Marianne Bell. An Examination of Strong Female Characters in Dystopian and Post-Apocalyptic Young Adult Literature. A Master’s paper for the M.S in L.S. degree. April 2013 69 pages Advisor: Brian W. Sturm

This study details the latent content analysis of seven young adult novels describing either dystopian or post-apocalyptic environments that centered on one strong female character. The focus of the analysis centered on each of the main characters as the strength of each character to determine the sources of their strength, to determine whether these sources were character traits or outside environmental sources and to define what roles that the other characters in the book play in the development of their strength. Ten different sources were isolated and it was determined that there are a mixture of both character traits and outside influences, as well as the influence of abstract ideals. It was determined that the influence of the relationships that each of the heroines experience served either as a motivation of their actions or support to endure their difficulties.

Headings

Content analysis

Young adult fiction

Science fiction
AN EXAMINATION OF STRONG FEMALE CHARACTERS IN DYSTOPIAN AND POST-APOCALYPTIC YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

By Marianne Bell

A Master’s paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Information and Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina
April 2013

Approved by

Advisor Brian W Sturm
# Table of Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 2

Literature Review ................................................................................................................................... 3

- Strong Females in Literature .............................................................................................................. 8
- Portrayal of Females in Young Adult Literature .................................................................................. 10
- Strong Female characters in Dystopian Young Adult Literature ..................................................... 11

Methodology .......................................................................................................................................... 14

- Research Questions ............................................................................................................................ 14
- Final List of Books Selected for this Study .......................................................................................... 16
- Coding Procedure ............................................................................................................................... 16

Analysis .................................................................................................................................................. 18

Conclusion .............................................................................................................................................. 62

Bibliography .......................................................................................................................................... 64
Introduction

Throughout the course of history, human beings have survived tremendous trauma and have developed great strength in order to survive it. This has been exhibited in both real life cases and literature, none more so than strong protagonists in young adult literature.

One of the most popular trends in young adult science fiction in the last 5 years has been dystopian/post-apocalyptic storylines in which the strong female protagonists are called upon to perform tremendous acts of strength, bravery, courage, etc. Examples of this can be found in 1) a teenage girl who volunteers to take her sister’s place in a fight to the death, 2) a teenage medic in training who goes on a journey to cure a disease so her sister’s unborn child will survive beyond the first few days of life, 3) a young woman who fights against the very framework of the world she knows in order to preserve her own identity. These are only a few of the strong female protagonists that will be examined in this study. The existence of their strength is undeniable, but the question remains of where their strength comes from. The research question that I will be attempting to answer through content analysis in this proposed study is

What are the sources of strength in selected strong female protagonists in dystopian and post-apocalyptic young adult literature?
Literature Review  
Psychology of Human Strength

Carver and Scheier (2003) state that “strength is the solidity to stand firm against the rockslides of an uncertain world. Strength is flexibility with tensile reserve, allowing people to bend but not break when facing raging winds.”(p.87) There are many things that contribute to human strength, but the four different aspects that I will focus on are relationships, perseverance, giving up and growing as a person.

When we examine human strength through the lens of psychology, we see that there are certain elements of human life from which human beings draw their strength in order to get through the difficulties of life. The greatest of these is our relationships with other people and the emotions that we develop in those relationships. Zajonc (1998) states on this subject:

```
Emotions, even though their hallmark is the internal state of the individual – the viscera, the gut- are above all social phenomena. They are the basis of social interaction; they are the products of social interaction, their origins, and their currency. (pp.619-620)
```

Thus we see that it is our emotional connections to those closest to us that help us to overcome our greatest obstacles. Berscheid (2003) states that “the central hypothesis has been relationships with others promote physical well-being through the health-promoting actions of those with whom the individual is in relationship.”(p.41) According to Berscheid & Reis (1998), our close relationships with the people around us bring us the most happiness. It is this happiness that allows us to find strength through our relationships. A study done by Durkheim(1897/1963) made the connection between a person’s likeliness to commit “suicide and his or her degree of social integration or his or
her maintenance of relationship ties with others.”(p.41) Bersheid (2003) summarizes this contributor to human strength by saying that “it seems likely that our ancestors survived, and that we survive today, only with the aid of other humans”(p.44).

Thinking of “giving up” as a strength may seem strange, especially in our culture in which quitting has such negative connotations, but being able to recognize your limitations and alter your course of action can have many beneficial effects. These benefits can show themselves when we lessen our commitment to one direction in order to increase our commitment to another objective. While we have certainly lost something by abandoning our first objective, our increased commitment to the second objective or dream can have benefits. As Carver and Scheier (2003) have found, “by scaling back the goal – giving up in a small way -- the person keeps trying to move ahead, thus not giving up in a larger way. The person thereby retains the sense of purpose in activities in that domain.” (p.91) This shows us that there are many different forms that giving up can take. There is abandoning one dream for another; there is giving up control over a project that we are supervising to someone else so that they might develop in that area. The act of giving up also has a place in the self-regulation in our behavior and in life-span development.

The act of disengagement or giving up can have unforeseen benefits in the area of behavior self-regulation. One example of this is that it eliminates internal conflicts that can arise when we reduce our effort but not our commitment towards a goal. This conflict can result in helplessness when a goal cannot be reached, but cannot be abandoned due to its importance. (Carver and Scheier 2003) One example of giving up, that people practice after they have experienced a serious trauma is according to Tedeschi (1995):
A strengthening of religious beliefs may serve a variety of purposes for an individual coping with trauma, and that these purposes vary among individuals. These purposes include gaining a sense of control over a life that has become uncontrollable. Placing one’s decisions “in the hands of God” represents a paradox of gaining this control by giving it up. (p.38)

Carver (2003) states that “commitment and confidence interact to foster persistence and perseverance, even in the face of great adversity.” (p.88) Carr (2011) states that “a person with the character strength of perseverance finishes demanding and difficult tasks despite encountering obstacles to task completion and experiencing the temptation to quit.” (p.63)

Along the lines of perseverance is the idea of self-determination theory and intrinsic motivation. Nietzsche said that “He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how.” (p.76) This theory was developed in order to “explain conditions that foster intrinsic motivation” (p.125) and was developed by Professors Richard Ryan and Edward Deci at Rochester University. The concept of intrinsic motivation as outlined by this theory is “the inclination we have towards spontaneous interest, exploration, and mastery of new information, skills, and experiences.” (p.125)

It is the study of how human beings respond to the difficulties in their lives that shows us their true strength. On this subject, Moffat (2010) states that “when one coasts through life with minimal stress, it is much easier to maintain a fragile existence. When trauma presents itself, however, such luxury does not exist. To coast means to accept defeat” (p.3). The growth that victims of misfortune or even trauma experience can exhibit itself in many different and varying ways. For instance, a man is laid off and consequently spending more time at home and he and his wife become closer together and their relationship improves (Tedeschi 1995). This growth can be physical, emotional
or mental. According to Richard G. Tedeschi, this growth can exhibit itself as increased self-reliance and personal strength; recognition and appreciation of vulnerability; self-disclosure and emotional expressiveness; compassion, empathy, and effort in relationships and a changed philosophy in life. The growth that people gain from surviving a trauma, according to Carver and Scheier (2003), “may be an actual skill, it may be an enhanced knowledge base, it may be enhanced social support. With new skills, people are better prepared to deal with an unpredictable world. With new pathways to get from one place to another, people are more flexible in confronting the unknown” (p.96); another form of this growth can also be seen in the development of certain virtues in their character. According to Moffat (2010), these virtues are humility, gratitude, hope, forgiveness and optimism.

Despite our current culture’s aversion to humility with the attitude that it consists of belittling oneself or low self-esteem, Tangney(2002) argues that

True humility is a rich, multifaceted construct that is characterized by an accurate assessment of one’s characteristics, an ability to acknowledge limitations, and a “forgetting of the self.” (p.411)

Tangney goes on to say that the key elements of humility consist of an accurate assessment of one abilities and achievements, rather than low self-esteem and self-deprecation; an ability to acknowledge one’s mistakes, imperfections, gaps in knowledge and limitations; openness to new ideas, contradictory information, and advice; keeping one’s abilities and accomplishments-one’s place in the world- in perspective, an example of this is seeing oneself as just one person in the larger scheme of things; a relatively low self-focus, a “forgetting of the self,” while recognizing that one is but part of the larger
universe; and an appreciation of the value of all things, as well as the many different ways that people and things can contribute to our world.

With our current society’s definition and attitude of humility being associated with low-esteem, it is not surprising that it is not currently seen as an attractive attribute, but when you look through the lens of the definitions given to us by C.S. Lewis and June Tangney, it becomes clear that the development of this characteristic is indeed a positive outcome and is indeed a strength.

In contrast to humility, the idea of having gratitude is universally accepted as a positive attribute by cultures and religions around the world. According to Tangney(2002), “as a psychological state, gratitude is a felt sense of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation for life.” (p.460) Moffat (2010) recounts the story of Correy ten Boom and the fact that while she was “incarcerated in a concentration camp, was grateful for lice. Because the inmates’ dormitories were ridden with lice, the guards would not enter their living quarters. That gave Correy and her fellow captives freedom to practice their living without interruption from the camp guards.” (p.42) Gratitude also helps us to focus on the positive which can be used as a means of strength, as it can lead to further perseverance.

Hope and optimism are both goal-oriented states of mind. Moffat (2010) recounts that Viktor Frankl, who was a psychiatrist who was arrested in 1942 and sent to a concentration camp, said that the loss of “hope and courage can have a deadly effect.” (p.43) Moffat also goes on to explain that “optimism might involve hope. Hope is the desire for some future event. Optimism is the explanation of current events.” (p.44)
According to a study conducted by Peterson & Seligman in 1984, another approach to optimism relies on the assumption that people’s expectations for the future derive from their view of the causes of events in the past. The psychological conceptualization of optimism takes two different extremes, dispositional optimism and optimistic explanatory style. According to Carver (2009), the concept of dispositional optimism is a “broad personality trait characterized by general optimistic expectations.” (p.89) In contrast, Alan Carr (2011) explains the optimistic explanatory style as:

Optimistic people, according to this perspective, explain negative events or experiences by attributing the cause of these to external, transient, specific factors such as prevailing circumstances. In contrast, pessimists explain negative events or experiences by attributing their cause to internal, stable, global factor such as being a personal failure. (p.91)

The last personality characteristic that sufferers of traumas develop as part of their growth is forgiveness. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the definition of forgive is “to give up resentment of or claim to requital for.” There is a lot of research on the psychological dimensions of forgiveness; according to McCullough & Witvlet (2002), who summarized the dimensions of forgiveness that already have been researched. The dimensions of forgiveness are: 1) how the propensity to forgive develops across the life span, 2) the personality traits that are linked to forgiveness, 3) the social-psychological factors that influence forgiveness, and 4) the links of forgiveness to health and well-being.

Strong Females in Literature
As previously stated, the popularity of dystopian fiction is fairly recent, but portrayal of strong females has been present in literature dating back to the early 20th
century. While Anne Shirley from the Anne of Green Gables series doesn’t show her strength to the extent to that of the heroines that will be examined in this proposed study, it doesn’t negate the fact of her own strength. Like Katniss Everdeen, Anne Shirley is an outsider to her environment at the beginning of Anne of Green Gables. K.L. Poe(1997) states that Anne “is about as far removed from society as one could get in the late nineteenth century: as an orphan, her origins were suspect; as a girl, she was useless for hard farm work and hard to marry off because of those same suspicious origins”(p.21). Despite her origins, Anne was able to thrive in her environments, due in part to the loving environment that she finds with Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert. However, just like Anne, this living arrangement was truly original in respect to the gender roles of the inhabitants. Shirley Foster and Judy Simmons (1995) elaborate on the gender roles that take place in the Cuthbert household. In regards to Matthew, “he embodies maternal comfort rather than paternal authority (he is the one who pleads for her to let off the punishments which Marilla imposes), and it is significant that Anne feels in close harmony with him ‘Matthew and I have such kindred spirits I can read his thoughts without words at all’ (120) – in a female bonding of non-verbal communication.”(p.163) Poe elaborates on this gender role reversal “Matthew is the nurturer of Anne’s spirit; Marilla is the word of law and society.” (p.21) It is this loving environment that Anne is able to draw strength from in order to go on to the successes that she achieves in the later books in the series.

