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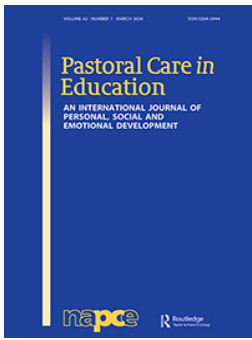
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Applying the power threat meaning framework to the UK education system

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ABSTRACT

The Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF; Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a, 2018b) has fundamentally changed both the practice of clinical psychology and the understanding of mental health since its conception in 2018. However, to date the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a, 2018b) has had little application to other contexts, despite being of clear relevance. Once such absence of application is to the educational context. The context of power within education has been outlined before by philosophers such as Michel Foucault, however, the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a, 2018b) elaborates further about how negative power operations create threat and therefore lead to responses of psychological distress. Thus, the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a, 2018b) could elaborate on Foucault's theories and offer more understanding on the role of power and psychological distress in the field of education. Therefore, this paper will seek to outline the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a, 2018b) and highlight the ways in which the PTMF can apply to education through reference to the school structure, teachers, parents and students.

Introduction

The Power, Threat, Meaning Framework (PTMF) is a paradigm for understanding emotional and psychological distress as a meaning making response to aversive situations (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020; Johnstone et al., 2019). The PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c) is currently used in clinical psychology as a method of understanding the role of power in life, the threat that power may pose to individuals and the sense or meaning individual's make of this threat. The application of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) to date has been limited despite it posing clear relevance to other areas. One such area is the education system. The education system in itself presents a variety of considerations and situations in which the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b,

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2018c) may be applied and thought about, for example, the SEND system given the PTMFs (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) alternative approach to understanding difficulty and distress without a diagnosis or behavioural management strategies given the natural power imbalance evident between teachers and students, as outlined in Foucauldian schools of thought (Ball, 2019). However, given the limited nature of the application of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) to education it is important to broadly demonstrate and discuss how the concepts of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) can relate to the UK education system and its agents generally, without focusing too specifically on situations or concepts such as its relation to the SEND system or understanding student distress. Fundamentally, the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) offers a new paradigm for understanding education and therefore the purpose of this article is to present this. Therefore, this article will first introduce some of the limited applications of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) to education that have been made by other researchers before outlining the basic of understanding the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c), the role of power in the UK education system and its application to schools, teachers, students and parents before then moving onto explanations of threat and meaning in the context of the education system.

Before considering the two specific examples of the application of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) to the UK education system that has already been published, it is important to consider the context of the UK education system. In the UK, mandatory and mainstream education is heavily regulated and legislated with an independent inspectorate (Office for Standards in Education, 2019). The inspectorate ensures high standards and adherence to the four key judgements: quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leaderships and management (Office for Standards in Education, 2019). In recent years OFSTED has come under harsh criticism for increasing pressure on schools, teachers and pupils with often negative repercussions. Waters and McKee (2023) criticise the lack of concern that Ofsted hold for the wellbeing of school staff throughout inspection. This view was evident in feedback from school staff in a YouGov (2023) survey that found that 90% of teachers have an unfavourable view of OFSTED. Indeed, the establishment of neoliberal hegemony in the late 1970s instigated reform in education using social dominance, power and cultural capital to influence change (Punch, 1972). Schools in Britain are subjected to a bureaucratic dimension of neoliberalism which is narrated by education and policy drivers, commandeered by hierarchical systems that rely on, 'adequate conceptualisation, description and measurement of the phenomenon under consideration', (p.254) to thrive. As a result, such emphasis on performativity increasingly limits the opportunity to display autonomy from both a school and staff perspective (Maija & Brunila, 2019).

One such application of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) to education focused specifically on its relevance in teacher education. O'Toole

(2019) explored the implications of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) for teacher education identifying that exposure to the framework encourages teachers to consider further the role of trauma and distress in directing student behaviour and wellbeing as an alternative to diagnostic labelling. The framework encourages recognition of the lasting impact of trauma or adversity in a student's life and how that can manifest itself in their ability to conform to behaviour management strategies in schools. Indeed, O'Toole (2019) has successfully implemented PTMF into a Masters of Education (M.Ed.) qualification at Maynooth University. O'Toole (2019) reported that students believed that the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) oriented them to a different approach and perspective in understanding mental health in students. Perhaps due to the change in terminology from typical diagnostic language found in a mental health course. A wider understanding of the impact of trauma and distress enabled the M.Ed. students to reconsider current discourse on behaviours that are seen as outside of the societal norms.

