

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE'S VOICES OF
RESILIENCE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR
PRACTICE IN
EDUCATION**

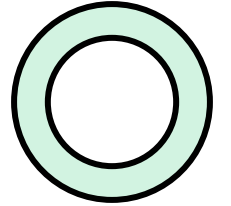
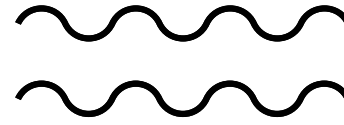
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Resilience

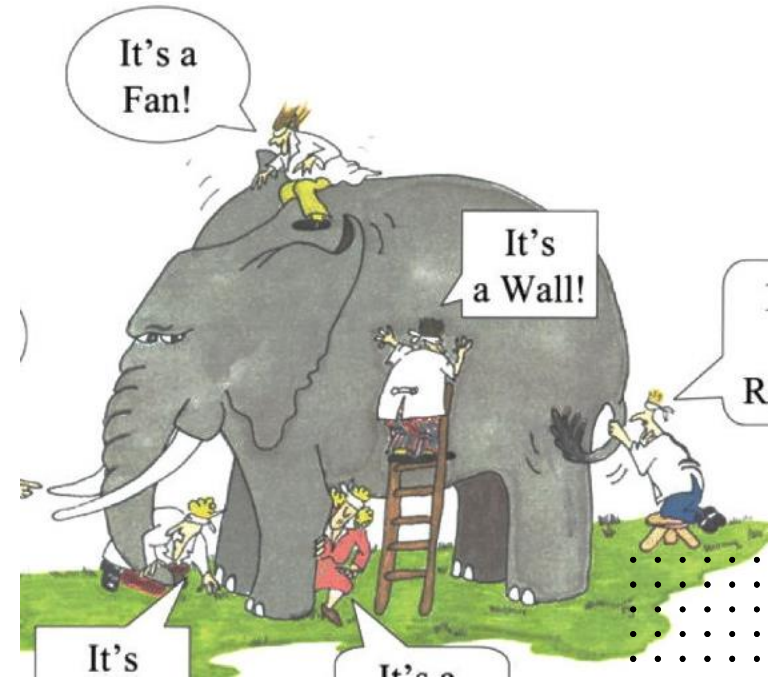
- Resilience, defined as “*positive adaptation despite adversity*”, first used by Werner in the 1970s, has become a popular term in research and practice with disadvantaged groups, centralising the role of ‘positive emotions’, ‘successful traits’, and coping mechanisms in adapting to life despite great odds (Werner & Smith, 2002, p. 3; see also Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2015; Rutter, 2012).
- Moreover, the phenomenon of resilience has been adopted in everyday language with a focus on ‘*making people more resilient*’ or the ‘*need*’ to become more resilient.



Revisiting Resilience



- Yet, 'resilience' has also provoked scepticism, and at present there is **little consensus on the referent of the term, standards for its application or agreement on its role in explanations, models and theories.**
- Some of this is linked to the fact that **key terms**, such as 'success' and 'positive adaptations' are *not clearly defined*, other than being **measured in terms of education success, an 'ability to achieve goals' and having a 'positive attitude'**, to name a few, whilst **'resistance to change' and 'disordered behaviours' are equated with lacking in resilience** (Ungar, 2020).



○ Examples of where Resilience may be Challenged

- **Learning Difficulties.**
- **Autism and other Pervasive Developmental Disorders.**
- **Conduct Problems.**
- **Depression and Bipolar Disorders.**
- **Anxiety Disorders.**
- **Child Abuse & Neglect.**
- **Racism & Discrimination.**
- **Marginalisation & Displacement.**



○ Voice of Child with Learning Difficulties - Example:

“As a child I was slow to learn left from right and was easily confused by verbal instructions. I was, and still am, easily disorientated when I am out and about. At school I was slow. I hated reading and writing. Teachers punished me for my shortcomings. I was denied playtime and they made to stay late after school. I was separated from my classmates and made to sit at a table be myself.”