Another female character that shows strength in classic literature is Catherine Barkley in Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell of Arms*. Due to the gender bias of the narrator, the reader may perceive Catherine as weak, but Suzanne del Gizzo(2003) reinterprets Catherine’s character:
When Federic meets Catherine, she is wearing nurse’s uniform, but she is also carrying an “a thin rattan stick like a toy riding crop, bound in leather” given to her by her dead fiancé. While the uniform signals her nurturing nature, the stick suggests that she is a woman whose loss has forced her to discover her strength and has given her discipline and determination to save herself and those she loves. (p.18)

Another example can be found in Lady Macbeth from Shakespeare’s Macbeth. The character of Lady Macbeth is unusual due to the fact that she is a woman in a major role, a rarity in Shakespeare, but according to Elizabeth Kitt (2003), she is “often labeled an ‘unnatural’ woman because she manipulates her husband into killing the king and seizing his crown.”:(p.178) Despite her intentions and her tragic end, Lady Macbeth can be seen as a very strong female, as Kitt elaborates:

Lady Macbeth herself does not conform to feminine stereotypes. Rather, she renounces her femininity in order to commit the murder. In her first soliloquy, she calls on dark spirits to ‘unsex’ her so that she can be cruel and merciless(1.5.42). Later she tells Macbeth that she would forsake motherly instincts and murder her own child to prove her devotion and courage (1.7.54-59) (p.179)

**Portrayal of Females in Young Adult Literature**

In contrast to the females that I will be analyzing in the proposed study, independent young women were not always portrayed in a positive light. One example of this treatment is the evolution of the character, Jo March in Little Women. Joanne Brown and Nancy St. Clair(2002) summarizes Jo’s character at the beginning in the novel as “She longs to be a boy, to exchange her knitting needles for the weapons of war, to become a successful write enjoying an independent life” (p.12). However, this never happens due to her mother’s influence as Brown and St. Clair continue, “if Jo is to live happily ever after, she must learn to curb her tongue, dress like a lady, and behave like a
saint.” (p.12) Jo was expected to conform to feminine norms of the day, which during the Civil War included getting married and having children and little else.

Jo’s strength, however, extends beyond her longings to get away from the feminine stereotypes. It is also in her ability to care and nurture those around her. Brown and St. Clair; (2002) elaborate on this strength further, “In Part 1 she gains - not loses – strength by nursing Beth through scarlet fever and pampering Laurie when he is ill or has been unfairly castigated by his grandfather.” (p.34)

**Strong Female characters in Dystopian Young Adult Literature**

On the subject of strong female characters in dystopian young adult literature, one character who comes to most people’s minds is Katniss Everdeen. Jessica Miller(2012) remarks in her essay “She has no idea. The Effect She Can Have: Katniss and the Politics of Gender”, that “Katniss is an unusual female protagonist in the sense that her behavior, attitudes, temperament, and character seem to fit the norms of muscul arity more than those of femininity.” (p.146) According to Miller, Katniss’s strengths don’t end there. Her other strengths includes loyalty and protecting those she loves. Miller elaborates on these points by stating, “She may not be caring in the traditional sense associated with women, but she’s intensely loyal and will lie, steal, fight, and even kill to those she loves alive.”(p.147) Katniss’s greatest asset, however, is her will to survive in order to keep a promise to her sister. It is for this promise that most of her actions in the arena occur, including her relationship with Peeta, which seems to entirely contradict her previous actions. Miller presents the theory that:
Essentially, she adopts femininity as a *performance*. During the Games, Katniss reminds herself to act for the cameras in the way a girl in love would act, whether that means tender kisses, gentle caresses, affectionate glances, or fighting desperately to keep her lover alive when he is grievously injured. (p.156)

Guy Andre Risko (2012) presents the theory that Katniss is actually a very conflicted character that her choices are not as straightforward as they may appear, “Katniss finds herself being pulled from multiple angles, from the drive to ‘survive’ and the desire to remain loyal.” (p.81) Risko also presents the idea that

Prior to becoming a competitor, Katniss had attempted to avoid the Capitol’s eye. Sneaking into restricted areas and hunting illegal game, she existed as a subject only affected by the constituting power of the Capitol. The bounds of her political choices were clearly visible. She was not allowed to go beyond the electric fence, but the economy allowed it. She stood as a nonexptional [sic] figure of law who clearly sees its failures and limits. When Katniss volunteers to replace her sister, however, she suddenly becomes devoid of political and legal value. (p.83)

The fact that Katniss is unaware of the complete magnitude of the actions that she commits in the name of protecting those that she loves is elaborated by Lindsey Issow Averill in her essay, “Sometimes the World is Hungry for People who Care: Katniss and the Feminist Care Ethic. She states that “Katniss’s moral choices often seem to be guided by a kind of favoritism, or strong personal attachment to particular people, such as her sister. Some philosopher might see this as a deep character flaw, since they believe that we should make our moral choices from a standpoint of impartiality.” (p.163) However, this impulsive part of her nature is actually one of her greatest strengths. Katniss’s sense of care for those that she feels responsible for turns out to be the very thing that saves her the most often. Joseph J. Foy states in his essay: “Safe to do What?”: Morality and the War of All against all in the Arena, that “in a refutation of Hobbesian reasoning what
saves Peeta and Katniss in the end is the feel to each other, as well as to others like Rue” (p.213). He goes on to say:

In acknowledgment of Katniss’s kindness to Rue, District 11 parachutes a gift of bread to Katniss. Later, Thresh, also from District 11, spares Katniss’s life because she comforted Rue with a song as Rue drew her dying breaths. Katniss could not have foreseen this response to her acts of kindness and selflessness, but it affirms the rightness of her behavior. (p.213)

Katniss carries this practice of protecting the helpless far beyond the arena and utilizes this tendency as she is made the figurehead of the rebellion and right to her reaction to her sister’s unjust demise at the hands of someone she trusted the most as she reacts by saying, “‘Prim . . . Rue . . . aren’t they the reason I have to try to fight?’ she asks.

‘Because what has been done to them is so wrong, so beyond justification, so evil that there is no choice? Because no one has the right to treat them as they have been treated?’”

Katniss’s sense of care for the innocent is illuminated in her alliance with Rue. Tammy L. Gant states in her essay, “Hungering for Righteousness: Music, Spirituality and Katniss Everdeen”:

In the arena, Katniss forms a brief alliance with Rue, the smallest and youngest tribute. The alliance meets a violent end when one of the Career Tributes fatally spears Rue. Her dying request is for a song, and Katniss obliges even though she knows she’s on screen in front of all of Panem. Katniss’s song for Rue challenges the viewers with one question: how should we treat the young and the vulnerable?(p.91)

One of Katniss’s assets is her family and the length that she will go to protect them. The depth of this conviction is demonstrated when we see what would happen to her if she would ever to fail them in her reaction to Rue’s death.
Katniss, despite her brave words around the mockingjay- soon sinks into despair. Rue had become like family to her and Katniss’s defining feature is the need to feed and protect her family. In fact, she recognizing Rue’s vulnerability, she knows protecting her as more important even than protecting her sister, Prim. In the face of her failure, Katniss slips into an almost suicidal lethargy. . . . Bathed in beauty, the Rue in Katniss’s dreams retains the flower shroud Katniss created for her. She is uninjured and happy and laughing. In her appearance, is the verification of Katniss’s claim: Rue is in a better place. (p.93)

It is through the identification with a character like Katniss Everdeen that we are able to find the strength to face our own challenges.

**Methodology**

The methodology that is being used in this study is latent content analysis. According to the *Sage Glossary of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, the definition of latent content is “the content of an event, as measured by the appearance of themes as interpreted by the researcher.”(p.285) I will be using this method to analyze the text of 7 works of fiction in order to isolate the sources of strength of 5 different heroines. This analysis was done through the practice of internal coding. Each passage was isolated and analyzed in order to identify the source of strength that is being exhibited within that passage. It was through this method that this researcher was able to identify 24 different sources of strength that are demonstrated to varying degrees by each of the heroines.

**Research Questions**

The motivation behind this study was to understand how these teenage girls are able to endure the worst horror imaginable, make the most difficult decisions of their lives, break all the stereotypes that we as a society have constructed for damsels in distress, and despite all of their challenges and also because of them, find strength to keep going. I am not saying that they are perfect that they don’t have weaknesses, and they
don’t have their low moments but they still have the ability to be independent, and to have a man in their lives without him becoming their whole existence. The research questions that I hope to answer in this study are:

1. What are the sources of their strengths in selected strong female protagonists in dystopian and post-apocalyptic young adult literature?
2. Are these sources of strength character traits or outside environmental forces?
3. What roles do other people play in each of the character’s development of their strengths?

Selecting texts
In order to determine which novels are currently on the market that would fit the criteria of my study, I used the resources of Amazon.com and NovelList, as well as the library catalogs of local public libraries. From these resources I was able to glean a list of more than 100 young adult novels in a dystopian or post-apocalyptic setting that centered on one main female lead. This list was reduced through a convenience sample that included 47 books. Each of these 47 books was read in its entirety and analyzed based on the portrayal of the female lead protagonist. From that list of 47 books, I eliminated 18 of the books due to the fact that they didn’t fit the pattern of the novels in this study. The factors that eliminated them are as follows: there were fantasy elements to the plot and the heroine fits the profile of a damsel in distress, meaning that they step aside and let their male counterpart dominate the action of the plot. Twenty-two of the books were then randomly eliminated to make the sample size of this study more manageable.
Final List of Books Selected for this Study

The books that I identified that best fit my criteria to be included in this study are the following:

- The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins - Heroine: Katniss Everdeen
- Legend by Marie Lu – heroine: June Iparis
- Prodigy by Marie Lu - heroine: June Iparis
- The Dark and Hollow Places by Carrie Ryan – heroine: Annah
- Divergent by Veronica Roth - heroine: Beatrice (Tris) Prior
- Insurgent by Veronica Roth - heroine: Beatrice(Tris) Prior
- Partials by Dan Wells - heroine: Kira Walker

Coding Procedure

An internal coding procedure was used to identify the attributes and influences for each heroine by taking each passage in context and discerning which attribute was demonstrated, whether it was already included in the rubric or a new attribute altogether.

Scope and limitations of the study

Due to the current popularity of dystopian/post-apocalyptic young adult literature, it was not possible to examine in depth all of the potential books that might have fit the criteria. In order to limit the novels that would be included in this study, I removed all books that had a fantasy or supernatural element to the characters or plot; the only exception that was made to this rule was the inclusion of zombies as part of the plot. The reason that this exception was made is due to the fact that the exclusion of this element from consideration would have severely limited the post-apocalyptic literature that would have been available to the study. The reason for the exclusion of most fantasy and supernatural elements from the book selection is due to the fact that the author of this study wanted to be able to examine characters that were as close to real life situations as possible in order to make the examination of their characters as clear as possible.
A limitation of this study is that in order to make the sample size of this study manageable, it also necessitated making the sample size very small. The size of the sample could make the results of this study insignificant however, each text was examined to such a depth that the author of this study was able to glean enough information to compensate for the limited scope.
**Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Katniss Everdeen</th>
<th>June Iparis</th>
<th>Annah</th>
<th>Beatrice (Tris) Prior</th>
<th>Kira Walker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intelligence and Skill</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Determination/ Courage</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Romantic Relationship/friends</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Truth or the pursuit of it.</strong></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kindness/Mercy</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional distance or control</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hope</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independence</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to obtain the best continuity throughout the course of this study and to look at each factor comprehensively, my analysis will be concentrated on each trait as it affects all five heroines. While each of these heroines is vastly different in both their circumstances and how they respond to those circumstances, the one thing that they have in common is they are teenage girls who endure great hardship in order to achieve their goals, whether that goal is staying alive, as with Katniss Everdeen and Annah, curing a disease that has killed 99.9% of the world’s population, as with Kira Walker, trying to find her place in the world, as with Tris Prior, or finding out the real truth behind the deaths of her family, as with June Iparis. Each of these girls is from worlds that are nothing like our own, but they face challenges that any teenage girl can relate to. An example of this is Annah, who suffers from body images issues due to scars on the left side of her body, or Tris Prior, who struggles to come to terms with her parents’ deaths.
while the very structure of the world that she knows is falling apart around her. No matter what their challenges or goals, each of these heroines is able to draw on their sources of strength in order to keep going, whether that’s achieving a goal or simply staying alive.

