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Author(s):	Nicole Willis, Patrick Leung, Nancy Chavkin
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Opportunities for a New Dialogue About Professional Development Through Title IV-E Training: Unexpected Result for Goodness of Fit

Nicole Willis, Patrick Leung & Nancy Chavkin

Abstract

This qualitative study of public child welfare workers ($N=603$) examined the impact of Title IV-E professional development on retention and turnover. Results found that although there are many similarities between Title IV-E and non-Title IV-E trained workers, Title IV-E trained workers were more likely to perceive a lack of fit between their skills and training and their career goals and job duties. This lack of goodness of fit is supported by both research and theory, and may contribute to the turnover that Title IV-E was designed to prevent. These findings create an opportunity for a new dialogue about professional development to address preventable turnover.

Opportunities for a New Dialogue about Professional Development through Title IV-E Training: Unexpected Result for Goodness of Fit

Child Protective Services (CPS) in public child welfare has seen tremendous change over the last 20 years in terms of policy and societal changes (Ausbrooks, Benton, Smith, & Wildberger, 2014; Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Smith, 2002). It has faced challenges in terms of staff retention and caseworker turnover rates (Brown, Chavkin, & Peterson, 2002; Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Kapp & Propp, 2002; Strolin, McCarthy, & Caringi, 2007). Conceptually, retention is defined as “the long-term, continuous public child welfare employment” (Westbrook, Ellis, & Ellett, 2006, p. 40). Turnover, which is conceptualized as the frequency workers leave their position, is calculated by the Legislative Budget Board as the number of full-time staff who left during the period without returning, divided by the average number of full-time staff on the last day of every quarter in that particular period (Burstain, 2009).

Professional development through Title IV-E partnerships has been seen as a possible aid to increasing worker retention and decreasing worker turnover.

Title-IV-E funded university-agency partnerships provide educational leave for workers to earn social work degrees, expand field placement opportunities, provide stipends for graduate studies, provide students with stipends to cover tuition and books, specialized curriculum to maximize child welfare competencies, specialized workshop, seminar, and training opportunities, teaching personnel and evaluation, and specialized internships in child welfare agencies (Folaron & Hostetter, 2007; Gansle & Ellett, 2002; Jacquet, Clark, Morazes, & Withers, 2007; Jones, 2002; Risley-Curtiss, 2002; Rosenthal & Waters, 2006; Zlotnik, 2002, 2003). Title IV-E funding serves as a means to retain CPS employees with specialized social work education so that they will start or continue their professional services at a child welfare public state or county agency upon earning a social work degree (Robin & Hollister, 2002; Rosenthal & Waters, 2006). The rationale for these partnerships is that providing CPS with more specially trained and skilled social work degreed professionals will not only improve client outcomes, but also lead to improved caseworker retention rates and decreased turnover.

This qualitative analysis of secondary data examines the impact of professional development through Title IV-E training on CPS workers' intent to remain employed or to leave CPS employment. The study is important for two reasons: (1) we found an unexpected result about what happens to graduates around the issue of goodness of fit that could actually increase turnover and (2) we use a theoretical approach as

Nicole Willis, PhD, LMSW, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Work at Texas Southern University.

Patrick Leung, PhD, is a Professor at the University of Houston and Director of the Office for International Social Work Education.

Nancy Chavkin, PhD, LMSW-AP, is the Regent's Professor and Director the Center for Children and Families at Texas State University.

an overarching framework that helps explain the connections between variables. We will describe the research background of the study, the theoretical support for the study, the method, and the results. In the discussion and conclusion, we look at both the strengths and the limitations of this study, and we suggest possible opportunities for social work educators to work with their agency partners in addressing goodness of fit issues and hopefully decreasing preventable turnover.

Research Background

Nationally, and in Texas, the average length of employment for a child welfare worker is fewer than two years (Brown et al., 2002; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003). In 2006, Texas ranked at the bottom (48th) nationally for salaries for caseworkers in CPS (McClure, 2008). Turnover rates in Texas nearly doubled between 1999 and 2006. The turnover rate of 17% in 2006 jumped to more than 20% in 2007 (McClure, 2008). Turnover rates in 2006 were highest for workers in Investigations and Conservatorship (CVS) (Burstain, 2009). In 2007, these rates were particularly high for those in specialist and caseworker positions, ranging from a 30 to 41% turnover rate (McClure, 2008). Turnover rate among investigators remained at 33% in 2008 (Burstain, 2009) even after CPS implemented a \$5,000/year stipend for workers in the investigations unit. High child welfare caseworker turnover rates result in not only disruption of the caseworker-client relationship (Burstain, 2009), but also financial losses for the agency in repeat training for new workers (Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Folaron & Hostetter, 2007; Landsman, 2007; Rosenthal & Waters, 2006).

