

## Article

# Relations between Child Poverty and New Migrant Child Status, Academic Attainment and Social Participation: Insights Using Social Capital Theory

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**Abstract:** Currently, around one in five children in the United Kingdom and the United States live in poverty. This has a devastating effect on their wellbeing, education and broader socio-political participation, and life chances. In this paper, Scottish policy documentary data are used to discuss the effects of relations amongst categories of children in poverty, migrant child status, and academic under-attainment. The study draws on social capital and intersectionalities theory to explore some of the power and knowledge relations that are effects of policy statements. The paper concludes by suggesting that addressing the issues of poverty and educational under-attainment, including for migrant children, requires a policy strategy beyond education. Disconnections across social, cultural, and economic child policy need to be redesigned in order to change the very real socio-economic-cultural-political relations which policy produces; these relations can lead to either high levels of social participation and potential academic attainment of new arrival children or to their social exclusion. Accordingly, knowledge practices aiming to improve the socio-economic-cultural-political inclusion of migrant children make central the conditions and experiences constitutive of new migrants' lived social lives.

**Keywords:** poverty; migrant children; social and multiple capitals; intersectionalities; relational space

## 1. Introduction

Europe and other places globally are experiencing the largest human migration in history. At play are a variety of 'push' factors, such as war, climate change, and famine, and 'pull' factors, notably the relative strength of the economies of the global north and Australasia. The effects of these major global flows of people produce changing, often unpredicted, patterns and scales of migration. In the United Kingdom context, immigration was a central issue in the June 2016 European Union (EU) Referendum. 'Vote Leave', the group campaigning on a platform for the UK to leave the EU, won the UK 2016 Referendum promising to end unrestricted 'free movement of people'—a foundational tenet of the EU. Post-Referendum, international migration into the UK—including from the EU countries, is likely to involve an 'Australian-style' points based system, which scores, for example, levels of education, income and English language competence.

### *Migrant Children and Poverty*

The focus in this paper is on Scottish educational and social policy logics and their effects for migrant children from EU member states and asylum seeking children from non-EU countries living

in poverty in Scotland. Levitas [1] cites a classic definition of social exclusion given in 1997 General Election material by Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in the UK: Social exclusion understood as referring to ‘the dynamic process of being shut out, fully or partially, from any of the social, economic, political and cultural systems which determine the social integration of a person in society’ [1] (p. 11). Social exclusion is understood thus as restricted access to educational opportunities as an effect of parental poverty with real costs to individuals and to society. The specific focus of this paper is on the Scottish policy/practice response to migrant children from the expanded-EU member states (since 2004) and children of families fleeing war and persecution in other non-EU countries, who are given asylum in the UK and housed in Scotland (hereafter, migrant children). Research on post-1945 migrants to Western Europe has mainly constructed the adult, male migrant as the prototype, with women and children rarely acknowledged or merely mentioned as dependants. Migrant children have traditionally been portrayed as ‘luggage’ in migration research [2], as victimised by the significant structures of inequality which forces them to follow their parents abroad and as part of the adult-dominated relations within their families. As migration has become now a global phenomenon, issues of integration, social cohesion and national identity have moved to the fore of current policy debates. In the aftermath of the March 2016 terrorist attacks in Brussels, Scotland’s First Minister, Nicola Surgeon MSP, stated that ‘Scotland is a diverse multi-cultural society and this diversity is our strength’ [3]. The emphasis in current Scottish policies is on integration of communities, interactions between cultures, participation and respect for the identities of migrants, although the responsibility seems to be particularly on migrants to adapt, rather than on receiving societies to facilitate their integration [4]. These structural factors contribute to migrant children’s particular positioning, within an adult-focussed international climate of regulating migration, as often marginalised or ignored by policies and provision aimed at the successful incorporation of migrants into their new societies.

In contributing to the themed issue of *Education Science*, this examination also constitutes a response to the recent surfacing and highlighting in theory of the high proportion of children in Scotland living in conditions of relative poverty and disadvantage [5], with a significant number of these being newly arrived migrants and refugees [6]. Embracing social and multiple capitals theory [7], and intersectionalities theory [8], the paper analyses the logic of policy documentary data on poverty, migration and academic attainment—and broader achievement in schools and society.

The challenge of re-design of overall policy for migrant children first demands analysis of the logics of relevant previous and current policy discourses and practices in that particular social-political space. For such insight on potential ‘spatial inequalities’ [1] that produce migrant child poverty, the paper utilizes the concept of ‘power and knowledge *relational space*’, with our emphasis on ‘the relational’ in the operation of power/knowledge. Places such as cities or schools deploy forms of knowledge in particular relations on different scales (governance/policy; institutional practices; practitioners’ and individuals’ knowledge and agency), thereby producing and reproducing social relationships [9,10]. Accordingly, through analyzing the logics underlying policy and practice for new arrival children, the paper aims to introduce new ideas about spatial *relations* on these different scales underpinning the design logic of education and broader social policy for children living at the intersection of poverty and migrant status.

