Re-examining the "Hero's Journey": A critical reflection on literature selection for affective bibliotherapy programs on resilience

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Affective bibliotherapy is a practice which "uses fiction to help the reader connect to emotional experiences and human situations through the process of identification" (Shechtman 2009, 21). Readers identify with the emotions and experiences of characters, following them on their journey to overcome obstacles and challenges. The author of this article works within a third sector organization that uses affective bibliotherapy in schools as a preventative measure for young people to learn resilience coping mechanisms and skills in order to help them navigate difficult developmental transitions and life experiences. This paper addresses the challenges of selecting literature for such programs. This type of resilience literature often refers to "a heterogenous set of creations"; for example, the fairy tales of Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm (Reyzábal 2014, 121). Such literature foregrounds the "Hero's Journey" trajectory that moves through a predictable, developmental arc: an exposition (resting position), which is then interrupted by an obstacle to be overcome, followed by the highest point of tension in which one must act in the face of adversity (the climax), before finding resolution when transformation or healing is successfully achieved. This arc can prove extremely useful for bibliotherapy in that it views resilience as a replicable process and ensures that participants gain a transferrable resilience toolkit, e.g. problem-solving techniques, critical thinking, and assertive communication. Yet, a simplistic linear model that achieves a predictable outcome is inadequate on its own for understanding the complexities of real lives. Whilst the aforementioned arc is apolitical and privileges an image of resilience in which "an essential, relatively stable and evolving self develops a chronologically appropriate and coherent biography", there is a need to utilize literature that exposes how these types of stories repress and exclude difference (Aranda et al. 2012, 551). Therefore, this article incorporates an awareness of vulnerability research into the design of ethical bibliotherapy interventions, because "through its focus on power and the limitations of individual agency, vulnerability research is concerned with political dimensions that prevent progressive changes from occurring" (Miller et al. 2010, Conclusions and Ways Forward section, para 1). In essence, the replicable resilience model promised by the Hero's Journey needs to be tempered with literary texts that

depict the additional vulnerabilities and barriers that complicate the resilience journeys of young people from marginalized communities.

Therefore, taking two literary texts used in the author's current pre-teen and mid-teen resilience bibliotherapy programs – "Grace" by Darcie Little Badger (2019) and an extract from *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas (2017) – this paper highlights how these texts are significant in that they foreground characters who face not only universal obstacles but additional cultural, social, and political factors that hinder their capacity to act. Grace is Lipan Apache (a Native American tribe) and Starr is a young "Black girl". Both teenagers attend schools made up of predominantly White peers and face racial and cultural discrimination for being seen as Other. Through analysis of these alternative narratives, privileging of the Hero's Journey arc in bibliotherapy is cautioned, and an approach which incorporates learning of the external factors that shape and alter how we perceive resilience encouraged. In this article, which analyzes three resilience narrative frameworks, it will be argued that the Hero's Journey constitutes an example of the privileged "Resilience Found" arc, whilst "Grace" and *The Hate U Give* exemplify two alternative narrative trajectories, identified by Kay Aranda et al. as "Resilience Made" and "Resilience Unfinished" (2012).

AFFECTIVE BIBLIOTHERAPY'S USE OF THE "HERO'S JOURNEY": MODEL STRENGTHS AND PURPOSES

Schectman notes that "the term bibliotherapy is made up of two words: *biblio,* originating from the Greek word *biblus* (book), and therapy, referring to psychological help. Simply stated, bibliotherapy can be defined as the use of books to help people solve problems" (2009, 21). It is a practice that is used for all ages and to address many different issues such as grief, stress, and anxiety, and has been cultivated in many sectors by therapists, counsellors, and librarians, among others. Often, however, affective bibliotherapy is used as a preventative measure for children and young people in order to equip them with a wellbeing toolkit or life skills that will foster resilience that can be applied in any future time of need or difficulty. The Hero's Journey narrative has been particularly prominent in therapeutical practices, counselling and narrative therapy (Lawson 2005; Dybicz 2013) and, in affective bibliotherapy, it is common to look at "literature as a laboratory on its own, with each text taken as a case-study" (Mahdiani 2021, 28). Children and young people in these sessions often engage in conversations about the character, their actions, and the consequences of these actions at different points in the story in order to help them frame their own problems in a similar way and to facilitate healing or learning.

