

If she's not going to protect herself, then how are we going to protect her? Managing risk in child protection practice with sexually abused teenage girls

Rosemary R. Carlton, Ph.D., Professor, École de travail social, Université de Montréal
rosemary.carlton@umontreal.ca

ABSTRACT:

Drawing from a qualitative study designed according to a girl-centred interpretive framework, this article addresses the influence of neoliberal and risk-thinking ideologies on child protection practices with sexually abused teenage girls. The study revealed views of these girls as vulnerable and consequently in need of protection while simultaneously autonomous almost-adults, responsible for identifying and managing the risks in their lives. This article illustrates how these seemingly competing views contribute to a transformation of sexually abused teenage girls into rational actors who are regularly scrutinized for their capacities and failures to ensure their own safety in the aftermath of sexual abuse.

KEYWORDS:

Child protection, sexual abuse, female adolescence, neoliberalism, risk-thinking

65

She's a petite thing – just turned 15, barely in the city for a month. She's definitely been exploited, taken advantage of and murdered. We know she was in care and was rebelling. She was running away and had a history of that. I'm sure she didn't realize the danger she was putting herself in.

The body of Tina Fontaine, an Aboriginal teenager who had been under the care of child protection services, was found in Winnipeg's Red River on August 17th, 2014. Sgt. O'Donovan, speaking with reporters following the tragic discovery, painted a touching portrait of her vulnerability. Underlying his words, however, was a contradictory message of individual responsibility that cast Tina as having failed to protect herself from danger. A special report produced by the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (2019), made absolutely clear the numerous historical, social, and personal experiences and circumstances of risk that contributed to Tina's vulnerability. Yet even in death, she couldn't escape suspicions of responsibility. What did she fail to do in order to ensure her own protection? Such coinciding yet conflicting views of vulnerability and responsibility around risk are the focus of this article. Specifically, this article addresses the treatment of teenage girls as simultaneously vulnerable and responsible in the particular context of the involvement of child protection services (CPS) in the aftermath of sexual abuse.

"Child protection services" refers to that distinct segment of Canada's welfare state responsible for protecting children from maltreatment. Sociojudicial in nature – in that psychosocial interventions are delimited and shaped by provincial/territorial legislation – CPS practice is carried out by professionals legally mandated to intervene in the private lives of families when concerns relating to risk to a child have been identified. In other words, CPS professionals are sanctioned by the

state to become involved with children and their families only when parental care or behaviour is deemed to have fallen below a prescribed minimum standard and to have contributed to a situation of serious risk to a child's safety, wellbeing or development (Bala, 2011; Hetherington, 2006). Legislation serves as a guide for CPS professionals in their day-to-day activities of assessing allegations that a child is at risk of abuse or neglect; taking protective actions to ensure the immediate safety of a child determined to be at risk; and pursuing any intervention necessary to prevent the recurrence of a situation presenting a danger to the child. CPS professionals are required to provide evidence to justify interventions into family life, especially the most intrusive interventions such as the apprehension of a child. There is no acceptance of imprecise reasoning as continued CPS involvement is restricted to those situations in which there is obvious risk of serious harm to the child (Bala, 1998). Anglin (2002: 238) noted that, in Canada, a legal perspective has come to inform CPS to the point that, even beyond the "boundaries of the court," CPS professionals often experience "their activities as if a judge were continually looking over their shoulder."

With children's safety as the driving force guiding all CPS interventions rather than a wider concentration on the needs and welfare of the child, CPS practice across Canada is narrowly concerned with identifying and managing risk (Lonne, Harries, Featherstone et al., 2016; Swift & Callahan, 2009). This preoccupation results in a practice emphasis on – quickly – identifying, monitoring and regulating risky situations and individuals. Such an orientation reflects the influence of prevailing neoliberal and risk-thinking ideologies, wherein individuals tend to be treated as responsible for the creation and management of risk in their lives while, at the same time, assessed and classified in terms of the risk they pose to themselves or others (Webb, 2006). While CPS interventions necessarily involve parents, primary attention remains securely fixed on the child deemed to be in need of protection. But what happens when that child is of an age nearing adulthood? Even more specifically, what happens when that child is a sexually abused teenage girl?

66

Drawing from the findings of a larger qualitative study designed according to a girl-centred interpretive framework, I suggest that neoliberal and risk-thinking ideologies combine to influence CPS practice with sexually abused teenage girls. Simultaneous with an appreciation of these girls' vulnerability and consequent need for professional care and protection, is a competing view of them as autonomous almost-adults, responsible for identifying and managing the risks in their lives. While their safety from risk remains the paramount concern of CPS, the added dimension of sexually abused teenage girls' proximity to adulthood contributes to a shift in responsibility for protection from CPS professionals to the girls themselves. I argue that this shift contributes to a common treatment of sexually abused teenage girls as rational actors capable of appropriately managing risk if provided the information and guidance needed to identify and avoid dangerous circumstances. I begin this article by elaborating on the influence of neoliberal and risk-thinking ideologies on CPS practice in general, and more specifically CPS practice in situations of sexual abuse. I then provide a description of the study from which this article derives. How protection is pursued in CPS practice with sexually abused teenage girls is then presented according to themes arising from the analysis of the study's findings.

1. Risk and responsibility in child protection services

Risk and the management of risk have been defining features of Canadian CPS for well over 25 years. While the safety of children has always been at the heart of CPS involvement with families, the attitudes and practices associated with ensuring that safety tend to swing in accordance with the socio-political climate of the time and place. Today's CPS legislation, policies and practices reflect the influence of prevailing neoliberal and risk-thinking ideologies.

Deeply entrenched in Canadian society and its range of social policies and programs is the recognition that parents carry the responsibility for ensuring the wellbeing of their children and they have the right to do so without the unwarranted intrusion of the state. While the welfare state shares some responsibility for children's wellbeing, today, its involvement is largely distant through the provision of certain health and educational services as well as family benefits. Ultimately, parents are expected to provide for their children's basic needs through income garnered by participating in the free market and by adopting behaviours deemed appropriate for ensuring children's care and education. But, in those instances in which parents struggle to provide basic care to their children or to protect them from risk, the welfare state, in the form of CPS, is mandated to step in. According to neoliberal and risk-thinking ideologies, individuals are ultimately expected to assume responsibility for managing or, better yet, avoiding any variety of risks in their lives – while those deemed unable to do so by virtue of their age, capacity, choice or action are potentially subject to the intervention of state authorities (Webb, 2006). CPS is a clear example of such state authority. Once a child comes to the attention of CPS, CPS professionals come to share with parent(s) the responsibility for ensuring the child's ongoing and future safety. The brunt of that responsibility, however, remains with parents. While children remain at the heart of CPS interventions, their individual responsibilities with respect to managing risk to themselves tend to hinge on external perceptions of their capacities. This is a point to which I will return shortly as I consider how CPS professionals and sexually abused teenage girls understand and negotiate girls' involvement in their own protection from risk.