We first provide a review of the current immigration and poverty context in Scotland, with a focus on Glasgow, its main arrival city. Next, we introduce the scales of policy and governance, institutional practices, and individual level knowledge and agency [10] and the idea of intersectionalities (social fractions, such as poverty, gender and ethnicity, and how these may cut across each other in what is said and done about them at different scales in society) [8]. We then use this conceptual frame to understand the operation of knowledge relations in the particular socio-political space of migrant children’s poverty. We apply the frame in an examination of previous and current documentary data, focusing on knowledge relations in the particular space—and uncover the underlying issue of current limited linkages of migration, children and poverty.

## 2. The EU—Poverty and Migration

The enlargement of the European Union (EU) since 2004 has led to significant demographic and social changes across all European nations, with key implications for issues of citizenship, diversity and national identity. Increasing mobility into and within an already diverse EU [11] has led to major social concerns across all Member States, such as the nature and effectiveness of social integration processes, the educational gap between social groups and the role of ethnicity as a determinant of social disadvantage. These have become central issues for political and public debate, especially as 35 million (or 15 percent) of the world's estimated 232 million migrants are children [12], and the child migrant population is substantial in many affluent countries [13]. The gap in educational attainment between the least and most deprived children is most stark for first generation migrants [14,15] and rates of early school leaving are double for migrant youth compared with indigenous children [16]. Research also shows that migrant children arriving at secondary school age are particularly at risk of academic underachievement and social exclusion [14,15]. In a letter to the European Council in May 2014 (see [17]) 38 leading organizations, including UNICEF and Save the Children, urged Member States to address the issue of migrant children's rights, because of their underachievement and marginalisation. Evidence from our research and that of others indicates that children of migrants are marginalised in terms of educational opportunities [18–21], access to services [22,23] and civic participation [24]. In Scotland, the Government has recently proposed to invest an additional £100 million in education to tackle the attainment gap of all groups [25]—data on the educational attainment of recently arrived migrant children not disaggregated.

## 3. The Case of Scotland

The United Kingdom, including Scotland, has one of the highest associations between social class, educational performance, and life opportunities amongst member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [16]. UK Government research recognises that UK and Scottish institutions, such as the law, media, sport, and politics, continue to lock out the talents of children from low income backgrounds, thereby becoming increasingly less representative of society [26,27].

Scotland is a United Kingdom polity with devolved powers for education, health, and social care. Powers for these matters have been devolved from the United Kingdom Parliament at Westminster, London, to the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood, Edinburgh, since 1998. Scotland has always had a separate education system from those of the other UK countries (England, Northern Ireland, and Wales); and education is a matter politically and operationally devolved to the Scottish Government. In the case of Scotland, 'nation' is an ideological category, historically and for its political-symbolic meanings today [28,29]. Since 2007, Scotland has been governed by a Scottish National Party (SNP) administration. The SNP represents itself as a centre-left social democratic party. Scottish 'nationhood' is politically and publically aligned with the 'civic' and not 'ethnic' category of nationalism [30]. So what partnership relations on *poverty* and *new migrant* status exist today in the case of Scotland and what does analysis of the current poverty-migration space suggest are distinctive place-based issues and trajectories?

The number of foreign-born people residing in Britain is now 7.5 million, of whom over half have arrived since 2004 [31]. In Scotland, over 200,000 people, or 4% of the population, identified themselves as from an ethnic minority background, arguably a small percentage, but a significant increase from the previous census, in 2001 [32]. In Glasgow, the second largest city in Scotland, 12% of the population is now from an ethnic minority background. Historically an industrial city with high rates of poverty, Glasgow has, over the years, accommodated many asylum seeking and refugee families, in addition to attracting other European, Asian and African migrants. The Census [31] reports ethnicity and languages spoken, but does not record individuals' nationality or year of arrival in the UK. It is therefore not possible to report the precise number of children of migrant origin in the UK. Accordingly, to give an overview of the diverse school population and main cultural groups

represented, we use the most recent data available on the languages spoken by pupils in Scotland. The most recent *Pupils in Scotland Census* report (2015) [33] identifies the main home languages: English (632,493 children), Polish (13,229), Urdu (5533), Scots (5414), Punjabi (3921), Arabic (2524), Cantonese (1265) and Mandarin (1275). Many of Glasgow's residents are struggling with poverty, with almost half of the city's inhabitants living in 15% of the most deprived areas in the country [5]. The few assessments carried out on skills, education and employment of new migrants reveal high variability between countries of origin [34], with polarisations into highly educated and some low skilled, traditionally illiterate and marginalised groups, e.g., Roma migrants. About 5000 Roma new migrants live in the Govanhill area of Glasgow, an area of high urban deprivation.

