, older and more experienced members need to be respected at all times, especially because Dauntless is highly ego and achievement oriented (see Hofstede 298), which, again, makes it obvious that this faction values masculinity.

3.2.5. Erudite

In Erudite, intelligence is the most important virtue, which coincides with the meaning of the faction name that can be found in the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary: "having or containing a lot of specialist knowledge" ("Erudite"). All members are driven by curiosity and thus always want to gain more knowledge. Ignorance is frowned upon and anything illogical is also undesirable. The following statements sum up what is most important in Erudite:

1. 'Ignorance' is defined not as stupidity but as lack of knowledge.
2. Lack of knowledge inevitably leads to lack of understanding.
3. Lack of understanding leads to a disconnect among people with differences.
4. Disconnection among people with differences leads to conflict.
5. Knowledge is the only logical solution to the problem of conflict (*Faction Manifesto* 43).

However, even though the intentions of Erudite are positive and "a long time ago, [the faction] pursued knowledge and ingenuity for the sake of doing good", things are changing. "Now they pursue knowledge and ingenuity with greedy hearts" (*Divergent* 206).

In order to become a member of Erudite, initiates need to prove their intelligence and willingness to learn more every day. Therefore, adolescents need to pass an intelligence test, before they are even admitted to Erudite's initiation phase, where they have to study even harder and pass numerous exams. Furthermore, every initiate has to work on one topic in particular, which then becomes his or her area of expertise. Initiates that fail an exam,

and who “after rigorous studying, do not meet a minimum intelligence requirement will be exiled from the faction” (*Faction Manifestos* 45), which means they become factionless.

In Erudite, people like to show their intelligence at work, but also during their free time. Because of their great knowledge, faction members usually provide the city “with intelligent teachers and researchers” (*Divergent* 43), as well as mathematicians, doctors, and other jobs that require a lot of intelligence. Outside of work or school, they still read a lot and constantly try to gain more knowledge. This is even supported by their clothing. Most faction members wear glasses, even if their vision is perfect, just to appear smarter and it is obligatory to wear “at least one blue article of clothing at a time, because blue causes the body to release calming chemicals, and ‘a calm mind is a clear mind’” (*Divergent* 348).

The faction is lead by Jeanine Matthews, “Erudite’s sole representative, selected based on her IQ score” (*Divergent* 33). Intelligence is always the only criteria in Erudite used to determine leadership, which is even stated in the faction manifesto:

Leaders must not be chosen based on charisma, popularity, or ease of communication, all of which are misleading and have little to do with the efficacy of a political leader. An objective standard must be used in order to determine who is best fit to lead. That standard will be an intelligence test, administered to all adults when the present leader reaches fifty-five or begins to decline in brain function in a demonstrable way” (*Faction Manifestos* 45).

As a result, it is up to one single person to make decisions, even though this person might abuse his or her powers, just like Jeanine Matthews. Still, all Erudite members and initiates look up to the woman and admire her, because they are blinded by her intelligence and do not realize what is happening behind the façade.

Especially because of Erudite’s leader the overall impression the reader gets of this faction is rather negative. It seems like this entire group of people is corrupt, when in reality, only a small group use their intelligence in a destructive way. A large part of Erudite consists of decent individuals, and apart from that, it is mentioned numerous times throughout the trilogy that this faction is essential for society. The other factions “cannot survive without them” (*Insurgent* 442), mainly, because all of the knowledge the Erudite possess.

Another aspect that is worth mentioning about Erudite is that this faction strongly relies on technology, especially biotechnology. It is Erudite who works on all of the serums that other factions use, including various simulation serums that are used by the Dauntless, and all of the city's data are also stored on Erudite computers. Destroying any of the technology would be "to deprive them of knowledge" and "to deprive [them] of power" (*Insurgent* 291).

Like Dauntless, Erudite is also a typically masculine faction, especially because this faction is highly achievement oriented (see Hofstede 298). Members, as well as initiates are always reading and studying, trying to become better and smarter. Constant improvement is expected and only the best get to even stay in Erudite, while the others are sent away to become factionless. The entire faction depends on the quality of people's performances (see Hofstede 323) and while people are not required to be physically strong, mental weakness is absolutely unacceptable.

Moreover, Jeanine Matthews is the only leader of Erudite, who makes all of her decisions without consulting others. Since, according to an intelligence test, she is the smartest, nobody ever doubts her and her decisions are respected, which, as Hofstede points out, is typical of masculinity in a society (see 298). This woman can educate, instruct, and criticize other Erudite members without losing any of the respect that everybody has for her. In Erudite, "Jeanine is their most valued teacher" and people are always "waiting to impress her" (*Insurgent* 335).

Finally, the fact that technology is significant in Erudite hints at the masculinity of this faction, since female societies are usually more concerned about possible risks that come with it (see Hofstede 323). As mentioned previously, for Erudite members, technology is essential. "It is a site of power" (Butler, *Undoing Gender* 11), and without it, the faction would most likely cease to exist, or at least lose all of its influence.

3.2.6. The Factionless

In Roth's fictional world, people who are not welcome in any faction become factionless. This might be because they failed the initiation of a

faction, but also because they do not agree with the ideals of their former faction. In some cases, individuals also realize that they simply do not fit in and consciously choose to become factionless. However, numerous people say that they “would rather be dead than empty, like the factionless” (*Divergent* 54), since “to live factionless is [...] to live divorced from society, separated from the most important thing in life: community” (*Divergent* 20).

Not belonging to a group means living in poverty on the streets of Chicago and working jobs that nobody else wants to do. This might include driving a garbage truck or helping out in factories. Unlike people in factions, the Factionless do not get paid for what they do. The only thing they receive in return for their hard labor is food, in extremely small amounts, and clothing. Unlike the Abnegation, Amity, Candor, Dauntless and Erudite, the Factionless do not have their own colors or styles that they can wear and instead receive whatever is left over from the factions. As a result, a factionless person might be seen in “tattered clothes in different colors – a black T-shirt with a torn Abnegation jacket over it, blue jeans mended with red thread, brown boots [...], black Candor pants paired with black Dauntless shirts [or] yellow dresses with blue sweatshirts over them” (*Insurgent* 89).

In the beginning of the *Divergent* trilogy it seems as if the Factionless are just a small group of people spread out all over the city, but it turns out rather quickly, during *Insurgent*, that, in fact, they are “twice the size of Dauntless” (100) and want to be heard and taken seriously. People from the five factions all assume that the Factionless are “scattered, isolated, and without community” (*Insurgent* 94), but actually they formed groups, support each other and live in various safe houses all over Chicago, almost like a real faction. Also, it is noteworthy that the Factionless have the highest amount of people who are divergent, since “obviously those who can’t confine themselves to a particular way of thinking would be most likely to leave a faction or fail its initiation” (*Insurgent* 108).

The Factionless even have a leader, Evelyn Johnson, a former Abnegation member. She provides guidance and structure, which, after years of oppression, finally makes a rebellion possible. The Amity leader Johanna Reyes even warns the other factions: “Sometimes the people you oppress become mightier than you would like” (*Insurgent* 518). What the Factionless

demand is simple: “Death to the factions!” (*Allegiant* 34), and they are prepared to fight for this goal. Nonetheless, when looking at this group of people closely, one can easily notice that they actually do not differ much from the five factions themselves.

Various masculine, as well as feminine aspects can be discovered when analyzing the Factionless. First of all they have their own beliefs and opinions that they stand up and fight for, which makes them performance oriented and thus masculine (see Hofstede 323). They are after self-realization and want to gain recognition in their society (see Hofstede 298). Still, the fact that, at times, they resort to “negotiation and compromise” (Hofstede 323) in order to solve conflicts shows that there are some feminine elements as well.

In the end of Roth’s trilogy Evelyn Johnson steps down as the leader of this group, suggesting some terms, though, that the people of Chicago should live by. She demands from her opponent, Marcus Eaton, that he “will allow those people who wish to leave and seek a new life elsewhere to do so” and that he “will allow those who chose to stay to *vote* on new leaders and a new social system” (*Allegiant* 482). Democratic ideals should be introduced that ensure equality and tolerance, as well as people’s right to speak up and contribute.

The result of this negotiation is shown in the end of *Allegiant*, where the reader gets to know the new Chicago and how people live two years later. All of the faction members, as well as the Factionless and Divergent live in peace and are able to move in and out of the city as they please. By depicting a positive ending like that, the author shows that all characteristics and values promoted by the various factions are equally important and that all of them are necessary in a well-functioning society.

3.2.7. The Divergent

As explained previously, people who receive inconclusive results on their aptitude test are referred to as divergent. Generally, this means that two different factions were suggested for them, but, occasionally, it might even be three. In any case, the Divergent tend to diverge from the norm, which,

according to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, means "to follow a different direction, or to become different" ("Diverge").

Abnegation, Amity, Candor, Dauntless and Erudite all expect their members to behave in a certain way and to think in a certain way, but for the Divergent, it is impossible to simply adapt. Instead of being just one way, they "want to be brave, and selfless, *and* smart, *and* kind, *and* honest" (*Divergent* 405) and they collect "the lessons each faction has to teach" (*Insurgent* 269).

They differ from the norm and thus are not tolerated by some of the faction leaders, especially since they cannot be controlled by the use of serums or through simulations. This scares intolerant authorities, who then resort to the prosecution of the Divergent.

People who are divergent are independent and "Roth clearly draws a correlation between free-thinking and Divergence" (Basu 26). Only this group of people can resist the totalitarian and dystopian rules of society, because they exercise their free will and resist control from higher instances (see Basu 26).

While specific gender attributes can be assigned to all of the five factions and even the Factionless, Divergence is the representation of "situational fluidity of gender" (Messner 66). Depending on which faction a divergent person decides to stay with, he or she might change his or her behavior. This can be best seen when looking at Tris, who acts differently depending on whether she is with her family in Abnegation, or with her chosen faction Dauntless. Her role as a Divergent, however, will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that, in *Allegiant*, when it is revealed that the entire city of Chicago is just an experiment of genetic manipulation, it turns out that regular faction members are genetically damaged individuals, while the Divergent are "those who have reached the desired level of genetic healing" (*Allegiant* 126). This fact shows that being divergent, and being a free-thinker should be the desired norm, while being confined and categorized by society is morally reprehensible.

3.3. The Bureau of Genetic Welfare

Roth's *Divergent* trilogy operates on two different levels of Dystopia, with the factions being the first one and the Bureau of Genetic Welfare being the second one. It is located outside of Chicago, at O'Hare airport, and its goal is to control and supervise genetic experiments that are going on inside of several big cities. The Bureau is a government agency, but it is explained that it still differs from most other agencies due to "the focused nature of [their] work and [their] contained, relatively remote location." Knowledge is always passed on to people's "children, instead of relying on appointments or hiring" (*Allegiant* 150). As a result, people who work for the Bureau of Genetic Welfare train their entire lives to be there and dedicate themselves completely to the goal, which is genetic healing, also referred to as Divergence.

This government agency is led by David, who is "advised by a small group of councilors" (*Allegiant* 322). He explains various times that working for a higher cause means that one needs to possess the "ability to make sacrifices for the greater good" (*Allegiant* 326), which means risking death or being prepared to erase people's memories, like he is ready to do with the people inside Chicago, since the factions that keep together his experiment are falling apart.

The plot-twist and the presentation of a rather unusual background story for the creation of the factions in *Allegiant* bring up various important themes that Roth wants to introduce the reader to. One of them is discrimination, which is already part of the faction system, especially concerning the Divergent, but within the context of the Bureau of Genetic Welfare, it becomes an even bigger issue. Furthermore, the author illustrates the dangers of technology by depicting a society where some groups of people seem to be suffering from technophobia, which will be discussed in more detail later on.

3.3.1. Genetic Discrimination

Genetic discrimination is a serious issue in Roth's fictional world, as well as in real life. It can be defined as the "discrimination against an individual

or his or her relatives because of *real or perceived* [...] differences from the ideal genome” (Wong and Lieh-Mak 393). This is particularly problematic when it comes to health care, insurance, or employment (see Wong and Lieh-Mak 393 and 395), which is also the case at the Bureau of Genetic Welfare in *Allegiant*.

There is a clear distinction made between genetically damaged individuals and genetically pure people, the Divergent. Both are welcome on the grounds of the Bureau and generally nobody gets simply sent away, but differences in the way these two groups are treated are clearly noticeable. Nita, one of the unpure characters, explains the job situation in the compound:

Support staff is more than just a job. Almost all of us are GDs- genetically damaged, leftovers from the failed city experiments or the descendants of leftovers or people pulled in from the outside [...]. And all of the scientists and leaders are GPs- genetically pure, descendants of people who resisted the genetic engineering movement in the first place (*Allegiant* 195).

It quickly becomes obvious that the more important jobs are reserved for the genetically pure, while the genetically damaged only get to help out and do simple work, because they are seen as less worthy. Moreover, GPs are the sole decision-makers and are, for example, capable of erasing the minds of people in the experiments when things develop in a way they did not anticipate and thus cannot control. Still, numerous GDs and GPs alike agree that, while “these people have the power to do that”, “no one should [ever] have that power” (*Allegiant* 270).

The discrimination against genetically damaged people is also illustrated by the fact that punishment is performed differently than in the case of genetically pure individuals. One of the workers in the Bureau of Genetic Welfare explains in more details why that is the case: “We don’t believe in capital punishment for the genetically damaged [...]. We can’t have the same behavioral expectations for those with damaged genes as we do for those with pure genes, after all” (*Allegiant* 304). While it is of course positive that these people are not killed on any occasion that might occur, there is still a difference in treatment that shows that the rights of GDs and GPs are unequal.

Genetically pure people are treated like superior individuals and even the protagonist Tris confesses that, when she found out about her Divergence, she “thought of it as a secret power that no one else possessed, something

that made [her] different, better, stronger” (*Allegiant* 179). She realizes quickly, however, that being genetically pure does not make her any better or worse than anybody else. Being divergent simply means having a certain structure in one’s DNA, much like “people with brown eyes or blonde hair” (*Allegiant* 179) do.

Apart from the genetically damaged and pure people, there is another group of individuals, who live in the fringe, which means that they are neither inside the city of Chicago and part of the experiment, nor do they live in the compounds of the Bureau of Genetic Welfare. They are homeless, live in poverty and often have to resort to violence and stealing in order to survive. Of course, all of them are genetically damaged, and, according to David and his co-workers, this makes them incapable of being proper humans and leading a decent life. The people in the fringe are outsiders, much like the Factionless at the beginning of the series, but that does not mean they should not be taken seriously. They might be ready to start an uprising at any minute and some protagonists, including Tris, have clearly learned from their experiences with the Factionless, which is why the young woman points out: “If they are like the factionless, then they are surely desperate like the factionless, and I am wary of desperate people” (*Allegiant* 349).

Through the depiction of discrimination and the various forms in which it may occur Roth raises awareness and warns the reader of the problems and consequences that oppression creates. Numerous factors, including gender, class, race, or the genetic predisposition of a person may lead to the exclusion from a society, but the author shows through the *Divergent* series that this violates human rights and is simply unjust.

3.3.2. Big Brother is Watching

Manipulating people’s genetics is only one thing that the Bureau of Genetic Welfare does, but it is important to note that individuals who are, unwillingly, part of these experiments, are also constantly being observed and controlled. This becomes obvious when, in *Allegiant*, David, the leader and main scientist of this government agency, confesses to Tris and her friends:

“You’ve always known that the Dauntless observe the city with security cameras [...]. Well, we have access to those cameras too” (128-129).

As a result, the people inside the experiment in Chicago have absolutely no privacy, without even knowing it. This clearly raises ethical issues, since “privacy is a fundamental value” (Bayer and Fairchild 1899) that should be respected. Nevertheless, the Bureau of Genetic Welfare is highly invasive and their actions could be compared to the “Big Brother is Watching You” notion that can already be found in George Orwell’s dystopia *1984*. As mentioned earlier, it is extremely typical for this type of literature to depict societies that are constantly monitored (see Bradford et al. 111-119), thus, Roth’s trilogy is no different. The people inside the experiment, who are trapped in Chicago, have no way of escaping from constant surveillance and control.

It turns out, however, that surveillance and control are not the only reason for the observation of individuals in the city. For numerous people in the Bureau watching the factions and the problems between them turns into a form of entertainment. They do not realize that what they see concerns the real lives of people and perceive everything as a reality TV show instead. Clearly, for the protagonists this is extremely shocking, particularly for Tris, when she is told: “People in the Bureau watch the screens often, and for the past few months, you’ve been involved in a lot of interesting things. A lot of the younger people think you’re downright heroic” (*Allegiant* 148). It seems almost as if the deaths of numerous people, including Tris’ parents, are seen as some kind of amusement by the spectators in the Bureau, which makes their genetic experiments even more morally reprehensible. They seem to be unaware of the fact that they intervene with people’s lives and the consequences that come with it.

3.3.3. Technophobia

The rather negative depiction of the Bureau of Genetic Welfare and their use of technology, including various forms of genetic manipulation and the utilization of different serums, show that in Roth’s dystopian trilogy science and technology are criticized. It goes without saying that there are several

positive aspects concerning technology, but if it “is a source to which some people want access, it is also an imposition from which others seek to be freed” (Butler, *Undoing Gender* 11).