A further application of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) to education is demonstrated in a doctoral thesis by Milligan (2022) who interviewed Educational Psychologists on their opinions of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c). The findings of the interviews demonstrated that Educational Psychologists believed that the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) enhanced and empowered the clients they worked with, in addition to prompting practitioners to reflect on the nature and purpose of an Educational Psychologist, including the dilemmas they face. However, while the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) encouraged reflection about the nature of clients' problems it did not focus on solutions which were found to be a distraction from what Educational Psychologists considered their job to be.

Therefore, given the potentially illuminating and beneficial influence the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) may have to educational practice this article will broadly seek to apply the PTMF to the UK education system. This article will focus on the application at three different levels: teachers, students and finally school structure. Before applying the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) to these it is important first to briefly explain in further detail the PTMF with reference to the core principles of the framework and the implications and influence it has currently demonstrated in clinical practice.

The power threat meaning framework

The creation and integration of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) into practice is due to wider acknowledgment of the limitations and pervasive issues in psychiatry as a discipline. For example, many psychiatric conditions such as depression and anxiety show extensive variation in manifestation leading to substantial overlap between conditions and consequently frequent comorbidity, which is defined as the co-occurrence of clinical conditions (Joshi et al., 2017;

Van Der Meer et al., 2012; Van Loo et al., 2013). Overlap and comorbidity between disorders raises questions about the salience of condition categories and the theoretical basis for such disorders (Kotov et al., 2017). Part of this problem is the lack of concrete biological markers (such as insulin levels in diabetes of blood pressure levels for heart disease) for psychiatric conditions (Lozupone et al., 2019), therefore requiring judgment on the presence of a condition through the interpretation of behaviours as symptoms (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Lewis-Fernández & Kirmayer, 2019). These symptoms are often self-reported and are usually a judgment of an individual's failure to conform to social norms or fulfil role expectations (Lewis-Fernández & Kirmayer, 2019) and are therefore subjective interpretations. In clinical practice the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) is not necessarily used as a questionnaire, focus-group or anything that is prescribed or enacted towards the patient, but rather is an alternative model to the ubiquitous medical and psychiatric model of understanding patient distress that can frame and shape a medical professionals work with an individual.

The PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) fundamentally focuses on five specific questions in understanding an individual distress and difficulties, these are:

(1) What has happened to you? (How is power operating in your life?)
(2) How did it affect you? (What kind of threat did the power pose?)
(3) What sense did you make of it? (What do you think the meaning is of the situations and experiences?)
(4) What are your strengths? (What access to power resources do you have?)
(5) What is your story? (How do these factors fit together?)

In clinical practice these questions are used to drive understanding of the difficulties faced by a service user that is relevant of the context, their experiences and other factors. The PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) posits that the 'symptoms' one experiences during times of psychological distress or within a mental health condition are rather the threat responses to negative operations of power. Power in the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) is a pivotal element in all forms of adversity an individual may experience throughout their life. Indeed, power is both ubiquitous and heavily influential in society. Drawing heavily upon Foucault's conceptualisation of power (Foucault, 1980), Johnstone and Boyle (2018b, 2018c) argued that individuals in society engage in self-surveillance of their own behaviour by comparing to norms and expectations dispersed by the media and other influential bodies. Foucault (1977) uses the term governmentality to define how these expected norms are reinformed by key practices and institutions in society. These practices of sovereignty lead to the development of disciplinary power, one key factor of this being hierarchical observation, where the idea of being constantly monitored leads to self-

surveillance. Disciplinary power perpetuated by sovereignty lead to normalising judgement and examination (Taylor, 2014). The overwhelming control of disciplinary power through self-surveillance results in more visibility of those who do not conform. This discourse subjugates and posits what is expected and what is accepted. This permeation of acceptable practice leads bodies to become docile (Foucault, 1977) and presents a rationale to exclude those 'who do not fit the socially acceptable understanding of categories', (Zaidi et al., 2021. p.74). Johnstone and Boyle (2018b, 2018c) suggest that any deviation from the conformity of propagated expectations and norms expressed by power-laden discourse may lead to feelings of shame and internalisation of deficiency or pathology.