Through my research, I have identified 10 different sources of strength through latent content analysis. These sources are:

- Intelligence and Skill
- Determination and Courage
- Romantic relationships and friends,
- Family
- The pursuit of truth or truth itself
- Kindness and Mercy
- Emotional distance and control
- Hope
- Independence
- Identity

Intelligence is defined by Merriam-Webster’s dictionary as the ability to learn or understand or to deal with new or trying situations. This ability can be used to interpret the mental processes and physical abilities that are exhibited by each of the five heroines.

June Iparis exhibits her intelligence mostly through her powers of observations which she developed through her military training in her assessment of Day, her male counterpart at their first meeting:

“What do you want for the cure, cousin?” The voice is barely a whisper, but through the speakers it sounds broken and startling, so crackly that I have trouble understanding him, Details race instantly through my mind. (Male. He has a light accent- he's not from Oregon or Nevada or Arizona, or New Mexico or West Texas or any other Republic state. Native southern Californian. He uses the familiar term cousin, something Lake sector civilians often use. He's close enough to have seen me put the vial away. He's not so close that the speakers can catch his voice clearly. He must be on an adjacent block with a good vantage point-a high floor). (Legend p.77-78)
June also exhibits her intelligence as she examines the scene of her own brother’s murder.

‘Whoever hit him with this knife either stabbed him from close range or has an incredibly strong throwing arm. Right-handed.’ I run my fingers along the blood caked handle. ‘Impressive aim. The knife is one of a pair, correct? See this pattern painted on the bottom of the blade? It cuts off abruptly.’ (Legend p.43)

Her intelligence is also shown as she goes undercover in order to pursue Day, who is a suspect in her brother’s murder.

I need to look genderless, generic, unidentifiable. I need to look like a black-market dealer, someone rich enough to afford plague cures. (Legend p.73)

The combination of these elements of her intelligence enables her to judge her surroundings and be able to discern the truth from fiction both before and after she helps Day escape and join the other side of the conflict.

“You seem to know a great deal about the young Elector. You also seem to know a great deal about what happened at the celebratory ball,” I reply. I can’t hold in my suspicion any longer. “I suppose that’s because you were also a guest that night. You must be a Republic officer— but without a rank high enough to get you an audience with the Elector.” I study the room’s rich velvet carpets and granite counters. “These are your actual office quarters, aren’t they?” (Prodigy p.41)

Katniss Everdeen’s intelligence and skills, however, manifest themselves in a completely different way due to the fact that Katniss’s life is as different from June’s as night and day. Whereas June has never wanted for material possessions, Katniss has worked nearly every day since she was 11 years old in order to keep her family alive after her father’s death. Therefore, her intelligence and skills come from the knowledge that
she gleaned from that endeavor. This knowledge was of great benefit as she tries to keep herself alive in the arena.

I'm wishing for a fire - eating raw rabbit can give you rabbit fever, a lesson I learned the hard way - when I think of the dead tribute. I hurry back to her camp. (p.164)

Her intelligence also helps her to survive the attacks of the other tributes especially when she has to take a defensive position.

Still, they are closing in, just like a pack of wild dogs, and so I do what have done my whole life in such circumstances. I pick a high tree and begin to climb. (p.181)

The hardship that Katniss endured in providing for her family give her the physical strength that is necessary in order to achieve her goal, which as previously mentioned is simply staying alive.

I stand straight, and while I'm thin, I'm strong. The meat and the plants from the woods combined with the exertion it took to get them have given me a healthier body than most of those I see around me. (p.94)

Annah’s intelligence is much more subtle in nature. It is not evident to us at first, but manifests itself when they are planning their escape from the Sanctuary.

Figuring out how to get the hot air inside and keeping it there is more difficult. I stare at the charred embers of the fire for a while and finally I just make a small basket from the leftover wire and stuff a bit of fabric in the bottom. On top of that I pile a few embers and twigs. The entire concoction begins to smolder and spew smoke into the dome of fabric. I hold my breath, waiting. Slowly at first and then faster and faster the balloon lifts from my hand. (p.279)

Another element of Annah’s intelligence is manifested in her judgment of when to go on the offensive and when to portray a weaker image.

He holds up a hand, knuckles angled toward my cheek. I flinch, recoiling into a ball, waiting for the blow and ready to roll away from it to lessen
the impact. My own fingers clench into fists, but I know better than to strike and provoke the obviously stronger man. (p.161)

Just like Katniss, Annah’s intelligence also includes survival skills that she utilizes when she needs to light a fire in order to escape the subway tunnels near the end of her adventure.

It’s impossible in the darkness. I can’t see how the pieces all fit together. Frustration rages through me. I don’t want to take the time to build a fire but I’m afraid that’s my only option. (p.279)

Kira Walker’s intelligence and skills are related to her medical training and utilized in her quest to cure RM, which is the disease that decimated the world’s population and is continuing to kill every infant born within 56 hours. It is important to know that Partials are a genetically engineering organic android, once built to be servants, but that now far outnumber the human race.

Kira paused, staring at the screen, feeling dirty and uncomfortable as the virus stared darkly back. If they wanted to understand that virus, why not go to the source? If they wanted to see what true immunity looked like, why not look at the subjects who were truly immune? If they really wanted to cure RM, what better way than by studying a Partial? (p.110)

Another aspect of her intelligence is her ability to read people in order to persuade them over to her way of thinking.

Kira closed her mouth, watching him, trying to gauge the situation. He was right about some of it—this had been stupid, and dangerous—but she was right too. This had to be done. She couldn’t just let him throw it all away now that the Partial was right here in their grasp. How far could she push Mkele? How could she get more than just a blood sample before they destroyed the Partial? (p.187)

Beatrice (Tris) Prior’s intelligence takes the form of strategy, and being able to think on her feet. These qualities manifests in many different occasions throughout the
two novels of the Divergent Trilogy that are included in this study. The first occasion of her ability to think on her feet is during the aptitude test simulation.

What else do I know about dogs? I shouldn't look it in the eye. That's a sign of aggression. I remember asking my father for a pet dog when I was young, and now, staring at the ground in front of the dog's paws, I can't remember why. It comes closer, still growling. If staring into its eyes is a sign of submission? (Divergent p.15)

Her skill for strategy can be seen in numerous occasions but the most notable occasion was when she climbs the Ferris wheel to locate the other team during capture the flag.

We can’t act until we know where the other team is. They could be anywhere within a two-mile radius, although I can rule out the empty marsh as an option. The best way to find them is not to argue about how to search for them, or how many to send out in a search party. It’s to climb as high as possible. I look over my shoulder to make sure no one is watching. None of them look at me, so I walk toward the Ferris wheel with light, quiet footsteps, pressing my gun to my back with one hand to keep it from making noise. (Divergent pp.140-141)

Although all five of the heroines’ intelligence is different and varied, each one is still perfected suited to the situation that they are in and the application of their intelligence helps them to succeed.

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, the definitions of determination and courage are firm or fixed intent to achieve a desired end and mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty, respectively. While these terms have two different definitions, it is this author’s belief that the two terms are actually synonymous with each other. Each of the heroines in this study shows great determination and courage in order to overcome the obstacles that lie in their paths. Katniss’s determination is directed towards staying alive. June’s determination is to hunt down the person who is responsible for her brother’s murder and make them pay.
Annah’s determination is to find an answer to the question, “What would you do if you knew you had only a few days left to live?” and following through on that answer. Tris’s determination is to prove herself and survive long enough to do it. Kira’s determination is to have a future that is filled with hope and prosperity.

Katniss’s determination centers greatly on providing for her family as previously stated, and surviving the arena. The Hunger Games centers on a practice of the nation of Panem of sending one girl and one boy, between the ages of 12 and 18, from each of the 12 districts into an arena, where they then are expected to kill each other until only one of them is left alive. This bloodbath is broadcast to the entire nation and everyone is required to watch. The Capitol uses this spectacle as a form of punishment to the districts from rebelling in a war that took place over 74 years before our story begins. The greatest example of Katniss’s determination is in her ability to keep going during hardship and after tragedy strikes. When Katniss first arrives in the arena, she, under her mentor’s instruction, runs away from the group in order to avoid conflict and to find water. She’s not able to find it at first and this gives us the first opportunity to see just how determined this sixteen year old girl really is:

\[\text{Every step is an effort, but I refuse to stop. I refuse to sit down. If I sit, there's a good chance that I won't be able to get up again, that I won't even remember my task. (p.167)}\]

She also shows her determination to keep going after she suffers the tragedy of Rue’s death. She is greatly affected by this due to the fact that Rue reminds Katniss of her younger sister, Prim, who is the only person that Katniss is sure that she loves. After Rue is killed by one of the other tributes, Katniss has to force herself to keep going:
I give myself a series of simple commands to follow, like "Now you have to sit up, Katniss. Now you have to drink water, Katniss." I act on the orders with slow, robotic motions. "Now you have to sort the packs, Katniss." (p.240)

Rue’s death also gives her further motivation to survive the arena, to stay alive when, seemingly everyone is against her:

Something happened when I was holding Rue's hand, watching the life drain out of her. Now I am determined to avenge her, to make her loss unforgettable, and I can only do that by winning making myself unforgettable. (p.242)

June’s primary motivation behind her determination can best be described by the following passage:

I will hunt you down. I will scour the streets of Los Angeles for you. Search every street in the Republic if I have to. I will trick you and deceive you, lie, cheat and steal to find you, tempt you out of your hiding place, and chase you until you have nowhere else to run. I make this promise: your life is mine. (Legend p.45)

Her conviction for finding the truth about her brother’s murder never changes even after she realizes that she has been chasing the wrong person and she realizes that her brother’s best friend is the actual culprit. She saves Day from execution and they escape and join the Patriots, who are the rebel forces fighting against the Republic. Both June and Day participate in a plot to assassinate the Elector, Republic’s equivalent of a president, but June realizes that killing the head of the country is not going to change anything, so she decides to go against the Patriot’s assassination plan.

But if I decide not to play out my role, what will happen to Day? I’ll need a way to contact him without Razor finding out. And then what? Day’s certainly not going to see the Elector the way I see him. And besides, I have no backup plan. Think, June. I have to come up with an alternative that will keep us all alive. (p.170)
At the actual assassination attempt, in order to gain Day’s attention and stop him from assassinating the Elector, she throws herself from a moving vehicle.

And then I see something that makes me forget everything I’ve promised to do for the Patriots. The door on the second jeep flies open, and out rolls a girl with a long dark ponytail. She tumbles a few times, then struggles to her feet. She looks up to the rooftops and waves her hands frantically in the air. (Prodigy p.232)

She continues to demonstrate her determination and courage by telling Day to go ahead without her, when they arrive back in the Republic after fleeing to the Colonies in order to show support for the new Elector to keep the country from turning against the Elector.

