

Faction before Blood: Family Communication Patterns and Gender in the Dystopian Teen

Drama Film *Divergent* (2014)

by

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Abstract

This study examines the family communication and gender messages communicated in the dystopian teen drama *Divergent* (2014). Through application of family communication patterns theory and a family feminist perspective, the family communication orientations and family type in this film maintain the dominant gender ideology – patriarchy. In a two-step critical cultural methodology, this study first applies family communication patterns theory to the relationships between mother-daughter, father-daughter, and brother-sister presented in the film resulting in a laissez-faire family type. Second, the gender messages communicated in the film are analyzed by means of this specific family type portrayal. This analysis found that the depiction of this type of family communication resulted in adherence to patriarchal power structures within the family and the negative feminine characterization of Tris, the protagonist. Power in this family is maintained by the males and masculinity while the laissez-faire family type inhibits discourse to challenge this androcentric value. Implications of this analysis include the framing of masculinity as powerful and femininity as weak as well as the importance of communication to challenge dominant constructions and values in society.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Divergent generally means to be different or to differ from a standard. In a society that emphasizes cohesion and celebrates normalcy, divergence is often frowned upon. Unfortunately, this adherence to societal norms is seen through many aspects of culture including gender. Western culture is androcentric, which means male is the valued norm while female is the deviation from that norm— divergent (Bem, 1993). This study analyzes the film *Divergent* (2014) for the messages it communicates about gender, specifically through family communication.

Families are referred to as interdependent small groups and are a core attribute of our culture. Families can stem from blood, law, or affection and are characterized by ongoing interdependence (Baxter & Braithewaite, 2006). Most importantly for this study, families are constructed and maintained through communication (Vangelisiti, 2004). Family communication can shape individual's values, beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies including those about gender (Witt, 1997). Families influence gender role socialization because families communicate and pass on their gender role ideologies both overtly and covertly through conversations, interactions, and activities (Witt, 1997). Therefore, understanding how family communication impacts gender role ideologies of individuals is an important area of study for family communication scholars and social effects scholars alike.

In addition to face-to-face interactions, family communication is represented prevalently on media platforms. These depictions predominantly include books, television, and film. Family communication is a common and significant experience that is embedded in social interactions for many individuals and thus, the family is a popular media portrayal (Douglas, 2003). As many scholars have argued, media are a substantial mode of socialization and learning in our culture.

When viewers use media to meet their own needs either as information sources or for entertainment, they also gain societal and individual insights from media portrayals (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Mediated depictions of families drive expectations of how families are or ought to be (Callister, Robinson, & Clark, 2007). Viewers of these families draw comparisons with their own families and learn about family life, relationships, roles, and rules through the depictions (Callister et al., 2007). Mediated messages' influence on conceptions of family life may be just as significant as the home environment and interpersonal family communication (Callister et al., 2007). Thus, media portrayals of family communication are a significant area of study in order to elucidate potential influences and implications.

This study examines the portrayal of family communication in a popular teenage post-apocalyptic film. The genre of this film, often deemed post-apocalyptic teen drama or dystopian teen drama, has been a popular form of entertainment for decades (Ames, 2013). According to Ames (2013), the abundance and popularity of young adult dystopian depictions in novels, films, and television increased significantly following 9/11/2001. Dystopias are defined as a counter-utopian society that incorporates a “repressed, controlled, restricted system with multiple social controls put into place via government, military, or a powerful authority figure” (Spisak, 2012, p.55). Classic dystopian novels include George Orwell’s *1984*, published in 1949, and Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*, published in 1953.

More often than not, dystopian teen drama films are adaptations from novels. Three recent film examples of post-apocalyptic teen novel adaptations include *The Hunger Games* series (2012-2015), *The Maze Runner* series (2014-2018), and *Divergent* series (2014-2016). It is important to note that the target audience for this genre is young adults aged 12 to early 20s (Spisak, 2012). Thus, these films follow dystopian plots that comment on political, social-

psychological, and existential elements but with relatively simplistic plots (Dodson, 1997).

While atomic bombs, natural disasters, and zombies are common elements of post-apocalyptic films, dystopian teen dramas often focus on social commentary, such as entertainment venues or diversity, in order to spark interest with young adults (Ames, 2013). The main characters in dystopian teen dramas are teenagers themselves. These characters reflect the hardships of everyday teenage life (difficulty with schoolwork, parents, and/or romance) through the incorporation of restricted dystopian characteristics (Spisak, 2012). Because teens often have trouble seeing the bigger picture outside of their own problems, these films encourage scrutiny of societal norms through relatable plots (Ames, 2013; Spisak, 2012). The purpose of these plots is to encourage viewers to examine their society with a critical eye and to predispose to and potentially incite political action and change among young adults (Ames, 2013).

Interestingly, many of these dystopian teen dramas lack the incorporation of family communication in their plots. For example, *The Hunger Games* (2012) does not emphasize much parental communication between the main character, Katniss, and her one living parent, her mother. While there is a focus in this film on the influence of sibling relations, the direct communication presented between Katniss and her sister is minimal. Similarly, *The Maze Runner* (2014) does not incorporate any family communication within the dystopian plot. In fact, the characters in this film do not remember anything about their families, and thus, the influence from their family on their identity is not apparent. Rutherford (2004) argues that isolation is a common element of dystopian teen dramas. This isolation can be from family and/or friends and somehow influences the evolution of the character and the plot (Rutherford, 2004). Specifically, isolation from adults including parents demonstrates generational gaps between adult and adolescent culture (Rutherford, 2004). While this separation between family and teen is a

common theme in this genre, this is not the case in *Divergent* (2014). In fact, I argue family is the central focus of this film and the biggest influence on the main character's identity.

Therefore, due to its uniqueness in the dystopian teen drama genre, *Divergent* (2014) is an important cultural artifact to study. For this reason, this film is the sole focus of this analysis.

The film *Divergent* (2014) was released in March of 2014 and grossed over \$288 million worldwide ("Divergent," n.d.). This film is a young adult novel adaptation originally written by Veronica Roth. The plot follows a female protagonist, Tris Prior, in a futuristic world set in Chicago, where people are divided into five factions based on human virtues: Abnegation, Candor, Dauntless, Amity, and Erudite. In the film, Tris has four living family members: her mother, Natalie Prior, her father, Andrew Prior, and her older brother, Caleb Prior. I chose to analyze this film for several reasons. First, *Divergent* (2014) is a current representation of the teen dystopian drama and, as mentioned previously, is one of the only films in this genre that emphasizes family communication. While there are two other movies that follow in the series, *Insurgent: The Divergent Series* (2015) and *Allegiant: The Divergent Series* (2016), I focus on the first movie because of its thematic emphasis on Tris' family. Both of her parents die towards the end of the first film, and thus, the next two films focus solely on the effects of her past parental communication rather than direct communication itself. In addition, this film is one of the more current, popular films that utilizes a female heroine in a dystopian setting. While *The Hunger Games* (2012) is another current example of the use of a female heroine in this genre, it exhibits little direct family communication that is required for this type of analysis. Third, the film also communicates the intersection of family communication and feminine gender role ideologies. *Divergent* (2014) is the only film that incorporates all of these elements that are necessary for my analysis, and thus, it is the sole film that I analyze.

Previous studies have analyzed *Divergent* (2014) both in film and novel form.

Rahmawati (2016) analyzed Tris' character identity and transformation in terms of female action hero in the film. Tris, as the main character in this film, is a unique individual in the dystopian society of factions. In the beginning, Tris has difficulty defining who she is, while she is forced to choose one distinguishing personality trait to define the rest of her life. Through the use of personal choices, strengths, and tragedies, she evolves into an outspoken, brave hero by the end of the film. This specific author used Tris' physical attributes such as her body transformation, costumes, and tattoo to analyze the depiction of a female heroine (Rahmawati, 2016). In addition, Hemphill (2015) compared the book and novel in their depictions of sexual violence. The author concluded that although these scenes in the novel and film are presented to illustrate Tris' strength, it fails to subvert the trend of sexual violence portrayals against women in the media (Hemphill, 2015). While these cultural analyses of this film overlap with my methodology, they do not study the impact of family communication on Tris' gender identity.

This paper analyzes family communication in the film in order to elucidate the elements in this dystopian teen drama that may influence gender role ideologies. To do this, I employ family communication patterns theory and a family feminist perspective. Using a critical methodology, I argue that the family communication patterns presented in the film *Divergent* (2014) maintain the dominant gender ideology - patriarchy. To illustrate this, this paper progresses in five chapters. Following this first chapter, in chapter 2, a review of literature on mediated family communication, gender role ideologies, and family communication patterns theory is presented. Chapter 3 outlines my critical methodology and research questions. Then, in chapter 4, my analysis applies family communication patterns and family types to the family communication presented in the film. In addition, I analyze how these applied patterns maintain

gender role ideologies. Last, in chapter 5, the implications of the analysis are presented and possibilities for future research outlined.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Before conducting my analysis of *Divergent* (2014), it is imperative to have foundational studies grounding my theoretical framework and feminist perspective. This chapter reviews literature on the three main elements of my study: family media portrayals, the critical perspective in conjunction with feminism and family, and family communication patterns theory. The purpose of this review is to present past and current research in these areas of study and to illustrate the backing, development, and innovation of this analysis. The family media portrayals section presents literature on families in television and film. Then, the critical perspective section defines cultural studies, gender role ideologies, and the feminist family studies perspective. Finally, the family communication patterns theory section provides an overview of the origin and applications of this particular theory.

Family Media Portrayals

Family systems and family communication play an integral role in American popular culture as well as the daily lives of individuals. Vangelisti (2004) emphasizes three basic assumptions that scholars use in their definitions of families: families are interdependent systems, their processes are patterned, and they are constructed through communication and interaction. Caughlin, Koerner, Schrodtt, and Fitzpatrick (2011) define a family as, “a group of intimates who generate a sense of home and group identity, have strong ties of loyalty and emotions, and experience a history and a future” (p. 682). Because these bonds are “generated,” family communication scholars study families as discourse dependent entities that are based on, created, and maintained through communication (Caughlin et al., 2011; Few-Demo, Lloyd, & Allen, 2014). Social interaction, not biology or structure, is the fundamental aspect of families and images of families (Few-Demo, Lloyd, & Allen, 2014).

Images of families are presented in various media platforms. Television, movies, books, and music use the construction of families to shape their plots, themes, and messages (Douglas, 2003). Douglas (2003) asserts that the significance of the family experience and its embeddedness in social interactions are the main reasons that the family is a popular media portrayal. While there are various forms of mediated sources that depict families, most of the literature surrounding mediated family depictions examines televised portrayals. In addition, the vast majority of these studies focus solely on prime-time television families. According to Glennon and Butsch (1982), 218 fictional families were depicted on television between 1946 and 1978. In 1981, 40 to 50 families were depicted on prime-time and Saturday morning television each week (Wilson, 2004). Robinson and Skill (2001) analyzed 630 prime-time family depictions that aired between 1950 and 1995. Although these statistics have not been updated over the past two decades, the number of family depictions on television has no doubt increased tremendously. With the rise in cable channels, new television genres such as reality TV, and growing non-normative depictions of single-parent families and gay/lesbian couples, it is apparent that TV families are widely abundant today.

Researchers in this field focus on portrayals of the family from the late 1940s to current day depictions using methodologies such as content analysis and descriptive analytics (Cantor, 1990; Glennon & Butsch, 1982; Moore, 1992; Robinson & Skill, 2001; Wilson, 2004). For example, Glennon and Butsch (1982) analyzes the content of all the family series broadcasted on network television from 1946-1978 with an emphasis on social class depictions. Moore (1992) categorizes family characteristics as either conventional or non-conventional as depicted in television series from 1947-1990. According to this study, there is a trend toward more equal portrayals of conventional (couples with children) and non-conventional (single parent) families

on television. Also, Robinson and Skill (2001) found that the size of the family depicted has increased from an average of 1.8 children in the 1950s to 2.45 children in the 1990s.

The vast majority of scholarship on fictional family portrayals focuses on the effects of viewership. Through research on the portrayals of families on television through time, scholars have found that these depictions affect many facets of family life including social expectations of the family and family communication (Douglas, 2003). Douglas (2003) states that mediated depictions of family offer implicit lessons about family communication that often affect the viewer's conceptualization of family. In addition, family portrayals can influence the viewer's own family interactions (Douglas, 2003). Many of these effect studies use the cultivation theoretical perspective asserting that repetitive exposure to patterns of family images on television cultivates certain perceptions of the world among viewers (Signorielli & Morgan, 2001). This approach focuses on long-term effects rather than aesthetic categories or specific interpretations of mediated messages (Signorielli & Morgan, 2001).

