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**MAY THE CONTROL BE EVER IN YOUR FAVOR!: THE CONTROLLING TOOLS  
OF THE CAPITOL IN *THE HUNGER GAMES* BY SUZANNE COLLINS**

**CAMPINA GRANDE  
2024**

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Trabalho de conclusão de curso (artigo) apresentado à Coordenação do Curso de Licenciatura em Letras Inglês, da Faculdade de Linguística, Letras e Artes da Universidade Estadual da Paraíba, como requisito parcial à obtenção do título de Licenciada em Letras Inglês.

**Área de concentração:** Estudos Literários.

**Orientadora:** Profa. Ma. Isabela Christina do Nascimento Sousa.

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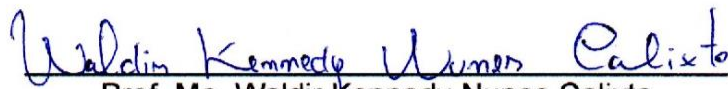
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To my mom, my profound source of inspiration, and to my guiding Alpha in times of darkness.

She slowed and glanced back. There, alone at last. Far away at last. No one was going to tell her off any more, remind her of something, demand her attention, threaten that this would be the end of such rides. Alone at last, free, at ease and independent.

(Andrzej Sapkowski)

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**QUE O CONTROLE ESTEJA SEMPRE AO SEU FAVOR!: AS FERRAMENTAS DE  
CONTROLE DA CAPITAL EM *JOGOS VORAZES* DE SUZANNE COLLINS**

Claryce Cunha de Araújo Torres\*

**ABSTRACT**

The controlling tools are mechanisms used by the totalitarian governments to subdue the population and deprive them of freedom, information and power. These aspects of control are observed in the dystopian universes, that depicts stratified societies, into powerful and powerless, ingrained in censorship environments. For that reason, this research aims to analyze, in *The Hunger Games* (2011) by Suzanne Collins, the tools of control used by the Capitol and to discuss, in which ways, this oppressive government rules the country of Panem and its Districts, that are divided by the class-system, representing the subjugation of the citizens. Hereupon, for this purpose, this work was based on the ideas of Foucault (2009; 1980; 1977), Marx (1990); Sar and Murni (2012); among others. Furthermore, it was possible to recognize the tools of control used by the Capitol, that reinforce the governmental power over the Districts, highlighting the subjugation inherent to the society of the book.

**Keywords:** the hunger games; controlling tools; governmental power; subjugation.

**RESUMO**

As ferramentas de controle são mecanismos usados pelos governos totalitários que subjagam e privam a população de liberdade, informação e poder. Estes aspectos de controle são observados em universos distópicos que retratam sociedades estratificadas, em dominadores e dominados, impregnadas em ambientes de censura. Desse modo, esta pesquisa objetiva analisar, em *Jogos Vorazes* (2011) de Suzanne Collins, as ferramentas de controle usadas pela Capital e discutir, de que maneiras, este governo opressor lidera o país Panem e seus Distritos, que são divididos pelo sistema de classes, representando a subjugação dos cidadãos. Por isto, para este propósito, este trabalho foi baseado nas ideias de Foucault (2009; 1980; 1977), Marx (1990); Sar e Murni (2012), entre outros. Ademais, foi possível reconhecer as ferramentas de controle utilizadas pela Capital, que reforçam o poder governamental sobre os Distritos, enfatizando uma censura inerente à sociedade do livro.

**Palavras-Chave:** jogos vorazes; ferramentas de controle; poder governamental; subjugação.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The tools of control used to subjugate societies are frequently depicted in dystopias<sup>1</sup>, a kind of narrative which “seeks a static reality where the government establishes the way people should behave, live and make decisions” (Facal, 2020, p. 7). In this way, in novel *The Hunger Games* (2011) there is a totalitarian government led by the Capitol. This central power subjugates the citizens; thus, it provokes the reader into questioning what tools of control are used by that oppressive totalitarianism against the novel’s society and, also, how the Capitol obtains the *status* of an authoritarian regime that is diligent in its own ideologies.

Therefore, the object of the study in this research is the international bestseller novel, *The Hunger Games* (2011). The book was written by the North American Suzanne Collins, who was born in 1962. She was influenced by her father, a military specialist and a doctor on political science. Collins learned from him how and why the battles happened and their consequences; and, also, she acquired knowledge about hunting, edible plants, and the woods (Collins, 2011, p. 457-458), themes that appear in the book.

*The Hunger Games* is the first book of a trilogy and it was first published in 2008. The other two works are named *Catching Fire*, released in 2009, and *Mockingjay*, published in 2010. The three books complete the story of a dystopian world ruled by an oppressor system, in a place that once was North America, now called Panem. After natural disasters and, further, an uprising of the subjugated citizens, the country Panem was raised, resulting in its division in the Capitol, the oppressors, and the thirteen Districts, the subjugated ones.