In answer to a Scottish Parliamentary question in 2006 [35], it was stated that in 2002/03 to 2004/05, an estimated 42% of children from a minority ethnic household lived in poverty, compared to 24% of White (Scottish/British/Other) families. As asylum seekers are excluded from working in the UK by law, most live inevitably below the poverty line for many years. Asylum seeking children are often invisible in poverty debates, given their temporary status, with a decision on their families' situation often taking years. The position of migrant children from the enlarged-EU countries might be considered more favourable, as their parents have the right to work. However, reports suggest that precarious work circumstances and gendered labour market conditions mean that many migrant families suffer from poverty and social exclusion derived from poverty, especially in the initial years after their arrival [4,34]. Evidence also suggests that ethnicity and poverty combine at local level with underlying issues of racism and class [36], to place certain ethnic minority groups at clear disadvantage in terms of opportunities for employment and civic participation, with impact on children's opportunities for integration [18,22,37]. To better understand such local combinations pertaining to newly arrived children, the paper investigates policy and practice interventions aimed at tackling childhood disadvantage.

In Scotland, as in many other societies globally, unequal access to opportunities remains a chronic and cumulative impediment to individuals' education, health and civic participation. Almost one in five children, or over 220,000 children, currently live in poverty [5]. Two aspects of poverty are pertinent here: *Absolute* and *relative*. Absolute poverty pertains to people lacking the basic necessities for survival; and relative poverty pertains to people whose income and resources levels preclude them from having a standard of living considered minimally acceptable in the society in which they live. Townsend's (1979) definition of *relative* poverty is helpful in understanding the poverty-migrant relation and the effects of *relative* poverty for living in conditions of social exclusion, inequality and dis/advantage:

Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong [38] (p. 31).

Research shows that growing up in poverty has devastating effects for children's health, education and long-term opportunities. Such damaging effects are documented in a number of studies in Scotland and other places [39–41]. Those young people born in better off families have most resource intensive education, supporting their subsequent successful lives and careers beyond the school gates [42].

Pertinent to understanding the inequalities and preparedness for participatory socio-political agency for children in Scotland, social class at birth is an indicator of access to services and social participation opportunities children have throughout their lives [26,27,29,43–46]. Deprivation affects children's health throughout their life spans, and relatively poor children have relatively high engagement with health services [47]. Children in poverty live with health inequalities—more chronic health conditions, disabilities and general poor health compared with other children, particularly mental health problems [48]. Children's unequal experiences of inequalities in education, health, social participation and agency [42] and actions in response to social exclusion and the long-term effects of poverty in early life continue to be key policy challenges in Scotland.

#### 4. Methodology—A Critical Theoretical Interpretive Lens and Framing Questions

The paper adopts an equality-based argument [49] conceptualising *poverty* as an issue of human rights and social justice [50,51], linked to individuals' ability to proactively participate in politics and society. Perspectives on social justice and equality range widely, methodologically and theoretically. Relevant here are Rawls' two principles: equal basic liberties for all; and the regulation of inequalities to advantage the least advantaged [50]. Following Foucault [52], we use the term 'power/knowledge' to examine how policies aimed at tackling multiple socio-economic inequalities for children in Scotland benefit particular social fractions [10,53].

The analysis foregrounds social *relations*, with knowledge and skills embedded in these, and the principle that social networks are valuable resources for individuals [7]. Social Capital theory [7] is used to identify and understand people's social relations, their social resources, and connections at different social-spatial levels (policy/legislation, institutional, individual). Social capital theory conceptualizes social connectivity and networks as assets that are valuable for individuals, communities, and societies. Social capital takes three distinct forms: *Bonding*—inward looking connections supportive of in-group people perpetuating homogenous social stratifications and groupings, which lead to social exclusions for non in-group people; *bridging*—where individuals connect to more socially diverse social groups, and efforts are made to reach out and participate with people from across a more diverse social spectrum; and *linking*—where individuals are enabled to access and participate at multiple levels, connecting to the right person or group 'up and down' societal institutions and services. Thus, a key framing idea is that society is made up of social relations and associated interactions.

Another social theory we apply is *intersectionality theory*, which grasps the interlocking nature of social categories, such as ethnicity, race, gender, social class, age, sexuality, and dis/ability [8]. Attention to social intersectionality, particularly regarding ethnicity and nationality of relatively poor migrant children, shows the effects of lack of the necessary stocks of social capital in social exclusions including in relation to health [54]—and education. Therefore, our analysis heuristically addresses the issue of poverty at its intersection with another social section—'new arrival' or migrant children.