The relationship between family depictions on television and gender is also a popular area of study. For example, Press (2009) examined the evolution of feminism in regards to TV family depictions. Early depictions confined women to the home and family life; however, in the 1960s and 1970s, depictions of working women on TV increased demonstrating life outside of the family (Press, 2009). Nontraditional families began to be depicted more steadily in the 1980s and 1990s, while working women portrayals illustrated a desire to be home with the family (Press, 2009). Television in the 2000s follows a third-wave feminism script emphasizing individuality and sexual liberation as seen in *Sex and the City* and a more honest portrayal of choice issues as demonstrated in *Desperate Housewives* (Press, 2009). This evolution of feminine TV portrayals illustrates the reflection of cultural values in media representations.

Family Films. While analysis of family content on television has a long, in-depth scholarly history, research on the family in American films has received less attention. Researchers have analyzed the depictions of families in film in specific genres such as horror (Williams, 2014), the 1950s drama (Leibman, 2010), and family-adventure (Kramer, 1998). Levy (1991), in an analysis of family film representations from the late 1960s to 1990, claims that while American films reproduce cultural depictions of the family, there is a cultural lag between society and its representations. Therefore, societal conditions and concerns about marital status, divorce rates, family size, patriarchal or matriarchal structure, and the like may not be accurately re-produced in media portrayals (Levy, 1991).

For these reasons, studying media portrayals of families in popular culture and understanding their influence on American family life are vital aspects of family communication scholarship. Brown (2012) argues that Hollywood family film is a genre in itself even though it has received little attention from cinema critics and historians. Family films have a generic identity and thus, a precise definition is difficult to attain. However, Brown (2012) asserts that certain myths about family films, such as they are intended for and consumed by children only and family films “equate purely with Walt Disney,” are not true (p. 11). Family films encompass a wide range of genres including comedy, fantasy, and science fiction and incorporate aspects of family life that appeal to the whole family (Brown, 2012). Due to its expansive inclusion of sub-genres, appeal to broad audience base, and transcendence of cultural barriers such as age, race, and social class, Brown (2012) claims that Hollywood family films are the most “commercially-successful and widely consumed” form of film entertainment in the world (p. 1).

Scholars who study this genre of American films cover an array of topics. For example, Levy (1991) examined the incorporation of the American dream in family films. This author

concluded that depictions of the American dream were making a comeback in family films due to changing ideals but still maintained a cultural lag between reality and depiction (Levy, 1991). Williams (2014) analyzed the subgenre family horror films from the 1970s and argued that these films represented a creative outlet for the cultural movement encouraging change in American society. These films were a “powerful cultural counterforce” that incorporated a celebrated social institution (the family) with diverse and oppositional creativity (Williams, 2014). Furthermore, many studies have been conducted on the Disney family subgenre. Tanner, Haddock, Zimmerman, and Lund (1995) studied the images of couples and families in Disney films. Henke, Umble, and Smith (1996) focused on the construction of female identity in Disney family films. There are no studies thus far that examine American family films in the subgenre dystopian teen drama. This study fills that gap in research.

A current and important study of family film representations is one conducted by Kirby, Riforgiate, Anderson, Lahman, and Lietzenmayer (2016) on the portrayals of work-family balance in the films *One Fine Day* (1996) and *I Don't Know How She Does It* (2011). Using a critical methodology, these authors analyzed the female main character identity constructions for messages about work and family balance. Specifically, they studied how the female performances reproduced cultural ideologies about “good working mothers” and answered the question “How do the identity performances in *OFD* and *IDK* (re)produce ideologies of good working mothers?” (Kirby et al., 2016, p.80). They conclude that the construction of the good working mother heavily involves juggling the ideal worker and the true domestic mother. Further, these portrayals create “consequences” in that good working mothers must conceptualize fathers as secondary parents and place family over work (Kirby et al., 2016).

Due to its incorporation of family portrayals and film, Kirby et al.'s (2016) methodology is used as the basis for my study. However, these authors did not emphasize the use of family communication in the films nor did they use a family communication patterns theoretical framework. Therefore, I further this type of family film critical analysis by incorporating these elements into my methodology. While family portrayals have been and are currently a popular form of entertainment in film (*Death of a Salesman* (1951,1985), *Mr. Mom* (1983), *Parenthood* (1989); *Stepmom* (1998), *Meet the Parents* (2000), *Bad Moms* (2016), etc.), research has yet to address them from the perspective of family communication patterns and gender. Therefore, this study analyzes a representation of family communication in a popular, current film in order to help fill this gap in research. More specifically, this study takes a critical approach in order to gain understanding of family communication representations in the film *Divergent* (2014).

Family and the Critical Perspective

Critical cultural studies are lacking in family communication research. Stamp and Shue (2013) indicate that only 1% of articles published in the *Journal of Family Communication* are critical analyses. Critical studies interpret, analyze, and critique cultural works (Kellner, 2003). Specifically, critical studies of media must examine how the text perpetuates dominant values, political ideologies, and social movements of the time in which they are produced (Kellner, 2003). In addition, Barker (2012) highlights the importance of critical studies due to its focus on power and power structures. Understanding how power is perpetuated and how culture is socially constructed through media representations are fundamental attributions of critical cultural studies (Barker, 2012).

Families are cultural sites in which power is formed, distributed, maintained, and challenged (Olson, 2012). Families contain power struggles, hegemonic patterns of discourse,

communicative inequities, and dominant belief systems that are in need of critical analysis (Olson, 2012). Olson (2012) maintains that family communication researchers need to ask questions and form studies that “challenge the status quo of ‘family’ in our society” (p. 2). In order to do this, Suter (2016) asserts four key considerations of critical family communication. The first consideration entails attention to the issues of power in which power is seen as external to the individual rather than an inherent property or characteristic (Suter, 2016). The second consideration encourages the collapse of the public-private family sphere binary asserting that families are not private entities and are influenced by public, external factors (Suter, 2016). The third consideration emphasizes the resistance and critique of the status quo by questioning normative practices and conceptualizing families as a site of potential resistance and transformation (Suter, 2016). The fourth and final consideration encourages author reflexivity in this type of research (Suter, 2016). This process encourages the researcher to reflect on him or her self as the researcher and to identify potential biases or influencers.

Critical family communication research scholars utilize a variety of methodologies to make these considerations. For example, Medved (2016) and Scharp and Thomas (2016) performed discourse analyses in their critical family studies. Medved (2016) analyzed transcripts of interviews with fathers about stay-at-home practices and their construction of masculinity, while Scharp and Thomas (2016) analyzed adult child interviews on family estrangement. In addition, Berry and Adams (2016) and Strasser (2016) used the autoethnographic methodology to critically analyze aspects of family communication. Berry and Adams (2016) presented personal narratives to illuminate the abuses of power in family bullying. Strasser (2016) analyzed personal father-son discourses to critique models of fathering and masculinity. Furthermore, Kirby, et al. (2016) studied mediated representations of family in two films. The researchers used

these film representations to analyze the discursive ideologies of motherhood and labor (Kirby et al., 2016). Likewise, this study uses this same methodology to analyze the portrayal of family communication and gender identity in the film *Divergent* (2014).

Gender Role Ideologies. Many critical analyses focus on the perpetuation of gender role ideologies in media texts. Gender is a concept that is defined by society, expressed by individuals, and changes over time (Wood, 2013). While sex (male or female) is a classification based on biological factors, gender is a learned outward expression of masculinity and/or femininity (Wood, 2013). Masculine and feminine characteristics and stereotypes vary across culture, and thus, this paper focuses on American ideologies of gender. According to Wood (2013), gender is a product of cultural ideas and expectations that stipulate how individuals should act in accordance with socially constructed rules, norms, and values of society. Therefore, gender is often mistaken for sex and is seen as normal, natural, and right (Wood, 2013).

The ideology that masculinity is inherently the dominant gender is embedded in American culture (Bem, 1993). This ideology is known as patriarchy and translates to “father-rule.” Patriarchy emphasizes males and masculinity as the governing force of society and the possessors of power. Patriarchal societies are created, maintained, and defined by the perspectives of men and thus, male priorities, values, and ideas are the cultural forefront. Therefore, patriarchy maintains androcentric values, structures, and practices. Bem (1993) defines androcentrism as the socially accepted perception of male as the norm and female as a deviation from that norm. This patriarchal value has led American culture to view man as human and woman as other (Bem, 1993). In addition, this ideology has produced and maintained a gendered reality in which power is established and negotiated through language and communication (Wood, 2012). Stereotyped expectations of femininity and masculinity, such as

women are passive and men are assertive, are perpetuated by means of varying contextual forms of communication. In American culture, these forms of communication include, but are not limited to, family communication, early education, popular culture, and media texts such as television and film.

Feminism argues that gender role ideologies oppress women due to their inception in a patriarchal, androcentric society. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, feminists have challenged this perpetuated norm by illuminating political inequities, discriminations, poor treatment, and hidden assumptions based on gender (Bem, 1993). Whereas first and second wave (1848-1959; 1960s-1980s) feminism focused on female oppression and revealed many of the deep rooted inequities of American culture, third wave feminism (1990s-present) focuses on individual empowerment of all genders (Barker, 2012). Third wave feminism draws from previous movements and began in the early 1990s as a reaction and continuation of second wave feminism (Siegel, 2007). The third wave focuses on and celebrates differences among individuals in terms of race, class, sexual orientation, and gender identity and works to empower all types of people by emphasizing the importance of individuality (Wood, 2012; Siegel, 2007). Siegel (2007) claims that this new feminist ideology created the “feminist badass” identity that is an icon of individualized freedom and gender equality (p. 124). This feminist identity is now a popular representation of women in films, television shows, and music videos (Siegel, 2007).

Family Feminist Studies. Researchers who study the intersection of family communication and feminism term their perspective family feminist studies (Few-Demo, Lloyd, & Allen, 2014). This theoretical lens focuses on how power, structure, and agency are manifested in familial relationships and is informed by the fluid nature and critical perspectives of feminism, most currently third wave feminism (Few-Demo et al., 2014). Few-Demo et al.

(2014) illustrate three general assumptions that underpin family feminist studies. First, families are physical and emotional sites where power, love, conflict, and care influence how people live their lives. Second, family life is informed and constrained by social stratifications that in turn structure life opportunities. Third, privileges and oppressions that operate in institutional and communicative ways are present in family life by means of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, age, and ability status (Few-Demo et al., 2014). These assumptions inform family feminist studies that question the processes of power within families. Specifically, family feminist studies aim to investigate “the processes by which certain family members earn, possess, or lose power, identify as having power in families, and strategize to maintain power among varying constellations of family members over time, over generation, and in specific contexts” (Few-Demo et al., 2014, p. 88).

Families are a primary influence on gender identity. Wood (2013) establishes that children of both sexes rely on and identify with the person, typically a parent, that takes care of them in the earliest stages of life to negotiate and learn gender role expectations. Through parental modeling, young girls often identify with their mothers and learn to see the mother as a role of femininity (Wood, 2013). Girls are rewarded for being “mommy’s helper” and learn the importance of nurturing others and maintaining personal relationships as feminine qualities through their identification with their mother figure (Wood, 2013). In addition, women are often seen as synonymous with family and are used to represent the family as a whole (Few-Demo et al., 2014). Not only does parental communication influence the gender socialization of the child, but girls and women also are socialized to emphasize and nurture the family (Witt, 1997; Wood, 2013). This creates a cyclical intersection of woman/femininity and family. Therefore, mother-

daughter communication is an essential aspect of family communication and an important focal point of family feminist studies.

Many studies have examined the role gender plays in family communication and how family communication influences gender. Scholars have focused on socialization of gender and family communication (Booth & Amato, 1994; Langlois & Downs, 1980; Leve & Fagot, 1997; Peters, 1994), health, gender, and family communication (Epstein & Ward, 2008; Turnbull, Van Wersch, & Van Schaik, 2008; Tolma, Vesely, Oman, Aspy, & Rodine, 2006), and other variables such as life satisfaction, religion, finances, communication competence and decision making. Tannenbaum (2009) examined the role of gender stereotypes among family members in the context of course selection for children. Parents followed gender stereotyped selections for language arts and science classes for their children, while their children followed the same gendered pattern. Parents also made more discouraging remarks about courses to their daughters than their sons. This study shows the early onset of gender-differentiated treatment among children and parents. In addition, Epstein and Ward (2011) studied gender value communication and gender socialization within the family between parents and adolescents. The authors found that higher levels of egalitarian discourse from parents lead to the belief in more liberal gender roles among adolescents and more traditional discourse lead to traditional views. Therefore, this study links direct parental communication about gender to the gender socialization of the child.

