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# Terraforming Public Child Welfare Practice in the U.S. - Enhancing Worker Retention through Intentional Resiliency

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Terraforming Public Child Welfare Practice in the U.S. - Enhancing Worker Retention  
Through Intentional Resiliency

By

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Terraforming Public Child Welfare Practice in the U.S. - Enhancing Worker Retention  
Through Intentional Resiliency

*Keywords:* organizational factors, public child welfare, retention, turnover

### **Abstract**

This banded dissertation consists of three products addressing organizational factors causing turnover among public child welfare (PCW) workers, and explores pathways to terra-forming PCW practice. A conceptual article calls for resiliency content in social work education; a systematic review clarifies organizational factors causing worker turnover; and the dissertation concludes with a critical analysis of a peer-reviewed presentation by the author addressing workforce retention strategies. Theoretical and conceptual frameworks used are cognitive dissonance theory, self-efficacy, and the ecological model.

The literature attributes ethical distress, hostile work environments, and leadership issues as greater concerns amplifying conditions for role-confusion, burnout, turnover, and job disengagement for PCW workers. Social work education has not adequately address resiliency needs of emerging practitioners, necessary for longevity of practice and sustainment of ethical efficacious behavior. The conceptual paper proposes required resiliency content in social work programs as a responsibility to student social workers, particularly those entering child welfare practice.

While there has been a shift in examining organizational factors influencing turnover, interventions at agency levels have been fragmented and continue to focus on perceived worker deficits. A systematic literature review using the ecological model as an organizing and analytical framework identifies interventional gaps at the macro and exo-levels critical to addressing PCW worker retention. Using an exo-system perspective, the ecological model frames the discussion of implications for future research, policy, and practice.

Interventional gaps related to organizational issues in PCW workforce retention were discussed in a presentation at the Child Welfare League of America's National Conference. The

presentation highlighted findings, described the analytical framework, and addressed implications for social work research, education, policy, and practice. Recommendations called for an examination of the maladaptive external environment influences that impact agency leaders and agency ecology, and for social work education to support worker resiliency needs of emerging workers and those in practice.

This banded dissertation addresses the sustainability needs of the public child welfare workforce in the U.S. and the responsibility social work education has for all practitioners. It calls for augmentation of curriculum to include competencies addressing resiliency needs of practitioners and the systemic issues causing turnover. Emphasis is placed on terraforming practice environments to promote worker and organizational efficacy that leads to retention. Implications for education, policy, practice, and future research are presented.

### **Dedication**

First and foremost, I dedicate this work, everything before and after it, to my loving wife, Naehi Wong, who provided me with unconditional love, support, and a whole lot of patience leading to and throughout this process. Without you, my career path as a social worker and the completion of my doctoral studies wouldn't have been possible. You continue, as always, encouraging me to be a changemaker, and continue to selflessly support me. I love you with more than words can ever say or write what could ever fit into a dedication page.

Secondly, I dedicate this dissertation to Dr. Joanne Altschuler, Ph.D., LCSW. You have watched me grow and develop as a professional social worker over these *many* years, and have nurtured my desire to be a steward of our profession. When I said I wanted to be like you when I grew up, I didn't know how purposeful those words would be, uttered those years ago at graduation. I still have big shoes to fill, and I hope I make you proud.

Finally, to my current and former students, you *all* have been my source of inspiration. Your commitment to our communities, your passion for social, economic, environmental and racial justice, and the lived experiences you bring into the classroom encourage me about the future of our profession. The baton is yours. You're the reasons for this doctoral program, and it's all of *you* who continue to inspire my work.

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As expressed in an African Proverb, "*If you want to go fast, go alone...If you want to go far, go together.*" Thank you, one and all! Without each of you, this milestone would have been impossible or, at a minimum, hollow. You carried me through, placed value in what I do, and cheered me on all the way. But instead, I say, cheers to all of you!!!