Power increasingly becomes an invisible force which transforms over time. Historically power was upheld through behaviour management practices such as public executions to exemplify the ramifications of failing to confirm (Foucault, 1977). Before ratification of the Education Act (The United Kingdom Government, 1986) corporeal punishment was a legal and advised approach to maintaining discipline in schools. Despite corporeal punishment in schools now being illegal, the use of force to maintain power prevails with a focus on mental coercion through the promotion of self-regulation. This invisible assent of power means that it can be hidden to some, such as minorities, but may also mask other forms of power, for example, people are more likely to be aware of the power of an abusive partner than the economic power of the well-connected who may slowly nudge government legislation (Boyle, 2022; Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c). The negative operation of power, in whatever form it is wielded, results in feelings of threats to safety, wellbeing and/or survival.

Even in expected negative events, such as bereavements, power can be influential in the subsequential experience of distress through limitation of access to support or resources. Meaning, as the final component of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) is the process through which an individual can understand the threat interpreted by individuals as the recipient of a negative operation of power. Cromby (2022) highlights that meaning in the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) is based upon a critical realist, phenomenological and social constructionist perspective. The narrative an individual expressed when accounting for the meaning they ascribe to events is the focus of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) and the key difference between it and the traditional psychiatric/nosological approach to psychological distress.

Research has demonstrated that there are substantial benefits to the use of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c). Indeed, service users consider the framework to be relevant to their experience whereas consultants found the PTMF to bolster service user's self-esteem (Johnstone & 2018c). Despite the positive reactions towards the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) in

clinical practice, there have been some criticisms and limitations raised. For example, the movement away from a diagnostic model of psychiatry has been likened to a neoliberal agenda of removing support to those that need it the most (Johnstone et al., 2019). Indeed, attempting to remove a diagnosis from an individual can lead to a question of whether the individual even requires any support at all. The same argument has been made referenced in work by Armstrong (2012a, 2012b, 2015, 2017) when exploring a new concept of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in education which removes the deficit focus associated with a medical model of disability. Furthermore, practitioners have highlighted that the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) lacks any meaningful contribution to psychiatry as the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) is just repackaged diagnosis (Salkovisks & Edge, 2018) or a 'horoscope' whereby individuals can see themselves in all manner of power operations and threat responses with no meaningful explanation (Brown, 2018).

Regardless of both the positive feedback and controversy of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) to clinical practice, this paper intends to apply its relevance to the UK education system and the application of its principles. To do this, this paper will outline three specific elements of the UK education system and their application to the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c). The elements discussed include the relevance of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) to teachers, students and the school structure. Following on from this, recommendations for the use of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) in educational practice will be made and conclusions drawn.

Power in the UK education system

According to Johnstone and Boyle (2018b, 2018c, 2022) there are several different forms of power evident in society including biological/embodied power, coercive power, legal power, economic/material power, interpersonal power, social/cultural power and ideological power. All these manifestations are evident and pertinent to the UK education system in one form or another. For example, embodied power could be exhibited in the relative difference in skills and intelligence both teachers and students may have over each other, whereas ideological power is the capacity that teachers may have to influence language, meaning, beliefs, stereotypes, behaviour interpretation and perspective in students through their lessons and the teaching of the curriculum. The UK education system simultaneously grants and removes power from individuals both through legitimate and indirect means. Indeed, the application of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) could be applied to myriad considerations within the UK education system including the SEND process, student behaviour management or staff professional relationships and management. However, the intention of this paper is not to focus on specific applications but rather to broadly demonstrate how the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c)) applies

to the structural considerations of the UK education system and the main agents within it being both the teachers and the students. Focusing on the school structure, teachers and pupils allows a broad demonstration of the application of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) to the wider UK education system which can outline several concepts of interest, notably; the structural imbalances of power and threat that the school system poses to all individuals within it, the power imbalances between agents within the system, notably teachers and parents that are granted power by the education system and the experiences of threat but collective power the most powerless within the system may still demonstrate.

