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CalWORKs students and their best practices, how they succeed in community college

Claudia Velasco

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

CalWORKs STUDENTS AND THEIR BEST PRACTICES, HOW THEY SUCCEED IN

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

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Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Claudia Velasco

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Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Claudia Velasco

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Doctoral Committee:

Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D., Chairperson
Lani Simpao Fraizer, Ed.D.
Gabriella Miramontes, Ed.D.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to "my boys". Mauricio Miguel and Jose Luis, you both, are the motor that provides me with strength and resilience, to be whom I am today. Being your mother is the biggest blessing in my life, and this accomplishment is also yours.

Mama, gracias por el coraje que tuvo de inmigrar, su fortaleza es admirable. Isilma, my caring sister your spirit and love is always with me, and we will celebrate when we meet again. Marlene and Christophe, Thank you for always believe in me, for the love and support you have always give me. Jorge my dear brother, even from far away you always encourage me, thank you.

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VITA

EDUCATION

Pepperdine University, Graduate School of Education and Psychology Doctorate of Education I Organizational Leadership	2017
California State University, Los Angeles Master of Health Care Management	2011
California State University, Los Angeles Bachelors of Science, Business Administration Option Management	2008
West Los Angeles College Associate of Arts, Paralegal Studies	2005

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

California State University, Los Angeles Adjunct Lecturer, Business and Economics Department	2017- Present
Los Angeles Pierce College Director, CalWORKs Program	2014 – Present
West Los Angeles College Advisor (interim), Associate Student organization & Students Activities Director	2013 – 2014
West Los Angeles College Adjunct Assistant Professor, Allied Health	2011 – 2014
West Los Angeles College Associate Director, TRiO Student Support Services	2010 – 2014
West Los Angeles College Advisor Specialist, TRiO Student Support Services	2008 – 2010
West Los Angeles College Advisor Specialist, TRiO Upward Bound	2007 – 2008

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenology study was to determine the best practices that CalWORKs students utilize to be successful in the community college. This objective was achieved by identifying successes and challenges that current CalWORKs students in the community college have experienced while managing the responsibilities of college, parenting, and work. Obtaining higher education is a key for these students to have the ability to become self-sufficient and leave poverty behind.

To understand the significance of the study 15 CalWORKs students from Los Angeles Pierce College were interviewed. The face-to-face interviews consisted of eight semi-structured questions that were created from the four research questions that guided the study. The data collected from these interviews was rich on personal experiences and past recollections of student's challenges, and success that juggle parenthood, school, and requirements, and regulations of the CalWORKs program.

The main conclusions of the study yielded 26 themes that answered four research questions. The researcher found out that the CalWORKs students have a lot of resilience and strength to accomplish their objective to leave poverty behind, by attaining higher education. These students firmly believe that through education they can break the cycle of poverty, and improve the lives of their kids and themselves. The data collected in the study is believed to contribute to providing best practices to future CalWORKs students.

Keywords: CalWORKs, community college, students, single parents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Having a college degree is more crucial than ever to remain competitive in the current job market (Kurtzbelen, 2014). According to a study by the Pew Research Center (2014), millennials who have obtained a postsecondary degree have higher salaries than those who have only earned a high school diploma. Jobs require more refined and specialized skills and, therefore, more education in the changing economy. Learning those skills through education may secure a higher and stable paycheck for members of the workforce, and may create a more stable economy in which companies are less likely to outsource their workforce, a change that benefits the nation. Americans are becoming increasingly aware of this reality and are pursuing higher education. According to Tom Torlakson (2015), the California Superintendent of Public Instruction of the cohort of students beginning high school in the 2010–2011, 80.8% of these students graduated with their class in 2014. The high school graduation rate in California has risen tremendously since the class of 2010, which only received a 74.7% rate.

A workforce that has obtained a higher education has higher wages, is more productive, is more efficient, and will help to create a stronger economy. Hogan and Roberts (2015) projected a growing economy in the United States between 2014 and 2024 as a result of a large increase in new jobs. Hogan and Roberts (2015) expected 9.8 million jobs to be added to the economy. Among those jobs, four occupations with the most growth will mandate a minimum requirement of a bachelor's degree. These trades are registered nurse, general and operations managers, accountants and auditors, and software developers (Hogan & Roberts, 2015). Students who obtain either a certificate or an associate's degree from California Community Colleges have the potential within three years to double their earnings (California Community College

Chancellors Office, 2016d).