Table of Contents

Abstract..... iii

Dedication..... v

Acknowledgments .....vi

List of Tables ..... x

List of Figures.....xi

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework..... 15

Summary of Scholarship Products ..... 19

Discussion..... 21

Implications for Social Work Education ..... 23

Implications for Future Research ..... 26

Comprehensive References ..... 29

Taking Care of Our Own: Resiliency Coursework in Child Welfare Education ..... 44

An Ecological Synthesis of Organizational Factors Influencing  
Retention and Turnover Among U.S. Public Child Welfare Workers ..... 44

Expanding Evidence-Informed Strategies for Workforce Retention of U.S. Public Child Welfare  
Workers Through an Ecological Synthesis – Findings From a Systematic Review ..... 44

Appendix A: Conference Proposal Acceptance ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Appendix B: Conference Program ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Appendix C: Poster..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Appendix D: Reference List for Attendees .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Appendix E: Evaluation Summary .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**List of Tables**

*Table 2.1*

Studies included in the research synthesis.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**List of Figures**

*Figure 2.1*

Modified Child Welfare Agency Ecological Model adapted from Ellett et al. (2007). ..... **Error!**  
**Bookmark not defined.**

*Figure 2.2*

Screening process. .... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

*Figure 2.3*

Articles that met the inclusion criteria for synthesis. .... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Terraforming Public Child Welfare Practice in the U.S. — Enhancing Worker  
Retention Through Intentional Resiliency

Efforts to improve retention among U.S. public child welfare workers have largely involved making the worker fit into the practice environment. There are, however, many perturbations that can compromise even the most efficacious worker. From a natural science view, the process of terraforming involves transforming the environment or climate to make life sustainable (Graham, 2006). This banded dissertation addresses the sustainability needs of public child welfare (PCW) workers, looks at the responsibility the social work profession has for its practitioners, and suggests pathways to “terra-form” the practice environment of PCW based on findings from a systematic review.

Beyond the social work students’ initial education and perhaps at sparse workshops and conferences, little attention is given on how to develop or sustain self-efficacy beyond imparting client-based practice skills in light of other factors that can diminish efficacy, such as trauma, ethical and moral dilemma, and bureaucratic constraints (Grant & Kinman, 2014). While not all PCW workers are social workers, many of them are. The roles and responsibilities of PCW are part of social work practice, and the profession of social work has obligations for all who work in this context. Implications for education, practice, and policy include augmenting social work curriculum and competencies to address resiliency needs of social workers, and sufficiently addressing concrete systemic organizational issues influencing retention and turnover of PCW workers.

Child welfare is an intrinsically complicated but rewarding area of practice, particularly for those who work in public child welfare and who must contend with added layers of statutory requirements that are sometimes constraining. No other forms of social work practice have such

an immediate impact on the lives of children and their families. PCW intersects with virtually all areas of direct social work practice. When successful, PCW work results in children achieving safety and permanency with stronger options for successful lives, all of which ultimately strengthens society. Employee retention in public child welfare agencies continues to be a chronic and pervasive problem. National studies of public and private child welfare agencies report annual turnover rates ranging between 20% and 40%, with length of employment averaging less than two years (Auerbach et al., 2014, p. 349; American Public Human Services Association, 2001, 2003; United States General Accounting Office [GAO], 2003). In some regions, turnover within the first year of employment is as high as 85% (Smith, 2005).

The phenomenon of secondary trauma and burnout among PCW workers is well documented, yet many social work students continue to gravitate towards this area of practice. PCW workers are expected to handle complex and unexpected situations repeatedly and often under stressful bureaucratic constraints. Much is expected from graduates of social work programs. In its Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) requires that social work students develop competencies reflected in practice behaviors that promote client well-being and emphasize critical thinking (CSWE, 2015). Through EPAS 2015 Competency One, social workers are expected to make ethical decisions based on the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws, and regulations, and to seek supervision when necessary (CSWE, 2015). EPAS, however, does not include a competency for developing resilient behavior to promote ethical discernment and decision-making should policies, regulations, or quality of supervision not be commensurate with social work practice standards. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) also sets forth “values, principles, and

standards to guide social workers' conduct regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, or the populations they serve" (NASW, 2008, n.p.).

