

# The Mechanism of Neocolonialism in Faction System Veronica Roth's Divergent

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## Abstract

Human unawareness of neo-colonialism makes many people become deceived by circumstances that seem to raise them from adversity. This study explores how neocolonialism is reflected in Veronica Roth's novel, Divergent, by analyzing the mechanism of neocolonialism through the faction system. The faction system in Divergent is often examined from the perspective of social control and ideological domination. This research method is descriptive qualitative. It uses Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony to analyze how domination is maintained not only through coercion but also through the consent of other groups. Gramsci's concept highlights the role of ideological and cultural control in securing power, which in the context of Divergent is reflected in social norms, faction-based education, and moral values that shape individual behavior. This system simplifies social control by assigning a single quality to each individual to eliminate ambiguity and variation. This type of faction system prevents the emergence of rebels who could disrupt the established order. This is why neocolonialism occurs because they follow the existing rules without resistance. They perceive these as social regulations that they must obey to maintain world security and peace.

**Keywords:** Faction System, Hegemony, Neo-colonialism

## INTRODUCTION

Human unawareness of realization of neo-colonialism makes many people become deceived by circumstances that seem to raise them from adversity. Neo-colonialism usually produces future results that were previously unimaginable. But the way it is done to trick it can be very dangerous.

Neocolonialism is the last stage of imperialism that perhaps the most dangerous. In the era after colonialism collapsed where there was an imagination of freedom, but in the postcolonial era it turned out that the existing freedom was transformed into something that colonized others (Nkrumah, 1965).

Domination is implemented not just through physical means but is also created through language, influencing the way specific groups are viewed and situated. In terms of psychology, Frantz Fanon highlights that colonial rule generates a deeply ingrained feeling of inferiority in those who are colonized. This results in individuals embracing their lower status as something that is normal and unavoidable.

According to Palmer and Perkins (1957), "Neo-colonialism is a new and more insidious form of imperialism, widely prevalent and particularly pernicious and dangerous". Compared to classical colonial, neo-colonialism control people through indirect

means. It could be cultural, economic, and political effect with new distinctive forms of colonial.

Said (1978) states neo-colonialism can also occur through the imposition of values on society, making the dominant ideology accepted as the norm. The main characteristics of neo-colonialism include economic dependency, ideological control, resource exploitation, and the creation of social structures that benefit the dominant group. Domination is not only enforced physically but also constructed discursively, shaping how certain groups are perceived and positioned.

Lodhi (2019) explains that mechanism such as social classification, strict rules, and psychological conditioning function as tools to regulate individual and hierarchical order. When the individuals accept these ideas, they tend to unknowingly support and continue the system, illustrating key characteristics of neocolonial control. Furthermore, the study acknowledges the influence of dominant factions in shaping perceptions and maintaining their power over marginalized communities, thereby increasing inequality and limiting social advancement.

*Divergent* is a novel of American author Veronica Roth, published by HarperCollins Children's Book in 2011. This novel is a young adult science fiction adventure novel genre. *Divergent*, shows the human living in the future that live in five factions; *Abnegation* (The Selflessness), *Erudite* (The Intelligent), *Dauntless* (The Brave), *Amity* (The Peaceful) and *Candor* (The Honest). This factional division turned out to be a form of colonialism disguised as regulations that promised peace and security.

*Divergent* novel has a state of order in their faction system that is interest examined in depth. Factions came into being a new

social class inside the society. Only those with a compatible ability with any faction were allowed to join and live there. On the other hand, those lacking such compatibility would be a factionless. This state points to their exclusion from society. Prasgiyardi (2016) interpreting faction system as a form of class struggle within a hierarchical social system. It showed how power and domination are exercised by certain factions, particularly the intellectual elite, to maintain control and reinforce ideological structures.

Anggraeni (2017) analyzed how political power is constructed and sustained through ideological influence, which shapes the behavior and mindset of individuals within the faction system. The unequal power relations play a significant role in creating conflict and reinforcing social hierarchy. Primananda (2015) describes how the faction system operates as a strong method of social control by imposing strict identity boundaries, inhibiting personal expression, and sustaining stereotypes among groups. It also reveals that specific factions gain more power and dominance, leading to disparities and conflict among groups.

