

Workshop Title
Adolescent female knowledge, identity & power
Detailed Workshop Description
<p>How can we explore a process of valuing the knowledge and expertise of adolescent females? Participatory action processes can affect identity and power development and expression. Adolescent experience is driven by interaction with a wide variety of government agencies such as education, health, social services and the criminal justice system. The policies and processes of these systems are historically based on conservative and liberal ideologies with little evolution regarding social inclusion (Mckeen, 2006). The ways that “knowing” have been developed offer little space for alternate discourse. There are intersecting power structures that shape and obscure how adolescent females develop identities. Developing a process of valuing adolescent females’ knowledge, power and identity may affect how adolescent females experience the world around them and in turn may have an effect on discourse. Dominant discourses have direct effects on the lives of adolescent females through the rules in the schools, social services’ policies, the application of the criminal code, the priorities of media, and family and community values. Knowledge and experiences of adolescent females are invisible, or at least on the periphery of the processes. In exploring concepts of knowledge, power and identity with adolescent girls, the emphasis is on developing a transgressive process with the girls, because “the need to bridge participatory epistemologies with methods that favour the transgression of power relations in research with young people is unmistakable” (Dentith, Measor & O’Malley, 2009, p 163). The literature shows adolescent females develop identities in relation to the world in which they live and the power they are afforded (Brown 2010; Hielman 1998). As a social worker, valuing the knowledge and experiences of adolescent females might be an access point for transgression to occur. How social meanings and expectations are woven through experiences needs to be reflected in ways that develop new discourses and processes that the clients can carry through their lives. In developing reflective processes, through ongoing dialogue around meanings of power, knowledge identity and process, the potential to encourage clients to move to meaningful personal and social action can occur.</p> <p>References</p> <p>Brown, M. (2010) The Sad, the Mad and the Bad: Co-existing Discourses of Girlhood. <i>Child Youth Care Forum</i> (2011) 40: 107</p> <p>Dentith, A., Measor, L., O’Malley, M. (2009) Stirring Dangerous Waters: Dilemmas for Critical Participatory Research with Young People. <i>Sociology</i> 43:158</p> <p>Hielman, E. (1998) The Struggle for Self: Power and Identity in Adolescent Girls. <i>Youth Society</i> 30:182</p> <p>Mckeen, W. (2006). Diminishing the concept of social policy: The shifting conceptual ground of social policy debate in Canada. <i>Critical Social Policy</i>, 26(4), 865-887</p>
Learning Objectives
<p>Creating new dialogues and approaches regarding adolescent female experience. Engaging in critical evaluation of current programs, processes and policies. Evaluation of legislation in remedial ways to create strong points for advocacy to occur.</p>
Target Audience
<p>Those who work with youth involved in government and non-government organizations who are interested in exploring participatory practices and processes.</p>
Presenter Information

Tanya Pivovar

I received my Bachelor of Social Work from the University of Victoria after which I moved to London, England to a child protection position. Since returning to Canada I have worked as a school counsellor, as a community youth worker under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, at Labour Standards and as a regional advocate at the Advocate for Children and Youth. I received my Master of Social Work from Dalhousie University. Woven through my academics and career has been social justice through an anti-oppressive critical feminist lens. I value deconstructing policy and processes to ensure there is a client centred approach and fostering an environment of advocacy with my clients and my peers. I am passionate about children and youth rights and know we have the opportunities to raise the practice in this province to the highest standard and be active in the evolution of all practice.