Historically, many entrepreneurs have demonstrated that higher wages can be earned, despite only having some college experience and a high school diploma (Browne, 2013; Marks, 2014). However, Reidenbach (2015) argues that since 1979, people who have obtained higher education earn higher wages and have higher paid salaries in comparison to workers who interrupt their studies once receiving a high school diploma—taking into consideration one's personal background and work experiences. This college wage premium increased in 1979 and 2000 and has remained stable, resulting in the economic well-being of workers and affordable education. An educated workforce has higher earnings, which contributes to greater economic well-being for the cities in which they live, and as a whole, this improves the nation's economy. Californians with college degrees have the potential to earn $400,000 more than a Californian who has only a high school degree during their lifetimes (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016d).

As Figure 1 shows, workers who have obtained a higher educational degree, earn higher wages than uneducated workers (Bohn, 2014). There is a direct correlation between higher education and earnings. The data reflect this correlation for both women and men.
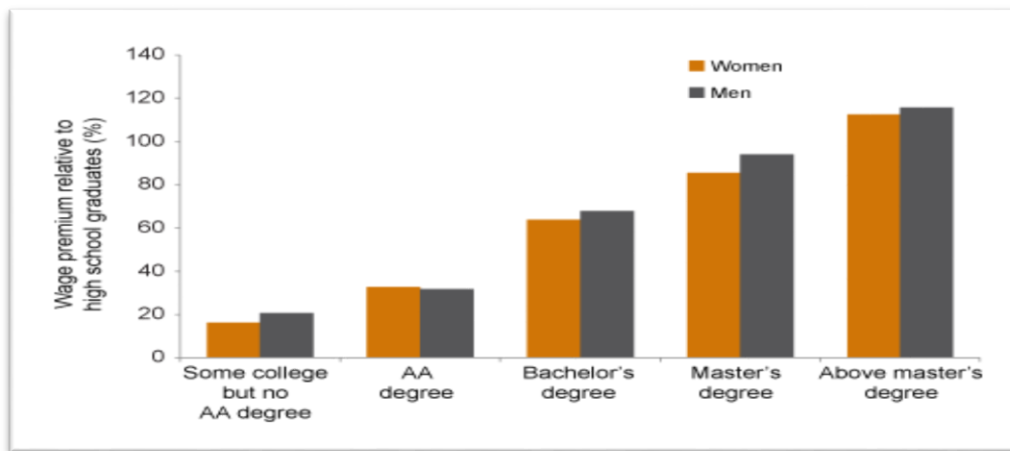
Figure 1. Quarterly performances for the 2003-2004 fiscal year. From Elementary School Arts Education Survey: Fall 1999, (p.23), by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. department of Education. Copyright 1999 by NCES. Reprinted with permission.

Bohn (2014) noted that by 2025, the state of California would be faced with a workforce lacking in formal higher education preparation, with a vast majority having less than a bachelor's degree. With the current uneducated workforce growing at a rate faster than the estimated college-educated and 1 million workers needed for advanced-level positions in given fields, Bohn (2014) suggests that the uneducated workforce will eventually exceed the total number of higher educated individuals. This concern can result in a lack of opportunities not only for California's workers, but also for the well-being of the state economy (Bohn, 2014; California Community College, Student Success Task Force, 2012). The state is facing one of its biggest challenges. For a healthy modern economy, California must increase the graduates it produces annually by at least 40% (Little Hoover Commission, 2013). For the gap to close, the state government needs to acquire information on how to target its support for training (Bohn, 2014; California Community College, Student Success Task Force, 2012). Students and workers need to be provided with more information so they can evaluate their educational choices.

