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Towards a new conceptualisation of marginalisation

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The OECD report 'Equity, Excellence and Inclusiveness in Education' (Schleicher, 2014) highlights the disparities in attainment and opportunity between children in many countries across the world putting them at risk of marginalisation. This paper draws from both sociological and psychological theory to forward a new theoretical framework by which marginalisation, as it applies to a wide range of contexts, can be conceptualised and further interrogated. It examines how marginalisation is experienced, with a specific focus upon children and schooling, and uses the concept of resilience as a lens through which marginalisation can be understood. It recognises the importance of the wider societal and political context whilst also taking account of the interpretive framework of the individual and how risk and protective factors within the wider environment shape the experience and perceptions of the individual.

Keywords

Marginalisation, Social Exclusion, Resilience, Risk and Protective Factors, Social Justice, Inclusion

Introduction

Marginalisation is a global problem that impacts negatively upon societies across the world. With regard specifically to the education of children, the OECD report, 'Equity, Excellence and Inclusiveness in Education' (Schleicher, 2014) states:

The challenge we face is how to ensure our education systems give every child the quality learning experiences they need to develop and realise their individual potential, and to do so in ways that value who they are, their language, identity, and culture. How do we harness diversity, create fairness, and ensure our learning environments engage and achieve the best outcomes for all individuals, not just a few? (Foreword)

Within a context, in which, across Europe, neoliberal trends prevail (Connell, 2013; Grimaldi, 2012), evident within the marketisation of education, represented within the knowledge economy and within the increasing focus upon accountability, performativity and a 'standards agenda' (described by Ball (2010, 126) as the 'commodification of the public professional'), as manifested within international

programmes such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) (Ball, 2010; Jeffrey & Troman, 2011; Slee & Allan, 2001), there will be ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ (Caro & Mirazchiyski, 2011; Ringarp & Rothland, 2010; Shapira, 2011; Slee & Allan, 2001). Connell (2013) describes education within a neoliberal agenda as being focussed upon a narrow conceptualisation of human capital: ‘It is the business of forming the skills and attitudes needed by a productive workforce – productive in the precise sense of producing an ever-growing mass of profits for the market economy.’ (104)

As education in Europe becomes more market-orientated, a process of decentralisation is underway with a concordant emphasis upon projectisation (Brunila, 2011). However, Brunila argues that such a process has led to a paradigm change in which societal problems (such as inequality and youth employment) are seen as individual problems, ‘as problems of a wrong kind of mindset.’ (429) Within the context of increasing mobility across Europe, this can present as problematic, particularly with regard to migrant populations. A range of studies have focussed upon the attainment of migrant populations in international testing programmes (as outlined above), identifying a range of variables, such as socio-economic status, which impact upon attainment outcomes (Dronkers & Van der Velden, 2012; Shapira, 2011). Rather than examine marginalisation in relation to a specific population, this paper takes a broader focus and examines marginalisation, drawing from both sociological and psychological theory, as it manifests itself in a range of forms with a particular focus upon children and their schooling, forwarding a new theoretical framework through which the concept can be interrogated and further illuminated. It achieves this end through the lens of resilience theory, examining how risk and

protective factors at the individual, social and societal levels (Olsson, Bond, Burns, Vella-Brodrick, & Sawyer, 2003) can impact upon how those who might be regarded as being marginalised will experience their lives.

The paper makes the case that marginalisation takes many forms (Booth & Ainscow, 1998; Messiou, 2012; Petrou, Angelides, & Leigh, 2009) (not all of which are readily apparent to the observer or even the individual concerned (Messiou, 2012)) and occurs at different levels (formal and informal) (Petrou et al., 2009). It may be situated within time and place (Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Razer, Friedman, & Warshofsky, 2013) and may become part of the lived experience of the individual if internalised (Hjörne & Säljö, 2013; Skovlund, 2013). Further, the paper argues that marginalisation can only be fully understood when account is taken of the subjective and emotional aspects of human life and the interpretative framework of the individual. It forwards the hypothesis that an examination of marginalisation through the lens of resilience enables us to arrive at a much more nuanced and complex understanding of marginalisation and how it may be experienced, integrating the macro and micro at the level of the institution – the school - and individual perception, whilst also taking account of the political context.

This paper will attempt to answer two key questions which are central to this understanding: ‘What does it mean to be marginalised?’ and ‘Marginalised from what?’ In examining the literature, it became evident that whilst many authors discuss issues pertaining to marginalisation (often framed in terms of (social) exclusion) few authors addressed these fundamental questions explicitly. Marginalisation is often considered at the broader, societal level in public policy (Policy First, 2012) and in terms of marginalised populations or groups (Scottish Government, 2012c) but the

questions above can only be fully addressed by looking at the experiences of individuals.

The paper commences with an examination of the concept of marginalisation before setting out the many different ways in which it manifests itself in society. Thereafter the concept of resilience is defined and its contested nature explored. The paper then focuses more specifically upon children and young people and the impact which marginalisation has upon their lives before focussing in on schooling: the importance of a sense of affiliation and belonging to the school community; and the role which schools can play in creating and ameliorating the effects of marginalisation. It examines issues pertaining to human agency and identity as they relate to marginalisation. The paper then draws from theories of resilience to cast light upon how marginalisation may be experienced differentially by children and young people in similar situations and contexts before synthesising all of the above to forward a new theoretical framework through which marginalisation can be further interrogated and understood, informing the research community across borders.

A focus upon marginalisation

The conceptualisation of marginalisation

The concept of marginalisation permeates the current literature but is rarely defined (Messiou, 2012). When it is discussed it is usually in relation to the concepts of inclusion and (social) exclusion and indeed social exclusion and marginalisation appear to be inter-changeable. Hansen (2012) makes the case that inclusion can only be understood through an investigation as to what constitutes exclusion: ‘they are two connected and interdependent processes’ (96):

... we cannot consider inclusion in itself by excluding its other: exclusion. We can identify inclusion neither by defining a normative limit between inclusion and exclusion nor by avoiding limits and making inclusion unambiguous. Thus, it is not possible to put meaning into the concept of inclusion without its otherness, exclusion. (96)

It is argued that it is over-simplistic to equate exclusion as being the opposite of inclusion (or vice-versa) (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011). Armstrong et al. also attest that they are ‘interrelated processes and their interplay constantly creates new inclusive/exclusive conditions and possibilities.’ (36) Thus, any discussion of marginalisation has to encompass within it the concepts of inclusion and (social) exclusion.

Messiou (2012) claims that marginalisation is not a unitary entity but has multiple conceptualisations. She forwards four different ways of thinking about it encapsulated within Table I:

Experience of Marginalisation	Recognition of Marginalisation
Experienced by the individual	The individual and others
Experienced by the individual	Not recognised by others
The individual is construed by others as belonging to a marginalised population	Not recognised by the individual
Experienced by the individual	Denied by the individual

Table 1: Messiou’s conceptualisations of marginalisation

What is significant in Messiou’s work is the distinction made between the experience of marginalisation (as construed by the individual or others) and the recognition of it (by the individual and/or others), recognising the subjective nature of the construct. However, it also raises the important question, ‘If an individual does not recognise their life as marginalised (which implies that they do not experience their lives in this way), by what legitimacy can they be considered by others to be marginalised?’ (the implication of which is the imposition of a set of cultural values and norms), a

question which has particular significance for public policy. (Perhaps the answer to this question may be a matter of degree and context.)

Interrogation of the literature through examination of the discourse around ‘marginalisation’ and ‘(social) exclusion’ reveals a range of conceptualisations: marginalisation as relating to social exclusion, arising from a lack of equal opportunities and barriers to learning and participation (Messiou, 2012; Petrou et al., 2009); marginalisation as related to social justice and equity, seen through the lens of cultural and social capital (Brann-Barrett, 2011); marginalisation as seen in relation to ‘inclusion for all’: the inclusive school movement being regarded as a social movement against exclusion which is perceived as structural and cultural (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006a; Messiou, 2012; Petrou et al., 2009; Slee & Allan, 2001); marginalisation as related to specific groups perceived to be specially vulnerable to exclusion and stigmatisation (Bottrell, 2007; Petrou et al., 2009); marginalisation as ‘identity work’ and resistance (Bottrell, 2007; Bright, 2011); marginalisation as it pertains to the social and relational aspects of poverty (Carter-Wall and Whitfield, 2012; Dickerson and Popli, 2012; Ridge, 2011); marginalisation as it is expressed through ‘clauses of conditionality’ in public policy (Watts et al., 2014) and being related to the need to give marginalised groups a voice (Slee & Allan, 2001); marginalisation as being contextually related: social exclusion is perceived as a process constituting *relativity* (one is marginalised in relation to others within a similar context), *agency* (marginalisation does not occur by chance – it arises from actions and/or circumstances) and *dynamics* (it is the interaction between sets of variables within the environment which together negatively impact upon future prospects) (Mowat, 2010; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Razer et al., 2013). It is not implied in the above that these are discrete categorisations, or, indeed, the only

categorisations, just different lenses through which marginalisation can be illuminated, but they highlight the inter-connectedness of the concepts under discussion.