School system

The relevance of Foucault's (1980) conception of power has already been alluded to but is of particular importance in considering the role the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) and has strong connotations and applicability to the school structure. Indeed, the school structure system is like the 'Panopticon' system found in the UK prison system, whereby there is constant surveillance, as found in the UK education system. The school system relies heavily on the concept of observation to reinforce acceptable practice and desired behaviour. Foucault (1977) interprets Bentham's theory of the panopticon to induce self-policing where an ever-present threat of being watched, 'assures the automatic functioning of power' (p.201). Foucault directly applies the power of panopticism to schools where he describes how the invisible gaze ensures conformity for the masses, 'if they are schoolchildren, there is no copying, no noise, no waste of time' (Foucault, 1977, pp. 200–201).,

These feelings of being watched internalise a sense of control in individuals within the system encouraging them to conform to expected standards and behaviours. Teachers, security cameras, open canteens and hallways all create an environment for the surveillance and monitoring of students. The power of the invisible gaze through panopticism means that it is difficult to detect when surveillance is happening. Foucault (1977) comments on the function of invisibility resulting in the behaviour of the masses being reflective of being under constant surveillance, even if the process is inconsistent in activity. In schools' surveillance does not apply solely to students, it expands beyond the focus of the student to surveillance of teachers. Line managers, security cameras, governors, parents, government agendas such as the Behaviour in Schools document (Department for Education, 2022), and the inspectorate, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), all ensure that teachers self-regulate and conform to the expectations of their conduct and profession. These internal and external forms of control within the education system further penetrate educational bureaucracy that; through forms of perpetual analysis, review,

observation and inspection; continue to swallow up any autonomy or individualism in UK schools.

The inspection, review, analysis and feedback mechanisms found within the 'panopticon' model of the UK education system clearly influence students' perceptions and functioning within school and therefore creates an almost self-fulfilling prophecy within students. A student's success will be influenced by their attitudes to education, which are largely shaped by their experiences in school. The greater the belief a student may have in oneself, the more likely they are to adopt that mindset to facets of their life beyond education. However, if the current framework of education is not conducive to the needs of the student, for example, the current behaviour management systems, the more likely a sense of inadequacy will prevail. An inability to perform and achieve within the UK education system can lead to an individual leaving education either with poor qualifications or without them entirely (Esping-Andersen, 2005). A lack of qualifications locks an individual into a cycle of poverty and deprivation with limited access to positive life chances (Esping-Andersen, 2005; McMahon & Oketch, 2013), thereby further leading to individuals exposed to a negative operation of power even after their time in education has ended. Therein lies the question of current educational practices and if they work to alleviate prejudice or instead fortify class-based hierarchies. Carvacho et al. (2013, p .272) explain how powerful 'system legitimising attitudes' are endorsed by key institutions such as schools, making education a key component in the ongoing social dominance of power, further negating the experiences of anyone who falls outside of dominant beliefs and practices. Weissman (2015) warns of the feeling of being othered and how this can significantly impact on a student's identity and sense of self. Foucault (1977) posits that to retain sovereignty, if subjects such as students or teachers fail to conform to the given norms of the institution, they will be blamed for their own downfall due to their inability to conform, leaving the institution or school to remain unscathed.

Teachers

As the perceived primary agents of the education system, it is important to consider how the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) may apply to teachers. It is crucial to recognise that teachers are both agents and victims of the negative operation of power and the type of power they're both subjected to and wield is varied ranging from interpersonal to economic (Boyle, 2022). The Teacher Standards (Department for Education, 2013b) clearly identify teachers as having disciplinary power. Further clarification of what this means in practice and how this power can be exercised, is exemplified in guidance such as the Behaviour in Schools document (Department for Education, 2022). However, the level of description in exactly how authority can be exercised raises the question

of how much power the teacher possesses. Such guidance positions teachers as facets of a wider institution where their purpose is to execute procedures that have been actioned by a higher order, drawing distinct similarities between the practice of power relations in education and Foucault's concept of governmentality (Foucault, 1977). It can be argued that the restrictions of guidance from both statutory and non-statutory educational guidance limits autonomy and the opportunity for problem posing education (Freire, 1970). When considering the potential liberative possibilities of applying the PTMF framework, the current constraints of education at the hands of bureaucracy and the impact this has on the school community, including students and teachers, must be examined.

Regarding negative power operations, it is widely reported that teachers face unreasonable stress because of their occupation perhaps due to punitive and restrictive legislation and monitoring. Indeed, teacher dissatisfaction is clearly documented in research such as the Health and Safety Executive (2020) findings, where teaching was seen as one of the top three most stressful professions. Further research (Kengatharan, 2020) explores how teacher satisfaction can be increased with a key requirement being the need for increased autonomy in practice. Despite current educational practice posing an unreasonable level of stress, teachers will also be recipients of negative power operations outside of their occupational context. Examples of these may range from the typical and ubiquitous such as bereavement to more extreme forms such as abuse, ranging from physical to verbal and psychological such as racism, bullying or homophobia (Andrew, 1998; Lopes et al., 2020). All negative operations of power, even those outside of an educational context may affect a teachers practice. Indeed, research has demonstrated that early experiences of racism in American teachers led to internalised racism later acted out in the classroom by the teacher. This replication led to a socially unjust perpetuating both the institutional racism and internalisation of racist experiences experienced by the teacher in their students (Kohli, 2014).