Previously, in a publication co-authored with Julia Krane, we explored how CPS practice has been transformed in a neoliberal climate preoccupied with risk (Carlton & Krane, 2013). We argued that present-day CPS practice “assumes that parents are what Lupton (2013) and Kemshall (2006, 2010) might call rational actors: capable of weighing and avoiding risks and able to take in information relevant to risk and act in acceptable or expected ways” (Carlton & Krane, 2013: 94). The concept of the rational actor is firmly situated in neoliberal ideology. Rational actors are envisioned as “free actors who are constrained only by their ignorance about the threat to which they may be exposed or their lack of self-efficacy in feeling able to do something about a risk” (Lupton 2013: 32). With appropriate intervention, rational actors are considered able to take matters into their own hands to resolve a situation of risk. Doing otherwise provides evidence that they are “irrational actors and thus vulnerable to blame and likely to be subjected to regulatory interventions” (Carlton & Krane, 2013: 95). Swift and Callahan (2009) observed this assumption of individual capacity and appropriate intervention combining to resolve risk playing out in typical CPS practices with parents. These authors explained that assessments of risk in CPS virtually always focus on the individual. As such, protective interventions aimed at risk reduction tend to centre on educating individual parents about what is needed in order for their children to be safe. Parents are thus charged “with the responsibility to help themselves through solutions that continually monitor their efforts and extend social control over them” (Swift & Callahan, 2009: 222).

“In other words, armed with the necessary information about the circumstances that gave rise to risk and the appropriate responses to resolve it, the parent, as a rational actor, is assumed to be in a position to make the right choice to protect her/his child” (Carlton & Krane, 2013: 95).

Clients of CPS, “as rational actors, are judged against particular and predetermined norms and ideologies of parenting and protection; they are made responsible for their decision-making around risk and are rewarded for protection choices that are socially sanctioned as correct” (Carlton & Krane, 2013: 95). Here the notion of failure to protect, which is written into CPS legislation across the country, including Quebec's *YPA*, becomes particularly salient as those parents who make

flawed or risky choices are all too likely to be viewed as having failed to protect and thus, rather than being rewarded, are subjected to further protective involvement, scrutiny and regulation. The degree of CPS intervention often relies on individual compliance with a particular CPS plan aimed at managing risk. Lupton (2013) conceptualized compliance as the acceptance and internalization of the objectives of organizational authorities. In the context of CPS, compliance “means demonstrating a capacity to immediately take on the expectation to protect one’s child from risk – with little if any room for ambivalence or confusion and uncertainty – at all costs and irrespective of the social and emotional context of such protection” (Carlton & Krane, 2013: 95). Noncompliance with a protection plan can result in intensified interventions or even the eventual removal of a child from his or her home environment. With the child’s safety paramount, there is no room for tolerance of risk.

2. Risk and responsibility in protection from child sexual abuse

Quebec’s *Youth Protection Act* (YPA) stipulates that the ultimate goal of any CPS intervention is “to put an end to and prevent the recurrence of a situation in which the security or the development of the child is in danger” (article 2.3(a)). Specific to concerns around sexual abuse, when a CPS professional becomes involved, s/he is responsible for (1) finding sufficient evidence to substantiate the allegations of sexual abuse; (2) removing any risk of sexual re-victimization usually by ensuring the separation of the victim from the perpetrator of the abuse; and (3) taking steps to address any physical or emotional harm experienced by the victim as a result of the abuse (Daigneault, Hébert, & Tourigny, 2007). Protective decisions may involve recommending placement outside of the child’s home environment; interdiction of contact with specified individuals, including most notably the alleged abuser; involvement in therapeutic interventions; or, surveillance and control over the child’s involvement with peers or movement in his/her surrounding community.

68

As previously stated, the recognition of parents as carrying the primary responsibility for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their children is central to CPS legislation and practice. Indeed, parental responsibility to protect does not disappear with the involvement of CPS. Rather, parents’ capacities (or failures) to protect are regularly made the object of CPS scrutiny and intervention. The current presence of *failure to protect* in CPS legislation makes explicit the expectation that even a non-offending parent – one who did not perpetrate an abuse – should be able to recognize risks to a child and to act so as to either prevent abuse or bring an end to the circumstances of risk (Krane, Strega & Carlton, 2013). Thus, in situations of child sexual abuse, a CPS determination of risk may result not only from the substantiation of the sexually abusive acts of an alleged offender but also from observations of the presumed failures of the non-offending parent – usually the mother – to protect the child when s/he is thought to have known of the sexual abuse or to have had reasonable cause to suspect it.

Before moving forward, I believe it pertinent to point out that despite the pervasiveness of gender-neutral language in official documentation as well as much of the academic literature dealing with CPS, CPS tends to produce gendered practices wherein scrutiny and intervention efforts are chiefly concentrated on mothers rather than fathers regardless of the a father’s presence and regardless of his potential identification as the principal contributor to the situation of risk (Coohey & Zhang, 2006; Risley-Curtiss & Heffernan 2003; Scourfield, 2003; Strega, Fleet, Brown et al., 2008; Trocmé, Fallon, MacLaurin et al., 2010). This observation combined with the fact that stepfathers and fathers were identified as the perpetrators of sexual abuse in a minority of cases (13 percent and 9 percent respectively) (Trocmé, Fallon, MacLaurin et al., 2010), is suggestive of a tendency in CPS practice to focus on mothers despite the possible availability of fathers or father figures.

In situations of child sexual abuse brought to the attention of CPS, a non-offending mother may well be viewed as having already failed in her individual responsibility to predict and prevent risk to her child. By concentrating efforts on mothers, the emphasis is shifted from the actions of the alleged (predominantly male) offender to inadequacies and “in/actions of women as mothers” (Krane, 2003: 70). Thus, what a non-offending mother does – or how she acts – after learning of the sexual abuse of her child is frequently made the focus of CPS intervention. Her presumed maternal responsibility to protect does not disappear with the involvement of CPS. If anything, it intensifies. Given the paramountcy of child safety in CPS legislation and practice combined with the fact that the removal of a child from his/her family environment remains an intervention of last resort, CPS professionals tend to rely heavily on non-offending mothers in their efforts to ensure children are protected from further harm. In her case study of the protection processes undertaken in situations of child sexual abuse in a CPS agency in Ontario, Krane (2003) observed that the CPS mandate to protect was often shifted from individual CPS professionals to non-offending mothers. This shift was seen in practices wherein CPS professionals encouraged mothers to express their belief and support of their sexually abused child; to take measures to restrict contact between the child and his/her alleged abuser; and to engage in any other measure deemed appropriate to address any physical and/or emotional harm resulting from the sexual abuse. Krane (2003) posited that placing expectations on non-offending mothers to take on the daily tasks of protection effectively serves to transform them into “mother protectors.” She further observed that this transfer of responsibility to protect tended to be done with little regard for non-offending mothers’ respective social contexts or circumstances. The underlying assumption appeared to be that women as mothers are (and ought to be) willing and able to make choices and to take actions appropriate to the best interests and wellbeing of their children.