Social Exclusion is defined by Razer, Friedman and Warshofsky (2013) as a state in which individuals or groups 'lack effective participation in key activities or benefits of the society in which they live.' (1152) Thus, to be socially excluded is to be marginalised from that society. However, it is important to recognise that marginalisation is more than a state: it encompasses feelings about that state. To be marginalised is to have a sense that one does not belong and, in so doing, to feel that one is neither a valued member of a community and able to make a valuable contribution within that community nor able to access the range of services and/or opportunities open to others. In effect, to feel, and be, excluded. For some, marginalisation can be experienced as transient and context related (Frisen, Hasselblad, & Holmqvist, 2012; Razer et al., 2013). For others, however, it can become global and forms part of their identity and lived experience (Hjörne & Säljö, 2013; MacLeod, 2013; Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013; Skovlund, 2013). Hjörne and Säljö (2013), within the context of a Swedish secondary school, describe how teachers, through their discourse, create an identity for the disabled child which serves to 'other' the child: 'the children, through some kind of insight, will agree to accept that they are not 'normal' but rather 'deviant'.' (44)

But, how does one come to be considered marginalised and does one come to be marginalised through identification with a specific group, for example, gypsy travellers or children brought up in impoverished circumstances? My starting point would be to question the notion of a 'marginalised group'. The difficulty with this conceptualisation is that it equates marginalisation with a global and stable state,

inherent within a given population, presenting them as victims of their own fate over which they have little agency, the solution invested in the actions of the state and others. It also takes away any sense of the subjective experience of the individual and confers upon them the identity of ‘other’. This is not to fail to recognise that marginalisation arises from the actions of others whether deliberate (Bottrell, 2007; Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013; Slee & Allan, 2001) or inadvertent, whether individually (as can be the case in bullying (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013)) or collectively. Not is it to negate the responsibility that we hold towards others which is part of our shared humanity.

There are two assumptions inherent within the concept of a marginalised group: firstly, stereotypical assumptions that there is a shared experience which can be associated with people who share certain characteristics (for example, poverty) – that of marginalisation; and secondly, there is a shared conceptualisation of whatever it is they are being marginalised from – ‘an ideal’, ideas which will be explored at a later point within this paper.

To return to the earlier discussion about the legitimacy by which we position others as marginalised, can the assumption be made that because someone is living in poverty that they will experience their life as marginalised? Can the opposite assumption be made that someone who appears to have all of the advantages in life will not experience their life as marginalised? (Messiou’s second categorisation – ‘Experienced by the individual – not recognised by others.’) Perhaps it comes down to the answer to the question that was posed above, ‘Marginalised from what?’ Inherent within this question is the assumption of societal norms (which are collective expressions of our understandings and experiences, shaped through culture and relative in time and place), values (what is held to be true and right), expectations and

a sense of what is valued (held to be important and of worth) by that society, related to the concept of *relativity* (Munn & Lloyd, 2005). There is a set of norms, values and aspirations which dominate (Bottrell, 2007) and which are perceived to be the 'ideal'. Anyone who falls short of these norms, values and aspirations is perceived to be wanting in some way, deficient, disadvantaged and/or marginalised. There is a failure to recognise that not all will share these values and aspirations and that there can be legitimacy in such positioning. Hence, people whom others would consider to be disadvantaged and/or marginalised may not perceive their lives in this way (Messiou's third category).

A focus upon how marginalisation can manifest itself in society

Petrou, Angelides and Leigh (2009) draw a distinction between groups which have been formally identified as marginalised according to Government policy, such as children living in poverty (Department for Education, 2013; Policy First, 2012), and those who are marginalised because they fail to conform to the cultural norms and expectations which prevail within schools (Bottrell, 2007).

As previously alluded to, people can be marginalised through poverty (Carter-Wall and Whitfield, 2012; Dickerson and Popli, 2012; Hirsch, 2007; Ridge, 2011). Social capital theory attests that people can be marginalised and disadvantaged through the lack of social networks (and the trust and reciprocity associated with them) which others can routinely call upon and the concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1972) perceives marginalisation through the lens of the status and power which people are able (or not) to exercise through their knowledge, skills and symbolic and material endowments (Bourdieu, 1972; Brann-Barrett, 2011) (for example, qualifications which open the door to further opportunities). People can be marginalised through race and ethnicity (Deuchar, 2009; Slee, 2013) through sexual

orientation (Taylor, 2010); through the locale in which they live (Brann-Barrett, 2011; Deuchar, 2009; Öhrn, 2012); through disability and/or ill-health (Hakala, 2010; Skovlund, 2013; Slee, 2013; Squires, 2012); through religion (Smith & Barr, 2008); and through personal circumstances. With regard to the last of these, there is a wide range of circumstance in which children can find themselves disadvantaged and marginalised: children of the Armed forces (Scottish Government, 2012b) and children of travelling families whose education and social relationships are often disrupted (Wilkin et al., 2010); children of migrants (Shapira, 2011; Dronkers and Van der Velden, 2012) and refugees (Sime, Fox, & Pietka, 2010); children of prisoners (Holligan, 2013); children who are carers and who cannot take part in the activities of other children of their age (Scottish Government, 2010); children who are looked after and accommodated (Children in Scotland, 2010); children of parents who are alcoholics and/or drug abusers (Blackburn, Carpenter, & Egerton, 2010); and through bullying and/or oppression (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013):

Only a ginger, can call another ginger 'Ginger', yep.

When you are a ginger, life is pretty hard.
The years of ritual bullying in the school yard.

Lyrics to 'Prejudice' by Tim Minchin [1]

People can also be marginalised in ways that are subtle and not so readily identifiable such as the children who are consistently not allowed to participate in 'Golden Time' [2] or other 'rewards' because their behaviour has fallen short of expectation (ironically, often in the name of promoting positive behaviour). Teachers draw upon psychopathologising discourses to describe such children (Berg, 2010; Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013): 'Behaviours were understood as an individual characteristic of the student, or their family; and when they get compared with the norm for students' behaviours they were seen as inferior and marked as problems,

challenge and deviant.’ (Orsati and Causton-Theoharis 2013, 516). Likewise, the child who may have all of the material attributes of wealth but who has not experienced the love and warmth that is characteristic of other family homes, leading to attachment problems and behavioural difficulties (Cooper, 2008) which then serve to marginalise the child.

A focus upon resilience

A ‘slippery’ concept

The concept of resilience is generally credited to the work of Garmezy who sought explanations as to why children in similar situations facing adverse circumstances had different experiences and outcomes. Rather than focussing upon psychopathology, poverty and post-traumatic stress, he focussed upon why some children demonstrated positive adaptation (Condly 2006, Kolar 2011). Within the literature, the concept of resilience has been used inconsistently across a range of disciplines, reflecting different paradigms, leading to a lack of clarity as to its meaning (Kolar, 2011). Further, there is a failure to critique the assumptions and biases, derived from the normative construct of the concept (Condly, 2006), about what constitutes positive rather than negative adaptation or outcomes within a specific context (Kolar, 2011, 423). The difficulty with resilience as a concept is that, as highlighted above, it is highly subjective. By who’s judgement and by which criteria might an individual be deemed to be resilient (if regarded as a stable trait) or to exhibit resilient behaviour when facing adverse circumstances and how might adverse circumstances be characterised and by whom?

Resilience has been defined as ‘a label that defines the interaction of a child with trauma or a toxic environment in which success, as judged by societal norms, is achieved by virtue of the child’s abilities, motivations and support systems.’ (Condly

2006, 213) or, alternatively, ‘a relative resistance to environmental risk experiences, the overcoming of stress or adversity or a relatively good outcome despite risk experiences.’ (Rutter 2012, 34). Condly (2006) proposes that, just as risk is multi-dimensional and takes a variety of forms, so, likewise, resilience is multi-faceted and is situational (ie. it is mediated by context).

The concept of resilience has also come to the fore in relation to social structures and spheres (for example, communities). Within this context it is often portrayed as the stability of the system in response to threat which, according to MacKinnon and Derickson (2012) ‘privileges established social structures’ (2) which are characterised by unequal power relationships whilst closing off the possibility of transformational change; places the onus on communities to ‘become more resilient and adaptable’ (2), reproducing social inequality; and places responsibility (without power) within social spheres rather than recognising the wider political forces which act upon the context.