However, very few scholars have integrated feminism and family communication in their research inquiries. According to Few-Demo et al. (2014), only three articles published in the *Journal of Family Communication* have specifically utilized feminist theory to study families (Medved, 2007; Sotirin, Buzzanell, & Turner, 2007; Weiner-Levy, 2011). Medved (2007) utilized an historical approach to analyze family labor discourses through time focusing on

unpaid female family labor. Sotirin, Buzznell, and Turner (2007) critically analyzed three social texts for their incorporation of family management language and studied the intersection of work and family relationships. Weiner-Levy (2011) used a narrative methodology informed by interviews to study the relationship between fathers and daughters in Druze society. While these methods use the family feminist perspective to draw conclusions on family communication and relationships, there is a need for more studies of this nature to explore power, structures, and agency in family contexts.

Family communication patterns theory

Family communication patterns theory (FCPs) is a holistic approach to examining the communication processes involved in one of culture's most fundamental social institutions. This theory focuses on two descriptive orientations of family dynamics to explain the development of shared meanings and social realities within families. FCPs were first conceptualized to study how families process information presented in mass mediated messages (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972, 1973). In the wake of FCPs success in examining families' processing of mediated messages, researchers began to apply this theory more broadly to describe family communication (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1990, 1994). Now, FCPs are applied to a variety of family communication situations to explain and analyze the complexities of such an integral aspect of personal and societal life.

Origin. The origin of FCPs resulted from the application of the psychological concept of co-orientation (Newcomb, 1953) to family beliefs and interpretations of mass media (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972, 1973). Co-orientation refers to a situation where two or more individuals, in this case a family, focus their cognitive attention on the same object in their physical or social environment. This, in turn, leads to congruent or incongruent beliefs and attitudes about the

object of focus based on the individual's cognition and the individual's perception of the others' cognition. McLeod and Chaffee (1972, 1973) asserted that in order for families to function as a group and coordinate their behaviors, agreement and congruency are necessary and that families can achieve this agreement in two ways. First, the concept-orientation involves family members discussing the attributes of the object and how the individuals conceptualize the object in order to form a shared belief about the object. Second, the socio-orientation emphasizes the perceptions of one family member and the process of allowing that perception to define the object for all family members.

McLeod and Chaffee (1972) posited that families systematically vary in their use of these orientations to achieve agreement among members in order to create shared realities and more specifically, shared meanings about mediated messages. In their application to how families process television programs and other mediated messages, McLeod and Chafee (1972, 1973) found that some families utilize the socio-orientation predominantly, while others utilize the concept-orientation. Some families use a mix of the strategies dependent on the message while others don't engage in either of the orientations and are less likely to create a shared social reality. Thus, scholars in media effects research have utilized widely the Family Communication Patterns instrument from these studies that measures concept and socio-orientations within family relationships (Krcmar, 1996; Kim, Lee, & Tomiuk, 2009; Rose, Bush, & Kahle, 1998; Schrodt, Witt, & Messersmith, 2008).

Orientations and Family Types. Broad application to family communication did not occur until Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1990) reconceptualized this instrument emphasizing the family communication behaviors associated with the orientations. The Revised Family Communication Patterns instrument redefines the original orientations to conversation and

conformity orientations. Concept orientation was reworked into conversation orientation because of its emphasis on open family communication and lengthy discussions (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1990). This orientation has been defined as “the degree to which families create a climate where all family members are encouraged to participate freely in interaction about a wide array of topics” (Fitzpatrick, 2004, p. 173). Parents of high conversation orientation families emphasize open communication, sharing ideas, expressing concerns, and participating in decision making to teach and socialize their children (Thompson & Schrodt, 2015). There are very few limitations on the topics discussed and the frequency and length of interactions. Families low in conversation orientation interact less frequently and about fewer topics usually keeping activities, thoughts, and feelings private (Thompson & Schrodt, 2015).

Socio-orientation was reconceptualized into conformity orientation because of its emphasis on conformity within the family (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1990). Conformity orientation refers to “the degree to which families create a climate that stresses homogeneity of attitudes, values, and beliefs” (Fitzpatrick, 2004, p. 173). Families high in conformity orientation stress obedience to the parents, uniformity of beliefs, and discussions focused on harmony (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Children in high conformity orientation families are socialized to look to their parents to assign meanings, and parents discourage divergent opinions and expect conformity (Thompson & Schrodt, 2014). Families low on this dimension are characterized by the encouragement of and interactions based on independence, individuality, and uniqueness among family members (Fitzpatrick, 2004).

Conversation and conformity orientation are not mutually exclusive. In fact, most families use both strategies in greater or lesser degrees (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1990; Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). In one of the revised FCPs’ first applications to family communication,

Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1994) found that orientations vary among different family schemata in regards to couple type. Traditional, separate, and traditional/separate couple types reported high conformity orientation while traditional and independent couple types reported high conversation orientation. These findings lead Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1994) to describe family types that fall within the dimensions of high and low conversation and conformity orientations. Specifically, these authors identified four family types that arise from the interaction of conformity and conversation orientations and that describe family communication patterns of behavior.

First, *consensual families* are high in conversation and conformity orientations. These families are characterized by communication that retains the hierarchy of power within the family but also encourages open communication and the expression of ideas (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). These families often face tension between pressure to agree and an interest in new ideas (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). Children in these families either adopt their parents' views without question or escape into their own fantasies (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Conflict within these families is regarded as negative and potentially harmful but because conflict threatens the balance of the family, an emphasis is placed on conflict resolution (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997). In general, members of consensual families are expected to place family values and needs above individual desires (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b).

Second, families high in conversation orientation but low in conformity orientation are known as *pluralistic families*. Communication within these families is unconstrained, open discussions about a wide array of topics (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). Parents in these families do not feel the need to control their children, accept their children's opinions, and allow children to participate in family decisions (Koerner & Schrodts, 2014). This, in turn, fosters independent ideas and communication competence for all family members (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Due to the

absence of overt pressure to conform, these families tend to utilize positive conflict resolution strategies, are low in conflict avoidance, and most often resolve their conflicts by openly addressing one another (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997). Children in these families are socialized to value family conversations and often exhibit independence and confidence in individual decision making (Koerner & Schrod, 2014).

Third, low conversation orientation coupled with high conformity orientation leads to *protective families*. Communication in these families focuses on obedience of parental authority with minimal effort on open discussions or expressions on individuality (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). Communication is used to enforce family norms rather than to express ideas, and thus, children of these families often are easily persuaded and influenced by authority figures (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Parents in these families are the key decision makers and place very little importance on explaining their reasoning to their children (Koerner & Schrod, 2014). Conflict avoidance tends to be high in these families due to the emphasis on conformity, and family members are encouraged to place family interests and norms first. Therefore, members of this family type often lack communication and conflict resolution skills, and tensions usually run high in these families because of the lack of conflict resolution (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997).

Last, *laissez-faire families* are low in both conversation and conformity orientations. This family type is characterized by a lack of communication and uninvolved interactions between family members (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). Decisions are left up to the individual members of the family and no value is placed on discussing decisions (Koerner & Schrod, 2014). Parents of these families often exhibit little interest in communicating with their children, and thus, children of these families are more likely to question their decision making abilities and to be influenced by outside social groups (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Members are emotionally divorced from

the family since neither conversation nor conformity are highly valued and therefore, tend to avoid conflict and communication altogether (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997). During the rare occasions of conflict, emphasis is placed on individual desires, familial support is lacking, and emotional involvement is low (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997).

Current Applications. Researchers have applied FCPs to a variety of contexts to describe and predict certain variables associated with family communication. These variable outcomes include relational maintenance (Ledbetter, 2009; Ledbetter & Beck, 2014), conflict styles (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b; Sillars et al., 2014), health and weight stigmas (Rosland, Heisler, & Piette, 2012; Asbury & Woszido, 2016), political and religious affiliation (Ledbetter, 2015; Fife, Leigh-Nelson, & Messersmith, 2014), privacy management (Bridge & Schrodt, 2013; Kennedy-Lightsey & Frisbey, 2016), and online communication behaviors (Ball & Wanzer, 2013; Ledbetter, 2010).

Conversation orientation has been found to correlate with a variety of variables. High and Scharp (2015) found that stronger conversation orientation lead to greater communicative ability and higher motivation and ability to seek support among family members. Thompson and Schrodt (2015) examined the relationship between family storytelling, FCPs, and family strength. Interactional sense-making behaviors such as engagement, polite turn-taking, perspective-taking, and coherence were used to indicate family storytelling. The authors found that conversation orientation was positively associated with these behaviors and family strengths. Ledbetter (2009) studied how family orientations influence extra-familial relationships as a means of friendship closeness through face-to-face and online interactions. The author found that high conversation orientation was associated with higher face-to-face maintenance behaviors. This, in turn, was positively associated with friendship closeness. On the other hand,

conversation orientation was not found to correlate with privacy invasion by the parent (Kennedy-Lightsey & Frisbey, 2016) or conflict discussion tactics (Sillars et al., 2014).

In addition, conformity orientation has been found to explain and predict certain variables. Koerner and Cvancara (2002) studied the verbal characteristics of high and low conformity oriented families. They found that families high in conformity were more self-oriented and used more advice, interpretations, and questions in their conversations. Families low in conformity were more other-oriented and used more acknowledgement, confirmation, and reflection. While Sillars et al. (2014) did not find any association with conflict style and conversation orientation, they did find correlations with conformity orientation. They found that conformity orientation predicted father tactics of pressure, confrontation, and demand but did not predict mother tactics. The authors believed this was due to the conformity orientation's roots in traditionalism and its tendency to follow sex stereotypic patterns. Kennedy-Lightsey and Frisbey (2016) found that privacy invasion behaviors on the part of the parent are associated with perceptions of ownership and conformity orientation. This orientation also predicted lower rates of interaction behaviors among family members and decreased family strength (Thompson & Schrodt, 2015).

Researchers also employed FCPs family types to study variable relationships and outcomes. Sillars et al. (2014) found that pluralistic families were particularly well-equipped to deal with conflict and adolescent changes while laissez-faire and protective families were not. In their study on relational maintenance behaviors, Ledbetter and Beck (2014) found that consensual families report higher maintenance behaviors than protective families, and pluralistic families report higher maintenance strategies than laissez faire families. In addition, children in consensual families are more likely to include the parent in his/her sense of self than those in

protective families. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002b) also found that family type conflict style affects romantic relationship conflict style. The authors found that characteristics of all four family type conflict styles carried over into romantic relationship conflict styles, and thus, concluding that the influences of the family of origin never leaves the subject and can impact situations outside of the family (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b).

These studies indicate just a few of the applications of family communication patterns and family types and their relationship to outside variables. Other applications include credit card behavior (Thorson & Kranstuber, 2014), organizational dissent (Buckner, Ledbetter, & Bridge, 2013), organ donation (Scott & Quick, 2012), adoption (Samek & Rueter, 2011), and communication apprehension (Elwood & Schrader, 1998).

FCPs and Gender. Two studies have indicated the relationship between gender ideologies and family communication patterns in particular. Both of these studies used a quantitative methodology to examine these correlations and employed the Revised Family Communication Patterns scale. Odenweller, Rittenour, Myers, and Brann (2013) illustrated the relationship between FCPs and gender ideologies in regards to males/masculinity. Participants included only males (sons, fathers, and grandfathers) with an age range from seven to 98. Using an online questionnaire, the researchers found that grandfathers' and fathers' conformity orientations were positively related to identification with and enforcement of masculine gender ideology with sons. Fathers' conversation orientations were associated with identification with and enforcement of androgyny gender ideology with sons. The authors concluded that fathers wishing to instill fluid gender identity with their sons should adopt a conversation orientation (Odenweller et al., 2013).

Colaner (2009) used the Evangelical gender role ideologies complementarianism and egalitarianism to study their associations with FCPs. The researcher used a survey to question church-attending parents about their perceived family communication. The 124 participants' responses indicated that conservative complementarianism is associated with traditional gender roles where men are generally the head of household. In addition, progressive egalitarianism is associated with the integration of feminist concepts and parents are seen as equal heads of household. The author found that families who identified as egalitarian reported the use of more conversation orientation behaviors while complementarian families reported the use of more conformity orientation behaviors. This supports the notion that high conformity lends its hand to traditional gender roles while high conversation allows for more gender fluidity (Colaner, 2009).