Deploying the key concepts of equity and participation, and applying social capital relations and intersectionalities theorizations, the paper is framed by two central research questions:

- What distinguishes *previous* Scottish educational and social policy designed to overcome child poverty and inequality from *current* Scottish discourses aiming to redesign the policy-practice space?
- What do redesigned policy relations on poverty mean—particularly for migrant children's participation?

To understand the forms that tackling inequalities in Scotland take, the concept of *children's rights* is particularly relevant here. Children's rights have been stated in the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) [55]—a Convention, to date, not ratified by only two countries, the US and Somalia. The Convention covers a range of rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Its four general principles are explicitly reflected in four provisions: The right to *equality* and non-discrimination (article 2, emphasis added); the best interests of the child (article 3); the right to life, survival and development (article 6) and the right to *participation* and to have their views heard (article 12, emphasis added). Although poverty is not explicitly mentioned, and the Convention does not include a right to protection against poverty, there is recognition that some groups of children are particularly vulnerable to poverty and deprivation and, salient here, that this includes migrant children.

Vandenhole [51] argues that certain rights in the Convention, such as article 2 (non-discrimination) and articles 26 and 27, which guarantee the rights to benefit from social security and to a standard of living adequate for a child's development, provide a clear legal framework for a rights-based approach to challenge current social inequalities, which impact considerably more on certain groups such as migrant children. In Scotland, citing the right of the child to be listened to, taken seriously, and



have their views respected [55], a report of the Office of the Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People gives operational definitions of participation and rights, the definitions provided by children [56]. Seven themes which children highlighted are exemplified in the report [56] (p. 5): Understanding of rights; Honesty and respect; Being valued and listened to; Being supported; Children and adults working together; Not making assumptions; Feedback and communication.

Elaboration and analysis of the above themes is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is relevant here to foreground the importance of close analysis of these and other key concepts, such as children's 'well-being' and 'resilience', often seen as 'buzz words and phrases' much used, but with limited shared understanding. *Wellbeing*, for example, may be viewed as individuals being contented, happy and healthy in life. However, use of the term in policy and research has been opened to question, for example, whether the concept is used 'with sufficient regard to social, cultural, or ethnic diversity' [57] (p. 32). Questions might also be asked on whether it is used with sufficient regard to the social category of new arrival children and the specific intersections of 'new arrival' category with the categories of 'poverty', and 'wellbeing'. *Resilience*, construed as personal buoyancy or 'bounce-back-ability'—the capability to adjust to adverse circumstances and to swiftly recover from any misfortunes or setbacks in life, is seen as a fundamental attribute for educational success—particularly for poor children. Pirrie and Hockings [57] (p. 1), however, note that: 'the importance given to it has been criticised . . . on the grounds that it seems to place the onus on the individual to adapt or cope with the underlying disadvantage'. Further, we would add, the underlying disadvantage persistently remains uninterrogated and unaddressed.

Therefore, to fill this gap—to gain insight on the constitution of policy/practice relations that disadvantage, in the following sections we apply a social relations and intersectionalities frame to analyse current policy data on equitable attainment and its practice enactments in the particular context of contemporary Scotland. Policy data here applies both to policy documentation and to the documented discourses surrounding policy development deployed in policy arenas and processes.

## 5. Policy Discourse Data Analysis—the Logics Underpinning Scottish Policy

### 5.1. What Distinguishes Previous Scottish Educational and Social Policy Context Logic Designed to Overcome Child Poverty and Inequality from Current Scottish Discourses Aiming to Redesign this Policy-Practice Space?

The *Child Poverty Act 2010* (UK Parliament 2010) [58] requires the UK Government to monitor targets towards the eradication of child poverty and imposes the duty on the UK devolved governments in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland to develop country specific strategies. The Scottish Government *Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland: Our Approach 2014-17* policy [59] specifies three key principles:

- *early intervention and prevention*, targeting early effective interventions to prevent families experiencing poverty;
- *an assets based approach*, focussing on individuals' knowledge, skills and views in any support processes and arrangements;
- *a child-centred approach*, prioritising the rights of children to be involved and their views made central in all decisions affecting them and their lives.