Thus, both in examining the concept at the individual and the wider societal level, it can be seen that it is highly contested and can by no means regarded uncritically as ‘a good thing’.

A focus upon how marginalisation may be experienced and its impact upon children’s lives

The relationship between poverty and marginalisation

For low-income children in the UK, living in poverty has a wide range of negative outcomes which means that they are excluded from many of the activities and experiences which other children take for granted: they are ‘looking in from outside.’ This leads to feelings of anxiety, sadness, frustration and anger. This is compounded by negative experiences of school with pupils identifying their teachers as behaving in

a discriminatory way towards them. Their lives are impoverished through: economic and material deprivation; the impact of poverty upon their social relationships, homelife and family relationships; taking on the role of young carer when circumstances present; the effects of homelessness and poor housing conditions; living in neighbourhoods which are not safe and in which there aren't public spaces in which children can play safely; limited leisure opportunities and access to affordable public transport; and through the constraints of poverty upon schooling which extend far beyond material issues such as not being able to participate in school outings and trips (Ridge, 2011).

Poverty impacts not only upon children's experiences of schooling but their future aspirations and chances. Within the UK, the attainment gap between children in poverty and those in more affluent circumstances emerges at an early age (by age three) and becomes cumulative, resulting in children in impoverished circumstances being half as likely as other children to go on to Higher Education (Carter-Wall and Whitfield 2012). Feinstein's landmark study (2003), drawing from the British 1970 Birth Cohort study, established that social inequality impacts detrimentally upon the academic progress of children from low socio-economic backgrounds, even for those who show early promise.

Over a decade later, within Scotland [3] (Sosu & Ellis, 2014), these patterns are still replicated. Differences in attainment between low- and high-income households form at an early age (with a differential of 10-13 months by age 5) and at age 16, despite evidence of an overall rise in attainment, a significant and persistent gap remains; socio-economic background is the greatest predictor of pupil outcomes; and, not unexpectedly, low attainment impacts upon leaver destinations and future prospects. Based upon school leaver destinations in 2012 in Scotland, 17.4% of young

people living in the most deprived wards went on to Higher Education in comparison to 59.9% of those in the least deprived wards and 18% were unemployed in comparison to 4% (Scottish Government 2013, Table L2.2). Thus children in poverty are marginalised in ways that have long-term implications for their future wellbeing, perpetuating cycles of deprivation.

The most recent Millennium Cohort Study (Dickerson & Popli, 2012), reporting on the progress of a sample of children born in the Millennium year in the UK at age 11, found that persistent, rather than episodic poverty has the greatest negative impact upon children's cognitive development in the early years. The relationship between the two variables may be indirect – low income impacts upon the capacity for effective parenting which, in turn, impacts upon cognitive development – and this effect extends beyond the period during which poverty is experienced, highlighting the importance of targeting poverty alleviation in the early years.

Whilst child poverty rates within the UK in the past decade to 2010/11 are declining and the number of working-age adults with dependent children living in poverty fell within this period (The New Policy Institute, 2013, Key Points) this hides a more complex picture. Watts et al. (2014) identified that the conditionality associated with recent welfare reforms (for example, benefits being dependent upon participation within government schemes) can have unintended consequences, impacting negatively upon children's welfare and also disproportionately upon young people (the under 25s). Health inequalities are not only stark but increasing: 'A boy born in the poorest tenth of areas can expect to live 14 years less than one born in the least deprived tenth. For girls, the difference is eight years' (The New Policy Institute, 2013, Key Points).

Marginalisation and vulnerable populations

There are some children who are particularly vulnerable such as those who are Looked after and Accommodated (LAAC). In Scotland, in 2010, there were 15,892 children looked after by Local Authorities - an increase of 4% on the previous year (Scottish Government, 2012a). This group had the second lowest participation in Higher Education of any group – 3.5% - and the 2nd highest unemployment rate - 28% - represented within school leaver destinations for 2011-2012 (Scottish Government, 2013) (table L4.1). It is also disproportionately represented in exclusion statistics (by a factor of 9) (Scottish Government, 2011). Further, the ‘Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime’ established that children who had been excluded from school by the age of twelve were more likely (by a factor of four) to be in prison by age twenty-two (Seith 2013).

Synopsis

It can be seen that children living in poverty and those with multiple deprivation, when considered collectively, may be marginalised in a wide range of ways which impact not only upon their day-to-day experiences, including their emotional wellbeing, but also upon their future aspirations and prospects and upon their quality of health and life expectancy putting them at risk in many different ways.

Marginalisation and schooling

The importance of a sense of belonging

This paper has forwarded the argument that marginalisation, at any point in time, cannot be conceptualised solely as a state: inherent within it are feelings about that state. Having a sense of belonging (or belongingness, as it is often referred to within the literature), and the positive feelings that accompany it, is a very important aspect

of inclusion for children within the school community (Khon, 1999). The corollary of this is that children lacking a sense of belonging may feel marginalised and alienated from school and what it has to offer. A sense of belongingness to school is correlated with a range of positive academic, psychological, behavioural and social outcomes for children with SEN (Special Educational Needs) whereas a poor sense of belongingness is correlated with a wide range of negative indicators such as ‘behavioural problems, lower interest in school, lower achievement, and increased dropout’ (Prince and Hadwin, 2013, 249). The latter are associated with outcomes such as poor mental health, depression and anxiety (Ibid.), all of which potentially could lead to further marginalisation within the wider community. Positive relationships between teachers and pupils and between peers were identified as important mediating influences and protective factors promoting resilience, as does a supportive, caring school ethos: ‘a school environment that is perceived as supportive and caring, and which emphasises individual effort and improvement, is associated with a more adaptive pattern of cognition, affect, and behaviour’ (Ibid., 239).

Bossaert, Colpin, Pijl, and Petry (2013) also attest to the importance of a sense of belonging within the school community for children with SEN. They identify four key themes as being important: relationships (mutual friendship and social networks), interactions (verbal or non-verbal communications towards others), perceptions (the subjective impressions and feelings of the pupil with SEN eg. loneliness) and acceptance by classmates.

The role schools play in marginalisation

Whilst education is perceived as one of the routes out of marginalisation, schools can inadvertently act as agents of marginalisation. An inappropriate curriculum which fails to take account of individual pupil needs; inflexible and inappropriate systems

and structures which fail to recognise the gap between the standards set for pupil behaviour and pupils' capacity to meet such standards; the adoption of mindsets which lead ultimately towards the path of exclusion (Munn & Lloyd, 2005); and the pursuit of a 'standards agenda' which creates winners and losers can all serve to marginalise pupils (Razer et al., 2013). Lloyd (2008) argues that the quest for inclusion through removing barriers to learning perpetuates deficit models of the child within an exclusive curriculum in which success is equated with achieving norm-related standards: 'members of the excluded groups can join the game if they submit to the rules and demonstrate that they can play the game at a standard which is acceptable.' (234) She argues for a fundamental reconceptualisation of schooling focussing upon optimal learning for all: 'a barrier-free, flexible, responsive inclusive learning environment where everyone is entitled to participate fully and to develop his/her potential.' (235).

Within an exclusive school environment (as characterised above), both teachers and pupils become marginalised, feeding off each other in negative ways (Razer et al., 2013), as exemplified in figure 1.

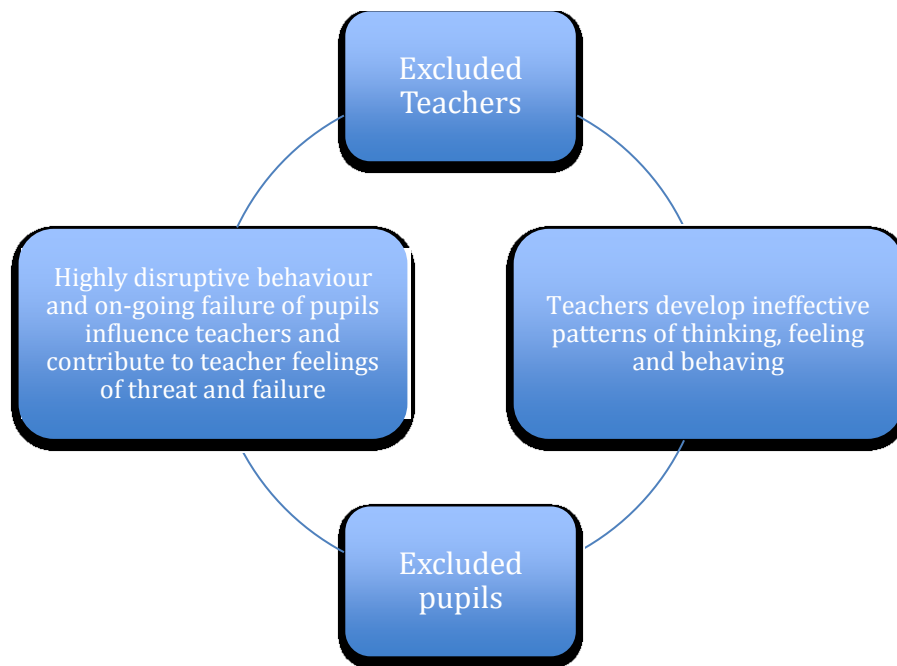


Figure 1: The Cycle of Exclusion in Schools [modified from Fig. 1 (Razer et al. 2013: 1156)]