Although family communication patterns theory has been applied to a multitude of contexts including media effects, relational maintenance behaviors, conflict tactics, and gender role ideologies, this theory has not yet been used to critically analyze the family communication presented in a film nor has it been used in a qualitative methodology. Therefore, this study's method aims to fill this apparent gap by employing family communications patterns theory to analyze the gender portrayals of *Divergent* (2014).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This paper employs a critical cultural methodology to analyze *Divergent* (2014). While scholars have studied the intersection between family communication patterns and gender, none have employed a critical methodology to analyze the family communication presented in a film for its perpetuation of gender role ideologies. Using the basis of gender stereotypes as perpetuated by the dominant patriarchal ideology of American culture and family communication patterns theory, this paper focuses on how this film reaffirms these stereotypes in a popular media portrayal of a dystopian teen drama.

Critical cultural studies analyze cultural artifacts for their perpetuation or disruption of the dominant ideology of the culture in which they are presented. The central idea behind cultural studies is to analyze and critique the distribution of power. The current power structure in Western culture privileges upper class, white males and is communicated through cultural works. The point of cultural studies is to identify this, analyze and critique it, and publicize it so others may understand and react. Kellner (2003) defines cultural studies as an interpretation, analysis, and criticism of cultural works. The author argues that media cultural studies must examine how media culture “articulates the dominant values, political ideologies, and social developments and novelties” of the time in which the work was produced (Kellner, 2003, p.10). In addition, critical cultural studies of media portrayals are vital because we partly form our definitions of ourselves, others, and our environment based on representations in media (Kellner, 2003). Studying, analyzing, and critiquing this phenomenon provides insight into why we may think and act the way that we do (Kellner, 2003).

Gitlin (1985) explains how media platforms re-present ideological structures and changes found in society. The author argues that media systematically perpetuate hegemonic values in

society, and even when oppositional views are portrayed, they are still filtered through the male dominated media market. Man (1993) asserts that Hollywood representations of women tend to fit traditional gender roles portraying females as passive objects. However, some media texts work to overturn these traditional ideologies in order to challenge societal stereotypes and constructs (Man, 1993). Therefore, this interpretive methodology lends its hand to this study, specifically in a gendered context. Deciphering the intricacies of *Divergent* (2014) as a media text and critiquing its commentary on gender through family communication is the goal of this analysis. Specifically, this analysis addresses the general research question: *What messages are communicated to teens in Divergent (2014) about family communication and gender?*

This analysis answers this question through two steps. First, I apply family communication patterns orientations to the family communication presented in the film. Through this application, a specific family type is identified to describe the communication styles between parent and child in the film. This is the first study that applies family communication patterns within a critical methodology. The research questions for this first step of analysis are as follows:

R1: What family communication orientations are presented between mother and daughter in the film? Between father and daughter? Between siblings (brother and sister)?

R2: What FCP family type does this communication illustrate?

The second step in this analysis incorporates a family feminist lens in order to examine how the family communication orientations and type either maintain or challenge America's traditional gender role ideologies.

R3: Does the family communication presented in this film challenge or maintain gender role ideologies?

R4: How does the family communication presented in this film challenge or maintain gender role ideologies?

Divergent (2014) was selected for analysis due to its prevalence in popular culture and its relevancy to family communication and gender. Summit Entertainment produced this film, and Neil Burger directed it. While it received some negative reviews from movie critics, it won four Teen Choice awards including best action adventure movie, as well as Young Hollywood awards, People's Choice awards, and an MTV Movie award ("Awards," n.d.). While these awards may not be deemed prestigious, they illustrate the reception and popularity of the film with the young adult audience (aged 12 to early 20s). The target audience for this film, and for the genre in general, are teenagers, and thus, this film can be labeled as a popular film among their target audience. This is also indicated by the film's \$54.6 million opening weekend and \$151 million five month gross in the United States ("Divergent," n.d.). Therefore, this analysis focuses on the messages communicated about family to teenagers—the major viewers of this film.

Divergent (2014) is set in a dystopian society and presents Tris Prior as the female protagonist. Once Tris turns 16, she must choose a faction to live with for the rest of her life even though she has discovered through a test that she is "divergent" and does not fit into one faction. Choosing to leave her family who resides in Abnegation, Tris joins Dauntless, the faction dedicated to ordinary acts of bravery. While in training at Dauntless headquarters, Tris discovers a plot to overthrow her home faction. Tris must utilize all of her skills that make her divergent in order to save Abnegation. The following chapter examines this plot, specifically for its family communication and gender messages, through utilization of the critical cultural methodology, family communication patterns theory, and the family feminist perspective.

Chapter 4: Analysis

As previously noted, this analysis holistically answers the question: *What messages are communicated to teens in Divergent (2014) about family communication and gender?* This question is answered in two parts; therefore, this analysis is divided into two sections. First, family communication patterns theory is applied to the direct family communication presented in the film. Second, the result of this application is used to analyze the influence of family communication presentations on the films' messages about gender ideology.

Family Communication in *Divergent* (2014)

Current dystopian teen drama films tend to underemphasize family communication within their plots. However, the film *Divergent* (2014) does not follow this pattern due to its incorporation of direct family communication as a central aspect of the plot. Therefore, the first step of this analysis uses family communication patterns theory to study the family communication in the film. This application clarifies the communication orientations used between each family member with the main character, Tris, and then uses these orientations to identify an overall family type for the Prior family. First, I present the level (high or low) of conversation and conformity orientations as defined by Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1990) between mother and daughter, father and daughter, and brother and sister. Then, I combine these orientations to select a general family type of the four types defined by Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1994). Overall, the application of family communication patterns theory elucidates the style and type of family communication presented in this specific film.

Mother and Daughter. The communication presented in this film between mother and daughter represent low conformity and low conversation orientations. Mother-daughter communication is the most prevalent family communication presented in this film. There are

several specific examples that illustrate the low communication orientations between mother and daughter. First, I illustrate the low conformity orientation between mother and daughter, and then, I explain the low conversation orientation between these two characters.

Conformity Orientation. In regards to the orientation that emphasizes uniformity and homogeneity of ideas, Tris' and her mother, Natalie's, communication represents a low categorization (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Conformity within this relationship, uniformity of beliefs, and obedience to the mother are not stressed (Fitzpatrick, 2004). There are three specific illustrations of this within the film: Natalie's acknowledgement and confirmation of her daughter's feelings, Natalie's other-orientation toward Tris, and Natalie's encouraging verbal communication about Tris' individuality and uniqueness.

First, Natalie demonstrates confirmation and acknowledgement which are two characteristics of low conformity communication (Koerner & Cvancara, 2002). For example, the opening scene of the film shows Tris' mother cutting her hair in their home in Abnegation. Tris must take her Aptitude test the following day which identifies the faction she should live in the rest of her life. Therefore, Natalie asks Tris if she is nervous to which Tris replies that she is not and asks if her mom was nervous for hers. Her mom states "No, [pause] I was terrified." This is an example of Koerner's and Cvancara's (2002) findings on conformity orientations.

Relationships low in conformity orientation use more acknowledgement, confirmation, and reflection. Although Tris states that she is not nervous, her nonverbals say otherwise – she is fidgeting in her seat and does not make eye contact with her mom. Natalie picks up on Tris' nerves and uses her answer in reflection of her own experiences to validate and confirm Tris' current feelings. Another example of Natalie's acknowledgement of Tris' feelings occurs when she visits her daughter in Dauntless. This visit, although strictly forbidden, occurs because

Natalie fears for her daughter's safety. When Natalie asks Tris about her test results, she is able to sense her daughter's hesitancy and worry. She acknowledges her daughter's feelings stating, "Honey, it's okay. You can tell me." Once Tris reveals her divergence to her mom, Natalie validates Tris' fear of chastisement by explaining society's fear of her nonconformity while still framing her uniqueness in a positive way. These examples illustrate Natalie's acknowledgement and confirmation of her teenage daughter's feelings and differences.

Low conformity orientations also tend to be other-oriented (Koerner & Cvancara, 2002). It is apparent throughout the film that Natalie is oriented to Tris' wellbeing and happiness, especially in regards to her actions and nonverbal behavior. Rather than reflecting on her own needs and wants, Natalie remains quiet at the Choosing Ceremony when Tris chooses to leave her family in Abnegation to live in Dauntless. Although her nonverbals express sadness for Tris' departure, she does not voice her personal opinions, ask Tris questions, or give Tris advice, all characteristics of high conformity relationships (Koerner & Cvancara, 2002). In addition, Tris' mother risks her own personal safety for that of her daughter on multiple occasions exemplifying her orientation towards others. She breaks faction rules and visits Dauntless secretly to warn her daughter about her divergent status. Towards the end of the film, Natalie literally puts herself in the line of fire to protect her daughter and is fatally wounded by gun fire. This is the ultimate example of her other-orientation and thus, reinforces the relationship's low conformity status.

Last, Natalie verbally emphasizes her daughter's individuality, especially due to her divergent status. There is a defining scene that solidifies mother-daughter low conformity orientation in regards to this specific characteristic. At the Choosing Ceremony, before Tris must choose a faction to live in, Tris and her mother are sitting in the auditorium next to each other. Natalie reaches over, holds Tris' hand, and says "I love you, no matter what." In this moment,

her mother verbalizes for the first time her low conformity orientation towards Tris. Fitzpatrick (2004) states that families low in conformity are characterized by communicated encouragement and interactions based on independence, individuality, and uniqueness. Although it is a simple statement, it indicates to Tris (and to the audience) that her mother accepts whatever decision she makes. With this statement, it is almost as if her mother knows Tris is about to choose a new faction, and she is communicating to Tris that that choice is okay. Natalie continues to encourage Tris' uniqueness and individuality throughout the film by framing her divergence as a positive trait and encouraging her to become who she is despite the faction system. For example, Natalie tells Tris during her secret visit to Dauntless, "Your mind works in a million different ways. You don't conform." While the words encourage uniqueness, it is truly Natalie's nonverbals in this scene that display encouragement of individuality to Tris. Although she is communicating something of importance and urgency, her hand is on Tris' cheek, she has a soft smile, and her tone is relaxed and comforting. This scene encapsulates Natalie's positive characterization of her daughter's divergence. Overall, Natalie's acknowledgement and confirmation of differences, her other-orientation specifically in her actions, and her verbal and nonverbal encouragement of Tris' independence and individuality create a low conformity dynamic between mother and daughter in this film.

Conversation Orientation. Tris' and Natalie's direct communication also indicates a low conversation orientation. Although at first glance the communication between mother and daughter in this film may seem abundant and open, further analysis suggests it is not. Conversation orientation is generally defined by a climate of open communication about all topics (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Even though Tris communicates with her mother more frequently than with her other family members, this communication cannot be characterized as open. This

mother-daughter relationship constitutes low conversation orientation because of the secrets they keep from each other and the physical distance between them.

The main reason this relationship is characterized by low conversation orientation is the lack of open communication between the two and thus, the number of secrets they keep from each other. High conversation orientation emphasizes sharing ideas, expressing concern, and participatory decision making, whereas low conversation orientation lacks these characteristics, interact less frequently, and keep activities, thoughts, and feelings private (Thompson & Schrodt, 2015). Tris discovers she is divergent through her Aptitude test. In fear of rejection or humiliation, she hides this new information from her entire family. In fact, she lies to her family and tells them she was sent home early from the test because she got sick. Even though she doesn't know what "divergent" means exactly, she decides not to confide in her mother for help. High and Scharp (2015) state that higher conversation orientation results in the ability to seek support among family members. Tris apparently lacks this ability. She keeps her divergence a secret until her mother figures it out and asks her outright if she is divergent. Even then, Tris hesitates with the truth but after encouragement from her mother ("Honey, it's okay you can tell me.") reveals to her that she is in fact divergent. As previously stated, her mother encourages this trait and frames it as a positive.

In addition, Natalie keeps secrets specifically from Tris. Tris (and the audience) does not know until toward the end of the film that her mother used to live in Dauntless and was in fact trained as a Dauntless guard. This information surprises Tris because she has assumed her mom has lived in Abnegation all her life. The revelation of this information demonstrates the low amount of open communication that is shared between mother and daughter. It is as if Tris has never thought to ask about her mother's past, and her mother did not think to share this

information with her daughter. In fact, Tris asks her mom if she was Dauntless when she shows up there in secret, but her mom diverts this question by stating “Never mind about me” and does not acknowledge this information until moments before she dies.