But what happens when the child in question is a sexually abused teenage girl? Embedded in Quebec’s *YPA* is the requirement that “the child’s” active participation in interventions and decision-making on their own behalf be encouraged, especially when that child is aged 14 or older. CPS professionals and courts are thus mandated to share information in a manner that supports girls’ understanding and to take into consideration their views and wishes throughout the intervention and decision-making process. Whereas a number of feminist authors have brought attention to CPS practices with non-offending mothers around the protection of (or failure to protect) their child, left out has been a consideration of sexually abused teenage girls’ implication in their own protection.

3. The study and its objectives

This article is drawn from my doctoral research the overarching aim of which to provide an in-depth understanding of how teenage girls and CPS professionals understand and negotiate concerns for risk and aspirations for girls’ autonomy in the aftermath of sexual abuse. While significant scholarly attention has been given to understanding risk as the driving concern of CPS and integrating risk assessment and management tools into protection practices, less attention has been given to understanding the influence on CPS involvement of expectations surrounding the developing autonomy of youths and, more specifically, girls. Even less attention has been given to intersecting experiences of CPS involvement due to concerns relating to sexual abuse and female adolescence. Responding to these gaps, my research aims were twofold: to provide insights relevant to enhancing CPS policy and practice involving sexually abused teenage girls, and to encourage

dialogue within two seemingly disparate academic domains – social work scholarship on child protection and sexual abuse and Girls’ Studies¹.

The study was designed as a qualitative case study informed by a girl-centred interpretive framework. This framework emerges from efforts of Girls’ Studies researchers to elaborate “what it means to do girlhood research” (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2009: 214). At the core of a girl-centred interpretive framework and in keeping with the principle focus of Girls’ Studies is a research concentration “on issues about girls, for girls and by girls” (Reid-Walsh & Bratt, 2011: 9). Such inquiry involves more than simply naming girls or phenomena particular to girls as the subject matter under study. Rather, researchers adopting a girl-centred interpretive framework seek to confront essential or universalized/universalizing notions of “girl” and “girlhood.” Bringing attention to the intersections of age, gender and generation (amongst other facets of identity) allows for and encourages research that challenges and deconstructs simplistic and homogenous understandings of girls as women-in-the-making and girlhood as a temporary period of maturation within women’s life cycle. A girl-centred interpretive framework for research encourages deep and thorough examinations of the complex circumstances and contexts of girls’ lives and their influence on girls’ identities, experiences, choices and behaviours.

Data collection involved semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviewing and document review. Seven sexually abused teenage girls with a history of CPS involvement and nine CPS professionals practicing within a local agency took part in the research. The study also involved a review of official CPS documentation as well as the CPS case files of select participants. Collection of data from multiple sources also worked as a strategy for validating my findings. It allowed me to note points of convergence and divergence, to see the phenomenon under study “from different angles,” “to pursue interpretations further,” (Simons, 2009: 131) and, eventually, to develop a comprehensive portrait of CPS involvement with sexually abused teenage girls.

70

The teenage girls who participated in the study, while not a homogenous group, shared certain characteristics. At the time of the research, all seven girls were aged between 15 and 18. All were born in Quebec, English-speaking, and all but one were white. The seventh girl described herself as “brown.” Six were attending high-school or adult-education programs while the seventh was working full-time. All but one of the girls had lived or were living in residential or foster care. All had been subject to CPS interventions due to concerns for sexual abuse during their adolescent years. Each girl had been sexually abused by a male family member or a male adult with a close relationship to the family and most (5) reported multiple experiences of sexual violence, including rape by a peer, “gang rape,” and/or sexual exploitation.

All nine CPS professionals who participated in the study had direct CPS practice experience working with sexually abused teenage girls. Six were women, three were men. Six were born and raised in Quebec while three had immigrated to Canada as adults. While being the first language of only three of the professionals interviewed, all were fluent in English. They ranged in age from 31 to 57 and ranged in years of CPS experience from 3 to 27. In terms of education, all but one held a certificate, or bachelor’s and/or master’s degree in social work. The ninth had a bachelor’s degree in psychoeducation. These professionals came from different points of service within the agency and carried titles of child-care worker (1), social worker (5) and manager (3).

1 Girls’ Studies, now considered to be well-established as an academic domain, is a “unique and significant area of critical inquiry” occupied by scholars from various disciplines committed to researching and theorizing around girls, girlhood and girls’ cultures (Kearney, 2009: 2) and with close ties to third-wave feminist research and writing (Wald, 1998: 587).

Heeding advice offered in literature on qualitative research (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015; Simons, 2009), I began my data analysis concurrent with my data collection, thus allowing me to go back and forth between various sources of information, explore tentative hypotheses (Merriam, 2009: 165), and eventually produce trustworthy findings responsive to my objectives. Analysis included being attentive to how understandings of risk and autonomy intersected with perceptions of girls and girlhood to influence the protective efforts of CPS in situations of sexual abuse.

4. Establishing protection with sexually abused teenage girls

Consistent with neoliberal and risk-thinking ideologies, the reasonable next step flowing from the identification of risk is the regulation of that risk. In terms of CPS, managing risk means adopting specific strategies aimed at eradicating or reducing the identified risk to a child and its effects. As laid out in legislation, once a CPS professional determines a child to be at risk and in need of protection, the ensuing tasks are to “decide on the direction of the child” (YPA, article 32(c)), to enact protective measures, and to monitor the child and his/her family in their efforts to manage and reduce the situation of risk. The goal of such intervention, of course, remains that of ensuring the child’s safety.

Common throughout the participants’ accounts was an understanding that establishing protection in situations of sexual abuse involves three principal areas of intervention: 1. removal of the risk of revictimization by putting in place strategies for prohibiting contact between the victimized child and the perpetrator; 2. Supporting the child in coping with the fallout of abuse by ensuring the child’s access to appropriate therapeutic resources; and 3. Scrutinizing, regulating and controlling the risky choices and behaviours displayed by the abused child. This last strategy emerged as particularly characteristic of interventions with teenage girls in the aftermath of sexual abuse.

71

4.1 Removing the risk of revictimization

As noted, once concerns for sexual abuse have been identified, an essential first step in establishing a child or youth’s safety involves prohibiting contact with the abuser. Indeed, CPS professionals commonly cited prohibition of contact as a “concrete” protective measure applied with the goal of removing the risk of revictimization:

We’re very focused. Our mandate is clear. To make sure that the sexual abuse doesn’t happen again, to protect them from the perpetrator. (Elise)

Concrete measures. “Uncle Joe can’t come to the house” or something like that. ... There’s not much clinical to it, you know, just... “You better listen, or we’re calling the police” (Michael)

And so, this man, today, has no contact whatsoever with his children or with the family. But the mom still has contact with him because when she wants money, she calls him, and they meet somewhere in [the city]. (Alberto)

Michael made clear the authority of CPS underlying expectations of prohibition of contact. Given the paramountcy of child safety, there is no option but for the family to respect the CPS measures. Alberto’s comment was in reference to a situation in which the oldest of seven children in the family had been sexually abused by her mother’s boyfriend. The mother, a refugee to Canada, was unemployed and, having only limited connection with family in her country of origin, found herself isolated in her new home city. Overshadowed by the priority of protecting

her daughter from revictimization were the struggles she faced in suddenly being responsible for caring for her children all on her own. While Alberto was quite sensitive to the challenges facing this mother, his disapproval over her continued contact with the abuser was clear. He explained that she was “making progress” but had yet to demonstrate to him her capacity to ensure the safety of her children.

