



Piacentini, Maria and Dunnett, Susan and Hamilton, Kathy (2014) Patient, client, user, consumer? Issues involved with approaching vulnerability with consumer-focused terminology. In: Macromarketing and the Crisis of the Social Imagination. Proceedings of the Annual Macromarketing Conference . Macromarketing Society, p. 108. ,

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Patient, client, user, consumer? Issues involved with approaching vulnerability with consumer-focused terminology

Maria Piacentini, University of Lancaster, UK

Susan Dunnett, University of Edinburgh, Scotland

Kathy Hamilton, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland

This presentation aims to build upon the central themes emerging from our ESRC seminar series on Consumer Vulnerability (2013-2014). These seminars provided a space to critically engage with the notion of consumer vulnerability in two key ways. First, they brought together international speakers from the fields of marketing, consumer research, sociology, social policy, law and medicine to ensure developments in thinking and best practice were shared across academic networks and across traditional disciplinary boundaries. Second, policy and practitioner organisations played a key role in our series, thereby adding a more practical element to discussions. An overarching concern emerging from the seminar series was the nature of the language we use when discussing those experiencing vulnerability, and how this language impacts on the relationships between individuals and the services they used (both private and non-commercial). In particular, this presentation will consider the issues involved when approaching vulnerability with consumer-focused terminology.