The principles of a child-centred and multi-agency approach to tackle disadvantage align with the principles that underpin the *Getting it Right for Every Child* (GIRFEC) [60,61] policy logic. Since 2005, GIRFEC and related policy has promoted effective planning and coherent service delivery across children's agencies, where several agencies and professions are expected to collaboratively support the needs of a child or young person. The GIRFEC approach aims to ensure that the needs of each child are made central in multi-professional and agency co-practice, with practitioners expected to ensure that all children are: *Safe; Healthy; Achieving; Nurtured; Active; Respected and Responsible; and Included* (referred to as the SHANARRI indicators). Crucially, the GIRFEC approach (to jointly identifying and

coherently responding to the needs of children) does not explicitly specify ‘indicators’ derived from the lack of resources of children living in conditions of ‘poverty’, or indeed, and relatedly, to family migration. The ‘assets based’ approach enacted in policy aligns strongly with neo-liberal ideologies and policies that privilege ‘the market’, which trickle down to view the individual mainly in terms of their human capital (their acquisition of resources of desired knowledge and skills).

Further policies underpin the Scottish ‘joined up’ approach amongst Scotland’s Government, local authorities, health services, third sector and community planning partners:

- *Achieving our Potential: A Framework to Tackle Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland* [62]—a Concordat giving local authorities responsibility for locally targeted anti-poverty strategies. The Framework delineates actions on finding work, making work pay, tackling health inequalities and discrimination, ensuring better homes, and improving children’s life chances.
- *The Early Years Framework* [63] aims for ‘transformational change’ in the delivery of early years provision and support for families with young children. A ten-year plan, it enjoins a coherent approach to service delivery, improved collaboration between agencies, and empowerment of children and families.

Neither *Framework* states that poverty or ‘new arrival’ status should be ‘indicator’ grounds for targeted interventions; nor that more comprehensive thinking is demanded, which might prove transformative of the children’s social-political space, designed to materialise more equal and socially just conditions. Policy logic here emphasises the need for ‘coherence’, strengthened structures and systems relations, in the form of better power/ knowledge and relational practices across joined-up services. Thus, the central discursive thrust in practitioners’ transactions and interactions is integrationist: Integration constituted through legislation, policy, structures, professional development, research agendas and other communications [64]. The dangers and unexpected consequences of lack of criticality on integration of services and the accompanying discursive constructions of risk/need for protection legitimizing increased ‘policing’ of families and intrusion into family relations is to be seen, for example, in the many challenges to new governing practices [65]. Newspaper polls suggest that ‘fewer than one in four people support’ a current legislative change that will require a ‘named person’ or ‘state guardian’ for every child in Scotland [66]. A campaign group: ‘Say No to the Named Person Scheme’ (NO2NP) has collected around 35,000 signatures calling for the scheme to be abandoned. The future status of the ‘named person’ legislation, then remains widely contested by political, parental and other groups concerned that it would undermine parental and family rights and divert child protection funding and personnel resources from children who need them.

A service integrationist approach may alternatively be viewed as an instance of whole-scale, sector wide institution of a neo-liberal ‘market based’ economising agenda. The logic underpinning these policies has been to tackle inequality and social disadvantage in a ‘challenging financial climate’. Hence, a neo-liberal austerity-limited discourse is used to cut back national resources available to re-design the space of power and knowledge relations across services. Alluding to issues of inequity and individuals’ human capital, but not explicitly analysing what these must mean for justice, policy discourses continued to invoke pre-2008 (pre-financial crash) discourses of ‘ameliorative’ responses to child disadvantage. Today, such discourses, founded on a neo-liberal logic of scarce economic resources, are thoroughly naturalised in an extended time of local cuts to services, linked to Scottish Government funding settlements to local authorities.

## 5.2. What Do Redesigned Relations on Poverty Mean for Migrant Children’s Participation?

Recently, the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Angela Constance MSP (Member of the Scottish Parliament) (hereafter, the Secretary), has emphasised a narrative of Government targets on excellence in attainment for Scotland’s poorest children [67]. This approach to tackling poverty and its wider societal effects premised not only on state investment to ameliorate academic and social ‘failure’, but also as an issue of the constitution of conditions

productive of rights, equality of opportunity and social justice. A key documentary data source on the logic informing Government action to address child disadvantage, including for new arrival migrant children, is a keynote address to Scottish educationists given by the Secretary last year. In her keynote speech, the Secretary emphasised Government targets on attainment for the country's poorest children [67], *not* however, taking account of other societal intersectionalities in relation to poverty, notably here, the category of 'new arrival' child.

The current Scottish Government First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, has emphasised that educational equality is a priority for her Government. Accordingly, the Education Secretary's recent address delineated the multiple inequalities experienced by a large number of Young Scots, notably including the over 220,000 children who live in poverty, and setting out as a priority to close the attainment gap for children in poverty [67]. The educational 'attainment gap', particularly for the lowest achieving 20% of the school population, has been a longstanding policy concern at least since prior to 2004 [59,68] and continues to be recognised as a major factor that perpetuates social divisions [37]. The 'Growing up in Scotland' study, currently following 8000 children since birth, shows that poor children are also more likely to experience emotional and behavioural difficulties, in addition to cognitive delay [48].