The author's organization, for example, often selects literature with a universal narrative structure identified by Gustav Freytag, who illustrated a linear model using five sequential segments that include the following: an exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement (1900). This is consistent with Joseph Campbell's 1949 coining of the Hero's Journey or monomyth. Campbell also found that most stories from mythology follow this pattern where the hero sets out and receives a challenge or call to action before undergoing transformation and returning with new knowledge about the world and one's self. As Phillip Dybicz states, Campbell

identified five fundamental narrative elements common to myths across cultures and across historical epochs: a *Call to Adventure*, *Crossing Beyond a Threshold*, *Overcoming Trials and Tests*, *Receiving Aid*, and *Facing a Supreme Ordeal Yielding a Reward*. These basic elements are what comprise the monomyth (2012, 271).

These journey steps and tropes are used to encourage discussion that will help participants carry out a situational analysis of the environment, context and characters after the exposition; to identify the problems that arise with the rising action; to consider what the consequences of the character's actions might be after the highest point of tension in the climax; to examine those consequences further in the falling action; and to encourage final reflections on lessons learned at the story's resolution. The stories thus act as a lesson in what Aranda et al. term, "the classic epistemological position of resilience" (2012, 550), with Jon Franklin claiming that there is a "deeper satisfaction that comes when the reader learns with the character. […] The story is an artificial experience. It doesn't moralize but, like all experience, it teaches" (1986, 90). In essence, through identification with the character, it is anticipated that the participants undergo transformation themselves during the course of the story, re-emerging at the close of the session with new knowledge.

This approach is characteristic of much affective bibliotherapy and Angelo Gianfrancesco (2010) has suggested that resilience literature tends to be associated with those tales and stories with an "outline almost prototypical in line with the proposals of Vladmir Propp and Bruno Bettelheim" (Reyzábal 2014, 121). Such narratives are designed to foster psychological growth, the development of life skills and the notion of rebirth after adversity. It stands to reason then that this universal narrative framework ties in neatly with Michael Basseler's assertion that "the very notion of resilience, as the capacity to bounce back from stress and pain, rests intrinsically upon the narrative sequencing of events, responses and adaptive processes" (2019, 26). In this way, stories are often used in affective bibliotherapy to impart skills in problem-solving; in critical thinking; and to highlight how traits such as kindness, self-confidence, bravery, and self-care are all intrinsic qualities that support resilient individuals to succeed and overcome challenges. This suggests that resilience can be related to intrinsic qualities *within* individuals but also that resilience can be *learned* (Coutu 2002), with narratives becoming "tools for generating and propagating indirect experience and knowledge" (Mahdiani 2021, 18). This means resilience can be viewed as both a process (in line with the prototypical arc) but also as a series of traits that can be learned and cultivated by young people to develop a more resilient self.

These Hero's Journey narratives *have* been effective and are popular for portraying images of resilience and triumph in spite of hardship. For example, Jack Zipes calls fairy tales and folktales irresistible, highlighting how they endure because of their capacity to impart universal lessons of hope, depicting individuals who triumph in spite of overwhelming odds (2013). These narratives can help young people to feel less alone knowing that facing challenges and difficulties is an inevitable part of life. Many of these types of stories are coming-of-age or developmental narratives and that is why they tend to be so popular for use with children and adolescents. The Hero's Journey can reassure young people by helping to "set in place a structure of respons-

es to possible threats" and supports them in identifying problem resolution strategies that can be applied to their own lives (Reid 2019, 36). The benefits of the Hero's Journey framework is also evidenced by Alison Habens who examined if there were additional benefits of using the mythic narrative structure and archetypal characterization for overcoming trauma in relation to other forms of literature such as memoir and autobiography (2018). Habens investigated whether "some imaginative engagement with archetypal narratives could be more effective in helping people resolve difficult memories or chart positive approaches for the future" (2018, para 6). The findings suggest that the Hero's Journey template received a more positive participant response in terms of being more "helpful" in the creative writing therapy sessions than a pure Life Writing format, with the monomyth arc helping them to view their own lives from "a new perspective" (2018, para 14). There is thus evidence to suggest the potential benefits of these archetypal narratives to foster resilience.