Daly, Dudley, Finnegan, Jones, and Christiansen (2000) found that replacement cost per child welfare worker overall is estimated at between \$15,000 and \$17,000 (Jones, 2002). Financial losses to public child welfare agencies fall in two categories: *hard* costs and *soft* costs (McClure, 2008). Hard costs include additional administrative time, added overtime for remaining workers, advertising position openings,

interviewing potential new hires, checking references and backgrounds, drug testing, new employee orientations (during which time no cases are assigned for three months), and psychological testing. Examples of soft costs include lost productivity of not only the employee who left the agency, but also of that employee's colleagues and supervisors. Graef and Hill (2000) describe three categories of costs directly related to public child welfare. These include costs due to separation, replacement, and training. Separation includes the extra administrative time to process a worker out of the agency. Training includes costs due to providing pre-service and field training to new hires. McClure estimates the total financial loss of *each* Texas child welfare worker who quits costs DFPS more than \$52,500. Based on the turnover of more than 1,000 child welfare workers in 2006, McClure found that the Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) experiences a loss of more than \$56 million annually.

In addition to helping us understand whether Title IV-E programs are effective in reducing the high costs of turnover, effectiveness studies are particularly important for social work educators to re-examine our own teaching practices and how we dialogue with our public child welfare agency partners (Ellett & Harris, 2012). Social work educators need to know if their Title IV-E training programs are having the desired effects of increasing retention and decreasing turnover. Conducting studies- sufficient in quality *and* quantity- that measure the effectiveness of Title IV-E training or curriculum programs for increasing retention is imperative (Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2003; Smith, 2002).

Previous studies about the effectiveness of Title-IV-E funded professional development have reported mostly positive results (Author2 & Author1, 2012; Hartinger-Saunders & Lyons, 2013). Many of these studies focus on retention, job satisfaction, and increased skill (Barbee, Sullivan, Antle, Moran, Hall, & Fox, 2009a; Barbee, Sullivan, Antle, Moran, Hall, & Fox, 2009b; Boyd, Morrow, Shobe, & Tack, 2006; Fox, Miller, & Barbee, 2003; Hopkins, Murdock & Rudolph, 1999; Morazes, Benton, Clark, &

Jacquet, 2010; Rheaume, Collins, & Amodeo, 2011; Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2007). Zlotnik and Price (2013) surveyed 56 programs in 31 states and reported three positive outcomes resulting from Title IV-E programs. The factor mentioned most often was the professionalization of the child welfare field because of the increase in the number of social workers with degrees. Other factors were retention of Title IV-E graduates in the field and the positive relationship between child welfare agencies and their stakeholders. Cahalane and Sites (2008) sampled 304 graduates and reported that Title IV-E had an important influence on worker satisfaction. Franke, Bagdasaryan, and Furman (2009) found that Title IV-E participants performed better than non-Title IV-E participants on both pre- and post-training test. Gansle and Ellett (2002) reported that BSW Title IV-E graduates scored higher on basic child welfare tests than non-stipend participants.

Conversely, Cahalane and Sites (2008) reported that Title IV-E workers leave because of job dissatisfaction and perceived lack of freedom to use their judgment and training. In the Franke, Bagdasaryan, and Furman (2009) study, even though Title IV-E participants did perform better on the training tests, non-Title IV-E participants were able to improve performance and catch up after in-service training. O'Donnell and Kirkner (2009) reported that only 19% of Title IV-E participants stayed because they enjoyed the work. Critics such as Perry (2006) have asked if social workers will stay after their Title IV-E payback requirement.

Theoretical Support

Research studies on Title IV-E professional development are largely “atheoretical” (i.e., Brown et al., 2002; Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Jacquet et al., 2007; Juby & Scannapieco, 2007; Lehman, Liang, & O'Dell, 2005; Rycraft, 1994), often lacking theory when evaluating the relationship between variables (Strolin et al., 2006). Two theories provide a framework for understanding factors that affect caseworker retention and turnover: systems theory and social exchange theory.

Systems Theory

The interaction between the various sub-

systems (supervisors, caseworkers, state policy, organizational policy, clients, etc.) within public child welfare is complex. This is also true of reasons why workers decide to leave or stay employed in public child welfare. According to systems theory, the environment in which we live is comprised of separate, but interdependent subsystems where changes and transactions take place (Ambrosino et al., 2005; Barker, 2003). Furthermore, the interactions between each of the subsystems create continual transformation of the participants in each subsystem.

Systems theory has direct relevance for organizations (Latham & Pinder, 2005), especially in public child welfare agencies, both structurally and empirically. For example, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services is an organization in which there are a variety of separate but interacting subsystems (see Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2013). The organization is comprised of regions and divisions; there are 11 regions and 4 main divisions. At the time of this research, the participants made-up independent but interacting subsystems, such as investigations, adoption/foster care, and prevention intervention programs, which include clients, intake specialists, caseworkers, program directors, supervisors, legislators, and policymakers.

