

# Resilience, Grit, and Other Lies

## Academic Libraries and the Myth of Resiliency

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# Think-Pair-Share Activity

1. Think: When have you been asked to do more with less, cope with change, or be resilient at your job?
2. Pair with the person next to you and describe this situation to them.
3. Share your thoughts with the group by reporting back on your discussion.

# What is Resilience?

- Commonly conceived of metaphorically, as “bouncing back” from a catastrophic event
- Found widespread adoption in psychological and ecological fields
- Later applied to engineering, emergency preparedness, and security after 9/11
- Now present in financial industry to urban planning; self-help to libraries



“More than education, more than experience, more than training, a person’s level of resilience will determine who succeeds and who fails. That’s true in the cancer ward, it’s true in the Olympics, and it’s true in the boardroom.”

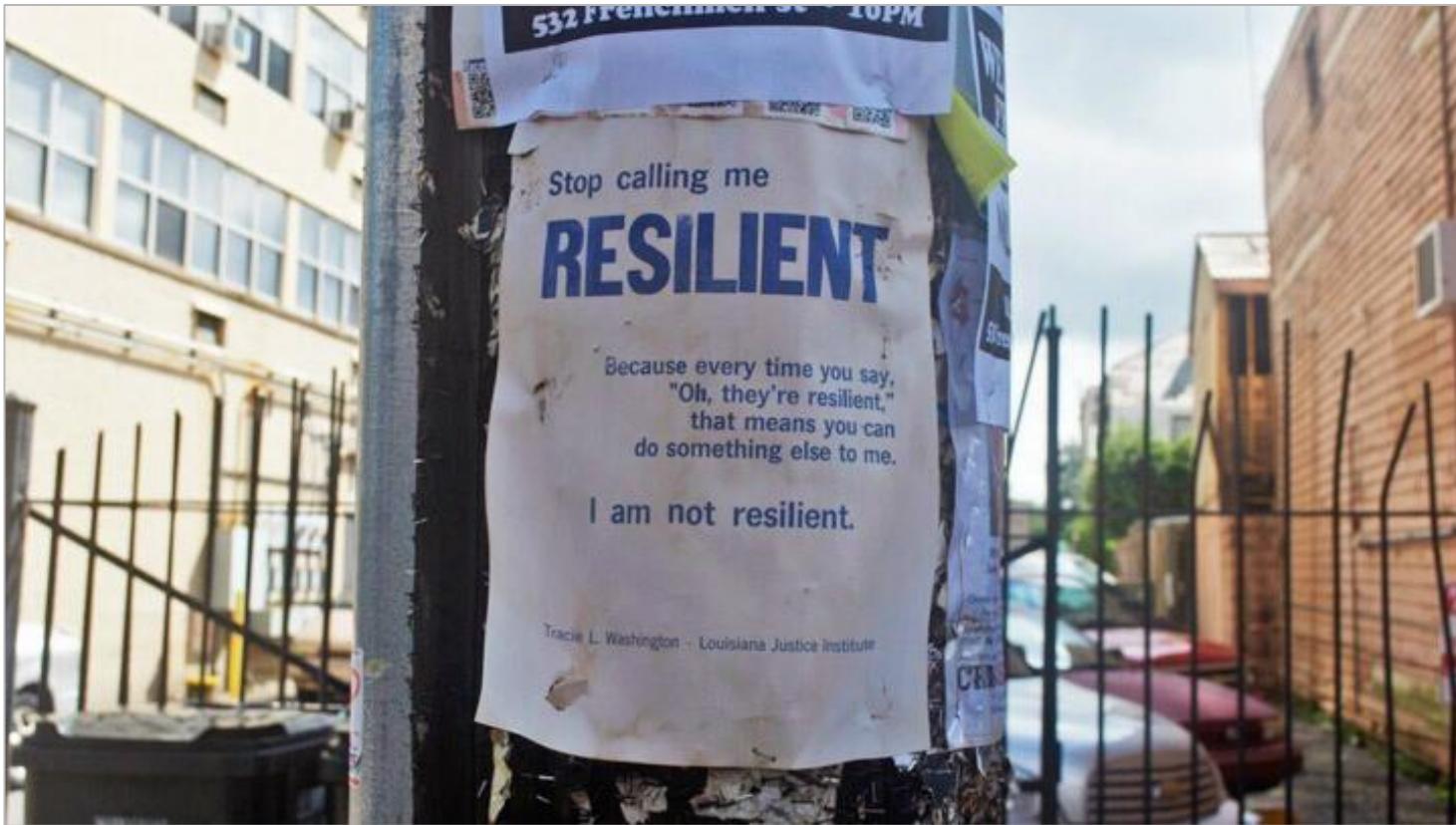
- Dean Becker, CEO of Adaptiv Learning Systems

