

# From Individual Resilience to Inclusive Systems: A Cross-Cultural, Spatial-Phenomenological Dimension to Agency in Developmental Psychology

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Resilience assumes a framework of  
agency

**ACTIVE MEDIATING VARIABLES –  
a) experience**

How can experience be potentially  
active to change environmental-  
genetic determinism ?

Where is the site for human  
freedom/agency in experience ? –  
movement between diametric and  
concentric primordial spatial  
structures of experience

Resilience assumes a framework of agency

\*Beyond constructivist agency (Williams 1992) of **choice between alternatives** as culture conditions criteria for choice in infinite regress

\*Beyond **relational** agency of Carol Gilligan et al (1982; 1992) as choice from interpersonal relationships may be highly flawed (Downes 2012) e.g, friends involve people in human trafficking (Downes et al. 2008) and heroin addiction (Downes 2003) in Baltic States

Propose dimensions of experience (primordial cross-cultural experiential **structures**) as **spatial** –concentric and diametric spatial experiences

## Resilience needs to address agency for intrapsychic and systems of care dimensions

Ungar's (2012) work has sought to broaden resilience to a socio-ecological, cross-cultural focus but this arguably does not go far enough.

Ecological systemic perspectives on resilience, reliant on Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1995) ecological systems theory, need to recognise the weaknesses in Bronfenbrenner regarding:

**\*intrapsychic systems** (Downes 2012): Primordial spatial structured projections of concentric and diametric spaces embedded into cognitions, emotions, interpersonal relations (and social systems)

**\*system change, system blockage** and power relations (Downes 2014), as well as systems of care (Downes 2014a).

Rutter's (1985) resilience framework is too individualistic - social supports and schools for resilience is not a systemic focus

# RESILIENCE and AGENCY: A NEGLECTED FOCUS ON POTENTIALLY ACTIVE MEDIATING VARIABLES

a) Experience – Some modes of  
experience

Primordial embedded spatial-relational  
experience: A phenomenology *through*  
space not simply *of* space

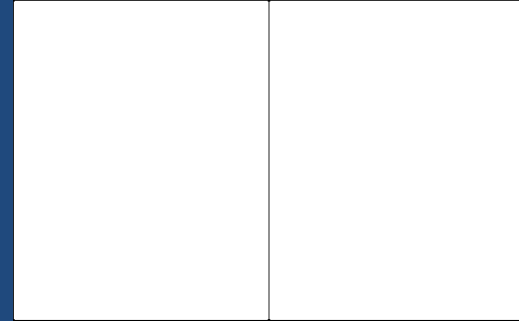
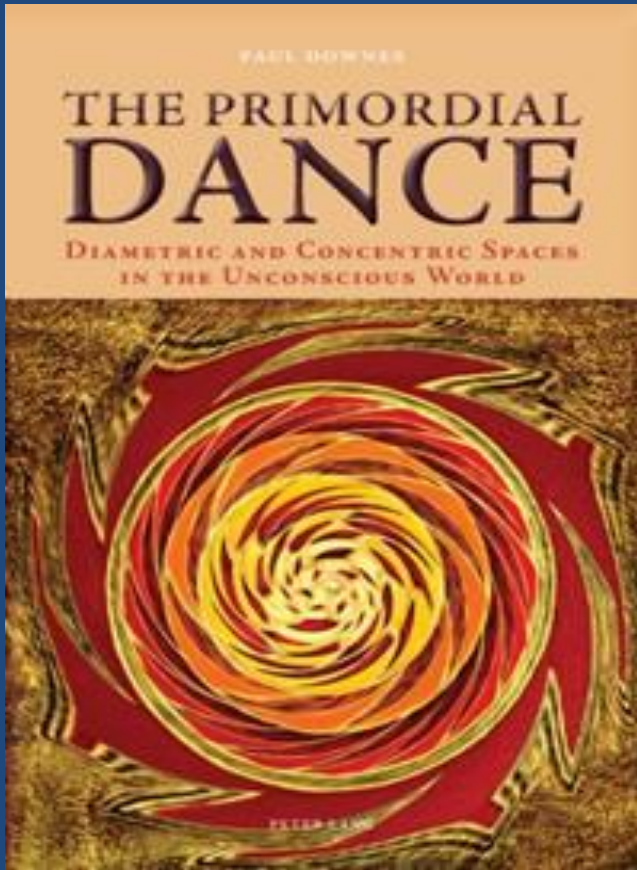
b) Supports of relational space of  
assumed connection in systems and  
system blockage as splits of assumed  
separation



