

# **From the Zone of risk to the Zone of Resilience: Narratives of Resilience among Child Protection Workers in Argentina, Canada and Ireland**

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This study explores the concept of resilience in Child Protection and looks at how child protection workers (CPW's) construct resilience in different cultural settings. It also examines the ways in which CPW's remain resilient themselves through a process of shared resilience with their clients. Practice hardiness is the process by which social work professionals remain competent and committed despite significant work related adversity. The study attempts to answer three basic questions. (1) How is the concept of resilience understood within child protection practice? (2) What do CPW's see themselves doing to promote resilience in children and families? (3) How do narratives of resilience help foster resilience in CPW's via a process of vicarious resilience? Interviews were conducted in three different countries allowing for diversity of culture, policy and practice in the delivery of child welfare services. Through a series of 60 interviews, workers were encouraged to share 'narratives of resilience' about their clients, and to reflect on how these shared narratives impacted their own sense of resilience. Although many similarities were identified, significant differences were found with respect to how resilience is constructed in each location. Findings from the study suggest that resilience is not a unitary concept and that the idea of collective resilience may be more meaningful for many CPW's than an individualized notion of resilience. Social work practitioners continually struggle to support resilience in children despite the contradictions and ambiguities of child protection practice. It is hoped that the study will encourage reflection on knowledge generation and contribute to helping children and social work providers develop more resilient relationships.

Key Words: cultural contexts, child protection, vicarious resilience