This study seeks to address the current gaps in previous studies by examining that faction system is also a form of neo-colonialism. In analyzing the faction system in Veronica Roth's *Divergent* (2011), this study employs Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony to examine how dominance is maintained not merely through coercion, but through the consent of subordinate groups. Gramsci's concept highlights the role of ideological and cultural control in securing power, which in the context of *Divergent* is reflected in the social norms, faction-based education, and moral values that shape individual behavior.

## METHODS

The researcher used Gramsci's hegemony theory to analyze the mechanism of neocolonialism through faction system. Hegemony operates through systems like education, media, and cultural customs, which embed prevailing values and influence social conduct, enabling those in power to maintain control with minimal resistance.

Hegemony, as defined by Antonio Gramsci, refers to the prevalence of a social faction that is established through the agreement of less powerful groups, commonly achieved through control over ideology, culture, and education instead of through overt coercion.

In the realm of *Divergent*, hegemony is illustrated by the factional system that influences actions, upholds societal standards, and perpetuates authority through widely accepted ethical and ideological values. By applying hegemony theory, the researcher find that the faction system can be analyzed as a neo-colonial mechanism through ideological control, structural dependency, and oppression.

This research used qualitative descriptive. A qualitative approach allows researchers to interpret social and cultural phenomena within the text, particularly those related to the mechanisms of colonialism. The primary data are in the form of words, phrases, sentences, and dialogues taken from the novel *Divergent*. In addition, secondary sources are used to support the analysis, including books and scholarly articles on hegemony and neo-colonialism theory and previous studies related to the novel.

To analyzing the data, the process is conducted through several steps. First, the researcher performs close reading of the novel to collecting quotation related to the

topic and research question. Second, relevant data are identified by selecting textual elements related to faction systems, power relations, ideological control, identity, and resistance using Gramsci's approach. Then selected the data which show the concept of faction system as constructed in the novel, analyze the mechanisms of neocolonialism in the novel, and finally describe the mechanisms of neocolonialism in the novel.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Faction System in *Divergent* through the Lens of Hegemony

The faction system in *Divergent* is a social structure that divided into five factions. This faction based on the specific moral values like *Abnegation* (The Selflessness), *Erudite* (The Intelligent), *Dauntless* (The Brave), *Amity* (The Peaceful) and *Candor* (The Honest). All sixteen-years-olds from every faction will get the Choosing Ceremony. Each individual can choose one faction as their permanently identity. Their decision that day will make them initiation, and they will become members if they complete initiation.

*Abnegation* defined with gray clothes and the plain hairstyle. They didn't like to draw attention and more concerned about people's contentment than themselves. *Abnegation* was entrusted with governing the political leadership. *Erudite* defined intelligently, grow with knowledge and education. They believe the world would be a better place if people are well-educated. They like learning and try to understand how everything works. They also make decision based on logic rather than emotions or instinct. *Dauntless* wore black clothes makes them look strong and bold. They do what they believe is right no matter how difficult it is. *Dauntless* entrusted be the military and

security in that place. They believe the world would better if people not afraid to make things right. *Amity* has yellow and red clothes. They appreciate music and the arts, funny easy to make them laugh. One of their goals is find pieces and happiness as much as they can. They held agriculture and cooperation in there. *Candor* always honest with everyone, no matter how much trouble it gets. They prefer to hear the truth even if it hurts. Looks insensitive, but they are trustworthy and confident. *Candor* was entrusted managing law and justice administration.

This system regulates individual roles and interactions, establishing order and ideological control. The structure of factions restricts individual freedom by designating societal roles that dictate conduct without direct force. The Erudite group's employment of propaganda and authority over information reflects dominant strategies, as it maintains supremacy through influence and belief systems rather than physical intimidation.

The people who did not be categorized into single faction, they would be a factionless or called a *Divergent*. *Divergent* characters representing resistance against ideological and structural control. Though this framework is presented as a solution for human conflict, it can be critically examined as a form of hegemonic control that maintains social order through ideological domination direct coercion.