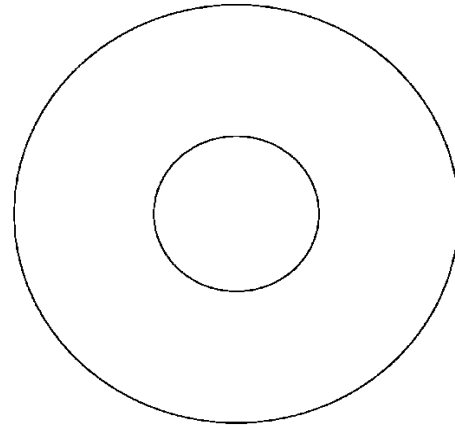
## Neglect of Silent Contingent Conditions

Rutter (1985) argues more generally that change to background supporting conditions have been frequently overlooked within developmental psychology:

‘It is commonly but wrongly assumed that a significant main effect in a multivariate analysis means that that variable has an effect on its own. It does not. What it means is that there is a significant main effect for that variable, after other variables have been taken into account: that is not tantamount to an effect in the absence of all other variables’ (p. 601).



**Fig. 1** Diametric Dualism



**Fig. 2** Concentric Dualism

# DIAMETRIC AND CONCENTRIC SPATIAL STRUCTURES OF EXPERIENCE

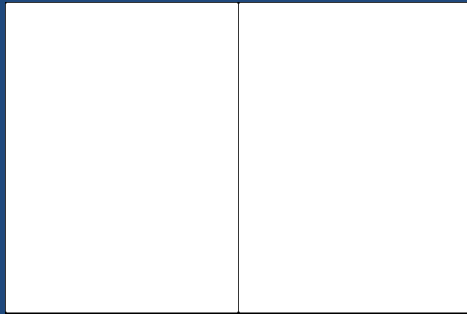
Jahoda's (1982) cross-cultural, anthropological review concludes that 'the simplest and at the same time most common type of symbolic classification ... is the dual one'. (p. 251). Resonant with Osgood (1979), Jahoda (1982) recognizes that the Chinese classification of *yin/yang* is 'perhaps the best known case' (p. 251) of fundamental bipolar oppositions.



Concentric structures can be found also in Islamic, Japanese, Russian, Chinese, Jewish, Celtic, African, ancient Greek and Estonian contexts, while Jung locates the concentric mandala structure in Buddhist, Hindu and Christian traditions (Levi-Strauss 1963, 1973; Downes 2012)

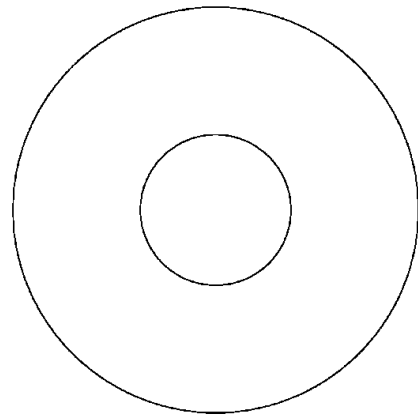


# DIAMETRIC AND CONCENTRIC SPATIAL STRUCTURES OF EXPERIENCE



**Fig. 1** Diametric Dualism

A diametric spatial structure is one where a circle is split in half by a line which is its diameter or where a square or rectangle is similarly divided into two equal halves (see Fig. 1).



