



Parental Divorce and Socioecological Resilience in *Big and Little Questions* (According to Wren Joe Byrd)

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Abstract

This study explores the tween's socio-ecological resilience in the face of parental divorce in Middle Grade American novel, *Big and Little Questions* (According to Wren Jo Byrd). The text employs Ungar's theoretical lens of socioecological to explore the tween protagonist, Wren's resilience in the face of parental divorce. The textual analysis of selected excerpts is based on analytical framework of Catherine Belsey which is a qualitative and interpretive strategy of analyzing texts. The study examines the tween's negotiation of her adversity through culturally relevant resources. This analysis reveals that in the absence of relational resources the tween asserts her agency and negotiates for culturally attuned symbolic resources of dictionary, diary and digital support system. She achieves resilience through assertion of agency, negotiation of relational support, seeking peer integration and parental validation, and acknowledging her fragmented familial reality. Moreover, she focuses on textual symbols and metaphors as a means of critique of social discourses which ignore emotional needs of the tween and overburden her with adult responsibilities. The study concludes that middle grade fiction holds significant potential for illuminating the socio-ecological dimensions of resilience.

Keywords: Parental divorce, MG fiction, tween, socio-ecological resilience, relational resources, critique of divorce discourses

Introduction

Family system plays a significant role in a child's psychological, behavioral and academic development, hence any change in this system greatly effects a child's developmental needs. Parental divorce severely disintegrates nuclear family system, and is a severe blow on a child's well-being, posing physical, emotional, behavioral, legal, economic, and social challenges (Ghaffarzadeh & Nazari, 2012). It makes a child subject to aggression, delinquency, anxiety, depression, a decline in academic performance, and a decreased parent-child bonding (Lansford, 2009). Though, divorce makes a child grieve the loss of familial unity irrespective of age, but usually younger children experience more emotional distress than adolescents (Umberson et al. 2014). Likewise, societal attitude towards divorce affects the short-term and long-term adaptability of children depending on family dynamics, parental economic condition, interparental conflict, and a child's psychological, behavioral, academic, and social issues (Lansford, 2009).

These adverse cognitive, relational and academic outcomes can be mitigated through informed interventions (Demir-Dagdaz et al., 2017). Mediating and symbolic resources assist children to bounce back multiple



divorce induced adversities and achieve resilience.

Resilience plays a significant role in making a child adapt to the situation. A significant number of children develop internal strength, accept the changing order of things and demonstrate resilience. According to Masten (2018), children with adaptive qualities look at divorce as a challenge and not as a threat, developing resilience. Hence, a society should enable children to handle adversities resourcefully and tactfully by facilitating them in developing a resilient mindset.

Resilience is the ability to adapt positively to high risks (Masten, Best, & Germazy, 1990); a dynamic process of coping and self-regulations with the help of protective factors and resources (Werner, 1989); adaptation to stressful situation (Southwick et al., 2014), an ordinary magic of adaptation and an individual's ability to bounce back trauma and resume functional state after adversity (Aburn, G. et al. 2016). Likewise, Ungar (2005) considers resilience as "more than an individual set of characteristics, structures around the individual, the services the individual receives and the way health knowledge is generated to overcome adversity. Ungar address the gaps left by other theorists (Shaikh and Kauppi, 2010) focuses on negotiation and navigation of resources and cultural relevance apart from significance of individual, environmental, physical ecological and social factors (Shean, 2015, p. 42). Moreover, culture is considered to be a significant contributor to resilience as risks and protective factors vary across culture (Luther, 2019).

The present study explores a female tween's journey of resilience in *Big and Little Questions (According to Wren Jo Byrd)* (2017). The 10 years old Wren fears social stigma associated with parental divorce. This fear shatters her sense of security, leading to her peer abandonment and alienation. Her young age and lack of life experience make her more exposed to divorce trauma, hence, her reaction to divorce shapes her decisions and experience, giving insight into the adversities and coping strategies of children experiencing divorce in American society in general.

Increased number of divorces in American society makes this study significant from social, research and psychological point of view (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). It is crucial as it highlights divorce induced adversities and coping strategies, contributing valuable insights into the existing body of research and experiences of children in American society. Moreover, it draws attention of the research to the multi-dimensional struggle of children at psychological, familial and environmental level.

The study addresses the following questions:

Q1: What resources does the tween utilize to overcome her divorced induced adversity?

Q2: How do textual symbols and metaphors critique social discourse of resilience?

Literature Review

Literature for children reflect valuable insights into the social and psychological dynamics of divorce and coping with its divorce induced adversity. The study by Lairana & Wandamar (2023), reflect that children's bonding with custodian parent, availability of peer support, trust of adults, engagement in extracurricular activities, belief in religion and cultural factors buffer emotional adversity of divorce. These mediating agents facilitate a child's access to therapeutic resources, counsellors, family members and close relationships.