Current literature addressing PCW worker turnover focus on various approaches to increase worker self-efficacy, such as improved training, caseload reduction, and inclusion tactics for leaders to increase worker organizational commitment. PCW work, however, is not entirely dependent on the ability to perform pre-prescribed tasks repeatedly, but rather on whether workers are empowered to be autonomous and are encouraged to use critical thinking and ethical decision-making skills in handling challenging circumstances amidst competing organizational culture and agency priorities (Claiborne et al., 2011).

In its strategic plan, CSWE seeks "to be the premier social work organization in defining and promoting quality in social work education" (CSWE, 2010). Although many in the social work profession do not regard PCW as social work practice, or PCW workers as "social workers", many graduated from social work programs are assuming roles in PCW agencies. While the CSWE strategic plan does indicate that it seeks to "detect and respond in substantive ways to emerging societal needs requiring the knowledge, values, and the practice skills of professionally educated social workers" (CSWE, 2010 np), it does not provide a "rallying point" or acknowledgement about foundational causality issues facing the profession. Across levels of practice, the strength of social work and PCW lies in the employees. An obvious point of engagement for social work education is the insistence that its professionals have not only the knowledge, values, and skills to serve in the PCW context, but are resilient enough to thrive in practice at both the worker and administrative levels.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

In examining factors contributing to PCW worker turnover and looking at recommendations for retention, few studies were identified in the literature that addresses organizational factors. The study of PCW workforce turnover has spanned over 30 years, with most of the causes in retention and turnover implicating employees (Strand & Dore, 2009). While few in comparison, those recent studies examining organizational causes in worker retention continue to focus interventions on the front end of PCW worker recruitment and retention and not on the upper organizational levels or the external environment. Client failures caused by incompatible services pre-prescribed by agency procedure can trigger ethical distress for PCW workers that lead to feelings of dissonance and diminished self-efficacy, promoting conditions for burnout and job disengagement. These situations occurring within the ecology of PCW practice can promote dissonance and affect worker self-efficacy levels.

The theories of cognitive dissonance and self-efficacy and the ecological model together guided this dissertation. The ecological model, using the person and environment concepts, encapsulates the three products from this banded dissertation and suggests primary points of engagement for workforce retention at the organizational and external environment levels.

#### **Cognitive Dissonance Theory**

Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory posits that dissonance occurs when an individual holds two competing forms of knowledge and acts in a way that is contrary to their attitudes and beliefs (Harmon-Jones, 2009). In the context of professionally trained social workers, cognitive dissonance can occur when agency practices are not congruent with the individual's professional code of ethics and when workers attempt to reduce this dissonance by changing their attitudes to be more consistent with their actions dictated by agency policy.



The theory of cognitive dissonance states that people have an innate need for psychological consistency. If a person is presented with two competing ideas or demands, a state of “dissonance” or discomfort emerges that drives the person to make the competing ideas congruent by changing a single cognition over the other or both (Festinger, 1957). Rather than being empowered to make ethically-based case decisions, PCW workers are often forced to conform to focus on tasks (Beddoe et al., 2013) and embrace agency agendas as social work ethics (Camasso & Jagannathan, 2014), creating conditions for ethical and moral dilemmas that can promote PCW worker attrition or job and ethical disengagement for those who stay (Travis et al., 2011).

Despite those stressors, PCW workers are expected to exhibit ethical and efficacious behavior, and be resilient enough to negotiate a comfortable fit in order to succeed. Ethical dilemmas can lead to moral distress, which “occurs when one knows the right thing to do, but institutional constraints make it difficult to pursue the desired course of action” (Kälvemark et al., 2004, p. 1076; Raines, 2000, p. 30). Competing values can set the stage for cognitive dissonance, which has been correlated to stress-related burnout (Schaible & Gecas, 2010) and compromising feelings of self-efficacy.

### **Self-efficacy**

According to Bandura (1977), “an efficacy expectation is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes” (p.193). The concept of self-efficacy is derived from social cognitive theory, which states that individual’s act is based on multiple influences from both the internal and external worlds (Bandura, 1989). Among those internal influences, self-efficacy—which is a form of self- evaluation—describes how cognitive functioning affects behavior patterns. Instead of being task-specific, self-efficacy beliefs are

related to an individual's potential to handle complex and varied situations, which may (or should) include ethical behavior supported (or not) by the leadership where the worker is employed.