# What Does Resilience Do?

- Encourages individualization
- Naturalizes and depoliticizes social structures
- Positions insecurity as normal and to be expected
- Places additional demands for labor upon women and people of color

“When we celebrate resilience, we focus the spotlight on the people who got screwed over. The institutions that did the screwing over take the opportunity to slink off into the shadows.”

- Kung Li, *Catfish for Lunch*



“Stop calling me RESILIENT. Because every time you say, ‘Oh, they’re resilient,’ that means you can do something else to me. I am not resilient.” - Tracie Washington, Louisiana Justice Institute

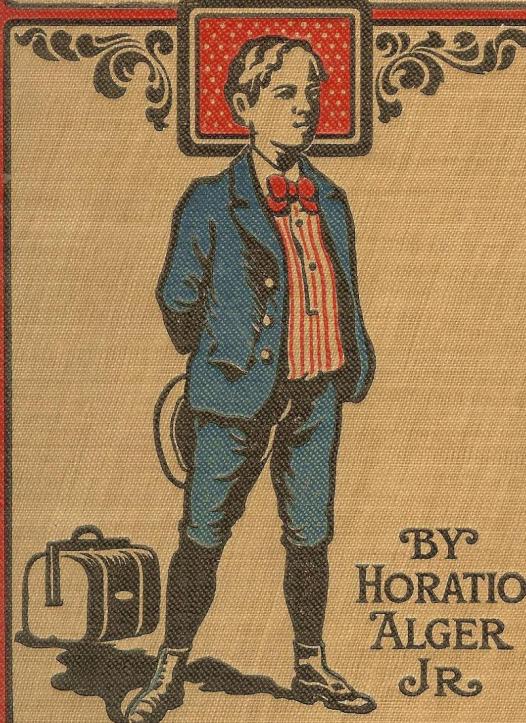
“We needed a revolution. We got resilience.”

- Alf Hornborg, Lund University

## A Note on “Grit”

- Like resilience, a term that naturalizes forms of oppression
- Externally defined and applied to populations “needing” grit
- Promises people the capacity to change their lives, gives them empty rhetoric

# SINK OR SWIM



BY  
HORATIO  
ALGER  
JR

YOU'VE GOT TO  
HAVE GRIT



Do You Have What It Takes to **Succeed** In  
Your **Business, Career, Life?**

Take This Short, Simple, Scientifically Proven Test Now and Find Out...

Take...**The Grit Test**

# Resilience and Libraries

# Problem

At its core, resilience offers an individual response to a structural problem.

Definitions refer to the “rate” at which a community / library / system recovers from displacement.

How can we recover if we’re not given the tools?