A parent's role is significant in a child's coping with divorce trauma. Effective parenting increases a child's adaptability (Lansfor J.E., 2009), while strong parental bonding assist children in handling pain (Hetherington & Kelly (2002), by acting as a lever for resilience (Doty et al., 2017). Their support, love, care, discipline, consistent, and regular routines, negotiated schedules for food, play, school, and regular visitation of either parent can help a child adjust easily. Likewise, parental warmth, stability, and involvement in a child wellbeing (Germazy, 1989), open communication and attention to a child's worries and emotional issues foster resilience and adaptability by encouraging children to share their emotions, worries, and insecurities.

Beside parent, individual agency, other mediating agents and environmental factors also contribute to a child's coping. A child's access to close friends and caregiver, counselors, and support groups equip them with additional emotional outlets and perspectives, guiding, reassuring and making them build connections (Musaja, 2020). An individual agency i.e. age, high intelligence, intellectual skill, temperament, and hopefulness effect coping (Werner, 1989) Likewise, a child's traits of emotional adjustment, hopefulness, and self-efficacy are also pivotal in coping. A child's trait of hopefulness is key to resilience, that "despite chaos, brutality, stress, worry or despair," life makes sense (Southwick et al., 2014, p.6). The factors of "optimistic bias", "faith in recovery" (Murphy (1987), "learned optimism" and "learned helplessness" (Seligman, 1990) and "inner locus of control" (Werner, 2001) are effective in enabling strategic coping. Moreover, external environmental factors; maternal substitute, a concerned teacher, church or any social group (Werner, 1989); "relational pattern and an individual's role and relationships (Polk, 1997), ecological facilities; "immediate and extended family, peer groups, community networks, school and work settings, and larger social systems" play vital role in a child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

These theorists stress the significance of interventions by councilors, mentors, teachers, parents, peer's and close relative in mediating a child's divorce rooted psychological, mental, emotional, academic and identity issues. They support compensations of divorce trauma through celebrations, emancipations, validations and acknowledgement.

Kelley and Emery (2004) endorse that children overcome divorce adversity "reevaluate their lives and make positive changes" with the help of "three self-determinators: autonomy, competence and by relating. Autonomy involves altering the environment with volition and a sense of choice (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Competence relates to "self-efficacy" – the ability to function effectively in the environment for survival, success and growth, by being "helpful to others". While the need for "relatedness", is the concept of keeping oneself connected to relationships (Eggen & Kauchak, 2007). Finally, a child's internal and external protective factors help him to achieve resilience.

Middle-grade American fiction (age 8-12) explore challenges that children face after a divorce (Nikolajeva, 2020). These works portray children grappling with feelings of sadness, anger, confusion, and ways of adapting to new family dynamics (Trites, 2018). They also underscore moderating agents, i.e., friends, family, or other relationships, assisting in coping with the adversity (Ungar, 2021). The novel "*The Great Jeff* by Tony Abbott (2019) reflects the way the main child character, Jeff, grapples with feelings of abandonment, financial and emotional instability after divorce. It also reflects the protagonist's struggle to



adapt to the new reality of family dynamics. Likewise, Chronicles of Lincoln Jones (2019) reflects children's post-divorce trauma and their process of overcoming the adversity.

According to Lee, C (2023) Middle Grade (MG) fiction reflects resilience, emotional growth, and optimism. The article argues that hope is indispensable for market and psychological impact. Hope in MG fiction does not guarantee a happy ending, but an unhappy ending can also foster hope. Resilience arises from hope, growth, and meaning-making. Parental separation often disrupts a child's sense of stability, and MG fiction gives direction to reframe loss and find "safety amidst chaos," encouraging emotional resilience.

In the backdrop of this literature review the present study is concerned with studying the tween's ability (8-12) to cope with divorce trauma. According to research, adolescents and grown-ups with better cognitive resources and with the ability to engage with journaling readily adapt to the adversity (Lansford, 2009) while younger children exhibit worsening situations of adaptability by blaming themselves for parental separation (Amato & Keith, 1991). The coping of young children is a gap that the present study endeavor to study through the lens of Ungar's socio-ecological theory of resilience. Moreover, the study is concerned with insights from Ungar's lens and Besley's textual analysis, which together have not been the focus of any earlier study.