He needs Day’s help. Behind us, four soldiers are gradually catching up. The chase saps away the last of my strength. I’m panting, struggling to breathe. Day is already slowing down to keep pace with me, but I can tell we’ll never make it at this rate. I squeeze his hand and shake my head. “You have to go ahead,” I tell Day firmly. “You’re cracked.” He purses his lips and pulls us forward faster. “We’re almost there.” “No.” I lean closer to him as we continue to make our way through the people. “This is our one shot. Neither of us will make it if I keep slowing us down.” Day hesitates, torn. We’ve already been separated once before—now he’s wondering if letting me go means he’ll never see me again. But we don’t have time for him to dwell on this. “I can’t run fast, but I can hide in the crowd. Trust me.” (Prodigy p.323)

This move shows great determination and courage on her part due to the fact that Day is the only person that she has left in her life and she needs him just as much as he needs her.

For Annah, we watch her aim in life changing from just merely surviving:

My sister stares down at one of the empty bodies. “What would you do if you knew you had only a few days left to live?” she says. Water laps around dead arms and legs, tempting the deep. A gust of wind rips through my coat and I steel myself against it. I think about the woman on the roof asking the same question. How terrified I was that I’d die like her: alone, no one to mourn my absence. I think about how quickly that’s changed. “I’d find a way to survive,” I tell her, my teeth chattering. (pp.223-224)
As time progresses, she finds something to live for through her reunion with her sister and Elias and her budding romantic relationship with Catcher, and her determination gains two new targets, the first is freedom from the paramilitary force that holds them captive:

“I decided that I’d live,” I tell her. “I decided I’m tired of being scared and waiting for other people to make up their minds about what they want—I’m going after what I want.” I pull another pile of fabric toward me. “And what I want right now is off this stupid island.” (p.321)

The second is her desire to spend the rest of her life with the man she loves and the family she has recently found:

And I realize that’s the difference. I realize that I still have everything to lose. The possibility of my sister and Elias and Catcher and my future. I’d lose sunrises and stars and the feel of Catcher’s heat against my lips. I’d miss the taste of snow and the smell of the first flower of spring. I’d miss laughing and crying and all the moments in between. I stumble back into the darkness and keep walking. (p.362)

In the case of Tris Prior, her determination and courage are centered on the fact that she has chosen to leave her factor and her family behind and she is now trying to find a new identity to prove everyone including herself, what she is capable of. In Tris’s world, society has split into five different factions in relation to the virtue that they believe will prevent another conflict that destroyed the world as they once knew it. The five factors are Abnegation, who embraces selflessness; Dauntless, who embraces bravery; Candor, who embraces honesty; Erudite, who embraces knowledge and Amity, who strive for peace beyond all reason. Each child on their sixteenth birthday takes an aptitude test to find out which faction they truly belong to and then if that faction is one different from the one they were born in, they must decide to stay with their family or join their new faction and leave their family behind forever. Tris makes the decision to
leave her faction and family in Abnegation and joins Dauntless. This abrupt change in
this life creates a desire in her to prove herself to everyone around her especially after she
realizes that her place in Dauntless isn’t guaranteed.

My odds, as the smallest initiate, as the only Abnegation transfer, are not
good. “What do we do if we’re cut?” Peter says. “You leave the Dauntless
compound,” says Eric indifferently, “and live factionless.” The mousy-
haired girl clamps her hand over her mouth and stifles a sob. I remember
the factionless man with the gray teeth, snatching the bag of apples from
my hands. His dull, staring eyes. But instead of crying, like the Erudite
girl, I feel colder. Harder. I will be a member. I will. (Divergent p.72)

Her determination and courage help her to survive not only the stages of initiation, but
also the malicious conduct of her fellow initiates especially Peter. Peter is responsible for
severely wounding another initiate who is standing in his way of getting into Dauntless
and also tries to kill Tris on more than one occasion. They help her to survive all these
things, and she becomes a member of Dauntless, but this is not the end of our story
because members of Dauntless are drugged to become mindless soldiers at the hands of
the Erudite in order to wipe out the Abnegation, due to the fact that there has been
animosity building between Erudite and Abnegation for quite some time. It is at this point
that Tris’s determination and courage take a turn from proving herself and survival to
saving those that she loves the most:

I can’t wage war against Abnegation, against my family. I would rather
die. My fear landscape proved that. My list of options narrows, and I see
the path I must take. I will pretend long enough to get to the Abnegation
sector of the city. I will save my family. And whatever happens after that
doesn’t matter. A blanket of calm settles over me. (Divergent pp.418-419)

Near the end of Divergent, Tris witnesses the murder of both her parents and she only has
one thing left to live for and that is to save everyone else:
“Dad,” I say. I mean for it to be a shout, but it is just a wheeze. He slumps to the ground. Our eyes meet like the yards between us are nothing. His mouth opens like he’s about to say something, but then his chin drops to his chest and his body relaxes. My eyes burn and I am too weak to rise; the scent of sweat and blood makes me feel sick. I want to rest my head on the ground and let that be the end of it. I want to sleep now and never wake. But what I said to my father before was right— for every second that I waste, another Abnegation member dies. There is only one thing left for me in the world now, and it is to destroy the simulation. (Divergent pp.471-472)

After her parents’ deaths, Tris goes into a moral and emotional tail spin that involves numerous occasions of clearly reckless behavior and a moment in which she seriously contemplates suicide in order to stop the ache over the loss of her parents and pacify the guilt that she feels about killing one of her best friends while he was under the influence of the Erudite. In fact, it is not until the moment of her execution that she realizes that she actually wants to live:

I don’t want to die. All those times Tobias scolded me for risking my life, I never took him seriously. I believed that I wanted to be with my parents and for all of this to be over. I was sure I wanted to emulate their self-sacrifice. But no. No, no. Burning and boiling inside me is the desire to live. I don’t want to die I don’t want to die I don’t want to! (Insurgent pp.383-384)

But she is able to survive due to a rescue from her greatest enemy. After this, her aim shifts, from literally sacrificing herself to making sure that the information that her parents died for comes to light, even if it means losing the one person in her life that she has left, Tobias, the boy she loves.

For Kira, her determination is motivated by the fact that one of her closest friends, Maddie, is pregnant, and she must cure RM before Maddie gives birth or the baby will not survive more than a couple of days. Her other motivation is that if this disease isn’t
cured that then there is no real future in their society and Kira can’t bring herself to accept without a fight the prospect that the future holds no hope.

“Of course it’s worth it,” said Kira. “Say that it’s stupid, say that it’s impossible, but never say that it’s not worth it. We know full well that we might not be coming back alive, or successful, and I recognize that, and I wouldn’t have suggested it if I wasn’t ready to accept it. But Haru is right—trading any of us, even trading all of us, for the chance to start a new generation of humans is more than worth it. If we can actually pull this off and use a Partial to cure RM, we’re not just saving Maddy’s baby, we’re saving thousands of babies, maybe millions of babies—every human baby ever born for the rest of time. We’re saving our entire species.” (p.125)

Another aspect of Kira’s determination is that even after everything is against her, she never gives up. She never accepts that there is nothing further that she can do, that the odds are stacked against her, even after she’s accused of treason.

Kira stared at the hospital, willing herself to find something, anything, that she could use to get in. I’m a wanted criminal with a face well-known by every single person in that building. If I get in, it will be because I’m in chains. She shook her head, forcing herself to think it through. I am stronger than my trials, she thought. I can use my trials to help me; I can make them serve my own ends. Don’t say, “I’ll never do it,” say, “How can I turn this situation in my favor?” (p.444)

The efforts that are prompted by each of the five heroine’s determination and courage shows that no matter what happens, as long as you pick a motivation, there is nothing and no one can get in your way of you achieving what you set out to do.

As previously stated in the literature, other people are a person’s greatest source of strength. For the purpose of this study, I will be dividing the interpersonal relationships that each of our heroines experiences in my analysis into two different categories, romantic relationships and friends, and the relationship that they share with their family. As with each aspect of their strength, each of our heroines has varying experiences when
it comes to this aspect of their lives. June Iparis’s only family is her older brother, Metias, who is murdered at the beginning of the first book, and due to the isolation caused by her prodigy status, she doesn’t have any friends. Her sources of strength are the influence that her brother has left on her life and her relationship with Day. The absence of her parents in her formative years is substituted by her older brother who takes on the role of parent and raises her:

I didn't know our parents long enough to miss them in the same way that Metias does. Whenever I cry over losing them, I cry because I don't have any memories of them. Just hazy recollection of long, adult shuffling around our apartment and hands lifting me from my high chair. That's it. Every memory from my childhood-looking out into the auditorium as I receive an award, or having soup made for me when I'm sick or being scolded or tucked into bed- those are with Metias. (Legend pp.19-20)

Many of her actions are motivated by her brother as she mourns and endeavors to bring his killer to justice. When she realizes that Day is merely the government’s scape goat and she finally believes the truth from the computer files that her brother left behind, her motivation changes and she saves Day from execution. After they have escaped from the army and have found temporary safety, she is able to find closure and say goodbye to her brother.

I close my eyes and think of Metias, of all my favorites’ memories and even the one I'd rather forget, and I picture him bathed in light. In my mind, I turn to him and give him a final farewell. Someday I'll see him again, and we'll tell our stories to each other . . . but for now I lock him safely away, in a place when I can draw on his strength. (Legend p.304)

But even after she is able to find closure, she is still constantly reminded of her brother and he still remains an influence on her thoughts, as is appropriate due to the fact that he is the only family that she has ever known. An example of this is that the fact that her
decision to rebel against from the inside the government instead of from the outside, is motivated by something her brother told her before he died.

If you want to rebel, rebel from inside the system. That's much more powerful than rebelling outside the system. And if you choose to rebel, bring me with you. (Legend, p.241)

Her relationship with Day brings her strength from the very beginning, even though she resists the relationship due to her belief that he is her brother’s killer. However, when she learns the truth about how her brother really died, all barriers she has towards their relationship fall away and she embraces the relationship.

Day pulls me to him. He kisses me before I can say more. His mouth feels warm and soft, and when he kisses me harder, I wrap my arm around his neck and kiss him back. In this moment, I don’t care about the pain in my shoulder. I don’t care if soldiers find us in this railway car and drag us away. I don't want to be anywhere else. I just want to be here, safe against Day's body, wrapped in his tight embrace. (Legend pp.303-304)

As they continue on their journey, she relies on their relationship and they cling to each other as they struggle through their mutual grief.

Sometimes, when Day is quiet like this, I wonder how well he’s hanging on to his sanity. The thought scares me. I can’t afford to lose him. I keep telling myself it’s for practical reasons: we’d have little chance of surviving alone at this point, and his skills complement mine. Besides . . . I have no one left to protect. (Prodigy p.2)

As much as they rely on each other for their mutual sanity, another aspect of their relationship is that through their physical affection, they are both able to forget, if only for a little while, all the trouble and cares that is currently in their lives.

His lips come back up to my mouth, and I can feel the remnants of any self-control slipping away from him, replaced with something instinctive and savage. I love you, his lips are trying to convince me. They’re making me so weak that I’m on the verge of collapsing to the floor. I’ve kissed a few boys in the past . . . but Day makes me feel like I’ve never been kissed
before. Like the world has melted away into something unimportant. (Prodigy p.37)

Even at the end of their relationship, she is still very aware of the importance of their relationship in her life.

Then he’s kissing me one last time, overwhelming me with his warmth, breathing life and love and aching sorrow into me. I throw my arms around his neck as he wraps his around my waist. My lips part for him and his mouth moves desperately against mine, devouring me, taking every breath that I have. Don’t go, I plead wordlessly. But I can taste the good-bye on his lips, and now I can no longer hold back my tears. He’s trembling. His face is wet. I hang on to him like he’ll disappear if I let go, like I’ll be left alone in this dark room, standing in the empty air. Day, the boy from the streets with nothing except the clothes on his back and the earnestness in his eyes, owns my heart. He is beauty, inside and out. He is the silver lining in a world of darkness. He is my light. (Prodigy p.354)

Katniss’s relationships with those around her are a little different. Her primary role in her relationship with her family is one of protection, and nurturing but she also benefits from her relationships with Peeta, Gale and Rue. She doesn’t exhibit these emotions often due to the fact that she has to be strong and assume a masculine rule in her family for so many years, but these emotions are felt very strongly even if she doesn’t express them. The earliest example of this is when Peeta burns the bread to feed her.