Razer et al. describe two frames which lead teachers down these negative routes: teachers either adopt the ‘helplessness’ frame, characterised by feelings of worthlessness, inevitability, guilt and helplessness which eventually lead to the teacher withdrawing from the situation with which they have difficulty coping as a protective mechanism (1159) or the ‘false-identity’ frame in which teachers ‘cling to the goals, standards, methods and rules’ (1161) of schools in more fortunate circumstances, serving to disenfranchise pupils who do not match up to these standards: ‘the frame sends a clear message to these pupils that they are not wanted and they do not really belong to the school.’ (1163), leading to their sense of marginalisation, exclusion and alienation. It should be stated that the standards agenda is not only complicit within this but creates the conditions under which it thrives (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006b; Graham & Harwood, 2011; Lloyd, 2008; Razer et al., 2013; Slee, 2013). Thus teachers are marginalised in the sense that their identity

and agency as a professional are compromised and pupils are marginalised in that they are unable to access a quality curriculum and to feel that they are valued and accepted members of an inclusive school community. Such marginalisation may not pervade all aspects of the individual's life but may be confined to the specific context of the school (Razer et al., 2013) but the effects may extend far beyond this context, impacting on the life chances and sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem of the individual.

Human agency and marginalisation, and the forging of identities

This discussion will examine issues pertaining to how young people take on identities, how they position themselves (or not) in relation to schooling, the degree to which they are perceived as being able to exercise agency, the underlying issues of power and how these are related to marginalisation.

Berg (2010), within the context of a case study of a Norwegian child (Tom) 'with' Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, describes how professionals used their power to 'define Tom as an outsider, and to construct an identity for him as a deviant student in the school's margins' (172), whilst simultaneously presenting themselves as 'normal':

The professionals' classification involved an evaluation of Tom as a person, based on their perspectives, knowledge and theories, and on recognizable symptoms and behaviour. In classifying Tom, they gave themselves the attributes of normality, whereas Tom was perceived as deviant.' (171)

When Tom tried to negotiate his own identity, the professionals used their power to authenticate their version of 'who he was' whilst taking away any agency with which he could present himself in a different light, ostracising him also from his peers: within the school context, he became stigmatised and an outsider. The professionals

had used their power to ‘define, confirm and determine a wide range of Tom’s conditions in life.’ (173)

In contrast to the above, some would argue that individuals or groups marginalise themselves through rejection of the dominant values (often white and middle-class (Bottrell 2007)) and cultural norms ‘and the power relations which underlie them’ (Ball, 2012) of a community or society. However, this reasoning positions the individual or group who/which has been marginalised as being responsible for their own fate (whilst also positioning them as ‘victims’ – ‘the marginalised’) and fails to take account of the wider systemic, structural, political and cultural factors which have interacted with each other to create the context in which they find themselves. Such positioning Riddell aligns with the discourse of the ‘moral underclass’ the solution for which is to ‘change people’s attitudes and culture’ (5).

Bright (2011) makes the case that the resistance of young people to schooling is a manifestation of political action or what the author describes as ‘an enduring aspect of local working-class culture – namely, a propensity for ‘bottom-up action’.’ (502). He describes such young people as inhabiting a ‘counter-hegemonic space of cultural production’ (502) grounded within the historical memories and experiences of the community (what Bourdieu would describe as ‘habitus’) and patterns of school resistance exercised by older generations: ‘children negotiate schooling not only directly through their own experiences but also through the sedimented experiences of parents or even grandparents’ (512) (citing Reay 2009). Thus, rather than characterising disaffection from school as a manifestation of a ‘pathological failure of aspiration and ‘behavioural difficulty’’, the author characterises it as ‘a dignified process of non-servile challenge from below.’ (512)

In contrast to the findings of Bright, Öhrn (2012) draws from the literature to forward the perspective that youth living in urban, disadvantaged areas in Sweden, may have less potential for political action than had previously been the case. This is explained by changes in schooling practices and the lack of a sense of community in poor areas in comparison to old working-class neighbourhoods, the latter being regarded as more homogenous. However, her own study found that there was a commitment in young people towards collective action but that schools did little to foster this.

Deuchar, 2009 and Bottrel, 2007 examine the interaction of agency and structure in marginalisation processes. Children and young people who fail to find fulfilling relationships within the school community seek affirmation outwith that environment through engaging in risk-taking behaviours and negative relationships which could impact negatively upon their wellbeing (Deuchar, 2009; Prince & Hadwin, 2013). This may particularly be the case for young people who reject what school has to offer (Bottrell, 2007; Deuchar, 2009) and who affiliate themselves with alternative cultures such as gangs, within a context in which dominant values and cultural norms (represented within institutions) may be unexamined, unquestioned and taken for granted. Deuchar observes that gang membership for many young people provides social bonding, a sense of identity and a way of coping with social exclusion (96) and Bottrell (2007) describes how young people, through actively positioning themselves within a different culture (what some might describe as a sub-culture), find a sense of belonging and affirmation through participation within the sub-culture (610). However, this positioning serves to marginalise young people from wider society more broadly and confers the disadvantages which this may bring.

In examining the lives of marginalised young people in Glasgow through the lens of social capital, Deuchar paints a picture of youths who cannot take advantage of the facilities and resources which could potentially be open to them (perhaps only a short bus journey away) because of territorial issues: they are bounded by their communities – to step outside of them is to put themselves at risk: ‘They often felt trapped, afraid of being seen in the wrong area and victimised for crossing boundaries.’ (52)

Bottrell (2007), in a study of marginalised teenage girls, describes the distancing of young people from the values and norms of the school as a form of resistance – part of their identity work:

For marginalised young people, school is problematic in a variety of ways that are educational, relational and social. In the context of academic success, ‘school as boring’ may also be a euphemism for the pressures, expectations of failure (Teese & Plesel 2003) and inability to change the situation ... (604)

The teenage girls within the study were aware of their low social status within the school environment and saw themselves as not cared about and ‘not worth bothering about.’ (605). Bottrell (drawing from Apple 1997 and Hey 1997) proposes that resistance, within the school context, is ‘both a cause and an effect of marginalisation of those whose cultural capital is different from that centralised and privileged by the school.’ (607). However, the author also positions resistance as a form of positive adaptation to a difficult, rejecting environment.

Both Bottrell and Deuchar discuss the great difficulties which young people experience in trying to break away from their marginalised positioning, limiting their opportunities and aspirations.

Synopsis

This discussion has highlighted the many ways in which marginalisation is understood and manifests itself within society and the underlying issues of power, reflected in social and cultural capital theory. Marginalisation has been explored as it has been experienced by a wide range of individuals and groups, examining the multiple effects of poverty and multiple deprivation upon people's and children's lives; the centrality of a sense of belonging in their wellbeing; and the importance of relationships. It has examined the role that schools can play in marginalisation; issues around agency and identity; and the seeking of affirmation through alternative sub-cultures that ultimately serve to marginalise children and young people even further.

Resilience

It has already been established that there are multiple (and often conflicting) conceptualisations of resilience drawing from a range of fields. However, this author attests that, even allowing for the contested nature of the concept, it is of value in helping to explain why marginalisation may be experienced differentially by people sharing similar circumstances.

Resilience as a state or process

Reflected in the varied conceptualisations (as previously described) are issues pertaining to whether resilience can be considered to be a state at which one has arrived - 'a stable pattern of low distress over time' (Kolar 2011, 4, citing Mancini and Bonanno 2009) or a process - '.... Positive adaptation in circumstances where difficulties - personal, familial, or environmental - are so extreme we would expect a person's cognitive or functional abilities to be impaired' (Ibid., 4, citing Newman

2004). Resilience as a state is generally characterised by good mental health, functional capacity and social competence (Olsson et al., 2003). Understanding resilience as a process of adaptation requires examination of both the risk mechanisms that make the individual more vulnerable to adversity, and the protective mechanisms which make the individual more resilient (Ibid.).