Research Methodology

This study explores the tween's coping with parental divorce in *Big and Little Questions* (According to Wren Joe Byrd) (2017). The study is qualitative with a focus on qualitative data of the novel text. This interpretive and contextual study focuses on linguistic features of the given text. Passages related to the tween's coping with mediating resources have been quoted and textually analyzed. Textual analysis of selected excerpts has been carried out in the backdrop of sociocultural context of American society through Socio-ecological lens of Ungar (2013). The study is concerned with close reading of the given text, highlighting the choice of language and types of meaning associated with metaphors, and symbols, paying particular attention to culturally specific narratives of divorce.

Ungar's (2013), focus on culturally relevant adaptability forms the focus of the study. This theory is based on an interplay between individual agency and mediating resources. The mentioned research questions in introduction chapter address the symbolic resources for adaptability as well as critical value of these symbols and metaphors in the context of divorce.

Analysis of Textual Excerpts

1. Dad "renting a cabin across the lake from our house. I mean, Mom's house. I mean, my house. I mean, I don't know what I mean". (p.02)
... "I had to go stay with my grandparents ... I missed Amber's birthday. And swimming lessons. And fireworks ... And Bartlett's ... cookout ... reading party at the library". (p.04)
"How can I tell my friends I'm going away because my mom and dad are getting divorced (p.05)
"Dad's desk was gone. So was his recliner. There were gaps on our bookshelf, like missing teeth"... (p.06)

Textual symbols reflect the socio-ecological rupture in the tween's micro system. The shifting of belongings, "Dad's desk was gone... clothes were in the laundry,"



"big suitcase hauled from the attic" symbolize her profound familial rupture, relational displacement and adverse feelings of un-homing of her home. The "gaps on bookshelf, like missing teeth," represent her familial fragmentation. Likewise, "Amber's birthday", "fireworks", "cookout" and "library party" represent potential coping strategies that her community possesses. However, the social stigma surrounding divorce denies her access to these culturally rooted resources. The metaphor of "I didn't know how to answer," reflects her self-imposed alienation from potential channels for peer connections.

The tween intentionally avoids socialization, fearing possible interrogation and pity. She asserts her agency and thoroughly recounts her losses, "I missed Amber's birthday... fireworks... cookout," as a counter discourse challenging changing family dynamics. Yet she navigates her adversity reactively, "I still had to go", representing conflict between survival and self-determination. For resilience, she desperately requires strength to withstand her adversities, reinterpret her surroundings, restore her communal links, and undergo socioecological realignment.

2. *"a reminder... with a smiley face magnet". (p. 06)*

"MONDAY–THURSDAY: MEET MOM AT THE LIBRARY AFTER SCHOOL".

"FRIDAY: RIDE BUS 5 TO YOUR DAD'S PLACE".

"SATURDAY–SUNDAY: STAY WITH YOUR DAD".

"I walk over to the fridge and turn the smiley face magnet upside down".

... "my house,...sometimes feels crowded even though only three people live here.

I mean, two people now. Is two even enough for a family?" (p.06)

The changing family dynamics reduces the tween's people from three to two, destabilizing her little world. The objects in the text symbolize the tween's socio-ecological rupture and her demonstration of fragile resistance. Her weekly schedule accompanied by a "smiley face magnet," represents her imposed custody arrangements. The rigid schedule "MEET MOM AT LIBRARY," "RIDE BUS 5 TO DAD'S PLACE" imposes spatial control, commercializing her existence and reducing parent-child relationship to strictly scheduled transactional movements. On the contrary, the upside-down magnet signifies the tweens' silent challenge and negotiated resistance against parents' performative normalcy.

The tween exercises her agency by inverting the smiley face magnet, denying its imposed smile, and resisting reorganization of ruptured family structure. She challenges her new family structure "Is two even enough for a family?". She actively reanalysis her surroundings, "not like my house, which sometimes feels crowded even though...two people live her". Yet "her controlled autonomy restricts her access to resources, making her recline.

While going to school for the teacher-parent meeting, she asks her mom

3. *"Isn't he (dad) coming with us?" ... "I gave him your schedule. He can meet us there." "But why can't he come here first? There's a lot of pizza. He's probably hungry."... (p.07)*

"Maybe she decided to call him," I whisper to Shakespeare". "There's still time for him to stop by. We can go together." But then I hear Mom say big word" ..."it's just her lawyer again. They never use little words when they talk. Shakespeare purrs and licks my cheek. His tongue feels as scratchy as Dad's whiskers used to feel at the end of the day".... "It's against our family rules to feed him from the table ... And there's no real family here anymore anyway. It's just me". (p.08)

Mom does not allow Shakespeare with Wren, and she protests....



...*"But why can't Shakespeare come?"... "If Dad were here, he wouldn't care."
"Your dad isn't here," (p.10)*

The environmental toxicity and adult-focused management of domestic issues and legal process of 'interrogatories,' overshadow the tween's need for parental empathy. Likewise, inconsistent family routines destabilize a child's developmental needs.