Nazilla Khanlou and Ron Wray have highlighted, however, "a growing convergence in the approaches and tools that make up the current mixed bag of resilience interventions" (2014, 71) and there is certainly much evidence out there to suggest the need for diverse literary materials in bibliotherapy (McCulliss and Chamberlain 2013). Therefore, it is important for organizations who use bibliotherapy to consider their current approaches and practices, the impact of bibliotherapy interventions, what learning about resilience should look like, and the broader implications and ethics behind it. The use of the Hero's Journey, though it has proven useful, also needs to be critically revised and interrogated.

LIMITATIONS AND PROBLEMS WITH THE USE OF THE "HERO'S JOURNEY" IN RESILIENCE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Whilst there are clearly benefits of using the Hero's Journey or Freytag's universal narrative structure pyramid to help children and young people learn about some of the traits of resilience and to establish a replicable process for approaching challenges, this is too simplistic once children start to develop into their pre-teen and teenage years, when external social and environmental factors start to hold more sway over their identity formation and self-determination. The monomyth often does not factor in the social, political, and environmental determinants on an individual's resilience. Indeed, many of those fairy tales and folk tales identified as prototypical resilience case-studies are essentially ahistorical, set "Once upon a time", outside of contextual realities. In this way, it is easy for the Hero's Journey monomyth to portray a stable and evolving self who is universal in appeal, developing in a neat, linear fashion. This neat story type suits the interdisciplinary nature of affective bibliotherapy because "Psychology too is known to construct or invent and privilege a particular conception of the individual, even when recognizing the influence of the social" (Aranda et al. 2012, 551).

The Hero's Journey is the narrative of "Resilience Found" according to Aranda et al., where the heroic individual discovers innate qualities that nurture their awareness of their resilient self (550). However, by using this repetitive model to help young

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people learn about resilience, individuals who are not like the heroic and transformed characters, and who cannot achieve neat and complete healing in this linear fashion, are often viewed as somehow deficient or lacking in normal or natural attributes associated with the characters in the stories. This highlights how "the non-resilient subject is then conceived in opposition to this psychological norm" and often these young people can "become the targets of psychological interventions" (2012, 551). This problematically suggests that everyone should have the same, or at least very similar, story maps and sequenced lives, when in fact resilience shape-shifts and has different guises in different contexts. Race, gender, and social background all need to factor in our teaching of resilience as a multifaceted and fluid concept, because not all children and young people have the same "protective factors" such as family support, socioeconomic status, community support, etc. (Fleming and Ledogar 2008, 7) It is certainly important to acknowledge and foreground "the powerful role societal norms play and the authority of experts to control and regulate what constitutes normal, healthy or good outcomes" because "normative understandings of the resilient subject potentially further serve to repress or exclude difference" (Aranda et al. 2012, 551). Sometimes things do not work out, the "Happily ever after" ending cannot be achieved because of forces beyond the child or young person's control, and this needs to shape our depictions of what constitutes a resilient subject. The following section analyzes two different texts, currently being used in the author's work in affective bibliotherapy resilience programs for pre-teen children (11–12 years) and mid-teens (14–17 years), for their depiction of resilience. These texts offer alternatives to the Hero's Journey arc, highlighting the need to expand the corpus of material used in bibliotherapy in order to encapsulate the many faces of resilience.