This latter situation described by Alberto provides an example of Krane’s (2003) observation of the transformation of mothers into “mother protectors” in the context of CPS involvement in situations of child sexual abuse. Expectations of maternal protection were common in CPS professionals’ discussions of protection, as were expectations that sexually abused teenage girls assume responsibility for their own protection. For example, CPS professionals regularly spoke of the expectation that girls stay away from the perpetrator of sexual abuse. Still, despite Michael’s above-mentioned suggestion that a prohibition of contact is a straightforward protective measure, CPS professionals repeatedly noted that putting such a ban into effect with teenage girls was fraught with challenges:

We ask for it in Court. I mean, if a 16-year old wants to go see her perpetrator, she’ll do it. Regardless of a court order. You try your best to keep the kid away from the perpetrator. You try the best to get the perpetrator out of the house but it doesn’t always work like that. (Evelyn)

The reality is that they’re 16 and we have a “no contact” order, and they want contact, they’re going to do it behind our back anyway, so... (Meghan)

While acknowledging teenage girls’ autonomous choice, CPS professionals questioned the safety of their choices to pursue contact with their abusers “behind our back.” Discussing the situation of a 16-year old girl who had been sexually abused by a family friend, Evelyn commented, “she has both pieces to her,” a capacity to act autonomously and vulnerability. Despite the prohibition of contact, this girl continued to visit her abuser:

She has a head on her shoulders, but that doesn’t mean that she doesn’t want to belong somewhere. She makes stupid decisions. She was back there all the time and lying about it. She put herself repeatedly in that situation, but so do a lot of sexual abuse victims. You know, most teens don’t have the knowledge or the ability to say, “I’m going to avoid this situation. This is bad.” There’s some emotional need that’s being met, even though it’s completely inappropriate and if you could take a step back and see it clearly from an outside perspective, you would say, “Oh, well then, just don’t put yourself in that situation,” even when it’s not so straightforward. (Evelyn)

Evelyn recognized the complex dynamics evident in the relationship between this girl and the perpetrator and displayed a sensitivity to the girl’s confusion as she was being asked to understand her situation as risky and accept responsibility for CPS’s prohibition of contact. Nevertheless, while appreciating that it was not “straightforward,” Evelyn remained consistent in her conviction that the girl’s choice to be in contact with the perpetrator was a “stupid” decision that left her open to revictimization and continued risk.

The teenage girls interviewed were well aware of the CPS-imposed responsibility to avoid contact with their abusers. They were equally well aware of a range of difficulties associated with this specific responsibility to self-protect. Dora (age 16), for example, talked about the expectation that she stay away from the young men who had gang-raped her and threatened her into prostitution. According to Dora, after having expressed her insecurity and fear and her doubts that she could

assert herself in the face of her abusers, her CPS social worker advised “that when they [abusers] see you they need to go away. If they don’t go away, you call the cops so they can find them and put them in jail.” But Dora doubted her ability to control contact with her abusers. She explained that, since being raped, she did not feel safe anywhere; she was terrified her assailants would find her and exact their retribution for her having reported them to the police. Unfortunately, in making Dora responsible for self-protection, the CPS social worker, from Dora’s perspective, was unable to hear her feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness. In a manner similar to Dora’s experience of responsabilization, Sanni (age18) spoke of being made responsible for managing her father’s potentially sexually abusive behaviour. In her case, rather than an absolute prohibition of contact, Sanni was given the choice as to whether to see her father. The expressed expectation, however, was that she not allow any inappropriate behaviour on her father’s part:

My worker was telling me, “if ever you see him again, what are you going to tell him?” And, I told her, no, I’m not going to talk about it because it would be just way too awkward. For me and for him. But then she said, “well, okay you have to let him know that it’s never going to happen again.” And then she gave me ways to sneak it in to let him know it’s never going to happen. (Sanni)

Paralleling Krane’s (2003) observation that preserving a child’s safety in situations of child sexual abuse was largely reliant on the availability and ability of non-offending mothers to carry out the work of a protection plan, the success of protective measures relating to prohibiting or managing contact between sexually abused teenage girls and identified perpetrators relied largely on the compliance and capabilities of the girls themselves.

4.2 Recommendations for psychological follow-up

CPS professionals made frequent mention of the trauma associated with sexual abuse as well as their hope that sexually abused teenage girls might eventually heal from the abuse and be able to go on to form healthy relationships with themselves and others. Therapy was oft cited as important to girls’ healing process as well as to helping them learn to manage the secondary risks associated with sexual abuse. Equally often, however, CPS professionals noted challenges to engaging sexually abused teenage girls in therapy. Along with common complaints over a lack of resources, the CPS professionals spoke of their powerlessness to force these girls to seek and follow through with treatment. Manon, for example, commented, “A lot of those teenagers come into care and some of them just don’t want to deal with it. We have therapy available for them. We have psychologists. It’s free. It’s here. It’s therapeutic ... but they have to be willing.” Thematic throughout CPS professionals’ discussions on recommending therapy for teenage girls in the aftermath of sexual abuse was a respect for their choice to participate or not: “it’s their choice; they have to be willing; you can’t force them.” In this instance, a recognition of girls’ autonomy earned through their age superseded CPS professionals’ recommendations. But how much leeway is really given to girls’ autonomy? Evelyn and Elise provided some insight in this regard:

If you have a teenage girl who’s going to fight you on getting help, then what are you going to do? What kind of services are you going to give them? You’re going to force them to sit in therapy? How’s that going to – they aren’t going to show up. Like it needs to be something that you’re ready to do ...which is unfortunate because then they spend years putting themselves at risk. (Evelyn)

Here Evelyn recognized girls' refusal to participate in therapy as a risky endeavour but also accepted that she could not force any girl to participate in "getting help." Elise voiced a similar perspective in speaking of a particular case of a sexually abused teenage girl:

We were searching for a psychologist for her, but she was telling us that she was ok, so we waited. We were trusting what she was telling us until something happened. Not too major. So we decided to push it because she needs it. (Elise)

The "something" that happened was that the girl became violent at school with her teachers and classmates, had been caught getting drunk with friends, disrespected her curfew, and had put herself in a position where there was potential for being in contact with her abuser. Provided that the girl presented as protected from revictimization and displayed no risk-taking or acting out behaviours, there was no need for Elise to use her authority to urge her to participate in therapy. However, once concerns for risk escalated due to the girl's behaviours, the need to privilege her safety superseded respect for her autonomous choice. As expressed by Evelyn, and repeating the CPS credo of privileging child safety, "sometimes we give them the credit of being adults, and sometimes we don't. We do it when it's convenient ... and if they're not in danger."