Finally, frequency and length of interaction are important aspects of conversation orientation. The more frequent and longer the interactions are between family members, the higher the conversation orientation (Thompson & Schrodt, 2015). However, the communication between mother and daughter in this film is infrequent. As stated previously, their communication is the highest among the other family members, but their interactions are still relatively low. There are four scenes in the entire film that highlight mother-daughter direct interaction. The physical distance Tris chooses to place between herself and her family diminishes opportunities for open communication with her mother. Only once does Natalie actively seek Tris out in Dauntless in fear of Tris’ safety. Tris does not call, write letters, or communicate whatsoever with her mother once she chooses to relocate to Dauntless. It is not explicitly stated whether this is due to her trainee status, but she is able to leave and visit her brother during training. Thus, it is implied that she has the ability to communicate with the rest of her family but chooses not to. The fact that she chose to move elsewhere indicates how little importance she places on open, direct communication with her mother. This is not to say that she doesn’t place importance on her family or her mother because she does. She clearly illustrates her love for them in many scenes including the revelation of her worst fear: being ordered to kill her family. However, she does underemphasize the importance of open communication. Talking openly with her mother is not a priority for Tris. All in all, Tris’ and Natalie’s inability to seek support from one another, to share private thoughts and feelings with one another, and their chosen physical distance from each other create a low conversation orientation between mother

and daughter. Therefore, the mother-daughter relationship presented in this film illustrates low conformity and low conversation orientations.

Father and Daughter. The communication presented in this film between father and daughter demonstrates low conformity and high conversation orientations. Tris and her father, Andrew Prior, inhabit specific communication characteristics that define low conformity and high conversation orientations. Although direct father-daughter communication does not occur as frequently as mother-daughter communication, there are still quality instances that help shape the communication patterns between these two characters.

Conformity Orientation. Tris and her father share a low conformity orientation due to two specific characteristics: his willingness to let her make her own decisions and his encouragement of her independence. First, in every scene that Andrew and Tris are in together, her father encourages her verbally or nonverbally to make her own decisions and act upon them. Fitzpatrick (2004) highlights that children of high conformity families look to their parents to assign meanings, and parents discourage divergent opinions. However, Tris' relationship with her father is the opposite. Andrew expects Tris to be an individual and to make her own decisions. This is shown through Andrew's verbal and nonverbal communication. For example, the night before the choosing ceremony Tris and her brother are doing the dishes in the kitchen. Their father walks in and encourages them to go to bed early because they have a big decision to make in the morning. Rather than giving advice or leading his children down a specific path to conformity, he simply tells them he loves them, kisses them, and leaves the room. This encouragement to make her own decision and lack of guidance represents their low conformity orientation. In addition, Andrew witnesses Tris in a moment of uncertainty when she is talking to Jeanine, another adult, about the upcoming Choosing Ceremony. Andrew does not interfere in

their conversation even though Tris' hesitation and uncertainty are obvious. Instead, he remains silent with a slight smile and observes Tris and Jeanine converse. Tris stands up to Jeanine and questions her motives and authority. Her father does not intervene or tell Tris that this is inappropriate. He also does not step in and encourage Tris' sentiments. Rather, he remains silent in the background. This silence communicates to Tris (and to the audience) that she does not need her father to assign meaning or to guide her through her interactions with others.

This leads to the second characteristic of low conformity between Tris and her father, which is his encouragement of her independence. As stated in the analysis about the mother-daughter dynamic, low conformity relationships emphasize individuality, independence, and uniqueness (Fitzpatrick, 2004). This characteristic is most apparent between Tris and her father toward the end of the movie after her mother has been killed. Once her father learns of his wife's death, he immediately looks to Tris for guidance. He encourages her to come up with their plan of action due to her Dauntless training and follows her lead. He specifically asks Tris "What now?" in a moment of crisis. Instead of looking to the other adults in the room, he focuses his attention on Tris. This communicates that he trusts her decision-making power and wants her to step into the independent leader role. Andrew trusts in Tris' decision making and independence so much that he sacrifices himself for Tris' goals. He repeats back to her that they have no time to lose, a statement Tris made just moments before, and runs at several guards ("Like you said, we haven't a second to lose."). His repetition of her words and his sacrifice indicate to Tris his acceptance of her individuality and independence and marks the beginning of Tris' life without parents. Thus, Andrew's encouragement of Tris' individual decision making and his reinforcement of her independence as a leader illustrate their low conformity relationship.

Conversation Orientation. Tris and her father represent a high conversation orientation. This does not specifically mean that they converse in greater quantity. In fact, they do not communicate as much as do Tris and her mother. It means that the content of the conversations are more open and about a wider range of topics (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Tris' father illustrates this open communication through his initiation of information sharing among the family and his truthfulness about his thoughts and feelings. In multiple scenes, Tris' father is depicted as the initiator of communication among the family. Expressing concern and question asking are two profound characteristics of high conversation orientation (Thompson & Schrodt, 2015). In the first scene where all four family members are seen together, Tris' father asks Tris about her Aptitude test and why she left. They are sitting around the kitchen table eating dinner:

Andrew: Why did you just leave without telling anybody?

Tris: I was sick. (shrugs)

Andrew: Beatrice, I don't think you understand the level of scrutiny we're under. They're doing everything they can to discredit us right now.

Tris: Wait, who is?

Natalie: Erudite. They believe they should be the governing faction, not us.

Andrew: So, you have to be extra careful right now, ok?

Natalie: Even Marcus is under attack right now.

Tris: For what?

(Natalie looks at Andrew)

Andrew: It's an old accusation. That he mistreated his son. And that's why the boy defected.

Tris: Is that true?

Andrew: No.

Natalie: (looking down) Of course not. Children defect for all sorts of reasons.

This scene is full of high disclosure of information lead by Tris' father. Tris participates by asking questions in return. This is information that is not necessarily imperative for Tris to know, but her father openly communicates with her about it to keep her informed and to express concern over the situation unfolding. Natalie, her mother, participates as well but is following Andrew's lead and even looks to him for guidance at one point. Caleb, her brother, is at the table

but does not say anything. Andrew's openness to information sharing with his family heightens his and Tris' conversation orientation.

Tris' father openly expresses his own thoughts and feelings and encourages Tris to do the same which represents high conversation orientation as well. High and Scharp (2015) assert that motivation and ability to seek and to give support including emotional support are characteristics of high conversation orientation. Throughout the movie, Andrew constantly initiates affectionate physical contact with all the members of his family to communicate support. He is the first to kiss his daughter and son goodnight the night before the Choosing Ceremony. Tris' mother follows in his actions. Andrew also pats the side of Tris' arm as a sign of comfort right before she makes her decision at the Choosing Ceremony. This physical contact, initiated by her father, communicates his desire to express his support and the love he has for his daughter. His actions also display support for his daughter. As noted earlier, in his last scene, Andrew sacrifices himself for Tris. This is the ultimate act of support because he is willing to sacrifice his own life in order for Tris to accomplish her goals of stopping Jeanine. These examples illustrate Tris' father's ability to give support, but he also is able to seek support from his daughter.

Andrew verbally expresses his feelings to Tris in an open manner and seeks her support toward the end of the film. Specifically, after Natalie is killed, Andrew asks Tris where her mother is. When Tris tells her father the truth about her death ("She saved me"), Andrew once again initiates a hug with Tris and with tears in his eyes states "Then, it wasn't in vain." His distress and grief are apparent on his face. He does not try to act strong or emotionless in this moment. He presents himself as a real human with real feelings in front of his child and openly expresses them to Tris. This true expression of grief represents the wide range of topics Andrew is able to share with his daughter. He illustrates high motivation and ability to seek support from

Tris and also to support Tris in return (High & Scharp, 2015). Further, he relies on Tris throughout the next scenes (until his death) to make decisions and support the family. He asks her “What now?” and follows her lead seeking her support in this crisis situation. There is a high level of trust between Andrew and Tris in these final moments. For example, they must jump from the roof of a building down about 30 stories to a net to get into Dauntless. However the net isn’t visible, and it looks like they are just jumping to their death. Tris tells him, “Don’t think. Just jump. There is a net at the bottom,” and Andrew jumps. He trusts her words and the support she gives. Therefore, Andrew’s open communication style, information sharing, emotional expressiveness, and ability to give and seek support create a high conversation orientation among Tris and her father. Overall, the father-daughter communication presented in this film represents low conformity and high conversation orientations.

Brother and Sister. The communication in this film between brother and sister illustrates low conformity and low conversation orientations. Although parents are typically the main socializing factor within a family, sibling interactions can also impact family communication patterns and type (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Witt, 1997). Tris’ brother Caleb is older than Tris by almost a year, but they are both 16 on the day of the Choosing Ceremony. The relationship between Caleb and Tris is dynamic and complicated throughout the series. However, the communication between the two in this specific film falls into low conformity and low conversation orientations much like the mother-daughter dynamic. First, I illustrate specific examples of their low conformity orientation, and then, I present examples of their low conversation orientation.

Conformity Orientation. First, Tris and Caleb share a low conformity orientation through their communication. However, the reasons for this characterization are much different than they

are for Tris' mother and father. Caleb presents himself as a model or example for Tris to follow and within his examples he highlights his own individuality and independence from his family. He models this behavior both verbally to Tris and through his own actions within the plot. An apparent example of his verbal independence occurs the night before the Choosing Ceremony after his parents say goodnight to them both and leave the room. He turns to Tris and tells her that tomorrow at the ceremony she has to think of the family, "but you also have to think of yourself." Even though he includes thinking of the family, Caleb is subtly hinting to Tris that he plans to choose a different faction and that it is okay for her to do the same. He does not feel the need to conform to his family's origin, Abnegation, and feels comfortable making independent choices that lead him away from his family. By telling Tris to think of herself, he is opposing the Abnegation teachings of selflessness and models low conformity.

Caleb's actions also model low conformity orientation for Tris. At the Choosing Ceremony, he is called to choose his faction before Tris. This gives Tris the opportunity to watch Caleb exemplify his individuality by choosing a new faction, Erudite. At this low conformity apex, homogeneity of values, attitudes, and beliefs within the Prior family is at its lowest (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Erudite is the faction that is actively in conflict with Abnegation, and yet, Caleb chooses this faction as his home because he knows it is the best fit for his personality. This action is in direct opposition to his parents' values, but he independently decides the best course of action for himself. Although his parents are shocked, they do not speak out or condemn Caleb for his nonconforming behavior. This specific action communicates to Tris the importance of self-actualization for this choosing process. She realizes she can make a decision based on her own will rather than based on her parents' desires. Although she is still hesitant when it is her time to choose, Caleb's actions may very well be the reason she felt able to make her own

independent decision. Because Caleb models individuality and independence from his parents through verbal and nonverbal communication towards Tris, their dynamic encompasses low conformity characteristics.

Conversation Orientation. Second, Caleb and Tris share a low conversation orientation. This sibling relationship does not include open communication, sharing ideas, or lengthy interactions as high conversation orientations do (Thompson & Schrodt, 2015). The two main ways Caleb and Tris illustrate a low conversation orientation are the secrets they keep from each other and Caleb's allegiance to his new faction. After their Aptitude tests, Caleb and Tris are preparing dinner for the family. Caleb asks Tris what her test result was to which Tris replies "What was yours?" in a sarcastic tone. It is obvious that neither of them plan to reveal their results to one another. This secrecy is characteristic of low conversation orientations. Fewer topics are on the table for discussion, and thoughts, activities, and feelings are kept private (Thompson & Schrodt, 2015). In addition, Caleb keeps his true personality a secret to Tris. Although he subtly hints that he will be changing factions, he never reveals to her his inquisitive nature or his love for learning which are characteristics of Erudite members. Instead, he acts as an Abnegation member would modeling the behavior for Tris. Their communication about their results and true personalities is nonexistent.

Caleb's fierce loyalty to tradition and rules also impacts their low conversation orientation. After Tris moves to Dauntless and Caleb moves to Erudite, Tris soon learns troubling news about Caleb's new faction. She leaves her home to seek him out at Erudite headquarters because she is afraid. However, she is met with disdain for her appearance at his home. Tris tries to communicate to her brother that she is in trouble because of her divergent status (without revealing too many facts), but Caleb's response is cold and compassionless.

“Faction before blood” is a common saying in their society and means that once a faction is chosen you put them first over your family. Caleb sticks to this tradition in this scene and does not disclose any information about Erudite to a troubled Tris. When Tris tells Caleb that Erudite leaders are manipulating him, Caleb responds, “You should go.” Tris then states “Faction before blood, yeah? Got it” with tears in her eyes and turns away to leave. Caleb’s lack of disclosure and unwavering loyalty to his faction prevents open communication between brother and sister. He does not seek support from his sister nor does he want his sister to seek support from him (High & Scharp, 2015). He makes it clear that his faction is his new family and that Tris should not have visited him. This reaction communicates to Tris (and to the audience) that Caleb does not wish to continue ties or openly communicate with his sister. This scene solidifies their low conversation orientation for the rest of the film. Thus, Caleb’s adherence to “faction before blood” and the siblings’ inability to share vital information with each other leads to their low conversation orientation. Overall, this brother and sister represent low conformity and low conversation orientations through their communication (or lack thereof).