○ Immediate Impacts:

- **Social Exclusion** – *being excluded from school activities, because of difficulties with written language.*
- **Self-imposed isolation** – *avoiding close contact with other children to avoid 'being found out'.*
- **Self-esteem** – *low self-esteem and related anxieties, resulting in bed-wetting and stress.*
- **Depression** – *a negative attitude of oneself, one's environment and one's future (see also Beck).*
- **Academic achievement & motivation** = *low.*



○ Long-term Impacts

- *Dropping out of school.*
- *Aggression.*
- *Lack of confidence when it comes to personal abilities and achievements.*
- *Crime?*



○ Autism - Example:

"I always had rituals and obsessions!!! ...they changed over time. However, they were always based around my interests: animals, insects' medicine... I like to wear clothes that are familiar... Eat foods that are the same... I hated it when routines changed, and i would become quite miserable, almost lose motivation for anything. I am still like that today; however, I am more adaptable now than when I was a child"

(Wendy Lawson - In: Wood et al, 2006; page 148)



○ Immediate Impacts

- Impairment in social interaction – social exclusion, leading to low self-esteem.
- Executive dysfunction: problems with switching attention flexibly from one thing to another; problems with planning and delivering intended actions.
- Not seeing the 'bigger picture'.
- Inability to engage in pretend play, lack of imagination.



○ Long-term Impacts

- Loneliness - inability to make friends, to be 'accepted'.
- Employment problems - inability to work in a team, lack of skills when it comes to applying for a job
- Depression.



○ Conduct - Problems; Example

A mother's account: *"As a toddler, Kyle was a handful. He was always getting into mischief, disobeying me, and throwing tantrums. By the time Kyle was in second grade, he had been suspended twice for physical aggression. Kyle has injured classmates, got into drugs, and has made racially and sexually offensive comments to classmates. I know that he has made a lot of trouble, but he is not really a bad kid. I think if his father played a larger role in his life he'd be ok!"*

(Weiss, 2008, p. 287).



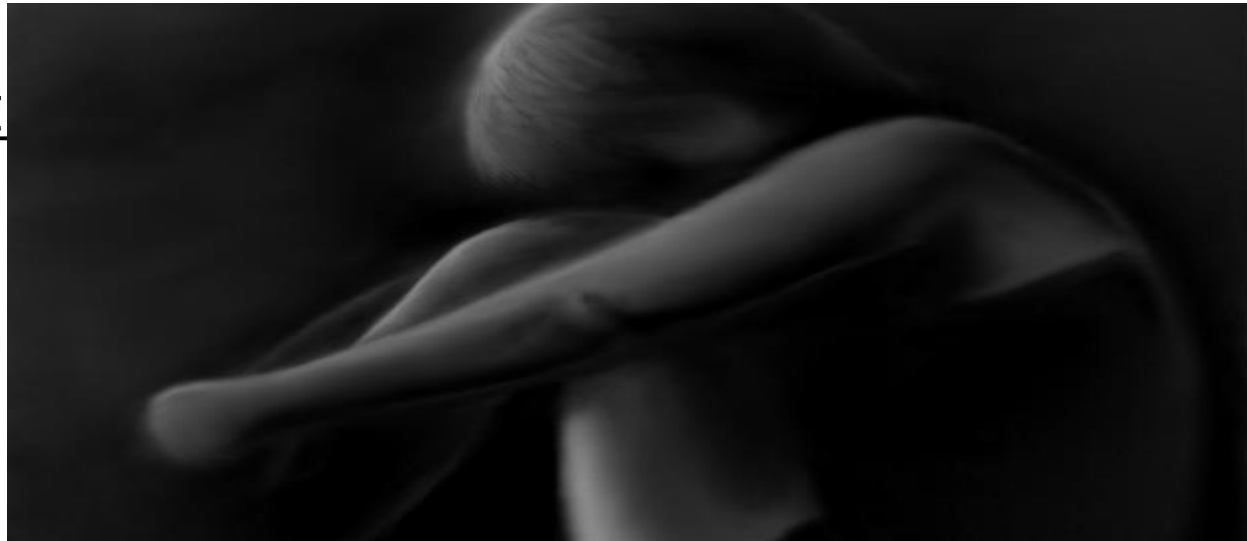
○ Immediate Impacts

- Social Exclusion.
- Lack of Academic Achievement.
- Anxiety.
- Depression.
- Gender: *More prevalent in boys. Onset in boys: preschool - in girls: adolescence.*



○ Long-term Impacts

- Substance Abuse & Delinquency.
- Social Exclusion & Employment Difficulties.
- Mental Health



○ Child Abuse & Neglect - Example

"My grandmother died when I was 13, and I was alone with my older brother, who is mentally handicapped and my grandfather. I was beaten daily for almost a year. My grandfather used to scream at me... tell me I was worthless, and ugly, and a disappointment, stuff like that. I would take the blame for things my brother did, so he would be spared from the pain that i was forced to deal with. One day I picked up a razor blade an just started slicing my arms - it made me feel better."