In this way, after such disasters, in order to avoid another rebellion and to stablish peace, the Hunger Games were invented. In this event, every year, in the Games, two citizens of each District are chosen, then are placed in arenas to kill one another, until only one lives. According to Halsall (2019), the Games happen in a species of battle royale, commonly associated with electronic games, in which happens in a place with an audience that watches people killing each other for delight, as in the gladiatorial arenas, a place where the gladiators or slaves fought for their lives against animals and humans, to entertain the Roman audience (Juvenal, 2011), also the individuals that compose the Capitol, as the watchers and the powerful regime of Panem, do not play in it.

It is, hence, interesting to point out the three main characters in the novel, Katniss Everdeen, Peeta Mellark, and Gale Hawthorne. The events in the story revolve, especially around those three names. The whole story is told by the narrator that is also the protagonist, Katniss, who became a symbol of resistance against the oppressive Capitol, being a revolutionary character that fought in opposition to the tools used by the authoritarian regime to subdue the community she is part of – the Districts –.

Regarding the perspective of analyzing *The Hunger Games’* society, the main objective of this article is to analyze the controlling tools used by the Capitol to subdue the Districts, in *The Hunger Games* (2011) by Suzanne Collins. For achieving this general purpose; firstly, it is examined the aspects, such as class-system and

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<sup>1</sup> “The term **dystopia** (‘bad place’) has recently come to be applied to works of fiction, including science fiction, that represent a very unpleasant imaginary world in which ominous tendencies of our present social, political and technological order are projected into a disastrous future culmination” (Abrams and Harpham, 2012, p. 417).

governmental power, that allow the Capitol to control the Districts; then, it is investigated which controlling tools the powerful regime uses to subdue the citizens of the Districts; restricting freedom, information, and power; and lastly, it is discussed, in which manner, the Capitol employs the tools of control against the Districts' citizens.

To reach this purpose, the research is divided into four topics. In this way, the first one is entitled "The theme of control within the literature", and introduces the next topic "The Capitol's central power: class-system and Districts' subjugation", that explains, in which manner, the authoritarian regime has such power in The Hunger Games' universe, through the division in the class-system based on the Marx' (1990) ideals and how this empowerment leads to the subjugation of the Districts.

Secondly, the next two topics are named as "Totalitarian government and tools of control". It is a brief introduction to the subsequent topic that is "The tools of control used by the Capitol over the Districts", which analyzes the controlling tools used by the Capitol to subdue the Districts and deprive them of information, freedom and power.

This research is categorized as qualitative and bibliographic, as well as, taking into account the nature of literature, an interpretative study. Additionally, this work lies on the ideas of Foucault (2009; 1980; 1977), Marx (1990); Sar and Murni (2012), among others; in order to have theoretical basis for improving and making meaningful contributions regarding the main theme.

Through the analysis of *The Hunger Games* (2021), it is doable to depict the government power that subjugates society by the usage of controlling tools, oppressing citizens, for manipulating the political, social, and economic environments, making it impossible for the Districts to ascend. Hence, this analysis is favorable to an awareness of how the authoritarian system can be manipulative to societies, in order to alienate them to follow its rules.

## 2 THE THEME OF CONTROL WITHIN THE DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE

The theme of control attached to oppressive governments has appeared, over time, in several literary works. Examples of it include *1984*, by George Orwell, in which the Country is ruled by a vigilant and manipulative regime; *The Handmaid's Tale*, by Margareth Atwood, in which an oppressive government forces women to have children, depriving them of having their own choices over their life; and *Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury, narrating a story with a regime that deprive the citizens of intellectual freedom, prohibiting books and other sources of knowledge.

This kind of controlling machinery by totalitarian governments is also expressed in *The Hunger Games* (2021) by Suzanne Collins, a narrative in which the author explores a universe where the individuals have to deal with constant surveillance, manipulation, unbalanced power, exploitation, and the condition of being marginalized citizens. Eliciting discussions about the nature of governments, injustice, censorship of tyrannical governs, and how these elements affect society.

These subjects, mainly the power relations, are expressive in dystopian literature. In the next section is provided a discussion on the Capitol's power, implemented through social division, that leads to disparities between the Capitol and the subjugated Districts, in *The Hunger Games* (2021). Then, it is proposed a study of how this social division can stratify society and permit the regime to take control over the population.

## 2.1 The Capitol's Central Power: Class-System and Districts Subjugation

It is worthy to mention that societal division is part of humanity since the primary states of it, thus “[i]n any society there are organized groups trying to promote the interests, broadly conceived, of their members” (Elster, 1986, p. 122). As a consequence, when individuals in the same group have different interests, it often leads to conflicts that separate the society into contrasting classes. This stratification reflects on levels of power and privileges, with the dominant group imposing their interests over others, occupy the top in the social hierarchy, becoming powerful.