Social Exchange Theory

Systems theory contributes to the “what” and “how” of the impact that a variety of micro, mezzo, and macro- level variables have on retention and turnover (actual behavior or intent), as well as motivation to work. Why these variables affect each other can be best understood with social exchange theory. According to social exchange theory, behavior is motivated by desire to minimize negative experiences and maximize positive experiences. This is achieved via social interaction, which is a process that brings forth costs and rewards (Weiss & Stevens, 1993). Assumptions of this theory include: (1)

participants provide outcomes to each other through exchange, (2) participants are motivated to obtain more of the outcomes that they value and others control, and (3) exchanges between

participants are sustained over time. The reciprocal norm dominates and is a pattern of exchanges developed over time, and perceptions by both partners will result in their viewing the exchange as fair and just (Cook & Rice, 2003). Perceived positive benefits enhance positive attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Gardner, Van Dyne, & Pierce, 2004; Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997). Social exchange theory would predict that the extent to which these interactions are perceived as reciprocal will influence the permanency of the relationship, in other words, retention. Social exchange theory can be applied to intra-organizational relationships within public child welfare (Landsman, 2007). Interactions between workers and the agency are reciprocal relationships (Latham & Pinder, 2005).

Social exchange theory also states that for a relationship to exist and continue, it must provide a cost/benefit ratio or outcome that compares favorably with competing alternative situations (Weiss & Stevens, 1993). In making a decision to participate in an activity, an individual weighs the costs and benefits of his or her current involvement and develops a level of satisfaction. Level of satisfaction is based on previous experiences, expectations, and current experiences. The worker also assesses the costs and benefits of alternatives and perceives a level of satisfaction for each alternative. These evaluations are then used to determine whether an individual will participate (low performance), persist (motivated/engaged), or withdraw (leave) from a given activity or relationship. Persistence is likely to occur when the benefits outweigh the costs and the satisfaction for the activity is above the comparison level. Participation is also likely to continue if the costs outweigh the benefits, but alternative activities are either unavailable or do not provide a more satisfying situation. Social exchange theory also provides conceptual corroboration with other models (see Bannister & Griffeth, 1986; Horn, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia, & Griffeth, 1992; Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978), which suggests that external employment options, perceived satisfaction, and intent to leave employment have shown an impact on actual retention and turnover behaviors within the CPS system.

Method

Design

With the support of systems theory and social exchange theory, this study examines a variety of variables that influence public child welfare workers' work in CPS. Through the use of secondary data, this exploratory study is a part of a larger study, which uses a cross-sectional design using a qualitative method to examine the relationship between Title IV-E professional development and worker retention. We examine retention by the research question: How does Title IV-E training influence CPS workers' intent to remain employed or intent to leave? The study also examines the differences and similarities between Title-IV-E workers and Non-Title-IV-E workers in relation to explaining why a caseworker might leave or remain employed at CPS. Title-IV-E workers were those who received the specific Title IV-E stipend to obtain a social work credential while the Non-Title-IV-E workers were those who did not participate in this stipend program.

Sample

Participants in the overall, purposive sample include workers (who were currently employed during the time of the survey) ($N=1,136$) at state of county CPS offices in Texas. Participants with the following job roles were included: CPS Investigators II, III, IV, V; CPS Specialists II, III, IV, V; Faith-Based CPS Specialists II, III, IV; Kinship Caregiver CPS Specialists II, III, IV; and Program Specialists I, III, IV, V. In these rankings, higher numbers indicate more senior job positions. Participants who indicated on the questionnaire that they were Supervisors, Administrators, or Directors ($n=526$) were excluded from the study. After exclusion criteria were assessed, a total of 603 CPS workers were included in final analyses for this part of the study.

Instrument/Measures

The instrument that was used for the secondary data analysis was a questionnaire developed by a statewide evaluation committee. This 40-item questionnaire contained both quantitative and qualitative data. After permission from the University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects was granted, the survey was posted on the

Survey Monkey web site for participants to complete in 2008. With input from CPS supervisors and administrators, the questionnaire achieved moderate to high face validity, as the items reflect demographic, professional, and organizational variables that have demonstrated relationships with job satisfaction and motivation to work that have been used in other related scales and instruments. Furthermore, construct validity appears to be high in terms of retention and turnover. For example, the use of open-ended questions to assess factors that contribute to leaving CPS or remaining employed at CPS capture the participants' perspective, which can often result in robust data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Grinnell & Unrau, 2005). This study analyzes only the qualitative data collected.

Data Analysis

A qualitative approach was used to look for thematic differences and similarities comparing workers graduated from Title IV-E programs and those who did not graduate from Title IV-E programs. Content analysis (Barker, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) in this study was a systematic analysis of themes that emerged from participants' written comments to the questions: "*What are the primary reasons that you stay at CPS?*" and "*What are some of the reasons that may explain your intent to leave CPS?*" During analysis, the qualitative data were analyzed for reliability. Interrater reliability was established by examining the percentage of agreement between two researchers on data coding.

Several steps were taken to conduct a content analysis. Since the nature of qualitative research does not allow for hypotheses to be made *a-priori* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Grinnell & Unrau, 2005), no *a-priori* hypothesis was set to test the relationship between retention, turnover, and Title IV-E training. Within each interaction, responses were read and re-read until major themes emerged. Responses were then grouped together and coded based on thematic similarity and meaning of content.