Prior Family Type. As explained in the literature review, conformity and conversation orientations are not mutually exclusive, and their high to low pairings result in four different family types (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). These family types include Consensual (high conversation; high conformity), Protective (low conversation; high conformity), Pluralistic (high conversation; low conformity), and Laissez-Faire (low conversation; low conformity) (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). The four family types hold specific characterizations based on communication patterns. Variables such as decision-making ability, conflict management style, relational maintenance behaviors, and self-identity have all been linked to specific family type

characteristics (Koerner & Cvancara, 2002; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a, 2002b; Ledbetter & Beck, 2014; Sillars et al., 2014).

In order to characterize the Prior family into one of these four types, I use the conformity and conversation orientations between each family member and Tris explained above. Table one summarizes these orientations for each relationship and the reasons behind each categorization.

Table 1: Summary of Orientation Categorization per Family Relationship

Orientations	Mother-daughter	Father-daughter	Brother-sister
Conformity	<p><i>Low</i></p> <p>Reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement and confirmation of daughter's feelings and differences • Other-orientation towards Tris • Encouragement of individuality and independence 	<p><i>Low</i></p> <p>Reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to let Tris make own decisions • Encouragement of her independence 	<p><i>Low</i></p> <p>Reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modeling own individuality and independence from family (through verbals and actions)
Conversation	<p><i>Low</i></p> <p>Reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of open communication and support • Secrets kept from one another • Physical separation 	<p><i>High</i></p> <p>Reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiation of disclosure and information sharing • Ability to give and seek support (physical and verbal) • Emotional expressiveness 	<p><i>Low</i></p> <p>Reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of open communication and secret keeping • Loyalty to faction over family

Altogether, the Prior family relationships encapsulate three low conformity orientations, two low conversation orientations, and one high conversation orientation. Family communication patterns theory does not yet define a “moderate” orientation. Therefore, they are categorized based on the majority orientations of the Prior family: low conformity and low conversation. This suggests they are a *laissez-faire family type* (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994).

As discussed previously, this family type includes a lack of communication and uninvolved interactions among family members (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). Laissez-faire families communicate about a limited number of topics and believe that each individual family members should make their own decisions with little to no discussions about decisions (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). Emphasis is placed on individual desires, and conflicts are a rare occurrence (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997).

The Prior family communication portrayed in the film reflects these laissez-faire characteristics. Even though family communication is actually presented in the film unlike other dystopian teen dramas, the communication presented is characterized by lack of openness and emphasis on individuality. For example, there is only one scene in the entire movie in which all four family members are shown communicating with each other. While Tris’ father does initiate disclosure of information about conflict with Erudite in this conversation, the communication seems formal and distant as if family discussions are a rarity. There is no warmth in the mother’s or father’s tone. The information is shared as if it is being read from a book with straightforward glances and monotone voices. Secrets and lack of openness also riddle this conversation. Neither Tris nor Caleb reveal their test results to their parents, and their parents also do not seem to be curious about their decisions. There is no discussion about the importance of this decision or how to go about deciding. Rather, it is implied that choosing their faction is an individual choice that

should have little family interference. Faction before blood. Further examples of the Prior family's laissez-faire type are presented in the next section in application with gender messages in the film.

Gender Messages and the Laissez-Faire Family

The laissez-faire family type presented in this film maintains American gender role ideologies. Through the representation of a laissez-faire family this film communicates its adherence to the patriarchal ideology of American culture. Patriarchy translates to father-rule and emphasizes the male as the governing body and the father as the head of the family (Bem, 1993). Patriarchal societies are defined by the perspectives and priorities of men and thus, maintain androcentric values, structures, and practices (Bem, 1993). *Divergent* (2014) communicates patriarchal conformity through presentation of stereotypical gender roles and the distribution of power within the Prior family. First, the patriarchal society in which this film takes place is reflected in the family communication presented between all family members through means of power. Second, Tris' feminine gender role categorization is a direct product of the patriarchal, laissez-faire family type until the end of the movie and communicates androcentric values of femininity and masculinity.

This analysis uses the family feminist perspective asserted by Few-Demo et al. (2014) to examine the gender messages communicated in the film. Specifically tailored for this analysis, this perspective assumes that power is present in families, families are informed by society and culture around them, and privileges and oppressions are communicated within families in terms of gender (Few-Demo et al., 2014). (Few-Demo et al. also mention race, class, age, and sexual orientation as sites of power within families, but this analysis focuses on gender). Thus, power is present in the Prior family, and the structure of power is a direct reflection of the society in

which the family resides. The family feminist perspective is used to analyze the power structures presented within the laissez-faire family and in turn the privileges and oppressions communicated between the family members in this film.

Patriarchal Family. The Prior family's laissez-faire communication type maintains patriarchal ideology and androcentric values. This term means male-centered and is used to describe past and current American gender ideology (Bem, 1993). It is first important to note that the society in which this movie's plot takes place is much like American culture today. Even though this film is set in the future (the year 3012, to be exact), the cultural values and ideology as it pertains to gender is patriarchal and androcentric. This is most profoundly seen in this society's representative government. Abnegation is set to govern all the people in this society because of their selfless values. However, in the very brief depiction of this counsel, all the representatives seem to be male including Tris' father, Andrew. The leader, Marcus, is also male. There are other communicative occurrences in which patriarchy is highlighted. For example, Tris is always referred to as Andrew's daughter, never Andrew's and Natalie's daughter. She is defined by her relationship with her father, a male, but not her mother, a female. This includes direct references from other characters like Jeanine and a newspaper article that is read aloud by another character. In fact, the name Natalie isn't mentioned once in the movie. All of these characteristics present this dystopian society as patriarchal. In accordance with the family feminist perspective, the Prior family structure is informed by this patriarchal society in which they reside.

Importantly, patriarchal ideals are reflected in the family communication and type presented among the Priors. A central aspect of the family feminist perspective is examining the manifestation and distribution of power among family members (Few-Demo et al., 2014). It is

apparent that the men in the Prior family maintain most of the power within their relationships, especially Tris' father. In regards to communication, Andrew initiates all disclosures of information within the family members. He is a government official and thus, is presented as if he holds all the key information to share within the family. Andrew is not presented as the stereotypical masculine father. He is not overly assertive, and he does not actively compete with other family members for power. However, his possession of power within the family is more subtle and is based off his sex and status in society. The power is assumed to be his because of the society's construction of patriarchal ideals.

Although the power dynamic between father and females in the family is not presented as outright sexism, the subtlety of the imbalance of power can be just as harmful. Neither of the females in the family, Tris nor Natalie, contest this male dominated power, perhaps because they do not recognize it. Since their family reflects the patriarchal society in which they live, male power may seem "normal" to the women (and men) in this family. In fact, they reinforce stereotypical feminine behavior by remaining passive and non-communicative. In many instances, Andrew initiates communication and Natalie follows his lead. For example, the family's conversation over dinner about Erudite's scrutiny illustrates Natalie's hesitancy and adherence to her husband's power over the family. She specifically looks to him when Tris asks a difficult question and let's Andrew respond. Natalie does encompass her own identity apart from her husband when she interacts solely with Tris, but this identity conforms to feminine stereotypes of motherhood including other-orientation and protective behaviors (Kirby et al., 2016). Within interactions with her husband and children, however subtle, the power resides with Andrew, and she follows his lead. Both Tris' and her mother's passivity toward the power structure is characteristic of a laissez-faire family. Open conversation and confrontation are not

highly valued, and thus, conflict and communication are typically avoided in these families (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997). Therefore, Tris and Natalie go along with and maintain this imbalance of power due to their laissez-faire communication style.

In conjunction with his father's power, Caleb holds power within the family, especially in regards to his relationship with Tris. However, Caleb only demonstrates this power to Tris when his father is not around. As explained previously, Caleb presents himself as a model for Tris. Through this modeling, there is an assumed reality that Caleb knows better than Tris and should help her discover herself. This goes beyond big brother, little sister modeling. This assumption is based on Caleb's sex and the power he thus holds between him and his sister. He uses this power to guide Tris to be the same as him – nonconforming and independent. For example, in an early scene in *Abnegation*, Caleb helps a woman with bags and says, "Beatrice, want to help with the bags?" Tris replies, "Sorry," and promptly follows Caleb's words and actions. Later, they are walking to the test administration and have a conversation about the lady and being selfless.

Caleb: What if she was blind or an amputee? Would you have helped her then?

Tris: I was thinking about helping her.

Caleb: It's not that hard.

Tris: For you, maybe.

Caleb: Just relax, Beatrice. Take a deep breath and trust the test.

In this scene, Caleb is once again modeling the "correct" behavior for Tris. He knows that he does not belong to *Abnegation* but is still able to fake the selflessness that is required. He teases Tris a bit about not being able to realize those in need and even tells her it isn't that hard to do. These conversations illustrate Caleb's sense of power over Tris and the assumed reality that he knows best. He is guiding and advising her through their communication because he has the position of privilege and thus, power within their relationship.

However, he does not model for Tris in front of their father. This is due to the patriarchal status of the family, and thus, his father's rule over the entire family. Although Caleb holds power within the family because he is male, he is not the head of the household. His father maintains that role and holds more power within the family than Caleb. The previous transcript of the conversation at the dinner table illustrates Caleb's hesitancy around his father. He remains silent through the entire conversation and does not advise or model for Tris in this family gathering. Therefore, Caleb only asserts his male-dominance over Tris when his father is not present. Another example of this occurs right before the test administration. He and his sister are standing outside in a line and witness bullying of a fellow Abnegation member. Tris tries to step in physically to stop it, but Caleb holds her back and says, "Beatrice...don't." Tris looks down at her feet and shakes her head complying to her brother's wishes. Once again the male power over female is demonstrated. Caleb physically holds her back from her instincts to fight. However, had this scene occurred in front of their father, Caleb might not have had the same reaction. His power stems from his masculinity, but this is overshadowed within the confines of a patriarchal family when the father is present.

However, since this modeling is presented within a laissez-faire family type, Tris confronts stark disappointment with her brother when he is not willing to help her later in the film. She is used to Caleb modeling "proper" behavior for her, so when she is in need, she runs to his faction for help. However, he has fully embraced his individuality and independence from his family, as a laissez-faire child would, and does not wish to assume the guiding role for his sister anymore. This family dynamic illustrates the control Caleb, as a male, has over his sister. There is an apparent contrast between his individual power to make decisions for himself and Tris' ability to make decisions for herself. She is accustomed to the males in her family holding

all the power, so when some of that power weakens due to her brother's apathy, Tris is lost in her own independence.

The patriarchal power system demonstrated within a laissez-faire family in this film communicates male hegemony even within a family that emphasizes individuality and independence among all its members. Even though Tris' family's low conformity orientation encourages diverging opinions and independent decision making, its coupling with low conversation orientation leads to a traditional gender role ideology within the family. Odenweller et al. (2013) and Colaner (2009) assert that high conversation orientations are associated with egalitarian family dynamics and more fluid gender identity than low conformity orientations. Thus, while a low *conformity* orientation strengthens individuality, it does not aid in challenging traditional gender roles within the family. The Prior family's lack of a high *conversation* orientation is the main drawback when it comes to gender and power.

In contrast to other family members, the father in the film holds a high conversation orientation with his daughter in this film. This is interesting because the character that holds the most power in the family also communicates most openly and honestly with his daughter. As the head of the family, as defined by a patriarchal society, he has the ability and the right (and thus, the privilege) to converse with his daughter however he sees fit. This conversation orientation between father and daughter maintains patriarchal ideology because it emphasizes the power that Andrew has within the family. The lack of open communication between the rest of the family members also reinforce patriarchal ideals and laissez-faire patterns. The possession and maintenance of power within the family resides with the father role. Therefore, specific oppressions on communication style and patterns are placed between all other family relationships including mother-daughter and brother-sister. This, in turn, creates a laissez-faire

family climate where open communication is only initiated by the power-figure and is underemphasized in all other circumstances. Thus, the lack of high conversation orientation between mother and daughter and brother and sister can be ascribed to the patriarchal framework of this family. Colaner (2009) affirms that low conversation orientation among all family members is associated with traditional family dynamics. These findings indicate that traditional patriarchal relationships within the Prior family reinforce their low conversation orientation.