### 5.3. Policy Redesign—Participation Relations

The Education Secretary's keynote address communicated the Scottish Government's aim that all children, including those living in conditions of poverty and disadvantage, 'have an equal chance at success in further and higher education . . . Fundamental [is the Scottish] Government's enduring commitment to free university tuition. [And that] every child should have the opportunity to go to university based on their ability to learn, not on their parents' capacity to pay' [67] (unpaginated, parentheses added). Discursively coupling and addressing the issues of high levels of child poverty and the aspiration for *all* poor children to succeed at school, whereby including migrant children, this policy redesign is premised on a shifting logic. The new logic explicitly links education, attainment, and poverty. This marks a clear development from earlier policy and the logic of the *Getting it Right for Every Child* (GIRFEC) programme, which silenced poverty as a distinct 'barrier' issue to children's wellbeing and flourishing. The Secretary's policy statement mandates new practice relations in schools and society. Her policy discourse explicitly *couples* the issues of poverty and educational attainment—and so practices linking the two will flow. Responsibility for solving the issue of improving the educational attainment of poor children, including recent expanded-EU migrant children, is placed on schools and teachers. Specifically, the Secretary's speech prioritises a national *educational* response to the persistently high levels of exclusion from universities of children in poor circumstances. Making the 'attainment gap' *the* policy priority, the Secretary's directive enjoins schools to redesign education-attainment space relations—with effects for all children. In so doing, a nexus of new relational realities are invoked, which we next outline and then discuss.

(i) The Scottish Government (hereafter also, Government) explicitly recognises 'the power university can have to transform lives, providing exposure to new ideas and experiences and enabling students to develop the knowledge and skills to succeed in their chosen careers' [67] (unpaginated). The Government 'are determined that no one should be excluded from this opportunity [of university] by circumstances' and so 'have established the Commission on Widening Access to help secure [the] goal that a child born today in one of the most deprived communities should, by the time they leave school, have the same chance of going to university as any other child' [67].

Albeit now distinguishing and realising the social category 'poverty'—a potential 'barrier' to participation not realized in earlier GIRFEC policy discourses, or the practices that flow from GIRFEC statements, the Government's new policy assemblage reinstitutes the undifferentiated 'one size fits all' logic of earlier policies, viz. 'access for all' and 'success for all'. Thereby, the extended spatiality of poverty goes unrecorded. Because of their poverty, individuals may experience multiple disadvantages in relation to unemployment, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning



and leisure. Poor children are often excluded and marginalized, restricted from participating in activities and fundamental rights (economic, social, cultural, and political), and high proportions of migrant children reside in deprived areas. The narrowing and blocking of spatial horizons is a reality of poverty, exacerbated further for particular social sections, such as migrant children.

(ii) Government recognises the need for particular resource arrangements, changed relations of power/knowledge which ‘change culture’ to effect sets of social processes that constitute pathways to university for all, and principally for poor children. New arrangements for processes of upbringing of poor students that bring together home, school and governance efforts from early years to University entrance are proposed. For the Scottish Government, practices of cultivation of the talents of disadvantaged children focus on academic attainment—in the building up of their stocks of formal curriculum cultural capital [7]. The national emphasis is on literacy and numeracy for all, particularly in closing the ‘attainment gap’ for poor children; and moving girls into careers in the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and maths) ensuring that ‘no young person’s aspirations are limited by gender stereotyping’ [67] (unpaginated). The gender/poverty intersection, but not that of migrant/new arrival category, is explicitly recognized in the new policy logic.

(iii) A new governing commitment across Scottish education space—government agencies, education authorities, professional groups, and schools, is the national realization of a programme of ‘raising attainment for all’ [59]. The programme sets out improvement practices for local education authorities, schools and teachers and associated central Government accountability and reporting duties. The Government programme to ‘close the gap’ [59], to reduce the link between poverty and deprivation and poor educational attainment in Scotland, explicitly realizes that each education authority and school ‘own its attainment gap and take action’, and concomitantly realizes a personalised approach to the attainment of each child, based on ‘much richer improvement and performance information’ [67]. Thus, the ‘individual’ child is recognized, but the import of intersecting socio-cultural locations of children—such as migrant fraction member—is elided.

## 6. Discussion—the Effects of Policy Logic for Poverty and Migrant Children

Our analysis interrogates the particular configuration of spatial relations whereby the Scottish Government now aspires to advantage all pupils. Examining and understanding the power/knowledge underpinning social spatial relations has highlighted an underpinning policy logic aimed at more adequately socially and educationally connecting children excluded through poverty to take advantage of educational programmes and other services provided. In principle, from earliest stages of learning, all children will participate in better defined learning-knowledge pathways envisaged to propel all social groups into higher education. The new Scottish Government interventions on behalf of disadvantaged children manifest the Government’s recognition of their right, duty—and determination—to support all children, especially the marginalised.