Johnson and Sengupta (2009) posit that to decrease the uneducated workforce in California, there are three relevant scenarios on which the state government should focus (a) increase college attendance rate, (b) increase transferability from community colleges students to four-year colleges, and (c) increase successful completion at four-year colleges. Reaching out to underrepresented groups is necessary to close the gap, as these groups tend not to enroll in postsecondary education (California Community College, Student Success Task Force, 2012). Increasing outreach to high school students is necessary to improve their graduation rates and to guide them to transfer and obtain a technical certificate or a community college degree, which will help the state have a better economy (Johnson, 2012). Citizens who complete postsecondary education have higher social and economic mobility, which foster economic growth (Johnson &

Sengupta, 2009).

However, not all students have the same starting point, nor do all have access to the necessary information, support, or financial resources needed to pursue higher education (Planty et al., 2008). According to Planty, et al., (2008) most undergraduate college students in California are in community colleges, primarily because access to it is more economically feasible. Community colleges charge lower tuition than four-year institutions (Pierce College, 2016b) and thus, may provide opportunities to students who have a difficult time obtaining a higher education because of a lack of financial support. California community college fees are also known to be some of the lowest in the country, starting at $46 per unit (Pierce College, 2016b). In comparison, California State University (CSU) fees are four times that cost per unit (California State University CSU Budget Office, 2016). The University of California (UC) is nine times more expensive (UCLA Registrar's Office, 2016), and private institutions often exceed even the cost of the UC system (Pepperdine, Seaver College, 2016). Table 1 represents the estimated cost of annual attendance in a California higher education institution.

Table 1

California Student Tuition at California Public Colleges, California Public Universities, and California Private Universities

Tuition	California Community College	California State University	University of California	Private University Pepperdine
Resident Tuition	$1,104	$5,472	$12,240	$49,770

According to Planty et al., (2008), a community college's open-enrollment policy allows students to enroll at any time throughout the year. Planty et al., (2008) also reports that the majority of students in California are economically disadvantaged, and many are first-generation college students. Planty et al., (2008) report indicates that California Work Opportunity and

Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) students are described as belonging to marginal groups, meaning they receive state benefits such as CalWORKs and have children out of wedlock (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2014; Planty et al., 2008).

According to Budd and Stowers (2015), the increasing enrollment rates of minority students in community colleges will continue to rise and perhaps become an ongoing trend as our nation's demographics shift. In the next 20 years, minority students will make up an increasing number of those who make it to the final year of high school. As scholarships and grants continue to suffer cutbacks, more minority students, disproportionately low-income and more likely to be, first-generation students will look for available opportunities in community colleges.

California Community Colleges

The leading system in the United States of postsecondary vocational education is in California and this are the California Community College. The growth of the community colleges has been the hallmark and the pride of California Community College. The functions they serve and the manner in which the locally oriented community colleges deliver programs provide a dazzling and sometimes confusing picture (CARVELL Education Management Planning Incorporation, 1986).

The California Community College Chancellors Office (2016f) reported 113 community colleges in the state of California. These colleges educate more than two million California students. The policy of the California Community College states that access should be allowed to any citizen (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016e), whether they have obtained a high school diploma, as long as they can take advantage of the training and new learning these institutions provide. This open-access policy is part of the California Master Plan for postsecondary education. Data from the chancellor's office indicated that in the 2014–2015

academic year, more than a quarter of enrolled students in the California Community College system were CalWORKs students (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016e).

The California Community College, Student Success Task Force, (2012) reinforced the benefits of the California Community Colleges and what they offer to the community:

- The California Community College has 175 diverse educational fields, among certificates, job-training, and associate degrees; these California colleges are the leading workforce providers in the state.

- At least 70% of the state nurses get trained in a California Community College.

- Eighty percent of California's law enforcement personnel, firefighters, and professional emergency technicians received their training at a California Community College.

- Fifty-four percent of students that graduate from a CSU have transferred from a California Community College.

- Twenty-eight percent of students graduating from the UC have also transferred from a California Community College.

- Californians who have attained a certificate or degree from a community college will double their earning potential within three years.