The patriarchal family representation in this film feeds into the laissez-faire communication style among the family. The privileges associated with the father and brother (when the father is not around) and the oppressions of the female communicative roles within the family reinforce androcentric and patriarchal ideals. This power dynamic, in turn, reinforces a laissez-faire family type. It is important to note that this power distribution is subtle because of the lack of communication and conformity within the family. There is no active competition for power within the family, and overt masculine stereotypes such as aggression and assertiveness are not presented through Andrew to demonstrate power. Rather, this power is assumed due to the patriarchal nature of the society in which the family resides. Therefore, the teenage audience may not clearly realize that what they're viewing communicates not only a lack of open communication within a family but also traditional, patriarchal gender roles and power structure within a family.

In context, the depiction of a patriarchal family through laissez-faire communication patterns reveals the subtle yet inherent nature of America's patriarchal society. The family feminist perspective asserts that while the representations of power, privileges, and oppressions within the family are not overt, their presence reflects the persistent yet not as obvious characteristics of patriarchy in society today (Few-Demo et al., 2014). Third wave feminists

claim that strides towards equality have been made, but there are still patriarchal ideals that inform values, structures, and practices in society, and these characteristics may not be as apparent as in previous generations (Siegel, 2007). The incorporation of a laissez-faire family type to maintain patriarchy ideology emphasizes how lack of communication can reinforce preexisting societal norms. Bem (1993) states that, “communication is the heart of social life and social change” and can be used to challenge the status quo (p. 10). However, low conversation orientation does not allow for open communication about current cultural views. Laissez-faire communication does not enable conflict or challenges to arise among family members. Thus, the patriarchal status quo, although potentially subtle, is maintained within the family. Societally, this communicates our own need to communicate openly in order to challenge cultural norms and assumed authority, especially in regards to masculine power. This film’s representation of maintenance of power imbalance and patriarchal ideology through laissez-faire patterns demonstrates the necessity of open dialogue within democracy to challenge preexisting ideologies.

Feminine Protagonist. This film also presents gender role stereotypes through Tris’ identity as a feminine protagonist. This identity is a result of her laissez-faire family and maintains androcentric ideals about the power of masculinity and the weakness of femininity. Tris assumes feminine stereotypes throughout the entirety of the film. Femininity is not inherently bad. Rather, androcentric ideology has a constructed perception of feminine stereotypes as weak/negative and masculine stereotypes as strong/positive. Even though she is the main protagonist, her femininity is presented as weaknesses through character flaws. As the discussion below illustrates, it is not until the end of the film that Tris begins to encompass a more androgynous identity assuming both feminine and masculine traits. Due to her family’s

laissez-faire communication type, Tris embodies three main negative feminine stereotypes: hesitancy and other-orientation in decision making, passivity among social groups, and general low self-esteem. The representation of these feminine stereotypes essentializes Tris' character reducing her personality to cultural assumptions about female characteristics (Bem, 1993). These assumptions are based on a patriarchal, androcentric society where masculinity is favored over femininity. Thus, her feminine characteristics are presented as negative qualities that undermine her potential as a protagonist.

First, Tris is hesitant and other-oriented in her decision making, which are common feminine stereotypes. A defining stereotype of women is that they are concerned with people and relationships and do not put their needs above others (Bem, 1993). This, in turn, can create hesitancy in decision making since impact on others may be emphasized. Unlike her brother, it is very hard for Tris to pick a faction at the Choosing Ceremony. Whereas it takes her brother exactly 11 seconds to choose a faction once he is on stage, it takes Tris 37 seconds. She is more hesitant than her male counterpart and goes between Abnegation and Dauntless for a couple of seconds before choosing Dauntless. This represents her feminine other-orientation because she is considering her family's reaction to her decision. She faces two conflicting choices: leaving her home faction and wanting to follow Caleb's model and be independent. This emphasis on her family's potential disappointment demonstrates her other-orientation and creates hesitancy in her decision making. Her choice of faction is not as straightforward as Caleb since she must consider the impact on others.

Even after choosing her new faction, she continues to question her decision. She knows she is divergent and doesn't actually belong to one faction. This makes her hesitant in the training process at Dauntless and makes her question her ability to succeed and become

Dauntless. She states to a fellow Dauntless trainee “I’m never going to make it. I’m the weakest one here.” In fact, her hesitancy with her new faction is one of the reasons she visits Caleb in Erudite. She tells Caleb that she is in trouble because she doesn’t think she fits in at Dauntless. This hesitancy in decision making is rooted in her family’s laissez-fair communication, which places little value on discussing decisions among family members. Fitzpatrick (2004) asserts that children of these families are more likely to question their decision making abilities. In addition, low conformity orientation can lead to other-orientation (Koerner & Cvancara, 2002). There is greater emphasis on acknowledgement and reflection of others’ needs in low conformity families (Koerner & Cvancara, 2002). Both of these family characteristics feed into the hesitant, other-oriented feminine stereotype and presents Tris in a stereotypical feminine role within her decision making abilities.

Second, Tris is presented as a passive character among her peers which is another feminine stereotype. Femininity in our androcentric culture encompasses submission, deference, and passivity especially in regards to men (Bem, 1993). Fitzpatrick (2004) argues that children of laissez-faire families are easily influenced by outside social groups. This is due to the lack of interest in and value of communication between family members (Fitzpatrick, 2004). This characteristic is apparent in Tris’ interactions with other characters, especially Dauntless characters. Specifically, Tris is easily influenced by the appeal of Dauntless attributes. Her aptitude test results indicated that she is divergent and encompasses characteristics from all five factions. However, she still must select one faction at the Choosing Ceremony. Before her decision, Tris is shown gawking at the high intensity, boisterous crowd of Dauntless members multiple times. It shows her as a kid running alongside them in her Abnegation clothes and also smiling every time she sees them running, climbing, and jumping. Though she knows she

doesn't belong to one faction, she is influenced by the fun, spirited nature of the Dauntless crowd and ends up choosing this faction over her home faction.

It doesn't take much to influence her decision. She's never been to Dauntless headquarters and does not fully understand what is expected of Dauntless members, but the thrill and excitement exhibited by the few members she encounters is enough to convince her to leave her family and join a new faction. This is a clear indication of Tris' passivity and subjection to others' influence. Huang (1999) found that "desirability to control" was lowest among laissez-faire family children compared to the other family types. This characteristic is illustrated by the inability to take control of situations and their disinterest of leadership roles (Huang, 1999). These specific characteristics are apparent when she follows the crowd to Dauntless headquarters. They climb scaffolds, run to catch a train, and jump off of the train onto the roof of a building. All the while, Tris follows along with the crowd not questioning the insanity of the tasks or the danger involved. This trait is also shown during a Dauntless training activity similar to capture the flag. Tris is placed on a team and instead of voicing her opinion to the group, she remains silent as they discuss plans. Then, she leaves the group without a word to find a good vantage point. This lack of communication with her team illustrates her inability to take control or assume a leadership role. Taken together, this passivity showcases yet another feminine stereotype that stems from her laissez-faire family.

Third, Tris lacks self-esteem and confidence which is another common feminine stereotype. Tris not only questions her decisions, but she also constantly questions who she is in general. Since she does not fully understand herself or her place in this dystopian society, her self-esteem wanes in the beginning and middle of the plot. Once she receives the news of her divergent status, she no longer feels like she belongs. She asks many characters including her

mother and her test administer, Tori, “What am I?” Not only does this question reflect her low self-confidence, it also indicates that she is treating herself more as an object than a person. She tries to suppress her divergent status and constantly relies on classification to define who she is, stating, “I am Dauntless now,” even though she understands she will never fit in to one faction.

Huang (1999) found that *laissez-faire* children, compared to children of the other three family types, exhibited the lowest self-esteem and defines self-esteem as an individual evaluation of oneself. Tris’ evaluation of herself is consistently low due to her inability to define who she is. This not only stems from her divergence but also her *laissez-faire* family. Sillars et al. (2014) asserts that *laissez-faire* families are not well-equipped to deal with adolescent changes and identities. These families use a hands-off approach in dealing with individual growth and character development (Sillars et al., 2014). As we see in the film, Tris is left to manage her identity on her own, a task she may not be ready for at 16. She presents yet another feminine stereotype, low self-esteem, influenced by her family’s communication type.

The portrayal of these three feminine stereotypes within the protagonist’s identity communicates the film’s adherence to the patriarchal ideology of American culture. Instead of challenging gender norms, as it seems manifestly to do, this film actually perpetuates gendered stereotypes through the presentation of a *laissez-faire* family communication type and in turn, the negative feminine characterization of Tris. Tris’ hesitancy in decision making, passivity among social groups, and low self-esteem are all products of her socialization among a *laissez-faire* family type. These characteristics create a stereotypical gendered performance of a female protagonist for the teen audience and continue the androcentric ideology that femininity is weak.

The presentation of Tris as a feminine protagonist is important in a cultural context. Because femininity is defined within an androcentric society, these characteristics are deemed

less-than or negative compared to masculine characteristics. Therefore, through her feminine characterization, Tris is presented as an incapable, inadequate protagonist. Rather than framing these characteristics in a positive light, the incorporation of a laissez-faire family type that demonstrates patriarchal ideology frames these characteristics negatively. Her family communication style undermines her potential by teaching her traditional gender roles and underemphasizing gender fluidity. This communicates to the audience the perpetuation of negative femininity. Feminine characteristics are presented as a lack of positive socialization within her family while masculine characteristics (which she embodies once her parents are dead) represent the fruition of identity and the final embodiment of true self, as discussed later.

In addition, the incorporation of laissez-faire communication effects on Tris' gender identity communicates the power of socialization within a family. Due to her family's lack of open communication and emphasis on independent decision making, Tris' personal growth mirrors the dynamics of her patriarchal family. Lack of guidance leads Tris to reflect gender role stereotypes rather than challenging them. This communicates the idea of essentializing gender where females are reduced to only feminine characteristics because they are assumed to be natural (Bem, 1993). Tris demonstrates feminine characteristics because she is a female and her family has socialized her to understand what femininity means in a patriarchal society. This film, then, reveals the tendency for our culture to define gender by sex when in fact gender is a learned outward expression of identity. It is important to identify the difference between sex and gender so that it is more generally understood that female doesn't inherently mean feminine and male doesn't inherently mean masculine.

Although Tris encompasses these three feminine stereotypes (hesitancy, passivity, and low self-esteem) throughout the majority of the movie, it is important to note that she does

experience a character shift towards its conclusion. At this point, she begins to exhibit both masculine and feminine characteristics creating an androgynous protagonist. Rahmawati (2016) claims that Tris' character identity transforms throughout the film, specifically through her physical characteristics. This may be apparent in her physical transformation as she trains at Dauntless and becomes physically stronger. However, it is not apparent in her communication until later in the film.

It is not until the end of the movie that Tris finally asserts herself communicatively, becomes a leader, and makes her own decisions confidently. Notably, this occurs after both of her parents are killed. The transformation begins once she watches her mom die. After mourning her loss (rather quickly), she picks herself up and continues her task. Her father helps with the transformation looking to Tris for answers and leadership. For the first time, Tris is empowered in her decision making, she is in charge of the group, and she is mentally tough. It is also at this time when her father imparts some of his inherent power on Tris. *He* follows *her* lead and encourages her to make the decisions. Once her father dies, she transforms to the most independent character presentation in the entire film. She tells her brother to stay where he is and goes into Dauntless headquarters alone to face Jeanine and complete her task. It is in this final climactic fighting scene where she defies categorization. Jeanine tells her "Maybe you aren't as Dauntless as you thought" to which Tris replies "You're right. I'm not. I'm divergent." She finally understands who she is, appreciates her uniqueness, and demonstrates independent will. Unfortunately, it took her parents' deaths for her to assume the androgynous heroine role.

However, this character turn-around at the end of the movie is not enough to challenge the dominant gender ideology. The fact that it took her parents' deaths for her to challenge gender norms communicates the power family has on character identity, specifically in this film

on gender identity. Tris' potential growth in her gender identity is stifled by her family's communication patterns. Their low conversation orientation creates an androcentric, patriarchal environment within the family relationships where males are assumed to have the power. Interestingly, it is not until her father, the true power center of her family, dies that she completely assumes self-power. This communicates the power her father had over her gender identity, however subtle. His perpetuation of gender roles through his possession of power forced his daughter into the less powerful feminine role within and outside of the family. It is not until he dies (and gives up his power to and for Tris) that Tris embodies true androgyny.