**Fig. 2** Concentric Dualism

In a concentric spatial structure, one circle is inscribed in another larger circle (or square); in pure form, the circles share a common central point (see Fig. 2). (Downes 2012)

## First entailment of the relative differences between concentric and diametric spaces: Assumed connection and assumed separation

Though Lévi-Strauss did not explicitly highlight this difference, *the inner and outer poles of concentric structures are more fundamentally attached to each other* than diametric structures. Both concentric poles coexist in the same space so that the outer circle overlaps the space of the inner one.

Fig. 1 Diametric Dualism

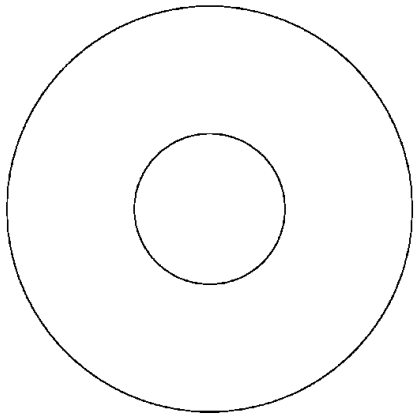


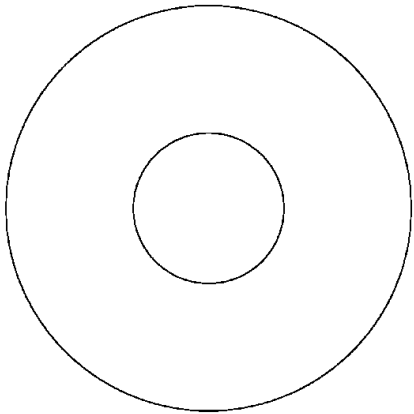
Fig. 2 Concentric Dualism

Diametric oppositional realms *are both basically detached and can be further smoothly detached* from the other.

A concentric relation assumes connection between its parts and any separation is on the basis of assumed connection, whereas diametric opposition assumes separation and any connection between the parts is on the basis of this assumed separation

## Second entailment of the relative differences between concentric and diametric spatial relation: Symmetry as unity and mirror image inverted symmetry

**Fig. 1** Diametric Dualism



**Fig. 2** Concentric Dualism

A mirror image is not an identical one but a left-right inversion or reversal.

\*Concentric spatial structures of relation are not a symmetry as inversion. Rather they offer a different symmetry as unity, where the line or axis of symmetry brings the same pole rather than a mirror image pole

## Defences as Diametric Space: Diametric mirror image inverted symmetry as a general feature of Freudian obsessional neurosis

*Wolf Man* case of obsessional neurosis, Freud (1926) strongly emphasises the interplay of two diametrically opposing states, 'In following up a single instinctual repression we have thus had to recognize a convergence of two such processes. The two instinctual impulses have been overtaken by repression – sadistic aggressiveness towards the father and a tender passive attitude to him – form a pair of opposites' (p. 106).

Diametric mirror image projections:  
Love/hate, active/passive, us/them,  
superior/inferior, pleasure/pain



‘The symptoms belonging to this [obsessional] neurosis fall, in general, into two groups, each having an opposite trend. They are either prohibitions, precautions and expiations – that is, negative in character – or they are, on the contrary, substitutive satisfactions which often appear in symbolic disguise’ (Freud, 1926, p. 112)

Ambivalent attachment and Ernst’s ‘fort/da’ game (Freud 1920) as diametric inversion (Downes 2012)



## Ego-Defences as Diametric Space: Diametric spatial projection as assumed separation – a structure of exclusion, a dynamic splitting structure

\*Freud (1914, p.11) splitting as a 'defence' as repression

Concentric spatial projection as assumed connection – a structure of inclusion (Downes 2012)

A compensatory relation implies that concentrically structured experience is an underlying potential structural *telos* for a psychological shift away from diametric mode of relation.