○ Immediate Impacts

- Physical Health: *broken bones; burns and scars. Neurological damage.*
- Behaviour Problems: *disruptive behaviour, hyper-activity; aggressive.*
- Mood & Anxiety Problems: *low self-esteem; self-blame.*
- Lack of attachment: *difficulty making friends.*
- Cognitive Delays.



○ Long-term Impacts

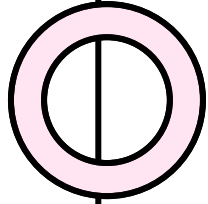
- Mental Health problems - *depression; anxiety; self-harm.*
- Eating Disorders - *anorexia; bulimia.*
- Does the 'abused' become the 'abuser'???
- Problems with attachment and relationships.



The Study



- Interviews with young people and adults from ethnic minority communities undertaken in the South of England between 2018–2021, as part of a study into their perceptions regarding social care, social services and education.
- *We argue that resilience can also mean ‘resistance’, i.e., resisting bad treatment and racism, as well as reflecting agency, identity and ownership of one’s own life and choices within this.*


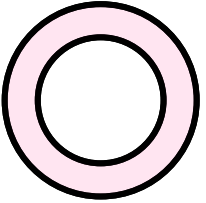
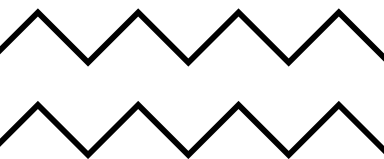


**‘Resistance’
and
‘Difference’
as
threatening**

They say ‘oh you’re shouting’ or they said that when you were talking to them, you were shouting, you’re raising your voice. We’re Caribbean they don’t realise that Caribbean people have a very high pitch tone! (Black female)

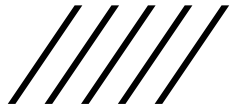
There was another black lady, her son had been taunted and called the N-word, and she kicked off at the school, and they told her that they will call the police to get her arrested. (Black female)

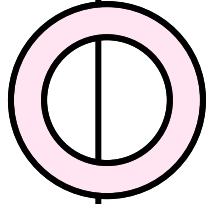
She has shouted at me in the corridor and said to me my son will not be able to participate in a nativity Christmas play because he is a Muslim. I have never started at her whether he is Muslim, Jewish, Christian or whether he can or cannot play part in the play, so I was really in shock because there were a lot of parents around. She was holding out the reception door, so there are a huge amount of people and there to shout at myself and expectedly put me in the shock and I didn’t know what to say to her. (Moroccan female)



Absence, Under- representation and 'Othering'

The kids touching (name) hair – there's always kids touching her hair and messing about with her hair and they – we don't see that as a nice thing. You shouldn't do that, you should maybe ask first or something. And they tried to say '[oh]' but it's because they like her' and I – I'm saying 'no but that's sort of racist' But it's all about saying 'no' without getting angry I guess 'cause (name) didn't like it, it's a bit rude. She used to say 'I'm not a dog'. [laughs] (Mother of a mixed-race teenage girl)





Conclusion

Voices from a range of communities are **absent** from and **under-represented** in resilience research and practice, including from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in the UK, as well as from global contexts.

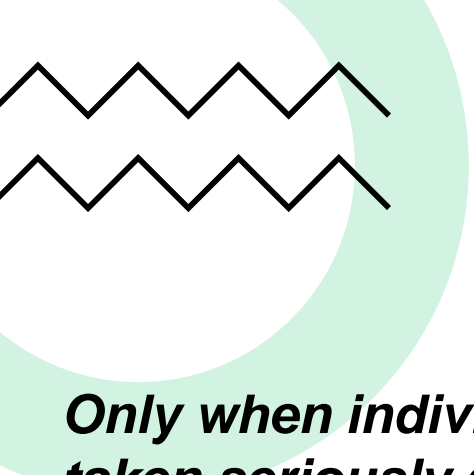
This is despite the wealth of anti-racist research that centres the role of resilience in achieving against the odds, particularly in relation to education, and which highlights ways in which **communities can be resilient in the context of discrimination and racism.**