Self-efficacy is critical to PCW workers at all levels because of complex tasks and multiple stressors associated with this work. They must work with involuntary clients, negotiate various bureaucratic systems, contend with legislative mandates, and perform complicated inter-agency and multi-disciplinary tasks to effectively serve their clients. PCW workers are expected to handle complex and unexpected situations on a daily basis. These jobs are not necessarily reliant on workers' ability to perform pre-prescribed tasks repeatedly, but rather on workers being empowered to be autonomous and use critical thinking and ethical decision-making skills (Weaver et al., 2007) in handling challenging circumstances amidst competing organizational cultures, legislative constraints, and political agendas (Claiborne et al., 2011). The theory of cognitive dissonance intersects with the development of self-efficacy. A process called "agentic shift" can occur — where gradual psychological transitions occur where participants relinquish ethical responsibility through over identification with a role with the idea of "just doing one's job" (Cooper, 2004). "Agentic shift" occurring among even PCW workers and administrators with social work degrees can occur through reciprocal exchanges within the agency eco-system and the external environment.

### **Ecological Model and the Person and Environment Framework**

Ecological theory is foundational to social work education. Spawned from the natural sciences, ecological theory proposes that organisms in an ecosystem survive perturbations through adaptation (Bonanno, 2008; Gitterman & Germaine, 2008). Viewing the PCW agency as a distinct eco-system that lives in and is affected by the larger external (exo) environment, the

ecological model illuminates what is occurring between various levels in the PCW eco-system. Derived from ecological theory, the person-in-environment (PIE) framework foundational to social work education proposes that human behavior and functioning is not solely predicated on personal pathology but, rather, that the social environment has significant influence (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2013).

Rather than the traditional understanding of PIE, which tends to view effects as unilateral, a variant of PIE as expressed by Gitterman and Germain (2008) is used to understand reciprocal exchanges that occur within systems. Through their articulation of person *and* environment—expressed as “person-environment” as compared to person-in-environment—the person-environment concepts emphasize the reciprocal person and environment exchanges where each influences and shapes the other over time; underscores the reciprocal relationships of people with their environment as compared to isolated characteristics (individual or environmental); and focuses on the favorable person-environment fit that supports well-being and growth and, in turn, preserves and enriches the environment (Gitterman & Germain, 2008).

The person-environment framework provides the basis to visualize and understand reciprocal exchanges at the various micro, mezzo, macro, and exo levels to deliberate if proposed interventions from the literature are commensurate with the identified factors affecting PCW worker turnover and intentions to leave. The person-environment framework encompasses all reciprocal exchanges affecting people at all levels through "biological, cognitive, emotional, and social processes" (Gitterman & Germaine, 2008), suggesting that conventionally accepted individual characteristics and factors (bio psychosocial makeup, self-efficacy, etc.) that contribute to PCW turnover are not independent variables. Rather, they are predicated by the environment and affect people (PCW workers) working in these environments whose ability to

fit in the PCW ecosystem then in turn affects the larger environment by way of client outcomes. These exchanges further affect communities that reciprocally affect the PCW ecosystem in a continuous multidimensional process.

### **Summary of Scholarship Products**

This banded dissertation consists of three products: 1) a conceptual article discussing social work education's obligation to educate resilient practitioners and leaders, 2) a systematic literature review identifying trends and gaps in addressing retention and turnover of child welfare; and 3) a critical analysis and narrative of a peer-reviewed national conference presentation by the author addressing PCW workforce retention strategies.

#### **Product 1—Taking Care of Our Own: Resiliency Coursework in Child Welfare Education**

This conceptual paper suggests required resiliency content in social work programs as a responsibility to student social workers, particularly those entering child welfare practice.

In addressing the chronic turnover of public child welfare (PCW) workers, which negatively impacts clients and communities, this paper challenges conventionally proposed retention solutions that still focus on increasing self-efficacy through caseload reduction, training, and resources at the front end of recruitment and retention.

