

Abstracts

This book does not claim to provide answers but to highlight the elements of reflection which inspire research and which stimulate debate among researchers and also between researchers and professionals. Part one builds on the work already presented in this introduction: defining the contours and uses of the concept of vulnerability. Part two brings together various research studies which all attempt to give substance to certain aspects of the vulnerability – the problematic vulnerability – of families, to question practices and to open up new perspectives.

Education and Vulnerability: Social Diagnosis and Ethical Concerns

In this chapter, Fred Poché argues that it is not so much fragility that poses a problem as the contemporary development of a process of hyper-vulnerabilization. The author invites us to distinguish between terms that are too often confused, namely: fragility, vulnerability, weakness and fallibility. He then underlines the importance of thinking about an ethics of ties and an ethics of care, attentive to the fact of taking care of others (and of oneself).

The Ethics of Ordinary Vulnerability and Theories of Trauma: Two Convergent Approaches to Rethink Child Protection Practices

In this chapter, Tristan Milot and Naïma Hamrouni first review the notion of vulnerability in the literature on feminist social ethics. They then discuss the contribution of an ethics of ordinary vulnerability. Lastly, they attempt to show how the use of contemporary knowledge on relational and interpersonal psychological traumas as a framework for analyzing child-protection systems leads to findings that support an “ordinary” conception of vulnerability.

Vulnerability or Risk? When an Ecosystem Analysis of Situations of Neglect in Child Protection Reveals the Shortcomings of the French Child Protection System

Gilles Séraphin draws on an ecosystem approach to situations of neglect to highlight the limitations of the French child protection system. He argues that this system provides children with inadequate responses. The theoretical foundation upon which this system was built makes it difficult to overcome the focus on the dual parent-child relationship and therefore to consider their environment, despite the fact that this environment is partly the origin of neglect situations.

Family Reunification: a Challenge for Social and Educational Action with Families with Child Protection Concerns

M. Angells Balsells and his colleagues consider that vulnerability can be defined as a process of fragilization, as a tipping point between social integration and exclusion. In their view, the situation of families in child protection systems can be analyzed as part of a fragile balance between risk factors and protective factors that influence parenting. They underline the need to take into account the needs of children, parenting skills and the family's psychosocial context and they defend intervention methods that highly encourage participation. Through the analysis of the family reunification process (children's return to their families), they focus on professionals' attitudes and on their impact on participation.

Vulnerabilities and Families: Conceptual Issues Associated with the Development of Vocational Training

Carl Lacharité and his colleagues discuss a training experience in the context of *La Maison des Familles au Québec*, which relates to community action rather than to public institutions. They question how this type of training on vulnerability can, on the one hand, preserve the logic of action common in this community and deepen the relationship with families, and on the other hand, strengthen the ties that these organizations forge on a daily basis with various types of public institutions that offer them services. In other words, the key challenge they face is in ensuring that the concept of vulnerability does not override community action with families through a certain institutional culture, but rather appears as a platform for dialogue between these two players.

The Inadequate Family Support in the Immediate Post-Partum Period and the Breakdown Associated with Becoming a Parent

The work presented by Delphine Vennat and her colleagues focuses on the perinatal period as a moment of vulnerability. Relying on a psychoanalytic assessment, these researchers emphasize the difficulty of becoming parents without the support of a family network. This factor of social and family isolation adds to the initial vulnerability experienced by all parents.

The Placement of Children at Risk in Institutional or Individual Substitute Care in the Czech Republic

In this chapter, Lenka Šulová analyzes current social discourse in the Czech Republic about children at risk and the quest for optimal forms of childcare. The author focuses on the historical context and on the baseline data on the child's life in this country. In addition to drawing on classical references (Freud), she also allows us to discover the scientific literature of her country and to see how issues shared by different countries are addressed. She also highlights the current risks associated with the transition period in Czech society. In conclusion, she proposes several recommendations to improve the situation of children at risk in the Czech Republic.