Results

Demographic Findings

Demographic characteristics of the sample

($N=603$) describe the participants in terms of age, job title, work setting, gender, ethnicity, years worked for CPS, years worked in social service pre-CPS, degree, licensure, and Title IV-E stipend status. Almost 50% of survey respondents were between 31-50 years of age. More than 45% worked in Investigations division. The majority were female (84.8%) and 63% worked in an urban setting. Diversity was evident, as almost 60% of workers in the study were ethnic minorities. Professionally, only 20% of CPS workers in the sample possessed a social work degree, and less than 9% indicated licensure. Approximately 54% of participants had worked for CPS from 0 to 5 years and 18% had worked from 6 to 10 years. The mean number of years of employment with CPS was 6.7 years ($SD = 6.5$) and the median number of years was 4.25 years. Workers began their CPS positions with an average of 4 years of social service experience.

Qualitative Findings

There were a total of 250 usable responses from Title-IV-E participants ($n=163$), and 700 responses from Non-Title-IV-E participants ($n=440$). Content analyses revealed several thematic similarities among these two groups of CPS caseworkers in terms of intent to remain employed and intent to leave. However, thematic analysis revealed the largest differences only in a few areas between the two groups, in terms of reasons to leave employment and reasons to stay employed. Due to the nature of qualitative analysis, a conclusion about whether or not these differences reached statistical significance could not be established in this study.

Emergent Themes

Intent to Remain Employed. Thematic analysis revealed three main thematic domains (intrinsic, extrinsic, and feasibility) with a variety of themes and sub-themes within those domains (see Table 1) across both Title-IV-E and Non-Title-IV-E workers. Within the intrinsic domain, themes such as contribution to agency mission and satisfaction emerged, and consisted of cognitive appraisals about the professional/spiritual fit as well as coping with that fit. Workers described such factors as the opportunity to help kids/

families, fulfill one’s purpose in life, professional competency, and improving CPS as reasons to remain employed at CPS. In terms of satisfaction, participants revealed satisfaction with specific factors such as job duties and stress.

The extrinsic domain described variables external to self and what the agency has to offer in exchange for worker contributions and consisted of the following themes: personal support, agency environment, professional, and financial. Personal support was an important factor in retention, which included job flexibility and getting time off. The agency environment also contributes to retention, as workers described stability, variety, collegial relationships, positive work environment, being appreciated, wanting to see organizational changes, and being challenged by the job as reasons to remain employed. What the agency had to offer professionally to the workers also contributed to retention; workers looked for and expected to gain knowledge, experience, and skills. They also articulated a desire for promotion within the agency or to use the job experience to get a better job outside the agency.

Workers also expressed autonomy as being an important factor for remaining employed. A financial theme also emerged from the extrinsic domain. Workers stated that they would stay for a satisfactory salary, retiring from the agency, and insurance benefits.

Feasibility was the third domain. The feasibility domain included themes that suggest some workers stay just because there are no other

options. For example, some workers stated that proximity to their job, not having another choice, and that they were just too comfortable to leave were sub-themes that emerged.

Intent to Leave Employment. Thematic

Table 1
Intent to Remain Employed at CPS

Domain	Theme	Sub-theme	Title-IV-E (n=250)		Non-Title-IV-E (n=700)	
			N	%	n	%
Intrinsic	Contribute to Agency Mission	Helping Kids/Families	73	29.2	232	33.1
		Competency/Purpose	4	1.6	21	3
	Satisfaction	Improve CPS Agency	3	1.2	1	<1
		Job Duties	40	16	81	11.6
		Stress	N/A	--	1	<1
Extrinsic	Personal Support	Flexibility & Schedule	28	11.2	80	11.4
		Time Off	4	1.6	6	<1
	Agency Environment	Variety	3	1.2	11	1.6
		Stability	5	2	24	3.4
		Collegial Relationships	18	7.2	60	8.6
		Positive Work Environment	12	4.8	15	2.1
		Appreciation	N/A	--	N/A	--
		Observe Changes	1	<1	2	<1
		Job Challenge	1	<1	3	<1
	Professional	Skills, Knowledge, & Experience	11	4.4	17	2.4
		Vertical Growth	5	2	6	<1
		Horizontal Growth	2	<1	1	<1
		Autonomy	2	<1	2	<1
	Financial	Salary	6	2.4	30	4.2
Retirement		9	3.6	31	4.4	
Insurance Benefits		14	5.6	50	7.1	
Feasibility	Proximity	3	1.2	9	1.2	
	No Other Choice	6	2.4	17	2.4	
	Comfortable	N/A	--	N/A	--	
Excluded	Random	3	--	7	--	

analysis revealed six main thematic domains (professional congruence, unpreventable, agency value, agency demand, agency climate, and attractiveness of other agencies) with a variety of themes and sub-themes within those domains (see Table 2) across both Title-IV-E (313 responses) and Non-Title-IV-E (871 responses) workers. Professional congruence included themes that explored the fit between personal/professional