It is argued that resilience should not be perceived as a single dichotomous variable inherent within an individual (you either have it or you don't) expressed through traits that lead the individual to cope or not within situations of adversity (Condly, 2006; Rutter, 2012). Nor should it be seen as a response to a single event (Condly, 2006). Condly argues that resilience is a continuous process and brings to the frame the understanding that underlying conceptualisations of resilience are normative views of what would constitute adaptation within a given context. Likewise, Rutter (2012) conceptualises resilience as an interactive dynamic process that operates across the lifespan. It is concerned with the wider social contexts and influences that impact upon the individual within that context. Its starting point is recognition of the heterogeneity in human response to a range of stressors. It is not directly measurable but is inferred from the response of individuals to risk and adversity. (34)

An historical perspective

Kolar (2011) traces the development of the concept of resilience over four waves as set out in figure 2. Whilst there is general agreement amongst researchers as to what constitutes the first two waves, two distinct schools of thought have emerged over the third and fourth waves. It is evident that over time a much more nuanced understanding of what constitutes resilience and how it can be fostered in children and young people has developed and there has been a gradual movement away from the

idea that it is a global trait primarily located at the individual level towards conceptualisations of resilience as an iterative process (the individual and the individual in relation to his/her environment) situated within time and place.

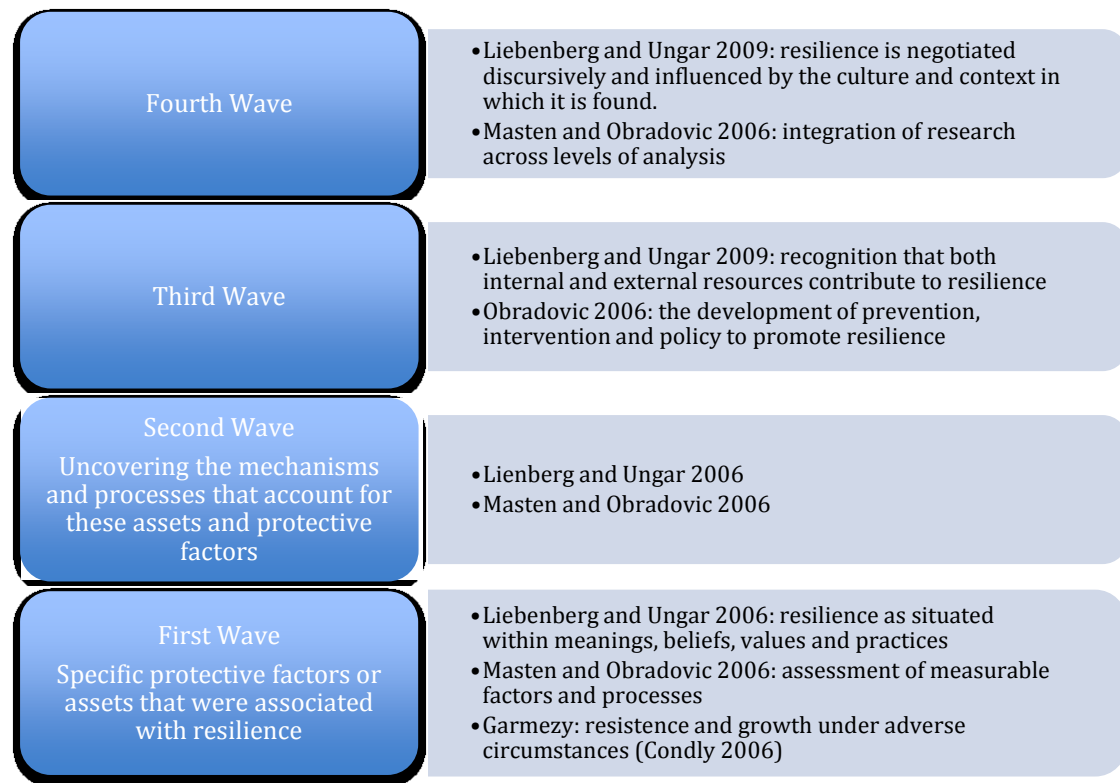


Figure 2: Representation of historical development of the concept of resilience as outlined in Kolar 2011.

A psychological perspective on resilience

The importance of mindsets in facilitating or impeding resilience

There is an extensive psychological literature on achievement motivation, a major component of which is the focus upon mindsets which promote (or not) resilience in learners. Foremost within this field is the work of Carol Dweck and her colleagues (Dweck, 2000, 2002, 2006; Dweck & Elliot, 1983; Yeager & Dweck, 2012) who draw upon the constructs of entity and incremental implicit theories of intelligence to examine how they impact upon academic achievement. Those who hold an entity

mindset attribute their success or failure in tasks to their innate ability, perceiving intelligence as innate and fixed: they are more likely to rationalise failure in terms of ‘not being smart/clever enough’. In comparison, those who hold an incremental mindset see intelligence as an innate potential that, if the right conditions prevail, has the capacity to grow: they tend to rationalise success or failure in terms of effort and strategies adopted and are therefore more likely to be resilient in the face of setbacks than their peers who hold an entity mindset.

Yeager and Dweck (2012) explore the impact of implicit theories of personality upon reactions to peer exclusion and victimisation and how these impact upon social stress and academic performance. Those who attribute the behaviour of others or their own behaviour to fixed traits which are stable over time (for example, perceiving a bully as a ‘bad person’ or perceiving themselves as unlikeable) would be regarded as having an entity mindset whereas those who see personality as malleable (people are able to change over time) would be regarded as having an incremental mindset. In a range of controlled trials, it was demonstrated that those who hold an incremental mindset are less likely to respond negatively to social conflicts and are more likely to be resilient in the face of them than those who hold an entity perspective on personality (306-309), making it less likely that they will become socially marginalised:

... adolescents are more vulnerable to ... social adversities when they hold a mindset in which they and their peers are not likely to change. However, when adolescents have or are taught a mindset in which people have the potential to change their socially relevant traits – even if those traits are difficult to change – then they can be more resilient in the face of victimization or exclusion. (310).

Resilience does not exclusively reside within an individual or a context but arises from the interpretation which the individual makes of the adversities in their lives (312).

An ecological perspective on resilience

Olsson et al. (drawing upon Garmezy 1991 and Werner 1995) conceptualise resilience as a framework which encompasses, ‘protective processes (resources, competencies, talents and skills) that sit within the individual (individual-level factors), within the family and peer network (social-level factors), and within the whole school environment and the community (societal-level factors)’ (3). Although Olsson et al. refer to socio-economic status (and its relationship to social class, gender and ethnicity) as residing within the societal-level, in building upon this conceptualisation, this author wanted to make the political dimension more explicit in order to highlight the impact of Government policies and legislation on schools and families (cc. Figure 3). This is not to imply that the societal and political levels can be considered as separate entities – they exist in relation to each other. Olsson et al. draw from the literature to propose that multiple risk factors (or conversely, multiple protective factors), if acting in synergy with each other, may combine to have a more powerful effect than a single life-event (4).

The above is in keeping with ecological conceptualisations of resilience as described by Ungar and his colleagues (Ungar, 2012b) and encapsulated within Bronfenbrenner’s theoretical framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) in which it is the interaction between different levels of the ecosystem – the microsystem (family, school, peer group and workplace); mesosystem (a system of microsystems which interact with each other eg. family and school); exosystem (the interaction between two or more settings exclusive of the child but which impact upon the child e.g. school and the neighbourhood peer group); macrosystem (cultural values, laws, customs and resources); and chronosystem (located within time e.g. changes in socio-economic status over the lifespan) - which create the context in which the individual

demonstrates adaptive behaviour. Bronfenbrenner has subsequently reworked his theory - bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) - to take greater cognisance of the influence of a child's biology on development. A range of authors (Cassen, Feinstein, & Graham, 2009; Howard & Johnson, 2010; Mowat, 2010; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2013) bring an ecological perspective to their work. Howard and Johnson observe,

..... no man (or child) is an island: we live in and are affected by nested social systems that interact and influence each other in complex ways. Clearly, things that happen in the family, the school and the community - all microsystem environments in which the child is physically located - can have a major impact on the development of resilience.' (336)

Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2013) examined the learning journeys of children 'at risk' and identified a wide range of factors both internal and external to the child that served as risk and protective factors. It isn't a single factor that promotes or impedes resilience as it pertains to children's learning but the 'active reciprocal and iterative interactions between these factors that determine the parameters for children's pathways to academic success.' (16). Resilience was dependent upon the presence of supportive networks and the child developing a sense of self-efficacy and exercising agency (a finding replicated in Mowat, 2010):

By having people around them that believe in them, encourage them, challenge them and support them, children develop a strong sense of self-efficacy with regard to academic and social success. Through their interactions with these people, children learn to build and sustain relationships (i.e. develop social and cultural capital) that support and facilitate academic success. (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2013, 17)

