

Hard to Reach Essay #2 – Children living in In-Work Poverty

Adversity can be defined as ‘the experience of life events and circumstances which may combine to threaten or challenge healthy development’, these can include family stressors, structural inequalities and socio-economic disadvantages (Daniel *et al*, 1999). ‘Where you live, what you earn and how long you stay in education may all affect your health’ (Public Health England, 2014) and ‘people who experience one or more of: material disadvantage, lower educational attainment and/or insecure employment are likely to experience worse health than the rest of the population’ (Department of Health, 2002). Good mental health can be described as ‘the ability to play a full part in your family, workplace, community and among friends’ (Mental Health Foundation, 2018) and good mental wellbeing links to a sense of belonging, social inclusion, physical health and emotions (Public Health England, 2015). This essay will first address the importance society places on work, afterwards it will unpick how a child’s health and wellbeing can be affected by living in working poverty and highlight barriers that may stop their full engagement and inclusion within society, while exploring what risk and resilience means within the context. For the purpose of this essay, in-work poverty, working poverty and the working poor are all used interchangeably.

Social divisions are guilty of bringing separation between individuals as well as at a national and global level (Payne, 2006). In contemporary society, although more fragmented, there are more opportunities to choose from than fifty years ago, however, many jobs require further education and deliver a greater sense of uncertainty (Payne, 2006). These opportunities and choices operate within frameworks which provide the poorly paid, insecure and those in unskilled jobs without the opportunity of choice towards the life they may want to live (Payne, 2006). Casual contracts or **zero hour contracts** entitles its workers to the national minimum wage (UK Government, no date) and has

Employment Practices in the Modern Economy (2016) addresses six themes: 1. security, pay and rights, 2. progression and training, 3. The balance of rights and responsibilities, 4. Representation, 5. Opportunities for under represented groups and 6. New business models. Good Work (2017) is based on fairness and one of the most important factors stressed is the relationship between management and the employee, where everyone has a baseline of protection and that which offers opportunities. Fair completion and **equality of opportunity** has a direct impact upon wellbeing, for both adults and children (Ridge, 2009). Many people are not aware of the actual extent that income inequality, within society, affects families (Pahl *et al*, 2007) or how much previous income levels and personal experiences or circumstances of others around them can contribute to the effect of poverty and equality has upon wellbeing (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009).

After a report was published, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary Margaret Greenwood expressed: “‘There is something wrong when the number of people in work poverty is increasing faster than employment’” (CITATION). **Employment** is shown, on one hand, to be rising however three in four children living in poverty have at least one working parent. Having a job is seen as taking control of your life and future, nevertheless, many families who have someone working are still living in poverty (Goulden, 2019). The poverty premium underlines how people who are already living in poverty, end up paying more for a certain good because of the location in which they live or because they do not have the full sum of money required at the point of purchase (JRF, 2014). **Wellbeing and subjective wellbeing** A main goal of society should be to focus on and achieve life satisfaction and happiness, however wellbeing is multifaceted (McAuley and Rose, 2010). Wellbeing has been separated into physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development and has been defined by the Welsh Government Legal Services (2016) as:

Physical, mental and emotion health, protection from abuse or neglect, education, training and recreation, domestic families and personal relationships, contribution to society, securing rights and entitlements, social and economic suitability of living accommodation, welfare and development.

The Minimum Income Standard states that the essentials for daily living are housing, food and drink, childcare (where needed), social and cultural participation, transport, clothing, household goods and services, with the main costs being on the first four listed (JRF, 2014). **Chief executive Campbell Robb said:** “‘We are seeing a

rising tide of child poverty as more parents are unable to make ends meet, despite working. It means families are trapped in impossible situations”(CITATION). Poverty can be defined as ‘a state in which lack of resources leads to an unacceptable low standard of living’ (Platt, 2006, pp.276) or ‘lacking the resources to get around the problem’ (JRF, 2014) and is linked with to other social divisions which also make a contribution, such as class, gender and/or ethnicity (Platt, 2006). In 2008, at the beginning of the recession, government made cuts and unemployment rose along with the essentials, like rent, food and fuel which affected low income families (Bradshaw, 2016). The cost of living, of essential goods and services has grown significantly and quickly over recent years and has happened much quicker than the wage increase of low income families. Public policy, consumer vulnerability, trade and planning policies are all impacting the rise of living costs. These costs can be seen within the special costs, enhanced costs and the poverty premium which affect low income families. It is important to highlight that decisions made in government have a direct affect on this group, either positively or negatively (JRF, 2014).

