
**Psychology for Engaging Vulnerable Young People; The Role of the Community
Educational Psychologist in Supporting Professionals who Work with Young People.**

Declaration

Submitted by Emily Claire Jane to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Educational Psychology in Education, Child and Community Psychology, July 2010.

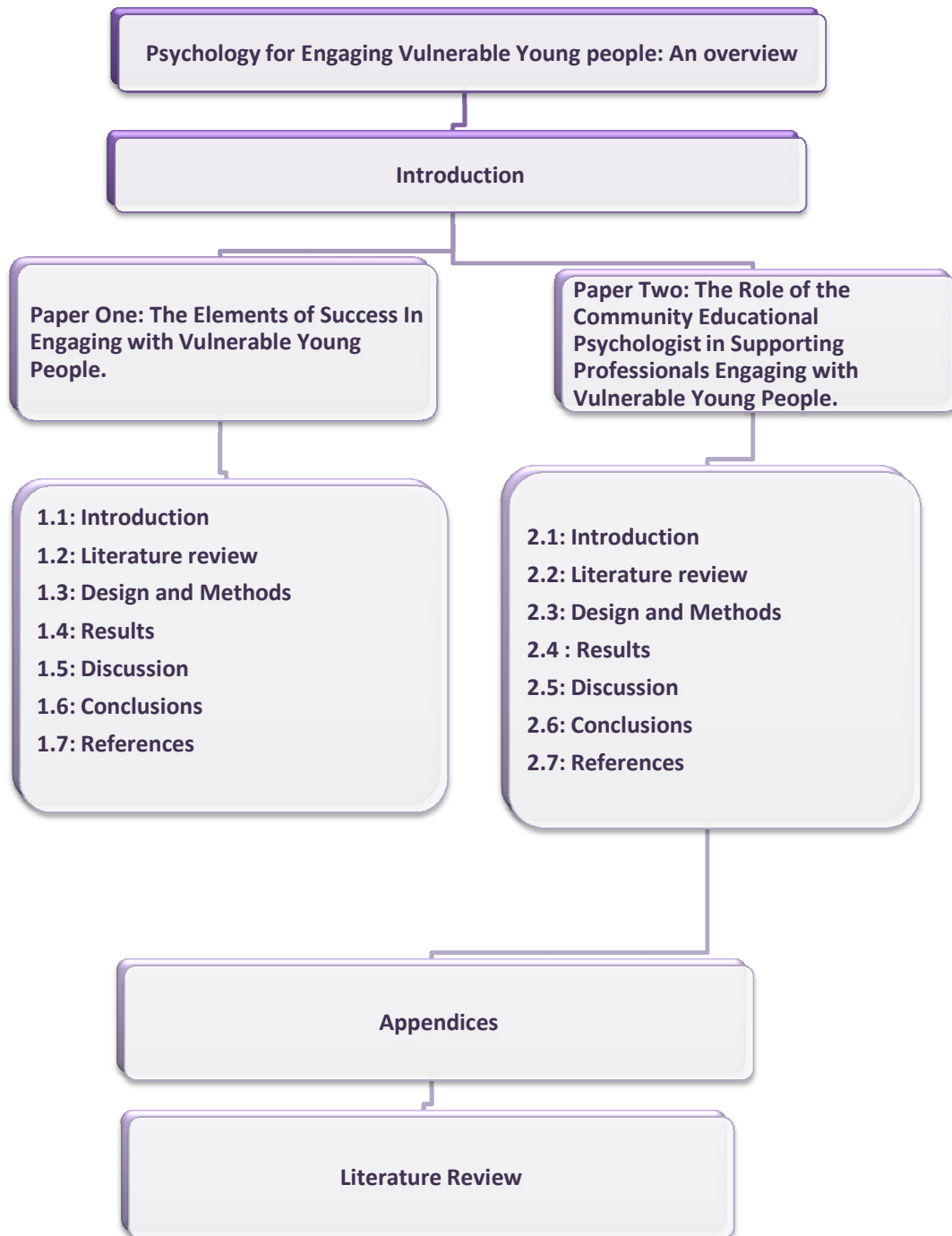
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Emily Jane



Paper One:

The Elements of Success in Engaging with Vulnerable Young People.

Abstract

The process of engagement is essential in practice with young people at risk of social exclusion. The elements of success in building this relationship are explored to some extent in the therapeutic literature, but do not necessarily cross the discipline divide to provide clear guidance for youth work practice. This paper explored the elements of success in engaging with vulnerable young people from the perspectives of eleven vulnerable young people and ten practitioners using Personal Construct Psychology methods to elicit and compare perceptions of the process of engagement. Professionals' personal theories of the causation and prevention of a commonly occurring case study were also investigated for their relationship to the personal constructs guiding their practice. It was found that young people prioritised the affective elements of the relationship, but that pragmatic considerations were also of high importance to them. In contrast, professionals prioritised a commitment to young person well-being, followed by factors supporting the well-being of the practitioner including self reflection. Implications for practice include an appreciation of the factors important to young people, such as genuine warmth and affect, and pragmatics that make a worker more accessible such as ad hoc availability and approachability.

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Paper Two

The Impact of Community Educational Psychology on Professionals Engaging with Vulnerable Young People through Six Months of Solution-Focused Peer Supervision Coaching.

Abstract

Vulnerable young people access services such as Youth Services and Youth Offending Services. Professionals in this sector have limited access to Educational Psychology. Educational Psychologists are increasingly working outside traditional settings in Community Educational Psychology roles, however more evidence is needed to illustrate the diverse possibilities of practice. This paper explores the role and perceived impact on practice of a Community Educational Psychologist coaching six, monthly sessions of Solution-Focused peer supervision with three professional peer groups from Youth Services, Youth Offending Services and Police Youth Intervention. Personal construct shifts regarding the elements of success in engaging with vulnerable young people were measured pre- and post-intervention along with role and impact themes identified through observation diaries and post-intervention semi-structured interviews. Findings included the importance of the non-intervention specific elements of the psychological supervision, the impact of Solution-Focused techniques as both a tool and process for professional development, and recommendations for further support for professionals working with vulnerable young people.

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