In this way, in *The Hunger Games* (2011), those who rule the country, Panem, are “[...] called the Capitol” (Collins, 2011, p. 7), and it is perceived that, the society of the book is divided into a class-system, composed by the Capitol and the Districts, with the Capitol controlling some aspects of citizen’s lives, that is explained further.

Furthermore, this Capitol’s control is imposed through a totalitarian government, making use of sovereignty<sup>2</sup> and disciplinary mechanisms<sup>3</sup>, that constitutes the processes to acquire power in society (Foucault, 1980). In this way, it can be noticed that the oppressor government, ruled by the Capitol, in *The Hunger Games* (2011), commands the society by its own decisions and interests, leading to the subjugation of the Districts.

Moreover, these lower classes, subdued by the regime are divided into twelve Districts, each one with their laboring functions, that provide supplies to the Capitol, such as: District 11, with its agriculture; District 4, with fishing; District 3 and its factories. The District 12 is related to coal mining and is nicknamed the Seam (Collins, 2011). To check labors of the other Districts that were not mentioned in the first book of *The Hunger Games*, see the **Appendix A**.

In ascending order, from 1 to 12 Districts, those which are near to the Capital are more favoured than the others, yet still under the Capitol’s commands. As we can perceive, by the excerpt below, the tributes – namely, the boys and girls selected to take part in the Hunger Games – from District 1, are close to the ruling regime, in this way they are depicted as wealthy people:

[...] ride out in a chariot pulled by snow-white horses. They look so beautiful, spray-painted silver, in tasteful tunics glittering with jewels. District 1 makes luxury items for the Capitol. You can hear the roar of the crowd. They are always favorites (Collins, 2011, p. 84).

Katniss describes the tributes of District 1 as the wealthiest, what is made evident from her description of their clothes and jewels. Moreover, the Capitol has them as the cherished ones, as they typically possess, in the Games, the physical and mental balance to eliminate more tributes than those from the undernourished Districts. It means that the Capitol values those who can survive longer in the Games.

Additionally, there was one more District, the thirteenth, that was obliterated by the Capitol, due to an uprising. In this sense, the elimination of District 13 is a warning to the other Districts to keep the peace between them and the Capitol. In this manner,

<sup>2</sup> “Sovereign power involves obedience to the law of the king or central authority figure” (O’Farrell, 2013, n. p).

<sup>3</sup> Discipline is a mechanism of power which regulates the behaviour of individuals in the social body. This is done by regulating the organisation of space (architecture etc.), of time (timetables) and people’s activity and behaviour (drills, posture, movement). It is enforced with the aid of complex systems of surveillance (O’Farrell, 2013).

this reminder is rooted in the Treaty of Treason, a system of laws, elaborated to guarantee a harmonious society and to enforce this pact of peace (Collins, 2021). The story highlights the power the Capitol has, reinforced by the class-system, to control the lower ones, by this threat they call a reminder.

In this context, as a stratified society, it is suitable to indicate that the twelve Districts are strictly divided to provide supplies for the ruling government, in areas of agriculture, technology, textiles, and so on. We can notice that this division reinforces the Capitol's power by the usage of the class-system as a tool of control that ensures the subjugation and the lack of control of the Districts' citizens.

Furthermore, Sar and Murni (2012, p. 6) notes that, even though the Districts are providers for the Capitol, they were forbidden to consume their own goods. By controlling the resources' quantity, labor, productivity, and willingness of the Districts, the Capitol solidifies the authority and its systematic oppression over their citizens. This leads us to the Marxist thought about the social division of labor, that refers to the specialization of tasks in face of the social division, which prioritizes the owners of capital (Marx, 1990, p. 55).

Regarding *The Hunger Games* (2021), once the Capitol has control over people's labor and provisions, its profit will surpass its provider, making the Capitol the owners of the capital. This indicates to us a dichotomy between capitalists (the Capitol) and workers (the Districts), depicting the power relation throughout the centrality of the ruling system, maintaining societal hierarchies and laboring division of the Districts.

Besides that, this controlling power, as well as the impact of the Capitol, is applied both against the Districts and over itself, since it can be noticed that some of the Capitol's citizens approve and connive with the Hunger Games. As an example of this passivity, we can notice how Katniss' prep team – those who put Katniss' appearance in the Capitol molds – are quite inclined to accept such power that subjugates them, as we can observe, during a conversation of Katniss and her prep team before the Games:

The three step back and admire their work. "Excellent! You almost look like a human being now!" says Flavius, and they all laugh.  
I forced my lips up into a smile to show how grateful I am. "Thank you," I say sweetly. "We don't have much cause to look nice in District Twelve."  
This wins them completely. "Of course you don't, you poor darling! says Octavia [...].  
[...] you're going to be absolutely gorgeous!" (Collins, 2021, p. 76).

