**Multisystemic Approaches to Researching Young People’s Resilience: Discovering Culturally and Contextually Sensitive Accounts of Thriving**

**About the Presenter:**

Michael Ungar, Ph.D.

Canada Research Chair in Child, Family and Community Resilience

Director, Resilience Research Centre

Professor of Social Work, Dalhousie University

AAMFT Clinical Supervisor

Registered Social Worker

**To contact:**

Michael.ungar@dal.ca

(902) 229-0434

[www.michaelungar.com](http://www.michaelungar.com)

[www.resilienceresearch.org](http://www.resilienceresearch.org)

Twitter @MichaelUngarPhD

*Check out Dr. Ungar’s* Psychology Today *blog at:*

[*https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/nurturing-resilience*](https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/nurturing-resilience)

**Dr. Michael Ungar’s Bio**

**Michael Ungar, Ph.D.,** is a Family Therapist and Professor of Social Work at Dalhousie University where he holds the Canada Research Chair in Child, Family and Community Resilience. Since 2002, Dr. Ungar has directed the Resilience Research Centre, designing multisite longitudinal research and evaluation projects in collaboration with organizations such as The World Bank, Save the Children, and national public health agencies. Dr. Ungar’s clinical work and research spans more than a dozen low, middle, and high-income countries, with much of that work focused on the resilience of marginalized children and families, and adult populations experiencing mental health challenges. He has published over 250 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on the subject of resilience and is the author of 17 books for mental health professionals, researchers and parents. These include *Multisystemic Resilience: Adaptation and Transformation in Contexts of Change,* an edited volume with contributions from more than a dozen diverse disciplines studying resilience, *Change Your World: The Science of Resilience and the True Path to Success,* a book for adults experiencing stress at work and at home, and *Working with Children and Youth With Complex Needs*: *20 Skills to Build Resilience,* a book for mental health professionals. Dr. Ungar is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, past recipient of the Canadian Association of Social Workers National Distinguished Service Award, and former executive board member of the American Family Therapy Academy. His blog, *Nurturing Resilience,* can be read on *Psychology Today’s* website.

**Abstract:**

**Multisystemic Approaches to Researching Young People’s Resilience: Discovering Culturally and Contextually Sensitive Accounts of Thriving Under Adversity**

As our understanding of the process of resilience has become more culturally and contextually nuanced, researchers have had to seek innovative ways to account for the complex, reciprocal relationships between the many systems that influence young people’s capacity to thrive. Whether challenged by individual biology, psychological processes, peer and family relations, use of social media, community and school engagement, economic and political factors, or the climate emergency, children’s resilience is now understood to be the result of multiple interacting systems making positive development under conditions of adversity more likely to occur. This presentation briefly traces the history of a more contextualized understanding of resilience and introduces a model of multisystemic resilience. Several case studies will be used to show how a more systemic understanding of resilience can influence the design and implementation of resilience research. These include (1) the Resilient Youth in Stressed Environments (RYSE) study, a longitudinal mixed methods investigation of adolescents and emerging adults that are coping with boom-and-bust economic cycles and diversification in communities that are dependent on oil and gas industries in Canada and South Africa; and (2) a study of the factors that protect young people who have been clients of the child welfare system from homelessness. Building on these examples, Dr. Ungar will discuss how we can create better investigations of resilience that are able to capture both emic and etic accounts of positive developmental processes in ways that avoid the tendency to homogenize children’s experience (e.g., defining biological parents as the most important caregiver, assuming education is a necessary pathway to success, or privileging specific behavioral outcomes without sensitivity to their function in different contexts). Limitations to doing multisystemic resilience research will also be highlighted, with special attention to the need for further innovation. Finally, Dr. Ungar will briefly explore the implications of a systemic understanding of resilience for policy and clinical practice.