CalWORKs Program

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) was signed into law by President William Jefferson Clinton in August 1996. President Clinton restructured the national welfare system. Under this act, obtaining work took precedence over completing educational goals for welfare recipients, for them to receive any state or federal assistance on a limited-time basis. It was designed to end the entitlement status of welfare benefits (Texas

Woman's University Social Work Resource Manual, n.d.). As a welfare reform, it limited access to higher education and skills training for CalWORKs recipients in the favor of a work-first approach. This new policy affected community college students receiving welfare. According to Cohen (1998), the CalWORKs participants who were enrolled in college when the welfare reform took place were mandated to take any available job as soon as possible, leaving behind education, and in the long run, self-sufficiency.

With the establishment of PRWORA, states receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grants, or a block of federal funds, to administer welfare programs at the county level. In August 1997, California Governor Pete Wilson signed into law the AB 1542, better known as the Welfare to Work Act of 1997, and created CalWORKs. The CalWORKs program in California came to replace the previous welfare job-training program, Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

TANF was created to provide federally funded cash support to help families in need to fulfill their most basic needs (California Department of Social Services, 2007; Department of Social Services, 2017). The equivalent of this program in California is CalWORKs. This program also helps participants to attain higher education, to participate in programs that will teach them new skills, train for a new career, and will help them find employment. The goal of the program is to give upward mobility to families and to be independent of state or federal support (Department of Social Services, 2016; Office of Family Assistance, 2016). Every community college in California has a CalWORKs program operating on its campus; these programs get their funding from the California Community College Chancellor's Office. Among the functions and services, the CalWORKs programs provided are educational services that help students by guiding them through the completion of an instruction curriculum, supportive

services such as childcare and transportation, and request for ancillaries such as books and schools supplies.

      CalWORKs Program in the California Community College. The California Community College prepares students for workforce opportunities by providing education, skills, training, and occupational information for career development. These schools educate most of the state's underrepresented student populations such as single parents; those of low socioeconomic status or students who are the first in their families to attend a college; single parent CalWORKs students who face challenges such as transportation, child care, the need for academic preparation; and more. Table 2 indicates the degrees or certificates obtained by CalWORKs students from 2009 through 2015. The information is based on data presented on the California Department of Social Services Welfare to Work Division (2016).

Table 2

Total of CalWORKs Recipients 2009-2015 Who Have Received a Certificate, or a Degree from a Community College

Table 2

Certificates & Degrees	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Associate of Arts Degree (AA)	7,197	9,244	10,814	11,661	12,431	11,953
Associate of Science Degree (AS)	3,440	4,572	5,127	6,152	6,848	7,010
Certificate (60 or more credits)	268	196	253	189	185	198
Certificate (less than 6 credits)	340	344	301	608	261	358

(continued)

Certificates & Degrees	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Non-credit units earned	560	285	546	949	1,043	1,148
Total	18,787	23,584	26,119	30,873	33,214	32,318

Note. From "Education and Training," by California Department of Social Services Welfare to Work Division, 2016. CalWORKs Annual Summary, p.53. Copyright 2016 by the researcher. Adapted with permission.

Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) is the biggest district of community colleges in the United States. It serves 225,942 students. Of those, 5,237 students are CalWORKs (Los Angeles Community College District, 2016). Los Angeles Pierce College serves 356 CalWORKs students for the 2014–2015 academic year. The CalWORKs Pierce College program operates with funding provided by the California Community College Chancellors Office. Annual funding varies, depending on the number of CalWORKs students served on a yearly basis, and the amount passed by the legislators for these specific programs.

The CalWORKs program at Pierce College provides personal attention, specialized case management, academic counseling, student success workshops, priority registration, work-study opportunities, and GAIN coordination services. The program is intended to provide students on welfare the chance to obtain or upgrade marketable skills that can be used to secure employment and to provide them the assistance needed to ensure a smooth transition into the college environment (Pierce College, 2016a).

Characteristics of CalWORKs students. The majority of CalWORKs students at the community college tend to be women who are single parents and the head of their households. They also tend to be first-generation college students. Children and women are

disproportionately impacted by CalWORKs. Only 20% of CalWORKs recipients are adults; the rest are children. Only 10% of the households receiving CalWORKs benefits are two-parent families; the rest are primarily single-mother households. California's community colleges provide access to education and training that leads to employment or a four-year degree (The California Budget Project, 2013).