While some factions, such as Abnegation, hardly use any technological devices, in other factions, including Erudite, nothing is done without the use of various serums and other scientific devices. Especially the members of the latter faction are convinced that “technology is supposed to make life better. [...] No matter what you believe, there’s a technology out there for you” (*Insurgent* 452). This, however, might be closely related to gender, since studies have shown that femininity is more closely related to technophobia than masculinity (see Brosnan 36) and, as previously stated, Abnegation is a feminine faction, while Erudite could be classified as a masculine one.

Technophobia is the anxiety and fear of an individual or a group about computers and computer-related technology (see Brosnan 15), and it is an increasing issue in every-day life (see Applebaum 15). It is impossible to deny that technology strongly influences the world, people that live in it, as well as different cultures (see Applebaum 69) and thus technophobia has behavioral, emotional and attitudinal components (see Brosnan 12-13) that are all equally relevant.

The biggest issue concerning technology and technophobia in the *Divergent* series, however, is the fact that the Bureau of Genetic Welfare conducts genetic experiments. According to Butler, “technology threatens to take over the business of making persons, running the risk that the human will become nothing other than a technological effect” (*Undoing Gender* 11). These are the exact risks of genetic manipulation, which is therefore highly dangerous and certainly also extremely unethical. By depicting technology as rather negative throughout the entire narrative, Roth warns her readers and makes them aware of the negative consequences science might be responsible for.

3.4. Significant Characters

Among all of the female and male characters in Veronica Roth's *Divergent* series there is a lot of diversity. Thus, many different and interesting aspects can be analyzed, the most significant one being gender. While some protagonists represent stereotypical gender roles, others stray far away from expected archetypes. Clearly, the female writer manages to show that identity needs to be liberated "from the constraints and limitations imposed by binaries" (Mallan 155). Furthermore, it is generally noticeable that the number of significant male and female characters is rather balanced, as well as their roles as either heroes and heroines or villains.

The following chapters will introduce some of the most remarkable characters of the dystopian series and examine their behavior, as well as their most distinctive aspects and features. A critical analysis and evaluation of the characters will then be provided in the final chapter of this thesis.

3.3.1. Female Characters

When reading the dystopian trilogy, one immediately notices that most of the female characters have one thing in common: they are all strong and powerful women who do not conform to gender stereotypes. Even though some of them are the heroines of the narration, while others are more villainous, they all contribute to the redefinition of gender roles and show that masculinity and femininity are interrelated and often supplement each other.

3.3.1.1. Beatrice "Tris" Prior

Beatrice Prior is the female protagonist of Veronica Roth's dystopian series and the entire story, with a few chapters in *Allegiant* being exceptions, is narrated from her point of view. This means that the reader experiences everything from the perspective of this 16-year-old teenager, which needs to be kept in mind when analyzing the story and all of the other characters. The

way Beatrice sees the world and the people who surround her strongly influences the way the reader perceives all of these elements.

The girl herself is born into Abnegation as the daughter of Natalie and Andrew Prior. She has an older brother named Caleb, whose character traits and personality will be discussed later on. Like numerous adolescents, Beatrice has difficulties finding her own identity and fitting in, even though this is one of the most important things for her at the beginning of the trilogy. As an Abnegation member, the girl is expected to be selfless, but she does not conform to the one-sided thinking that is promoted by the faction system easily. Her curiosity and braveness are always part of her as well, so it is not surprising when she turns out to be Divergent on the day of her aptitude test. Three factions instead of just one are suggested for her, namely Abnegation, Dauntless, and Erudite.

Deciding to join Dauntless leads to a big change in the way Beatrice presents herself and in the way she acts and behaves. The first step the girl takes to leave her former personality (see Basu 25) behind is shortening her name to Tris. With the help of her newfound friend Christina, she also alters her appearance. Beatrice's loose, grey Abnegation clothes are traded for tight, black Dauntless attire, and make-up is supposed to make the teenager more noticeable as well. Even her first tattoo, three birds, "one for each member of the family [she] left behind" (*Divergent* 90), is part of the transformation process. Finally, the girl herself realizes:

Looking at myself now isn't like seeing myself for the first time; it's like seeing someone else for the first time. Beatrice was a girl I saw in stolen moments at the mirror, who kept quiet at the dinner table. This is someone whose eyes claim mine and don't release me; this is Tris (*Divergent* 87).

Together with Tris' appearance, her character changes as well. The girl slowly turns into a young woman. She becomes stronger and more self-confident. Being a member of Dauntless allows her to become the heroine of the narration, which even the author, Veronica Roth, highlights by pointing out that Tris "is always the agent" and an "active rather than a passive or reactive, character" (Q&A 10). As previously explained, this notion of being active is closely related to masculinity, just like various other qualities that Tris embodies.

From her first day in Dauntless onwards, the young woman refuses to be submissive and does not let any of the male characters restrain or oppress her. Of course, there are some men that try to intimidate her, like Four, her trainer during initiation, but her reaction is the following: “He stares at me, and I don’t look away. He isn’t a dog, but the same rules apply. Looking away is submissive. Looking him in the eye is a challenge. It’s my choice” (*Divergent* 69). Again Tris proves that her behavior does not coincide with what is stereotypically expected of females. She decides to go her own way and to not conform to any preexisting gender roles.

As a Dauntless initiate, the female protagonist quickly develops more and more strength, both physically, as well as psychologically. As a result, Tris sometimes comes across as rather masculine, especially for her best friend Christina, who even has to ask her: “Can you be a girl for a few seconds?” (*Divergent* 369), when she wants to talk about something other than fighting techniques and Dauntless training. Quickly, all of the initiates, including the teenage boys, realize that Tris is not as weak as she might seem at first glance. Her high rankings during the training sessions make her a threat for them, so a small group of guys, including a close friend of hers, try to kill Tris. Four manages to save her and explains to the young woman: “He hurt you because your strength made him feel weak. [...] The others won’t be as jealous if you show some vulnerability. Even if it isn’t real” (*Divergent* 285). The man then advises Tris to hide her true self and instead wants her to pretend to be dependent on the help of others, just like a woman is supposed to be (see Spence and Helmreich 160). For the protagonist herself it is extremely difficult to follow this piece of advice since she does not want to hide her strength and appear disempowered, especially in a faction like Dauntless. Moreover, pretending to be somebody she is not would hinder her in growing and finding her own identity.

This search for her true self is further complicated by her sexual awakening (see Hintz 255-256) that takes place when she falls in love with her Dauntless trainer Four, who she soon refers to as Tobias. Just like every other young adult Tris experiences new feelings that initially confuse her. Rather quickly the two protagonists start a romantic relationship in which, once again, the young woman displays traits that one might describe as rather masculine.

She practices what Mulvey would refer to as the “male gaze” (808), which is a term generally used in cinematographic criticism, but it can certainly be applied in the context of this literary trilogy as well. It refers to the “pleasure in looking at another person as an erotic object” (Mulvey 815) and is usually only executed by men, since they are active, while women are only passive objects that are stared at. As previously pointed out, however, Tris is an active character. Thus, it is her that gazes, while the object she is looking at is the male protagonist Tobias. This notion of pleasurable gazing can be detected numerous times throughout the entire dystopian series, because the young female always watches her love interest very closely, such as in this example, where she describes: “He presses a hand to the wall next to my head and leans into it. His shirt is just tight enough that I can see his collarbone and the faint depression between his shoulder muscle and his bicep” (*Divergent* 312). Tris watches every movement and every body part of Tobias closely because of her desire for him, which means that she is driven by a scopophilic instinct (see Mulvey 815). Once again, one can thus recognize how closely the female protagonist relates to various ideas and aspects of masculinity.

As a member of Dauntless, Tris also develops leadership qualities that are usually associated with men rather than women. When Abnegation is under attack and other people need her help, the young woman realizes: “It’s my duty to lead now”, but she also has to admit to herself: “I have no idea how to bear that burden” (*Divergent* 451). It takes some time for her to accept her rather masculine role, especially since she is still struggling with her mother’s death and the death of countless people that fell victim to the attack. Nonetheless, Tris develops a strategy that helps her deal with her weakness:

For a second I feel like everything inside me is breaking, and I crouch by a body, breathing through my mouth so I don’t smell the blood. I clamp my hand over my mouth to contain a sob. Five more seconds. Five seconds of weakness and then I get up. One, two, three, four. Five (*Divergent* 481).

The brave female protagonist only allows herself to display stereotypical feminine weakness (see Nikolajeva 133) for a short moment before embracing her role as a strong leader again. She knows that other people, such as her father Andrew and her brother Caleb, are relying on her to make decisions and to act. Back in the days when Tris was still in Abnegation, it was clearly her father who acted as the head of the family, but during these times of hardship,

it is the young woman who is in charge and who realizes: “[Andrew] looks at me like I’m a peer. He speaks to me like I’m a peer (*Divergent* 454). Tris is no longer considered inferior, but instead fully accepted in her predominantly masculine role.

In spite of everything, the female protagonist still shows some characteristics and qualities that prove that there is also a feminine side to her, like her ability to be selfless. Initially, the girl thought: “I wasn’t good enough for Abnegation. [...] I was selfish. [...] My mother said that everyone is selfish. [...] But I became less selfish in Dauntless. I discovered there were people I would fight for. Die for, even” (*Insurgent* 147). Her great love for other people allows Tris to give herself up for them and even sacrifice her own life for them, but more on that will follow shortly. Even though this character trait is closely related to femininity, Tobias points out: “You’re from Abnegation [...] and it’s when you’re acting selflessly that you are at your bravest” (*Divergent* 311). Hence, her selflessness is strongly linked to her strength and bravery, which makes both, femininity as well as masculinity, significant aspects that can coexist and even complement each other.

It is highly interesting that, when the Erudite analyze Tris’ brain, they find out that “she is not reward motivated. Yet she is extremely good at directing her thoughts and actions toward her goals” (*Insurgent* 335). Again, this displays how feminine and masculine aspects influence the behavior of the female protagonist. Stereotypically, men tend to be driven by rewards and are more focused on the outcome (see Applebaum, Audet and Miller 48), while women, like Tris, value interpersonal qualities and emotions. Nevertheless, the young woman always manages to succeed and to achieve her goals, which, at first, might appear to be rather contradictory. Thus, it is again the combination of masculinity and femininity that make up Tris’ character and that allow her to be the heroine of the novels.

As briefly mentioned before, the fact that the female protagonist has the ability to be selfless, allows her to make sacrifices and to even sacrifice her own life. Numerous times throughout the trilogy Tris considers ending her life, in order to save somebody else. When Abnegation is under attack and Erudite uses Dauntless as soldiers with the help of a computer program, the young woman is ready to give away her life for the first time and argues: “If I

go up into the building, I probably won't come back down. The best I can hope for is to destroy the simulation before someone kills me. When did I decide on this suicide mission? Why wasn't it more difficult?" (*Divergent* 469). According to Nikolajeva, self-sacrifice is typically feminine (see 133), but in the dystopian series, Tris herself points out: "My father says- used to say- that there is power in self-sacrifice" (*Divergent* 476). By not hesitating to risk her life for other people, the protagonist shows that there is strength in femininity, and she clearly does so on more than one occasion. When Erudite threatens to make people commit suicide through a simulation unless a Divergent voluntarily shows up for experiments, Tris is the first to act. She turns herself in without any reluctance. For the young woman, sacrifice is extremely important, but one should not do it for the wrong reasons, as she learned from her mother Natalie, who sacrificed her life for her daughter:

She taught me all about real sacrifice. That it should be done from love, not misplaced disgust for another person's genetics. That it should be done from necessity, not without exhausting all other options. That it should be done for people who need your strength because they don't have enough of their own (*Allegiant* 473-474).

For Tris, being able to sacrifice herself is a way of showing her strength and her power, but it also shows her ability to love. It does not even matter for the young woman whether somebody is genetically damaged, or genetically pure, because when a person really matters to her, nothing changes the way she feels. Her older brother Caleb is a traitor and, according to many characters in the narration, deserves to die, but still Tris cares about him deeply. In the Bureau of Genetic Welfare he is about to risk his own life in order to eliminate his feelings of guilt for betraying Tris, when she realizes: "I love my brother. I love him, and he is quaking with terror at the thought of death. I love him and all I can think, all I can hear in my mind, are the words I said to him a few days ago: *I would never deliver you to your own execution*" (*Allegiant* 455). The young woman gives up her own life so her brother can live, and she does so without hesitating or doubting her decision. Being absolutely selfless and brave at the same time are the two character traits that define the female protagonist most. They make her exceptional and prove that female characters do not need to follow stereotypical gender expectations.

3.3.1.2. Natalie Prior

Natalie Prior is the loving and caring mother of Tris and Caleb. She values her family more than anything in the world and even when both of her children decide to leave their family, she still tells them: "I love you. No matter what" (*Divergent* 41). Additionally, she seems to be a perfect fit for Abnegation, since she does not have a selfish bone in her body, and "she is well-practiced in the art of losing herself" (*Divergent* 1). This nurturing quality and the need for domestic harmony (see Lorber and Moore 3) might let the reader assume that Natalie is an archetypical female character, but it turns out later in the series that the woman is stronger than she might seem and does not conform to stereotypical gender roles easily.

When other people, especially family members, need her, no matter in what way, Natalie Prior does not hesitate and immediately turns into an active character. The first time this quality becomes visible for the reader is on visiting day, when Tris is hoping to see her family members in the Dauntless headquarters because she needs mental support. When Natalie actually appears, her daughter is relieved and happy:

She came. She came for me. I walk faster. She sees me, and for a second her expression is blank, like she doesn't know who I am. Then her eyes light up, and she opens her arms. [...] She runs her hand over my hair. *Don't cry*, I tell myself. I hold her until I can blink the moisture from my eyes, and then pull back to look at her again. I smile with closed lips, just like she does. She touches my cheek (*Divergent* 178).

Even though the members of Abnegation usually do not show affection through physical contact, Natalie knows that her daughter needs her and is there for her in any possible way.

In the end of *Divergent*, the woman even sacrifices her life in order to save Tris, which, according to Nikolajeva, it closely liked to femininity and typical for female characters (see 133). Still, this sacrifice also displays Natalie's strength, which even her daughter notices by pointing out: "She is dressed like my mother and she looks like my mother, but she is holding a gun, and the determined look in her eyes is unfamiliar to me" (*Divergent* 439). At this moment, the mask that Natalie was wearing and that made her seem like a weak and passive female disappears and the reader gets to see how

brave she actually is, even though this is also the reason for her honorable death. However, her family knows that Natalie needs to be remembered as the strong woman she was, and her daughter even emphasizes: “My mother’s death was brave. I remember how calm she was, how determined. It isn’t just brave that she died for me; it is brave that she did it [...] without hesitation, and without appearing to consider another option (*Divergent* 451).

A while after Natalie passes away, her children find out more about their mother, through a diary that they get from the Bureau of Genetic Welfare. It turns out that the woman was actually born in Milwaukee and part of a different experiment. When her mother killed her father, though, she ran away and committed murder herself, in order to protect a little boy. She was then taken to the Bureau of Genetic Welfare, where she learned that a lot of people in Chicago were in danger, because of their Divergence, a characteristic that Natalie also possessed. Therefore, she quickly volunteered to go into the city and help these people, because even as an adolescent, she was already extremely compassionate and always wanted to take action into her own hands. Natalie was put into Dauntless at first, but at the choosing ceremony decided to join Abnegation, together with the man she fell in love with. Since this was not the way the Bureau had planned out the entire scenario, David, the leader of the government agency, became extremely patronizing. He expected the woman to be submissive, just like a female was supposed to be (see Spence and Helmreich 160), but Natalie had already developed her strength and assertiveness as at a young age. She was never afraid to confront David by sending him letters, explaining:

I left *everything* behind to come in here when no one else wanted to. You should be thanking me instead of accusing me of losing sight of my mission. Let’s get this straight: I’m not going to forget why I’m here just because I chose Abnegation and I’m going to get married. I deserve to have a like of my own. One that *I* choose, not that you and the Bureau chose for me (*Allegiant* 209-210).

Natalie refused to accept suppression and thus proved that power and empowerment are not necessarily related to sexuality and gender.

Due to her early death, Natalie Prior does not have a big role in the *Divergent* series, but still an extremely significant one. Even though at times she might appear weak and silenced, she is actually one of the strongest

women in Roth's narration and, thus, defies stereotypical assumptions of femininity.

3.3.1.3. Jeanine Matthews

The leader of Erudite, Jeanine Matthews, is the main villain and anti-heroine throughout most of the dystopian series. She is extremely intelligent and always acts out of logical reasoning, which is typical for members of her faction, but, nonetheless, the woman clearly abuses her status and power. Jeanine is the one responsible for the deaths of countless Divergent and the attack on numerous innocent Abnegation families. According to Kate Winslet, who portrays the Erudite leader in the movies, one could simply describe her as a "female Hitler" (TheEllenShow), since the woman's goal is to keep the faction system alive and the faction members pure.