4.3 Scrutinizing, regulating and controlling risky behaviour

"Safety isn't only about the sexual abuse," Evelyn told me. Ensuring the safety of sexually abused teenage girls was consistently linked to scrutinizing, regulating and controlling girls' risky choices and behaviours. A common thread weaving throughout the interviews with the CPS professionals was a view of sexually abused teenage girls as complicit in their own risk through their participation in risky, irresponsible and acting-out behaviours. Correspondingly, girls were regularly expected to take individual control of their behaviours as a means of ensuring their safety and avoiding more intensive CPS interventions. The sexually abused teenage girls interviewed were well aware of such assumed accountability and equally well aware that being identified by CPS as risky and irresponsible would lead to increasingly intrusive protective interventions.

As explained by Manon (CPS professional), a shift in concern from the sexual abuse to the risky behaviours of sexually abused teenage girls brings about a corresponding shift in CPS interventions:

Girls are initially signalled, right... Youth Protection initially comes into their lives because of sexual abuse. Risk. And often, by the time they come to need to be placed in residential care, a lot of other issues have developed, such as acting out, running away, drug use, alcohol use, gang involvement. So, the interventions then – a lot of times – become more focused on these new problems that have developed. (Manon)

The interviews revealed that focusing on "these new problems" translates into efforts to ensure the safety of sexually abused teenage girls by raising awareness and educating them to be able to identify and avoid risky situations while simultaneously closely monitoring their choices and behaviours. In this way, sexually abused teenage girls are cast as rational actors, free to make appropriate safe choices once they have the right information. For example, Meghan spoke of educating girls about how to identify and respond to perpetrators' efforts to manipulate them into reinitiating contact:

The father owned two restaurants, and it was going to be an issue because the girl worked in one of them. We had a Court order. He wasn't to be there when she was there, but he started calling, and her reaction was, "Well, what's the big deal? It's just the phone." So we

talked about – not so much risk factors, but grooming, what is he’s saying? ... How could he be influencing, because in her mind, it was, “It’s okay. I could manage it” – “he’s not” – you know. I needed to educate her. (Meghan)

Equipped with necessary information about the circumstances that could give rise to risk and the appropriate ways to manage such circumstances, it is assumed that, as rational actors, sexually abused teenage girls are able to make the right decisions to ensure their own safety.

Compliance emerged as an important element contributing to CPS professionals’ interpretations of the self-protection successes and failures of sexually abused girls and their corresponding decisions about how to preserve the girls’ safety. Molly’s (age 18) struggle with compliance was evident in her CPS file:

Molly goes through times of compliance, and then she does behaviours that put her at risk or make her vulnerable to risk. Molly AWOLed from the back-up unit ... and was prepared to have an adult male store owner drive her back to [her group home]. Molly, with a lot of counselling from staff and the worker, and in much conversation with her mother, began to see that these choices put her at serious risk.

Earlier, I introduced Lupton’s (2013) conceptualization of compliance as the acceptance and internalization of the objectives of organizational authorities. In the context of CPS involvement, noncompliance tends to result in intensified interventions. In Molly’s case, despite demonstrating progress in terms of being able to recognize her choices as presenting a risk to her safety, her continued struggle to fully internalize and adapt her behaviour to expectations of self-protection meant remaining in protective custody rather than returning home. Indeed, sexually abused teenage girls’ failures to integrate information about risk and self-protection and their noncompliance with the protective measures put in place by CPS professionals were regularly cited as reasons for pursuing placement:

My part is to work with the family. But it depends. With sexual abuse, that’s not always evident. I can think of a girl where the interventions were focused on acting out, running away, drug use – a lot of times the interventions can seem punitive. When a youth, fourteen years old, runs away, places herself at risk, you know, does not return to her group home at night, well, we will back them up. (Manon)

I say to her, I say, “Listen, if you don’t follow your mom’s curfews and behaviours, you’re going to the hellhole, again, of a group home.” (Alberto)

Recommendations of removal and placement of the child in a CPS resource typify the peak of restrictive measures. Both Manon and Alberto indicated that in those situations in which sexually abused teenage girls continued to make flawed choices, thus placing themselves at risk, placement in the protective custody of a CPS residential resource is the obvious next step. The following excerpt from Nicole’s (age 17) CPS file further illustrates CPS decision-making around placement when risk is understood to lie with the sexually abused teenage girl and the dangers she poses to herself:

The risks that Nicole is exposing herself to now outweigh any inherent risks (recruitment by gangs and contact with adolescent prostitutes) of placement. Furthermore, the undersigned is of the opinion that placement provided the only hope for Nicole to be contained in a safe environment.

In this case, despite the CPS professional’s recognition that placement itself carries with it “inherent risks,” ensuring Nicole’s safety from herself remained the paramount concern.

CPS professionals have recourse to a network of diverse placement settings when deciding that a child or youth be placed outside of their home environment. This network includes settings providing varying degrees of observation and regulation with the most extreme being “intensive supervision units” (YPA) or, as the participants in my study referred to them, “locked units,” “closed units,” or “back up.” Andrew, speaking of his concerns for Nicole, told me he “would have liked to put her in a closed unit for 6 months a long time ago, before she got herself into trouble.” The “trouble” Andrew referred to was Nicole’s abduction and consequent sexual exploitation after having run away from her residential unit. Well aware of the restrictions of liberty experienced by individual girls placed in closed units, yet committed to the paramountcy of safety, Andrew wondered whether protecting sexually abused teenage girls from the “threats they pose to themselves” ought to take precedence. In a manner similar to Evelyn’s comment cited in this article’s title – “If she’s not going to protect herself, then how are we going to protect her?”, Andrew’s conveyed sentiments of frustration and powerlessness with respect to the futility of his interventions aimed at protecting Nicole from her individual failures to identify and manage risk. He concluded that for Nicole, “a closed unit is at least somewhere where she can’t run and put herself in harm’s way.” The irony of locking up Nicole in order to protect her was not lost on Andrew. Still, rather than concentrating on the emotional and concrete circumstances that may have precipitated her repeated AWOLs, Nicole was consistently identified as the problem to be managed. With a strict focus on risk and a corresponding expectation of individual responsibility for managing risk, there is limited space for CPS professionals to engage in interventions aimed at understanding and supporting sexually abused teenage girls in coping with the fallout associated with their histories of victimization. Averting risk remains the principal focus of intervention.

4.4 Collaborative decision-making or continued scrutiny, regulation and control?

76

Article 2.3 (b) of the YPA stipulates that any intervention “must, if the circumstances are appropriate, favour the means that allow the child and the child’s parents to take an active part in making decisions and choosing measures that concern them.” This stipulation becomes particularly salient once the child in question reaches the age of 14, given that upon reaching the age of 14, citizens are awarded certain rights of consent – or refusal to consent (*Civil Code of Québec*, 1991).