Ungar (2012a) brings an 'interactional, environmental, and culturally pluralistic perspective' to the frame which is based upon the understanding that the environment is a much stronger variable than had initially been countenanced in accounting for the antecedents of positive coping in adverse circumstances (14). He argues that resilience arises from a 'clustering of ecological factors that predict positive human development', influenced by the nature of the challenge faced (14),

and, further, that it is the capacity of the environment to '*potentiate* (the author's emphasis) positive adaptation under stress' that is of the essence (15). Focussing solely on the individual level can lead to other important variables being overlooked, leading to errors in attribution when researchers take account of individual agency whilst underestimating the impact of socio-political, economic and cultural factors. In coming from an ecological perspective account can be taken of variability in the environment of the individual whilst also recognising that the strengths and challenges of the individual are expressions of culturally embedded values that influence how coping and risk are understood. The author argues that the starting point for understanding resilience has to be an exploration of the context in which the individual experiences adversity and only then should account be taken of factors at the individual level, 'making resilience first a quality of the broader social and physical ecology, and second a quality of the individual' (27). He describes this as a paradigm shift: 'it is like turning a pair of binoculars around and looking at the world differently (28). Drawing from a range of studies, he observes that protective processes do not impact equally upon individuals: they are more likely to impact upon those with higher levels of risk and that both protective factors and risks need to be taken into account in any intervention. In a study conducted by Sloboda et al. (2009) of a substance abuse prevention programme the findings of which demonstrated that young people who were already substance abusers benefited from the intervention whilst the programme had an adverse effect upon those who had previously not been substance abusers (Ungar, 2012a, 21).

Synopsis

Whilst recognising the contested nature of the concept of resilience and the (almost inevitable) different schools of thought that have developed around the concept, it is

evident that there are clear trends emerging. Resilience is largely a concept that traditionally has been associated with the psychological literature, hence the focus upon the individual, but it is a concept which cannot be understood through the lens of psychology or sociology alone. To understand the concept in its full complexity requires the integration of insights from both fields. Ecological theory bridges both the individual and individual in relation to his or her environment. Liebenberg and Ungar's understanding of resilience as being 'negotiated discursively' (2009) and as being socially and culturally situated within meanings, beliefs, values and practices (2006) is of particular relevance to the arguments forwarded within this specific paper. Figure 3 below is a representation of resilience that draws from the above discussion and attempts to integrate the various elements within a single framework. The model integrates risk and protective factors as they may impact upon the individual at the individual and social levels and at the societal/political, building upon Olsson et al's model, which, as they interact with each other, shape the experiences of the individual, determining the degree to which an individual may or may not be resilient within a specific context. It recognises that the experiences which shape the individual are mediated through societal norms, values and expectations which are located within time, place and culture, in keeping with an ecological perspective on resilience as forwarded by Ungar and his colleagues. It will (at a later point) be integrated into a theoretical representation of marginalisation.

Resilience [a dynamic process]

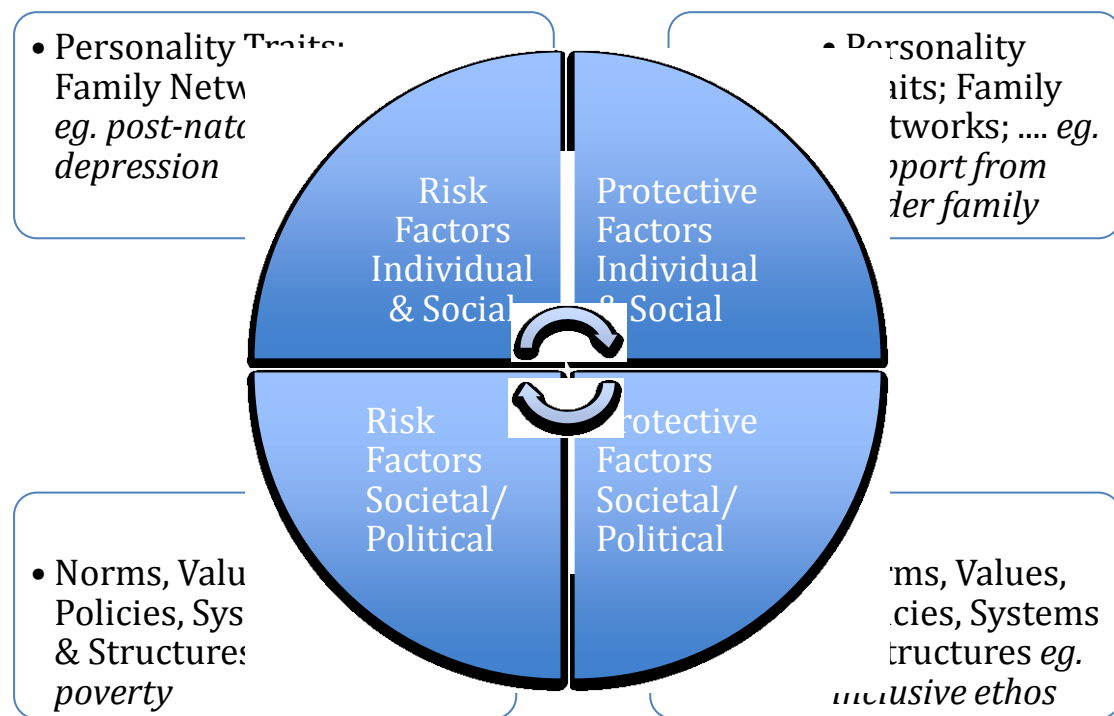


Figure 3: A representation of resilience building upon previous conceptualisations

Towards a new conceptualisation of marginalisation

This paper posed a series of questions, central to which were, ‘What does it mean to be marginalised?’ and, ‘Marginalised from what?’ It asked how one could come to be considered as marginalised and whether such marginalisation could arise from identification with a specific group. It questioned the notion of a marginalised group and the legitimacy by which marginalisation could be conferred on individuals through their affiliation with a specific group. It questioned the assumptions and prejudices underlying such positioning. It also highlighted that there are considerable implications for public policy arising from the above much of which is founded on the notion of readily identifiable vulnerable groups at risk of marginalisation and which takes little or no account of the subjective experience of the individual. This paper is

not arguing that public policy should not be redressing social inequality and exclusion or should fail to meet the needs of children and young people who may be highly vulnerable. It is arguing that a much more nuanced understanding of marginalisation is required to inform public policy such that support and resources can be targeted more effectively.

Might it be the case that a sense of marginalisation is dependent upon the interaction between what society holds to be desirable and that which is valued by the individual (cc. figure 4a) and that what is valued by the individual, in turn, may be shaped by the degree to which risk and protective factors (at the individual, social, societal/political levels) interact with each other to shape their experiences? These experiences are then interpreted by the individual through their conceptual framework and, as argued by Gardner, thoughts and feelings are inextricably intertwined (cc. figure 4b) (Gardner, 1999).