There is a lot more to this character, however, than just pure malice and viciousness. Even Tris, the female hero of *Divergent*, notices that Jeanine's actions are not driven by her seemingly evil nature. She points out:

I see no vicious glee in her eyes, not a hint of the sadism I expect. She is more machine than maniac. She sees a problem and forms solutions based on the data she collects. Abnegation stood in the way of her desire for power, so she found a way to eliminate it. She didn't have an army, so she found one in Dauntless. She knew that she would need to control large groups of people in order to stay secure, so she developed a way to do it with serums and transmitters. Divergence is just another problem for her to solve, and that is what makes her so terrifying- because she is smart enough to solve anything, even the problem of our existence (*Divergent* 431-432).

Jeanine Matthews strongly believes that the faction system is necessary and that without it there would be no stability in society. Therefore, she does everything she can to maintain this system and is even "willing to make sacrifice for the greater good" (*Insurgent* 496). While Jeanine is definitely craving power, she does not only use her malignity to achieve personal goals, but to make an impact on society, which keeps her from being a typical villain.

Driven by curiosity and thirst for knowledge the Erudite woman starts to work on experiments that should help her find out more about the nature of the Divergent. She needs to know at all cost why they cannot be controlled. One of her test subjects is Tris, who immediately notices that Jeanine "doesn't

care what she does, as long as it fascinates her” (*Insurgent* 329). Generally, curiosity and a thirst of knowledge are desirable character traits that can change the world for the better, but unfortunately Jeanine crosses a line and becomes almost unstoppable. She is working hard to reach her goal and does not rely on anybody, even though she has a lot of helpers and followers. It is always her that takes on an active role as a leader, and, especially for the Erudite, “Jeanine is their most valued teacher. They all stare at her with wide eyes and eager, open mouths waiting to impress her” (*Insurgent* 335). The woman is aware of the impact she has on others and clearly makes use of it, but it also fills her with arrogance.

The combination of all of Jeanine’s characteristics makes her often seem “mechanical” (*Divergent* 433). The woman is extremely focused on her goals and always curious to learn more. She wants to improve her scientific methods and she spares no efforts to control her followers and force her enemies into submission with her “vicious, predatory stare” (*Divergent* 358). Still, Jeanine is a human being who is not immune to failure. This becomes obvious when her experiments on Tris do not work out the way she is expecting them to, and the young girl thus notices: “She was like a machine; she was cold and emotionless, bound by logic alone. And I broke her” (*Insurgent* 375). The notion of Jeanine being a broken machine is reinforced at the moment of her death. At first, the Erudite woman tries to use her intelligence to reason with Tori, her executor, but in the end, her smartness is of no use. She is killed by the Dauntless woman who is determined to punish Jeanine for her malice. Overall, Jeanine Matthews is a woman, who predominantly appears extremely masculine due to all of her qualities and characteristics.

3.3.1.4. Johanna Reyes

Initially, Johanna Reyes is the spokesperson of Amity, the faction that values peacefulness and kindness the most. The woman appears to fit right in, since she is extremely friendly herself and always respects the people around her, no matter what faction they belong to. One can also notice that Johanna has a well-developed sense of “awareness of the customs of other factions”

(*Insurgent* 7), since she knows exactly that a Dauntless is greeted with a firm handshake, while Abnegation members prefer physical distance.

The only aspect that always distinguishes Johanna Reyes from the rest of Amity is her appearance:

It is hard to forget Johanna's face, whether you've seen her once or a thousand times. A scar stretches in a thick line from just above her right eyebrow to her lip, rendering her blind in one eye and giving her a lisp when she talks. [...] She would have been a beautiful woman if not for that scar. (*Insurgent* 5).

Johanna is marked by a scar and it is unclear where exactly she got it from. It is safe to assume, however, that domestic violence was the cause, since, in *Allegiant*, Johanna confronts Marcus about the way he abused his family and says: "I have watched how your son behaves, how your wife behaves. I know what people who are stained with violence look like. [...] We recognize our own" (312). During this discussion "Johanna's fingers skip over the scar on her cheek", which is definitely a hint dropped by the author and suggests that there mistreatment took place in her family. Nonetheless, Johanna Reyes still managed to become an important figure in her faction by leaving her past behind and refusing to take on the role of a victim, which would be typical for females (see Cranny-Francis et al. 66). Clearly, one can already notice that she possess a lot of inner strength and confidence.

As the dystopian narrative proceeds the reader gets to find out even more how much this woman differs from other Amity members. The faction is asked if they want to participate in the fight of various factions against each other, but most members choose to stay uninvolved. Instead of passively agreeing with their decision, Johanna addresses Amity with a short speech:

It is not my wish to encourage division in this community, which has given so much to me (...). But my conscience forces me to go against this decision. Anyone else whose conscience drives them toward the city is welcome to come with me. (...) I understand if this means I can't be a part of Amity anymore (...). But please know that if I have to leave you, I leave you with love, rather than malice (*Insurgent* 445-446).

Johanna actively decides to go a different way than the rest of her faction and thus proves that she is not a stereotypical female character.

In fact, Johanna takes her active involvement in the city's uprisings even one step further when Evelyn Johnson and the Factionless are taking over the city. Together with the help of Cara, a former Erudite member,

Johanna establishes a rebel group, the Allegiant, who want to reinstate the faction system. The once so peaceful Amity woman is hardly recognizable anymore, because “with the factions disbanded, it seems she has become something other than the mouthpiece of Amity or even the leader of Allegiant. She has become a soldier” (*Allegiant* 365-366). Johanna Reyes ends up in a position of power and proves that she does not necessarily have to be a white, middle-class man (see Cranny-Francis et al. 66) in order to exercise this power.

3.3.1.6. Tori Wu

Another important female character in the *Divergent* trilogy is Tori Wu, a Dauntless woman with a rather striking appearance that sets her apart from most of the other women. Like all the other members of her faction, Tori is always dressed in black, but unlike the rest, who opt for tight clothing, she prefers to wear “a black blazer- like a man’s suit” (*Divergent* 11). She clearly appears rather masculine, which is further supported by her tattoo, “a black-and- white hawk with a red eye” (*Divergent* 11). This type of body art is generally known to signal masculinity (see Wohlrab et al. 203), but the reason Tori has for getting her tattoo enforces this notion of manliness even more. According to Wohlrab et al. females get tattoos to increase their attractiveness (see 203), but the Dauntless woman wears the hawk on her back so it can remind her of a fear that she has overcome, the fear of darkness, and fearlessness is an ideal that is generally associated with masculinity, rather than femininity.

Tori’s fierceness does not only show in her appearance, but also in her character traits. She is the first one that finds out about Tris’ Divergence while conducting her aptitude test and she immediately chooses to help the girl. Since Tori’s brother was one of the Divergent who were supposedly killed, the Dauntless woman knows about the dangers and becomes a mentor for Tris. Initially, Tori Wu does not actively fight against the injustice in Chicago, but by helping others she slowly turns into a rebel. She even admits that there is nothing she wants more than revenge for her brother’s death and that she is just “waiting for [her] opportunity” (*Divergent* 305).

The need for revenge is another aspect about Tori that brings out her masculinity, since, generally, men are more likely to long for revenge than women (see Wilkowski et al. 553). Nonetheless, the woman's wish to avenge her brother seems to get out of control, and when she reveals her intentions of killing Jeanine Matthews, the alleged killer of George Wu, Tris notices something about her: "I see a kind of thirst in her expression [...]. Before the attack simulation I might have called it a thirst for justice, or even revenge, but now I am able to identify it as a thirst for blood" (*Insurgent* 263). One could almost say that Tori is turning mad, which is a process often related to femininity, since it is the "heightened emotional nature" of females "which can turn to madness" (Cranny-Francis et al. 144).

Despite her strong emotions, people look up to the Dauntless woman and trust her. As a result, she is one of the three people who get elected as new leaders of the faction, after the old ones turn out to be traitors. It is striking, however, that Tori is the only woman who gets to make decisions for Dauntless, along with two male characters, Four and Harrison. It shows that, generally, men are trusted more to be competent leaders, but her numerous masculine qualities make her equally competent.

Tori Wu is part of the group that leave Chicago in *Allegiant*, but she never gets to find out that her brother is still alive outside the fence. A group of Factionless want to prevent the group from leaving the city and the Dauntless woman gets shot. After her death, all of the protagonists remember her as a strong and brave person and when they tell George about what happened to his sister, Tris makes sure to mention: "She gave her life defending us [...]. Without her, none of us would have made it out" (*Allegiant* 163).

3.3.1.7. Christina

Christina is a Candor-born Dauntless transfer who displays characteristics typical of both factions, even though she is not Divergent. Her loyalty, honesty, and forgiveness make her stand out, as well as her positive attitude towards life. Due to these qualities, she quickly becomes Tris' best friend, who supports and encourages her throughout Roth's entire dystopian series.

One aspect that distinguishes Christina from the majority of the other characters is her ethnicity. Since she is described as “tall, with dark brown skin and short hair” (*Divergent* 51), one can assume that she is a woman of color. Even though her appearance is only brought up this once in the trilogy, this still makes race an issue. Buckley and Carter have conducted studies on black adolescent girls where some were categorized as feminine due to being warm, emotional and nurturing, some were categorized as masculine with characteristics such as having a strong personality and being independent and autonomous, and finally others were categorized as androgynous, which means they represent both, masculine, as well as feminine elements (see 658). It was discovered that the last group showed the highest amount of self-esteem because “this pattern fits the gender role expectations of their cultural group” (Buckley and Carter 656). Obviously, gender roles and stereotypes associated with black people differ from those that apply to white people, which needs to be taken into account when looking at Christina’s character. In fact, the young woman has an extremely high self-esteem and her personality traits definitely coincide with feminine and masculine character stereotypes, so the results of the study by Buckley and Carter obviously apply to her.

As mentioned before, Christina has a very close relationship to Tris from the day they first meet, which is their first day as Dauntless transfers. Even though Tris is initially very weak and does not seem to fit in, the Candor born female supports her and encourages her to fight harder and never give up. She even helps her in becoming more noticeable by choosing new clothes for the heroine and doing her make-up. Whenever Tris gets hurt or is in trouble, Christina is there for her without asking any questions, which shows that she feels sympathy for others and has a caring and nurturing side. In some instances, one could even think that she has some qualities that would make her fit into Abnegation, like when Tris says: “Christina just passes me a muffin and crouches in front of me to tie my shoes” (*Divergent* 119).

There is only one moment where the Candor born girl acts in an extremely patronizing way towards her friend. When they have to take part in a game of capture the flag and end up being on the same team, Tris makes an observation that helps them come close to winning. Both girls, however, then

find the other team's flag at the same time. From Tris' point of view the situation is described as follows:

The flag hangs from a tree branch, high above my head. I reach for it, and so does Christina. 'Come on, Tris,' she says. 'You're already the hero of the day. And you know you can't reach it anyway.' She gives me a patronizing look, the way people sometimes look at children when they act too adult, and snatches the flag from the branch (*Divergent* 153-154).

While Christina certainly values her friendship with the Abnegation born protagonist she is also used to her being slower and weaker. When she realizes that this is not the case anymore, she gets scared and feels the need to prove her own strength and power. Nonetheless, Christina apologizes for her behavior shortly afterwards, because she realizes that Tris and her do not have to be rivals, but that they can combine their strengths and be allies instead.

As a Candor born initiate, one of the young woman's most significant qualities is her honesty and openness. She is not scared to speak her mind and sometimes even has to apologize for the things she says, since not everybody is used to this kind of behavior. Often, she justifies her behavior saying: "Sorry, am I being rude? [...] I'm used to just saying whatever is on my mind" (*Divergent* 81). Especially when she does not like other people, like Peter and some other Dauntless initiates, she does not hesitate to let them know about her feelings towards them and then explains to her friends: "They already know I hate them. [...] Because I've told them" (*Divergent* 94). Even though this character trait represents masculine aspects of Christina, she emphasizes, "being honest doesn't mean you say whatever you want, whenever you want. It means that what you chose to say is true" (*Insurgent* 59). Hence, the "Candor smart-mouth" (*Allegiant* 518) still shows empathy and knows that there are situations when the truth might hurt too much and should therefore be replaced by silence.

Even though Christina can generally be described as an independent woman, she falls in love with one of her fellow initiates, Will and lists what attracts her about him: "How he put his arm around me at the funeral, how he opens doors for me like I'm a girl instead of someone who could beat the crap out of him" (*Divergent* 369). It is noticeable that she still wants a masculine and chivalrous partner who is able to protect her, but this does not stop her

from being strong and courageous herself. Especially after Will dies, Christina proves that she does not need a man to survive. It is, however, the way she can forgive Tris for killing her boyfriend, that shows how brave, forgiving and noble the Candor born girl really is.

After Tris' death, Tobias notices as well that Christina is "a forgiving friend, faithful to the truth" and "brave enough to take action" (*Allegiant* 507). They both grieve together, because they understand each other's pain. Nonetheless, despite everything that happened, the young woman still has a positive outlook on life and teaches Tobias: "Sometimes life really sucks. [...] But you know what I'm holding on for? [...] The moments that don't suck. [...] The trick is to notice them when they come around" (*Allegiant* 526). Christina remains strong, even in the most difficult times, which makes her an excellent role model for adolescent readers.

3.3.2. Male Characters

The male characters in the *Divergent* trilogy also show a lot of diversity and variety. While some characters seem to be stereotypical, masculine men, others challenge classic gender roles and provide the reader with new perspectives. Generally, all of the male characters are rather complex and provide a lot of ground for analysis, as the following sections will show.

3.3.2.1. Tobias "Four" Eaton

The male protagonist of Roth's dystopian series is Tobias Eaton, son of Marcus Eaton and Evelyn Johnson. Various chapters in the last part of the trilogy, *Allegiant*, are written from his point of view and the author even published a fourth book called *Four* that contains a number of short stories where Tobias is the first-person narrator.

Tobias has no positive memories of his childhood and adolescence as an Abnegation born. His mother supposedly died when he was only a young boy, leaving him alone with Marcus, an extremely abusive father. As a 16-year-old he therefore decides that he cannot stay with his old faction. Instead, he first considers Amity, but realizes: "They are too perfect, too kind, for

someone like me to be driven into their arms by rage and fear” (*Four* 29). Then he discards Candor because he would have to reveal all of his secrets during initiation and people would find out about his terrible past. Erudite tempts the teenager for a second, until he must confess to himself: “I know myself well enough to understand that I am too volatile, too emotional, for a place like that” (*Four* 30). Finally, he ends up in Dauntless, where his entire life starts to change.

In his new faction, Tobias wants to hide who he really is. He does not tell anybody about his name and lets other people call him Stiff, until his initiation trainer Amar comes up with the nickname Four after working on fear landscapes and finding out that the teenager only has four fears. This change of name gives Tobias confidence and it makes him strong. It symbolizes that he is a character that “balances strength with vulnerability” (Q&A 7). Tobias was always put down by his father as a young boy and never had the courage to stand up against him, but Four is different. He is finally able to embrace his power and realizes: “I have a new name, which means I can be a new person. [...] Someone who can cut back. Someone who’s finally ready to fight. Four” (*Four* 55).

Even though Dauntless contributed to the manifestation of Four’s masculinity, the young man still displays feminine elements. Just like the female protagonist Tris, he also does not conform to gender stereotypes but instead goes his own way. His desire to be unique and to not be confined by the values of a single faction is shown by the tattoo on his back: “The symbols of each faction are drawn there- Dauntless at the top of his spine, Abnegation just below it, and the other three, smaller, beneath them: [...] The scales that represent Candor, the eye that stands for Erudite, and the tree that symbolizes Amity” (*Divergent* 405). Four wants “to be brave, and selfless, *and* smart, *and* kind, *and* honest” (*Divergent* 405). He further knows that he has strengths and weaknesses, but they all define him and make him who he is.

Still, for a long time Four hides his past and does not tell anybody about his abusive father, because it limits him. It even stops the young man from taking the position as a Dauntless leader that is offered to him after his initiation, because he is scared of possibly running into Marcus at meetings. Furthermore, his father always appears in his fear landscape and is thus one

of the four things that Tobias is afraid of the most. Revealing his terrible experiences from his childhood would mean showing vulnerability and, especially in *Dauntless*, this weakness would make Four appear feminine (see Nikolajeva 133). The male protagonist wants to be respected by others and does not open up easily. Thus, instead of being a leader he works as a trainer for initiates, a position where he also gets to exercise power and superiority over others.

Things change when he starts falling in love with Tris, because in front of her, the young man is not afraid to be himself and expose all of his flaws. He even takes her into his fear landscape to show her his true identity, after which the young woman starts calling him Tobias instead of Four like everybody else. Tris changes him and even other people start noticing this and inform the female protagonist: “Four without you is a much different person. He’s ... obsessive, explosive, insecure...” (*Allegiant* 357). The young man even reveals that she was the only thing that made him stay in *Dauntless* when he was actually planning to leave the faction because of its corrupt leaders: “I was planning on leaving *Dauntless*, and becoming factionless. But then I met *her*, and ... I felt like maybe I could make something more of my decision” (*Insurgent* 143). Four also admits that he only joined *Dauntless* in the first place because he was scared of his father. He points out: “Choosing *Dauntless* in order to escape my father was an act of cowardice [...]. I regret that cowardice. It means I am not worthy of my faction. I will always regret it” (*Insurgent* 143-144). Again, he is finally able to show his weaknesses without being worried about not appearing masculine enough.