"RESILIENCE MADE": NATIVE AMERICAN RESISTANCE IN DARCIE LITTLE BADGER'S "GRACE"

In contrast to the "Resilience Found" narrative that the Hero's Journey represents, with privileged or special characters journeying both within and without to discover their own strength and innate qualities for fostering resilience, Aranda et al. point out a second alternative: the narrative of "Resilience Made" (2012, 552). Darcie Little Badger's story "Grace" is one prime example of this: "Resilience Made is the constructionist story of resilience, whereby resilience is not something we have but something we do" and "Wellbeing and resilience are therefore argued to result from the ongoing iterative and interactive navigations and negotiations between selves, communities and environments" (552). In essence, the "Resilience Made" narrative favors the idea of resilience as a process, as something which is developmental, rather than stemming from intrinsic traits of heroic individuals who are born to succeed. Grace is a member of the Lipan Apache tribe who must navigate new environments persistently, drawing from the cultural strength her people have shown both historically and in the present: her tribe having spent their lives "surviving in small enclaves after the world figured we all died" (Little Badger 2019, 7). The Lipan Apache were once a powerful, nomadic tribe from the southern Great Plains but their numbers have dwindled significantly due to warfare from the 19th century onwards. According

to the *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, "their descendants presently live among the Mescalero Apache in New Mexico and the Tonkawa and the Plains Apache in Oklahoma. The Lipan are not a federally recognized tribe, and little of their culture remains" (May 2007, para 1). The fact that her tribe's very existence is no longer officially recognized highlights the complex challenges to her identity that Grace faces, and it also explains her determination to record her tribe's culture and history through her actions and words. She uses her knowledge of history and her heritage to *make* her own resilience and to establish her confidence in her ability to overcome difficult situations. For example, Grace draws on the innate spiritual connection her tribe feels to nature: "Someday, we'll go home. It's there, waiting, never really stolen. But until then, we gotta live like a pair of dandelion fluffs in the wind and drift around until the day comes to settle and grow […] each new land has its own troubles" (7). As Iris HeavyRunner and Joann Sebastian Morris state, "resilience is not new to our people; it is a concept that has been taught for centuries. The word is new; the meaning is old" (1997, para 1). There is a concept of "natural resilience" that Native American cultures make their children aware of, illustrated through the environmental imagery and symbolism employed in the language of the story, highlighting how a huge part of Native American resilience is their sense of connectedness to the power of the natural world (para 11). Grace discovers in nature, for example, the importance of emotional and assertive communication, "Mama says I showed the loons how to really cry, and sometimes the birds and I screamed at each other, like we were sparring with our voices" (Little Badger 2019, 8).

Through her process of adaptation to new environments, Grace creates her own mechanisms for resilience, "When you're a stranger trying to fit in, it helps to find something familiar and use it as a life raft. Gives you confidence. At least, that's what I've experienced" (9). In essence, Grace uses her awareness of her connectedness to the natural world to give her that sense of belonging, of having a place despite her tribe's nomadic existence and stolen homeland. The environment is a constant source of familiarity wherever she goes as it remains unchanging and she takes comfort and confidence from using nature's processes to develop her own resilience strategies: learning to float, adapt and take root, like a dandelion fluff, to grow and find sustenance in whatever soil she lands in. It is also interesting that, in the exposition, Grace tells us her life story, another unique part of the Native American understanding of resilience: "I'm alive because my great-grandma, great-great-grandma, and great-great-great grandma resisted the men who tried to round them up and kill them or steal everything that mattered" (7). It is through her awareness of her family and tribe's history, that she recognizes her own inherited and innate strength that she can draw upon to overcome challenges. This background is Grace's introduction to one of her stories of oppression where a boy, Brandon, tries to kiss her without consent. It is clear in the way that she draws together these seemingly disparate cultural, historical, familial and personal stories that Grace sees all of the threads as part of her own developmental narrative. As HeavyRunner and Morris state:

> Our children's cultural strength or resilience can also be fostered by the oral tradition of storytelling. Children can learn to listen with patience and respect. Our stories can

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be told over and over; they are developmental. At every step we learn something new. In essence, we grow up with our stories. They are protective factors that convey culturally specific high expectations, caring, support, and opportunities for participation (1997, para 12).