The concept of hegemony, as theorized by Antonio Gramsci, refers the methods in which those in power maintain control through the manipulation of cultural standards, values, and beliefs, making their authority seem natural and unavoidable. In *Divergent*, the faction system illustrates this mechanism by instilling its beliefs profoundly in the minds of people from a young age.

Individuals are brought up to think that human character should be distilled into one main virtue, and that societal cohesion relies on rigid compliance with this classification.

One of the most evident expressions of dominant ideology is the concept which emphasizes group identity over family connections.

"I think of the motto I read in my Faction History textbook: Faction before blood. More than family, our factions are where we belong. Can that possibly be right?" (Roth, 2011, p. 43).

This idea showcases the effectiveness of ideological training, as people gladly embrace the authority of the system above their personal bonds. The adoption of these principles indicates how power functions in a nuanced manner: individuals agree to their own inferior status because they view it as ethically justified and socially essential.

This also demonstrates how state ideology is instilled from childhood, leading society to accept the system without question. The state/faction controls society's way of thinking, with individual identities determined by the system, but society accepts these rules as correct. In other words, power is not imposed directly, but is voluntarily accepted through education and culture.

Furthermore, the Choosing Ceremony acts as an essential institutional tool that strengthens hegemonic control. While it is framed as a chance for self-determination, the procedure is significantly shaped by earlier social influences. From childhood, people are surrounded by values linked to specific factions through their education, family dynamics, and cultural traditions. Consequently, their perceived "choice" is limited by ingrained expectations, making it more a reflection of the existing social

framework than an exercise of true autonomy. This supports Gramsci's assertion that institutions are vital in upholding hegemony by normalizing dominant ideologies.

The faction system also functions by condensing human complexity into fixed categories. By assigning individuals based on a sole characteristic, this system removes ambiguity and diversity, making society to easier management. Such a reduction is crucial for maintaining hegemonic control because it hinders analytical thinking and discourage people from questioning the system. Individuals begin to identify themselves in limited ways, which diminishes their ability for self-reflection and resistance.

"Without a faction, we have no purpose and no reason to live" (Roth, 2011, p. 20)

This quotation showed people think that factions are one way for them to live with clear goals. Indirectly, they rely on and follow the faction system to have a direction in life. They don't even think that they are controlled and given rules so that no one rebels. By promising a clear direction, this faction system continues and no one dares to challenge this system.

Importantly, the existence of factionless highlights the coercive basis that supports this apparently agreed-upon system. The factionless are people who cannot assimilate into any faction, and as a result, they are excluded from social, economic, and political participation. They endure lives in poverty and invisibility, constantly reminding society of the penalties for nonconformity.

"To live factionless is not just to live in poverty and discomfort; it is to live divorce from society, separated from the most important thing in life; community" (Roth, 2011, p. 20)

The factionless are the lowest of the low. This illustrates that while hegemony is based on consensus, it is ultimately reinforced by structural inequality and the implicit threat of exclusion.

The emergence of *Divergent* characters, who defy classification and reject strict factional identities, illustrates a challenge to dominant power structures. Their presence questions the prevailing ideology and highlights the weakness of societal agreement, showcasing the conflict between personal freedom and overarching ideological influence. Therefore, the faction system in *Divergent* not only upholds Gramscian hegemony but also serves as a storytelling framework to investigate the interactions of ideological authority and opposition within an organized society.

"The city is ruled by a council of fifty people, composed entirely of representatives from Abnegation, because our faction is regarded as incorruptible, due to our commitment to selflessness...." (Roth, 2011, p. 33)

This sentence suggests that government is handed over to a particular faction believed to be pure of heart and incapable of corruption. This power demonstrates that moral imagery can be used as a pretext for leading society.

Moreover, the emergence of Erudite as a significant political power demonstrates how hegemony can change within a system. Utilizing their control over knowledge and information, Erudite challenges the established authority of Abnegation and seeks to alter the societal values. This internal power conflict emphasizes that hegemony is dynamic, constantly reshaped by differing ideologies.