Living in poverty has long term and short-term effects, and children living in working poverty are likely to experience poverty over a long period of time (Ridge,2002). So, focussing on the welfare of children is not only about how successfully they may become as adults but should take into account their best interest now (McAuley and Rose, 2010) and by focussing on what concerns them is important to giving them a voice and agency (Ridge,2002). Also listening to children and their life from their viewpoint will assist the learning and developing of new policies (McAuley and Rose, 2010). ‘Children's lives are diverse and their risks and experiences of poverty will differ’ (Ridge, 2002, pp.22). The Children’s Society (2018) for the past seven years have produced the Good Childhood Report which asks and values children’s opinion about their subjective wellbeing (definition) and the latest highlights the importance of family, reporting that the research shows family is the most important aspect for children. In 2017 the Report estimated half the population to be living in three or more disadvantages and that around fifty thousand children in Wales experience seven or more. Living standards are increasing which escalates the demands and increases the pressures for those families already finding it hard to succeed in social integration adequately (Ridge, 2002, pp.37).

Housing – Kate Henderson, from the National Housing Federation, has said that a major driver for working poverty is a lack of affordable housing, adding: “ Building affordable homes must remain at the top of the polical agenda”(CITATION).

Upto what earning are you allowed benefits?

What does an average family need to live on

Childhood is changing as society changes, altering its form to the culture and socio- economy of its time (Lee, 2001) and currently we cannot ignore the sharp increase of child poverty rising within working families (Press Association, 2018). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) developed to protect children from

Risk factors can be defined broadly as a problem that has the potential to form, continue or worsen due an event or condition (Fraser and Terzian, 2005).

Structural inequalities

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Developed in 2010, the Measuring National Wellbeing (MNW) program aims to report and monitor subjective and objective data which is supposed to reflect how people in the U.K. are doing regarding feeling life as worthwhile, recent feelings of happiness, life satisfaction and in contrast anxiety (Bradshaw, 2016), Subjective

wellbeing consists of focusing on evaluating ones' personal life and emotions and **Friendships** can have a large impact upon a person's wellbeing (Dunn, 2004) and for boys, meeting with friends outside of school has a positive impact on their happiness and life as a whole (The Childrens Society, 2018). 'Children's interactions with those around them – and the way in which children make sense of those interactions – are fundamentally important to how they feel about themselves' (The Childrens Society, 2018). **Attachments** at a young age are important for development, which **Bowlby**, focussed his attention on and developed a theory which places the need for a strong and affectionate bond as the foundation for future psychological wellbeing, stable relationships, positive self-image, trust and resilience (Crowley, 2014). Bowlby also believed that everyone is born with survival instincts and Ainsworth studied the outcomes that are produced by the level of attachments developed (Crowley, 2014).

Maslow

Disorganised attachments involves how feelings are processed and understood

Social stratification

Protective factors are influences which reduce the opportunity for risk to affect a person's life, such influences could be environmental, interpersonal, social or individual factors however positive attributes can operate in the midst of risk or adversity creating successful adaptation which can be known as resilience (Jensen and Fraser, 2016, pp.11). Resilience within a person reflects the level of risk one is exposed to in comparison to the protectoe

(Gilbert,2018) 'students must see themselves as potentially successful'(pg.24) which holds personal confidence and motivation at its core. Such must be developed

~~An accumulation of risk seems to disrupt normal developmental trajectories (Jensen and Fraser, 2016, pp.7).~~

Future Wellbeing Act

Since 1994, the aim to end child poverty by 2021 has seen targets being set however, currently in 2019, it is noticeable that this aim will not be fulfilled (Bradshaw and Main, 2016). So, although we are one large society, we live with boundaries between us which contribute to shaping who we are and our lives. Class is 'reflected in our attitudes, lifestyles, accents and ways of dressing' (Scott, 2006, pp. 25). Every individual looks towards changing their **social position** one way or another, this emphasises that the rules, codes of conduct and boundaries to which each social group must oblige still exist and are deep rooted however with less rigidity. Such codes of conduct to which one must adhere to help create perspectives of the world. Nothing in human society is absolute, meaning that with time change also happens (Payne, 2006)