In this way, resilience is no longer seen as a linear process with neat closure, rather it is an ongoing process that is almost cyclical in nature. This is fitting because, according to Joseph Brown, "everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round" (1988, 35). This narrative too is cyclical: Grace shares the story of her birth, history and growth before proceeding with the current flashback she wishes to relate. In the end we come full circle, with Grace bringing us back to the present and reminding us that she has already moved on to a new place (Little Badger 2019, 9). Brandon is introduced in the story with his "prehistoric-themed chess set with dinosaur-shaped pieces" acting as a red herring for his outdated world view in terms of gender and ethnicity, insisting on getting an answer from Grace concerning "where are you *from*?"; with Grace recognizing the true prejudice behind his insistence, "I realized it was that kind of question. Where are you from, brown-skinned girl?" (9–10). Winning the chess game, Brandon insists that his prize should be a kiss, and Grace tells us how "I tried to pull away, but Brandon's grip tightened […] 'Stop,' I said" (10–11). Grace's initial reaction is to escape from the situation, to "throw all my belongings into a few cardboard boxes and leave my personal baggage behind" (12), but she recognizes from her tribe's history that she needs to formulate her own resistance now and stand up for what is right. She forms this resilience using the cultural, familial, and personal strength garnered from the stories she carries within. It is interesting that this text is meta-aware in illustrating how Grace does not follow the typical, neat trajectory of the Hero's Journey, noting how "Home had always seemed beyond our reach, like we were knights chasing the Holy Grail" (12). Her life is cyclical, with each land's challenges acting as layers of development building up her resilient self but with no end point; like a tree that grows outward in rings, taking up more space. In this way, Grace exemplifies HeavyRunner's point that Native American tribes embrace oral storytelling as a key element of their resilience, as she continually circles back to stories of her tribe's strength, her heritage, and her connectedness to nature to guide her own actions and cement her own self-belief. Grace draws on all of the resilience her people, her family, and she herself, have "made" to tackle the bigger injustices represented in this situation with Brandon (13). Not everyone is a hero wielding a sword, there are quieter ways to display strength.

When her teacher forces her to work with Brandon on a test, this causes Grace to draw on all of the resilience she has made for herself and to confidently assert her right to work on her own. It is important to note Ms. Welton's response: "I understand it's difficult sometimes, but in the real world, you need to associate with all kinds of people. Find ways to get along and work together. It's important" (16). The teacher's response here exposes how often we fail to see the various different social, political and environmental factors that hinder the capacity of some individuals

to act and that not everyone has the same baseline level of privilege. Grace's response exemplifies her awareness of this injustice:

> *Real world*? Did she think that everyone younger than eighteen lived in a simulation? I leaned forward and continued in an-almost a whisper, afraid I'd start shouting otherwise. "Brandon tried to kiss me, and I said no. Now he's treating me like garbage. I don't have to work with anybody who disrespects me that way. *Ever.*" (16)

Grace's words here highlight how the "real world" has definitely entered into the space of the classroom. Just like the monomyth stories that promise a stable environment for heroic resilience to follow its destined course, her teacher seems to assume that the school is a world somehow set apart, where the dynamics of power and privilege hold no sway. Grace corrects her teacher here in order to highlight how she refuses to give up her agency, asserting her right to control her own life and her awareness of her own social and political vulnerabilities. It is this acute awareness of her place in history and society, as well as that empowering knowledge of her heritage and "natural resilience" stemming from her culture, family, and sense of connectedness to the environment that make up the various ingredients of Grace's "Resilience Made". This type of "Resilience Made" narrative, that combines individual resilience with an awareness of social and cultural determinants, assists to "repoliticize narratives" and ground them in specific contexts (Aranda et al. 2012, 553). It is an interpretation of

> resilience as resistance where individualized notions of risk are not manifestations of individual vulnerability or moral failing, but of social disadvantage and inequalities. Moreover, recognizing and validating difference in resilience does much to challenge or disrupt the dominant normative discourses and criteria and gives voice to marginalized stories. (553)

However, this type of resilience narrative still tends towards "the binaries of individual and society, culture and nature […] and leaves the focus of theory and research on an inner and social outer world" (553). For example, Grace continually progresses, each cyclical layer of development constituting a story that she learns from, growing bigger and stronger like the trunk of a tree and its many rings of wisdom. Throughout, Grace maintains a very clear and stable sense of who she is and where she is going – the outside world does not impinge on her identity or shake her sense of self. In contrast, the final work this paper will examine, takes the complexity of the interplay between internal and external pressures on an individual's identity and resilience further to depict a narrative of "Resilience Unfinished" (553).