The paper identifies ethical and moral distress, hostile work environments, and leadership issues that are greater concerns amplifying conditions for burnout that self-efficacy alone cannot address. Current accreditation standards for social work programs do not adequately address resiliency needs of emerging practitioners, necessary for longevity of practice and sustainment ethical efficacious behavior. Social work education requires foundational courses in order to practice (such as Human Behavior and the Social Environment) as they relate to client needs, but does not include coursework to address the sustainability needs of the workforce, who are also a

part of the social environment. The paper concludes with suggested content to be integrated into social work curriculum to promote resilient practice behaviors, and discusses the responsibility social work education has for its emerging and established practitioners.

### **Product 2—An Ecological Synthesis of Organizational Factors Influencing Retention and Turnover Among U.S. Public Child Welfare Workers**

This systematic review addresses the chronic and pervasive problem of premature employee retention in public child welfare agencies, uses the ecological model as an organizing framework; and introduces the person and environment concepts as a method of analysis in examination of organizational factors. Literature is overloaded with discussions of the causes for PCW worker turnover that point to worker personal factors. Although there has been a shift in examining organizational factors influencing turnover, interventions at the agency level have been fragmented and focused on perceived worker deficits.

This ecological synthesis examines recent studies and identifies interventional gaps stemming from the macro and exo levels as critical to address for public child welfare worker retention. The ecological model from an exo-system perspective frames the discussion and the examination of implications for future research, policy, and practice.

### **Product 3—Expanding Evidence-Informed Strategies for Workforce Retention of U.S. Public Child Welfare Workers Through an Ecological Synthesis: Findings From a Systematic Review**

Product 3 of this banded dissertation provides a narrative of a poster session presented on March 30, 2017, at a national peer-reviewed conference of the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) in Washington, D.C. Derived from Product 2 of this banded dissertation, the poster presentation included findings from a systematic review of empirical research analyzed using the

ecological perspective as an analytical framework, and identified interventional gaps in organizational issues in public child welfare workforce retention.

Concurrently addressing worker personal factors to retention and turnover, recommendations included a study re-focus to examine exo-environment impacts on agency leaders affecting agency ecology. It concluded with a call for the social work profession across all levels to support intentional resiliency and retention of emerging workers and those in practice through a shift in addressing macro and exo-level maladaptive exchanges in the workplace. Special focus was given to the unique practice environments of public child welfare workers.

### **Discussion**

This banded dissertation adds to the literature on factors that influence PCW worker turnover and decisions to leave or stay, and has implications for other areas of agency-based social work practice. Ethical and moral dilemmas diminish self-efficacy and challenge the notion that enhancement of extrinsic resources mitigates a worker's decision to leave. There are correlations between ethical and moral distress in relation to self-efficacy, the external environment influence of leadership contributing to organizational factors that affect workforce retention and turnover, and the role and responsibility of social work education to re-conceptualize resiliency and educate resilient practitioners and leaders by integrating resiliency competencies.

PCW workers' feelings of competence and educational attainment have been regarded as a personal factor, as well as a personal responsibility to obtain. According to the ecological model, social work education is nestled in the external (exo) environment and PCW workers' abilities to transfer learning are sanctioned at the agency (macro) level. A generation-long effort

to retain workers has included Title IV-E collaboratives between PCW agencies and social work programs that provide financial assistance and specific training for social work students preparing for PCW practice, with obligatory time periods of post-educational employment. Though education through training partnerships with PCW agencies is positively correlated with job readiness (a dimension of efficacy), it does not, however, determine longevity or resiliency in practice nor does it predict performance outcomes of those Title IV-E graduates (Franke et al., 2009).

In obtaining mere practice skills, compulsory readiness is different than ethical practice behavior and does not assume the ability to be resilient in social work practice when contending with dissonance. Lack of organizational commitment due to unresolvable discourse can result in low levels of job satisfaction leading to worker turnover intention (Kim & Kao, 2014). In many PCW contexts, those with social work degrees tended to express higher turnover intentions, suggesting possible conflicts between social work and agency ethics, standards, and values (Kim & Kao, 2014) predicated by organizational climates. In the context of the ecological model, these conditions are thought of as organizationally induced, providing evidence that skills, competencies, and confidence alone are insufficient to prevent premature attrition across the spectrum of social work practice (Ulrich et al., 2007). Within the scope of PCW agencies, leadership regulates policy and reinforces practice culture in accordance with external (exo) environment influences that are often political. Most interventions presented from the current literature focus on PCW worker regulation through supervision and selective transference of learning, and do not consider the impact of PCW agency leaders as they negotiate their interactions with often-adversarial external political environments.