Karpilow and Reed (2010) agreed that the key to true welfare reform is to break the cycle of poverty and promote economic self-sufficiency by providing access to educational opportunities for all girls and women. CalWORKs students in the California community college have an array of difficulties unique to their circumstances and these jeopardize the completion of their higher education, which impairs their ability to acquire self-sufficiency. The majority of participants are single mothers attending school, trying to improve their employability, and hoping for higher salary job to end dependence on the welfare system. These students must balance a challenging load of responsibilities: working, caring for their families, and carrying a full load of classes while doing so under very strict time limits.

Nelson, Purnell and Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (2003) noted that every week, adult CalWORKs recipients must keep themselves occupied with preapproved tasks, for example attending school for a minimum of 32 hours starting from the moment that one parent (or both) enrolls, to receive CalWORKs benefits. Each CalWORKs participant receives his or her personal plan, which maps the preapproved tasks that each adult in the house must fulfill to comply with the requirements provided by the CalWORKs eligibility worker (Person, Pavetti, Max & Mathematica Policy Research Incorporation, 2008; Student Services and Special Programs Division and the Office of Communication, 2010). Attending school to obtain a certificate or degree is a permitted task if the participants complete an assessment that scores him

or her in a level of math and English that is not too rudimentary and if education can assist the participant in obtaining a higher-paying job, or even his or her first job, to lead him or her to be independent of the welfare system. Another exception for a CalWORKs recipient to attend school is if, by the time he or she applied for benefits, the participant has enrolled in a curriculum that will lead to obtaining either a credential, an Associate's degree, or to transfer to a four-year institution (California Department of Social Services Welfare to Work Division, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

The complexity of the multiple roles that CalWORKs students face in their pursuit of higher education at community colleges while juggling the CalWORKs program requirements makes it difficult to succeed. CalWORKs student populations are usually described as nontraditional students. According to Engle, Tinto and Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education (2008), nontraditional students are those students who come from a socioeconomically disadvantaged environment and are the first in their families to pursue higher education. These students are usually older; they come from minority groups, lack academic preparation and they also lack of social skills to help them communicate better with faculty members. Their chance of remaining in a community college after the first year is low.

CalWORKs students are not only nontraditional students, but they are also single parents with multiple obligations outside the school, and often the only providers in their households. Requirements imposed by the CalWORKs program can be overwhelming for these students. California is a work-first state when it comes to the welfare reform, as the state must place the welfare beneficiaries into work activities to avoid sanctions from the federal government (Cohen, 1998).

Purpose Statement

This study attempted to emphasize on best practices that current CalWORKs students follow to be successful in obtaining higher education while managing the external demands from school such as parenting and, meeting the regulations that the CalWORKs program imposes on them.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to determine:

- The best strategies and practices employed by CalWORKs students to succeed in a community college.

- The challenges that CalWORKs students face in implementing those policies and practices in the community college.

Research Questions

To examine the current successful practices of CalWORKS students, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Research Question 1: What challenges are faced by CalWORKs students in implementing strategies and practices in community college?

2. Research Question 2: What strategies and practices are employed by CalWORKs students to succeed in community college?

3. Research Question 3: How do CalWORKs students measure success while attending community college?

4. Research Question 4: What recommendations would CalWORKs students make for future students in their same situation to succeed in the community college?

Significance of the Study

This study was significant because it helped to identify best practices among successful

CalWORKs students, and this can contribute to creating a welfare reform policy that supports services intended to allow these students to become self-sufficient. By studying the best practices of CalWORKs students, college administrators will be able to implement, improve, or renew services that benefit these students. New CalWORKs students can be guided by the success of former students in their position, and this will facilitate how they deal with the same challenges that other students faced. At the moment, the literature on successful college CalWORKs students is limited; there is not much information on how the community colleges improve their programs to the full benefit of the students. Furthermore, the results of this study may be used as a guide for what works and what does not work for CalWORKs participants and what is needed at the California Community College to help them be victorious in their pursuit of postsecondary education.