Opportunities for a New Dialogue About Professional Development

Intent to Leave CPS Employment

Table 2

Domain	Theme	Sub-theme	Title-IV-E (n=313)		Non-Title-IV-E (n=871)		
			n	%	n	%	
Professional Congruence	Goals		15	4.8	13	1.5	
	Commitment to Child Welfare		6	1.9	14	1.6	
	Competency (skills/knowledge)		6	1.9	17	2	
	Stress/Burnout		15	4.8	72	8.3	
	Job Satisfaction		1	<1	1	<1	
Unpreventable	Location/Relocation		2	<1	6	<1	
	Sick/Health		N/A	--	12	1.4	
	Financial Independence		11	3.5	20	2.3	
Agency Value	Growth		7	2.2	23	2.6	
	Pay (general)		69	22	129	14.8	
		Workload	4	1.3	15	1.7	
		Hours	2	<1	10	1.1	
		Skills/Education	14	4.5	11	1.3	
		Cost of living	8	2.6	26	3	
		Insurance/Benefits	3	<1	14	1.6	
		Vacation	2	<1	4	<1	
		Appreciation	8	2.6	23	2.6	
		Support (general)	N/A	--	9	1	
			Collegial	24	7.7	87	10
			Collaborative Systems	3	<1	16	1.8
	Agency Demand	Workload		17	5.4	62	7.1
Caseload			24	7.7	52	6	
Hours (general)			11	3.5	33	3.8	
		Personal Life	7	2.2	27	3.1	
Agency Climate	Culture/Environment	Unethical/Unfair Treatment	5	1.6	2	<1	
		Safety	3	<1	4	<1	
		Cohesion/Conflict	9	2.9	15	1.7	
	Bureaucracy Changes		5	1.6	17	2	
			N/A	--	4	<1	
			Policy/Procedure	9	2.9	6	<1
	Staff restructure/Loss	5	1.6	16	1.8		
Attractiveness (Other Agencies)	Agency Value	Better Salaries	11	3.5	59	6.8	
		Better Opportunities	2	<1	13	1.5	
		Better Benefits	N/A	--	9	1	
		Advancement Opportunities		<1	5	<1	
		Autonomy	1	<1	N/A	--	
	Environment		N/A	--	3	<1	
		Flexibility	N/A	--	4	<1	
		Location	N/A	--	1	<1	
	Professional Congruence		Less Stress	4	1.3	5	<1
			Commitment to Child Welfare	N/A	--	3	<1
	Excluded	No Intent to Leave		6	--	13	
Random			N/A	--	7		

self and the agency. The themes that emerged here included: goals, commitment to child welfare, competency (skills/knowledge), stress/burnout, and job satisfaction. The second domain, unpreventable, included themes related to factors that one cannot prevent that lead to termination of current employment. These include location/relocation, sick/health, and financial independence. The agency value domain included themes that related to both tangible and intangible means that the agency provides to workers and which the workers perceive as valuing them. These themes included growth, pay (relative to workload, hours, skills/education, cost of living), insurance/benefits, vacation, appreciation, and support (collegial and from collaborative systems). The agency demand domain includes factors that the agency requires from the workers in terms of service delivery. These include workload, caseload, and work hours (relative to personal life). The agency climate domain refers to structure and culture of the work environment, and includes three main themes: culture/environment (unethical/unfair treatment, safety, and cohesion), bureaucracy, and changes (policy/procedure and staff restructuring/loss). The attractiveness of other agencies domain included variables that workers appraise as more attractive than what is being offered at their current job. This includes agency value (better salaries, better opportunities, advancement opportunities, better benefits and autonomy), environment (flexibility and location), and professional congruence (less stress and commitment to child welfare).

Similarities and Differences

Intent to Remain Employed at CPS:
Similarities. Content analyses revealed that although there were many similarities among Title-IV-E and Non-Title-IV-E workers, the dominant thematic similarities between the two groups were seen in the extrinsic domain. A high number of Title-IV-E (11.2%) and Non-Title-IV-E (11.4%) workers expressed job flexibility and work schedule as being factors that contributed to staying employed at CPS (i.e., *"I love the flexibility of this job"*; *"I currently have a part time position that is flexible as I just had a baby and that is important to me at this time"*). In

terms of the agency environment, data from Title-IV-E and Non-Title-IV-E workers included the importance of collegial relationships (7.2% and 8.6%, respectively) (i.e., *"I have a strong unit that is supportive"*; *"and I have a wonderful supervisor"*) and securing insurance benefits (5.6% and 7.1%, respectively) (i.e., *"social work jobs with good benefits are hard to find"*) as being important factors in retention. The impact that satisfaction with perceived external factors has on retention is consistent with the literature. Travis (2006) found that extrinsic satisfaction (satisfaction with agency rewards, pay, supervision, etc.) directly impacted a worker's sense of job enjoyment (intrinsic satisfaction). Travis argued that workers view extrinsic rewards as an indicator of their work value. According to expectancy theory (Cameron & Pierce, 2002), those who feel more valued via external rewards (agency pay) may be more intrinsically motivated to work (Travis, 2006), and thus more likely to remain employed at CPS.