Research shows that the level of a number of major social problems relate to the incidence of socio-economic exclusion and derive from how un/equal a society is rather than its level of wealth [69]. Those being both migrant and poor may desire to participate, but may not have the resources, the ‘know how’, or ‘feel for the game’—they may think that participation is ‘not for the likes of them’, that they are ‘not worthy’ of equality and social agency. Thus, practices and lack of social capital relations can become socially exclusive of the poor and the newly arrived in a society. In one example, Glasgow’s poor social housing estates and areas of poverty are the neighbourhoods mainly attracting expanded-EU immigration. Such housing conditions potentially intensify migrants’ social disadvantage and isolation and, productive of strong migrant in-group social capital ties, risk high levels of social non-cohesion for these children.

There remains a continued strong link between families’ stocks of economic capital (wealth) and children’s broader acquisition of societally successful forms of power/knowledge resources. Research has found that high stocks of multiple capitals resources—including cultural, intellectual, and social, foster further success, and an even more ‘full passport to future opportunity’ [67] than that provided

by solely academic achievement. To be adequately socially connected to participate fully in institutions, such as the university, young people born into deprived communities and/or new to a country must be brought up not only in the cognitive ways of schools and society, but also feel equipped with broader cultural resources and social ways.

For the above to be realized, further policy action focused on poverty and intersectionalities, such as migrant status, is needed. Our analysis has indicated that policy redesign of concrete relations that will realize greater educational and social inclusion must take account of the intersections of poverty in the context of social spatial relations. This includes understanding the effects of governance and policy constitutions—or omissions—in the social relations they produce for all social sections—at the levels of institutional processes and practices, and individuals' knowledge, agency, and identifications. Redesign of educational and social inclusion policy, processes and practices must be founded on the premise that 'poverty is not an aspect of the poor. It is a relationship between the poor and others in society' [70] (p. 60). Tackling social inequality is therefore a matter of addressing the share of resources and the distribution of wealth to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. Enhancing access to opportunities increases the likelihood of civic participation and representation for those potentially marginalised. Critically, policy designed to re-skew schooling arrangements towards poor children must remain fully cognizant of the effects of the link between children's identities and educational attainment and dimensions, such as economic and migrant status.

The Scottish 'closing the gap' school programme redesign aims to extend secure pathways towards higher education. Effective pathways must extend back into parenting skills in homes, early years learning, and basic literacy and numeracy [67]. Current Scottish policy redesign represents the Government's commitment to eradicate students disadvantaged by poverty and social marginalisation. Poor students will benefit from early learning of knowledge and skills, ensuring their attainment in high status academic subjects for university entrance. Such redesigned living and learning relations for the improved attainment of poor children in their early years will, Government policy envisages, give them to access the kinds of spatio-temporally extensive informal, non-school learning opportunities that better off children routinely access.

Scottish Government logic realizes new practices and learning and teaching relations designed to be offered to all in extended school and out of school preparation for university. The new governing policy and practice assemblage on 'closing the gap' makes transparent and more equitable the desired forms of capitals, knowledge and skills and the forms of transmission practices to be realized in Scotland. Mandating such new processes of education/societal reproduction, the Government aims to convert families' lack of economic capital (poverty) into desired forms of prestigious power/knowledge resources, notably in the form of improved academic attainment. Consequently, in the policy redesign logic, inequity of access to university will be diminished and a full passport to future opportunity achieved by a greater numbers of Scots, including those of poverty and migrant status.

However, a key government assumption persists that the broad range of societal inequalities experienced by children should—and can—be tackled by schools. Recent ministerial policy discourses explicitly *tightly couple* education and 'the attainment gap', effectively placing the responsibility on schools to 'close' the gap. Conversely, our analysis would suggest that policy which does not set out strengthened linkages and resource arrangements amongst education *and other child and family services*, such as health, social care, housing, youth criminal justice and so forth at all levels is set to fail. This analysis highlights that for success in tackling inequalities, coherence and continuities across all scales (policy/governance, practice, and amongst the knowledge and skills bases of child sector practitioners) are demanded. Questions must always be asked of the logic patterning new policy, viz., 'What is the relational logic (power/knowledge relations) underpinning this initiative?' and 'In what ways is its logic dis/continuous with previous and parallel education and broader socio-economic policy?' Thus, regarding the Scottish Government £100 million investment, in the form of the *Attainment Challenge Fund*, an intervention designed to close 'the attainment gap' between the country's least and most deprived children [25], the question might be asked: 'In what ways is this initiative continuous—or

not—with policy initiatives that tackle wider inequalities?’. Additionally, if the *Fund* interventions fail to help eliminate inequality, what particular lack of consideration by Government or its agencies of wider impinging social relations—such as gender or new migrant status, destine it to fail?