"RESILIENCE UNFINISHED": AN EXTRACT FROM *THE HATE U GIVE* BY ANGIE THOMAS

Extracts from longer pieces of fiction are also used in addition to short stories for affective bibliotherapy sessions. These extracts are able to stand alone as scenes or contained scenarios that the participants can learn from. One extract is from the novel *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas where Starr, a Black teen, faces the hy-

pocrisy of her predominantly White school peers who stage protests about the death of Kahlil, Starr's friend who is shot by a policeman in a racially motivated attack right in front of her. They protest not because they believe in the injustice of the event but because they want to get out of class: "Hell yeah. Free day. I'm game" (Thomas 2017, 182). This extract comes after news of Khalil's death has spread in the media, and reveals that Starr not only has to fight against a society that is prejudiced towards her race but she also has to confront one of her best friends, Hailey. This type of "Resilience Unfinished" narrative highlights how, "the psychosocial subject is ambiguously conceived, being imbued with agency, but equally constrained, subjected to broader discourses or forces from elsewhere" (Aranda et al. 2012, 554). This means that identity and performativity are a huge part of this type of resilience narrative, with Starr certainly being "a gendered subject who is the product of a complex interplay of discourses, norms, power relations, institutions and practices" (554). Starr attends a fancy suburban prep school, an extreme contrast to the poor Black neighborhood where she lives. This means that Starr has been forced to split her identity in order to adapt to both situations. She has what she calls, "Williamson rules" that apply when she is away from her homeplace of Garden Heights to determine how she behaves in a predominantly White setting (Thomas 2017, 183). In this extract, angered by Hailey's enthusiasm for protesting just to get out of class, Starr's neat split in persona starts to fall apart, her two worlds collide and sit uncomfortably together, a world of privilege colliding with a world of oppression:

> They're so damn excited about getting a day off. Kahlil's in a grave. He can't get a day off from that shit. I live it every single day too. In class, I toss my backpack on the floor […]. When Hailey and Maya come in, I give them a stank-eye and silently dare them to say shit to me. I'm breaking all of my Williamson Starr rules with zero fucks to give. (183)

She is stifled by this need to repress what she sees as her Black culture and identity at school. For example, when Hailey hurts Starr with a racist remark during a basketball game: "Dammit, Starr! Hustle! Pretend the ball is some fried chicken. Bet you'll stay on it then" (111), Starr's pain turns to concern that she has fallen into a stereotype: "They probably heard me crying: great. What's worse than being the Angry Black Girl? The *Weak* Black Girl" (115). Starr thus struggles to discover a stable sense of self, being shaped by prejudices from society, racial injustice, personal trauma and the split of her dual lifestyle. As Aranda et al. state, when the "resilient subject is re-imagined as performative rather than as stable and socially constituted, then this subject and their resilience becomes unfinished, always in a process of remaking or becoming" (2012, 555). This highlights how, for many individuals, resilience is not always linear and straightforward.

Not only does the multiplicity of Starr's sense of self, that continually manifests and implodes, mark her as different from the heroes of the monomyth, her capacity to be resilient is also hindered by the competing narratives that undermine her perspective on the world and serve to silence her: "I don't respond. If I open my mouth, I'll explode" (Thomas 2017, 184). For example, in this extract, Starr doubts herself and her feelings of hurt and injustice because of the different perspectives of those around her, with Hailey insisting her racist basketball outburst was nothing: "Lighten

up! It was only game talk" (112). This lack of understanding and affirmation of Starr's feelings and story hinders her capacity for resilience. As Cyrulnik states,

> When there is a match between the narratives of self, family, and culture, traumatized people feel supported and can undertake the work of building resilience. But when a discrepancy prevents affected persons from expressing themselves because the stories around them silence them or give an interpretation of the facts that is incompatible with that of the subjects, the work of resilience will then be difficult. (2021, 101)