Intent to Remain Employed at CPS:
Differences. Emergent themes from content analyses reveal two interesting differences between Title-IV-E and Non-Title-IV-E workers' intent to stay at CPS within the intrinsic domain. However, content analysis does not reveal whether or not these differences are large enough to be statistically significant. Intrinsic motivation focuses on enjoyment and pleasure as driving forces for action (Grant, 2008).

Non-Title-IV-E workers' thematic content included a higher proportion of comments (33.1%) regarding remaining employed in order to help children and families than did Title-IV-E workers (29.2%) (i.e., *"the gratification I get from helping children"*; *"To make an impact in the lives of young people that may be abused or neglected"*). This finding is inconsistent with research by Leung and Willis (2012), who found a higher percentage of Title-IV-E workers than Non-Title-IV-E workers reported commitment to child welfare as a primary reason to remain employed at their current public child welfare agency. Commitment to child welfare has been shown to have a strong effect on the likelihood of retention (Landsman, 2007; Rycraft, 1994; Strolin et al., 2006). Although the highest proportion of

responses regarding staying at CPS were found here, a good fit between personal/professional values and agency mission alone cannot determine the likelihood of staying at CPS. If a worker perceives barriers (i.e., enormous caseloads, lack of support, and lack of resources) to fulfilling these values, workers may still be more likely to begin researching outside employment opportunities and/or leave CPS. A higher percentage of Title-IV-E workers' comments (1.2%) than Non-Title-IV-E (<1%) stated wanting to remain at CPS in order to contribute to making the organization better (i.e., "To develop a better image of CPS with the community and with stakeholders"; "With the current position I feel that I am positively effecting change within the agency to be more family focused and strengths-based").

Satisfaction with job duties was different thematically between Title-IV-E and Non-Title-IV-E workers in terms of reasons to stay employed with CPS. Sixteen percent of comments by Title-IV-E workers, and 11.6% of Non-Title-IV-E workers' comments included satisfaction with job duties as being a reason to stay. This is an interesting thematic difference. Rycraft (1994) found that the perceived goodness of fit between a professional's skills and position (duties/ assignments) in an agency impacted retention. Because Title-IV-E workers have significantly more unique skills and training (Gansle & Ellett, 2002; Riskey-Curtiss, 2002; Rosenthal & Waters, 2006), evidence suggests that goodness of fit may be more highly appraised than by Non-Title-IV-E

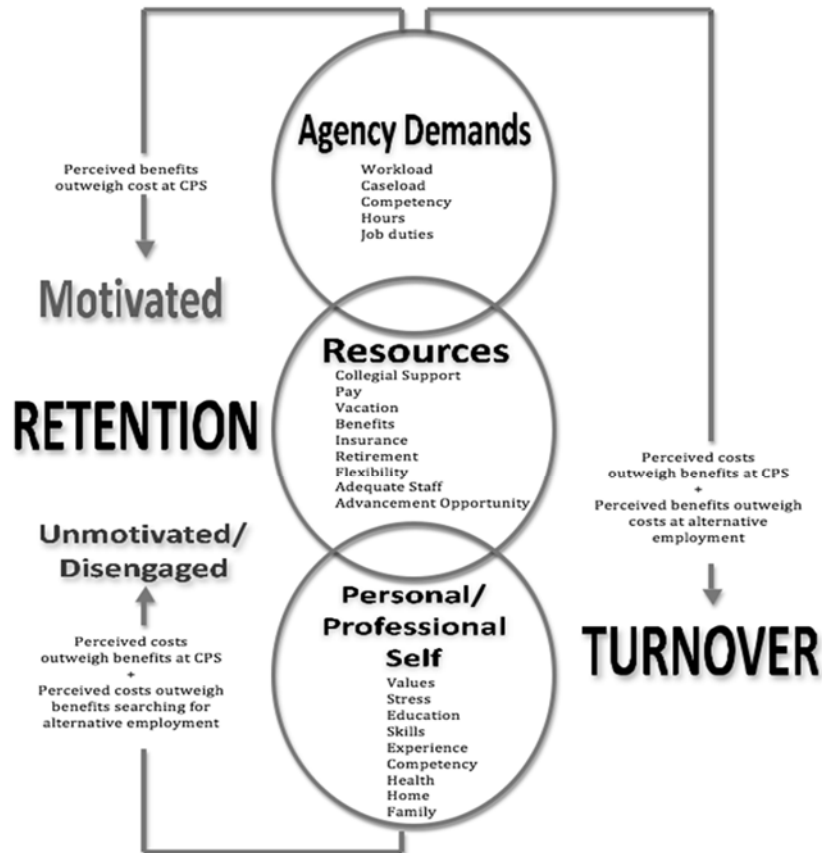


Figure 1. A systems and social exchange theoretical framework for retention and turnover

workers in decisions to stay employed. Furthermore, researchers have found that a workers' perception of his/her ability to carry out job duties effectively will contribute to retention (Barker, 2003; Ellett, 2001; Jones & Okamura, 2000).