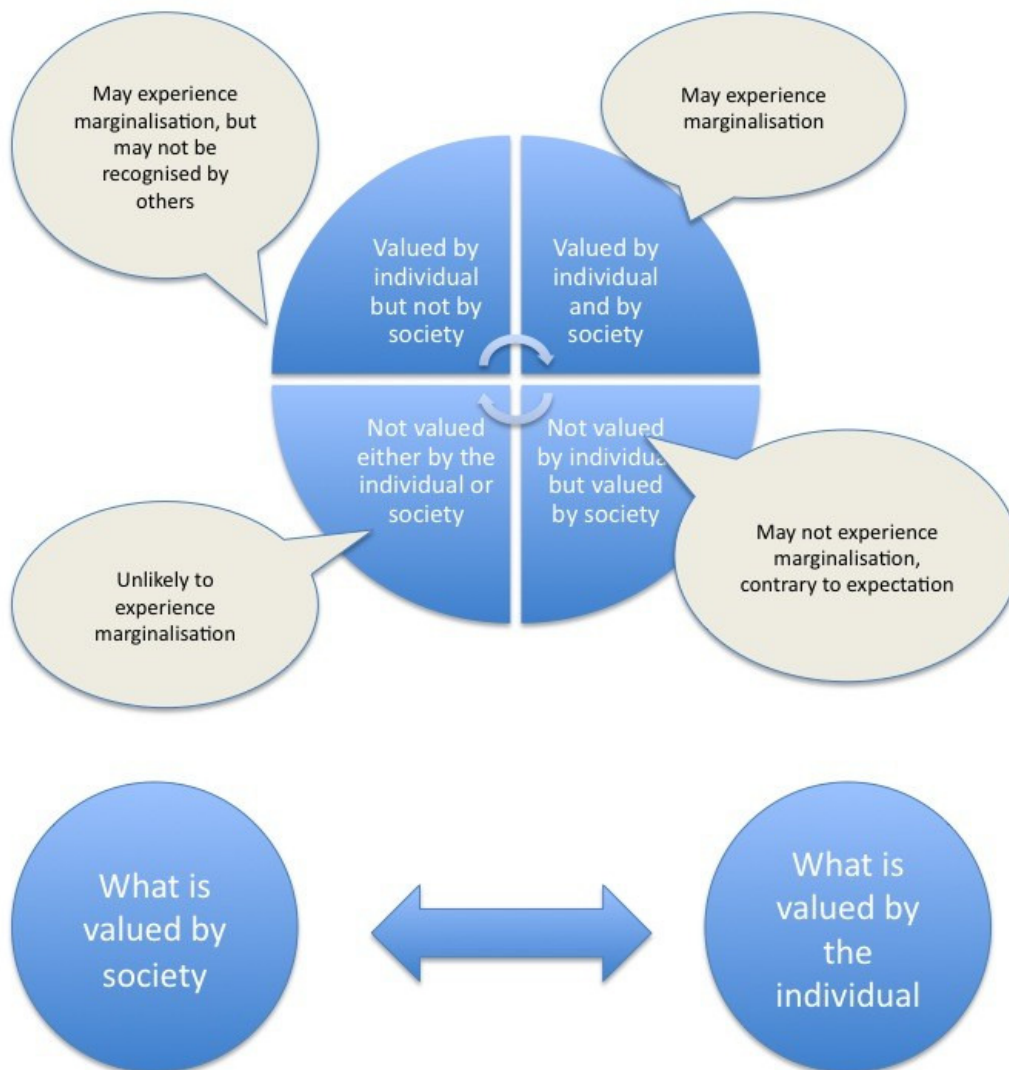


Figure 4a: The relationship between marginalisation and what is valued by the individual and by society

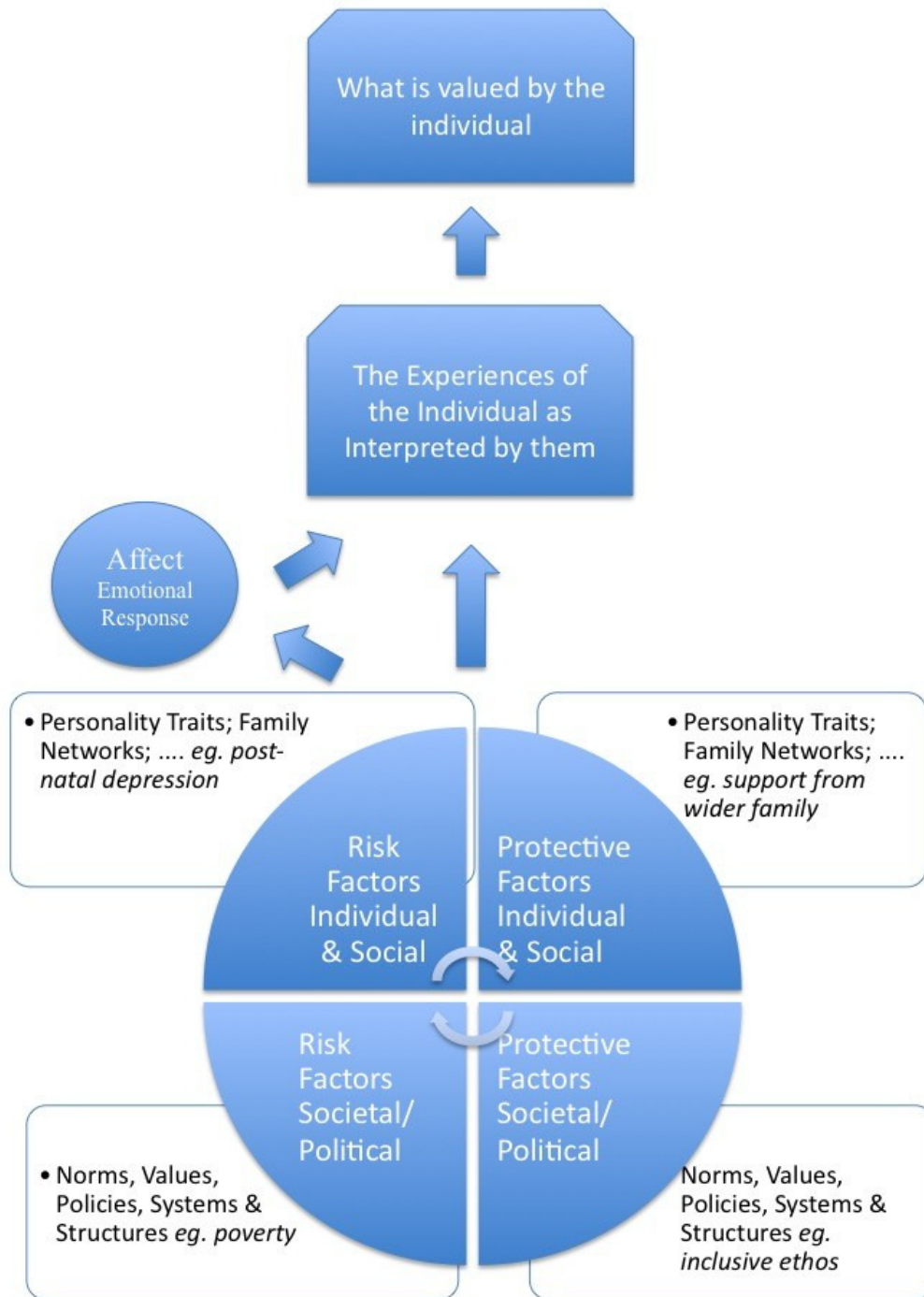


Figure 4b: The relationship between resilience and what is valued by the individual

Societal norms do not exist in a vacuum. They are mediated through the lens of culture and are situated in time and place. They reflect collective values and

expectations of how people should behave towards each other, reflected within which are the ideals to which people within a culture aspire. They also exist within a political context which both reflects and shapes that culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) (cc. figure 4c).

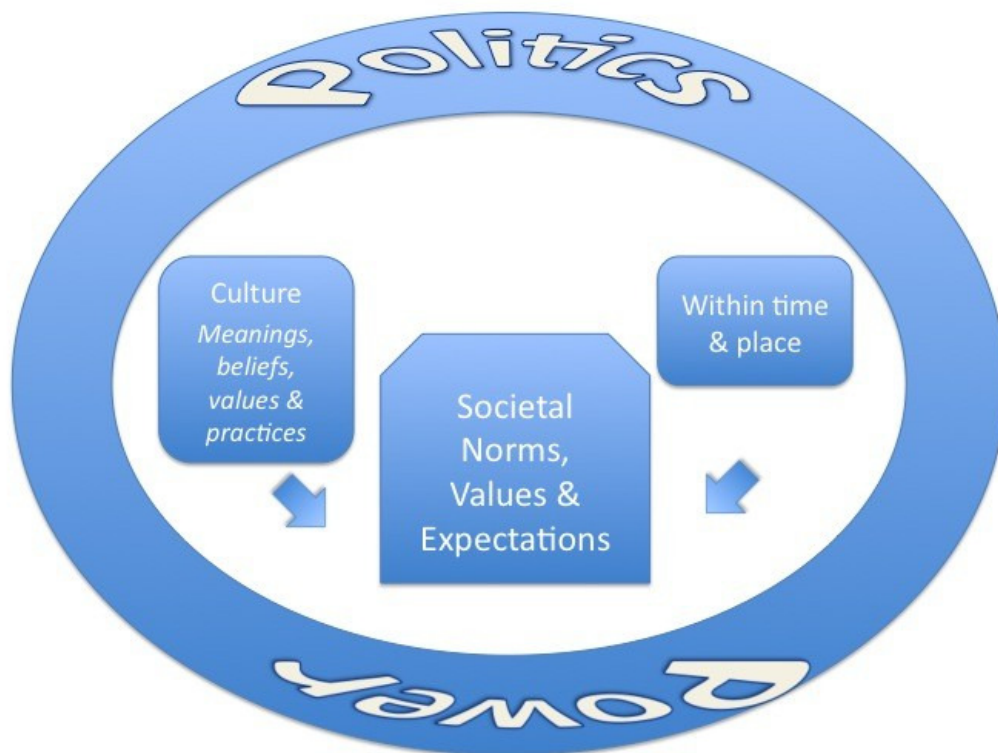


Figure 4c: The political and societal context which frames both resilience and marginalisation

Just as societal norms, values and expectations are mediated by time, place and culture so too are the risk and protective factors which together intertwine to determine the resilience of the child within a specific context and situation, and all of these are mediated by issues of power (Ball, 2012) reflected within the political context, which create and act upon that context. Thus, a child, living in poverty, but in

a loving and caring home in which there are wide family networks (social capital), in which education is valued (cultural capital) and in which there is the ‘scaffolding of experience that supports human development’ (Ungar 2012, 14 citing Vygotsky 1978), may not experience their life as marginalised and will be more able to draw upon the opportunities which are open to them than children in similar circumstances who do not have these protective factors in their lives, as illustrated in Brann-Barrett’s (2011) study comparing the life trajectories of those from an impoverished community who went on to Higher Education with those who did not. However, there is no doubt that, these arguments aside, the risk factors for some children (for example, those who are looked after and accommodated) are such that the likelihood of marginalisation is much greater and that, in order to be able to come to a deeper understanding of the barriers to participation and learning which are experienced by such children and young people, it is important to examine their experiences from a range of perspectives whilst also recognising that how (and if) marginalisation is experienced will be individual to the child or young person and the set of circumstances pertaining to the child, mediated through the wider societal and political context. Figure 5 sets out the hypothesis as described above.