However, as agents of power in some capacity, teachers can utilise various forms to,their advantage. For example, they have an ideological power over students and can inform their perception, beliefs, language, meaning making and many other components. In addition to this, teachers also have a coercive and legal power over students to enforce obedience and compliance within lessons, for example, 'staff should consider the impact of their own behaviour on the school culture and how they can uphold the school rules and expectations' (Department for Education, 2022, p. 12)., Guidance repeatedly reinforces the notion that teachers hold and must exercise power and discipline, meaning students remain relatively powerless and the most obvious subject of a negative operation of power. However, guidance such as the Behaviour and Discipline in Schools document (Department for Education, 2022) evidence that teachers are required to exercise this power as a duty of their occupation and as a statutory

requirement. Therefore, it is not possible to conclude that the teachers exercise this power willingly, but instead as an obligation. The power teachers demonstrate over students has been clearly exhibited in research. Indeed, it has been noted that persistent narrative in UK teacher training courses focuses on classroom management of students and control with Bennett (2017), the current UK government behaviour Tsar, publishing an entire review ('Creating a Culture') focusing on such. This focus on power between teachers and students however extends far beyond teacher training guidance and permeates the entire school structure, often with the school system and formal guidance grating teachers this power. For example, the national curriculum (Department for Education, 2013a), policed by OFSTED (2019) grants legitimacy and authority to the content and instructions teachers provide. Furthermore, even the official guidance from the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework (Department for Education, 2019) directly cites Bennett (2017) and has a fixed approach to behaviour management from which teachers cannot deviate. Therefore, limited agency on the part of teachers is perpetuated through engrained structures of dominance that are reinforced through governance beginning in teacher training and repeated school compliance and regulation frameworks.

Students and parents

As the targets of the education system, students can be the recipients of the negative operation of power, while wielding very little power in the education system and indeed relatively little power in general (Boyle, 2022). Some examples of relevant negative operations of power experienced by students include lower teacher expectations (Rubie-Davies et al., 2006), poverty and deprivation (Thompson et al., 2016; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020), racism (Kohli, 2014), homophobia (Moyano & Del Mar Sanchez-Fuentes, 2020), bullying (Andrew, 1998; James et al., 2008; Twemlow et al., 2006) and punitive teacher behavioural management systems such as exclusions. Indeed, exposure to these examples of negative operations of power in the education system have been linked to worse academic functioning (Berliner, 2009), lower achievement (Guimond et al., 2023; Nikulina et al., 2011) and mental health problems (Chang et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2021; Li et al., 2022). The lasting impact of such adversity is pervasive and can remain with a student beyond school and into adulthood. Chang et al. (2019, p. 6) describe how increased adversity in childhood without support can result in a higher likelihood of 'behaviours and morbidity in adulthood'. To clarify, some negative operations of power are societal and structural power inequalities that are difficult to address. Despite this, negative operations of power wielded by the UK education system and teachers as its agents are done so with consideration.

Exclusions, detentions, negative feedback and other such negative operations of power could be considered to be a choice as teachers choose how to

respond to student behaviours. However, as already discussed, teacher responses to behaviour and the decisions to sanction are driven by greater pressure from the education system to ensure that children are suitably educated. Morrison and Vaandering (2012) report that, 'punitive, individualising and pathologizing' (p.17) responses to challenging behaviour in the classroom remain the default response, despite the growing awareness of the potential harmful impact if this approach. Indeed, research has demonstrated that classroom disruption by unruly students leads to a worse outcome for other students which therefore has implications for the teacher (Lentz Jr., 1988). Thus, this effectively implies that teachers only have an illusion of choice in administering sanctions, as without sanctioning classrooms would be too disruptive, student success clearly impacted and teachers at risk of negative outcomes.