## Trends in Book and Journal Spending in ARL Libraries, 1986-2006

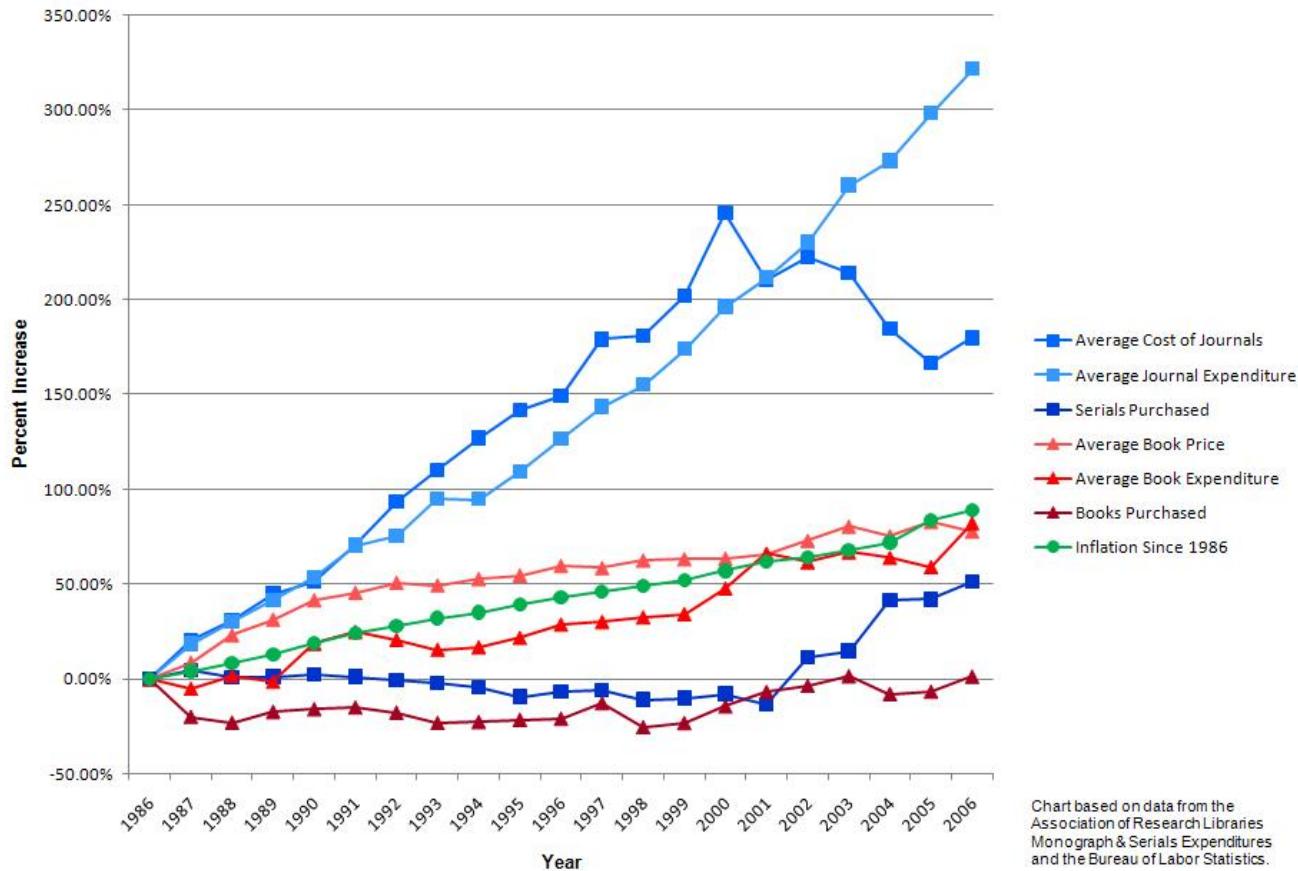
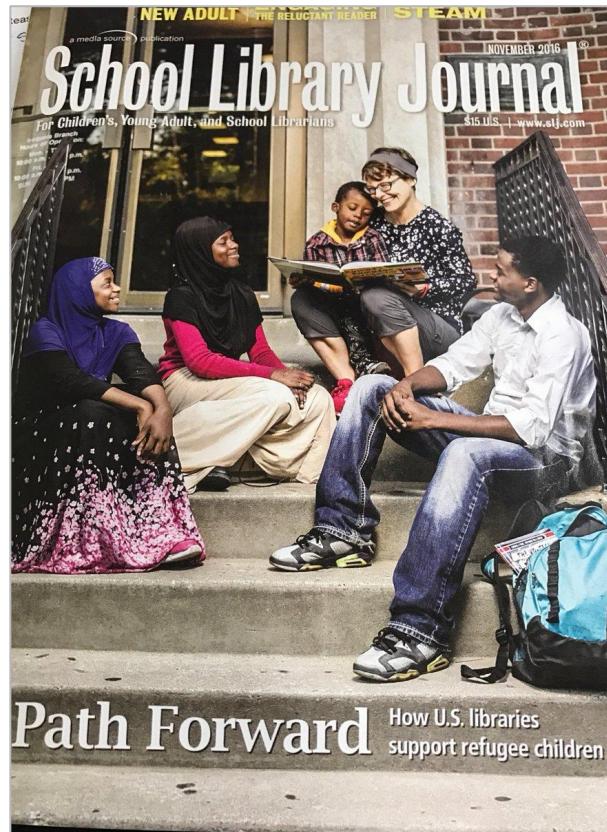