The domestic relics reflect systemic rupture in her ecosystem. Though pizza stands for ritual of shared treat, but the tween's rejection of it signifies her relational deprivation. The abandoned pet represents her restricted access to non-human support while its scratchy tongue is a metaphor for lack of parental anchor. On the contrary, her memory of Dad's whiskers and her self-correction, "it's just me" reflect her consciousness of the catastrophic collapse and desperate need for relational anchor. These symbols materialize the tweens' resource deprivation, turning the culturally relevant pathways for negotiation into challenges.

The tween exercises her agency and demonstrates subversiveness. She reinterprets her kitchen geography, "I'm not eating at the table," and alternate her pet's relational support. Her "stomp", represents her restricted micro-resistance to her immediate relational and structural boundaries. She negotiates discursively through rhetorical interrogation, "But why can't Shakespeare come?". For autonomy, she requires validation, relational, and culturally congruent support networks, restricted currently.

4. *"I was hoping to spend my last day of summer vacation with Amber, Phoebe, and Eleanor, but now that they believe nothing weird is going on with my family, I don't want to mess things up. If I ask them to meet me at the library, Mom might say something to give away my secret. If I bike to the park with them, or we meet up at Large Marge's for ice cream, they might ask more questions that are hard to answer. Then I'll have to think up more lies. It's better to hang out alone". (p.35)*

Mariana tells about her parents' remarriage and then asks Wren, *"Are your parents still married?" I stiffen. "Mmmhmm," I say, which feels like a smaller lie than Yes". (p.41)*

The tween experiences adversity due to the self-imposed burden of keeping her parental divorce a secret from her peers. She lies for face-keeping, exposing divorce as a societal stigma and challenging system that fail to provide safe disclosing strategy.

The tween's culturally relevant resources of resilience, "library", "park", and "Large Marge" are blocked. Possible risk of parental intrusion and revelation makes library, a corrupted site; the risk of interrogation makes the park and Large Marge's as threatening, forcing the tween to decide, "it's better to hang out alone". Similarly, fear of peer conversation destabilizes her possibility of "bike ride. Amato (2000) endorses that societal attitude towards divorce as a stigma or a phase in life either facilitates or restricts a child's access to cultural resources for resilience. Likewise, cultural denunciation of divorce elevates the tween's challenges by restricting her access to culturally attuned resources.

The tween asserts her agency and alienates herself, "it's better to hang out alone". She is mindful of maternal intrusion "Mom might say something" and takes a critical step, to "think up more lies" in self-defense. Likewise, she avoids risky interrogation by restricting her visits to library, park and ice cream shop, adopting isolation as the only viable solution for safety. She maintains



performative conformity, and shields herself against social reprimand. Finally, she upholds her facade of "nothing weird", a culturally approved form of tactic adopted for survival under unbearable circumstances. Lansford (2009) endorses the fact that the attitude of society towards divorce affects the short-term and long-term adaptability of children depending on family dynamics, parental economic condition, interparental conflict, child age, parenting practices, psychological, behavioral, academic, and social issues of children.

5. *We always eat at the kitchen counter. At Dad's place, we always sit on the couch. (p.192)*

Don't divorced people believe in chairs and placemats?"(p.193)

My chest tightens. "That's just like my koala bear shirt," I say quietly.... "It's my favorite, but I was wearing it on the day you told me about the divorce. I've tried to wear it since then, but it doesn't feel right, so I stuffed it at the bottom of my drawer"

"Mom's eyes fill with fresh tears ... She pulls me into her arms. Now she's using my shoulder for a tissue, but I don't mind".

"I don't want us to be divorced, Mom. I miss Dad all week, and I miss you all weekend" (p.194)

Systemic failures to scaffold children from divorce adversity and adult emotional fallout, create environmental adversity for children. The koala bear shirt is a metaphor for objects that can be associated with painful, contaminated, traumatic memories. Through shared recognition over the koala shirt, mother and daughter associate objects with emotional histories and create symbolic cultural meaning that can facilitate the tween's resilience. Moreover, the kitchen table represents environmental adversity and emotional residue associated with physical spaces, destabilizing resilience. While, mother's use of the tween's shoulder "as a tissue" represents her inverted caregiving roles.

In suppressive environment, the tween asserts her agency and negotiates her relational needs through sarcastic metaphor, "Don't divorced people believe in chairs", and her pressing desire to stay united as a family, "I don't want us to be divorced". Shared recognition over the koala shirt helps her to create symbolic cultural meaning, facilitating her resilience journey. Moreover, she acknowledges her fragmented family status by articulating her lost spatial dimensions, "at Dad's place, we always sit on the couch", stepping towards resilience. Finally, through tearful relational reconciliation of mother-daughter, the tween supports her mother during her emotional fallout exhibiting role reversal and demonstrating resilience. The text reveals that divorce contexts disrupt traditional caregiving hierarchies and make parents and children emotionally equal in grief.