Intent to Leave CPS Employment: Similarities. The content analyses revealed several thematic similarities among Title-IV-E and Non-Title-IV-E workers, with the dominant themes emerging from the agency value, agency demand, and attractiveness of other agencies domains.

Within the agency demand domain, a high percentage of Title-IV-E and Non-Title-IV-E workers expressed both perceived workload and caseload as reasons why they would leave CPS.

More than 5% of Title-IV-E workers' comments and 6% of Non-Title-IV-E workers' comments described workload (i.e., *"tons of paperwork"*; *"the volume of work is overwhelming"*), as well as caseload (i.e., *"more cases"*; *"no cap on the number of cases you get"*) as being reasons that would motivate them to leave CPS. Lack of perceived collegial support was a large motivating factor to leave for the Non-Title-IV-E (10%) as well as the Title-IV-E workers (7.7%) (i.e., *"not enough people to help take care of cases"*; *"Poor supervisor support"*). Lastly, attractiveness of better pay at other agencies had an impact on intent to leave CPS employment for both Title-IV-E (6.8%) and Non-Title-IV-E (3.5%) workers (i.e., *"better paying job"*; *"higher pay in private sector"*).

Intent to Leave CPS Employment: Differences. Thematically, there were four interesting thematic differences among two domains (professional congruence and agency value) in terms of reasons to leave CPS between Title-IV-E and Non-Title-IV-E workers. However, content analysis does not reveal whether or not these differences are large enough to be statistically significant.

Within the professional congruence domain, a higher proportion of comments from Title-IV-E workers (4.8%) described leaving due to having long-term professional goals that did not fit what CPS had to offer than Non-Title-IV-E workers (1.5%) (i.e., *"I would like to be a social worker at an elementary school"*; *"to achieve career goals"*). In addition, responses among Title-IV-E workers (4.8%) suggest that they are less likely to leave CPS due to perceived burnout than Non-Title-IV-E workers (8.3%) (i.e., *"Burn-out"*; *"stress"*), which is consistent with previous findings (see Leung & Willis, 2012).

In terms of agency value, perceived satisfaction with pay differed between Title-IV-E and Non-Title-IV-E workers. Among Title-IV-E workers, a higher portion of responses (22%) regarding leaving as a result of dissatisfaction with pay was found, compared to the Non-Title-IV-E workers (14.8%) (i.e., *"The pay is not enough"*; *"I need better pay"*). Again, this finding is consistent with prior studies on salary, which is one of the most common reasons reported for leaving CPS (Scannapieco & Connell

-Carrick, 2003; McClure, 2008). Furthermore, Title-IV-E workers' comments (4.5%) described pay in relation to being commensurate with skills/education level more than the Non-Title-IV-E workers (1.3%) (i.e., *"The salary, especially with my LCSW"*; *"no value for tenure"*; *"no merit raises"*). This is consistent with previous findings (Leung & Willis, 2012). Workers who perceive that pay is lower than they deserve may perceive themselves less valued by the agency. This may impact motivation levels (Gardner et al., 2004; Gerhart & Milkovich, 1992; Gneezy & Rustichini, 2000), and ultimately, may be the catalyst to either remaining employed and disengaged, or leaving the agency.

Discussion

Data from this study suggest that Title-IV-E training does have some systematic impact on workers' appraisals and expectations about interactions between personal, professional, and organizational variables which affect intentions to remain employed at or leave a public child welfare agency. Across all workers in the sample- regardless of training- qualitative data demonstrate that what agencies have to offer workers (flexibility in hours, collegiality, financial benefits, and competitive salaries) are extrinsic factors that have a large influence on maintaining motivated workers (see Figure 1).

Data suggest that Title-IV-E training may affect retention/turnover among caseworkers. The Title-IV-E trained workers appraised the fit between what they had to offer (skills, education, training, commitment to child welfare), what the agency demanded of them, and what the agency gives them (rewards, compensation, etc.).

Systems and social exchange theories help to explain the relationship between these variables (Ambrosino et al., 2005; Skyttner, 2005), in which transactions take place between independent and interdependent sub-systems (in this case, between the Title-IV-E worker and agency), and these transactions are appraised for costs and benefits (Weiss & Stevens, 1993) in making a decision about leaving an organization. Perceptions about the exchange of inputs and outputs between the worker and the system were especially important in specific areas for Title-IV-

E workers. Because Title-IV-E workers are more highly trained in general in terms of knowledge, skills, and experience in child welfare, findings suggest that these workers expect the agency to give them several tangibles. Title-IV-E trained workers may be more likely to leave CPS than Non-Title-IV-E trained workers if the opportunity to obtain a position and salary that are both commensurate with their qualifications are not available within their current public child welfare agency.

Previous research has shown professional skills have a strong impact on retention (Caselman & Brandt, 2007; Jones & Okamura, 2000). This is consistent with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Molm, Takahashi, & Peterson, 2003). A large percentage of comments by Title-IV-E trained workers described that after their training, their career goals became aligned with positions requiring higher level of skills. Furthermore, these workers also appear to be more likely to leave if they appraise the salary as not commensurate with the knowledge, skills, and advanced degree they earned.

