

# Sociology of "hunger games"



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## Introduction

The nation of Panem has risen out of the ravaged ruins of what was once known as North America. 74 years ago, the poverty-stricken districts of Panem rebelled against the wealthy, controlling the Capitol. After its crushing victory, the Capitol devised the Hunger Games as an annual reminder to the twelve districts of its authority, and as continuing punishment for the rebellion. Every year, each district must hold a raffle (known as the "reaping") to choose one boy and one girl (ranging from age 12-18) to participate in the Hunger Games, a competition in which each of the twenty-four contestants (known as "tributes") fight to the death in a televised arena until only one is left alive.

This is the story of the 74th Hunger Games and at the center of it is Katniss Everdeen, a resident of the poorest of all the districts, District 12. During "The Reaping", the "Tribute" selection comes to pass and is where Katniss ultimately volunteers to fight after her sister's name is drawn from the fish bowl.

Her male counterpart is the baker's son, Peeta Melark. Per the rules, only one or neither of these two combatants will ever return to District 12 alive. "The Hunger Games" are treated as just that, games, they are televised in the Capitol and all 12 Districts as people look on, the members of the Capitol cheering along the way and members of each District looking on in sadness as their children are murdered for the satisfaction of the oppressive government. After the tributes are selected they are taken by train to the Capitol. On the train and in the capitol you can see the apparent culture shock in the face of the 2 district 12 contestants. Coming from the poorest

district modeled after the coal mining era, where most people live in absolute poverty. Peeta and Katniss are taken back by the surplus of luxury and wealth exhibited by the Capitol. The Games are held in an arena in a forested area. When they begin, Katniss rushes away from the excitement of the initial bloodbath and uses her hunting/survival skills to develop a strategy. She sleeps in trees and hunts game.

Each night, faces of the dead are broadcast into the sky. As she stays hidden, she learns that Peeta has allied himself with the "Career Tributes," those tributes from the richer districts who train their entire lives for the Games. The game makers announce that the rules have changed, and that the two tributes from a district can serve as co-victors. She then finds Peeta, who was cut badly after helping Katniss escape the Careers. She does her best to help him recover. They spend days growing closer in a cave, they prepare themselves and head out to face Cato, the only other surviving tribute. But their main challenge turns out not to be Cato, but several wolf-man creatures unleashed by the Game makers, creatures reanimated from the corpses of dead tributes. Katniss and Peeta escape by climbing to higher ground, while the other tribute falls and is tortured by the creatures. Finally, Katniss kills the tribute with her arrow out of mercy. They have won the Games, but the Game makers rescind the rule about dual victors. Peeta and Katniss threaten to commit suicide, which would ruin the Games, and they are hence awarded a dual victory.

### Social Conflict

The social conflict theory is a struggle between different segments of a society over often limited and valuable resources, needed for that segments

survival. This is seen in majority of districts as the citizens of each district struggle to survive and obtain resources such as food, water, clothing, and shelter. They are also exploited for their districts specific resources like fish, coal, and steel to name a few by the uber rich Capitalist ( those who live in the capitol). This reminded me of our reading and discussions about the Congo. In the Congo the poor native people were controlled by the rich looking to exploit them of their resources. The conflict theory is even exhibited in a more literal sense in the actual " Hunger Games" competition as tributes battle to the death over resources to survive.

### Social Stratification

The division of the districts, each district has a specific area of production. Ex. District 1-Luxury items, District 4- Fishes, District 11- Agriculture, and District 12- Coal Miners. All districts produce their items for the rich and powerful Capitol. This can be viewed as a division of labor. Each district has a specific job, a specific labor that contributes to the whole nation but mostly to the Capitol. The first 2 districts live comfortably while as the number of the district increases their quality of living decreases. Because of this caste system those born into one of the districts have very little if any opportunity for advancement in the class system and are generally stuck in their respective district.

### Structural Functionalism

Their treatment and control of the poor districts can also fall under structural functionalism. Looking at each district as if they were gears in a motor, if you would remove one the system as a whole would start to fail. Looking at it from that perspective one would argue that if there was not a class system in <https://assignbuster.com/sociology-of-hunger-games/>

this case a district system, who would mine coal or fish to support the capitol? This is a key question when examining the structural functionalism of the "Hunger Games". Since the rich elitists of the capitol lack the ability of self-sustainment the poor serve a purpose, and without them life would not be as comfortable for the Capitalist. So most all of the citizens of the Capitol do not feel bad for the poor districts, they actually view it as if they were helping them, giving them a purpose and a means of living. The government perpetuates the ideology that their society must be structured this way for there to be peace and order.

Sound familiar? Even in our world the rich are always pointing out how poverty is necessary. For jobs to be done that middle and upper class wouldn't do you need a lower class willing to work longer days, more extreme conditions and often for less pay. This could be seen today in arguments for immigration reform and amnesty for undocumented immigrants. Supporters of amnesty often point out that it is usually the undocumented immigrants that will work the fruit fields and other demanding low paying jobs that majority of Americans would not, allowing fruits and vegetables to make it from farm to store and eventually our table. So using my sociological lenses to view this argument I could clearly see the need for poor undocumented immigrants for our society to progress smoothly.

### Socialization

Socialization plays a major part in this film. It is evident in the different behaviors and values, and ideologies. Socialization determines how a society is run. Those from the Capitol dress in futuristic wildly colorful fashions, dye

their hair bright colors, wear extravagant makeup. When we see the citizens of District 12, they are dressed in old, dirty clothing of the coal mining era and obviously no makeup or hair dyes. When the reaping takes place, the children are dressed their best, wearing their cleanest dresses and cleaning up in an attempt to look semi self-respectable and to show some pride. Both the citizens of the district as well as those of the Capitol have differing views of the games. To majority of the districts the annual Hunger Games are terrifying and difficult to watch. The citizens of the capitol on the other hand view it as an exciting sporting event, just entertainment for them.

The difference was easily noticeable throughout the movie, there were many times when you could notice the fear of the games in the tributes and how the Capitol citizens congratulate the tributes as if it was an honor to be forced to kill or be killed. There was also a few moments exemplifying deviance in this movie. Through the eyes of the Capitol Katniss is the very epitome of a deviant in one scene she shot an arrow past the game makers' heads to grab their attention then bows and says thanks for the consideration. Another good example of deviant behavior was when one of the tributes was murdered Katniss went to the nearest camera and held up 3 fingers which is in my understanding some sort of symbol for unity and respect throughout the districts and sparked the rebellion in District 11. Katniss and Peeta also show deviance at the end of Hunger Games when told that there could only be one winner they were going to eat the poison berries which would have rendered the Hunger Games pointless and most likely would have incited mass riots throughout the districts which led to the game makers allowing dual winners as promised.

## Conclusion

This is an amazing film exemplifying the different sociological theories. There are so many aspects of this film that relate to our real life society, many exaggerated but still the underlying message of inequality throughout the social class is dead on. One can easily see the caste system of class differing among the Districts as well as the Capitol, the rich stay rich and the poor stay poor. The rich exploit and otherwise make excuses justifying the need for a class system which only benefits them (sounds like American politics). I have watched this movie numerous times but it wasn't until gaining my sociological imagination that I was able to see the underlying messages being brought forward in this film and I would strongly recommend this movie to all sociology students.

## References

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