Even the most resilient practitioners (or administrators) working in adverse environments can become beleaguered over time unless there is a supportive mechanism within the agency management structure (Kinman & Grant, 2011). Because the practice of public child welfare exists in a political environment, gaining public stakeholder support becomes necessary to create a shift in examining ecological conditions contributing to retention or turnover. Established in 1920, the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) is the oldest and most influential child welfare advocacy organization in the United States, with public and private stakeholders that include practitioners, agency leaders, researchers, and policy makers (CWLA, n.d.[a]). In gaining the attention of stakeholders, national conferences such as CWLA's can be one of the most effective venues to present findings that can reach these influential stakeholders who drive child welfare policy and practice. Because the idea of workforce retention and sustainability still focuses on regulating the PCW worker, with little to no research available or conducted regarding PCW administrator impact, introducing findings and implications for social work research, education, policy, and practice strategies that suggest a refocus on interventions at the managerial level requires sanction from the macro and exo-environment.

### **Implications for Social Work Education**

Some social work programs may already be preparing their students to be resilient social workers in tangible ways, such as integrating resiliency techniques into courses. CSWE as the accrediting body can require resiliency content that would be consistent across all social work programs. Social workers are to be discerning and discriminating consumers of services for their clients (CSWE, 2015). With so many competing demands, especially in agency-based settings and social work programs relying on field education as the signature pedagogy, social work education may no longer be preparing students adequately to fulfill their obligation as agents of



social justice. Without fortification in social work professional principles, standards, and ethics, and knowledge of how to actively apply them in practice scenarios, students run the risk of over-identification with agency culture that is not always congruent with social work principles, standards, and ethics.

Furthermore, in the realm of PCW practice, federal standards of practice does not exist, nor does PCW have a professional entity offering ethical standards by which to abide. Regarding agency practice models and institutional agendas as “social work” can cause cognitive dissonance, particularly for those with social work degrees, leading to worker turnover or maladaptive behaviors. Social work education has a responsibility not only for the transmission of content and transformative learning (Beddoe et al., 2011), but also for sustaining professional knowledge, values, and skills.

The capacity of the social work profession includes its ability to adjust and adapt in order to address evolving social concerns against ever changing societal shifts (Farchi et al., 2014). Required content on resiliency in social work education can help students harness the diversity of strengths they already hold, provide a learning environment of sharing and purposeful development beyond just mere coping, and deploy efficacy in envisioning challenges as opportunities for change in practice or otherwise.

Resiliency involves anticipating and welcoming challenges and the capacity for perseverance regardless of failure, therefore supporting the idea of self-efficacy. Resiliency training through social work curriculum can provide students enhanced capacity through resilient efficacy, a skill set especially necessary for PCW workers. Resiliency content can be embedded within foundational or practice sequence courses (Grant and Kinman, 2012) in the form of a requisite course or through new EPAS competencies. “A resilience-based approach to child

protection workforce development and management has considerable potential to turn around these entrenched patterns” (Russ et al. (2009, p. 333).

The study of resiliency can support and encourage development of self-efficacy for all social workers, and social work education supporting resiliency content can help emerging practitioners develop resiliency competencies and behaviors that can sustain ethical practice, which can then transfer into agency culture. Learning opportunities in resiliency can empower social work students to take a proactive approach to their own capabilities in managing stress and reframing perceptions of stress as changeable and manageable in spite of competing demands (Collins, 2015, p.79).

If ethical discourses caused by agency practices are triggers that promote intentions to leave, resiliency practices accepted by hiring agencies because they are required by social work curriculum may in time entrench a positive practice culture of agencies themselves viewing challenges and barriers as opportunities for growth through the people they employ. There is a growing concern about the departure from social work administration as an area of practice (Wilson & Lau, 2011). When social work programs, represented by faculty and program leaders, are perhaps a party to swaying student practice preferences, it speaks to attitudes and perceptions that diminish the value of macro practice and may be contributing to sustainability issues in social work administration. “When social workers are promoted into leadership roles as managers...without adequate training or preparation, the competency of the individual...or agency could be in question” (Wilson & Lau, 2011, p. 327). Social work education as a social institution can play an effective role in terraforming social work practice, particularly in the realm of PCW. Resiliency competencies integrated into micro and macro practice contexts can enhance the development of not only of efficacious practitioners but also of agency leaders.