Conclusions

This secondary data analysis study has several strengths to address some of the gaps in previous research, such as sample size and integration of theory. Sample size is a strength of this study as the secondary data source reached 603 CPS caseworkers. Large sample sizes help to increase external validity (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Although this study includes participants only from Texas, the sample size in this study is larger than in most studies examining Title-IV-E and retention. Another major strength of this study lies in the integration of theory. Both social exchange theory and systems theory provide a basic understanding about the structural and interactional relationship between the variables under study. These theories can explain that perceived relational reciprocity between the caseworker and the supervisor, co-workers, and organization can perhaps have a larger impact on retention than the micro-level characteristics of the individual alone.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are inherent in the nature of secondary data analysis in terms of this study. The researcher has little control over the secondary source. In this case, although the questionnaire appears to have high face validity, it is a questionnaire that has not been normed or standardized. Instruments that have not been normed or standardized can have high internal validity threats. Although this study was an exploratory design using qualitative data, any differences in portions of thematic content cannot be determined as statistically significant. Although this study included a large sample, generalizability of findings to other states may also be a limitation, as sample participants from only one state were included in this study. In addition, the study was not able to consider degrees because the data was not available in the agency database. There could be a difference in BSW, MSW, and other BA, MA, MS degreed workers. We cannot be sure whether it was the social work degree or the social work degree with Title IV-E training that influenced the results. It is hoped that future studies can include a larger sample of non-Title IV-E social work degreed CPS workers to compare with Title IV-E social work degreed CPS workers in order to conclude whether the impact was due to the basic social work education rather than the Title IV-E training.

Implications for Title IV-E University-Agency Partnerships

Knowledge about the effectiveness of Title IV-E training as a professional development tool will be helpful to agency administrators and to social work educators. Title IV-E training is most often used through university/agency partnerships, and is designed to increase child welfare competency and retention in public child welfare. Thematic analysis from qualitative comparison of Title-IV-E and Non-Title-IV-E workers reveals an unexpected result. Some may call it a catch-22, or “paradoxical professionalization.” The training, skills, education, and experience that Title-IV-E students gain create the kinds of professionals CPS would want in the agency and that social

work educators are trying to prepare. Social work educators have been successful in educating child welfare workers to be critical thinkers. However, social work education and Title IV-E training also create a worker who might appraise the costs and benefits of casework as a less than desirable fit. The professional fit between a worker and their position has been shown to have a strong influence in retention (Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005; Rycraft, 1994). Title IV-E professional development may be creating workers who choose to leave because they no longer see a desirable fit.

Results from the qualitative data suggest that Title-IV-E workers may appraise more strongly the exchanges in the relationship between the worker and the agency. Title-IV-E workers- because of their higher qualifications- often appraise equity between what the agency has to offer (i.e., pay) for what they have to offer (i.e., skills/level of education). Workers also appraise the fit between positions/job duties CPS has to offer with their long-term career goals and desire to use higher-level skills. If this exchange is not appraised as equitable, Title-IV-E workers are more at risk than Non-Title-IV-E workers to either (1) remain employed and disengaged, or (2) leave employment.

This unexpected result is essential for social work educators and the field of professional development to address, as this phenomenon supports the importance of reaching out and focusing on preventable turnover. Social work educators should look at possible ways to better prepare Title IV-E students for working in bureaucracies or for working in non-social work settings. Social work educators might dialogue more with agency partners about the transition or return into the child welfare workplace. They should look for more opportunities to provide ongoing support for graduates (mentors, groups, online activities). Perhaps they could bring more agency personnel into the classroom as instructors or guest lecturers.

This study also has implications for future research. There is a need to operationalize the construct of retention. Retention of CPS workers means different things to different researchers and different agencies. Key questions remain about

what is acceptable long-term and short-term retention. In addition, there is a clear need for better systems of data collection on Title IV-E child welfare stipend recipients. Nationally there is no systematic requirement to collect data or to follow-up on graduates.

Future research might also consider the difference between preventable turnover and necessary turnover. Preventable turnover is important in terms of both field placements and post-graduation job placements. Title-IV-E students should be placed in those public child welfare positions that are the best fit for their advanced training, knowledge, and skills in order to increase the likelihood of retention when they graduate. Social work educators need to have conversations with their agency partners about goodness of fit. Agencies and universities need to discuss how child welfare workers can effectively apply their new skills and appropriately address this preventable turnover.

These key findings in Title IV-E research have significant implications for social work educators who are developing Title IV-E partnerships and provide several opportunities for continuous improvement of Title IV-E partnerships. It is imperative to turn this unexpected result about goodness of fit into an opportunity for improvement. This result does not mean we should abandon Title IV-E as a professional development tool for public child welfare. The strengths of the Title IV-E far outweigh this finding. This unexpected result relating to goodness of fit is a modifiable issue. Social work educators need to work with agencies to improve teaching about the issue and to examine transitions from higher education to the workplace for both new employees and returning employees. Teaching cannot be done in isolation from the issues of the real world; social work educators need to partner with agencies and discuss the issue of goodness of fit.

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