The value of higher education is self-evident: society and government benefit from an educated workforce. It is a profitable investment for both. Higher annual earnings and higher educational attainment go hand and hand with each other; the higher the educational attainment, the higher the chances to earn more. These higher wages help the state and the federal governments to increase their tax revenues (Ishitani, 2006). Higher earnings equal higher revenues for the government, and a better national economy. Individuals with higher educational degrees have the potential to yield higher revenues in our society. One of the best resources CalWORKs students have to exit low-income status is to obtain colleges degrees. By doing so their economic situations change, this improves the quality of life for them and their families. Society benefits as a whole when CalWORKs students complete their degrees and become productive; not only does their economic status increase, but the future of their children's education improve.

Limitations and Assumptions

In conducting this study, the assumption was that all CalWORKs participants have a unique set of needs and by knowing them, community college CalWORKs programs can support them more efficiently. A further assumption is that all the participants obtaining a higher education can become self-sufficient. A third assumption is that the participants would be forthcoming telling their stories.

Definition of Terms

There are a variety of terms that will be utilized in this study, and they are presented to facilitate understanding of the literature review. They have specific meanings as they relate to this work. For this research, the following terms definitions are provided it for the reader's references:

AFDC. AFDC was established as a welfare program to provide basic needs for children when one or both of the parents are absent from the household because of death, incapacitation, and-or unemployment. The states provide monthly assistance in the form of cash and or housing arrangements (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2009).

Barriers. Barriers are any physical, social, or psychological factors that welfare recipients identify as keeping them from full participation in education or work. Examples include lack of education, childcare, transportation, lack of work experience, psychological stressors for parents and child, fear of losing benefits, and housing issues (Loprest, 2003).

Block grants. Block grants are federal monies given to individual states to support welfare reform from several programs that were combined and given to the state as block grants. Money was given to the states as block grants to assign the states the responsibility of managing the funds, according to federal regulations (National Conference of State Legislatures, 1997).

CalWORKs. CalWORKs is the replacement of TANF in California. It is a welfare-to-work program that helps needy families with income subsidized and also provides them with health coverage on a temporary basis (California Department of Social Services Welfare to Work Division, 2016).

CDSS. California Department of Social Services is a department responsible for overseeing and administering programs that involve about three million of the most vulnerable residents in the state of California programs such as CalWORKs, foster children, and youth, among others (California Department of Social Services, 2007).

GAIN. GAIN provides services to CalWORKs beneficiaries; GAIN's goal is to help the participants to obtain employment, to maintain that job, and to move the participants to higher paying jobs, as this will lead all the CalWORKs participants to independence and self-sufficiency (California Department of Social Services Welfare to Work Division, 2016).

Nontraditional student. A nontraditional student is a student attending a higher educational institution, and who is older than 24 years old, has problems staying in school, and has low income. This type of student is usually a single parent and first-generation college student (Planty et al., 2008).

Persistence. Persistence is a way of measuring the percentage of students that retained in a higher educational institution from one semester to the next; they enroll in classes every regular semester until they obtain a degree or certificate (Planty et al., 2008).

Federal PRWORA of 1996. This is an act intended to limit the dependence on aid, reduce the childbirth rates of kids born from unmarried parents, increase the stability of a safe and, traditional home, and most important, safeguard children's ability to be raised by their parents or family members. PRWORA substituted AFDC with TANF and made changes to the

structure of the funding. Families can receive only 60 months of federal aid. It also created an incentive for states to incentivize their participants to obtain employment (California Department of Social Services Welfare to Work Division, 2016).

Self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency is living above the poverty level and earning an income that supports a family without any assistance from welfare. Self-sufficiency is when an individual can maintain a minimal degree of independence and financial security (Tinto & Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2004).

Single, head of household. This is a parent or guardian with whom a child younger than 18 resides 100% of the time, is entirely responsible for the child, and has no input from the second parent or guardian (Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services, CalWORKs, n.d.).

TANF. TANF is the primary funder of CalWORKs. It is a federal program that replaced AFDC. TANF has been created to assist families in the system to become self-sufficient. TANF provides block grants to the states to provide assistance to needy children, promote job training, decrease teen pregnancies, and encourage marriage (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2009).