6. *Mom says. "I miss being all together sometimes too". "She kisses the top of my head".(p.195)*

"Mom? "Will we ever be happy again?" (p. 207)

"I know things are different now," Mom says. "I wish different was the same as happy, but it's not"

"Someday we'll be happy," she tells me. "But for now, I'd say we're happier"

"Happier ever after?" I ask.

Mom..... "Happier ever after." (p. 208)

I "give her a hug. She holds on for a long time... She kisses my forehead"...

"Thanks for bringing him (cat) along"

"I look at Dad. "Is that okay?" "As long as he earns his keep," Dad says. "I saw



a mouse this morning" (p.223)

The text represents the tween's navigation of parental divorce and relational support in her journey towards resilience. Textual symbols and metaphors represent maternal, paternal and tween's negotiation of symbolic and tangible resources. Maternal connections through kiss, touch, emotional honesty and validation, "I wish different was the same as happy," are metaphors for culturally relevant empathy and love. She inculcates hope and stability through metaphor of validation, "I know things are different now". Moreover, mom offers a culturally relevant resource for mediating between the parental households by bringing the cat to the cabin. The tween negotiates her resilience through transformation of the metaphor "happily ever after" into "happier ever after". Dad's presence and humorous remark is additional support and security. Likewise, the pet stands for mother-daughter relational comfort and sustainability.

The tween's interrogation, "Will we ever be happy again?" and reframing the family narrative, "Happier ever after?" reflects her negotiation of autonomy and assertion of agency. She achieves versatile, relational, and contextually embedded framework for adaptation by reframing the narrative of cultural archetype of "happily ever after" as "happier ever after," as a meaningful narrative of adaptability.

7. *"I wouldn't miss your big day for the world."... "We're two peas in a pod." Ha says. (p.18)*

Dad says "Amber had a sleepover and you didn't go? You're going to have to tell me when there's stuff going on, Wren. Your mom used to take care of that sort of thing. It's up to you now, to keep me in the loop" "...next time, let me know." (p.135)

"Amber, Phoebe, Eleanor, Ruby, and Marianna! Everyone wants to see my cabin. We're going to build a pretend stable for our invisible horses down by the lake. Marianna wants to build a castle too so she can rule the world"

"Let me know if you need any help," Dad puts in. "I specialize in pretend stables and aristocratic castles"

"She could have it (sleepover) at my place next Friday night," Dad offers.

"It's not just your place now, it's mine too" (p.225)

She called him Dad this time, not your dad. It probably seems like a little thing, but it's a big deal to me.

"Could we have the sleepover at our house?" ... "Fine by me," Mom says. (p.226)

The tween navigates parental connection, shifting responsibilities and changing family dynamics in her resilience journey. Textual symbols and metaphors in the excerpt depict her yearning for stability. The metaphor of, "two peas in a pod" affirms dad's relational support and familial stability. He affirms his anchor through his participation, tangible acts of care, maternal collaboration and facilitation to tween's culturally attuned activities, "I specialize" in "pretend stable," and "aristocratic castle". Likewise, mom affirms unified co-parenting, symbolically and linguistically recognizes connection with Dad, and affirms facilitation for culturally relevant act of sleepover and imaginative group play, ensures her relational stability, belonging and a sense of normalcy within the restructured family system.

The tween demonstrates agency and navigates fathers' support, prioritizes her psychological connection and contemplates for the location and structure of the sleepover. The tween achieves resilience through invoking parental support,



peer rituals and imaginative play. She actively reframes her sense of security and relational connection. Moreover, she also reaffirms her belonging "home" within new family dynamics.

8. *"How can I tell my friends I've been lying to them all this time"? (p.209)*

"How do I admit a lie? I type into my phone".

"There's something important I have to tell you," I say, practicing. "We need to have a serious talk."

"Already my throat aches with tears"...(p.210)

"Our classroom is too busy," I'll have to pick a spot on the playground during recess. Maybe the sandbox"?

"But what if Amber won't meet up with me"? I sigh

"My stomach flipflops. This feels (confession) like the hardest part".

"What if Amber won't accept my apology ... Who will I play with at recess? Where will I sit at lunch"? (p.211)

"I toss aside my phone and curl into a ball on my bed".

"How many sorrys are enough"? ...