To this day, I can never shake the connection between this boy, Peeta Mellark, and the bread that gave me hope, and the dandelion reminded me that I was not doomed. (p.32)

She benefits greatly from her relationship with Gale as they support each other in their mutual endeavors in providing for their families as they are both the primary providers for their respective families. She feels at ease with Gale. He is the “only person with whom I can be myself.” (p.6) As she struggles through the Hunger Games she reflects on her relationship with Gale:
Gale gave me a sense of security I'd lacked since my father's death. His companionship replaced the long solitary hours in the woods. I became a much better hunter when I didn't have to look over my shoulder constantly, when someone was watching my back. But he turned into so much more than a hunting partner. He became my confident, someone with whom I could share thoughts I could never voice inside the fence. In exchange, he trusted me with his. Being out in the woods with Gale . . . sometimes I was actually happy. (p.111)

Her relationship with Peeta, however, is far more complicated. They do have a connection since he helped to feed her once when she was starving, but at the same time, she is reluctant to become too emotionally attached to someone that she might have to kill. Despite this distance, Peeta saves her life by letting escape after she drops the tracker jacker’s nest on the Career Tributes. As she compares her relationship with these two young men, she realizes “Gale and I were thrown together by a mutual need to survive. Peeta and I know the other's survival means our own death. How do you sidestep that?”(p.111) Due to her reluctance, she feels extremely conflicted about her budding feeling for Peeta:

I'm relieved Peeta's alive. I tell myself again that if I get killed, his winning will benefit my mother and Prim the most. This is what I tell myself to explain the conflicting emotions that arise when I think of Peeta. The gratitude that he gave me an edge by professing his love for me in the interview. The anger at his superiority on the roof. The dread that we may come face-to-face at any moment in the arena. (p.157)

She plays at being in love with Peeta in order to get sponsors, thus giving her a greater chance of survival, but after a while, that is no longer the only reason. She realizes that “the idea of actually losing Peeta hit me again and I realized how much I don't want him to die. And it's not about the sponsors. And it's not about what will happen back home. And it's not just that I don't want to be alone. It's him. I do not want to lose the boy with
the bread.” (p.297) In the end, she finds that she can’t kill Peeta nor can she allow him to take his own life.

“No, you can’t kill yourself,” I say. I’m on my knees, desperately plastering the bandage back onto his wound.


"You're not leaving me here alone,” I say. Because if he dies, I'll never go home, not really. I'll spend the rest of my life in this arena trying to think my way out. (p.343)

So while she might not be as in love with him as her actions in the arena may suggest, she obviously cares very deeply for him, and it is clear that his demise would have left her with deep emotional scars.

Katniss’s relationship with Rue is comparable with the relationship with the one between Katniss and Prim, Katniss’s younger sister. This is due to the fact that Rue reminds Katniss of Prim and so Katniss protects Rue as she has always protected and cared for her sister. As previously mentioned, Katniss has been the primary provider for her family since she was 11, and these protective instincts are therefore very well developed, and this is part of the reason that forms an alliance with Rue, but it is also because she realizes that the girl has skills that she doesn’t and they can help each other out.

Annah’s situation in relation to other people is completely unique among our heroines. When the story opens, we meet Annah after she has been completely on her own and alone for three years, with no one to rely on but herself. It is in this lonely state that she comes to the awareness that she has “lost the part of myself that used to belong to someone else. That I once held my sister’s hand and sat on my father’s lap and knew my
neighbors’ names. I’ve filled that place with an emptiness, and the woman tonight made me see that that hole inside me is from Elias and that I’ve waited for him to come home long enough.” (p.12) However, as much as she wants to belong to someone else and her desire to reconnect with the sister that no longer remembers her, her long period of complete isolation has left her very guarded when it comes to trusting another person. This situation isn’t helped by the fact that Catcher, her male counterpart, is just as guarded as she is.

“I just …” He seems to struggle with the words. “I need you to know that I’ll help you find Gabry. I’ll make sure you’re both fine and safe but that’s all. After that I’m gone. I can’t …” He runs his hand through his hair, making it spike up like a halo. “I can’t be or do anything more.” His pronouncement makes me feel cold and ugly. Unwanted. And this infuriates me because I promised myself that I’d never put myself in this position again— a place where I could hurt because of someone else’s decision. Not after Elias joined the Recruiters and abandoned me. (p.84)

A further obstacle that hinders her ability to relate to and trust other people is that she has scars running the length of the left side of her body and this greatly affects her self-esteem due to her fear of rejection that she has come to expect because of those scars.

“‘No!’ I shout at him. ‘You wanted to know why I force people to see how ugly I am. It’s because that’s who I am. It’s all I am.’” (p.197) However, with the passage of time and their mutual need for each other, they find the courage to trust each other enough to rely on each other and together they are able to forget the terrors of the world in which they live:

I catch my breath but he’s not finished. “I love you, Annah. And if you’re willing to risk everything to be with me, then I’m willing to risk everything to be with you. I’m going to keep fighting for you, every day of my life. If you’ll have me.” I sink to my knees until our foreheads are touching. Amazed at how in this tiny little room in this corner of a dark and forgotten world I can feel so alive. “Yes,” I whisper against his lips. I
kiss him and he kisses me back, fully and wholly and without reservation. And for a moment there’s no death in the world, no pain or infection or despair. There’s only us and life and something between us so impossibly pure that it consumes us both. (p.310)

Annah’s isolation also affects her ability to connect with her twin sister, who is her only family. She has been separated from her sister for many years and it is when she is leaving the city where she has left alone for the past 3 years on her own, that she catches a glimpse of her sister, coming in the opposite direction, and her determination changes direction:

I was so close to leaving. So close to saying good-bye to all the pain and misery this place has caused me. A tension pulls along my neck as I realize everything’s changed again. I can’t go— not yet. Not when my other half might be here. (pp.23-24)

There is an emotional distance between them due to Annah’s guilt of leaving her sister behind when she was only five and there is also a small amount of resentment because they are identical twins so Gabry looks exactly like her, except she doesn’t have the scars, but when her sister falls ill, she gets a different perspective:

For the millionth time I wish I were her. Not because of her smooth skin and easy life but because I’m afraid of failing her. I’d rather it be me on the bed slowly letting go of life. Because that means my sister could still hold on to hers. (pp.281-282)

Her greatest action in the novel is one of sacrifice in order to save those she loves. As previously mentioned, Annah comes up with an idea to construct a hot air balloon in order to escape the island where they are being held and as they’re escaping, one of the seams on the balloon comes undone and they start to lose attitude. So, in order to save her sister and Elias, she jumps from the balloon to lessen the weight in the basket:
In that moment I’m thrown back in time. I’m standing on the path and staring at Abigail, who’s crying and begging Elias and me not to leave her behind. She’s scared and alone and bleeding. I’m back in my little girl body, trying to decide what to do. Except this time I can’t choose between them. I don’t have to choose between them. “I love you,” I say. They look at me, confused. “Both of you.” “We’ll make it out of this,” my sister says. I reach out and cup Gabry’s face, feeling her smooth skin under my thumb. “Build a world for me,” I tell her. And then I jump. (pp.331-332)

Annah’s strength in relation to her relationships, both family and romantic, is characterized by evolution. At the beginning of her journey, she is so emotionally closed off that the thought of relying on another human being is terrifying for her. She recognizes that she needs people, but allowing herself to take the risk, which is associated with any relationship, is her difficulty:

I’m startled by the quiet strength of his grip. By the resolve in his voice. It terrifies me because it makes me want to lean on him and let him prop me up. Let someone else be strong and in charge. (pp.63-64)

It is through their mutual need to trust someone and in the case of her relationship with Catcher, their mutual attraction, that binds Annah to those she loves and helps her to fight to maintain those relationships.

Kira Walker’s concept of family is unorthodox by necessity. The reason for this is that after RM killed 99.9% of the world’s population; there are very few familial connections left so the people that are left have formed adoptive families. The situation that RM has continued to kill every infant born in the 11 years has caused the government in power to form the Hope Act, which states that every female over the age of 18 has to get pregnant at least once a year. The possibility of the age being lowered to 16 and the fact that her adopted sister Madison is pregnant spurs Kira into action to find a cure for RM. The family structure that is place in this society is as follows:
The children had been divided among the adults, and Nandita had happily laid claim to four of them: Kira, Madison, Ariel, and Isolde. Ariel had moved nearly three years ago, on her sixteenth birthday, and Madison had moved in with Haru when they got married. Ariel had hardly spoken to any of them again, but Kira loved them all like sisters. (p.76)

So while Kira doesn’t have any family in the traditional sense, she does have a support system similar to a traditional nuclear family. Kira adopts an attitude similar to Katniss, not that she has to physically support her family, but she sets to cure RM to save her adopted sister’s baby in the same way that Katniss enters the arena to save her sister’s life.

“I’m going to lose her, Kira.” “You’re not going to lose her.” “Even if she’s born on time— even if she’s born late, with plenty of time to develop— I’m going to lose her to RM.” “I’m not going to let that happen.” “You can’t stop it,” said Madison. “I know you’re trying, I know you’ve done everything you can possibly do to help, but it’s not enough. Maybe someday, but not for me.” Her voice broke. “Not for Arwen.”(pp.295-296).

Even in her sister’s darkest hour, as she realizes that her sister has actually named her unborn child, after no baby has been named for over a decade, it only serves to further strengthen her resolve to save those that she loves most and while this relationship does not give Kira any apparent support, it does demonstrate her dedication to her cause and the love that she feels for those closest to her.

Unlike our other heroines, who are in the stage of just starting a relationship, Kira has been with her boyfriend Marcus for a long time and “life was always easier with him around” (p.6). However, when she contemplates a future with him in the world that they currently live is more than she can handle:

“Stay with you and what, Marcus?” She opened her eyes again, looking deeply into his. “You want to get married? You want to have a family?
We can’t do any of that until RM is cured. Whether or not they lower the required age, I will spend the rest of my life pregnant: Most of those women average one a year, and all the children die. Is that really what you want? We get married, we get pregnant, and twenty years from now we have twenty dead children? There is not enough room in my heart for that; there’s not enough strength.” (pp.129-130)

Through all their difficulties and challenges and even though Marcus doesn’t necessarily approve of what she is doing, he still supports her and that is the greatest strength that anyone can give:

I know it’s dangerous, and I know you don’t want to do it, but I need you, Marcus. I need you to believe me; I need you to trust me. I need to hear you say you’ll come with me.” Marcus stayed silent. He rubbed his eyes, pulled on his face, gritted his teeth. Kira covered her mouth with her hands, blowing out a long breath, never taking her eyes off him. Please, Marcus. Please say yes. Marcus stood, turning to the side. Kira closed her eyes, crying silently. “I’ll do it.” (pp.332-333)

Tris Prior leaves her family behind at the beginning of the first book as previously mentioned, but that doesn’t mean that they cease to matter to her or she doesn’t continue to receive strength from the influence that they have had on her life. This is shown on numerous occasions, the first of which is that the first tattoo that Tris gets as a Dauntless is to honor her family. The love that she still feels for her family is also shown on 2 different occasions, the first of which is her reaction to the fact that her mother actually comes to her on Visiting Day:

Then I see her. My mother stands alone near the railing with her hands clasped in front of her. She has never looked more out of place, with her gray slacks and gray jacket buttoned at the throat, her hair in its simple twist and her face placid. I start toward her, tears jumping into my eyes. She came. She came for me. I walk faster. She sees me, and for a second her expression is blank, like she doesn’t know who I am. Then her eyes light up, and she opens her arms. She smells like soap and laundry detergent. (p.178)
The second occasion is after a particular day of initiation, she realizes that she needs to remind herself of who she is, and due to the rule of faction before blood, she is not able to go home, so she does the next best thing, she goes to visit her brother:

The air rushes over my body and twists around my fingers. I let my hand trail over the edge of the car so it presses against the wind. I can’t go home, but I can find part of it. Caleb has a place in every memory of my childhood; he is part of my foundation. (pp.347-348).