Marginalisation as seen through the lens of resilience

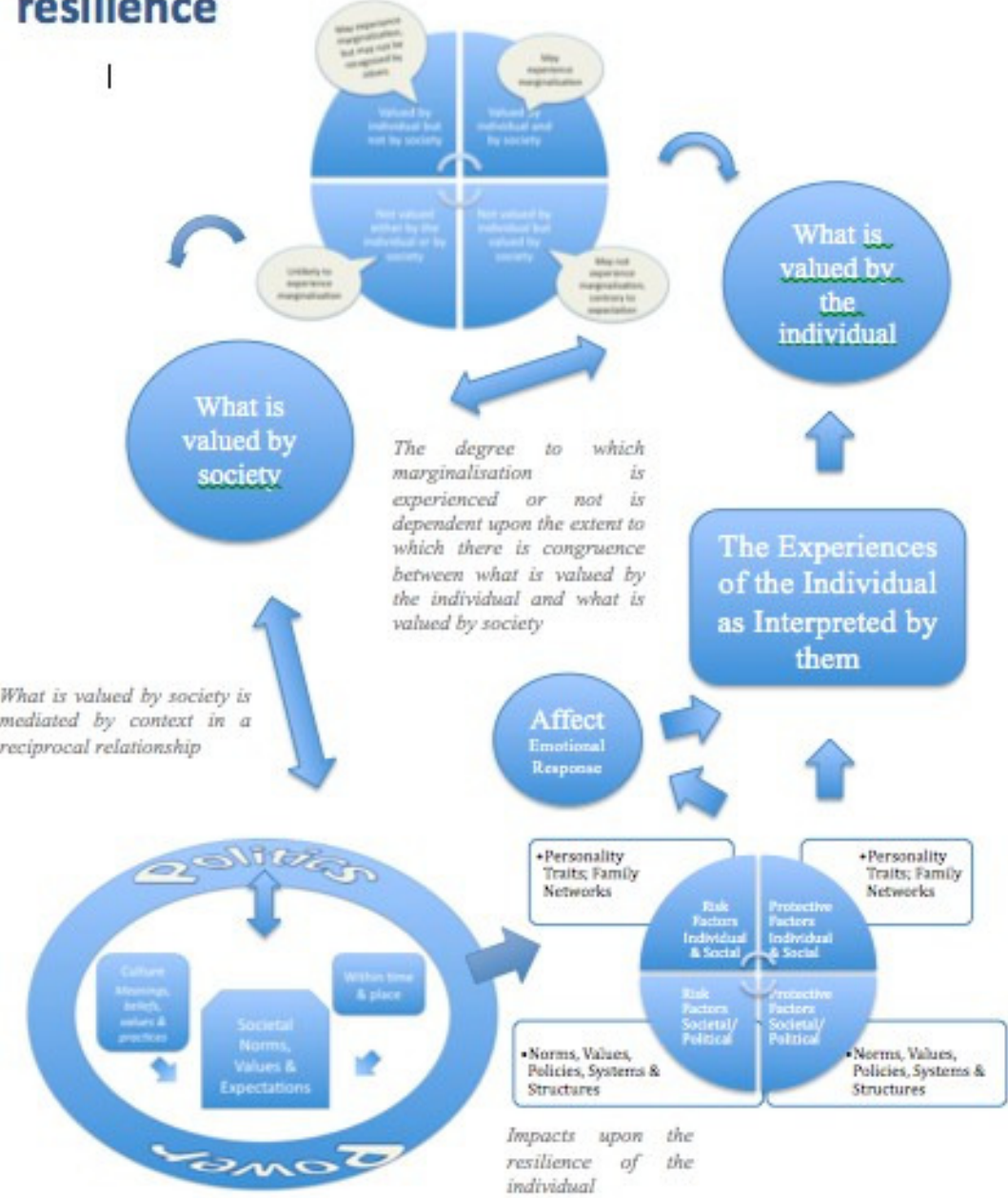


Figure 5: A theoretical framework through which marginalisation can be understood

Conclusions and Implications for Policy and Practice

What has emerged within this discussion is the complexity of the construct. It is not as simple as examining the range of circumstances which pertain to an individual and placing them within a category of ‘marginalised’, nor to make the assumption that

marginalisation will apply to all aspects of their lives, in all places and at all times. This paper has argued that it is how individuals interpret their life experiences (which in itself is framed through their past experience) and how they perceive their lives in relation to others and the 'ideals' which are a representation of cultural norms, expectations and values, shaped by and through political forces and the systems and structures (including legal systems) of society, which will determine whether or not they will experience their lives as marginalised. In summary, marginalisation may be a matter of degree, the extent to which it is experienced or not by an individual filtered through their life experiences and their interpretation of such; it has an affective dimension; it is contextually related (situated in time, place and culture represented in norms, values and expectations); it may be temporary or become internalised and global; it arises through the actions of others, whether intentional or inadvertent, and is representative of unequal power relations; it may be formal (as represented through Government policies and legislation) or informal; it manifests itself in many different ways and can be understood at the individual, social and societal/political levels.

If it can no longer be held to be the case that there is a shared experience (marginalisation) which can be held to be true for all people who share certain characteristics (as exemplified within this paper), the implication for public policy and practice is that differentiated solutions are required which take account of the subjective experience of individuals and the interaction between risk and protective factors which shape those experiences – a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is unlikely to be successful and could, indeed, be counter-productive and wasteful of public funding, as was demonstrated by Ungar. If full account is to be taken of the subjective experience of the individual within public policy, this is dependent upon a

commitment towards giving people a voice and working in true partnership with communities rather than imposing solutions upon them. Within the school context, it means valuing children and young people for who they are (the concept of unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1957)), enabling them to participate fully in the life of the school and in decisions pertaining to their wellbeing and learning, tailoring interventions to the individual child and investing in the professional development of teachers.

Ungar (2012) argues that the greater the fidelity between the intervention and ‘the way good development is theorized for a particular sample of at-risk individuals in a particular context’ (13), the more likely the intervention is to be successful. The implication of this is that further research is needed to inform such public policy and practice. Seddon (2014) draws attention to the conflict between global enactments of policy (as reflected in neoliberal agendas) and the European sociological tradition with its focus upon social justice that is being marginalised through the focus upon performativity, standards and competition. This is conceptualised in relation to three concepts: sociology of education as *a space for knowledge making*, as *a space of knowledge* and sociology of education *as network*. It is hoped that this paper will open up these three spaces as they pertain to European educational research through providing opportunities for collaboration and debate, through the creation of new knowledge which will inform policy and practice and through opportunities for researchers to work across boundaries. Such collaborations would enable the research community to come together so that insights from a range of fields can be integrated and the conceptual confusion across a range of paradigms to which Kolar drew attention addressed.

Limitations

As previously stated, this paper sets out an hypothesis for consideration by others to stimulate debate within the field with the purpose of informing public policy and practice at an international level such that inclusive practice can be furthered and developed. This hypothesis has not yet been tested within the field and it is not implied that resilience is the only lens through which marginalisation can be understood. It is recognised that areas such as race, ethnicity and poverty are fields within their own right and, within the constraints of the paper which draws from a broad theoretical base, it may not be possible to do justice to these fields.

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Endnotes

1. Reproduced by kind permission of Tim Minchin from the album 'Ready for This' recorded in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London in 2008
2. A strategy introduced by Jenny Mosley and Helen Sonnet by which children 'earn' through good behaviour the right to participate in a set of activities

3. It should be noted when drawing from findings within the UK that Scotland has devolved powers for education, health, social work and housing amongst other aspects of public policy, which means that the political and social context is different.