Parents of students can also be impacted by operations of power within the UK education system. This can be both directly as negative power operations wielded by the school and education system and indirectly through a knock-on effect of negative power operations by the education system to their child. Indeed, an example of this can be through school exclusion of students, which therefore has implications for childcare and may as a knock-on consequence mean that parents must take time away from work to look after their child. This absence from working due to caretaking commitments has implications for earnings and therefore quality of life as a result. This same example also has direct consequences for parents as student/child exclusion from school has been associated with significant negative emotional impacts including feelings of parental punishment for student misbehaviour and a lack of support (Parker et al., 2016).

Although while in the system individual students and parents are relatively powerless, collectively students and parents have a combined authority and power over the education system. Traditionally this collective power was rarely exercised, which further signified the Foucauldian notion of governmentality and disciplinary power. Subjugation between the ruling power; in this case, the school, and the subjects; in this case the parents and children, means that sovereignty reinforces the 'natural order of things' where those ruling must not be questioned, and the problem must lie with the subject. More recently the marketisation of education has meant that students and parents are no longer simply passive recipients of education, they are instead consumers with knowledge as the product marketed by schools (Rudd & Goodson, 2017). This neo-liberal view of education therefore permits students and their parents unprecedented power over both teachers and the school. The student and the parental voice have been shown to clearly influence and change educational practice in recent years. One such example is in 2019 in well documented protests outside a Birmingham school in response to the teaching of LGBTQ curriculum content to primary school children. The teaching of LGBTQ curriculum content is mandated according to the National Curriculum (Department for

Education, 2021) however, following protests by parents the response from one of the schools was to cease the delivery of the content pending further investigation, indeed, continuation of the programme at one school in Birmingham required an exclusion zone to be placed to prevent further protests (Carlile, 2020).

Thus, the unified voice of parents and/or students can have considerable power to adjust and implement change within the education system. Indeed, the protests and subsequent halt in curriculum delivery could even be considered a negative operation of power that undoubtedly resulted in a stressful and aversive threat to the education system.

Experiences of threat in the UK education system

The examples of negative power operations within the context of the UK education system results in aversive and threatening contexts both for teachers as victims and agents of a negative operation of power and students as the primary victims of negative power operations. One persistent threat for teachers can be the looming Ofsted inspection process. The grading and feedback from OFSTED inspections can result in greater monitoring of teachers, particularly if areas of concern are noted (Munoz Chereau et al., 2022), possibly resulting in a perceived threat to job security and autonomy and a pressure to improve performance under the threat of greater sanctions and negative repercussions. Failure to meet standards required and improve, if necessary, can have negative implications for the stability of their occupation. The threat, power and indeed pervasiveness of an inspectorate such as Ofsted exemplifies the all-consuming hold surveillance has on education. Foucault's (1977) pantoptocism theory resonates with this level of surveillance in education where the perpetual feeling of judgement, assessment, and essentially threat is an ongoing component of the role of a teacher.

Furthermore, the teachers as wielders of power and agents of power from above are a potential source of threat for students. Indeed, teachers are presented with increasing numbers with problematic classroom behaviour which contributes to teacher stress (Hastings & Bham, 2003), which has been reported to have increased significant post pandemic (Raghunathan et al., 2022) and, due to a lack of training and guidance on alternative behaviour management processes (Ford, 2020), subsequently leads to punitive discipline strategies (Jones et al., 2023). Punitive discipline strategies lead to wider reaching negative outcomes for students due to the creation of an aversive or threatening situation. For example, challenging behaviour by students may be a means of adaptation to an environment which they feel is challenging. Indeed, these feelings can be fuelled by how children feel that are being perceived. Weissman (2015) posits that children who feel a sense of unbelonging or being outside of the social and behavioural norms of the school culture are

more likely to be subjected to 'negative labelling' which 'cuts to the core of a person's identity' (p.189).

"Meaning" in power and threat in the UK education System

Considered thus far are the various forms of negative power operations evident both within and outside of the UK education system that may influence educational practice and both teachers and students. As outlined by Johnstone and Boyle (2018b, 2018c) these negative power operations result in a threatening or aversive situation that an individual must contend with. According to the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) an individual must attempt to 'make sense' or ascribe meaning to their positionality in terms of power and how that position elicits or inhibits opportunity. Awareness of power relations may not always be conscious, as already described in the concept of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1987), however the ever-presence of needing to prove or evidence oneself reinforces the magnitude of power and threat and how they are the seedbed of what conceptualises success within current education systems.

