Mad, Bad, Sad or Fad

Labelling of Vulnerable Young People

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Introduction

• Social construction of vulnerable young people
  ▪ Mad: young people and mental illness
  ▪ Bad: young people as “offenders”
  ▪ Sad: young people as victims of abuse and neglect
  ▪ Fad: the “latest” thing and the construction of crime

• Empowering or Disempowering?
Mad: young people and mental illness

- Diagnosis of mental illness
- Behaviour / Conduct disorder / mental illness
- danger of the young person becoming the condition or the problem
- One way of responding to a particular difficulty can slip into becoming the right way or the only response. (Fawcett, Featherstone & Goddard, 2004)
Bad: young people as "offenders"

- Assumptions about “offenders”
- Assumptions shape how professionals, the “system” and the public (and media) react to those young people.
- Trigger processes that induce the very behaviour that was anticipated, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.
Sad: abuse and neglect

- Children and Young People as victims
- Looked After Children are at greater risk of criminalisation
- Young people in the Looked After system often suffer due to lower expectations and being lost in the system, resulting in being re-victimised.
Fad: the “latest” thing

- Definitions of crime
- Media reaction
- Social policy and legislation
Images
Questions?