Diametric opposition as a relational space of assumed separation – *interpersonal* relations

Conquergood's (1994) three-year ethnographic portrayal of how male teenage street gangs in Chicago divide into diametric structured opposition, even though there is no tangible reason for the content of these oppositions such as ethnic, socio-economic, racial or regional differences.

'there are hundreds of gangs in Chicago, but all of them align with one of two Nations: People or Folks'

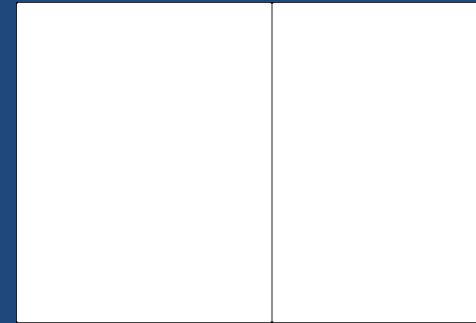
Heidegger (1927) primordial structures of being: being alongside the world contrasted with 'side-by-side' ness:

Concentric dwelling alongside contrasted with diametric side by sidedness (Downes 2009, 2012)

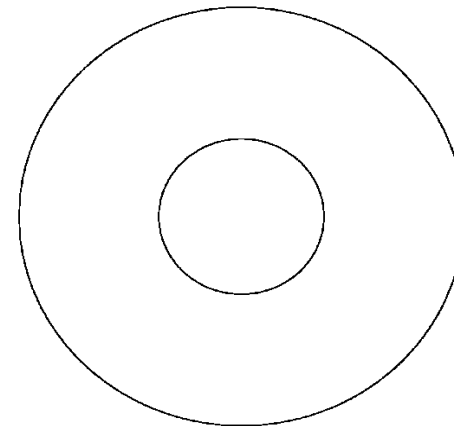
Secure attachment – concentric assumed connection relational space

Avoidant attachment – diametric assumed separation

Disorganized attachment - diametric mirror image inversion between opposites of active/passive



**Fig. 1** Diametric Dualism



**Fig. 2** Concentric Dualism



Brumariu & Kerns (2010) cite a range of studies that observe such disorganized attachment in children as showing:

‘contradictory, bizarre, and incoherent behaviours as an expression of experiencing a paradoxical situation: the caregiver is at the same time a source of apprehension and the secure base ... Three groups of disorganised attachment have been identified, **two of which manifest role reversal with the caregiver: controlling-caregiving, including children who focus on guiding and entertaining the parent; controlling-punitive, including children who manifest hostile behaviors toward the parent...**’ (p. 178)

- reveals a diametric spatial projection underlying insecure attachment
- **a range of role-reversals as diametric mirror image inversions**

Ambivalent attachment – diametric mirror image inversion between opposites of love/hate

In this projection of a spatial-relational space, there is an interchange between a diametric split of assumed separation and hostility to the caregiver, with a concentric assumed connection to the caregiver. Yet this is itself a diametric spatial projection, as a process of division itself *between* concentric and diametric modes of relation.

# Experiential agency as shifting and movement between diametric and concentric spatial structures of experiences

- Interplay between concentric assumed connection and diametric splitting assumed separation
- Interplay between diametric mirror image inversion and concentric unity
- Interplay between diametric closure of noninteraction with background (Levi-Strauss 1963) and relatively more open concentric space
- Phenomenologically: Experiential fluidity (concentric space) versus experiential solidity (diametric space)

\*Primordial spatial structured projections into cognitions, emotions, interpersonal relations (and social systems)

## **RESILIENCE: A NEGLECTED FOCUS ON POTENTIALLY ACTIVE MEDIATING VARIABLES**

**b) Supports of relational space of assumed connection in systems (Concentric spatial systems) and system blockage as splits of assumed separation (Diametric spatial systems)**

Ungar (2008) broadens Rutter's conception of resilience to a socio-ecological model of resilience:

'In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of the individual to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual's family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways' (p.225).