"I practice my lines, over and over in my head". (p.212)

The tween's fear of social exclusion and resource lessness makes her approach digital assistance, negotiating her agency against systemic neglect. In order to achieve resilience and seek peer assistance, she consciously endeavors to dismantle the façade of her familial normalcy as depicted through symbols. These symbols reflect the tween's lack of organic and relational resources in adversity. The cat as a non-judgmental support, supports her rehearsal. The lack of possibility of neutral space for peer reconciliation "What if Amber won't meet?" reflects that reconciliation requires the presence of culturally feasible spaces, which may not be possible in the adult-designed playground. To overcome her adversity and seek peer validation, she relies on algorithmic solutions of a digital device, "How do I admit a lie? In extreme adversity, her online digital device is a risky and emotionally devoid, but a culturally relevant resource. Her question, "How many sorrys are enough?" cannot be resolved by any online guide, critiquing a culture that overburdens tween with emotional labor with negligible and irrelevant tools to resolve it.

The tween demonstrates agency and structures a four-step plan for confession and negotiation by seeking digital help to achieve peer validation. Her question, "How many sorrys are enough?" needs relational support and not gadget.

9. *"Marianna ...doesn't call me Crybaby either. I'm still just Tweety to her". (p.213)*

To Amber... "I didn't go to Mount Rushmore this summer" (p.214)

"Amber, there are things I haven't told you" Big things. (p.215)

"I was afraid... if I tell you the truth"... "then all the awful stuff would spill out and nothing would ever be the same again".

"I grip the pineapple eraser in my hand. I thought it would make me feel braver, ... "...my parents are getting a divorce. That's why I had to go away" (p.216)

I'm so sorry, Amber."

"Marianna squeezes my arm". "It's okay, Tweety," she says.

"I hold out the pineapple eraser to Amber". "I'm really sorry,"

Amber shifts. Then she says, "Wren, I gave you that pineapple eraser." (p.217)

"... I'm So. Glad. We're still friends!"



"Amber takes my hand and squeezes it super tight". (p.218)

"We find Phoebe and Eleanor by the swings and Marianna tells them the truth about her house and her mom. Then I tell them the truth about the divorce".(p.219)

"Eleanor says. "That's such a bummer, Wren. My aunt and uncle got ... A divorce"

Phoebe nods. "So did my mom's friend".

" Marianna says. "We can build a pretend stable by ourselves. We can build a whole castle" (p.220)

"I hear a snort laugh".... (p.221)

At ... "Dad's place ... I take the pineapple eraser" ... "set it next to the orca and unicorn". (p.222)

The tween successfully negotiates relational support, validation, overcoming structural adversity and achieving symbolic integration. Symbols and metaphors in the given text reflect the tween's resilience as a socially constructed process rooted in confession of authenticity. It encapsulates the tween's materialized and rebuilt ecology, achieved resilience and environmental restoration. The pineapple symbolizes a soothing object "make me feel braver", a missed connection, a connection with Amber, and finally peer and familial unity. The idea of pretend "stable" and "castle" are metaphors for peer security while the metaphor of "We can build", stand for peer-anchor. Likewise, Amber's hand squeeze is a metaphor for relational intimacy. Lastly, addition of erasers to her stuff symbolizes the successful ecological coherence. The tween claims belonging through peer union, solidarity, integration of personal and peer experiences.

Finally, the tween overcomes structural adversity through assertion of agency, negotiation of autonomy, confession and seeking peer forgiveness, peer validation, and ecological reintegration in a culturally relevant manner.

10. *"Even though I don't want to live in two places, maybe it doesn't have to be a bad thing". (p.222)*

"I click up the dictionary on my phone and type in the word family".

Family

• *"A basic social unit, consisting of parents and their children, whether dwelling together or not"*

"I read the last part out loud to Shakespeare".

"Whether dwelling together or not"

"Mew," he says, "curling up next to me on my bunk". (p227)

Textual symbols reflect the tween's emotional and intellectual coping strategy for negotiation of culturally relevant support system and pathways to resilience. The dictionary, an institutionalized knowledge assists the tween's interpretation of restructured family dynamics. As a cognitive strategy, it enables her to regulate the impending chaos, mitigating her distress. The pet is a metaphor for stable, unconditional, nonjudgmental validation in a relationally devoid background. Its non- verbal comfort replaces human verbal validation and embodies tangible support through physical closeness "curling up next to me on my bunk".

The tween demonstrates and negotiates resilience through the authoritative text of dictionary and non-human resource. In an environment devoid of a relational support system, the tween creatively relies on culturally relevant source of dictionary and pet to solve her query. When all institutional and relational support systems fail, the tween turns towards the intellect, considering it a neutral and non-biased system for clarity and affirmation.