Given that there is a variety of forms of negative power operations pertinent to teachers that can result in threatening contexts, it is important to attempt to understand the meanings that can be ascribed to these to further demonstrate the application of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) to education. Although meaning will largely be an idiosyncratic element and differ per teacher, it is important to draw focus to this as the meaning ascribed will define further behaviour and responses by teachers and ultimately frame their lived experience (Cromby, 2022). In the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) meaning is continuously ascribed and arises dynamically as a response to situations intertwining contingent information such as personal, social, affective and cultural elements (Cromby, 2022). Therefore, meaning ascribed to negative power operations experienced by teachers will likely be informed by previous experiences, cultural and political contexts and even biological factors.

Recommendations

Following an outline of the myriad of applications that the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) has to the UK education system it is apparent that some recommendations may be made. Firstly, a clear recommendation is a wider dissemination of the principles of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) to the education system in the UK and a greater understanding by educational professionals on the impact that power operations can play on an individual. This could be applied through staff training and implementation into teacher training curriculums. Although there are differences between schools cultures, approaches to students and wider cultural and environmental climates, fundamentally the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) offers a different way of

thinking about the school and the impacts it can have on an individual specifically regarding the operations of power that are evident within a school, the agents operating within it and the societal structures surrounding it and the way this power is wielded and the subsequent effects that may have. As outlined previously, the clinical use of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) is not necessarily through an interview, questionnaire or any specific notion that is acted upon an individual but is instead a framework in which to think about clinical practice and the origins of mental distress. This same application would be beneficial for schools and the wider education system, rather than any specific intervention acted upon agents within the UK education system, but rather as a framework for educators, heads and school staff to think about operations, behaviours and interactions within the school. This could therefore provide more considered responses to students, teachers and other staff and a greater insight into the origins of behaviour, distress and actions.

Furthermore, there is a clear recommendation that can be made for the integration of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) into school pastoral and counselling services. Given that schools are sources of numerous threats within the nature of the institution but also as a result of the interaction between society and education it would be beneficial for pastoral teams within the school to recognise that some of the students' manifestations of distress may be a direct result of the threat caused by educational specific negative operations of power such as exam stress or punitive behaviour management strategies, for example. The acknowledgment of these threats by pastoral and counselling services within schools could be pivotal in changing behaviour management styles and school culture.

A key aspect of the PTMF is meaning making (Cromby, 2022). The framework seeks to understand what factors contribute to aspects such as fear, distress, worry and troubling behaviour. However, as described in this paper, understanding must go beyond the individual and into the accepted and saturated practices and procedures of education to identify punctuation points and evaluate if those accepted practices support, are attuned, and are responsive to the needs of children, teachers and schools alike. Then, by gaining insight, a well-informed narrative of how we can apply this understanding to education can begin to form. This application of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) is also complimentary to well-established models such as comparative justice (Fronius et al., 2016). Indeed, despite the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) possibly being used to inform behaviour management or SEND support, fundamentally it can just be used as a way of considering interactions within the school system without informing any specific intervention. This could still have wider benefits in informing and changing the school culture and management.

Despite some recommendations being evident, there is a clear need to acknowledge the limitations of applying this framework to an educational setting. Fundamentally, the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) is a paradigm shift

from a ubiquitous model of understanding behaviour and therefore presents a pressure on professionals to learn and adopt this new model. This acknowledgement has implications for training and implementation time. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that the wider educational system beyond the school is a key aspect of effective educational practice, and these multi-disciplinary teams are not structured with the ideas of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) in mind. Thus, wider structural and societal changes would be needed to support close integration of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) in educational practice.

Conclusions

To conclude, the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) has clear implications for how we think about the UK education system as a whole. A closer consideration of the role that power plays in education and the threats that negative operations of power, both systemic and intrapersonal, pose to students, teachers and parents has clear benefits for educational practice. Indeed, some of the benefits could include a closer analysis of the potential ramifications of teacher classroom management style and the implications of this for behaviour or perhaps even the role of power in the manifestation of psychiatric illness or mental health issues in the student population. A closer inspection of these factors in the student population therefore has wider implications for interventions and management that could yield a variety of benefits including changes in support systems and teaching. However, despite the potential of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) framework being used to inform behaviour management systems or the SEND support system, this paper has focused on broadly outlining the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b, 2018c) and how it may apply to the UK education system with respect the agents within it and the wider structure due to the limited research and application of this highly relevant framework.

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