Welfare reform. Welfare reform is a reform utilized by the U.S. government to create laws and policies that serve to improve the nation's social welfare programs. The goal of these reforms is to reduce the number of people that depends on government assistance to survive (Longley, 2016).

Welfare to work. Welfare to work activities are imposed on families receiving CalWORKs benefits. These activities vary depending on the number of hours the parents must invest in it, and will depend on what type of help these adults need to obtain employment to

become self-sufficient. Such activities may be the treatment for domestic violence, drugs abuse, counseling for mental health, vocational education, skills training, on-the-job training, among others (California Department of Social Services Welfare to Work Division, 2016).

Chapter Summary

An increase of understanding and awareness of the CalWORKs program is necessary for California community colleges to continue providing services that benefit the students on those programs. The CalWORKs student population needs special services to thrive and succeed in community college, services such as counseling, mentoring, tutoring, and childcare, among others. The majority of CalWORKs students lacks basic academic skills but is rich in life experiences and these characteristics can and will enrich the learning process if the faculty and staff of the community college are aware on how to best serve them.

California needs an educated and trained workforce to improve its economy. Educating, training, and developing the skills of CalWORKs students will help to get California families out of poverty. Educational programs can be effective methods for social change, as they guided CalWORKs students to advance in their careers. They will also offer CalWORKs students the necessary tools to be successful in any career choice they may want to pursue, which will help them to leave the welfare system for a stable and well-paid job (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, 2002).

Chapter 1 provided an outline of this research study, described the background of the problem, stated the problem, and highlighted the purpose of this study. Chapter 2 yields a review of relevant literature that will provide a foundational framework for the research

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Higher education serves as a tool to leave poverty behind (Pew Research Center, 2014), as the following literature review demonstrates. The welfare system in the United States has played and continues to play an important and critical role in the lives of economically disadvantaged American families that for one reason or another have fallen below the poverty line (Danielson, 2012; Jenkins, Fitzgerald & Education Commission of the States, 1998). The breadwinners of these families are usually women (Kates & Smith College, 1993; Mathur & California Community Colleges, 2002). These breadwinners' women firmly believe education is the key to helping them and their children accomplish an economically balanced life (The California Budget Project, 2013; Center for Women Policy Studies, 2001).

This comprehensive review provides an understanding of how the welfare system when paired with education can be the best tool to fight poverty (Student Services and Special Programs Division and the Office of Communication, 2010). Furthermore, the review of literature addresses the purpose of this study, as well as the services and resources a community college in collaboration with the state welfare program can create to move CalWORKs students from the welfare system to a stable path of self-sufficiency (Mathur, Reichle, Strawn & Wiseley, 2004).

History of California Community Colleges

Schools are not the only educative entities in our society. However, they have become the only social organization the primary function of which is entirely focused on education (Gabert & Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1991). California's educational institutions have tremendously influenced the growth of children and young adults and their moral and social values, as well imparting knowledge and vocational skills to them (Hendrick, 1980). California

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Community Colleges have changed tremendously since their inception. According to Simpson and California State Legislature, Senate Office of Research (1984), the development of the four phases of the California Community Colleges began as extension of secondary schools, 1900 to 1930; Junior colleges, 1930 to 1950; Community colleges, 1950 to 1970; and evolved from 1970 to the present.

Extension of secondary schools, 1900–1930. When the idea of community colleges started, their reputation was not good (Rodda, 1986). The perception of these institutions was the continuation of high schools mostly for mediocre students; these organizations were described as high schools with ashtrays because the students who attended lacked academic preparation for a postsecondary curriculum (Gabert & Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1991). The citizens of California became aware of the lack of opportunities in education high school graduates had at that time. The lack of opportunity in obtaining education made California residents concerned for the future of the young people, for which the growth of secondary schools became a reality and the first junior colleges were born (Rodda, 1986). In 1929, the first junior college in the state of California opened its doors, its name was Los Angeles Junior College, and its location was the vacated buildings previously used by University of California Los Angeles on Vermont Street (Cloud, 1952).