11. *"Later that night, Dad runs a bath for me. I sit and soak in the bubbles while he puts away groceries and gets supper ready".*

"Plugging my nose, I dunk down and imagine I'm a deep-sea diver, searching for sunken ships and hidden treasure. But it's dark under the ocean. And there are scary sharks and creepy squids hiding behind every reef and boulder. So, I take a breath of air, then imagine Amber, Phoebe, Eleanor, Ruby, and Marianna, diving down with me, so we can be scared and creeped out together". (p.222)

The tween negotiates her challenges within a complex but stable ecology. She cognitively mediates her adversity and integrates agency and support system reflected by symbols and metaphors. The "bath" and "bubbles" symbolize her safe space and relationally monitored vulnerability in future. Deep-sea diving is a metaphor for intense emotions, while the "dark ocean" encapsulates her ongoing ecological challenges. Likewise, "scary sharks and creepy squids" reflect unresolved challenges, and unknown fear of relational deprivation. Crucially, invocation of "Amber, Phoebe... diving down", reflect peer anchor which assist the tween through darkness, challenges. This culturally attuned coping strategy integrates external peer network and internal urge to adapt. Finally, through cognitive resources the tween transforms her vulnerability into peer integration, and navigates bubbles of unseen depths through cognitively structured companions, culminating her resilience.

12. *Dear Diary, "Lots of things have changed" ... "Big things, like living in two places, and getting a new favorite teacher, and making new friends, and finally being brave enough to tell Amber the truth". (p.227)*

"And little things, like starting a unicorn collection, and getting a bunk bed, and keeping a diary. Probably more things will change too. And I keep thinking of new questions. Like, what snacks should I buy for my sleepover? How many fish will we catch? Will Dad really let me paint my room orange? Will he come to Thanksgiving at Gma's house? "Will Mom ever sit under the table with me again"? "Could we all go to Mount Rushmore next summer? "Could Amber come along"? (p.228)

Through diary writing and shifting idea of "big" and "little" things in life, the tween negotiates her instability. Her diary resource symbolizes narrative order while its non-linear, fragmented narrative structure reflects her complex ecosystem. Through diary resource she asserts her agency by externalizing her trauma and mediates for absence of parents. Through the use of diary and unicorn she navigates her micro-level instability, demonstrating vital practices for resilience. Lansford (2009) endorses that better cognitive resources and an individual's ability to engage with journaling plays a significant role in a child's adaptability to the adversity.

By negotiating petty details of her interest of unicorn, and bunk bed she compensates for her adversity. The confessional tone of her text creates relational support, and unaddressed questions indicate her ongoing adversity. These are metaphors for the tween's reconstructed stability and reclaimed agency. While the interrogation of Mount Rushmore" and "thanksgiving" are symbols for future hope for stability. The tween materially and imaginatively reconstructs her sense of self and resilience through available culturally relevant resources. The unresolved queries of "Thanksgiving" or "Mount Rushmore" reflect resilience as a continual negotiation.



Discussion

Symbols and Metaphors as a Resource for Resilience

In the absence of relational resources, the tween asserts her agency and utilizes symbolic resources to overcome adversity and achieve resilience. She resists reorganized family structure through inverted smiley face magnet. She expresses her urge for familial unity, "I don't want us to be divorced" and discursively challenges its pets' absence, "But why can't Shakespeare come?". She resists her restricted boundaries and adversity through "stomp", alienation fabrication, and confining her visiting sites. Through creation of cultural meaning over the koala shirt and 'supporting maternal fallouts she reconciles with her mom. She transforms the metaphor of "happily ever after" into "happier ever after", reflecting her negotiation of autonomy and assertion of agency.

The "bath" and "bubbles" symbolize safe space, "dark ocean" encapsulates ongoing challenges, and "scary sharks and creepy squids" reflect unresolved challenges. Her invoking "Amber, Phoebe while diving down", reflects her surety of peer support, integrating external peer network and internal urge to adapt. These cognitive resources transform the tween's vulnerability into a shared landscape of peer integration, achieving resilience.

The "unicorn collection" and "bunk bed", Mount Rushmore" and "thanksgiving" are metaphors for reconstructed stability and future hope while the unresolved queries of "Thanksgiving" or "Mount Rushmore" reflect resilience as a continual negotiation. Similarly, the pineapple eraser underscore strength, peer integration and ecological coherence, pretend "stable" and "castle" stand for peer security and Amber's hand squeeze reflect restored peer support. By placing pineapple erasure among her valuable possessions, she connects to her peers.

She seeks digital support for confession and negotiation of peer adversity. The dictionary, a cognitive strategy reflects regulation of adversity. Through diary resource she externalizes her trauma and mediates for parental absence. Through these symbolic resources she navigates her instability and demonstrates resilience.