Without the support of her family, she compensates for their absence by creating real friendships for the first time in her life. These relationships help her to feel safe in a time in her life when she is experiencing great turmoil. They give her a sense of security, a sense of belonging when she needs it the most. One example of this is Uriah and the other Dauntless born initiates inviting her to the zip line after she feels a little ostracized by her other friends when she scores higher than they did in the ranking during initiation.

Her relationship with Tobias, or Four as he is also known in the story, supports her the most as she grapples with her grief after her parents’ death and even when he saves, he does so in a manner that still acknowledges her strength.

Whoever he is, I like him. It’s easier for me to admit that to myself now, in the dark, after all that just happened. He is not sweet or gentle or particularly kind. But he is smart and brave, and even though he saved me, he treated me like I was strong. That is all I need to know. (pp.228-289)

The greatest thing that Tobias does for her in their relationship is that after her parents’ death, she loses a part of herself and goes into a tailspin, and Tobias tries to call her back to herself:

“I love Tris the Divergent, who makes decisions apart from faction loyalty, who isn’t some faction archetype. But the Tris who’s trying as hard as she can to destroy herself . . . I can’t love her.” I want to scream.
But not because I’m angry, because I’m afraid he’s right. My hands shake and I grab the hem of my shirt to steady them. He touches his forehead to mine and closes his eyes. “I believe you’re still in there,” he says against my mouth. “Come back.” (Insurgent p.261)

Tobias also provides her with stability after her parents died and she feels safe with him so she can mourn without reservation, without holding back and without fear of what he will think about her.

Unlike the aspects of strength that we have explored so far, the truth or the pursuit of it doesn’t occur of all of the heroines that are included in this study. For three of them, June, Tris, and Kira, the truth is an integral part of their journey. For Katniss it doesn’t have any bearing on her whatsoever, mostly because she has already been exposed to the worst that her world has to offer and she shields those that she loves from the truth, rather than the type of person that goes looking for it. For Annah, she is shown a glimpse of truth in the war room at the Sanctuary, but it is merely a confirmation of what she has known all along.

The role that the truth plays in June Iparis’s journey is a fairly large one. It comes into play when June is investigating her brother’s murder. As previously stated, June is a very intellect woman and she is internally skeptical that Day is her brother’s murderer almost from the very beginning. However, when she gets to know Day on a personal level that she has to reconcile with the picture that she has in her head of her brother’s murderer and Day as an actual person:

I think back to the warmth of Day's kiss, the way he'd bandaged my wound. Since his capture, I've puzzled over this a hundred times. The Day that killed my brother is a cruel, ruthless criminal. But who is the Day I met on the streets? Who is this boy that would risk his own safety for a
girl he didn't know. Who is the Day that grieves so deeply for his mother? His look-alike brother, John, did not seem like a bad person when I questioned him in his cell-bargaining his life for Day's, bargaining hidden money for Eden's freedom. How could such a coldhearted criminal be a part of this family? (Legend p.176).

She continues to question whether or not Day is the actual killer and then when she realizes that she has these doubts, she examines the evidence from the crime scene and she realizes that “this report is incomplete. I run a hand through my hair in frustration” (p.225). Other details seem to fall in place in her head about how the authorities were so quick to come to the conclusion that Day was the murderer, how they were so quick to divert her attention, by arranging for the funeral so quickly. Then she asks the fateful question:

"'Day, can you say, honestly and truly . . . that you didn't kill Metias?' . . . 'I didn't kill your brother.' I reach out to touch her hand and wince at the pain that shoots up my arm. 'I don't know who did. I'm sorry for injuring him at all - but I had to save my own life. I wish I'd had more time to think it through.'" (Legend p.229)

However, it is not until she finds her brother’s journal that she truly believes that everything that she knows about so many subjects has all been a lie. Among these subjects is the fact that Day actually got a perfect score on the Trial, which is a test that is administrated by the military to every citizen at age 10, in order to gauge their abilities for military service. Those that fail the exam are sent to labor camps and never seen or heard from again. At least that is what June has been told, but in reality as she learns through the information that her brother left behind, “They also run individual plague experiments on some of the children who fail the Trial. They don't go to labor camps, June. None of them do. They die." (Legend p.246) This realization is the catalyst to her
greatest action in both books, which is rescuing Day from his execution. The motivation behind this action is revealed in the following passage:

"'You threw everything away.' I bring a hand up to touch her face, to wipe rain from her eyelashes. 'Your entire life- your beliefs . . . Why would you do that for me?' June has never looked more beautiful than she does now, unadorned and honest, vulnerable yet invincible. When lightning streaks over the sky, her dark eyes shine like gold. 'Because you were right,' she whispers. 'About all of it.'" (Legend p.299)

After they escape, there are some other truths that are revealed about the Republic’s history, but the main theme of the second book in the series is trust, rather than truth.

The only truth that Annah is confronted with is the realization that most of the world has been lost to the zombie hordes. While this realization is startling and unsettling for our heroine, it has no real bearing on her actions or motivations and therefore has no real significance in relation to this story.

The role that the truth plays in Kira Walker’s life is one of realization. Similar to June’s experience, it is a realization about the government that runs her life and the cure for the disease that she striving so hard to cure, but it is also a realization in relation to her identity. Just as June did, she pursues the truth as she searches for the cure. However, some of the truths that she learns are completely unsolicited and come as bolts out of the blue. These revelations are the real origins of the explosions of City Hall and the hospital, and the fact that they aren’t related to the rebel group known as the Voice, but rather the Senate, who is the governing body of society. The second sudden truth that she discovers is that she is not actually human, and that she is actually a Partial.

The biggest role that truth takes in the case of Tris Prior is her attempts to find out what it is means to be Divergent. This revelation is given to her during her aptitude test
and it is something that she struggles to come to terms with, especially since it is a
dangerous subject and those that are Divergent often end up dead:

“Among other things, you… you are someone who is aware, when they
are in a simulation, that what they are experiencing is not real,” she says.
“Someone who can then manipulate the simulation or even shut it down.
And also…” She leans forward and looks into my eyes. “Someone who,
because you are also Dauntless… tends to die.” (Divergent p.257)

The reason for this danger is not made clear until Tris learns that her mother is also
Divergent and her mother educates her on why being Divergent is such a threat to those
in power:

“Every faction conditions its members to think and act a certain way. And
most people do it. For most people, it’s not hard to learn, to find a pattern
of thought that works and stay that way.” She touches my uninjured
shoulder and smiles. “But our minds move in a dozen different directions.
We can’t be confined to one way of thinking, and that terrifies our leaders.
It means we can’t be controlled. (Divergent pp.441-442)

Tris’s motivation to find out the truth doesn’t stop with the revelations about her identity,
if anything, the things that she learned only serve to strengthen her resolve to seek out the
truth and how it can change your perspective:

. . . I don’t believe it’s more important to move forward than to find out
the truth. When I found out that I was Divergent . . . when I found out that
Erudite would attack Abnegation . . . those revelations changed
everything. The truth has a way of changing a person’s plans. (Insurgent
pp.31-32)

After she learns that the information that her parents risked their lives for information that
Erudite is holding, it strengthens her resolve to complete what her parents couldn’t before
their untimely deaths. “So if he’s telling me the truth, and my mother really was willing
to die for this information to become public . . . I would do just about anything to
accomplish the goal she failed to achieve.” (Insurgent p.416)
Looking at the information that I have gathered about these five heroines about their actions of kindness and mercy, I realized that in some cases, like Katniss, it is truly represented by acts of kindness; when she shares her food with Rue, offers to share her sleeping bag, offers the mockingjay pin when she realizes it has more significance for Rue that for her, and some are true acts of mercy such as her ending Cato’s life as the mutants are killing him slowly. For the other four heroines, their acts and thoughts of kindness and mercy seem to center on the preservation of life, especially innocent life. This is especially true in Annah’s case. As previously stated, Annah’s world has been overrun by zombies and therefore, most of the world’s human population is dead. In order to preserve their own humanity, it is necessary to make a distinction between mercy killing and murder. Killing someone who is infected but is still alive is considered to be murder, whereas, killing after they have come back as zombie is considered to be a mercy killing. Annah comes face to face with this principle in a very personal way when she is thrown in a cage with two zombies and a woman who has been infected but is still alive. As Annah is rescued by Catcher, the woman, Dove, pleads with her to end her suffering but Annah can’t bring herself to become like the evil people around her:

> She’ll hunger for me and the living on this island just as her husband did. Just as they all do. I think of how I felt locked in the kennel, terrified I’d never see the sky again or breathe fresh air. I know she feels the same, but if I let her go free I’m setting that loose on the island. I’m putting everyone including my sister and Elias in danger. Yet I can’t kill her. Not now. She’s still alive. She’s still human. It’s a line Catcher’s crossed but that I never have. Not even to grant mercy. (p.305)

As a medic intern, Kira demonstrates her kindness and mercy as she deals with death, humane treatment of prisoners, preserving life and strives to help others even at great personal risk to herself. The first look that we get of Kira’s compassionate nature is
when her adopted sister gives birth and just every other baby for years, the baby dies. The doctors around Kira have become hardened by constant loss and are ready to dispose of the baby without letting the baby’s mother hold it first, but Kira intervenes:

Kira looked toward Ariel, crying and beating on the thick glass window. “I know you’ve lost a lot of them, ma’am.” Kira swallowed. “But this is Ariel’s first.” Nurse Hardy stared at Kira for a long time, a distant shadow in her eyes. Finally she turned. “Sandy?” Another young nurse, who was carrying the tiny body to the door, looked up. “Unwrap the baby,” said Nurse Hardy. “Her mother is going to hold her.” (p.4)

Another example of her compassionate nature is when she tending to the injuries inflicted upon the Partial when she is away from the hospitals by the night guards:

“It doesn’t matter if you’re human or not,” said Kira, probing the Partial’s shins through the fabric of his pants, searching for more wounds. “They’re human, and that means they need to act like it.” She pulled up his pant legs. “You’ve got a few new cuts on here, but they’re not bleeding, obviously, and you should be okay.” (p.277)

The text also shows us that Kira is against unnecessary violence:

Kira closed her eyes, trying to clear her head. “I know this is dangerous, and I know it might come to guns— that’s why we have them. But I don’t want to shoot anybody if we can get away with it.” (p.360)

Tris’s prior kindnesses are more of the everyday sort in comparison with our other heroines. They mainly consist of supporting those around her especially when they are at their weakest. Examples of this include holding Christina when they jump from the train to the roof, or keeping Edward calm and comforting him after he gets stabbed in the eye:

“Lie still,” I say. I feel calm, though I can’t hear anything, like my head is submerged in water. Edward thrashes again and I say it louder, sterner. “I said, lie still. Breathe.” “My eye!” he screams. I smell something foul. Someone vomited. “Take it out!” he yells. “Get it out, get it out of me, get it out!” I shake my head and then realize that he can’t see me. A laugh bubbles in my stomach. Hysterical. I have to suppress hysteria if I’m going to help him. I have to forget myself. “No,” I say. “You have to let the doctor take it out. Hear me? Let the doctor take it out. And breathe.”
“It hurts,” he sobs. “I know it does.” Instead of my voice I hear my mother’s voice. (pp.202-203)

The most interesting aspect about Tris’s kindness is that it is a result of selfless behavior, which is not entirely surprising due to the fact that she was raised in a faction where her everyday behavior was dictated by selflessness. However, what is surprising that even though she left that faction because she didn’t feel that she was selfless but her actions are still greatly influenced by selflessness more often than selfishness.