After living a life in fear of Markus, Tobias eventually gets to face his father and has the chance to punish him for his actions during the protagonist’s childhood.

Tobias shoves Marcus to the ground and presses the heel of his shoe to his father’s throat. Marcus smacks at Tobias’s leg, blood streaming past his lips, but even if he was at his strongest, he still wouldn’t be as strong as his son. Tobias undoes his belt buckle and slides it from its loops. He lifts his foot from Marcus’s throat and draws the belt back. ‘This is for your own good,’ he says (*Insurgent* 240).

The roles of the two men are reversed, and instead of Marcus beating up his son, it is now Tobias who punishes his father. He has turned into an authority who needs to prove his masculinity (see Cranny Francis et al. 145).

Additionally, Four gets to show that he is a physically and mentally strong fighter who is superior to the man who tortured him for so many years. The action of beating up Marcus might appear to be rather emotional and uncontrolled, but Tobias is calm and acts in a calculated way that makes it seem like he has planned his revenge for a long time. He has finally managed to accept his past and is able to move on, which is clearly positive for his personal development. The fact that he has to use violence, however, emphasizes Tobias' masculinity and makes him seem rather brutal.

Marcus has to experience the strength and power of his son the hard way, but the young man's friends have know what he is capable of since they first met him. They are certain that he would be "one hell of a leader" (*Allegiant* 354) and when all of the original Dauntless leaders turn out to be traitors, Four is one of the three people elected to guide the remaining faction. The people have faith in him and acknowledge his leadership qualities. While in the beginning of the trilogy the protagonist is still insecure, in *Insurgent* he can finally get past his self-doubts, at least temporarily, and accept the position as a leader.

Tobias' attitude changes again when he leaves Chicago with Tris and some other characters and they learn about the Bureau of Genetic Welfare. The young man learns that, even though he is Divergent, he is still genetically damaged and not genetically pure like the love of his life. This piece of information makes his world fall apart and he is starting to think that he is an incomplete and worthless human being. Therefore, he reflects back on his entire existence:

I guess I always knew that there was something wrong with me, but I thought it was because of my father, or my mother, and the pain they bequeathed to me like a family heirloom, handed down from generation to generation. And this means that the one good thing my father had- his Divergence- didn't reach me (*Allegiant* 176).

Even though Tris tries to convince Tobias that words like genetically damaged or pure should not matter, he continuously struggles to believe her.

Nonetheless, the young man gains strength again when he sees what injustice is done by the Bureau of Genetic Welfare and wants to make it stop. So does Tris, but unfortunately she sacrifices herself and dies when trying to hinder David, the leader of the Bureau, from doing terrible things to the people inside the experiment in Chicago. When Tobias learns that the most important

person in his life is dead, his whole world falls apart again. He cannot stand the pain of losing the young woman and decides to use memory serum to forget about his life with her. Just in time, Christina stops him and calls him a coward for even considering going this far. She reminds him that he cannot simply forget about Tris and that he should value the memories he has of her instead. In the end, Tobias realizes that Christina is right and decides to be brave, just like the girl he loved:

There are so many ways to be brave in this world. Sometime bravery involves laying down your life for something bigger than yourself, or for someone else. Sometimes it involves giving up everything you have ever known, or everyone you have ever loved, for the sake of something greater. But sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes it is nothing more than gritting your teeth through pain, and the work of every day, the slow walk toward a better life. That is the sort of bravery I must have now (*Allegiant* 509).

Similar to the female protagonist of the dystopian series, Tobias ends up proving that weakness and strength are closely related and that, even though most of his qualities underline his masculinity, he is still not a stereotypical male character.

3.3.2.2. Caleb Prior

Caleb Prior is Tris' older brother and, initially, he seems to be the perfect Abnegation member. While his sister struggles to find out who she really is before the aptitude test and the choosing ceremony, the teenage boy appears to have "inherited [his] mother's talent for selflessness" (*Divergent* 3). For people around him, "his natural goodness" (*Divergent* 30-31) stands out, since Caleb never hesitates to help others, for example by offering his seat on the bus.

Everything changes, however, on the day of the choosing ceremony when the young man's real personality becomes apparent. Instead of staying in Abnegation with his parents, he decides to join Erudite, which comes as a shock for his family and peers. Nobody was able to see his true self before, even though his sister Tris claims to have noticed little hints in retrospect, like "the stack of books on Caleb's desk" (*Divergent* 46). His thirst for knowledge is certainly nothing that just appeared overnight and he immediately feels comfortable among other Erudite members.

After Jeanine Matthews' attack on Abnegation, Caleb temporarily joins Tris and Four with their group of survivors and Erudite opponents, which makes him seem like an adolescent who respects and supports his family members and is loyal to them. Even his protective instincts as the big brother seem to be triggered when his sister is ready to sacrifice her life for the first time. Caleb clearly states: "I can't stay here while you go up there and risk your life" (*Divergent* 469). Additionally, he clearly disapproves of Tris' relationship with Tobias, asking him: "And you don't think you're too old to be with my little sister?" (*Insurgent* 17). Even though these moments show that Caleb cares about his family, they also let him seem rather patronizing. His role as a man and older brother make him superior and more powerful in his opinion, so he tries to control his younger sister who, as a girl, should have less to say and instead take advice from him.

Even though Caleb certainly cares about his family members, he ends up betraying Tris by working for Jeanine Matthews. He is not as secure about his identity as it appears at first, and obviously, he is just trying to fit in somewhere, since membership is highly important for adolescents, and the leader of Erudite knows how to use this fact to her advantage. She wants information about Tris from the boy, and, in return, offers him membership and knowledge. When Tris asks one of Caleb's fellow initiates what he thinks about her brother he immediately reveals: "Brilliant, but he was... what's the colloquial term for it? A suck up. [...] There was a division between the initiates. Those who embraced everything Jeanine said and those who didn't. [...] Caleb was a member of the former [group]" (*Insurgent* 455). The teenager depends on the guidance of the Erudite leader and accepts her as a role-model despite her being a woman. This shows that he does not generally feel superior to women, but only feels the need to patronize his sister occasionally. Even when Tris finds out about his betrayal and he wants to defend himself the girl notices: "His eyes plead with me to understand, but I recognize his tone- it's the one he employed when we were younger, to scold me. It is condescending" (*Insurgent* 367).

After Jeanine's death, Caleb leaves Chicago with Tris, Tobias and the others, only to find out that he is genetically damaged, as the Bureau of Genetic Welfare explains to him. The young man is shocked and cannot really

grasp what is happening to his world, so he starts questioning his entire existence: “Because my ancestors were *altered* to be smart, I, their descendant, can’t be fully compassionate. I, and every other genetically damaged person, am limited by my damaged genes” (*Allegiant* 127). Clearly Caleb lacks empathy, but it is questionable whether his genes have anything to do with this fact. Studies have shown that, generally, girls are able to show more empathy during their adolescence than boys, but those are only tendencies and not absolutes (see Chun, Solmeyer and McHale 1664-1665). Thus, his gender might be influencing his capability to be compassionate just as much as his supposed genetic defect. Moreover, Chun, Solmeyer and McHale point out that one of the most important aspects that help a child or a teenager to develop empathy is family (see 1650), and in Caleb’s case there was never a lack of family support. The boy grew up with parents whose lives were guided by the values of Abnegation, so they definitely taught him how to be selfless and compassionate. As a result, one might never know the true reason for the young man’s character traits and his behavior.

In the end of the trilogy, it seems, for a short time, as if Caleb has changed for the better, since he is willing to give his life in order to help his sister with a mission against the Bureau of Genetic Welfare. One gets the impression that he is finally showing compassion and love for his sister, but when she asks him to honestly tell her why he wants to sacrifice his life he answers: “I guess I feel like it’s the only way I can escape the guilt for all the things I’ve done [...]. I’ve never wanted anything more than I want to be rid of it” (*Allegiant* 446-447). It turns out that he only wants forgiveness for his betrayal and is not acting out of love for his sister, the only member of his family that is still alive. Tris, however, still honestly cares about her brother and sacrifices herself in order to save him, which certainly does not leave Caleb unaffected. He is devastated by her death, so after all, he is definitely capable of having emotions, including empathy and compassion.

3.3.2.3. Marcus Eaton

Tobias Eaton’s father is a rather complex character, especially since he seems to have two different types of personality that he makes use of

whenever one or the other seems appropriate. As the only Abnegation council member to survive the attack by Erudite and Dauntless Marcus is a strong and influential leader with numerous allies in other factions. At home, however, he is a terrifying patriarch who uses violence as an educational method. Thus, Marcus is “the patient, calm leader of Abnegation who would never hurt anyone” on the one hand, but “the man who slid his belt out loop by loop and wrapped it around his knuckles” (*Allegiant* 199) to abuse his son and wife on the other hand.

As head of his own family, his father suppresses Tobias, as well as Evelyn and commits terrible crimes by slapping them and beating them up on a regular basis. Using violence helps Marcus to position himself as a masculine character, since his “strength, power, and rationality” (Anderson and Umberson 374) are highlighted. When talking to his son, he always tries to justify his unethical methods and explains that he is simply trying to discipline the boy so he can become a strong man himself one day. It is unclear whether this is really the reason for Marcus’ actions, but when the truth comes out in public, Tobias watches and observes his father closely, which leads him to the following conclusion:

Part of me always wondered what my father would do if directly confronted with the truth. I thought he might shift form the self-effacing Abnegation leader to the nightmare I knew at home, that he might lash out and reveal himself for who he is. It would be a satisfying reaction for me to see, but it is not his real reaction. He just stands there looking confused, and for a moment I wonder if he *is* confused, if in his sick heart he believes his own lies about disciplining me” (*Allegiant* 313).

There is definitely a possibility that the Abnegation leader only wants the best for his child, and at one point he even explains: “Sometimes pain is for the greater good” (*Divergent* 465), but nonetheless his behavior is definitely unacceptable.

When Marcus first meets Tris, Tobias’ love interest, he is extremely condescending towards her as well. He shows off his masculinity by constantly criticizing and patronizing her. Even in situations where she saves other people’s lives, like when she stops the attack on Abnegation, he quickly puts her down, saying: “You may have succeeded in shutting down the attack simulation, girl, but it was luck alone, not skill. I would die of shock if you managed to do anything useful again for a long time” (*Insurgent* 45). In some

instances, Marcus even demonstrates his power over Tris physically, which she describes in the following way: “Marcus presses his index finger to my sternum, in the gap between my collarbones, and leans over me” (*Insurgent* 485).

For the public, however, Marcus takes on a very different role. He still maintains his place as a leader and an authority, but he turns into a kind man that wants to help others. Tris’ explanation for this change in character is that the Abnegation man “is a good liar- or at least someone who is skilled at hiding secrets” (*Insurgent* 45). For a long time, nobody knew about the fact that he was abusing his family, just like nobody had any idea that he is divergent. Additionally, Marcus is a skilled public speaker, which is why he is the one who always talks at the choosing ceremony, but also takes care of other issues that concern the city. This talent guarantees him many followers and friends, even though not all of them decide to stay with him after they find out about his use of domestic violence.

In the end, it is Tobias who knows his father best and who describes him by pointing out:

My father always has a way of persuading people without charm that has always confused me. He states his opinions as if they’re facts, and somehow his complete lack of doubt makes you believe him. That quality frightens me now, because I know what he told me: that I was broken, that I was worthless, that I was nothing. How many of those things did he make me believe?” (*Allegiant* 315).

Thus, Marcus is definitely an overall patriarch who always needs to be an authoritative figure that people either look up to or fear. While he might take on different roles in domestic and public spaces, his role as a leader and the masculinity that comes with it always remain the same.

3.3.2.4. Eric Coulter

The Dauntless leader Eric Coulter is probably another one of the most stereotypical masculine characters in the *Divergent* series. He is “powerful, emotionless and authoritarian” (Cranny-Francis et al. 145) and embraces absolutely every aspect of his strong masculinity. These qualities, as well as “Eric’s false smiles, his artificial words” and his “twisted ideals” (*Divergent* 309) are what allowed him to become the youngest Dauntless leader.

The young man always likes to be in control and does not want his authority to be challenged. He tries to make sure that everybody around him is aware of his superior position, especially Four, since the two men are rivals. Eric continuously points out: "I have the authority here, remember? [...] Here, and everywhere else" (*Divergent* 161). Even at his own execution the Dauntless man orders people around and feels the need to be in control. He requests that Tris sums up the accusations against him and that Four finally kills him "so he has to live with the guilt" (*Insurgent* 274).

Nonetheless, even though Eric often abuses his power and his status, one needs to consider why he acts the way he does. Due to his collaboration with Jeanine Matthews, it is easy to assume that he is simply "an Erudite disguised as a Dauntless, a genius as well as a sadist, a hunter of the Divergent" (*Divergent* 362), but actually there might be a reason behind the way he behaves. Eric strongly values the ideals of his faction, which can be seen best when looking at his role as a trainer for the initiates. He is a ruthless and demanding instructor, who often comes across as a sadist. Still, he is extremely ambitious and believes that he is doing the right thing by making the initiates strong enough to become respectable and worthy Dauntless members. For Eric, the Divergent are simply not good enough to be part of his faction, since they do not fit in, which is also, why he works with Jeanine. Hence, these two authoritarian characters are actually very similar to each other. Just like the Erudite woman, Eric does not hesitate when he has to kill people in order to reach a certain goal, which, again, shows how brutal and sadistic the Dauntless man is.

Overall, Eric Coulter represents one of "two different kinds of Dauntless", namely "the ruthless kind" rather than the "honorable kind" (*Divergent* 95). His arrogance and superiority seem to drive him, as well as his supposed fearlessness. Only just before the man's death is it revealed that even he has weaknesses and fears that he usually tries to cover up by mocking others and trying to keep in control, as mentioned before. Thus, Tris describes Eric's behavior at his execution as follows: "He seems arrogant, but I notice that his fingers tremble when he moves them. Even Eric must be afraid of death" (*Insurgent* 271).

3.3.2.5. Pater Hayes

One of the most complex male characters in this dystopian series is Peter Hayes, a born Candor who, at the age of sixteen, transfers to Dauntless. While the young man is portrayed as purely evil in *Divergent*, his personality changes and develops throughout *Insurgent* and *Allegiant*, showing that there is much more to Peter than it seems at first.

During the Dauntless initiation period, Peter Hayes is Tris' main antagonist, who behaves in a macho way, showing stereotypical masculine behavior. He could be seen as the representation of "hegemonic masculinity", which "refers to the widespread domination of men in the social, economic and cultural spheres" (Cranny-Francis et al. 16). This becomes especially obvious whenever he interacts with the female protagonist Tris, like when they have to fight each other during the first stage of initiation. Peter clearly feels superior and mocks the girl, saying: "You okay there Stiff? [...] You look like you're about to cry. I might go easy on you if you cry" (*Divergent* 109).

Additionally, Christina, Peter's fellow Candor transfer, contributes strongly to creating a completely negative image of the young man. She knows him since her childhood and is convinced:

Peter is pure evil. When we were kids, he would pick fights with people from other factions and then, when an adult came to break it up, he'd cry and make up some story about how the other kid started it. And of course, they believed him, because we were Candor and we couldn't lie. Ha ha (*Divergent* 93).

Certainly, this viciousness characterizes Peter extremely well in *Divergent*, who goes to extremes because of hatred and jealousy, which shows during the rankings of Dauntless initiation. Whenever he is placed second, he tries to destroy the person who is ranked higher than him. In one case, this is Edward, who decides to become factionless after being stabbed in the eye, and in another case it is Tris, who almost gets killed by Peter and a group of other guys.

Nevertheless, his behavior slowly changes as the trilogy proceeds. In *Insurgent*, Peter is the one who has to guard Tris, while she is being locked up by Jeanine Matthews in Erudite headquarters for some experiments. He appears extremely rude most of the time, but there are some moments when a rather different side of him shines through. Tris, for example, always wants to

know what time it is while she is locked up, and one day, Peter actually tells her, which can be seen as “a small act of betrayal- and therefore an ordinary act of bravery” (*Insurgent* 378). It is the first time he behaves like a true Dauntless. Furthermore, he actually helps Tris to escape from the Erudite headquarters, even though he points out that he is only doing this because he “can’t be in anyone’s debt”, since in his world “people only do things [...] for one of two reasons. The first is if they want something in return. And the second is if they feel like they owe [somebody] something” (*Insurgent* 393-394).

Finally, at the end of Roth’s narration, the reader gets to know yet another side of Peter. The young man realizes what kind of person he is and states: “I’m sick of doing bad things and liking it and then wondering what’s wrong with me. I want it to be over. I want to start again” (*Allegiant* 451). His identity is fractured and starts falling apart (see Cranny-Francis et al. 33), so he decides to make use of the memory serum. It lets him forget everything, his personality, his behavior, as well as his entire past, and the reader can “watch Peter disappear” (*Allegiant* 479).