Speaking about her practice with youth, Manon told me “you have to remember that they have something to say and can influence things in their lives.” She added, however, that encouraging youth to speak up and be influential, is complicated by their implication in a context wherein scrutiny, regulation and control regularly take precedence over shared decision-making: “being in the Youth Protection network, they’ve had a lot of people make a lot of decisions for them. There’s not a lot of leeway for teenagers to make their own decisions or to have a voice.” CPS professionals’ discussions about decision-making revealed that efforts to work collaboratively are commonly mediated by interpretations of right and wrong, of safe and risky. Collaboration with sexually abused girls tended to hinge on perceptions of the girls’ capacities to identify risk and adopt risk-management strategies. Elise explained, “I tell them you have the right to disagree with me. And in court you have the right to say what you want, but right now I don’t think you are ready to make the right decision about you. It’s not safe.” Similarly, Corrine claimed,

We should give them choices, because they’ll make their own decisions without telling us, and maybe not good ones. If we don’t give them choices, they’re going to choose maybe running away, maybe acting out ... you can explain their choices but they need to learn how to make good choices, ... not negative choices. (Corrine)

Such comments suggest that aspirations for girls' autonomous choice are constrained by expectations of rational action and continued concerns for flawed decision-making. Corrine's deliberations revealed how choice can be transformed into an opportunity both to scrutinize a girl's capacities to choose correctly and to educate by referencing "negative" choices. This process worries me in terms of the potential for sexually abused teenage girls' voices to be treated as evidence of their inability to conform to the risk-averse expectations of CPS interventions and, as a result, silenced.

For Evelyn, involving sexually abused teenage girls in decision-making is "not straightforward" and often confounded by their misdirected understandings of risk:

Oftentimes, their opinion about what's keeping them safe and what isn't is very different than what the Law defines as risk... It's complicated because they deserve to be included in decision-making, but their ideas, or what they want, is often very different from our perspective. It goes back to our job – to keep them safe. (Evelyn)

Evelyn's comments give weight to my suspicion that sexually abused teenage girls are excluded from decision-making when their responses to risk diverge from those sanctioned by CPS. Within the context of CPS, safety trumps collaboration. Girls' demonstrated internalization of official understandings of risk as well as their capacity to negotiate risk the right way thus become central to CPS professionals' determinations of the pertinence of girls' contributions to decision-making and protection planning on their own behalf. Often left out of collaborative efforts circumscribed by official understandings of risk and risk management are opportunities to integrate girls' complex experiences and nuanced understandings of risk into planning for their safety. This observation is intended neither to minimize the sensitivity I heard in the comments of Evelyn and other CPS professionals nor to deny that CPS decision-making and planning can be appropriate to ensuring the girls' safety. My concern is that a reliance on strict understandings of "what the Law defines as risk" and the appropriate ways of ensuring safety, may result in confining sexually abused teenage girls within one of two opposing identities – successful, safe rational actor or failing, at-risk or risky irrational actor. In a context driven by concerns for risk, encouraging autonomy through collaboration is easy with the first of these two groups of girls. Encouraging autonomy through collaboration is distinctly harder and, indeed, likely to be discouraged with those girls displaying the latter irrational identity.

A review of Nicole's file revealed a clear preoccupation with her identity as an irrational actor unable to help ensure her own safety, an identity that served to marginalize her wishes in protective plans and actions. She was portrayed as untrustworthy and as lacking the capacities to recognize appropriate means through which to manage risk:

Nicole has intellectual abilities in the low average range. Nicole is faced with interconnected issues of security and belonging, presenting post-traumatic stress symptoms. These symptoms are interfering with Nicole's ability to use her common sense and social judgment in interpreting and evaluating life situations, consequently affecting her consideration of appropriate ways of action. She is unable to link how her own behaviours and attitudes affect her present situation.

Noted in the file was Nicole's desire "to return home to her mother;" her "feeling uncomfortable in group homes;" and, her wish of "not wanting to remain in placement." She had purportedly identified her mother's home as "the safest place for her." While conceivable that a return to her mother's home may have been incongruent with ensuring her safety, there is also truth to Nicole's stated belief that, in the context of CPS involvement, she had "little control in her life" or "say" in decision-making:

I get pissed off. “Yeah, yeah, whatever. Go f— yourself. Do whatever you want!” Because if they’re going to make my decisions then basically I have no say. You’re running my life. Do whatever the f— you please, but don’t expect me to follow it. (Nicole)

Assuming she had no voice in decision-making and planning on her own behalf, Nicole saw her only recourse as being to disengage from participating in CPS planning. While Nicole may have found some power in her resistance, it is more than likely that such resistance further contributed to CPS perceptions of her irrationality.

5. Concluding thoughts: Taking risks with risk

Understandably, taking risks is generally well beyond the usual domain of CPS practice. Evident throughout the interviews with both CPS professionals and sexually abused teenage girls involved with CPS was a narrative of prudence characteristic of neoliberal and risk-thinking ideologies. With the common identification of sexually abused teenage girls as both vulnerable and risky, management of risk in the context of CPS is largely taken up with the scrutiny of girls’ willingness and ability to self-protect and the regulation and control of girls’ acting-out, risky and irresponsible choices and behaviours.

In a general sense, CPS determinations of risk lead to the establishment of specific strategies aimed at eradicating or reducing the identified risk to a child and its effects. This process of risk management is identified in CPS legislation and policy as an official responsibility of CPS professionals. With respect to sexually abused teenage girls’ involvement with CPS, however, this study uncovered a transfer of responsibility for managing risk from CPS professionals to individual sexually abused teenage girls. I observed these girls to be paradoxically viewed as vulnerable to risk – and thus the object of CPS intervention – yet simultaneously responsible for its regulation through processes of self-protection. But what happens with those girls unable to self-protect?

The notion of failure to protect is not new to CPS. Novel, however, is the observation of its implication for sexually abused teenage girls. Feminist scholars have observed the inclusion of “failure to protect” in CPS legislation, policy and practice in situations of sexual abuse as shaping practice with non-offending mothers such that determinations of risk are based not only on the substantiation of the sexually abusive acts of an alleged offender but also on observations of the presumed failures of the non-offending mother to protect the child (Krane, 2003; Krane, Strega & Carlton, 2013). Earlier in this article, I asked, what happens when the child in question is a sexually abused teenage girl? I found that in ongoing CPS assessments of risk, considerable attention is given to sexually abused teenage girls’ inadequacies and failures to self-protect. As such, sexually abused teenage girls tended to be treated as being safe or at risk on the basis of their ability to recognize and avoid risks of revictimization as well as their ability to choose and act within expected and safe bounds.