Like good things that come in moderation, one of the skills that each of these heroines utilizes to get them through difficult situations is the ability to control their emotions or to distance themselves from their emotions completely. An example of the latter is Katniss Everdeen. Katniss refuses to let her emotions show on her face in front of the cameras that are always present at nearly every stage of the Hunger Games because she is aware of the fact that at any moment, everything that she is feeling could be broadcast to the entire country and since she perceives negative emotions as weakness, she refuses to let those emotions show for the cameras to pick up on. Evidence in the text shows six separate instances when Katniss suppresses these negative emotions so that the cameras don’t pick up on them. Suppressing her true emotions is something that Katniss has been perfecting for many years before our story begins:

When I was younger, I scared my mother to death, the things I would blurt out about District 12, about the people who rule our country, Panem, from the far-off city called the Capitol. Eventually, I understood this would only lead us to more trouble. So I learned to hold my tongue and to turn my features into an indifferent mask so that no one could ever read my thoughts... Prim might begin to repeat my words and then where would we be?” (p.6)

As you can see, the distance that she puts between herself and her emotions is used as a defense mechanism. It is designed to keep those that she loves most and herself safe from
the repressions that those negative emotions might bring from the authorities. This
defense mechanism is also used when Katniss resists the feelings that she begins to feel
for Peeta even before they get to the arena. This is due to the fact if she is going to keep
her promise to her sister, who is the most important person in her life, she will need to
cut Peeta in order to escape the arena and developing feelings for someone that you know
you might have to kill only makes it harder in the end:

Kind people have a way of working their way inside me and rooting there. And I can't let Peeta do this. Not where we're going. So I decide, from this
moment on, to have little as possible to do with the baker's son. (p.49)

She doesn't allow herself to act on these conflicting emotions until after the rule change
in the arena, after it becomes clear that it is possible for both of them to survive this
ordeal and allowing her to fully experience these emotions once she realizes that their
expression will ensure her survival as well as his and she fully realizes how much Peeta
really means to her:

. . . the idea of actually losing Peeta hit me again and I realized how much
I don't want him to die. And it's not about the sponsors. And it's not about
what will happen back home. And it's not just that I don't want to be alone.
It's him. I do not want to lose the boy with the bread. (p.297)

Of course her complicated motives for getting involved with Peeta only make things
more difficult when most of those reasons are removed after they leave the arena and
have to face real life again:

I haven't even begun to separate out my feelings for Peeta. It's too
complicated. What I did as part of the Games. As opposed to what I did
out of anger at the Capitol. Or because it would be viewed back in District
12. Or simply because it was the only decent thing to do. Or what I did
 because I cared about him. (p.358)
The reason that Katniss’s tactic of emotional distance is so effective is due to the fact that it prevents her from fully experiencing emotions that may prevent her from doing what needs to be done. It is for this same reason that June exercises emotional control after she has fled with Day and joins the Patriots in trying to assassinate the Elector. She separates herself from situations and emotions that she feels would make it difficult to carry out what needs to be done. Although for June, the object is not simply staying alive, it’s carrying out the task that she has agreed upon and remaining strong in the eyes of those around her. Like Katniss, she is also suffering from some emotional instability in relation to her male counterpart. The difference for June is the fact she is confused by her own motives to stay with Day after he tells her that he loves her:

I’m helpless against the ache in his voice. But still. They’re just the words of a boy in the heat of the moment. I try to force myself to say the same back to him, but the words freeze on my tongue. How can he be so sure of this? I certainly don’t understand all these strange new feelings inside me—am I here because I love him, or because I owe him? (Prodigy p.36)

She also uses this emotional distance in order to keep herself from being distracted by emotions that might lead her to make a mistake and could result in her demise and in this way she is very similar to Katniss,

I could be dead before this day is over, long before the Elector learns I’ve been found. A million things could go wrong. That’s why I have to focus, I remind myself. And I can’t do that if I stare into Day’s eyes. (Prodigy p.84)

Tris also employs emotional control for reasons similar to those of June and Katniss. The difference that I have seen, however, is that in some situations Tris actually allows herself to react emotionally before she pushes the emotion back again. The best example that I have seen of this is when she reacts to the death of a girl who didn’t survive the jump from the moving train onto the rooftop:
I tell myself I will count to three, and when I'm done, I will move on. One. I picture the girl's body on the pavement, and a shudder goes through me. Two. I hear Rita's sobs and the murmured reassurance of the boy behind her. Three. My lips pursed, I walk away from Rita and the roof's edge. (Divergent p.56)

Another method that Tris employs to control her emotions is redirecting her feelings into an outlet that will allow her to experience the feeling but without giving her enemies the satisfaction of knowing that they bothered her:

I shake my head as I remove my pillowcase from the pillow. Don’t get angry. He wants to get a rise out of me; he won’t. But every time he fluffs his pillow, I think about punching him in the gut. (Divergent p.106)

Another method of redirection that Tris employs is that she tries to redirect her feelings into laughing to keep herself from crying:

“We could visit him,” suggests Will. “But what would we say? ‘I didn’t know you that well, but I’m sorry you got stabbed in the eye’?” It isn’t funny. I know that as soon as he says it, but a laugh rises in my throat anyway, and I let it out because it’s harder to keep it in. Will stares at me for a second, and then he laughs too. Sometimes crying or laughing are the only options left, and laughing feels better right now. (Divergent p.205)

In this way, Tris is very similar to Annah. This is due to the fact that Annah employs this same method when she is terrified for her life:

I laugh, which causes him to trip, which only makes me laugh harder. He doesn’t have to know about the tears burning my throat. That if I don’t laugh I’ll break down into terrified sobs. (p.297)

Annah’s emotional distance is also used as a defense mechanism, but for a completely different reason. Rather than for survival or to carry out a goal, she uses it to shield herself against further heartbreak, or as she says, “I refuse to have feelings about someone when I know they’re going to leave me.” (p.8) There is also a certain amount of pride involved in Annah’s emotional control, especially when she refuses to show her
enemies how much their actions are affecting her. At one point, Annah defends herself against a guard who attacked her and due to her acts, he is killed. In response to the event she is punished and this is her response to her punishment: “I swallow again and again as fear reaches deep inside me. But I refuse to let anyone know I’m afraid.” (p.225) With all of this being said, there is one thing that Annah achieves that neither June or Katniss haven’t, the ability to let go of the emotional control and let herself feel. One of Annah’s biggest fears is losing that control, to put her happiness in the hands of another person, but through her relationship with Catcher, she is able to overcome this fear: “‘I love you,’ I whisper. It hurts to say the words, to know that he now carries my heart with him and that I have to trust him with it.” (p.325)

The biggest difference about the strength that these four heroines get from emotional control, is that June, Katniss and Tris get their strength by maintaining it and Annah gains her strength by losing her emotional control and opening herself up to love someone.

Kira Walker’s emotional distance on the other hand allows her to stay calm in tense situations and remain objective, whether that is being the voice of reason in the middle of a heated argument or not panicking when she is injured when the hospital is attacked. While this method seems far more mundane and ordinary when comparing to our other heroines, but even though this strength may be quiet, it does not negate its strength or its benefit to the lives around the person this is using it.

Hope is another attribute that I have found among the heroines in this study that has varying degrees of importance on the influence in regards to their strength. Katniss
doesn’t indulge in a great deal of hope to shield herself from the prospect that she may never leave the arena alive. It is not until the rule change that she realizes that together with Peeta she might be able to beat the odds and be able to fulfill her promise to her sister:

For some reason, I badly want it to be my moon, the same one I see from the woods around District 12. That would give me something to cling to in the surreal world of the arena where the authenticity of everything is to be doubted. Four of us left. For the first time, I allow myself to truly think about the possibility that I might make it home. (p.310)

June, on the other hand, seems to indulge in no hope whatsoever. This is appropriate due to the fact that she is mourning her brother’s death and she doesn’t slow down long enough to think beyond the present. Annah, however, clings to hope with desperation. It is in fact a major source of motivation for her, although she doesn’t allow it to distract her from completing the task at hand. The strongest example of this is the prospect of the future waiting for her that allows her to get going as she travels through abandoned subway tunnels after she jumps from the hot air balloon:

For the briefest moment I allow myself to think about Catcher waiting for me. To think of the boat and the water and my sister and the sky. These are the thoughts that drag me back to the edge of the platform. That propel me down to the tracks and push me to stumble through the tunnels. (p.355)

Kira’s motivation in regards to hope is a little different from Annah’s although I believe that it is just as strong. It is a major motivation of her work towards finding a cure of RM is that the human race will have some chance of surviving and that a future without constant despair will be possible, but her mind is so involved with the task at hand that she doesn’t indulge in many thoughts of what could be, beyond her initial motivation:
We have to face the truth: We have tried everything, we have looked everywhere, we have used every reasonable resource, and RM is still not cured because it is incurable. Dying across the river is not going to change that.” Kira shook her head, trying to find the words she wanted. How could he say something like that? How could he even dare to think it? “You don’t…” She paused, crying, starting over. “How can you live like that?” “It’s the only way we have left, Kira.” “But how can you live without a future?” (p.130)

Tris Prior’s hope, unlike that of Annah’s and Katniss’s doesn’t resolve around being able to stay alive. It resolves around finding her true identity and having the freedom to explore that identity without the restriction of her old life:

“See?” she says. “You’re… striking.” Under the circumstances, it’s the best compliment she could have given me. I smile at her in the mirror. “You like it?” she says. “Yeah.” I nod. “I look like… a different person.” She laughs. “That a good thing or a bad thing?” I look at myself head-on again. For the first time, the idea of leaving my Abnegation identity behind doesn’t make me nervous; it gives me hope. (Divergent pp.87-88)

As is appropriate, each with their varying circumstances, has a different reason for hope to be important in the evolution of their strength and the varying degrees in which they depend on it. Some, like Annah, cling to hope on a daily basis to make it through, and others, like Kira and Tris, it is simply an underlying factor of the person that they are becoming.

As you can probably imagine, each of these heroines demonstrate a certain degree of independence: some in their assurances to their male counterparts that they are perfectly capable of taking care of themselves, others it is a constant companion in their journey. The most striking example of independence that I have encountered in this research is Annah, who, at the beginning of her story, has no support of any kind for the last three years of her life, so it is a skill that she has cultivated out of sheer necessity in order to stay alive. This is a skill that serves her well, even after she is reunited with her
sister and Elias and she begins her relationship with Catcher. It is this sense of independence and her confidence in her ability to survive on her own that allows her to survive after she jumps out of the hot air balloon in order to ensure the safety of her sister and Elias. June also cultivates her sense of independence out of necessity of her circumstances, but for a slightly reasons than Annah.

For June, she is left as the only surviving member of her family when her brother was murdered. Her independence is also necessitated by the need to be as inconspicuous as possible when she is first hunting Day. She is also independent due to the fact that through the course of her actions, she is left with very few people that she can trust. In fact, the only evidence of interdependence is her romantic relationship with Day, which is entirely appropriate due to the fact that she gave up her life based on her belief in his innocence and the truth that she was introduced to while she was investigating her brother’s murder.

Katniss’s independence stems from an aversion to being dependent on anyone due to the fact the she has learned from her early life that even those you love most can’t always be depended on. This started for her when her father is killed in a mining accident when she is only 11 and her mother goes into a state of depression that is so deep she basically shuts down. This of course, leaves Katniss to provide for her family in order to protect her sister from the consequences of what might happen if the authorities learned about her mother:

Because if it had become known that my mother could no longer care for us, the district would have taken us away for her and placed us in the community home. . . . I could never let that happen to Prim. . . . The
community home would crush her like a bug. So I kept our predicament a secret. (p.27)

So it is this state of forced independence that makes her reluctant to accept any form of assistance from those that have failed her in the past, such as her mother:

I’m trying to get past rejecting offers of help from her. For a while, I was so angry, I wouldn’t allow her to do anything for me. And this is something special. Her clothes from her past are very precious to her. (p.15)

The only evidence of dependence that I can find in my examination of Katniss is her partnership with Gale in their illegal activities in hunting beyond the fence in order to keep their families fed.