Chart based on data from the Association of Research Libraries Monograph & Serials Expenditures and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.



# Power under resilience

This makes everything about our work our responsibility, regardless of our level of power within a given system.

Absence of agency in this structure becomes a moral failing: you, the worker with the least power are at fault for your conditions.

# Web of Science: doin' us a significant frustrate

"...The important distinction is between databases that index bibliographical records and enable you to discover relevant citations on the one hand and databases that provide content (e.g. the fulltext of articles) on the other.."

<https://lib.unb.ca/news/2016/03/6657.html>

## Things > People

"Until recently, UW-Madison had been the only institution among the 114 Association of Research Libraries (ARL) that provided data showing more is spent on salaries and wages than on library materials (2014-2015)...Recent efforts to increase the total spend on library materials and to reduce the total spend on salaries and wages have enabled us to transfer dollars to the Library materials budget."

<https://www.library.wisc.edu/news/2016/11/02/rethinking-libraries-through-consolidation/>



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Library of the Future

You are at: ALA.org » Transform » Center for the Future of Libraries » Trends » Resilience

Advisory Group

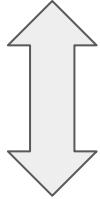
Events

**Resilience**

Take a look: <http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/resilience>

# Resisting Resilience

Collection Development



Counter-narratives

Space to Fail



# Resisting Resilience - But first, what it looks like

## Center of Excellence in Foreign Affairs Resilience



**Mission:** Diplomacy in the 21st century demands effective, creative, and innovative foreign policy solutions. America needs an engaged, flexible, and durable work force to safeguard our national interests. Resilience, the ability to adapt in the face of adversity, is the key.

**Vision:** Within the next ten years, a supportive inspired and nimble work force will formulate and implement more creative and effective diplomatic solutions.

### CEFAR's Four Pillars:

- Resilience Education and Training
- Research and Adaptation
- Organizational and Mission Support
- Individual Support

# Resisting Resilience - But first, what it looks like

## Encouraging Resilience in the Foreign Service Child (MQ500)



This evening seminar is a valued added resource for all parents in the foreign affairs community. Participants will hear from both parents of children who were raised overseas and the Third Culture Kids themselves. Discussions will address the characteristics of an internationally mobile childhood; influences on cultural identity; characteristics of families living overseas; and strategies for raising resilient children.

### Participant Feedback:

Um...

*"It was nice to hear my kids probably won't grow up to be miserable and depressed and regretful on everything I have done."*

# Resisting Resilience - But wait, there's more!

**“Foster Resilience** – Embrace new challenges and learn from them. Persist in the face of adversity. Take calculated risks, manage pressure, be flexible and acknowledge failures. Show empathy, strength, and encouragement to others in difficult times.”