By the lines above, we can be aware that the prep team not only tries to transform Katniss' appearance into the Capitol' style, which includes luxurious, painting their skin with different colors and even talking in a different accent, but also, by saying she looks like a human after the preparation, it depicts the idea of animalization of the citizens of the Districts. The passage indicates that they are conscient that people from District 12, in a certain way, cannot care about appearance, because they are worried by providing the Capitol.

Besides that, the prep team follows their instructions to change Katniss, physically, trying to put her in the ideal *status*, that is to look like a Capitol citizen. They do not question themselves the reasons why the Districts' peoples do not care about appearance just like them. Therefore, the passivity of Capitol's citizens hits, also, its own citizens.

Additionally, concerning the Capitol's power and sovereignty, in Foucault's thought, "the King's body wasn't a metaphor, but a political reality. Its physical presence was necessary for the functioning of the monarchy" (Foucault, 1980, p. 55). Thus,

making a parallel to *The Hunger Games* (2011), the representative of the Capitol's power is President Snow, who is described in the book as a small, thin man with white hair. He represents the significance and control of the Capitol over the Districts and a parcel of the Capitol's citizens, also the regime endeavors to propagate their ideologies of a totalitarian government, by the usage of apparatus oppressing society (Sar and Murni, 2010, p. 7), these apparatuses are the ideals and the tools of control.

However this controlling of the Capitol, occurs in a sneakily mode, due to its influence and high privileges. As we can observe, the character Effie Trinket shows herself excited about the Hunger Games and utters, to Katniss, words of excitement and happiness before the Games: "I hear Effie Trinket's voice, calling me to rise. 'Up, up, up! It's going to be a big, big, big day!' I try and imagine, for a moment, what it must be like inside that woman's head" (Collins, 2011, p. 66).

In this sense, besides the prep team, we can perceive that the character Effie Trinket, a Capitol citizen, does not realize how problematic The Hunger Games are. These Games, imposed by the Capitol, affect people emotionally and physically, once they play to kill each other until only one of them survives. In this way, Effie is being condescending to the Capitol's control.

However, not all individuals of the Capitol are totally passive about being controlled, as an example, the character Cinna knows how dominant can be the Capitol, because he, as Katniss says, looks normal and is not a person that is flamboyant, Cinna has no Capitol's appearance (Collins, 2011, p. 77-78). This quote shows Cinna's awareness of the Capitol's alienation, since he does not look like a Capitol's citizen. He tries to distance himself from the adorns of the Capitol by being simple in appearance, wearing simple black shirts and trousers (Collins, 2011). Somewhat, he does not dress like most of the citizens, and displays his sensibility to the other Districts, such as when he says to Katniss: "how despicable we must seem to you [...]" (Collins, 2011, p. 80). Different from the prep team, he knows what Katniss thinks about the Capitol's citizens, because he is aware of how prepotent they are and how this control can affect even their appearance.

Furthermore, concerning the controlling power the Capitol has, Foucault's (1980, p. 107) idea about disciplinary mechanisms can be discussed. It brings light to what he called the society of normalization, that is the usage of disciplinary mechanisms to regulate individuals' behavior and to suppress their autonomy, perpetuating dominant power through acceptance, as we can observe in the following lines: "[s]o I learned to hold my tongue and to turn my features into an indifferent mask so that no one could ever read my thoughts. Do my work quietly in school [...]" (Collins, 2011, p. 7). So, Katniss, by holding her tongue, seems to perceive Capitol's subjugation and oppression of freedom, differently from Effie that does not think about it, but at the same time, both, even Katniss, accept the Capitol dominance and the mechanisms over them, just described by Foucault (1980) in the society of normalization.

Another passage that explicitly indicates to us an awareness of the Capitol's control is when Katniss, during the Hunger Games, says: "It's the Capitol I hate, for doing this to all of us. [...] I want to do something, [...], to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can't own" (Collins, 2011, p. 286). Besides her anger, it is a fact that Katniss, as a District citizen, cannot fight alone against the Capitol, however her acknowledgement depicts her conscience about this subjugation. In addition, she expresses understanding of how to act in a totalitarian territory, that is submissive, silent, and compliant (Claeys, 2017, p. 491), having to be obedient with all the social rules imposed by the controlling regime.

In fact, it is possible to visualize this segregation between the Capitol and the Districts on the premise that the society in *The Hunger Games* (2011) is divided into powerful and powerless communities, due to the class-system division, being the Districts subjugated and controlled. Also, this division of society and labor may provide us an understanding about what allows the Capitol to ascend over the Districts and make its regime powerful in relation to the Districts. This awareness of how society is divided and formed, leads to the subject of tools of control used by the Capitol and its effortless manipulation, offering insight into how power operates and evolves within Panem's society. For this reason, the subsequent analysis is focused on the power's relations of the Capitol over the Districts, by the utilization of tools of control.

### 3 THE TOTALITARIAN GOVERNMENTS AND THE TOOLS OF CONTROL

To deepen the further discussion, it is essential to acknowledge that the themes of power and government aspects of subjugation are a prevalent content in societal and political dystopia studies. This is because these subjects are intricately related to the governing structures of a society, where politics has, historically, played a central role.