Kira’s independence is different from Katniss’s and Annah’s due to that she has an extensive support system and she doesn’t have any trust issues. Her independence springs from the fact that she refuses to be controlled by anyone not even Marcus, her longtime boyfriend, especially when he attempts to make her decisions for her:

“I’m not going either,” said Marcus. “And neither is Kira.” Kira whirled around, stalked to the couch, and yanked Marcus up by the arm. “Jayden, Haru, get started. Marcus and I are going outside to talk.” She dragged him down the hall to the front door, banging it open violently. She shoved him down the steps and stormed after, planting herself firmly in front of his face. Her eyes were hot with tears. “What do you think you’re doing in there?” “I’m saving your life.” “It’s my life, I can save it myself.” (p.128)

She recognized that she needs Marcus and that he has been a major part for as long as she can remember, and she as much as needs him; she also recognizes that, despite his need and attempts to protect and shield her from danger, she is more than capable of taking care of herself:

“I’m sorry I didn’t go with you,” Marcus whispered. “I regretted it every day you were gone.” “You could have died,” said Kira, shaking her head
and then kissing him again. “But I should have been with you,” he said, his voice hard. “I should have been there to protect you. I love you, Kira.” “I love you too,” she said softly, but a voice in the back of her head said, You didn’t need to be protected. She ignored the voice, shoving it away. Right now, all she wanted in the entire world was to be in his arms. (p.228)

Tris’s independence stems from the fact that she basically leaves home at the beginning of her story and she is striving to find her own identity and standing behind the decisions that she has made despite what her family might think of them:

I run my fingers through my hair and smooth it into a bun. I check my clothes— am I covered up? My pants are tight and my collarbone is showing. They won’t approve. Who cares if they approve? I set my jaw. This is my faction now. These are the clothes my faction wears. I stop just before the hallway ends. (Divergent p.177)

She is also incredibly stubborn and seems to thrive on carrying out difficult tasks without assistance from either equipment or other people. At one point Tobias/Four expressing his frustration at her inability to realize that his primary motivation behind his actions toward her has been to aid her in initiation, but she misreads his intentions:

“I keep trying to help you,” he says, “but you refuse to be helped.” “Oh, right. Your help,” I say. “Stabbing my ear with a knife and taunting me and yelling at me more than you yell at anyone else, it sure is helpful.” “Taunting you? You mean when I threw the knives? I wasn’t taunting you,” he snaps. “I was reminding you that if you failed, someone else would have to take your place.” (Divergent p.311)

Upon examination of the independent nature of our heroines, with three of them showing their independence because they had no choice and they were forced to grow up due to sheer necessity and the other two, asserting their independence despite maintaining a far more extensive support system than the other three. It is no question that their independence makes them stronger, but it brings the question of whether independence is stronger due to sheer need or by choice.
As with any teenager, identity is very important to each of the five heroines in this story. Each of them is at a different stage in regards to their identity. June has formed her identity almost solely based on her prodigy status with the military and her relationship with her brother, Metias, who as previously mentioned is her only family. Her identity shifts when she learns that so much of what she has based her life on, is based on a lie. Once she makes a decision on how she is going to deal with this revelation, she reaches a turning point in regards to her identity development:

In the mirror, I look the same. But I am a different person inside. I’m the prodigy who knows the truth, and I know exactly what I’m going to do. I’m going to help Day escape. (Legend p.247)

Katniss forms her identity through her familial connections and her position as provider of her family; her efforts in his position become an almost constant task. After she leaves District 12 and is on the way to the arena, she finds solace in returning to her usual style of clothing for the first time since the ordeal began:

This is the first time since the morning of the reaping that I resemble myself. No fancy hair or clothes, no flaming capes. Just me. Looking like I could be headed for the woods. It calms me. (p.87)

Katniss preserves her identity in the interviews before the arena by refusing to give any more personal information than absolutely necessary. At one point, Haymitch expresses his frustration at this tactic to which she replies:

"We’re got to find another angle. Not only are you hostile, I don’t know anything about you. I’ve asked you fifty questions and still have no sense of your life, your family, what you care about. They want to know about you, Katniss" "But I don’t want them to! They’re already taking my future! They can’t have the things that mattered to me in the past!" (p.117).

As Katniss ponders the prospect that she might actually survive the arena and return home, she realizes that her status as a victor will essentially change her life forever, that it
will mean that she no longer has to worry about food on the table and clothes on her back and those of her mother and sister, and she wonders what will be left of her life after this responsibility is removed:

But then . . . what? What would my life be like on a daily basis? Most of it has been consumed with the acquisition of food. Take that away and I'm not really sure who I am, what my identity is. (pp.310-311)

Annah’s identity is that of a very wounded person. Due to the many years that she spent on her own and emotional scars that inflicted upon her due to poor body image. This body image is caused by a series of scars that run the whole length of the left side of her body that she sustained after falling into a pit of barbed wire. These scars highly affect her self-esteem and she guards against attachment with other people in order to protect herself against the rejection that she is certain will eventually occur:

“You don’t ever let anyone see who you really are, and whenever anyone gets close or even thinks about getting close, you thrust your scars in their face like they’re some sort of badge. A way to ward people off. It’s like you want them to see only the worst parts of you. Like you think you’re ugly.” “I am ugly!” I roar at him. “What are you not seeing?” I scrape my hair back from my cheeks. “This isn’t beauty!” I scream at him, tilting my neck to the light struggling through the door. He’s now the one backing up the stairs and I keep climbing until we’re out in the snow. “Look at me!” I rip off my coat and then my shirt until I’m just wearing a short tight tank top, my skin on fire from rage. The scars stand out like white streaks tearing my skin. Over my shoulder and down my ribs. Across my hips and snaking along my abdomen, trailing down into my pants. “Annah,” he says, holding up his hands and turning his head as if I’m naked. “No!” I shout at him. “You wanted to know why I force people to see how ugly I am. It’s because that’s who I am. It’s all I am.” (pp.196-197)

However, as miserable as she might think that her existence is, that certainly doesn’t mean that she is ready to give up that life, especially when threatened:

This is it, I realize. This is the end of me. This man might choose to kill me or keep me alive but either way, who I am is done. A sadness begins to seep through me, a deep regret for all the time I kept my gaze focused on
the ground rather than the sky. But then an acid burns up the back of my throat, a rage coursing through me. I’m not willing to give up that easily. If I were I’d have died years ago. (p.34)

In connection to her poor self-esteem, she is also very reluctant to let someone into her life and let them affect her emotionally after spending so many years depending on no one but herself. She puts up an emotional wall in order to distance herself from them, especially Elias and Catcher, and maintain control:

I refuse to let these men unsettle me this much. I’m stronger than that. I’ve had to be determined and independent— it’s who I am now. (p.154)

However, she is able to drop those walls as she fights for Catcher and her place in his life. They each have their internal struggles and they go through emotional highs and lows together, but it isn’t until the following declaration that we realize that another aspect has been added to Annah’s identity:

“This is the woman I love,” he says, raising his machete to point at me. “She is my life, and when you harm her you harm me.” His breath is loud and I can see the way he fights to control himself. (p.304)

The last aspect of Annah’s identity that will be covered in this study goes back to her respect for other human life, to her reluctance to be the instrument of decision on who lives and who dies:

I’ve never considered myself a cruel person. Apathetic and ambivalent, maybe, but never outright inhumane. I’ve tried to take care of those around me or at the very least, tried not to cause them harm. And yet here there’s no easy answer. There’s no easy choice. “Annah?” Catcher asks softly, standing next to me. He holds out the machete, its blade still slick. My breath burns hot inside me and my heart pounds in my ears. It’s not fair that this all falls to me. I’m not supposed to be the one deciding someone else’s fate. I’m not the judge of what’s right and wrong. (p.305)

Annah’s identity is definitely a fractured one. She is very emotionally wounded by abandonment and trust issues and her own poor self-esteem. Despite all of this, however,
she is able to trust again and move on with her life, with the determination and independence that she gained through all the years that she spent on her own.

One of the biggest parts of Kira Walker’s identity is her dedication to her work. As a medic intern in the maternity ward, she is confronted with death on a daily basis in a world where no child lives more than 56 hours. It is because of this, and the discovery that her adopted sister is pregnant, as previously mentioned, that she become even more determined to find a cure to not only save her sister’s baby, but all the future babies as well. As indicated by this action, she is fiercely loyal to those she loves and will do anything for them.

As previously stated, Kira encounters some major revelations in regards to her identity. Namely, that she is not actually human. However, much like everything else she has encountered in life, Kira takes this news in stride and outwardly shows confidence even she doesn’t necessarily feel it:

“You really didn’t know?” He squinted at her in the fading sunlight. “You really thought you were…” He trailed off, and Kira felt grateful he hadn’t said it out loud. “I had no idea. I’m still not convinced.” “You’re definitely not like me,” he said, “but you’re”—he nodded at her friends—“not like them either. You can’t link, and yet I almost feel like you can, like there’s something between us that… I don’t know. I don’t know what you are.” Kira opened her mouth to respond, but she didn’t know either. “I’m Kira Walker,” she said finally. “What else is there to know?” (p.415)

One of the major themes of Divergent is Tris’s attempt to reinvent herself when she joins Dauntless. Finding herself in an environment that is completely different to the one that she was raised in, she attempts to find out who she is as a person rather than what is expected of her. Even before the revelation of her being Divergent, she feels out of place with the lifestyle that she was raised in:
When I look at the Abnegation lifestyle as an outsider, I think it’s beautiful. When I watch my family move in harmony; when we go to dinner parties and everyone cleans together afterward without having to be asked; when I see Caleb help strangers carry their groceries, I fall in love with this life all over again. It’s only when I try to live it myself that I have trouble. It never feels genuine. (Divergent p.24)

One of the symbols of this reinvention is that she changes her name from Beatrice to Tris. The significance of this name change is that it marks a clear distinction of people from her old life and people from her new life based on what they call her. Another significance of the name change is that it gives a sense of freedom that she never experienced before in her life:

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

It is through her attempts to fit in and survive in this new environment that she is able to acquire skills that help her to gain confidence and solidify her place in this new setting and the new identity that she is creating.

**Conclusion**

The sources of strength identified from each of the seven texts are illustrated in the table on page 17. I was able to find evidence of all ten attributes in each of the heroines’ characters, although they are demonstrated in varying degrees. The nature of the character traits themselves is something that I did not expect. While character traits and environmental forces are included in the nature of the sources of strength, I have also found that they also include abstract ideas such as hope and independence and truth. While being independent is certainly an action and can be used as a character trait, the idea of independence is abstract. Sources of strength that could be labeled as
environmental forces are those that involve the heroine’s relationships. These relationships are highly beneficial in contributing to the strength of each of our heroines, but it is the way that they contribute that is different. In the case of Katniss Everdeen, her biggest motivation in life is protecting those that she loves. It is because of this motivation that she modifies her behavior so that her family isn’t punished for something that she did. This modification helps her to survive because it allows her to set aside her emotions in order to focus on the task at hand. June, on the other hand, is driven by her loss of her brother to find his murderer and bring that person to justice. It is through this pursuit that she meets Day and they support each other through their mutual grief and help each other to be able to forget their sorrows, if only for a little while. Annah’s relationships help her to turn her greatest weakness into her greatest strength. By allowing herself to trust people after years of isolation, she becomes a stronger person as her motivation changes from mere survival to acting out of love on behalf of those she has allowed inside her emotional walls. Tris Prior’s relationships allow her to create a new support system after she leaves her family behind to begin her new life. Kira’s relationships are very similar in nature to that of Katniss’s, in that she places herself in the role of the protector for those she loves. She uses her relationship as motivation in her actions, but the difference between Kira and Katniss is that Kira is able to admit that she needs people and ask them for support.
Bibliography


**Young Adult Novels Used**