This analysis has shown the shifting set of expectations in Scottish policy that have rightly made ‘poverty’ a central profound barrier to attainment, but less helpfully have tightly coupled ‘education and attainment’. This discourse has shifted the responsibility almost exclusively on schools and teachers to solve the intergenerational problem of improving the academic attainment of poor children. Analysis has shown that for migrant children, starting life in a new country in poor socio-economic conditions to succeed educationally—and socially, a much broader multi-agency policy and practice logic is needed. To ameliorate the interplay of socio-economic factors (including poverty) for different social intersections, such as new migrant children, poverty needs to be explicitly coupled to structural inequalities in society. Policy efforts to address under-attainment must not dissociate families’ lack of economic capital from the exacerbating issue of children’s lack of full access to social and cultural capital resources in society, that together equip young people to progress academically. Critically therefore, we suggest, ‘under-attainment’ needs to be coupled in policy to lack of capital—economic (poverty) and social (connections). Additionally, in this logic, a central salient question might be: Can ‘the gap’ in attainment between relatively rich and poor children ever be ‘closed’ (eradicated) while lack of equal full socio-cultural access exists for the poor?

## 7. Conclusions

Like all European Union countries, the current moment in Scotland immediately following the decision of the UK in the 2016 Referendum to leave the EU is characterised by a response to the movement of previously unseen flows of migrants across Europe, in an extended period of economic uncertainty and austerity politics. For Scotland, the current moment is also marked by a time of heightened ‘nationalism’ in the wake of the 2014 Scottish Referendum, which returned a victory for the campaign against Scotland’s independence from the UK. In such circumstances, characterised by ambiguity, heightened emotionality and potential instability, it is critical that the networks of relations in Scottish policy enact logics of social justice and inclusion.

The identification in 2014 of the majority of Scots at the intersection Scottish *and* British has implications for the future patterning of Scotland’s socio-political relations with the other three UK countries (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and other places. It is critical that ‘civic’ and not ‘ethnic’ logics of nationalism continue to hold sway in Scotland [30]. The current liberal, non-xenophobic logic of nationhood based on common citizenship and an inclusive spirit characterized by values and practices of freedom, tolerance and equality needs to continue. Global flows of people are intensifying as an effect of globalisation. The need has never been greater for Scotland, as other countries, to attend to how social space is being reconfigured in policy logics and practices to fully understand the socio-temporal, spatial and relational circumstances for individuals at different intersections. A central powerful idea in this study has been that, through policy, government shapes social relations in a particular space and that in turn those social relations powerfully shape people’s lives and life opportunities. In concretising new social relationships accommodating of all sections of society, Scotland, a small nation in Europe, must realize justice logics that address today’s challenges.

The space of policy design and effects we have examined highlight the ways in which governance relations are productive of societal exclusions and patternings of inequity. Our analysis highlights how a high-level central Government call for collective action on attainment which views ‘poor’ as a single category, may ultimately work to exclude and subordinate, by not attending to intersections with other categories, such as class or migrant status. As a first step, following Rawls’ second principle on social justice [50] (discussed above) inequalities should be viewed as the effects of particular unjust socio-economic relations amongst people and groups. So long as political choices and social and cultural constructions that produce social injustices are understood as not being immutable, they are open to review and change.

A key message from this analysis has been that educational and social exclusion of new arrival children derived from poverty, that is, cultural, social and economic inequity, needs to be yet more broadly and coherently tackled than hitherto. This requires expanding policy logic beyond solely ‘improved academic attainment for poor children’ [67] (unpaginated). To realize more secure acquisition by all children of core socio-cultural practices, we have argued that the space of collective effort must be stretched. An expanded policy logic which cultivates inter-personal and cultural relations through higher levels of participative practices in schools and other children’s institutions will lead to more equal childhoods. For this to be realized, however, it seems that social intersections and their effects must be recognised as relationships of power/knowledge that dis/advantage children [71]. Our examination makes it apparent that understanding the effects of policy configurations for relations amongst distinctive social fractions is imperative prior to any new interventions aimed at tackling ‘poverty and academic attainment’. This requires a fuller understanding of the complex, intersected experiences of poverty and other categories of disadvantage, such as new arrival child status. Policy silences on certain categories such as migrant status need to be broken and insights on intersecting social categories understood to better remake and target social policy and practice interventions.

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