Yet not only are voices from a range of communities under-represented in this field, the focus on 'strengthening' and 'building' resilience in ethnic minority communities pathologises these communities, suggesting that they do not already develop resilience and are in need of transformation

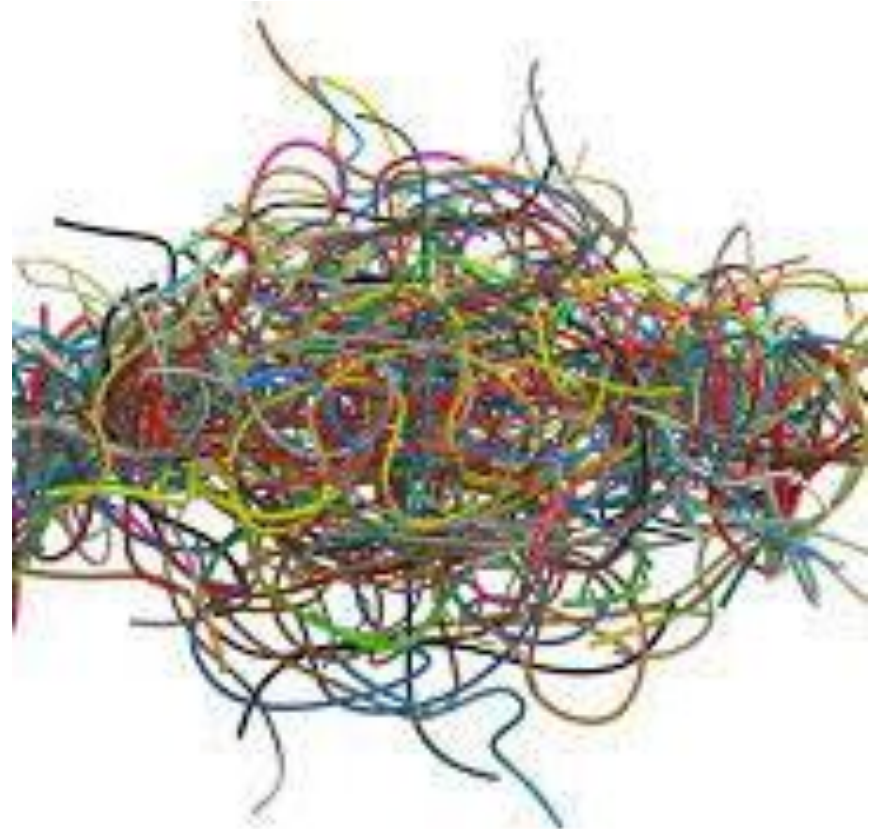
Instead, definitions of strong and poor resilience are established which can lead to blaming members from ethnic minority communities for not coping in an oppressive environment





Only when individuals and communities are heard, taken seriously and their needs engaged with is it possible to truly make sense of what resilience entails and what support is required to facilitate the development of resilience in different social and cultural groups. Rather than embracing a form of ‘colour blindness/evasion’, often wrongly applied in certain ‘inclusive practices’, there is a need for a race-conscious approach to transformation

What next?? >>>



● **"ECLECTIC" - Exposing Children's Lived Experiences, Co-produced Through Immersive Collections**

- *Against the backdrop of the rise in child refugees/migrants across the world, this project aims to advance understanding of the transformative potential of curating children's stories and experiences in accessible and creative ways to disrupt, counter, and draw critical attention to the impact and legacy of displacement.*
- *'Lived Memories' & 'Survivor Silence' - little is known about the every day experiences of (former) child migrants/refugees and displaced children following arrival in their new country.*