3.3.2.6. Amar and George

Amar and George are two significant characters in Roth’s dystopian trilogy, since they are the only two men who are in a homosexual relationship. Thus, they are essential in representing diversity in the narration, even though they only first appear in the last of the three books. Both of these characters are already mentioned earlier, though, but due to their Divergence, they had to fake their own deaths and then hide outside of Chicago, in the Bureau of Genetic Welfare. However, the two men both have strong ties with people inside the experiment. While Amar is the one who gave Tobias Eaton the nickname Four after training and mentoring him during Dauntless initiation, George is the brother of Tori Wu.

In the Bureau, these two characters have to hide their romantic relationship, as well as their homosexuality in general. Their true identities are only revealed to the reader when Amar confesses to Tris that he once had feelings for Tobias, pointing out: “I wouldn’t say we were good friends. Not as

good as I wanted to be” (*Allegiant* 356). Shortly afterwards, he lets her know about him and George, which seems only logical to Tris, since “they’re both Divergent who had to fake their own deaths to survive. Both outsiders in an unfamiliar world” (*Allegiant* 356).

By representing queerness in her novels and not only focusing on heteronormativity, Roth teaches the reader about the importance of inclusion. She challenged homophobia and manages to “undermine normalized assumptions around gender and sexuality” (Wickens 160). Nonetheless, Amar and George have to keep their relationship a secret, since the Bureau of Genetic Welfare would not accept their behavior, but the government agency is presented in a rather negative way throughout *Allegiant*, so their homophobic attitude is clearly villainized (see Wickens 160).

As indicated previously, young adult literature has the power to influence the lives of adolescents who are in the process of finding themselves, which makes the representation of queer characters in books so important. Teenagers need to see that sexuality and gender are not simply based on a binary structure, and that it is possible to steer away from what is perceived as heteronormativity. Therefore, narrations like the *Divergent* series can help young people find their identities and support them in accepting and embracing their differences.

4. The *Awaken* Trilogy by Katie Kacvinsky

The second dystopian series that will be analyzed is the *Awaken* trilogy by Katie Kacvinsky. It is less famous than the *Divergent* series, but still offers some highly interesting perspectives and ideas that any young adult reader can profit from. The female author contrasts stereotypical gender roles with reinvented ones and at the same time discusses a future where everything is dominated by computers and the internet, creating a world that seems realistic and closely related to the real world.

4.1. The World of *Awaken*

Awaken takes place in the near future where every aspect of life is digitalized. There is hardly any face-to-face interaction anymore, because everything can be done online. People do not need to leave their houses for shopping, dates, physical activities or even school. Instead, they are stuck behind screens and, for the most part, they are happy with their lives, because being locked up in a house means being safe.

The main reason for this fear of the outside world is the increase of violence that took place in numerous schools all over the United States. Shootings, rapes and deaths first led to the increase of security measures and made people decide to only send their children to private schools. However, things kept getting worse, so some families decided to stay locked up in their houses and make their sons and daughters attend digital classes. Then, the unthinkable happened: M28.

One March 28, eleven years ago, the largest attack to ever hit America actually hit the most vulnerable. The children. Seventeen elementary schools were bombed on that single day, all within the same hour, on all sides of the country. Ten thousand children died. In one single hour. Three thousand more were injured. Five hundred of those died in hospitals that didn't have enough workers to aid all the victims. The attack was led by a radical group in America who called themselves the Spades. The Spades were famous for the violent riots they led against reproduction. They fought for sterilization to reduce the overpopulation of the planet. They rose to tenacious measures to get it (*Awaken* 177).

Since that day, Digital School, often referred to as DS, is no longer optional, but obligatory. All children and adolescents receive their education online and are taught to live their entire lives behind screens.

Certainly, there are numerous positive aspects about a school that takes place online and provides people with a virtual protective shield, such as the ones that Kevin Freeman, the creator of DS, lists during one of his nationwide speeches:

Digital school is a success. [...] Teenage violence is at an all-time low. [...] One hundred percent of the children and young adults in this country receive a free education with the free resources necessary to make their lives and this world a better place. Every child and young adult in this country has access to a safe, challenging, secure educational program (*Awaken* 68-69).

Safety is the number one concern, but the accessibility of education also plays an important role. Additionally, in the virtual world all people are equal. Differences in class, race, wealth and other factors that might influence a person's appearance and demeanor in real life cannot be seen online. Social distinctions seemingly do not exist anymore, and everybody has the same rights, as well as the same chances in life.

Still there are numerous people who rebel against this system. They participate in face-to-face tutoring classes, meet in the few coffee shops or restaurants that are left, and occasionally enjoy live music in secret night clubs that only very few know about. Some digital school opponents have even created entire cities, for example Eden, that disapprove of lives behind screens and are based on face-to-face interactions instead. They cannot be found on maps, but they are the only places "where trees grow. Where people walk outside, where fear doesn't rule people's lives" (*Awaken* 240). Those who chose to live there have realized that, even though there might be some advantages to living digital lives, numerous problems arise when all aspects of life are based on computer programs and modern technology. These will be discussed on the following pages.

4.2. Problematic Issues Concerning Digital Life

In the *Awaken* series Kacvinsky depicts technology in general in a rather negative way and describes numerous problems that arise when everything in life is digitalized. Just like in any dystopian novel, society is malfunctioning for numerous different reasons. For many young adults in this trilogy the worst aspect of DS is the fact that face-to-face interactions do not take place anymore and that they do not get to use their senses. They do not get to experience real life, as opposed to virtual life, which hinders their personal growth and development. Nonetheless, other significant problems need to be taken into account as well. Due to the constant influence of technology on all aspects in life, the government and other important leaders have the power to implement censorship and to manipulate the entire population. This leads to people's loss of freedom. DS does not tolerate

resistance, which is why rebels are put in detention centers that force people to adapt to the system and to live in a virtual world.

4.2.1. Developmental Restrictions

Adolescence is the time when young adults try to find out who they really are and explore their own identities as well as sexuality. However, the excessive use of the Internet hinders teenagers in their development and does not allow them to grow personally. They have no chance of experiencing human emotions or using their senses, since virtual life is highly restricting in various ways.

Interpersonal relationships strongly contribute to the personal development of adolescents, but research has shown that spending too much time online leads to “increases in loneliness” and “declines in social support” (Subrahmanyam et al., *New Forms* 94). Even though young people might have hundreds or thousands of friends online, they cannot develop significant relationships with other people. The Internet limits them, which Maddie Freeman, the protagonist in the *Awaken* trilogy, notices as well: “I realized all of my digital friendships hovered on the surface. There was never any depth. We didn’t discuss ourselves because we didn’t take the time to know ourselves” (*Awaken* 143). Sitting behind computer screens, young adults may only form weak tie relationships “with strangers, acquaintances, or nonintimate kin” (Subrahmanyam et al., *New Forms* 94) instead of strong tie relationships, which include real friendships, bonds with family members, or romantic relationships. Without these strong tie relationships, adolescents might struggle significantly in finding their own identities.

To some extent, the Internet provides a safe space for young people that allows them to experiment with who they really are and who they want to be (see Subrahmanyam, Greenfield, and Tynes 663). They can try out dating and learn more about social interactions, because in a virtual world this might appear to be easier and less risky, but ultimately, they miss out on the real world and on real experiences. Initially, in Kacvinsky’s dystopian narration, Maddie spends most of her time interacting only with her online contacts, but when she first meets Justin’s friends, she immediately notices a significant

difference: “Not a single one of them was on their phone or staring into a flipscreen. They were listening. Their eyes were absorbing everything. I was starting to understand what Justin meant about being social. The difference between his world and mine was intimacy” (*Awaken* 46). The teenage girl is used to the fact that everybody she knows usually depends on modern technology and does not go anywhere without being connected. Her new social circle, however, is different. They want to get to know her and interact with her, because, as mentioned previously, interpersonal communication is of great importance for young adults and their development.

Quickly, Maddie starts to learn that face-to-face interactions cannot be compared to online interactions, since humans differ strongly from computers and machines. A real person has emotions and is able to feel “guilt regret, remorse, sympathy, because [they] can think about [their] actions” (*Awaken* 140). While technology is highly advanced, computers still do not have feelings. Additionally, they do not possess any senses, which is another aspect that sets them apart from humans: “Smelling, seeing, hearing, touching, tasting” (*Awaken* 234). The female protagonist finds out that in the real world, she can take in every element around her, while in the virtual world, she only gets to stare at a screen. There are no emotions or senses involved because everything consists solely of pixels. While Maddie notices these differences, many people do not, which is highly dangerous. For these people it is difficult to distinguish between reality and simulations, because these two worlds blur together (see Subrahmanyam et al., *The Impact* 22). As a result, their entire lives take place online and they do not even realize anymore that they might be missing out on something.

4.2.2. Censorship and the Loss of Personal Freedom

Another problematic aspect that goes hand in hand with virtual life is censorship, which inevitably leads to the loss of personal freedom. In a society like the one in the *Awaken* series, the government and other higher instances have control over all types of data and information. They may choose to share them or withhold them for a variety of reasons. The female protagonist Maddie, for instance, finds out that her father, the inventor of DS and thus a

powerful man, controls her digital life. She discovers: “Everything I do is censored. Every person I talk to online is tapped, all my websites are monitored. Even my cell phone lines are screened” (*Awaken* 33).

The reasons for censorship are myriad, but according to the famous children’s books author Judy Blume, it always “grows out of fear” (qtd. in Swiderek 592). Hence, it might be practiced by parents or teachers who are concerned that their children might come across inappropriate content on the Internet (see Murdoch and Roberts 8). Very often, however, censorship is closely linked to political issues. Monitoring an entire society is the goal for every dictator (see Murdoch and Roberts 7), but democracies and other forms of government usually do not refrain from using censorship either. Whenever something or someone “proposes an idea that conflicts with a power structure that wants to maintain its status quo” (Swiderek 593), those in power take measures to make sure that they can stop rebellions and uprisings before it is too late. This becomes obvious in Kacvinsky’s dystopian series when Maddie and her friends are at a virtual dance club and the female protagonist decides to speak her mind freely. In the beginning the owners only reprimand her for using expressions like “That wasn’t cool, douche bag” (*Middle Ground* 19), but when the young woman addresses serious topics, saying “Live outside your computers. Our minds are more than programs. Our bodies are more than extension cords. We might as well have been born with wires for fingers. That’s how much technology controls us” (*Middle Ground* 26), the entire club gets shut down. Maddie is a threat to the system and is thus not allowed to spread her rebellious ideas.

Nonetheless, it is not only censorship in the society of the *Awaken* trilogy that leads to the loss of freedom, but also the fact that every detail about a person’s life is accessible through technology. When Maddie gets locked up in a detention center, the leaders of this institution are able to find out everything about the girl’s life within seconds:

Images popped up around me. My entire life was depicted in words, graphs, and pictures. There were profile pictures and yearly school photos. There were images of my family and some of my online friends. There was even a shot of my parents’ wedding picture. My health records were all there, my family tree sprouting up from the ground and billowing out like branches and leaves. There were graphs and charts showing how I stacked up against my peers academically and socially. There were lists of all my grades, my social groups, and

my interest groups. All my contacts were noted. It showed where I shopped online (*Middle Ground* 92).

Being able to access all of these details about somebody's life gives higher instances a lot of power. Not only does it let them observe people easily, but it also gives them the chance to control individuals, which, of course, is dangerous for any society.

4.2.3. Manipulation

Closely related to censorship and the loss of personal freedom is the notion of manipulation, which is also an issue in the *Awaken* series. In dystopian societies like the one Kacvinsky has created, brainwashing may easily be done, since "when it comes to technology, humans are as easy to train as rats in a cage" (*Middle Ground* 63). People are strongly dependent on computers and machines, so they will believe everything they see through technology, even if it is non-existent. When digital school is promoted on TV, for example, it always looks as if there are thousands of supporters listening to speeches of Kevin Freeman, but in reality the man is standing on a podium all by himself. The spectators are later on added digitally "to make society think everyone loves DS", because people are "a lot less likely to rebel against something" (*Awaken* 279) when they think they are by themselves.

In some cases, manipulation is even taken to the next level with the help of devices called MindReaders. As the name already suggests, they allow individuals to read other people's minds, but they can also be used to install memories into somebody's brains. The idea behind this apparatus is a very positive one, because mental illnesses, such as Alzheimer's disease and amnesia can be healed, but some people abuse the MindReaders. Even though it is highly unethical, people can be brainwashed easily. Especially in detention centers, which will be introduced in the following chapter, they are used to tame rebellious adolescents and to force them into submission.

4.2.4. Detention Centers

In any dystopian society, people who do not conform to the system and rebel against it have to be locked away or even eliminated. For this purpose the *Awaken* trilogy features detention centers. They are “rehabilitation clinics for rebellious teenagers” and “hold people until they’re deemed sage to go back into society” (*Awaken* 195).

Detention centers exist all over the country and are generally enclosed by electric fences. The floors are always gender separated and in every hallway there is an electronic device called the Eye that watches everything. Students are not allowed to talk to each other and expected to stay in their rooms unless they want to get warm food or are escorted to the showers. They have isolated rooms without any windows, because all of the walls, including the floor and the ceiling, are covered in digital screens. Nothing is personalized and the rebellious adolescents do not get to keep any possessions. When Maddie gets locked up in a detention center she immediately realizes: “The DC could take anything from me. Even my thoughts. They didn’t want us to reflect in here. They didn’t want us to remember. They didn’t want us to think” (*Middle Ground* 88).

All of these measures and more are taken to lead rebellious individuals who prefer face-to-face interaction back to their digital lives. There are mandatory counseling sessions that all inmates have to attend and during these sessions they are forced to take tablets. These enable the detention centers to download terrible memories into people’s brains, which, combined with personal memories, lead to feelings of “terror, pain, heartbreak and despair” (*Middle Ground* 100) in the students. In the very few cases where this radical treatment shows no success, the leaders of the detention centers try out different methods, which usually result in the death of the respective students.

Corrective facilities like the detention centers in the *Awaken* series show that people and their behavior are extremely restricted. Certain norms and attitudes are expected in order to preserve the system of the dystopian society. As a result, young adults cannot be themselves and develop their own identities.

4.3. The Dichotomy of Society

In the *Awaken* series there are two big groups that fight against each other, the digital school supporters and the digital school opponents. This dichotomy of society is similar to the binary structure of gender: while the supporters of digital school represent masculinity, the opponents depict femininity. Nonetheless, it needs to be kept in mind that just like some people do not completely identify as either masculine or feminine, there are individuals in the dystopian narration that do not belong to either of the two main groups. They may take on a neutral position and neither fight nor encourage digital school and the virtual world they live in. All of the significant characters in Kacvinsky's story, however, belong to one of the two antagonistic groups that will be analyzed on the following pages.

4.3.1. Digital School Supporters

Lead by Richard Vaughn, the supporters of digital school can generally be seen as a rather radical group. They do not make compromises easily, since they have very strong beliefs and opinions about technology and digital school, such as the following: "You can't fight technology. You have to embrace it. Technology will always win. Digital school is the best thing that's ever happened to this country. It's like electricity and clean water. It makes the world a safer place" (*Still Point* ch. 26). Not only do digital school supporters promote their ideas, but they also try to force them upon others, because they feel superior and privileged (see Halberstam 2), which are only some of the masculine qualities that this group of people possesses.

In order to convince others of the perks and advantages of digital school, DS supporters, such as Paul and Damon Thompson, are prepared to take any measures they have to. They are highly achievement oriented, which also shows the masculinity of this group (see Kortenhaus and Demarest 220). However, in order to make others join their side, or at least follow their orders, they stop at nothing and do not care whether their methods are ethical or not. Therefore, young people who do not conform are sent to detention centers where scientists experiment on them with drugs and various forms of

psychological torture. Numerous other situations occur throughout the entire dystopian series where digital school supporters treat rebels in terrible ways, because DS opponents obviously threaten the strong and predominant masculinity of Richard Vaughn and his followers.

4.3.2. Digital School Opponents

While there are many people who do not agree with the ideas of digital school, only few are brave enough to act. As previously mentioned, it is not easy to publicly rebel against the system, since one might be sent to a detention center. Therefore, digital school opponents have to work clandestinely. They are extremely difficult to track down, even for people who want to join their side, explaining: “You can’t find us. That’s the point. We’re impossible to trace. [...] We don’t exist. [...] We don’t keep digital records” (*Awaken* 149). Since every aspect of people’s lives takes place online, the DS rebels can stay safe by not being online. They do, however, use technology in certain instances, especially when they decide to contact people who might want to work for them and who would be useful for them.

When the digital school opponents want to recruit an adolescent they usually perform an interception, which means that, when somebody is about to get sent to a detention center for some kind of rebellious action, this group of people interferes. Then, three possible scenarios might occur, as Justin Solvi, one of the digital rebels, explains: “One, people can decide they don’t want to be rescued and turn themselves back in, although that’s never actually happened. Two, people agree to join our side, which happens most of the time. [Three,] we kill their digital lives and help them start real ones. Help them relocate and get back on their feet” (*Awaken* 187). In contrast to digital school supporters, the opponents let people choose for themselves whether they agree or disagree with their ideas and beliefs. They are more rational and willing to compromise, which shows that they possess strong interpersonal and communication skills that typically characterize femininity (see Appelbaum, Audet and Miller 48).

