

UNPACKING (VULNER)ABILITY

DR SEVASTI-MELISSA NOLAS
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Acknowledging children and young people's strengths.

Creating supportive intervention spaces that focus on relationship building and staff awareness of children and young people's difficulties.

Developing children and young people's self-management strategies.

Recognizing social and community activities as vehicles for social inclusion.

SOCIAL SCIENCE DEBATES

Vulnerabilis = to wound

Vulnerability = susceptible to physical or emotional harm

Vulnerary = a remedy used in healing of wounds

The dialectics of vulnerability

Social policy & social work: risk & resilience.

Community psychology: empowerment.

Sociology of childhood: children's agency.

THE 'PLAY ON' PROGRAMME

A positive youth development programme running in some of the most deprived areas of England.

Working with 10-19 year olds at risk of drug abuse and criminal behaviour.

Play On used a relationship-strategy coupled with leisure and cultural activities to engage young people.

Aims to re-establish young people in employment, education and training.

THE 'PLAY ON' PROGRAMME

“Because that’s not what you do in football!”

A story about a boy with an anger problem who managed to turn his anger around starting on the football pitch.

Told by the project worker who built a relationship with him over several months.

Nolas, S-M. (2011) Stories as indicators of practical knowledge: Analysing project workers' talk from a study of participation in a youth inclusion programme, *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 21 (2), pp.138-150.

THE 'PLAY ON' PROGRAMME

Why did young people attend the youth club?

Shelter from the storm.

What do young people get out of attending the youth club?

Belonging & urban havens.

How do youth clubs engage young people?

Creating a culture of participation.

Nolas, S-M (under review) Exploring young people's experiences of spaces of youth development: creating cultures of participation, *Journal of Youth Studies*.

SUMMARY

The dialectics of (vulner)ability: no vulnerability without an equal focus on ability.

Thank you for listening.