Moreover, totalitarian governments, a type of political system ingrained by censorship and manipulation, are frequently depicted in dystopian literature. This authoritarian regime suppresses rights, freedom, information and power, employing various tools of control to oppress the citizens. Those tools are configured as laws, rules, places, techniques of vigilance, and an assortment of mechanisms that can oppress the citizens. In this way, in the next topic, the Capitol's tools of control are discussed.

#### 3.1 The tools of control used by the Capitol over the Districts

The tools of control are instruments used by oppressor governments to control the society. These are depicted in the dystopias' worlds and constructed via a manipulative relationship between the government and the citizens. Moreover, according to Foucault (2009, p. 96), this regime controls some aspects, such as the population behavior, causing obstructions in their lives and the whole society, as a body. Thus, in *The Hunger Games* (2011), as stated by Mohamad (2018), the Capitol governs the Districts

[b]y possessing resources and monopolizing them the government of Panem, seizes the organizational advantages in power relation. People's lives, bodies, environment, and tools of punishment have all been engendered to serve the mechanism of power the government plays (p. 98).

By concentrating such power, the Capitol controls every aspect of citizens' lives, creating rules and disparities of power dynamics, such as the class-system. Thus, this type of totalitarian government functions as a central massive controlling force, which aims to subjugate and compel citizens to do what they want. This means that who holds power in *The Hunger Games* (2011) is the Capitol, having the access to the usage of tools of control.

Moreover, the District division in a class-system, discussed in the topic 2.1, is a tool of control, as mentioned. This stratification destabilizes the individuals and the societal body, dividing them into submissives and rulers, asserting a power dynamic, in which the ruling system is powerful, "[...] fracturing unities and effecting regroupings,

furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds” (Foucault, 2009, p. 96). Besides, it leads to the disunity of the Districts. For instance, they are forced to kill themselves until one survives, which shows us that the tributes – people that fight in the Games – act under the Capitol’s rules, during the Games, not affecting any aspects of the Capitol’s ruling’s system.

This social division is emphasized by the tool of control named tesserae, which is an instrument used by the society in order not to die of starvation. Children who are eligible for the Games can increase their chances to turn into a tribute by exchanging a year of food supplies to another paper with their name in the lottery, “each tesserae is worth a meagre year’s supply of grain and oil for one person” (Collins, 2021, p. 15). Also, it is a way for the Capitol to increase the chances of poor people to go to the Games, exemplifying how the citizens are not free to do what they want or need, such as eating. As the character Gale, paraphrased by Katniss, points out:

the tesserae are just another tool to cause misery in our district. A way to plant hatred between the starving workers of the Seam and those who can generally count on supper [...]. “It’s to the Capitol’s advantage to have us divided among ourselves,” he might say if there were no ears to hear but mine (Collins, 2021, p. 16).

In this way, another tool of control used by the Capitol, in the novel, is the homonymous competition, the Hunger Games, more specifically the 74th edition of the Games, in which the first book is settled. Furthermore, this Game is used by the Capitol “as a cruel way to control the citizens in the districts to avoid them from doing a rebellion” (Sar and Murni, 2012, p. 7), reminding them of the treason committed by the thirteenth District during the rebellion, commented in the topic 2.1. Also, because of this society manipulation derived from a treason, the Hunger Games are declared by the regime as a good way to establish peace, and keep running every year, highlighting the power of the Capitol and its powerful environment, since the oppressive citizens will not be against the rules.

The Reaping Day, another tool of control, is when the twenty-four competitors of the Hunger Games are chosen, by raffling two citizens of each District on this day. As stated by Gale, a friend of Katniss, this system of choice is “unfair, with the poor getting the worst of it” (Collins, 2021, p. 15). Indicating the acknowledgement of the characters about the subjugation of the Districts, since he notices that: first, the Districts are poor; and second, they are not improving under this controlling government. This situation is reinforced, also, by the tesserae system that is intentionally oriented towards the Districts, once the poor people, by applying for tesseraes, have more chances to participate in the games.

In this way, the Reaping Day is characterized as a tool of control, depicted by Katniss as: “[...] a good opportunity for the Capitol to keep tabs on the population as well” (Collins, 2021, p. 19), once the citizens do not have the authority to choose if they are going to the Games or not, showing to us the massive power the Capitol has.

Furthermore, on Reaping Day, the Capitol, by making it impossible for the Districts to choose if they want to be in the Games or not, deprive the Districts’ citizens of making their own decisions, even if causing their death, like happens in the Hunger Games. As Katniss says, “[t]o make it humiliating as well as torturous, the Capitol requires us to treat the Hunger Games as a festivity, a sporting event pitting every district against the others” (Collins, 2021, p. 22) and, also, “[a]fter the reaping, everyone is supposed to celebrate. And a lot of people do [...]” (Collins, 2021, p. 12). By Katniss’

quotation, we can perceive that the word “requires” has an ironic connotation, because the Capitol uses its power to superimpose rules that put the Districts in a difficult position, forcing them to accept these rules, suppressing their freedom of choice.