It is only when Maya confirms Starr's suspicions of Hailey's racism that she is able to expel her self-doubt: "That's not why Hailey unfollowed you. She said she didn't wanna see that shit [Black Lives Matter material] on her dashboard" (Thomas 2017, 250). We learn here that Maya has her own trauma related to Hailey's prejudice: "Do you remember that time she asked if my family ate a cat for Thanksgiving?" and Starr is horrified to hear that both she and Maya played along with Hailey's supposed joke: "She claimed it was a joke and laughed, I laughed, and then you laughed. I only laughed because I thought I was supposed to. I felt like shit the rest of the week" (251). Both have been forced to repress their true selves and feelings to be accepted socially. It is only at the conclusion of this extract that the two start to find comfort in having validated one another's trauma: "'We can't let her get away with saying stuff like that again, okay?' She cracks a smile. 'A minority alliance?'" (252). Thomas's characters foreground how the capacity for resilience is greatly impacted by social, political and environmental forces but also by the complex interplay between these forces and the individual's developing sense of self. This highlights how messy resilience can be and that closure is not a necessary component of a successful resilience journey. Starr clearly displays strength and resilience here in spite of all of the hardships she faces. Her ability to bounce back is heroic despite no conclusive "happily ever after" closure or complete healing.

CONCLUSION

Overall, in highlighting some of the benefits of using the Hero's Journey in affective bibliotherapy sessions to foster a universal resilience toolkit, this article has foregrounded the problematic nature of sole dependence on this type of resilience literature. Instead, this paper posits that bibliotherapists must work to incorporate not only examples of Aranda et al.'s "Resilience Found" narratives but also narratives of "Resilience Made" and "Resilience Unfinished" into their programs. It is essential that we adopt this layered approach which privileges learning of not only the intrinsic traits that individuals can draw on for resilience but that also promotes an awareness of external cultural, social, and political vulnerabilities that many young people face – in the cases of Grace and Starr, this constitutes their ethnicity, race and gender – factors that inhibit and reshape their resilience journeys in more complex and nuanced ways. For example, this necessitates the incorporation of story resolutions that are incomplete or "imperfect", like the extract from *The Hate U Give* and the cyclical nature of the protagonist's development in "Grace", informed by her Native American heritage. These texts make young people aware that they are not responsible for the external pressures that factor in their identity development and prevent complete

healing. There is no one size fits all when it comes to resilience, instead the concept shapeshifts and morphs in different contexts.

Literature in bibliotherapy interventions needs to increase awareness of how resilience is often complicated, messy, and non-linear and, just because a young person's story does not match the neat monomyth arc does not mean that their resilience efforts are somehow lesser or "unheroic". "Grace" and the examined extract from *The Hate U Give*, exemplify texts that add layers of thematic and formal complexity to the resilience journey: instead of intrinsic or heroic qualities, Grace draws from her connection to nature, to her heritage, to her family, to her community, to the power of storytelling, in order to develop her own self-confidence and ability to adapt and fight to protect her own agency and sense of identity. Meanwhile, Starr's use of performativity to adapt and thrive in a hostile environment highlights her capacity to cope with difficult situations whilst also showing how her strategy simultaneously causes a fracturing of her own sense of self. Texts with this level of thematic and formal complexity are needed on resilience bibliotherapy programs in order to highlight the multi-faceted nature of resilience. To this end, this paper hopes to contribute to ongoing research that is delineating representations of resilience, highlighting the importance of critiquing and examining the structural, formal and thematic narrative features of literature for affective bibliotherapy programs in order to prioritize the importance of increasing awareness of the many faces of resilience.

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Re-examining the "Hero's Journey": A critical reflection on literature selection for affective bibliotherapy programs on resilience

This article critically examines the Hero's Journey arc, popular in affective bibliotherapy for children and young people. Privileging this archetypal model of resilience represses and excludes difference. It posits two alternatives, foregrounding characters who face additional cultural, social, and political factors that hinder their capacity to act, and argues that bibliotherapy must be inclusive, incorporating stories that offer alternative depictions of resilience that are complicated, messy, and non-linear but no less "heroic".

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