



**An evaluation of statutory children and families  
social workers perceptions and experiences of their  
own degree of agency and its implications for  
practice**

*Gavin Hutchison*

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Master's Thesis from the year 2014 in the subject Social Pedagogy / Social Work, grade: 75, University of Portsmouth, course: MSc Social Work, language: English, abstract: Recent evidence suggests that 80% of social workers find it hard to practice effectively and 53% fear lack of support could have tragic consequences for service users (BASW, 2012:07). The aim of this review was to determine the implications of practitioners perceptions and experiences of their agency, "...the capacity to have an impact on what's going on around (them) (Payne, 2005:230)," on statutory practice. The objectives consisted of the successful identification, analysis and synthesis of frontline practitioner's perceptions and experiences of their agency in statutory practice with children and families. The author used electronic search methods utilising sources such as IRISS, Oxford Journals, Web of Science, Google Scholar and SocINDEX. This review has been written using the narrative literature review framework with systematic data collection and recording methods. The influence of social constructionist thought has also been acknowledged The review looks at wider structure and agency debate and its relevance for contemporary social work practice with children and families and how it shapes practitioners perceptions of this. A brief history of the main theoretical perspectives within this debate is also explored. The author focused on five main studies which recorded social work practitioner's perceptions and experiences on their own degree of agency in statutory practice. The author found that practice wisdom, defined as "...the accumulation of information, assumptions, ideologies and judgment that have been particularly useful in fulfilling the expectations of the job" (Barker 1999 cited in Collins et al 2011:4) has a significant effect on the construction of practitioner's sense of practice reality in relation to their degree of agency. The author concludes that there is a substantial e

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