Who is marginal?

Conflicting accounts of disadvantage in policy engagement

Rachel Simon-Kumar

Background to the paper

Neoliberal social policy has given rise to user involvement

Since the turn of century, public engagement intertwined with debates on social exclusion/inclusion and difference/diversity

At its best, inclusion involves "co producing the process and content of decisionmaking, engaging multiple ways of knowing, and sustaining temporal openness"

Research questions

Multiple perspectives around

who is marginal?

Which disadvantage deserves to be represented as a political category?

What are the challenges of identifying as marginal?

Today's paper

Feminist and critical policy scholarship

Inclusion and Marginal Groups Project (2009-2013)

Rachel Simon-Kumar: Ethnic Communities & Women
Rebecca Fraser : NGO perspectives of Refugees & Migrants
Amanda Lowry : Maori Engagement: Ohiwa Bay in the EBOP

Bi/Multiculturalism Reading Group (2012-2013)

Policy and public media sources

Defining Marginality

As Social Categories:

Guttman (2004)

'Identity Politics' historically disadvantaged groups:

phenotypical markers or 'unchosen characteristics of persons'

'coalescence around the shared instrumental interest of their members ... [but] on the basis of mutual identification'

To be marginal, shared identities must experience disadvantage

Hence, marginality: inside/outside grouping, prefixed categorisations and stable set of experience of disadvantages

As structural categories

Iris Marion Young

Marginality is not prefixed but emerges from flawed social arrangements

From substantialist to relational

In both cases – requires embracing differential position from the norm

As Constitutive categories

Chantal Mouffe

That identity is not pre-constituted by power or by structures

Structures are variable and volatile – and identities are not stable.

various depictions of marginal are closely tied to the changing discourses of society, and socio-economic transitions

democracy is not about protecting the rights of these identities

---

Appreciation of the structural basis of marginality

There isn't one voice … the refugees like to separate themselves from their ethnic communities which is understandable because they have different needs

(Policy AH)

Implications:

Diverse engagement styles

Perceived end goal

Refugees from Africa is different from 3rd generation Greek people

(Policy TW)

Creation of a representative ethnic collective voice

if we're looking at the Chinese community you have the established Chinese, predominantly Cantonese speaking communities that have been here a lot longer and then more recently the larger influx from the Mandarin speaking population from mainly China and its from a different part of China that that original group came from. (Policy MQ)

Policy sector

From individuals to collectives of difference

the idea that as communities develop over time as migrant communities, ethnic communities … alongside that comes with it the idea of developing a community voice and more collective versus individual voices

(Policy FR)

More identity-based

Overlaid with inequality and needs discourse, led to exclusion

This is our experience the Congolese people all highly educated, had all been quite successful in their own country ..

Somalian people we brought were perhaps on the back foot because they didn't have a lot necessarily of education

the Colombian people seem to be coming and seem to be really settled easily because it wasn't such a foreign culture

Mid-level policy officials

Inequality, needs and representation

We have health priorities – high-risk people ... [Refugees and migrants] They are captured under low-socio-economic. Maori are there. Not well defined. But that is our policy. Not in our population priorities except if they are in the high needs. Only time we look at women is smoking. Women as target group in breast cancer, men reacting with prostrate cancer. Its ethnicity, low socio-economic, etc

(health sector bureaucrat).

Housing NZ will assess the needs of all quota refugees. we measure them on five things –now that means can they afford it and are they meeting any discrimination. So that doesn't apply normally to Chinese people ... But the Somalians, we house them lot because of discrimination in the private sector

Housing sector bureaucrat

Community

Marked by

 Claiming similarity

 Creating new identities

Leaving behind a marginal identity to become an interest group

And it didn't really matter where the people were from, whether it was from Samoa or India or China or the States our stories were so similar in our difficulties in settling here

we were at a meeting around family violence, what the young people were saying, and this was for refugee youth, they were saying they no longer wanted to be known as 'former refugees' because they're NZers.

one Somali gentleman who's got quite far in government departments who will say very proudly 'I'm the only Somali here who is not a refugee because I came as a migrant.'

.

Community

The migrant voice might become stronger and stronger and eventually change to a Kiwi voice
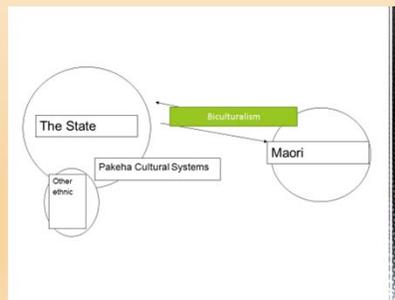
Implications

Multiple models of marginality

Different types of political salience and policy inclusion
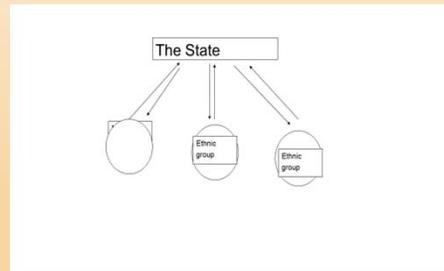
Conflicts:
vertical and horizontal; temporal

Current models of 'rights' in New Zealand fail to appreciate multiple discourses
E.g., Bicultural/Multicultural model

Representation, bi/multiculturalism

BICULTURAL MODEL

MULTICULTURAL MODEL

We are not saying dilute or anything that Māori have, we are just saying that we want to be more inclusive, right, so in decision making and all those things. ..

Conclusion

How do we reconstitute our understanding of how marginal communities are to be represented?