De te Fabula Narratur: Neglect and Vulnerabilities of Families, Professionals and Researchers in the P.I.P.P.I Program

In this chapter, Paola Milani and her colleagues present the results of an action research: the Programme of Intervention for Prevention of Institutionalization. This program is based on intensive intervention with families with negligence issues. Specifically, they focus on how various professionals involved in the program describe family situations during the pre-assessment phase and look at the representations in play. They also address the complexity of the researcher/professional relationship and its implications for the research.

Interactional Dynamics in Child Protection

Starting from the broad issue relating to how families in vulnerable situations are supported in child protection systems, Maryse Bournel-Bosson and her colleagues observe workplace realities to identify accurately the extent to which the voice of parents is taken into account during interviews with social workers. Indeed, the collaboration between families and social workers depends on the interactional dynamics at work in the interviews and on the possibility of jointly developing descriptions, analyses and views.

When Social and Health Vulnerabilities are Both at Play: the Trajectories of Child Protection

In this chapter, Séverine Euillet and her colleagues present a study on access to health-care and the health of protected minors within child protection systems. They focus on the connection between the health and social spheres and highlight the extent to which potential vulnerabilities of the child are conceived differently at different moments of his or her trajectory in child protection systems. Key questions arise: is the protected child perceived as being vulnerable? To what extent does the proposed social and educational support take into account multiple vulnerabilities? How is the issue of children's health perceived and integrated into professional practices?

Definition of Situations of Neglect Within Child Protection Institutions: the Importance of Parental Participation

In this chapter, Vicky Lafantaisie and her colleagues present the findings of two studies that focused on the participation of parents in situations of parental negligence within a youth protection institution in Quebec. The first study shows how this institution, because of its social organization, can weaken the families brought into contact with it. The researchers reveal the mechanisms that exclude parents' views, particularly with regard to the analysis of their own family situation. The second study shows a link between the use of a participatory approach and reduced stress among these parents. Lafantaisie and her colleagues therefore argue that institutions must create spaces in which parents are allowed to play an active role.

The Dynamics of Supporting Vulnerable Couples Within Parental Centers

In this chapter, Claire Ganne and Nathalie Thiéry focus on parenting centers, which are relatively recent institutions in the field of child protection in France. Their study aims to better understand the families received and the dynamics of support proposed. Analyzing this support, they distinguish between proposals that target the conjugal and parental couple, those that propose a differentiated approach involving the mother (with regard to motherhood) and the father (with regard to integration), and those that focus on the child. They underline the extent to which the absence of support from the family sphere is an element leading young parents to rely on professionals as auxiliary figures.

Immigrant Families Receiving Child Protection Services: an Experience at the Intersection of Multiple Vulnerabilities

This chapter by Chantal Lavergne and her colleagues presents the results of a qualitative study that explores the experience of immigrant families observed in child-protection systems in Montreal. Based on their testimonies, the experience of these families is analyzed from the perspective of vulnerability factors, taking into account the experience of migration, the process of integration into Quebec society, the adjustment of family roles, and cultural shocks between inherited educational models and the parenting norms and practices of the host society. Lastly, the relevance of taking into account the multiple vulnerabilities of immigrant families receiving child- and youth protection services is discussed from three perspectives: an in-depth and comprehensive assessment, meaningful interventions that mobilize individuals into action, and timely and personalized referrals.

The Challenges Associated with Thinking about Children's Paths and the Project in Day-to-Day Work

The social and family inclusion of children leaving child-protection systems is often problematic. Children who are placed because they are vulnerable because of complex family and social situations become independent adults in precarious conditions because of their lack of resources. This issue raises another issue, i.e., the sometimes chaotic trajectories that these young people experience. In this chapter, Michel Boutanquoi attempts to describe what complicates, or even obstructs, attempts to set up initiatives, thereby increasingly placing minors on a similar path. The *Projet pour l'Enfant (PPE)* (Project for the Child), instituted in 2007, and the participation of children and families are raised.