There is no doubt that CPS professionals are sensitive to the various challenges and disadvantages facing sexually abused teenage girls involved with CPS. Indeed, throughout my conversations with CPS professionals, I heard their compassion and thoughtfulness with regards to the girls with whom they intervened. I also heard their shared commitment to ensuring the girls’ safety. This commitment often translated into efforts to mobilize sexually abused girls to take responsibility for resolving situations of risk regardless of their difficult and/or marginalized circumstances. The underlying assumption appeared to be that sexually abused girls, largely by virtue of their age and proximity to adulthood, and armed with guidance and information about risk, ought to be willing and able to make choices and take actions appropriate to their own wellbeing and safety. Such transformation

of sexually abused teenage girls into self-protectors relies on an understanding of girls as rational actors. Girls' failures to live up to such expectations tended to produce identifications of them as irrational actors and to trigger intensified CPS interventions centred on the scrutiny, regulation, and control of girls and their behaviours. While the obvious goal of such interventions is the protection of sexually abused teenage girls deemed to be failing to self-protect, girls were inclined to experience these interventions as anything but protective. Girls spoke of CPS interventions as carrying with them a range of potential consequences associated with losses of freedom and voice.

The transformation of sexually abused teenage girls involved with CPS into self-protectors reveals an influence of neoliberal ideology. The successfully self-protecting sexually abused teenage girl looks remarkably like the ideal autonomous neoliberal subject who is adept at identifying and managing risk and prepared to perform as – or, in the case of sexually abused teenage girls, become – a productive citizen able to participate in the surrounding world without the need for intensive welfare state intervention. Performing as a neoliberal subject, or a self-protecting sexually abused teenage girl, involves an individualization of risk management. But, as Beck (2007) suggests, individualization should not be mistaken as a process of engaging free and conscious choice or preference on the part of the individual. Individualization, according to Beck (2007), is compulsory and involves exhortations for individual participation in managing our own biographies and risks according to institutional guidelines – such as those of CPS – shaped by a neoliberal ideology. Individualization represents a downloading of responsibility for managing risk to individuals, thus opening up the possibility of success and failure, celebration and blame.

Perusing my research findings raised questions for me as to what could be done differently in the context of CPS involvement with teenage girls in the aftermath of sexual abuse, a context driven by concerns for risk. In response to such questioning, I arrived at three potential avenues for enhancing practice: (1) collaborate with girls as essential resources in ensuring their protection; (2) develop and nurture relationships with girls; and, (3) support CPS professionals in investing time in and taking risks with girls. Rather than aiming to absolve girls of any responsibility for self-protection, my suggestions are intended to encourage a collaborative practice truly respectful of girls' complex experiences and situated knowledge.

Largely overshadowed in the responsabilization of sexually abused teenage girls is attention to the complex influence of girls' varied circumstances of difference and disadvantage on their capacities to effectively identify and resolve situations of risk. Taking account of such influence, however, might well contribute to developing collaborative interventions with girls. I suggest that protective interventions aimed at implicating girls in the identification and resolution of risk – that consider girls as collaborators in ensuring their own protection – ought to be founded on a deep appreciation of girls' individual risk-management efforts as well as their complex and varied circumstances. Here, I envision a CPS practice that treats sexually abused teenage girls as social rather than rational actors. A consideration of individuals as social actors means recognizing their situated knowledge of their respective experiences and contexts and respecting their understandings and negotiations of risk as complex, diverse and positioned in time, location and circumstance (Kemshall, 2010). Attending to the details of a girl's identity, circumstance and experience as well as how she recognizes and manages potentially risky situations allows for the development of protection plans that are realistic, suited to girls' particular situations, and attainable. Ignoring or glossing over girls' situated knowledge or reducing girls' accounts of their experiences to a list of risk factors runs the risk of alienating perhaps the most essential resource for ensuring the girls' protection – the girls themselves. Integrating girls' situated knowledge into collaborative risk management involves a certain tolerance for risk and uncertainty on the part of CPS professionals. It also requires transparency and a willingness to negotiate where to potentially draw the line about risk in girls' respective situations.

Of course, such an approach relies on the development and nurturance of relationships as well as an ability and readiness to engage in conversation. Both, however, are likely to be complicated by the contemporary context of CPS practice which, with its concentration on the identification, documentation and quick management of risk, allows limited space to individual CPS professionals to take risks with time and alternate visions of risk (such as those grounded in girls' situated knowledge). Adding to this challenge is the caution with which the girls I interviewed suggested they engaged with CPS professionals. The girls expressed being acutely conscious of the scrutiny of the CPS professionals with whom they were involved. For a number of them, their awareness of the potential to be judged as posing a risk to themselves or failing to protect provoked a lack of trust and led them to censor their conversations with CPS professionals. With little doubt, such censor limits opportunities for CPS professionals to fully appreciate the details of girls' intersecting experiences of sexual abuse and CPS involvement or to learn from girls' situated knowledge. Simply, it is difficult to imagine the possibility of developing collaborative relationships within which girls might feel safe to voice their thoughts, feelings, doubts or experiences when fear of scrutiny weighs so heavily.

As we concluded our interview, Sanni, one of the participants in the study, told me, "It's cool that you hear me out because I wouldn't talk about all of this with [my social worker] ... I've been really comfortable." In reflecting back on this exchange, I wish I had taken time to explore it further with Sanni. What contributed to her feeling "comfortable talking" with me? What did she understand to be the obstacles or possibilities of engaging in conversation with CPS professionals? Without the benefit of Sanni's reflections, I suggest that CPS professionals explore with sexually abused teenage girls what might facilitate or impede conversations about their thoughts or experiences. Adopting ways of communicating that respond to girls' concerns about being scrutinized also means being ready to deconstruct patterns of talking that are largely based on gathering information to assess and manage risk. To this end, I urge CPS professionals to continue in their efforts to pursue conversations characterized by attentive listening, transparent communication, cooperation, lack of judgement, and expressions of caring and empathy (Carlton & Krane, 2013). I say "continue" because I believe that individual CPS professionals already go above and beyond their CPS mandate in order to connect with sexually abused teenage girls. But, as the CPS professionals I interviewed suggest, they tend to do so "on their own time" and without the explicit endorsement or support of CPS agencies.