Moreover, the rules are a tool of control “set up by the Capitol, not the Districts” (Collins, 2021, p. 16), once the Capitol is the central command that holds power, it controls the citizens and disseminates an ideology of political repression among the Districts (Sar and Murni, 2012, p. 7). Also, the repression is evident regarding rules that are put in use during the daily lives in the Districts and while the tributes are in the Hunger Games.

Some of these rules are observed in the next fragments: “[...] trespassing in the wood is illegal and poaching carries the severest of penalties, more people would risk it if they had weapons” (Collins, 2021, p. 6). We can perceive that, as a hunter, Katniss is prohibited to hunt in the woods and to use weapons for this purpose, even though this is the only way she can keep her family alive, her mother and her sister. However, because of the high level of starvation apparent in her District and the fear of her family dying of it, she hunts using a bow and arrow to survive. Additionally, as stated before, the Districts cannot eat from their own crops and do not receive proper provisions, those are the reason of many deaths and why Katniss highlights that District 12 is a place where you can starve to death (Collins, 2021, p. 7), due to these facts, Katniss needs to break the rules; otherwise, she and her family could die of hunger.

In contradiction, during the Games, inside the arenas, all these rules are subverted. As we can observe, the tributes can make use of weapons during the Games, which might be the only salvation of Katniss, for example, by her technique with the bow and arrow. Also they can rob food and kill each other. Because, since the breaking of rules in that situation does not affect the Capitol's control, tributes are permitted to transgress them, so the Capitol rulers can entertain themselves with the killings.

Furthermore, the Capitol makes use of weapons to control the society, as the Mockingjays, another tool of control. This name refers to the birds used “[d]uring the rebellion, [...] as weapons. After the birds gathered words, they'd fly back to centres to be recorded. It took people a while to realize what was going on in the districts, how private conversations were being transmitted” (Collins, 2021, p. 52).

This monitoring, reminds us of the Panopticon, a term coined by Jeremy Bentham, in the late 18th century, while designing the architecture for a prison. In his turn, Foucault later used this term to describe a city invaded by a plague that produces effects of power, than is eventually divided into quarters and each of it has a commander. Also, the food and the time of being outside the houses is limited and organized by the rulers (Steadman, 2007; Foucault, 1977). This power, over the subjugated, is achieved through vigilance methods, such as the Mockingjays created to peek at the Districts' conversations, monitoring every aspect of their speech.

Another type for monitoring is produced by the cameras transmitting the Games, so the audience, that are Panem citizens, can watch the tributes fighting for their lives. Additionally, the Capitol rulers can entertain themselves, betting in the Game about who will be the victorious (Collins, 2021). Furthermore, as we can observe, the character Katniss constant remembers that there are cameras in the Games, “[t]he audience will have been beside themselves, knowing I was in the tree” (collins, 2021, p. 198), in this way, the word “audience” refers to the Capitol and Districts' citizens. These two quotations above show us that “the Capitol uses technology to establish direct control over individuals. [...] for entertainment in the Capitol because the citizens



of the capitol have fun while watching the death of young adults" (Günenç, 2022, p. 1092).

Moreover, another rule is that all acts of theft are strictly prohibited, being punishable by death, except in the Games. The robbery in the submissive District 12 is at a high average, once people are deprived of basic needs, such as food. In this way, people from the Districts rob to survive and having acknowledgment about it, the Capitol punishes it with death to display control of the situation, instead of providing the Districts with food and supplies in a proper amount.

Regarding the severe punishment of the Capitol for breaking its rules, there are the avoxes. As Haymitch, an ex-Hunger Games' victorious, explains about an avox girl, she is "someone who committed a crime. They cut her tongue so she can't speak" (Collins, 2021, 94-95). In addition, one of the rules asserted by the Capitol is that people must not speak with the avoxes, unless to give an order. This passage depicts to us a trait of power imposition over the citizens, prohibiting the freedom of speech and expression, also controlling physical aspects, such as their bodies.

Katniss clarifies the rules during the Games, also settled by the Capitol:

[t]he rules of the Hunger Games are simple. In punishment for the uprising, each of the twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy, called tributes, to participate [...]. Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch - this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy (Collins, 2021, p. 22).

The Game represents the District's submission to the Capitol, and puts the citizens' lives at stake, using the past rebellion as the justification, indicating that the Games are more significant than its people.

Furthermore, to keep the citizens over control, those who monitor the Districts in accordance to the rules are the peacekeepers, as a military enforcement, they "[...] spread terror to the citizens of the districts. [...] by threatening to punish those who break the law in a terrible way and to reinforce these terror, they will not hesitate to punish people in public" (Sar and Murni, 2012, p. 7).