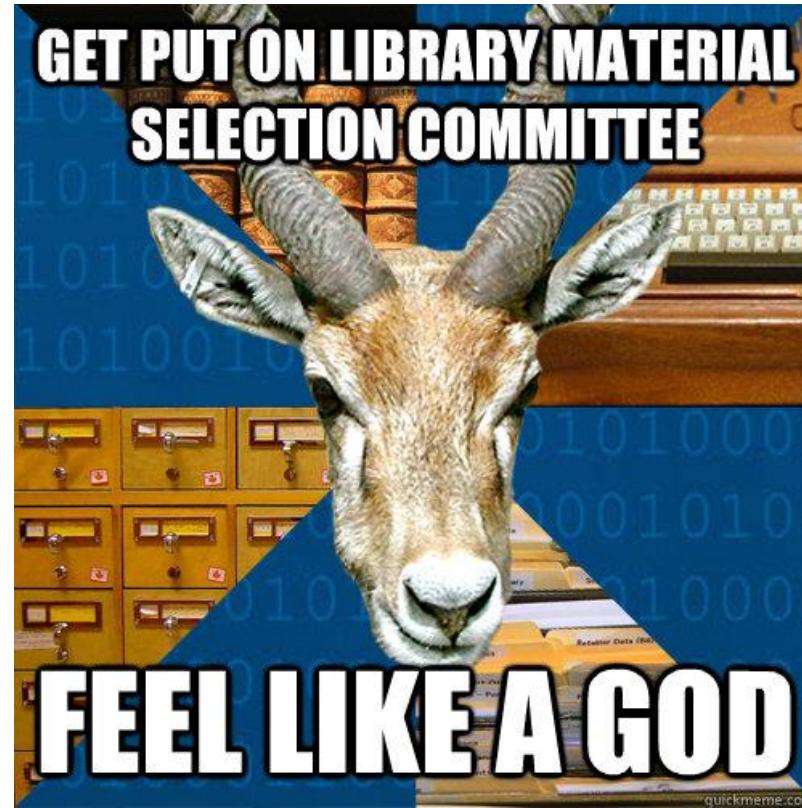
Resilience Strategies for Success Overseas (MQ502)

Pre-Deployment Preparation for High Stress Assignments (MQ940)

High Stress Assignment Outbrief (MQ950)

High Stress Assignment Outbrief – Special Session (MQ951)

# Resisting Resilience - Collection Development



# Resisting Resilience - Collection Development

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# Resisting Resilience - Counter-narratives

What do Rihanna and Marxism have in common?



 **Salomé Gemme**  
@SalomeGemme Follow ▼

Its creepy how fond American media is of picking random people just trying to survive in poverty as model examples of a "good work ethic"

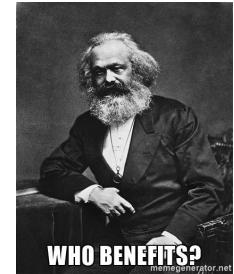
**ABC News**  @ABC  
Texas man walks 12 miles to work, five days a week. "I would love to have a car, but the car don't make the person."  
[abcn.ws/2IaECHJ](http://abcn.ws/2IaECHJ)

RETWEETS 19,589	LIKES 31,548
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8:08 PM - 23 Feb 2017

# Resisting Resilience - Collection Development

From Bohland, et al.



- “Who are the actors and what are the institutions that deploy the resilience machine?
- What are the social/political and moral/ethical implications of the different understandings and applications of resilience?
- What pitfalls and opportunities are embedded in and implied by various interpretations of resilience?”

Source: <http://www.urbanresilienceresearch.net/2017/02/09/the-resilience-machine/>

# Resisting Resilience - Counter-narratives

## Reclaiming Resilience



On grit: our low income students are already our most "gritty". **#sriwm17**

# Resisting Resilience - Space to Fail

Can you help create a culture where people don't need to be resilient?

Or don't need to perform it.

Supervisors, please

Encourage risk-taking

Give staff space to fail

Give staff time to be melancholy



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#ResistingResilience

Slides: [tinyurl.com/ACRLresilience](http://tinyurl.com/ACRLresilience)

March 23, 2017

Handout: [tinyurl.com/ACRLresilienceHandout](http://tinyurl.com/ACRLresilienceHandout)

# Image Credits

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