These interpersonal skills are especially important for the way leadership is organized among the DS rebels. Instead of having just one sole

leader, there are multiple individuals that are in charge of various regions of the United States. Justin Solvi is one of them, just like Megan, Cedar and Shawn. Thus, men, as well as women are involved in the politics of the digital school opponents, because, evidently, gender equality is valued. However, having more than one leader can also create difficulties, such as in Kacvinsky's *Still Point*, the last part of the dystopian trilogy, where Shawn wants to be the main leader at a protest and is longing to have more power and control than his colleagues. The situation quickly escalates and makes the rebels "look like a bunch of fascist extremists" (*Still Point* ch. 24).

As previously mentioned, digital school opponents are often locked away and punished for their behavior, but according to social scientists, young adults who rebel against a society and its methods are proof for the failure of those in charge. Adolescents should always "be encouraged to question their elders' values to ensure a better future" (Curnutt 10) and this is exactly what the DS rebels are doing. Their goal is to make a change and to actively improve society instead of just sitting back and watching powerful adults do as they please.

4.4. Significant Characters

In Katie Kacvinsky's dystopian series there are numerous significant characters that contribute to how adolescent readers might conceive gender roles. The most striking aspect concerning the protagonists and supporting characters is the low number of females and the high number of males in the novels. According to Wharton, this might indicate that the novels are sexist (see 238), but since Kacvinsky's characters challenge gender stereotypes in many ways, this is not necessarily the case. The following chapters will provide more insights on how the female author of this trilogy deals with femininity and masculinity in relation to male and female characters. A critical analysis and evaluation of the characters will then follow in comparison with Veronica Roth's dystopian trilogy in the last chapter of this thesis.

4.4.1. Female Characters

Just like the author of the *Awaken* series, the protagonist and heroine of the narration is female. As previously mentioned, however, one only encounters rather few other significant women and girls in Kacvinsky's dystopian world, while male characters are clearly dominant in the trilogy. Additionally, it is noticeable that none of the females are villains, which might be explained by the fact that stereotypically, women are seen as passive, pure and innocent, rather than aggressive and greedy for power. Moreover, all of the female characters regard digital school and technology as something negative, which might be related to the fact that femininity, as mentioned previously, is often linked to technophobia (see Brosnan 36). These aspects may need to be seen critically, but there is still a lot of diversity among the female characters, which will be discussed in more detail below.

4.4.1.1. Maddie Freeman

The female protagonist of the *Awaken* series, Maddie Freeman, is a teenage girl who does not enjoy living in a virtual world, despite her father being the inventor of digital school. She would rather be free and she dreams about experiencing real life:

I looked down at the dark outline of a bird tattooed on the inside of my wrist, where the skin is delicate and the veins are thick. I ran my finger along its outstretched wings and smiled. Every time I looked at my tattoo I was reminded of the person I wanted to be. Someone that's free to move. Someone that's too spirited to be caged in (*Awaken* 6).

However, her father keeps Maddie locked up and restricts the young girl because of a rebellious act in her past where she hacked into his computer and stole important files. The girl is thus suppressed by Kevin Freeman and does not get to make any decisions for herself while living at home.

The only time Maddie is allowed to leave the house is for soccer practice, which she is very passionate about, especially because it allows her to interact with other adolescents. According to Halberstam, physical activity, including any type of sport, is closely linked to masculinity (see 267). Thus, one can already notice that Maddie does not conform to preexisting gender

roles. Her interests and passions, one of which is soccer, of all sports, would more likely be expected from adolescent boys rather than girls, which clearly shows Maddie's individuality.

In the beginning of *Awaken*, even the appearance of the female protagonist suggests that she is not a stereotypical teenage girl. She dresses in an androgynous way that makes her seem like a tomboy and whenever she is asked to wear dresses, her immediate response is: "I'd rather be in jeans" (*Awaken* 62), or "'Dresses show too much skin for my comfort and heels are the most painful idea of footwear ever invented" (*Awaken* 61). Generally, tomboyism is tolerated by society, as long as it does not "interfere with the onset of adolescent femininity" (Halberstam 268), which is, however, the case when Maddie's parents want to take her to the National Educational Benefit. For this formal event, the girl is supposed to wear a dress and her mother tries to convince her by saying: "Maddie, you're a woman [...]. It's okay to let people see that once in a while" (*Awaken* 62). After this day, Maddie embraces her feminine appearance more often and is not completely opposed to wearing short dresses and tight clothing anymore, mainly because of the young man she meets.

As the title of the novel *Awaken* suggests, the female protagonist experiences her sexual awakening during the narration. It is caused by Justin Solvi who Maddie quickly falls in love with. She is drawn to him and the way the teenage girl looks at him can be compared to the male gaze, since it is a pleasure for her to see Justin as an erotic object (see Mulvey 815), which can be seen in this example from the text: "Every time I saw his chest move, his arm lift the soda to his mouth, or his throat muscles flex when he swallowed, my eyes were drawn to him [...] His lips looked soft and red in the light" (*Awaken* 230). Maddie's passion for Justin even turns into an obsession that leaves her confused and irritated whenever he has to leave for a while to take care of his work. When the young man is not around her, the teenage girl notices: "My life lacked an energy that only one person could fill" (*Awaken* 271). It is rather stereotypical for females to be dependent on males (see Spence and Helmreich 160), but with the help of Elaine, Justin's mother, Maddie learns that she does not need a man to be "a confident woman" (*Awaken* 273), and that she has enough power and strength to be

independent. The teenage girl does not need Justin to feel whole and instead realizes that she can rely on herself. In the end of the dystopian series she is even able to let the male protagonist go. Nonetheless, Maddie quickly ends up with Jax instead and falls deeply in love with him just like with Justin in the beginning.

While both men, Justin as well as Jax, always play an important role in Maddie's life, she remains an independent female who does not need the leadership and guidance of a male character. She realizes that being female does not necessarily mean being weak and helpless, but learns that feminine beauty and sexuality "can be a source of power over men" (Erchull and Liss 40). Therefore, she and her best friend Clare make use of their "female powers of persuasion" (*Awaken* 281) when trying to help Justin and some other DS protesters out of a difficult situation. They are successful, but this success has to be viewed from two different points of view. On the one hand, the fact that they have to use their physical appearance in order to get what they want makes them sexualized objects, which clearly sends out a rather negative message to the readers. On the other hand, however, Maddie and Clare manage to help other people and show that they are capable of solving problems by themselves without the help of men.

Throughout the entire dystopian series, Maddie is an active character, which becomes especially obvious when she is locked up in a detention center and still does not give up. Even though the conditions are terrible and she is tortured regularly, the adolescent consciously decides to stay in order to fight digital school and the institutions that come with it, such as detention centers. She realizes: "You could sit around and wait for life to happen or you could get busy and make it happen yourself" (*Middle Ground* 87). While passivity and disempowerment are usually characterizing femininity (see Nikolajeva 105), Maddie turns into a leadership figure among the digital school opponents. Other adolescents look up to her for guidance and the teenage girl feels overwhelmed, but also empowered, as this passage shows: "I looked out at a room-full of people who trusted me and I was still afraid, but not the kind of fear that's limiting- the kind that's empowering" (*Middle Ground* 261).

In order to keep up her role as an active character, Maddie strongly relies on art as a form of expression and liberation. According to Applebaum,

“creative endeavors” enable young people “to rebel against oppressive systems” (see 69) and the female protagonist of the *Awaken* series often starts to paint or to express herself through poetry while fighting digital school. Especially when Maddie is locked up in a detention center she uses the wall screens in her room for artistic purposes: “

I’d painted them. I drew a yellow sun on the ceiling, like a golden lantern shining happiness around me. I turned two of the wall screens into a front yard and drew homes on either side of me. [...] I wrote poems on the sidewalks with red and yellow chalk, and the words connected the houses. I wrote poems all the way up to each front door. I took cold, empty walls and gave them life (*Middle Ground* 199).

Art gives the female protagonist the strength to survive the detention center and it helps her to remain the powerful woman she is, even in dark and difficult times.

4.4.1.2. Jane Freeman

Jane Freeman, whose name is not mentioned until the last part of the trilogy, is Maddie’s mother. Even though she loves her husband, she is always on her daughter’s side, supporting the young girl in every way she can. Just like Maddie, Jane does not believe that digital school should be a law because it is too restricting, but, for the most part, she remains silent and passive, like a stereotypical female character. Still, there are some small moments of rebellion, for instance when Maddie is about to be sent to a detention center for the first time and Jane secretly gives her sports shoes, just in case she needs to run away.

Various other qualities of the woman suggest that she is a stereotypical woman. She is extremely affectionate and nurturing (see Cranny-Francis et al. 143) and domestic harmony (see Lorber and Moore 3) is highly important for her. She explains to her daughter: “Every day I wake up with one wish, Maddie. That some day I’ll have my family back. I lost Joe to the digital world. I lost your father to his career years ago. Now you’re practically running away because you can’t stand this lifestyle” (*Still Point* ch. 8). It hurts Jane that her family is torn apart, but there is not much she can do, especially as a passive female character. Instead, she keeps seeing the best in people,

because of her genuine and trusting nature and believes that “you should trust people until they give you a reason not to” (*Middle Ground* 114).

Despite everything, it turns out in the very end that Jane Freeman secretly worked as an undercover FBI agent the entire time. This means that she is actively fighting digital school, which leads her daughter to the observation: “I’d always known she was smart and loyal and sentimental and loving. I’d never realized she was brave” (*Still Point* ch. 31). However, since this side of Jane is only revealed on the last few pages of *Still Point*, this new piece of information is not very convincing. Overall, she is still portrayed as a highly stereotypical and passive female character throughout the entire dystopian series.

4.4.1.3. Clare Powell

When Clare Powell first meets Maddie, the girls immediately become best friends due to her welcoming and open nature. She is extremely friendly and always tries to see the best in people. When everybody else tells Maddie that they are only interested in her contacts, she emphasizes: “I want you to know that I don’t care if you *join our side* or whatever Scott calls it. I still want to be friends, no matter what happens” (*Awaken* 146). She deeply cares about the people around her and does not have a bad bone in her body.

As Clare knows very well herself, “communication is [her] strength” (*Awaken* 149), which is why she dislikes digital school and would love to design face-to-face schools instead. Her strongly developed interpersonal skills show that Clare is a classic feminine character (see Appelbaum, Audet and Miller 48) who enjoys interacting with people.. Especially when the teenage girl spends time with close friends one can notice how caring she is. Whenever Maddie needs advice, for example, Clare does not let her down, but encourages her with strong words: “My brother always told me the only way you’re satisfied in life is if you’re doing something with your heart. If your heart isn’t in it, you’re not on the right path. I believe that. [...] You find a different path. [...] That’s not giving up” (*Still Point* ch. 24). She is supportive and would never judge other people for their decisions, because she prefers a

harmonious atmosphere, which is another aspect that emphasizes her femininity.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that, in the quote above, Clare talks about her brother's opinion rather than her own. Like a stereotypical female, she holds back her own ideas and thoughts. Thus, Clare is portrayed as rather passive and dependent on the opinions and actions of male characters, such as, in this particular case, her brother.

4.4.1.4. The President of the USA

In the very end of Kacvinsky's dystopian trilogy another highly significant female character appears, namely the President of the United States of America. When Maddie first encounters her, she perceives the woman's appearance as follows: "A woman cleared her throat, and I looked up. My mouth nearly fell to the floor. The president of the United States was standing there between two security guards. Her coral suit fit tightly around her tall lean frame and accentuated her dark skin" (*Still Point* ch. 30). Not only is the president a woman, but also black, which is definitely a revolutionary aspect that the female author includes in her narration.

Independently from her position as the president of the United States, this female character is extremely powerful and has a lot of authority. Other people respect her, look up to her for guidance and value the woman's opinions. Thus, one could say that some of her personal qualities are rather masculine. Nonetheless, at the same time the woman is also very communicative, understanding and kind, which shows that femininity plays a significant role in her life as well. The president respects digital school and she values the ideas and intentions of the creator Kevin Freeman, but she also knows that it is time for a change and is not afraid to take action.

Recent studies have shown that, in real life, people in the United States of America do not seem to be ready for a female president yet. When US citizens were asked what qualities they are looking for in the leader of their nation most of them answered that they associate presidency with masculinity and maleness (see Powell and Butterfield 403). As a result, the fact that Katie Kacvinsky chooses a woman to be the leader of her dystopian society shows

that the author clearly reinvents gender roles. She does not care about meeting people's expectations and, instead, surprises the reader by depicting the president as a woman of color.

4.4.2. Male Characters

It is highly interesting that, even though the writer of the *Awaken* series is female, most of the characters that play an important role in the narration are male. Some of them are highly stereotypical, while others prove that masculinity and being a man do not necessarily go hand in hand. Furthermore, it is striking that all of the villains and anti-heroes in this trilogy are male. As mentioned previously, this might be due to the fact that maleness is often associated with aggression and the longing for power. On the following pages, various male characters will be introduced and analyzed, but it needs to be kept in mind that this is only a small selection, since the large number of boys and men in Kacvinsky's novels makes it impossible to discuss all of them.

4.4.2.1. Justin Solvi

As the leader of a group of digital school opponents, Justin Solvi is an important character in the *Awaken* series. He is respected by his friends as well as followers and always appears to be "cool and confident" (*Awaken* 137), but everybody knows that the adolescent prefers working alone to working in teams. This makes him seem unattainable, and Justin's friends know: "Justin is about work. When he comes here, he works. When he's hanging out with his friends, it's *all about work*. [...] He's never taken a day off. [...] He's never just taken a day to himself. Thought about himself" (*Awaken* 259).

In order to fulfill his dreams of improving society and abolishing digital school Justin always recruits new helpers with special skills or contacts. Therefore, he also tracks down Maddie online, but when they first meet in person, the young man is extremely surprised that she is a girl. In view of her online screen name being Alex and the history of her hacking activity Justin

clearly expects a boy. Maddie even confronts him, saying: “Was it unbelievable to think a girl could be just as rebellious as a guy? That a girl could be just as technically savvy as the boys?” (*Awaken* 136). While this might appear to be a rather sexist attitude, Justin realizes his mistake quickly and does not underestimate Maddie for long. Instead, he develops a lot of respect for the girl and even points out to her: “What I do is great but practically a joke next to what you are capable of. I can build a snow fort. You can start an avalanche” (*Awaken* 137).

While Justin generally does not allow anybody to get too close to him, he behaves differently around Maddie. The young man falls in love with the teenage girl and starts opening up. However, the way he treats Maddie and behaves around her reveals a lot about Justin’s character. While, most of the time, he supports Maddie and respects her decisions and actions, including staying locked up at a detention center instead of getting rescued by him and his friends, sometimes he behaves in a highly patronizing way. This is especially the case, when the girl’s life might be in danger, for instance during her first interception, when he warns Maddie: “Tonight, you need to do exactly what I say, when I say it” (*Awaken* 101). He comes across as rather dominating, which is further reinforced by the way he looks at Maddie, which can be referred to as male gazing (see Mulvey 808), and is experienced by the girl as follows: “I could feel him glancing at me while we walked; I could always sense his gaze, as though his eyes physically touched me” (*Awaken* 84). Due to Justin’s male gaze, and because of advice he gives her, such as “You’re also a woman, another huge advantage. [...] Guys are easy to distract. [...] You’re young, you’re gorgeous- that’s a huge power, if you know how to use it” (*Awaken* 117), it seems as if he sees Maddie as an object, rather than an active character.

Despite Justin’s numerous masculine qualities that define his character, he never shows off his masculinity. This is what allows him to be the one of the leaders of the digital school opponents, a rather feminine group, even though the young man himself is predominantly masculine. He never feels the need to prove himself in front of others. His friends and followers notice this aspect about him, and describe his behavior as follows:

Even though he was a leader, he still preferred to be invisible and it wasn’t because he was shy or timid or insecure. He was the opposite

of all of those things. He didn't want to stand out because, in his mind, he didn't. He didn't want to appear larger than life. He wanted to be the same as everyone at ground level (*Still Point* ch. 24).

Instead of suppressing others with his power and authority, Justin is completely focused on fighting digital school, which is more important to him than anything else. He wants to change the world and make an impact. As a result, he even ends up leaving Maddie behind and dedicating his entire life to this cause.

4.4.2.2. Kevin Freeman

One of the most significant male characters in the *Awaken* trilogy is Kevin Freeman. Not only is he the father of the female protagonist Maddie, but he is also the inventor and director of digital school. Due to his negative experiences as a school headmaster during a time when shootings were happening on a daily basis, Kevin decided to give people the chance to receive education in a safe space, namely people's homes. Safety, the decrease of teenage violence, as well as the availability of free and accessible education are Kevin's most important concerns and he works hard every single day to make sure he can fulfill them.