These soldiers of the Capitol are Districts' citizens, after receiving a sentence for breaking the laws, they can choose the army to pay the debts with the Capitol; or can enlist in the army by the recruitment of the Capitol-raised citizens. Also, they are deprived to marry and have children, during twenty years. Therefore, we can perceive that the regime empowerment controls the liberty of citizens, including their right to marry and construct a family, if they wish it.

Following these ideas, the peacekeepers work as a tool of control allied to fear, they punish the Districts, in public, to show the others how terrible are the consequences when they do not follow their rules. Moreover, as a place of oppression and disparities, it can be related to the Panopticon, a concept that leads us to comprehend the authoritarian state in *The Hunger Games* (2021), since it relates to censorship, surveillance, and vigilance of the citizens. In this way, according to Foucault' (1977) thoughts, we can relate that the peacekeepers act like a militia and commanders that monitor the streets with authority, spreading fear among the Districts.

Another tool of control is the arena, where the Games happen and where "twenty-four tributes will be imprisoned [...] that could hold anything from a burning desert to a frozen wasteland" (Collins, 2021, p. 22). For that purpose, the arena of *The Hunger Games* (2021), and its 74th edition, is placed in a forest, as Katniss describes it: "[t]o my right lies lakes. To my left and back, sparse piney woods" (Collins, 2021, p.

180) and also “[t]he woods begin to evolve, and the pines are intermixed with a variety of trees” (Collins, 2021, p. 184).

The arena, as a restraining place, functions like the Panopticon System, is described as a prison, where, to make the laws function, people were locked. As Foucault reveals: “[i]n this place, the individuals are inserted and monitored all the time (1977, p. 196), being a reduced space, as jails, it is easier “to induce [...] the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault, 1977, p. 201). Therefore, we can notice that the arena is a species of imprisonment that is easier to supervise, since people are locked in the same place and monitored by cameras.

Thus, the arena is chosen and controlled by the Gamemakers, who adjust the Game according to their own rules during battle, using a technological map of the arena in their control room. This means that they can manipulate the tributes in order to control their actions inside of it, once they can pluck the gamers by sending wild animals, toxic gas, and other artifacts to make them move inside the arena to where the Gamemakers want. As we can notice, when Katniss is inside the arena and sees a bunch of berries in a moment of hunger, she perceives the influence of the Gamemakers over the tributes and says: “[...] I'm guessing this is some evil trick on the part of the Gamemakers. Even the plant instructor in the Training center made a point of telling us to avoid berries [...]” (Collins, 2021, p. 201). This excerpt depicts to us the power Gamemakers have over the players' lives, being allowed to put poisoned food for them to eat in the arena.

In addition, regarding tributes' lives and the Gamemakers' power over them, Katniss says in the arena “[t]he Gamemakers don't want me dead. Everyone knows they could destroy us all within seconds [...]” (Collins, 2012, p. 214), while they launch fireballs into the arena. We can notice, at this point, that the Capitol deprives them of freedom, the tributes cannot rule their own lives, since the Gamemakers controls who lives and who dies inside the arena in the way the Capitol rules outside of it.

Also, the Gamemakers can hear, manipulate and omit conversations of the tributes during the Games, as Katniss says: “I wonder if the Gamemakers are blocking out our conversation, because even though the information seems harmless, they don't want people in different districts to know about one another” (Collins, 2022, p. 246). By this previous statement, one can elicit that the omission of information is not rare, revealing a censorship mechanism, one of the controlling tools of the Capitol. Hence, the Districts cannot ally themselves and distinguish what is true, due to the misinformation, making the Capitol supposedly the only source of truthful information for the Districts.

To sum up the ideas regarding the tools of control used by the Capitol, it is noticed that the Capitol governs Panem in order to control the citizens of the Districts into supplying and entertaining the Capitol. Thus, the subjugated ones, the Districts, do not have strength to be the central power, once the Capitol has rooted powerful tools of control in that society and, also, does not open paths for them to evolve, being a totalitarian government that privates population of having freedom and exercising power over them.

#### **4 METHODOLOGY**

The research executed in this article is characterized as qualitative that, according to Moreira and Caleffe's (2008) thoughts is about the exploration of certain social aspects and individuals that cannot be put in numbers. In this way, this work analyzed the experiences, beliefs, behaviors, and interactions of certain characters

from Suzane Collins' book, *The Hunger Games* (2021). As a work of literary criticism, due to its nature, it is classified as interpretative. At some points of this study, it established a connection between the authors used as a basis to individual awareness (Marconi; Lakatos, 2017). In this way of thinking, a criticism was built to validate the proposals analyzed, and to uphold and express a point of view. In this case, it used arguments that can be aligned with the ideas of the main objective.