Both parents facilitate the tween's resilience journey. Maternal connections, validation, hopefulness and stability reflected through the metaphors of, "I wish different was the same as happy," and "I know things are different now" are culturally relevant coping channels. Mom mediates between the parental households by bringing the cat to the cabin. Likewise, mom symbolically and linguistically recognizes connection with Dad, provides relational stability, and a sense of normalcy within ruptured ecosystem. Likewise, Dad provides support and security through the metaphor of "two peas in a pod", through his presence, care, maternal collaboration and facilitation to tween's culturally attuned, "pretend stable," and "aristocratic castle".

The cat stands for non-human, stable, unconditional, nonjudgmental validation for the tween's adversity. It evolves as a mother-daughter relational comfort and sustainability. Its non-verbal comfort reflects human verbal validation.

Ultimately, the tween achieves resilience through symbolically challenging divorce adversity, invoking parental support and peer rituals. She actively reframes her sense of security and relational connections. Finally, she overcomes structural adversity through assertion of agency, negotiation of autonomy, confession and seeking peer forgiveness, validation, and reintegration in a culturally relevant manner. Symbols and metaphors reflect the tween's resilience



as a socially constructed process rooted in confession of authenticity.

Symbols and Metaphors as a Critique of Social Discourses

The symbols and metaphors identify the tween's socio-ecological adversity rooted in the social stigma associated with divorce. This fear of social stigma extends to peer abandonment, fabrication, alienating her and disrupting her access to culturally relevant resources of resilience. This critiques social discourses that deny children with culturally relevant support system to discuss openly the issue of divorce, forcing them to opt alienation as the only viable solution, "It's better to hang out alone".

Similarly, her lack of access to relevant language to express her fragmented familial reality and lack of relational support to intervene critiques social institutions that fail to equip children with culturally relevant divorce disclosing strategies. Likewise, her claim "I should get a say" as "I'm part of this family too", critiques divorce discourses that exclude children from decision about their future. Her premature autonomy, "I don't want us to be divorced" critiques systems that charge children with resolving adult imposed adversities. The strict spatial control and custody schedule, multiple abodes and disrupted routines critique legal discourses that disregard a child's need for parent's emotional support. Moreover, her reluctance to contact her father, "I'm just about to text him... but" criticize legal discourses that pathologize a child's developmental needs and make her fearful of violating custody rules by connecting to the non-custodian parent.

The tween's inverted role to support her mother's fall out, and her anchor through digital support, dictionary and diary, is a bitter critique of divorce discourse that deprive children's access to adequate tools for coping during family breakdown. Moreover, her peer abandonment critiques divorce discourses that impose strategic deception for performative normalcy and forces alienation as the only viable solution. The metaphor of sleepover bag is material weight of the fictions she carries to navigate a fractured world. Likewise, her stress to accompany cat to the cabin, criticizes divorce discourses, forcing anchor through non-human resource. Her question, "How many sorrys are enough?" critiques a culture that overburdens tween with emotional labor and equip them with insufficient resources. Collectively, textual symbols and metaphors critique a cultural that overburden children with emotional labor and parental roles with negligible tools to overcome adversity.

Conclusion

The first research question is about the nature of resources the tween utilizes to overcome her adversity. She resists imposed order of things through assertion of agency, alienation and fabrication and expression of her urge for familial unity. Her seeks pet, digital, dictionary and diary support to regulate her adversity, mediate parental absence and to externalize her trauma. Ultimately, the tween achieves resilience through challenging divorce adversity, invoking parental support and peer rituals, reframing her sense of security and relational connections, seeking peer forgiveness, validation, and unity culturally relevantly. Symbols and metaphors reflect the tween's socio-ecological resilience rooted in confession and authenticity.

The second research question explores how textual symbols and metaphors critique social stigma discourse of resilience. The tween's peer abandonment due to fear of social stigma critiques social discourses that deny children with



culturally relevant support system to disclose divorce. The lack of relevant language to express her fragmented familial reality critiques social institutions that fail to equip children with culturally relevant linguistic support. Likewise, her premature autonomy, "I don't want us to be divorced" critiques systems that charge children with resolving adult imposed adversities. The custody schedule, multiple abodes and disrupted routines critique legal discourses that disregard a child's need for stability, order and parental support. Moreover, her reluctance to contact her father criticize legal discourses that pathologize a child's developmental needs and make them conscious of violating custody rules by claiming connection to the non-custodian parent. The tween's inverted role, anchor through digital device, dictionary and diary, critique divorce discourse that deny a child's access to adequate tools for coping. Likewise, her urge to take cat to the cabin criticizes divorce discourses that compel a child's anchor through a pet. Her question, "How many sorrys are enough?" critiques overburdening children with immense emotional labor. Collectively, textual symbols and metaphors critique a cultural that overburden children with emotional labor and parental roles with negligible tools to overcome divorce induced adversity.

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