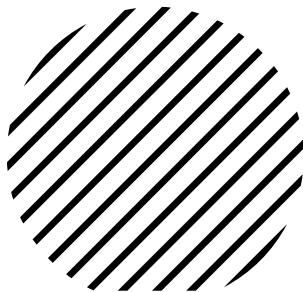
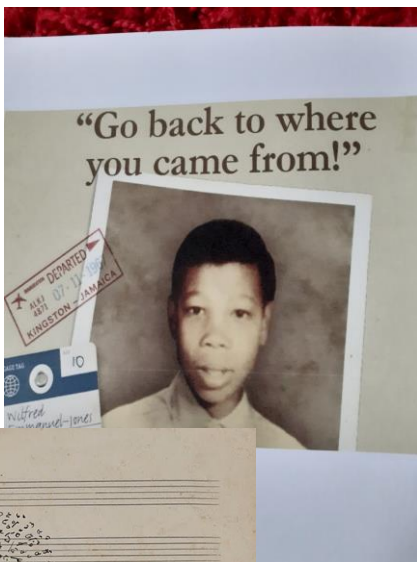
Dear Madam,
In connection with your letter of July 10, 1988 in the J'lem Post I am interested in the re-union.
I left Berlin on abt. July 19, 1939 as a child of nearly 15 years old. We were a large group of all kinds of children all ages.
My first stop was Great Enghoe Farm near Kent, where we were transferred to North Wales between Abergele and Colwynbay, we lived in a castle which is called GWYCH Castle. From there we were separated and put in different places in order to work for Agriculture Comsites. I changed a lot of places till in the end I landed in London in a place called Cazenove Road. All those nine years we worked on the land or in the House as DOMESTIC.
The entire idea was to prepare ourselves for Palestine. On July 1948 I left with a small group to Palestine through France.
I do not know whether this gives you a ~~WASA~~ picture but I will try to find some photos and will forward them to you. I only know that no many photos are in my possession, as in war time and as small children we did not have a camera. All the same I will try.
In the meantime, thank you,
I remain



How?

- By presenting **contemporary children**, as co-producers/researchers and experts, with **former child refugees/migrants' stories, memories and artefacts**, exposing the lived experiences and legacies of two historic migration schemes (**Kindertransport and Windrush**).
- Centred on **'things'**, this project acknowledges **objects, stories and artefacts as carriers of complex visual, material, cultural and social meanings generating multiple narratives and interpretations**. This recognition demands embracing an ***interdisciplinary outlook*** and adopting a multiplicity of research methods, including visual methods and participatory research.





Department for Education UK guidance on 'political impartiality: teachers to be 'balanced' over British Empire and not to back Black Lives Matter.

Instead, this project centralises children's meaning-making and validating children's voice, agency. This involves treating children's ideas and opinions on matters that affect them as central to ideas of participation, social justice, democratic practice and agency, and treating childhood as personal, fluid and relational, recognising the inherent interdependence of children's worlds.

Viewed **through a critical realist lens and positioning theory**, provides opportunities for making sense of **deeply subjective, sensed, and embodied experiences.**



JUST LIKE US...

The objects
tell you that
the children are
just like us.

What stories do these objects tell you about these
child migrants' lives?

This tells us that the
child migrants are just
like us. They are normal
people who have had
bad luck/experience.
(misfortune)

The child migrants probably
feel like they do not
belong. They might be
told to go back to where
they come which is not
possible because they had
to escape for a
reason.

objects?
people were
overwhelmed
unprecedented
sorry for
them because
they had to leave
their family.
the children
wouldn't understand
why they had

- feel like an
outsider
- no where to go
- have no idea
what people are
saying.



Phone
Charger



anxious

fee li
scary

worried

Sad to leave

relieved
(moved away
from danger)

homesick

isolated

they would feel
angry because
they are being forced
to move despite all
the changes they
are going through
personally

lonely

uncomfortable

the older children
have to feel responsible for
the younger siblings/children

pressured



FEELINGS & EMPATHY

○ Contemporary Children's Talk about Former Child Migrants/Refugees

- "Children our age, we always take things for granted. People do things like this and it's not very nice."
- "A memory, I'm just going to get over sad straightaway because like all I've got is a memory."
- "Scary because you've never- you don't have someone that you like always had around, also angry because you're being like forced to change something when you're already like changing physically. Puberty. Changing into a teenager."
- "And people are so selfish. Like, us British people are so proud to be British but our history is like actually nasty. It's just disgusting that people can be so selfish."



○ WHY?

- Immersive learning – counteracting ‘Othering’ and ‘Otherness’.
- Focus on ‘**belonging**’, rather than ‘migrants’.
- Curated by children, not adults – **children as constructors and co-constructors**.
- Taking **a departure from the UK Department for Education’s view of children as passive absorbers of one-directional teacher instructions**, evident in their recent advice to teachers in England to be “balanced” in their teaching about the British Empire.
- **Addressing Amnesia and Fragmented memories that are central in colonial and post-colonial empires and migration.**





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