### **Implications for Future Research**

If resiliency competencies are to be integrated into social work curriculum, learning assessments reflected in practice behavior should be conducted. Social work degree PCW workers notwithstanding, the transference of learning, such as knowledge, values, and skills from social work programs, is permissioned by agencies. In the systematic review conducted in this banded dissertation, a major theme that emerged regarding turnover or intentions to leave was PCW workers' perceptions of not being valued or regarded as legitimate professionals by agency leaders and the general public. Some agencies have passive-defensive organizational cultures that give the impression of progressive practices when, in actuality, efforts are superficial because the agency is not genuinely interested in change (Chenot et al., 2009). From the literature, it would appear that many PCW agencies are hiring workers with social work degrees. It would be important to assess organizational cultures through institutional analyses (IA) to determine any resistance in the transference of learning for graduates of social work programs entering in PCW practice. Findings from these IAs can help social work programs develop curriculum for emerging practitioners to thrive in their specific regional contexts.

Agency leaders who develop and enforce internal practice policy determine the transference of learning and the ability to integrate innovative practices skills can also be limited by legislative constraints for PCW workers and their administrators. In a parallel process, PCW agency leadership can experience complex competing demands created by conflicting priorities and influenced by the exo-environment. These can have deleterious effects on a program because the same levels of job disengagement negatively impact the efficacy of programs, in turn affecting workers' efficacies in ways that cannot be mediated within the agency eco-system alone.

Although the trend continues to focus PCW worker impaction and interventions on the front end of recruitment and retention, it would be important to also study similar exo-environment impacts incurred by managers and agency leaders. Administrators who shape the practice environments are not immune from the effects of cognitive dissonance or diminishing self-efficacy. Future research on the phenomenon of PCW worker retention and turnover focused on worker needs should be also be accompanied by parallel studies of the effect of stress, burnout, and moral and ethical dilemmas on our PCW leaders. To not do so assumes administrative infallibility and institutional benevolence that may not exist. Furthermore, future work should also include research on and development of specific social work administration programs to intentionally prepare those resiliently efficacious leaders who can contend with the external political environments.

In the interest of preserving an efficacious PCW workforce (whether or not individuals hold social work degrees) through the ecological model and the person-environment framework in viewing PCW as an ecosystem, terraforming the environment in which this area of practice exists becomes critical. The environment must be accepting of the knowledge, values, and skills acquired by its workforce so these can be used to improve the lives of children and families, and reciprocally expand the efficacy of PCW practice. Terraforming PCW and social work practice environments as a whole is necessary in order to provide our emerging practitioners ethically efficacious knowledge, values, and skills that can be sustained to promote reciprocal positive outcomes at all levels.

Deployment of any plan requires the sanction of the power structure. Navigators within these structures are the leadership within the agency and those in the exo-environment who often establishes the practice climate, provides opportunities or barriers in achieving objectives, and

influence public perceptions of the profession. In order to “develop and maintain a healthy, viable organization by ensuring effective management; strong leadership; diversity of the staff and open communication among the staff, board of directors, commissions, councils, and other governance and programmatic entities” (CSWE, 2010, np), there also should be agreement among leaders regarding the causes of issues in order to develop coherent objectives and cogent arguments for courses of action (Sherraden & Whitbeck et al., 2017). While “the essence of leadership involves influence of others to mutual goals” (Wilson & Lau, 2011, p 326), not acknowledging broader causes can lead to merely performing activities without resolution of actual issues.

If a social work education entity desires to be the premier social work organization driving practice, it must also include intentional efforts beyond teaching practice techniques to help graduates of social work programs thrive. Social work education as a whole can play an active and concurrent role in both teaching and terraforming environments, preserving ethical and efficacious behaviors that can then change the practice environments to sustain the workforce and an entire profession beyond PCW work.

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