Extended Paper: Reconceptualising Foundational Assumptions of Resilience: A Cross-Cultural, Spatial Systems Domain of Relevance for Agency and Phenomenology in Resilience

Paul Downes

This article seeks to amplify Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) concerns with concentric structured, nested systems and phenomenology, for Ungar’s (2012) extension of resilience to systems based on Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 1995) socio-ecological paradigm. Resilience rests on interconnected assumptions regarding space, agency and system blockage, as well as the role of individual phenomenological dimensions. This article proposes a specific model of dynamic spatial systems of relation to underpin agency and phenomenology in resilience, building on a reinterpretation of Lévi-Strauss’ (1962, 1963, 1973) cross-cultural observations of contrasts between concentric and diametric spatial systems; space is a key bridge between material, symbolic and interpersonal domains of relevance for resilience. Agency in resilience is interpreted in terms of movement between concentric and diametric spatial systems at social and school microsystem levels, as well as for individual phenomenology. Space is not just an object of analysis but an active constituent part of educational and developmental processes pertaining to resilience, as a malleable background contingent condition for causal trajectories. This framework of spatial-relational agency shifts focus for resilience from bouncing back into shape, towards transition points in space, moving from diametric spaces of splitting to concentric spatial relations of assumed connection across different system levels.

Keywords: Resilience, Agency, Systems, Concentric and Diametric Space, Phenomenology