While her growth at the end of the film seems powerful, it actually emphasizes the masculine power communicated in the film. Andrew had to die in order for her to gain power. However, the power did not come from within her or from her feminine characteristics (and definitely not from her *laissez-faire* family). It came from her father's death and her embodiment of masculine traits. Thus, the power is drawn from man not woman. In order for Tris to realize her true potential, encouragement and sacrifice of a male had to be given, and she had to develop masculine traits, as discussed in the following paragraph. This once again highlights the patriarchal society in which they (and we) reside that intrinsically privileges males.

Further, her androgyny at the end of the film occurs due to her development of masculine traits. While many of her feminine characteristics remain including other-orientation and indecisiveness, Tris begins to embody masculine traits including rationality, emotional control, and power. In the wake of both of her parents' deaths, Tris remains strangely level-headed and unemotional. We see her break down after her mother's death, but she does not show much emotion over her father's death. Instead, she directs the group and leaves to face Jeanine on her own. She is able to control her emotions at that time in order to accomplish her goals and save

her home faction. In her confrontation with Jeanine, she also embodies personal power for the first time. As discussed previously, she asserts herself as a divergent to Jeanine while ordering her to end the simulation. The incorporation of masculine traits during the climax of the film frames masculinity as a positive attribute. Not only is masculinity positive, but it is needed for Tris to save the day. This casts masculinity in a powerful light communicating its necessity and ability.

In contrast to femininity, masculinity in this film is presented as a powerful tool. While femininity is framed as a weakness through Tris' character flaws, masculinity is framed as powerful through Tris' successful heroic journey. These representations of masculinity and femininity are a result of androcentric values. Culturally, male is central and female is other. Thus, it follows that masculinity is good and femininity is bad. This film reinforces this ideology through Tris characterization throughout the film. Even though she evolves into a more androgynous character, the presentation undermines femininity and highlights masculinity.

This implies to viewers that ideal traits reside within masculine stereotypes. In order to be heroic, masculinity (to some degree) must be achieved. Femininity encompasses weaknesses that can be detrimental to character development. Males, especially fathers in this film, must pass on power through their own deference (or death even) in order for daughters to reach similar statuses of self-power. Patriarchy means that fathers rule, and thus, power distribution within a family must come from that role. This minimizes the roles of mother, sister, and daughter within families.

Overall, the laissez-faire family communication situated within a patriarchal society creates a feminine stereotypical protagonist. These stereotypes due to their inception in an androcentric culture are framed as negative attributes. Further, Tris does not embody both

feminine and masculine traits until her parents are both dead. This is due to the power that her father holds within the family as a direct reflection of their own patriarchal society. It takes the addition of masculine traits for Tris to accomplish her goals. This frames femininity as weak and masculinity as power. All in all, the patriarchal ideology of American culture is maintained through both the representation of a laissez-faire family that incorporates traditional power structures and in Tris' own feminine characterization as the protagonist in *Divergent* (2014). The implications of this are discussed further in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Through application of family communication patterns theory and an analysis of the family type influence on gender messages, this study asserts that the film *Divergent* (2014) maintains the patriarchal ideology of American society. This analysis examined the conformity and conversation orientations between mother and daughter, father and daughter, and brother and sister. As a result, the Prior family type was found to be the laissez-faire family type (low conformity and conversation orientations) defined by Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1994). Further, this study examined how this family type reinforces patriarchal ideology throughout the film. Specifically, the laissez-faire family type presentation maintains gender role stereotypes through the portrayal of a patriarchal family and Tris' feminine characteristics. These combined family and gender messages communicate a perpetuation of gender norms in media, specifically through the incorporation of a laissez-faire family communication style.

Implications. Now that the messages on gender and family communicated in this film have been defined and analyzed, it is important to situate these messages in our current cultural climate and understand the possible implications these messages may have on viewers, particularly teen viewers. *Divergent* (2014) is a cultural artifact which means it was produced within a certain cultural climate defined by specific dominant values, ideologies, and social conditions. This analysis indicated that the film perpetuated these dominant views of society as they pertain to gender. The film communicates the prevalence of patriarchal ideology even within family structures and demonstrates gender inequalities as a result. The perpetuation of patriarchy may not be a conscious effort on the part of the director, writers, and producers. In fact, its embeddedness in a seemingly feminist plot lead by an outwardly appearing strong, feminine protagonist, leads me to assert that it is not a purposeful perpetuation. Instead, the

patriarchal undertones communicate the ingrained nature of this ideology in American culture. Because the film was created and produced within this specific culture, it follows the power structures dominant in society without the direct intention to do so.

Currently, American culture is at a cusp of potential change for gender ideals and stereotypes. Third wave feminists are currently communicating and protesting the imbalance of power inherent in a patriarchal society through social events such as the Women's March on Washington (2017) and A Day without Women (2017). Political and social activists are urging for the inclusion of a broader definition of gender within society that encompasses many more gender roles than just masculine and feminine. These include but are not limited to transgender, pangender, agender, genderqueer, and gender-fluid. There is a strong social movement for civil rights occurring in the United States even though the country is starkly divided politically.

The production of this film at such a turbulent cultural time is unfortunate. The messages communicated in this film subvert these challenges to the dominant ideology. By depicting a "strong" female lead that still adheres to patriarchal power structures within her family and as an individual character, this film symbolically repairs a threatened reality. As stated previously, I do not claim that this subversion of progress is intentional; however, the subtle nature of the film's patriarchal values must be recognized and critiqued for its perpetuation of gender inequality. The messages of this film undermine the stance of equality for women and subtly perpetuate patriarchal ideology. This not only symbolically maintains the current cultural power imbalance but also attempts to restore the threatened and potentially damaged patriarchal ideology in American culture. This can be characterized as a diversion. On the surface, this film challenges gender role stereotypes, but with a closer reading, it actually undermines its own challenge through the preservation of patriarchal power. This plot is deceptive and misleads viewers in its

cultural representations. This indicates a current lag between our actual social environment and filmic presentations and undermines current movements pushing for cultural change.

However, the implications of this perpetuation reach beyond a divide between social movement and film representations. The major implication lies within the perceptions of viewers. Viewers of this film may not fully grasp the messages this film presents because of their placement within a laissez-faire family and female protagonist. Manifestly, this film presents a young teen girl who defeats evil through her own strength and will. But the underlying messages of masculine power and feminine weakness are ever present. Masculinity maintains power through Andrew's role as the father, Caleb's modeling, and Tris' self-actualization after acquiring stereotypical male traits. Femininity maintains weakness through laissez-faire family communication and Tris' embodiment of unfavorable stereotypical feminine characteristics throughout most of the film. While these stereotypes are not overt, they still communicate adherence to gender role norms to the viewers.

Moreover, the target audience for this dystopian teen drama is teens, potentially female teens. These messages tell teen viewers that adherence to traditionalism and patriarchy are common and normal. Female teen viewers may see Tris and think "I'd like to be like her!" without realizing her obedience to traditional gender roles. Viewers partly form definitions of themselves, others, and their social world from media portrayals (Kellner, 2003). It is reasonable to assume that using Tris and her family to define individuals and others may result in the continuation of feminine and masculine stereotypes. Teenagers are at an impressionable age where adherence to norms (defined by society) is emphasized. Producing this sort of female representation for teens that seemingly symbolizes third wave feminism but actually communicates patriarchal values reemphasizes these normalizing messages teens receive about

gender stereotypes. Whereas adult women may be able to recognize these messages, younger girls (and boys) do not have the social or emotional maturity to understand the nuanced gender messages nor the potential effects of these messages on their self-identity and definitions of society. Young girls may learn that only through masculine characteristics can they truly gain power in society. Young boys may learn that they inherently deserve power because of their sex. Both of these “lessons” are dangerous to a society seeking gender equality and balance of power. It is important to communicate equality straightforwardly at a young age rather than presenting material that seems to communicate equality but in reality subverts it to young impressionable viewers.

Likewise, using the presentation of a laissez-faire family that embodies patriarchal ideals to define the social world may preserve the dominant ideology. This depiction of this type of family not only perpetuates gender role stereotypes but also underemphasizes the importance of communication to challenge dominant constructions and values in society. Families are a main socializing factor in society (Witt, 1997). Depicting a family that socializes their children to avoid conflict, minimize communication, and adhere to societal values, normalizes these characterizations. Most importantly, minimizing the importance of communication teaches young viewers obedience without discussion. Challenging societal norms begins with communication. Democracy is characterized by open discussion, presenting opinions, and listening to opposing views. Thus, these messages may discourage young viewers from challenging gender norms in the future and from participating in democratic conversations. Teens are the future of American culture, and if they receive the majority of their cultural messages from TV shows and films like this one that perpetuate the dominant ideology, then social change may be stifled in the future.

Finally, the incorporation of these messages in a dystopian teen drama negates the potential of the plot. This genre of film incorporates teen characters and simplistic plots to appeal to teen viewers, but generally aims to encourage viewers to examine their own society with a critical eye (Ames, 2013). Dystopian teen dramas purposefully predispose young viewers to political action and change in order to incite real political action (Ames, 2013). These films typically encourage scrutiny of societal norms (Spisak, 2012). However, this particular dystopian teen drama contradicts these goals by situating the relatable plot in a patriarchal, laissez-faire family. In terms of gender, this film does not encourage critical inspection of society because it normalizes the dominant ideology. It does not encourage scrutiny of societal norms because it incorporates laissez-faire communication patterns that undermine the potential for conflict, challenges to norms, and communication about differences. As stated previously, the gender messages and laissez-faire family discourage real political action because of their continuation of dominant values and lack of open communication. Therefore, this dystopian teen drama fails to incorporate the necessary political characteristics that define this genre of film. *Divergent* (2014) lacks the cultural commentary and incitation of scrutiny that similar films in this genre encompass, and thus, it unfortunately falls short of its own power as a site for potential political change. *Divergent* (2014) lacks real divergence.

Limitations and Future Research. There are several limitations of the selected methodology and analysis in this thesis. First, *Divergent* (2014) is the first movie in a trilogy. While this first film is important because it sets up the conflict of the entire series, it is important to note that this is not the full story. This initial film communicates patriarchal ideals and feminine stereotypes within Tris, but her identity continues to grow and familial influence (even though her parents are dead) continue to be central plot elements in both *Insurgent* (2015) and

Allegiant (2016). Whether these messages that perpetuate patriarchal ideology and feminine stereotypes continue in the next two films is an area of potential future research. Second, this is a limited reading of the film *Divergent* (2014). I specifically analyzed the film's presentation of family communication and how that influenced the gender messages communicated through the Prior family and Tris' identity. This analysis did not include examinations of other characters or Tris' relationship with other characters such as her love interest, Four. This analysis also did not look at the original novel by Veronica Roth for its family communication and gender messages but instead solely examined Hollywood's film adaptation.

Last, there are several family communication theories that can be used to analyze mediated depictions. Using other theories may yield different readings and conclusions. In addition, the specific family communication patterns theory utilized also has its own limitations. The family types defined by Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1994) only encompass *high* and *low* orientations. It is reasonable to assume that families may fall somewhere in the middle in conversation and conformity. This makes a *moderate* orientation necessary in order to fully encapsulate all the types of families that can be present and represented in media.

Also, I suggest further research on this topic in order to elucidate certain aspects of family communication media portrayals and their influence on audiences. Dystopian teen drama films are targeted at teen audiences. *Divergent* (2014) is no exception. Now that the messages communicated about family communication and gender are clear from this analysis, it is important to understand the potential effects these gender messages may have on the viewer's socialization. Researchers can use a survey methodology to examine these specific effects among teenagers who have seen this film. In addition, this analysis illustrated the use of a *laissez-faire* communication style in a dystopian teen drama, while it is apparent other similar films present

little to no family communication. Thus, answering whether the incorporation of a laissez-faire family type is better than no incorporation of family communication is an important next step in research. Even though this film is one of the only in its genre that presents direct family communication within its plot, it does so through low conversation and conformity orientations among family members. Researchers should examine how this incorporation affects viewer's interpretations compared to other dystopian teen dramas that do not include any family communication.

Concluding Remarks. Overall, this study adds significant knowledge to the field of family communication and gender media messages. This is the first critical study of its kind that utilizes both family communication patterns theory and a family feminist perspective to analyze the gender messages in a dystopian teen drama. *Divergent* (2014) communicates a perpetuation of the dominant patriarchal ideology through its incorporation of the laissez-faire family type. This specific family type, because of its inherent lack of communication, preserves the societal patriarchal views within the family. Power and privilege are assumed by the males, and communication that could contest this is not present. This new knowledge of the messages contained within a laissez-faire family can be used to further research in this field on media presentations of family communication and their potential consequences for viewers and producers. Intersecting research in these fields can reveal the complicated implications of "Faction before blood."

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