However, this broader environmental model does not include a focus on State systemic supports, as integrated services, in its role of developing inclusive systems. Ungar's socio-ecological broadening of Rutter's resilience does not go far enough in its systemic concerns.

## **Agency as Overcoming System *Blockage* of Diametric Space towards *Inclusive Concentric Systems* –**

Beyond Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory for integrated systems of care across education and health for early school leaving prevention

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) neglected system blockages, diametric splits and displacement (Downes 2013, 2014)  
– Bronfenbrenner minimised system change issues, power issues and system inertia (Downes 2014)

EU Commission: Multidisciplinary teams in and around schools (Downes 2011; Edwards & Downes 2013; TWG 2013)



## Inclusive Systems of Concentric Space as Assumed Connection for Overcoming System Blockage (Downes 2014a)

- System Blockage as Structures of Exclusion – Diametric spaces
- System Blockage as Diametrically Opposing Strategies (Expulsion/Suspension V. Early School Leaving Prevention)
- Alternatives to Suspension  
Suspension rates themselves are predictive of early school leaving rates (T. Lee, Cornell, Gregory & Fan, 2011).
- System Blockage as Fragmentation – Diametric assumed separation and splits
- Gaps between strategies and implementation committees for access to education (Downes 2014)
- System Blockage as Resistance – Diametric opposition
- System Blockage as Hierarchy – Diametric mirror image of superior/inferior



## Active mediating variables –supports of assumed connection in concentric relational systems

Lester et al.'s (2013) Australian study, 3459 students aged 11–14 years during the transition from primary to the end of the second year of secondary school.

- \*victimisation significantly increased over the first year of secondary school.

***\*did not collect information on transition activities offered by primary schools***

Markussen et al (2011) longitudinal study following a sample of 9,749 Norwegian students over a five-year period, out of compulsory education and through upper secondary education.

Markussen et al (2011) “Students with high scores on an index measuring seriously deviant behavior were in fact less likely to leave early than students with low scores on this index. This last finding is explained by the extra resources, support and attention these students are provided with, making it less probable for them to leave”.



## Active mediating variables –supports of assumed connection in systems of concentric relational space

Finnish population based, longitudinal birth cohort study of 2551 boys from age 8 years to 16-20 years, Sourander et al. (2007) frequent bullies with conduct and hyperactivity problems and not the bullies per se are the ones at elevated risk for later criminality 'mental health services should be an integrated and active part of the school environment, as effective prevention requires the shortest possible delay between detection and intervention.'. (p.550)

Wolke, Angold & Costello (2013) Western North Carolina longitudinal study examined 1400 people regarding their reported experiences of bullying perpetration, victimization or both between ages of 9-16. Follow up at ages 19, 21 and 24-26 indicate that those who were bullied were more likely to have a diagnosable anxiety disorder in adulthood, while both perpetrators and victims were more susceptible to depression.

**Longitudinal bullying outcome studies seldom provide a focus on historical changes to support services (e.g., school counselling services) in systems that may be a mediating variable in outcomes.**

Likewise comparison studies for bullying in schools tend not to control for emotional support services availability across groups.



## Conclusion:

**Wider framework for resilience and inclusive systems –  
Spatial-phenomenology (Downes 2012) of movement  
between diametric and concentric structures of  
a) experience and b) system spaces of relation**

**Experiential and systemic embedded spaces for agency as  
potential mediating variables**

**\*Intrapsychic** system movement between diametric and concentric  
system spaces as agency (assumed connection v separation,  
symmetry v inverted symmetry, openness to background v closure)

**\*Interpersonal** system movement between diametric and  
concentric system spaces as agency

**\*Social support** system movement between diametric and  
concentric system spaces as agency

**\*Diametric space is system blockage, Concentric space as system  
flow**



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