In May 2019, Quebec's Special Commission on the Rights of Children and Youth Protection (Laurent Commission), convened to conduct a review of the province's youth protection services in the wake of the tragic death of a 7-year old girl in April 2019. A preliminary report released by the commission in November 2020 included a list of recommendations to be submitted to the government. A critical element noted therein was the inhospitable and untenable organizational climate within which CPS professionals carry out their protection mandate. According to the testimony of numerous interested parties, CPS professionals struggle to fulfill their protection mandate within an underfunded system characterized by heavy caseloads, cumbersome bureaucracy and increasingly technocratic approaches to practice. In such an atmosphere, it is difficult to imagine CPS professionals being able to invest the time and energy necessary for nurturing trusting relationships with girls, eliciting teenage girls' situated knowledge of their circumstances and experiences relating to risk, and privileging their voices and perspectives in risk assessment and protection planning. In concluding this article, I add my voice to calls to not only increase funding to CPS but also to recognize and support the clinical expertise and judgement of CPS professionals. Historically, changes to child protection systems have arisen in the wake of tragedy and have largely been shaped by fears of failing to protect children from risk. As such, over past decades, CPS reforms have included efforts to standardize practice, facilitate quick decision-making, and

reduce uncertainty in assessing and managing risk through the introduction of specific guidelines, timeframes and systems of accountability (Brown, 2010; Munro, 2004; Parton, 2008). I hope one day to see a radical shift in CPS policy and practice that would privilege the voices, experiences and knowledge of CPS professionals and the families and children with whom they work while allowing for a degree of tolerance for risk and uncertainty. Tolerance for risk, however, cannot be shouldered by individual CPS professionals. Rather, organizational support in the form of reduced caseloads, clinical (rather than administrative) supervision, access to ongoing professional training, etc., ought to be integrated into the day-to-day functioning of CPS agencies. With the benefit of organizational support and an ideological shift towards a degree of tolerance for risk, CPS professionals ought to be able to slow down their involvement with sexually abused teenage girls and invest in collaborating to explore and develop risk management strategies grounded not in preconceived notions of appropriate self-protection, but instead in girls' situated knowledge of their identities, circumstances, and experiences.

RÉSUMÉ :

S'appuyant sur une étude qualitative conçue selon un cadre interprétatif axé sur les filles, cet article porte sur l'influence des idéologies néolibérales et de la pensée sur le risque sur les pratiques de protection de l'enfance auprès des adolescentes ayant subi des abus sexuels. L'étude a révélé que ces filles sont considérées comme vulnérables et ont donc besoin de protection, tout en étant des quasi-adultes autonomes, responsables de l'identification et de la gestion des risques dans leur vie. Cet article illustre comment ces points de vue apparemment contradictoires contribuent à transformer les adolescentes ayant subi des abus sexuels en acteurs rationnels qui subissent régulièrement un examen minutieux de leurs capacités et incapacités à assurer leur propre sécurité à la suite d'un abus sexuel.

MOTS-CLÉS :

Protection de l'enfance, abus sexuels, adolescence féminine, néolibéralisme, pensée sur le risque

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Anglin, J. P. (2002). "Risk, well-being, and paramountcy in child protection: The need for transformation", *Child & Youth Care Forum*, Vol. 31(4), 233-255.
- Bala, N. (1998). "Reforming child welfare policies: Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater", *Policy Options/Options Politiques*, September, 28-32.
- Bala, N. (2011). "Setting the context: Child welfare law in Canada": 1-18, in K. Kufeldt and B. McKenzie (Eds.), *Child Welfare: Connecting Research, Policy, and Practice, 2nd edition*, Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Brown, L. (2010). "Balancing risk and innovation to improve social work practice", *British Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 40(4), 1211-1228.
- Carlton, R. and J. Krane (2013). "Take a chance on me: Rethinking risk and maternal failure to protect in cases of child sexual abuse": 92-106, in S. Strega, J. Krane, S. Lapierre, C. Richardson and R. Carlton (Eds.), *Failure to Protect: Moving Beyond Gendered Responses*, Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Coohey, C. and Y. Zhang (2006). "The role of men in chronic supervisory neglect", *Child Maltreatment*, Vol. 11(1), 21-33.
- Daigneault, I., Hébert, M., and M. Tourigny (2007). "Personal and interpersonal characteristics related to resilient developmental pathways of sexually abused adolescents", *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Clinics of North America*, Vol. 16, 415-434.
- Hetherington, R. (2006). "Learning from difference: Comparing child welfare systems": 27-50, in N. Freymond and G. Cameron (Eds.), *Towards Positive Systems of Child and Family Welfare: International Comparisons of Child Protection*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

- Kearney, M. C. (2009). "Coalescing: The development of Girls' Studies", *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 21(1), 1-28.
- Kemshall, H. (2006). "Crime and risk": 76-93, in P. Taylor-Gooby and J. Zinn (Eds.), *Risk in Social Science*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kemshall, H. (2010). "Risk rationalities in contemporary social work policy and practice", *British Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 40(4), 1247-1262.
- Krane, J. (2003). *What's Mother Got to Do with It? Protecting Children from Sexual Abuse*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Krane, J., Strega, S., and R. Carlton (2013). "G-d couldn't be everywhere so he created mothers: The impossible mandate of maternal protection in child welfare": 11-29, in S. Strega, J. Krane, S. Lapierre, C. Richardson and R. Carlton, (Eds.), *Failure to Protect: Moving Beyond Gendered Responses*, Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Lonne, B., Harries, M., Featherstone, B. and M. Gray (2016). *Working Ethically in Child Protection*, London: Routledge (Taylor & Francis).
- Lupton, D. (2013). *Risk, Second Edition*, Oxon: Routledge.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mitchell, C. and Reid-Walsh, J. (2009). "Girl-method: Placing girl-centred research methodologies on the map of Girlhood Studies": 214-233, in J. Klaehn (Ed.), *Roadblocks to Equality: Women Challenging Boundaries*, Montreal/New York/London: Black Rose Books.
- Munro, E. (2004). "A simpler way to understand the results of risk assessment instruments", *Children and Youth Services Review*, Vol. 26(9), 873-883.
- Office of the Children's Advocate (2019). *A Place Where it Feels Like Home: The Story of Tina Fontaine*.
- Parton, N. (2008). "Changes in the form of knowledge in social work: From the 'social' to the 'informational'?", *British Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 38(2), 253-269.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods, Fourth edition*, Thousand Oaks: Sage. (ebook)
- Québec (2010). *Youth Protection Act – 2007*, Éditeur Officiel du Québec.
- Reid-Walsh, J. and K. Bratt (2011). "Introduction: Texts about girls, for girls and by girls", *Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 4(1), 3-9.
- Risley-Curtiss, C. and H. Kristin (2003). "Gender biases in child welfare", *Affilia*, Vol.18(4), 395-410.
- Scourfield, J. (2003). *Gender and Child Protection*, London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Simons, H. (2009). *Case Study Research in Practice*, London and Los Angeles: Sage.
- Strega, S., Fleet, C., Brown, L., Dominelli, L., Callahan, M. and C. Walmsley (2008). "Connecting father absence and mother blame in child welfare policies and practice", *Children and Youth Services Review*, Vol. 30(7), 705-716.
- Swift, K. and M. Callahan (2009). *At Risk: Social Justice in Child Welfare and Other Human Services*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Trocme, N., Fallon, B., MacLaurin, B., Sinha, V., Black, T., Fast, E., Felstiner, C., Hélie, S., Turcotte, D., Weightman, P., Douglas, J. and J. Holroyd (2010). *Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect – 2008: Major Findings*. Ottawa: National Clearinghouse on Family Violence.
- Wald, G. (1998). "Just a girl? Rock music, feminism, and the cultural construction of female youth", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 23(3), 585-610.
- Webb, S. A. (2006). *Social Work in a Risk Society: Social and Political Perspectives*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.