As an influential public figure, Kevin Freeman is extremely powerful and always gets what he wants, because he is a "world-class manipulator" (*Still Point* ch. 1). Even when interacting with higher instances, such as Richard Vaughn, the man still remains dominant, which becomes obvious when he wants to visit his daughter at the Los Angeles detention center, but is not allowed in. He starts arguing with Richard, who is technically his boss, and, Maddie notices the behavior of the two men: "My dad pressed his gaze, and I saw Richard back down" (*Middle Ground* 204). Clearly, Kevin is very focused on his work, and, therefore, other people often describe him as: "Fast. Emotionless. Efficient" (*Awaken* 65). These qualities emphasize the man's masculinity, just like his competence and achievement orientation (see Kortenhaus and Demarest 220) that always drive him and allow him to accomplish his goals.

While Kevin Freeman's importance in the public sphere, which is typically known as masculine terrain (see Romaine 12), is difficult to ignore, he

also takes on an important role at home in the domestic sphere as the head of his family. He establishes the rules that his daughter and his wife are expected to follow. This is especially difficult to accept for Maddie, who notices on a daily basis that her father is extremely strict and feels that he “needs reassurance he’s in complete control of every facet of [her] life” (*Awaken* 5). In reality, though, Kevin Freeman is only concerned about his daughter’s safety. He explains to the teenage girl: “I’m not trying to hold you hostage. I’m trying to protect you. That’s all. You always see protection as control, Maddie. Please try to understand the difference” (*Still Point* ch. 5). He definitely displays his masculinity at home, just like he does at work, but this often leads Maddie to the question: “If my father had to choose who he was loyal to, digital school or his own family, what would his choice be?” (*Awaken* 281).

In the end of the series it turns out that Kevin Freeman is not the man everybody thought he was. He never wanted digital school to become a law and is trying hard to abolish it, explaining: “I knew the only way to fight it would be to stay at the top. That was the only way I could keep any kind of control” (*Still Point* ch. 18). Again, the importance of power and authority is shown, but when Kevin Freeman actually speaks up against digital school in public he gets shot and dies. However, it needs to be kept in mind that this side of Kevin Freeman is only revealed at the very end of the trilogy. As a result, this depiction of him is rather unconvincing, which means that, overall, he is still portrayed as a stereotypical male character.

4.4.2.3. Joe Freeman

Joe Freeman is Maddie’s brother, who lives in Los Angeles, where he fully embraces life in the digital world, since “he worked, exercised, socialized, and dated on his computer” (*Middle Ground* 9). Still, he values his family and agrees to let his sister stay at his house when she is in trouble for being a member of the digital school protesters. It is not easy for the two siblings to share an apartment, because of their different attitudes towards life, but they manage to make it work for a short amount of time.

One of the traits that characterize Joe is his protective instinct that comes out whenever he spends time with his sister. Her well-being is

important for him, but often lets him appear patronizing and suppressive. When he first meets Maddie's boyfriend Justin, for example, his sister notices: "Justin walked up to us and Joe's back stiffened. He thanked Justin for dropping me off and extended his hand, but his mouth tightened into a straight line. [...] I saw a look pass between them, like a subtle understanding" (*Awaken* 308). Clearly, Joe does not approve of Maddie's choice in men, which he makes even more obvious later on when he has a serious talk with his sister and warns her: "You know something, Maddie? I really don't think Justin's your type" (*Middle Ground* 66). In Joe's opinion, he is clearly the superior one among the two siblings, since he is not only older, but also the man. Therefore, it is his duty to protect his "baby sister" (*Middle Ground* 68) and take care of her.

While Joe's intentions might be good, he still ends up being a traitor who turns Maddie in and has her sent to a detention center. He informs Paul and Damon Thompson about his sister's whereabouts and justifies his actions by explaining to the young girl: "I just care about you. I don't want to see you throw your life away because you're too naïve to know what you're doing" (*Middle Ground* 70). Again, he takes the freedom to make decisions for his younger sister, since he is the older brother who has more power and a higher status. In the end of the dystopian series, however, Joe apologizes for his actions, because he finds out that detention centers torture their students and experiment on them and since he genuinely cares about Maddie, he does not ever want her to suffer.

Finally, Joe's entire attitude towards digital school and life in a virtual world changes. He discovers the perks of meeting people and having face-to-face interactions with them. Therefore, he joins the digital school protesters and can be with his family, but also live life to the fullest as an adolescent. His official reason for joining Maddie and her friends is the following: "Since I've never seen so many hot, half-naked women in my life, I can be persuaded to join yours" (*Still Point* ch. 23). While Joe is definitely starting to actively support his sister, he is still a stereotypical, hormone-driven male character.

4.4.2.5. Gabe

As a purebred, somebody who grew up without any technology at all, Gabe is very special in the *Awaken* trilogy. He is not used to computers and digital life and explains his upbringing as follows: “We lived without technology as much as we could. We used solar power for electricity; that’s it. We didn’t have phones or computers or televisions. [...] I never felt like I was cut off [...]. It’s all I knew” (*Middle Ground* 154). In order to digitalize the entire country, though, the government shut down the community Gabe grew up in, leaving him without family. As a result, he started to work at the detention center in Los Angeles at the age of eleven, where he still takes care of numerous duties.

Gabe is not like other people who work at detention centers. He is used to living without computers and favors human interaction over the virtual world. When he first meets Maddie he immediately notices that she is significantly different from other student inmates, because she wants to talk to him and leaves her room a lot. Quickly, a strong bond develops between the two, especially when the female protagonist notices: “His eyes were intense on mine, but he was hardly intimidating. His eyes gave him away. They were compassionate. If I felt anything, it was that he was genuine” (*Middle Ground* 103). Whenever Maddie feels weak, Gabe encourages her and shows his “nurturing, affectionate nature” (Cranny-Francis et al. 143), which stereotypically characterizes females. He helps the teenage girl in every way he can and even arranges for her to meet her friends, so they can all make plans together to escape from the detention center and to free all of the students that are imprisoned there. For Maddie, Gabe eventually becomes more than a friend. She sees him as a family member, realizing: “Gabe was like a brother. I was closer to him than to Joe because Gabe actually saw me, not the idea of me. He accepted me, he encouraged me. Most important, he took the time to know me” (*Middle Ground* 195-196).

Throughout the entire dystopian trilogy, Gabe never feels the need to show off his masculinity. Instead he is caring, compassionate and amicable. Even when he falls in love with a girl he does not change his behavior, because in Clare, he finds someone as accepting as himself. Their

relationship is extremely harmonious, and, as a result, there is no need for competition or a fight over power.

4.4.2.6. Jax Viviani

Jax Viviani is a teenage boy that Maddie knows from the virtual world. When they were both younger they went on a digital date together, but did not keep in touch afterwards. In *Still Point* the female protagonist wants to recruit him as a DS rebel, since she knows that he dislikes the world they live in just like her. Jax is already known among the digital school opponents since he is the creator of a software that collects the names of students that are being released from detention centers, but he got busted for developing this computer program and is thus not immediately willing to join the group of protesters.

It appears as if Jax “found the art of balance” (*Still Point* ch. 21) in his life, since he recognizes both, the perks and the problems of digital life. He values the work of the rebels, but at the same time just wants to enjoy his own life and thus not actively support the digital school opponents. At times, one can notice that the young man is rather noncompliant, which is expressed especially through his artistic side. Jax is a painter and one of his drawings even served as a template for the bird tattoo on Maddie’s wrist. According to Applebaum, creativity allows adolescents to rebel against oppression and against the misdeeds of society (see 69), and the female protagonist immediately recognizes this rebellious spirit in Jax. Eventually, she manages to convince him to help her out by saying “I didn’t take you for somebody who would give up. I remember the day we met; you told me to start speaking my mind. You told me we were living in a lie. That’s why you started painting. You wanted to show people what was real” (*Still Point* ch. 9).

Just like Jax manages to balance his life in relation to digital school, his personality is also balanced evenly. He shows some traits that are linked to femininity, such as need for harmony and peacefulness (see Lorber and Moore 3), but at the same time masculinity also plays an important role in his life. When he was younger, Jax often felt defenseless so he learned how to fight and these skills now allow him to feel strong and powerful, to protect

himself and to protect others. Guarding Maddie is especially important for the young man, since he slowly falls in love with the teenage girl, so he promises to always help her, and to stand by her.

Even though throughout most of the dystopian series it seems as if Maddie would end up spending the rest of her life with Justin Solvi, she chooses Jax in the end, because of his full dedication to her. He makes sure to be there only for her, while Justin is busy changing the world. This devotion is visible from Maddie and Jax's first kiss, which takes place in front of cameras and changes how the majority of the country thinks about digital school. Again, it is the balance in the young man's life that makes him successful and allows him to live a happy and peaceful life in the end.

4.4.2.7. Paul Thompson

The entire Thompson family, consisting of Paul, his sister Becky and his parents Meredith and Damon, is, initially, very close with the Freeman family. Damon is the city sheriff and Maddie's probation officer, and his son Paul aspires to be just like his father. He attends police academy and wants to make his career as a law enforcement officer, since he strongly believes in the ideals of digital school.

For Paul it is highly important to always be dominant when interacting with Maddie Freeman, since he is a man and she is a woman. Masculinity and femininity have to be clearly separated for him, so he gets extremely patronizing when the teenage girl mocks him after he asks her out on a virtual date. In response to one of Maddie's comments, the young man's reaction is described as follows: "Paul sat up straighter in his seat and lifted his chin" (*Awaken* 70). He knows how to position himself in order to appear superior, but still, being rejected by Maddie hurts his pride. The adolescent girl does not conform to traditional norms of femininity, which, for Paul, is a "potential threat to conventional masculinity" (Korobov 53). It puts him in a "vulnerable position" (Korobov 53) that he tries to conceal by pretending to be powerful and in charge, especially when it comes to arresting Maddie and locking her up in a detention center. She immediately notices: "He looked more determined than

everybody to see me impounded. Maybe he was still bitter over my date rejection six months ago” (*Middle Ground* 75).

In the end of the dystopian trilogy, Paul turns into an even more authoritarian villain. He disapproves of Maddie’s behavior and of everything the digital school opponents do. In order to take some action, he threatens the female protagonist, stating clearly: “Don’t think for a second that I’ve given up on arresting Solvi. [...] If Justin ever crosses my path, I have personalized handcuffs waiting for him. I won’t let up, Maddie. And after I arrest Justin, you’re next” (*Still Point* ch. 2). Paul feels the need to remain in a position of power in order to prove his masculinity. He refuses to show his weaknesses and, thus, can be seen as a rather stereotypical male character that reinforces existing gender roles.

4.4.2.8. Richard Vaughn

Richard Vaughn, the sponsor and leader of digital school, is the main villain in Kacvinsky’s dystopian trilogy. He is an influential man who frequently abuses his power. As a neuroscientist, he won many awards for helping people with Alzheimer’s disease regain their memory, but he is no longer interested in doing good. Instead, he controls all of the detention centers in the United States and is responsible for the experiments that are done on students. Richard points out himself: “I’ve dedicated my life to the study of the human brain. It’s the most complicated computer ever created. It’s a beautiful machine” (*Middle Ground* 212). His fascination with the human brain makes him ruthless and he is willing to do anything necessary in order to keep experimenting and abusing people.

Making sure that other people know about his position of power is highly important for Richard Vaughn. When Kevin Freeman, for example, questions his methods in the detention centers, the immediate response he gets is: “Neuroscience is my field [...]. Education is yours. I don’t look over your shoulder. I’d appreciate it if you’d back off mine. Remember who is boss here. If you don’t like my rules I can replace you with someone who does” (*Middle Ground* 202). Additionally, Richard notices immediately when somebody threatens his authority, such as Maddie Freeman. Since Richard

clearly states: “I’m not about to let one teenage girl jeopardize my entire program” (*Middle Ground* 214), he stops at nothing to eliminate the female protagonist. Stereotypically, men are perceived as “inherently powerful” (Cranny Francis et al. 82), and Richard Vaughn surely knows how to use this fact against others. He kidnaps Maddie and Jax and even wants to test a new drug on them. It is supposed to help him manipulate people, so they will testify in his favor when it comes to the evaluation of detention centers. Clearly, Richard is willing to do anything to keep digital school alive and remain in a position of leadership.

5. Discussion and Comparison

The two female authors, Veronica Roth and Katie Kacvinsky, both manage to address numerous important issues in their young adult dystopian series, since their futuristic societies serve as a reflection of their own values and ideas. The following pages will illustrate the attitudes of the two female writers and compare the *Divergent* series and the *Awaken* series in regards to their portrayal of society and of female and male characters.

5.1. Dystopian Worlds

Generally, dystopian worlds depict totalitarian regimes where the authoritarian state has an immense power over society (see Nikolajeva 74). To a certain extent, this is also the case in the two narrations discussed in this thesis. In totalitarian societies all aspects of life are controlled by a higher instance, and especially in Katie Kacvinsky’s *Awaken* series, the reader can identify this type of political system from the very beginning. The *Divergent* series by Veronica Roth, however, depicts a society that, initially, does not appear completely totalitarian. Various people are in charge and all of the factions work together, but still, society underlies certain ideologies and everybody is expected to behave in certain ways in order to fit into a faction. This is definitely characteristic of totalitarianism, but when Jeanine Matthews, sometimes referred to as “female Hitler” (TheEllenShow), tries to take over

control, this type of government becomes even more recognizable. Obviously, the *Divergent* series and the *Awaken* series differ from each other significantly, but they both show that there are numerous problems that society has to face. Some of them are related to freedom and oppression, others are of an environmental and technological nature and some are related to morality as well as to the expulsion and punishment of minorities and rebellious groups.

The biggest issue that the two female writers address is the lack of personal liberty in their dystopian narrations. However, in both cases there is still the illusion of freedom. In the *Divergent* trilogy, young adults get to choose which faction they want to join, but their choice is rather limited and there are aptitude tests that basically tell the teenagers what to do. Even after the choosing ceremony people are restricted in what they can do and achieve in their lives. Every faction allows its members to only work in a certain field, which means that, again, freedom is limited. Similarly, in the *Awaken* trilogy, adolescents can do anything they want, as long as it takes place online. They can do different types of sports, attend colleges, and travel the world, but only in the virtual world. Freedom is definitely always an issue, even in the real world. Clearly, some countries allow people to live more freely than other countries, usually depending on the form of government. Often, this type of restriction is closely linked to tyranny, but ultimately there are certain restrictions everywhere. Everybody's freedom is limited at all times in monarchies, dictatorships, and even in democracies. Roth and Kacvinsky criticize this in their novels and make their readers aware of the dangers and problems that come with the limitation and, in some cases, the oppression of people by authorities, who often abuse their power. However, the two authors do not actually suggest an alternative form of government that should be seen as an ideal. In both trilogies, change definitely happens at the end, but it is not stated explicitly in what exact ways. It is left to the reader to decide what form of government would be most desirable and accomplishable.

In Veronica Roth's narration, the categorization of people goes hand in hand with the illusion of freedom. Since society is divided into five factions, people are desperately trying to fit in, even if they have to hide who they truly are, like the protagonist Tris. Nobody wants to be a factionless outcast. In real life, countless young people struggle with fitting in and clearly the author

criticizes this tendency of people to categorize each other and to exclude anybody who is different. Roth shows that social exclusion can lead to revolutions and to violence, by describing the revolt of the Factionless in her dystopian trilogy. The Factionless want to be treated like the people that are in factions and have equal opportunities, which definitely should be their right, but a revolt is always problematic, since countless people have to risk their lives and die.

Clearly, putting people into groups that each value only one virtue does not work out, even though the five characteristics Roth ascribes to the factions are all important for a society. Selflessness, kindness, honesty, bravery and intelligence are most likely the virtues that define a functioning society in the eyes of the female writer. However, the fact that there are the Divergent who possess more than one of these qualities shows that people should not be restricted to only one of them. In the *Divergent* series many adolescents have difficulties fitting into their factions because of the restrictive thinking that is promoted. They are unable to follow the rules and cannot behave in the way that is expected from them. Still, there are some positive aspects about the factions. One of them is, for example, that people get to spend time with people who have similar interests and are alike in many ways. As a result, they may have a lot of fun together, such as in Dauntless where faction members get to enjoy various exciting and thrilling activities together. Overall, however, Roth shows the reader that putting people into groups is rather unethical and should generally be avoided. This is also closely related to gender, where people tend to be categorized in two groups, namely male and female. However, this way of thinking is extremely restricting and does not allow young adults to develop freely.

Just like Veronica Roth shows that too much restriction may be the reason for a revolution, Katie Kacvinsky depicts a rebellion in her dystopian trilogy as well. Living in a virtual world does not give young adults a lot of freedom, so there are numerous adolescents who want this form of education to be abolished. Digital school opponents, however, live in great danger, since they are locked up in detention centers if they get caught. There, terrible methods are used to brainwash them and to force them to conform to the system, which is a rather typical element of dystopian literature in general (see

Bradford et al. 111-119). Kacvinsky criticizes that people with revolutionary ideas are silenced, because this is definitely something that also happens in real life and not just in her fictional society. Men and women should be able to speak their minds, which, again, is closely related to the issue of freedom or the lack thereof.