They can't defy the norms of their factions. (Roth, 2011, p. 9). Society has been colonized, they are made to follow the norms and systems determined by the rulers so that they lose their freedom of thought. When the dominant group determines the standards of behavior and social identity, this event constitutes cultural hegemony in neocolonialism.

In conclusion, the faction system in *Divergent* functions as a dominant system that upholds its authority by influencing convictions, restricting identities, and gaining the approval of its members. The system's endurance relies on the effective absorption of its ideology, which conceals the deeper inequalities and power relations.

#### **Mechanism of Neocolonialism Demonstrated in *Divergent***

In addition to hegemonic control, the social structure in *Divergent* can be analyzed through the lens of neocolonialism. Neocolonialism signifies the persistence of colonial dominance through indirect domination, including economic dependency, cultural influence, and ideological control, instead of direct political rule. In this novel, there is no colonization by a foreign country, but rather an elite faction that retains authority by means of beliefs, education, advanced technology, and societal regulation, instead of physical colonization.

The dynamics of neo-colonialism in *Divergent* by Veronica Roth portray how the faction structure operates as an instrument of influence, subjugation, and ideological manipulation that mirrors neo-colonial behaviors. The faction system illustrates various critical aspects tied to this kind of authority. This is used to analyze how this system generates exploitation and ideological oppression.

Factionless communities signify collectives that experience social and economic exclusion. This idea closely ties to neocolonialism, where specific groups are intentionally positioned in subordinate roles to preserve the system's stability. They are deprived of power and resources, resulting in reliance on the very systems that subjugate them.

The enforcement and control of identity are vital to how this system operates. People are required to conform to specific faction identities that shape their beliefs, actions, and societal roles. This enforced classification diminishes individuality and promotes sameness, akin to how neocolonial regimes alter local identities to fit within prevailing global frameworks. The erosion of personal identity guarantees that individuals depend on the system for validation and a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, the functional division within the faction system reflects the economic organization seen in neocolonial scenarios. Every faction has a designated function that aids in the overall operation of society: Abnegation leads, Dauntless ensures safety, Erudite generates knowledge, Amity upholds peace, and Candor guarantees fairness. Although this division seems effective, it establishes a strict hierarchy and restricts social advancement. People cannot freely explore diverse talents or roles; rather, they are limited to functions that meet the system's requirements. This mirrors how labor is structured in neocolonial economies to perpetuate global disparities.

The Erudite group's control over knowledge signifies a type of intellectual domination. Knowledge serves not just as an unbiased asset, but as a means of influence that determines one's perception of reality. Erudite does not confront the public openly.

Initially, they influence public perception to gain support for their initiatives. By regulating who can access information and establishing what is deemed true, Erudite is capable of swaying both political choices and societal beliefs. This is similar to actual neocolonial approaches, where dominance over sectors like education, media, and technology permits powerful entities to sustain their control without overt force.

“Human reason excuse any evil; that is why it’s so important that we don’t rely on it” (Roth, 2011, p. 102)

This quote shows how the Erudite uses rationality to justify oppression. According to Nkrumah, neocolonialism is often disguised under the pretext of modernity, science, or progress in order to legitimize domination over other societies.

The exclusion of the factionless highlight systemic inequality and social exclusion. These individuals are systematically blocked from accessing essential resources, opportunities, and societal acknowledgment. Their disadvantaged position strengthens the credibility of the faction structure by portraying it as the sole viable route to dignity and survival. In neocolonial scenarios, comparable exclusionary trends are implemented to uphold economic and social disparities, ensuring that specific groups remain in subordinate positions.

The way *Divergent* individuals are treated underscores the system’s dependence on inflexible categorization and its lack of tolerance for uncertainty. *Divergent* individuals exhibit various characteristics that defy simple classification, rendering them difficult to control. Consequently, they are deemed as dangers and become targets for removal. This situation mirrors a larger

neocolonial tendency to stifle types of identity and knowledge that confront prevailing frameworks. The presence of Divergent individuals brings to light the constructed nature of the system and its reliance on stringent limits.