Moreover, the work is categorized into a bibliographic research once it “[...] is done based on texts such as books, scientific papers, critical essays, dictionaries, encyclopedias, newspapers, magazines, reviews, [and] summaries” (Marconi; Lakatos, 2017, p. 54, my translation<sup>4</sup>), due to utilization of the ideologies from Foucault (2009; 1980; 1977), Marx (1990); Sar and Murni (2012), among others.

When it comes to the steps of this research, in order to present the analysis proposed by the general objective, the first step was the research question, explicit by “what are the tools of control used by the Capitol to subdue the Districts; and in which manner the Capitol makes use of them?”. After a general introduction about the research and the object of study that was *The hunger Games* (2021) book by Suzanne Collins, the topic “The Theme of Control Within the Literature” narrated the power dynamics inherent to the totalitarian government and the disparities among the population, due to the societal division. These themes are largely expressed in dystopian Literature, that commonly focuses in a stratified society led by an oppressive regime.

This aforesaid theme was a preamble to the topic “The Capitol's central power: class-system and districts subjugation”, which was the third step of this research. In this subject, one of the ideals that most appeared was the one from *The Capital* (1990) by Karl Marx, a German philosopher, that is notorious in his works about politics and economy. His work influenced the research regarding the ideologies of the class-system, exploitation, and class struggle, in which the society is divided into bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In *The Hunger Games* (2021) universe, the social division is a crucial point for the Capitol to ascend among the Districts, facilitating the subjugation, forcing them to do labor and provide the capitol with food and supplies.

The fourth step was to settle the topic entitled “Totalitarian government and tools of control”, that correlates the prevalent themes such as power and government subjugation in societal dystopias, once the usage by the authoritarian regime of control is a weapon to suppress classes, in this case the Districts; and to characterize the totalitarian regime the oppressor of citizens, through censorship and manipulation, being, also, a preamble for the fifth part, entitled “The tools of control used by the Capitol over the Districts”.

This fifth step was the key point for the research, in which is proposed the explanation of which are the tools of control and, in which way, they are used by the Capitol. In these analyses, the main ideas rely on Foucault (2009; 1980; 1977), by the contents about the panopticon – a term initially coined by Jeremy Bentham –, the prisons, vigilance, surveillance, sovereignty, and disciplinary mechanisms; also, by the studies of Sar and Murni (2012) that linked aspects of political dystopia to *The Hunger Games* (2021), among others.

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<sup>4</sup> From the original: “[...] é feita com base em textos, como livros, artigos científicos, ensaios críticos, dicionários, enciclopédias, jornais, revistas, resenhas, resumos”.

## 5 CLOSING REMARKS

This research focused on analyzing the controlling tools used by the Capitol to subjugate the Districts, in *The Hunger Games* (2012), describing these tools and how they were used by in an analyses of the novel. Furthermore, it was explored how the Capitol's ascension influenced the usage of these apparatuses over the citizens of Panem; and some aspects that turned this regime powerful, such as the class-system and laboring division.

Through this research, it was possible to observe the power of the totalitarian government in a dystopian universe and how the class-system had an impact on the stratification of the population, facilitating the Capitol's power boost. Moreover, the passivity of the Districts and their acceptance of the disciplinary mechanisms of power were crucial for the government to have total control and to enjoy the goods produced by their labor, reinforcing the segregation that leads to the control of information, freedom, and power.

In addition, it was noticeable that the passivity was punctual among the Districts, also, due to the vigilance and peacekeepers of the Capitol that spread fear and dominance. In this way, this constant control involves political, social, and economic factors that functions censoring the population, while forcing them to do the necessary for the authority to keep the its power.

This inability to fight back is highlighted by the fear and manipulation ingrained in the society that has subjected themselves to avoiding conflicts with the powerful regime. In this way, it is difficult for the citizens of the Districts to beat the Capitol, since they do not have the possibility to put an end to that authoritarian regime, because of the already formed relations of power among Panem.

The theme of controlling tools, manipulations, stratification of the society, and subjugation of the powerless is remnant in the literary studies, attributable to the persistent exploitation of power dynamics and social hierarchies, that leads to the censorship of the citizens. This subject is commonly based on the real experience humanity has passed through and how these aspects can affect people.

Hereupon, the process of reflecting on the tools of control used by totalitarian governments and the consequent subjugation of citizens, becomes possible through dystopian Literature, even though the universe of *The Hunger Games* (2012) is fictional and invented, it reflects aspects of history that has occurred and could occur. Thus, being aware of concepts regarding alienation, censorship, and how they are employed in society, create a propitious process of understanding the world and its mechanisms and how these affect society.

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## **APPENDIX A — OTHER DISTRICTS' LABORS**

Regarding the non-mentioned Districts' labors in the first book of the trilogy, according to McCormick (2023), there are:

District 2 – the masonry and weapon manufacturing;

District 5 – power and electricity;

District 6 – transportation;

District 7 – lumber;

District 8 – textiles industries;

District 9 – grain production;

District 10 – with livestock industry, raising animals, and provision of meat.

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