Another problematic aspect that the dystopian worlds in the *Divergent* series and the *Awaken* series deal with is technology, which is highly relevant in the modern world nowadays. Technology is everywhere and it surely is necessary and important for countless occasions. Still, there are dangers related to it, which becomes obvious when looking at Roth's and Kacvinsky's novels. In the world of *Divergent*, genetic manipulation is the reason for the categorization of people and the author of the narration shows how dangerous experiments in this field are. They need to be avoided at all cost. Additionally, genetic discrimination is a closely related issue that Roth also brings up. Again, this is highly relevant in the real world, because due to genetics, people might be denied employment, insurance and health care (see Wong and Lieh-Mak 295). Nonetheless, it is Kacvinsky who addresses an even more common issue that concerns adolescents nowadays. In her novels young people are forced to live their lives behind screens, but in the real world they often choose to do so. It is not uncommon to see a group of teenagers sitting together and all staring at their phones because they feel the need to be connected with their virtual contacts and supposed friends at all times. The writer of the *Awaken* trilogy clearly condemns this behavior and makes her readers aware of this phenomenon.

All in all, both female authors address a variety of issues in their dystopian worlds. They raise awareness for various problems and help the reader gain new insights. However, through the characters in their novels the two writers manage to communicate other issues that are highly significant as well, especially in relation to gender. These will be discussed on the following pages.

5.2. Female Characters

In both, the *Divergent* as well as the *Awaken* trilogy, the main protagonist is female, which is not surprising, considering that both authors are female themselves (see Nikolajeva 106). Tris and Maddie share many characteristics and qualities, such as their longing for freedom and independence, which they both openly display by tattoos in the form of birds. Society and social norms suppress the girls and even other characters, such as instructors and family members, patronize them. Still, they are both determined to go their own way. They are active characters and take their fate into their own hands instead of passively waiting for a man to help them. Additionally, neither Tris nor Maddie is a stereotypical female character. They demonstrate that masculinity and femininity are not mutually exclusive. By portraying the female protagonist as a strong and courageous young woman, Veronica Roth and Katie Kacvinsky create a female role model for their adolescent readership. In real life more men than women occupy public professional roles in the government, in sports, in music and various other fields. As a result, boys and girls are usually more aware of male role models (see Balswick and Ingoldsby 246). However, Roth and Kacvinsky provide strong female leads in their narrations, which shows adolescent readers that girls and women can accomplish their goals. They can fight, change the world and do not always have to be obedient and dependent on men.

Just like the two female protagonists are extremely alike, their mothers also share various features and characteristics. Both of them appear to be rather quiet and seemingly accept a subordinate role in their families and in society in general. Still, Natalie Prior and Jane Freeman stand out through small rebellious acts that already let their daughters and the reader suspect that they are not who they pretend to be. While their femininity is predominant throughout the narrations, they both turn out to be powerful and strong as well. Natalie Prior is a fighter, who is shaped by her past in which she grew up outside of Chicago and the faction system until she consciously decided to move into the city to make a change, and Jane Freeman secretly works as an FBI agent in order to fight digital school. Roth and Kacvinsky depict these two women as nurturing mothers and as courageous revolutionaries at the same

time. Thus, they show that women may have some stereotypical qualities without completely conforming to preexisting gender roles. They should not be limited in either one way or the other, but instead have the possibility to find a middle ground and to decide for themselves who they want to be. Still, it is somewhat problematic that both, Roth and Kacvinsky, reveal the strong side of the mothers only at the very end of their narrations. This means that for a long time Natalie Prior and Jane Freeman are perceived as extremely stereotypical by the reader, who might not be completely convinced by only a brief reference to the women's brave actions and qualities in the last novel.

While both dystopian trilogies feature numerous powerful female characters, there is one highly stereotypical girl in the *Awaken* series. Clare Powell is one of the main characters, but all of her characteristics are closely linked to femininity. It may need to be seen critically that the teenage girl is rather passive and in some situations subordinate to male characters, but throughout the entire trilogy Kacvinsky seems to focus on the positive aspects of her femininity, such as her need for harmony and her interpersonal and communication skills. As a result, Clare is not a negative role model for young readers, despite her stereotypical depiction. She is presented as a likeable character, which shows that the author simply wants to depict different types of girls and women, and some of them might conform to pre-existing gender roles more than others.

Nonetheless, in the *Divergent* series as well as in the *Awaken* series a large number of females strongly contribute to the reinvention of gender roles. Especially Veronica Roth proves that women can be whoever they want to be. In her trilogy, most of the significant roles are taken on by women or girls and they are not only heroines, but also antagonists, such as Jeanine Matthews. This depiction of what is often assumed to be the weaker sex allows the author to prove the opposite. She shows that women can be strong and show ambitions in various different ways. In her narration, they can be and do anything they want. With role models like Tris, Johanna, Christina, and powerful antagonists like Jeanine, adolescent readers learn that they should not let society limit their choices and aspirations, because just like the heroines and anti-heroines in the books, they can decide themselves who they want to be. Among Kacvinsky's characters there might be less variety than in

the *Divergent* series, especially because most of them are male, but the author still delivers the same message to her young readers. Women can take on any role they want. Even leadership positions that require authority and fierceness are not exclusive to men. Therefore, the president in the *Awaken* trilogy is a woman, for example.

All in all, Veronica Roth and Katie Kacvinsky provide their adolescent readers with a variety of female role models. They show that girls and women can be caring and nurturing on the one hand, but also physically strong and technically savvy on the other hand. They may be leaders of groups or even countries, and, most importantly, they can stand up for what they believe in and fight for their beliefs.

5.3. Male Characters

While both authors feature interesting and innovative male characters in their narrations, it is striking that Kacvinsky seems to focus a lot more on them than Roth. The number of male and female characters in the *Divergent* series is well-balanced, but in the *Awaken* series the number of male characters is significantly higher than the number of female characters. This might be rather unusual, since the author is female, but it simply reflects how in the majority of books and movies males occupy the most space and thus appear more significant than women. As previously mentioned, this is also the case in the real world, where teenage boys and girls are both more aware of men in public professional roles (see Balswick and Ingoldsby 246).

The two male protagonists, Tobias Eaton and Justin Solvi, share some similarities, just like the two female protagonists. Both young men are rather masculine, occupy leadership positions and possess a lot of strength. Other characters respect them and look up to them for guidance. Still, neither of the two openly exhibits or shows off his masculinity. Tobias and Justin have a lot of insecurities and weaknesses that they do not always try to hide. As a result, they do not come across as intimidating male characters, but as accessible ones that may even serve as role models for some young readers. By portraying the protagonists like this, Veronica Roth and Katie Kacvinsky show that, while it is certainly expected of young men to be fierce and dominant,

they should not be afraid to display their weaker side at times. Clearly, both authors also display characters that are the complete opposite and try to hide their weaknesses, such as Al in the *Divergent* series, who secretly cries during Dauntless initiation whenever he is unable to keep up with the other initiates. Still, he is not portrayed as despicable until he decides to prove his strength and secure his reputation among some of the strongest initiates by hurting Tris. He changes his personality in order to fit in and to seem more masculine, but the author clearly wants to show that this is not the way to go, since his actions ultimately lead him to commit suicide.

In both dystopian trilogies the female protagonist has a brother and these two male characters also have some characteristics in common. Caleb Prior and Joe Freeman are both extremely patronizing and seem to believe that they have the right to dictate their sisters' lives. This becomes especially obvious when Tris and Maddie are in romantic relationships, because their brothers strongly disapprove of Tobias and Justin. Nonetheless, both, Caleb as well as Joe, love their sisters and honestly care about them. They want to protect them and make sure that they can live a happy life. In Caleb's case this might be hard to believe, since he lets Tris die for him in the end of the *Divergent* trilogy, but, after all, he initially wants to sacrifice his own life. His sister then decides that he has the wrong reasons for doing so and ends her own life instead. The way that Caleb is grieving after this incident shows that Tris was in fact an important person for him and that he loved her with all his heart. Summing up, it can be said that at first sight, Caleb and Joe come across like completely stereotypical male characters, which might give the reader a rather negative impression of the young men. However, one needs to keep in mind that the two female authors are simply depicting them as loving brothers who might make mistakes at times and not give their sisters enough space and freedom, but who, ultimately, are loving and just want the best for their younger sibling.

Even though the *Divergent* trilogy also features a female villain, the majority of anti-heroes in both series are male. In Veronica Roth's narration Marcus Eaton, Eric Coulter and Peter Hayes are the main antagonists, while the *Awaken* series features villains such as Richard Vaughn, Paul and Damon Thompson and various others. All of these characters have their strength and

dominance in common. They have a lot of authority, but tend to abuse it. For the most part, a majority of the anti-heroes in the two dystopian narrations are presented as stereotypical male characters, who are strong, brutal, and hungry for power. This, however, gives female characters the chance to stand out as heroines in the novels. By depicting predominantly male villains, the girls and women in the novels can prove what they are capable of and thus inspire young readers to stand up against antagonists as well.

Overall, it is striking that both female authors tend to portray male characters, with the exception of the two male protagonists, in rather stereotypical ways. Most of them are powerful and authoritative, they show off their strength, they suppress weaker characters, especially females, and they are, overall, very achievement oriented. Nonetheless, Roth and Kacvinsky also show some innovation by incorporating diverse characters into their dystopian novels and, thus, proving that not all men are necessarily brutal, strong, and longing for power. In the *Divergent* series, for example, there are Amar and George, two homosexual men, which proves that the author does not only focus on heteronormativity. Instead, it becomes obvious once again that Roth considers acceptance and inclusion of people who are different an important issue. Among the male characters is Kacvinsky's *Awaken* series there is less diversity, but one can definitely notice that not all of them are stereotypically masculine. Gabe, for example, is a teenage boy with a rather distinct feminine side. He craves harmony among people and is very compassionate instead of dominant and greedy for power. Just like Veronica Roth, Kacvinsky makes sure that there are various different male characters that readers may identify with. This is extremely important, because adolescents are in the process of finding out who they are and who they want to be. Reading about characters that are different helps them in learning more about themselves and in developing their uniqueness.

6. Conclusion

This thesis has shown that through young adult dystopian literature authors can address numerous social and gender-related issues and make them easily accessible for adolescents. They have the opportunity to criticize

society, to teach young people about certain risks and dangers, but they can also come up with new ideas and concepts in order to inspire change. Both female writers whose works were discussed in this thesis take this opportunity and prove that they are extremely innovative.

Veronica Roth depicts a society in her *Divergent* series where freedom is restricted because people are divided into factions. If they do not fit into these groups they become outcasts and are excluded from society. The author shows that this categorization of people is unethical, and that oppression may lead to resistance and revolts. She also addresses other significant issues, such as the dangers of technology and genetic manipulation. However, this thesis has proven that gender is one of the most predominant themes throughout the entire *Divergent* trilogy. Not only does Roth reinvent gender roles by depicting her protagonists and other characters in certain ways, but she also establishes a connection between each of the five factions and either femininity or masculinity. Similarly, Kacvinsky divides her fictional society into two groups, the digital school opponents and supporters, each of which is either linked to masculinity or femininity as well. Additionally, she also depicts diverse characters in her story. Especially the fact that the president of the United States is female can be extremely inspiring for adolescent readers.

While Roth and Kacvinsky show their readers that people should not be categorized and that their destinies are not necessarily predetermined depending on their sex and gender, it would be interesting to see whether other authors of young adult dystopian literature do the same. One could look at further novels and trilogies from different periods and see whether the time in which they are written influences the depiction of gender and other issues. Additionally, there might be significant differences depending on whether the author is male or female, so this could be another fascinating area to explore. All in all, this genre definitely has the potential to influence the lives of adolescents and it is important that writers are aware of this and develop their characters and story lines accordingly.

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S

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9. German Abstract

Jugendliteratur ist ein Medium das Autoren und Autorinnen erlaubt wichtige Themen anzusprechen und diese für junge Menschen zugänglich zu machen. Verschiedene gesellschaftliche Aspekte können dabei diskutiert und kritisiert werden, wie unter anderem Gender, ein Begriff der aus dem Englischen übernommen wurde und das soziale und gesellschaftlich konstruierte Geschlecht bezeichnet. Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit behandelt zwei dystopische Buchreihen für Jugendliche, nämlich die *Divergent* Trilogie von Veronica Roth und die *Awaken* Trilogie von Katie Kacvinsky, im Bezug auf verschiedene soziale und gesellschaftliche Themen.

Die Arbeit beginnt mit einer Einführung in die Theorie der die Analysen dieser Arbeit zu Grunde liegen. Dabei wird zuerst Jugendliteratur im Allgemeinen behandelt, sowie Charakteristiken und gängige Themen die darin anzufinden sind. Anschließend wird erklärt was unter dystopischer Literatur zu verstehen ist, und es wird versucht zu ergründen warum diese literarische Gattung unter Jugendlichen große Popularität genießt. Schließlich wird die Rolle von Gender in der Literatur besprochen. Stereotypische Geschlechterrollen werden dabei vorgestellt, wie auch verschiedene Möglichkeiten Gender-bezogene Themen und Problematiken in Jugendliteratur zu erkennen und zu analysieren.

Es folgt eine Analyse der *Divergent* Trilogie von Veronica Roth. Dabei wird die dystopische Welt vorgestellt, in der sich die Handlung zuträgt, sowie die Fraktionen, aus denen sich die Gesellschaft zusammensetzt. Auch die Fraktionslosen, die Unbestimmten, und das Genetik Büro werden analysiert, da sie eine wichtig im Bezug auf Gender und andere soziale Themen sind. Natürlich wird auch die Rolle der wichtigsten weiblichen und männlichen Charaktere besprochen, wobei besonders darauf eingegangen wird, ob sie stereotypisch dargestellt und aktiv oder passiv sind.

Auch die *Awaken* Trilogie von Katie Kacvinsky wird nach einem ähnlichen Muster behandelt. Zuerst erfolgt eine Einführung in die fiktionale Welt, in der die Handlung stattfindet. Danach werden mehrere Themen behandelt, die beim Leben in einer komplett digitalisierten Welt kritisch betrachtet werden müssen, wie beispielsweise der Verlust von Freiheit und die

Manipulation durch höhere Instanzen. Anschließend werden die beiden Gruppen vorgestellt, aus denen die Gesellschaft besteht, nämlich die Befürworter und die Gegner der digitalen Schule. Abschließend folgt wiederum die Vorstellung der wichtigsten Charaktere und deren Rolle in der dystopischen Bücherreihe. Erneut spielt Gender dabei eine wichtige Rolle, sowie die oft stereotypische Darstellung mehrerer weiblicher und männlicher Charaktere.

Den Abschluss dieser Diplomarbeit bildet eine Gegenüberstellung der beiden dystopischen Trilogien, wobei festgestellt wird, dass beide Autorinnen das Fehlen von Freiheit in der Gesellschaft kritisieren. Außerdem behandelt vor allem Veronica Roth das Problem der Kategorisierung von Menschen, während Katie Kacvinsky sich mit der Digitalisierung der Welt beschäftigt, und der Abhängigkeit von modernen Technologien. Weiters präsentieren Schriftstellerinnen sowohl stereotypische Charaktere, als auch Protagonisten, die unerwartete Eigenschaften besitzen und somit den jugendlichen Lesern beweisen, dass nicht alle Frauen ausschließlich fürsorglich und freundlich sein müssen, und nicht alle Männer zwangsläufig nach Macht streben und ihre Mitmenschen unterdrücken. Es kann eindeutig erkannt werden, dass es beiden Autorinnen gelingt eine Vielzahl an sozialen und gesellschaftlichen Themen anzuschneiden und sie dadurch jungen Lesern neue Perspektiven eröffnen.

10. Curriculum Vitae

Persönliche Daten

Katharina Oberhuber

Geboren am: 5.5.1989

Staatsbürgerschaft: Österreich

Ausbildung

1995 – 1999	Volksschule Maria Frieden
1999 – 2007	AHS Maria Regina, Matura mit ausgezeichnetem Erfolg
2007-2015	Universität Wien: Lehramt Englisch, Italienisch und Spanisch
2011	Erasmus-Semester: La Sapienza, Rom, Italien
2012 - 2013	Bowling Green State University, Ohio, USA
2014	Non EU-Exchange: University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australien

Beruflicher Werdegang

2004 - 2011	English Language Day Camp, Kinderbetreuung
2008 - 2010	Minopolis, Stadt der Kinder, Kinderbetreuung
2011 - 2012	Lehrerin für Englisch und Spanisch in der EMS Strasshof (NÖ)
2011 - 2012	Müllers Freunde: Kinder- und Familienfeste
2012 + 2013	Sommerjob: Reisebetreuung, People to People Student Travel (Italien, Griechenland, Frankreich, Spanien)
2012 - 2013	Fulbright German Language Teaching Assistant, Bowling Green State University, Ohio (USA)
2013 - 2014	English Lehrerin an der VHS12 bei BOK Berufsvorbereitung
2013 - 2014	Betreuerin bei Kinderpartys.at