“Currently, the factionless are drain on our resources,” (Roth, 2011, p. 429)

Lastly, it is essential to acknowledge that the tactics of neocolonialism within *Divergent* primarily function through internal acceptance rather than explicit force. People embrace the principles and ideologies of the system, viewing them as inherent and advantageous. This internal acceptance diminishes the necessity for direct oppression, enhancing the system's stability and sustainability. In this way, power becomes imperceptible, woven into routine behaviors and social conventions.

One of the most persuasive forms of proof is the implementation of a simulated serum. Within the story, the Erudite faction employs the serum, which manipulates the Dauntless, as a weapon to eliminate Abnegation. This demonstrates that contemporary neocolonialism often transcends physical territory control, focusing instead on the manipulation of human consciousness. The serum depicted in *Divergent* represents an allegory for mental and technological manipulation that erodes personal independence. As such, subjugation takes place without explicit agreement.

“A faction of intellectuals is no army. We are tired of being dominated by a bunch of self-righteous idiots who reject wealth and advancement, but we couldn’t do this on our own. And your Dauntless leaders were all too happy to oblige me if I guaranteed them a place in our new, improved government”. (Roth, 2011, p. 429)

Jeanine views Abnegation as “self-righteous idiots”. This showed how dominant groups devalue other groups to make their dominance seem legitimate. In neocolonialism, cultures or systems that do not conform to modern standards are often considered primitive, inefficient, or obstacles to progress.

“Why are most of the Divergent weak-willed, God-fearing nobodies from Abnegation, of all factions?” (Roth, 2011, p. 429)

Most of the Divergent came from Abnegation, which rejects wealth and ambition, is viewed by Erudite as an obstacle to societal development. This is why Jeanine wants to destroy the Abnegation.

The handling of *Divergent* people emphasizes the system's dependence on inflexible classifications and its refusal to accept uncertainty. Divergent individuals exhibit various characteristics and cannot be simply placed into specific categories, which makes them difficult to manage. Consequently, they are branded as dangers and pursued for removal. This illustrates a wider neocolonial tendency to suppress forms of identities and knowledge that oppose dominant structures. The presence of *Divergent* individuals reveals the constructed essence of the system and its reliance on rigid limits.

“Improved, and working toward a world in which people will live in wealth, comfort, and prosperity” (Roth, 2011, p. 429)

By destroying Abnegation, the Erudite hope that the Divergent as opponents will also be destroyed. From a neocolonial perspective, Erudite acts like a modern colonial elite, where knowledge is used to legitimize power.

They use military force to maintain dominance, using the cause of progress as a justification for controlling society. Thus, Divergent not only depicts inter-factional conflict but also critiques the modern power system that uses intellectualism and technology as tools of socio-political domination.

This system clearly shapes us to conform to the existing system. With the ostensible goal of providing comfort, the Erudite use this opportunity to colonize and force all individuals to conform to the system they have established. This is a form of neocolonialism mechanism with cultural hegemony so that they willingly follow and with the existence of a system that promises “prosperity”.

## CONCLUSION

Researcher have found that neo-colonialism practices exist in the *Divergent* novel. Hegemony is clearly present in the formation of the existing faction system. The division of factions is not only to organize individuals into several life goals that suit their passion, but clearly there is a hidden colonialism that no one is aware of. They are given rules from the beginning that are taken for granted and they obey and apply them from childhood. Under the pretext of obeying the rules to achieve a safe and prosperous world, the elite group uses its intelligence to control the world with the help of Dauntless. Erudite, who possess intelligence clearly needs a strong person like Dauntless who can help them succeed in their goals. With their intelligence, they create a world order so that no one can rebel against the system they have painstakingly built. All existing factions are also controlled by them. However, no one is

aware of this, only the *Divergent* are aware of it. The dominant class will use any means to ensure that nothing threatens the system's order.

In conclusion, researcher found that the faction system in Divergent novel operates as both a hegemonic and neocolonial structure. Through internalized ideology, controlled social roles, and systematic exclusion, society upholds order while limiting individual freedom. The theory of hegemony by providing colonization without realizing it through the existing system clearly forms a mechanism of neocolonialism. The novel ultimately reveals that power is most effective when it is accepted as natural, instead of being enforced through overt power.

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