Junior college, 1930–1950. President Truman, in 1947, passed a law that endorsed college education universally and created the commission on higher education (Gabert & Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1991). Junior colleges became the first thought of educators to provide access to students who were the first one of their family to pursue a postsecondary education and who otherwise might not be able to attend a higher education institution because of a lack of financial resources or strong academic skills; sometimes both.

During those 20 years, junior colleges grew in enrollment, and the number of institutions expanded. They started creating their identity and separating from high schools (Simpson & California State Legislature, Senate Office of Research, 1984). A big problem in this era was the financing of these institutions, as the financial resources were very limited. The first two years of college, only 30% of the student population was enrolled in a university. The remainder of the student population was enrolled in a junior college. Attendance at community college was high, and financing through the states was small (Rodda, 1986).

      Community colleges 1950–1970. The name community college evolved thanks to President Truman (Gabert & Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1991). During this era, the California Community Colleges officially became the third party in the system of higher education. The California legislature passed a ruling in 1959 that requested the state board of education and the regents of the University of California work collaboratively on the creation of an educational master plan (California State Department of Education, 1960). The design of a master plan was to lead the growth and management of postsecondary education in the state of California (Brossman, 1974; Simpson & California State Legislature, Senate Office of Research 1984). Initially, the California Community Colleges were created to serve as educational institutions the role of which was to educate students for two years with the goal of transferring these students to a university (Rodda, 1986).

      The fast-growing population attending community colleges persuaded the state to create the educational master plan. Also the college administrators were concerned of services duplication amongst universities and community colleges, and more concerning for these administrators were the fact that duplication of services may cost taxpayers millions of dollars (California State Department of Education, 1960). After 1960, and as a result of the educational

master plan, California Community Colleges added to their curricula vocational and technical programs to serve higher numbers of the general public (Rodda, 1986). In 1968, the state board of education passed the responsibility, management, and functions of all the existing state community colleges to the board of governors of California (Brossman, 1974).

1970 to present. By the 1970s, the growth and expansion of the California Community Colleges was unstoppable. California became one of the fastest growing states in the world. Its population was incredibly diverse hence the need to update the educational master plan created in 1960, which did not foresee the growth of the state population or its diversity (California State Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education, 1987).

The renewed master plan had four principal goals:

- Unity, to assure that the trio (CSUs, UCs, and community colleges) of the California educational system worked together to obtain common educational goals.

- Equity, all Californians citizens should have the opportunity to reach their educational objectives and ambitions.

- Quality, the system must provide excellence in all its endeavors.

- Efficiency, to guarantee efficient use of human and financial resources. (California State Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education, 1987).

Currently, California contains 72 community colleges districts; these districts administer 113 community colleges in the state (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016f). All of the community colleges belong to a region, and a board of trustees controls these regions locally. Citizens of the community elect these trustees where these districts operate (California State Department of Education, 1960). The boards are composed usually of five or seven members, and they are in charge of guiding the colleges to operate according to state and federal

law, and to the best interest of the students and the community in which they are established (Community College League of California, 2002). The state regulates the 72 community college districts and their boards of trustees through the California Board of Governors. The California State governor appoints the members of the board of directors. They are in charge of providing guidance, creating policies, providing leadership, and helping to provide guidance on budgeting to the community college liaisons. Their central location is in the city of Sacramento.

Funding for California Community Colleges

Three different sources finance the California Community Colleges student tuition, state funding, and local taxes (California State Department of Education, 1960). Most of these institutions also received small donations and gifts from either public or private agencies, as well as corporations, but these revenues are just a small part of their income (Gabert & Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1991). The California legislature established that the state is the principal entity responsible for providing postsecondary education to its citizens. The state maintains the functionality of the community colleges; the legislature has also established that students should pay a portion of their education (California State Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education, 1987).

California community colleges tuition fees are big factors in their success, these institutions only charge $46 per unit, which is a small amount when compared to the $371 price per unit that state universities charged (Pierce College, 2016b). Community colleges offer the same financial services to their students that the four-year institutions offer. These financial services are grants, loans and work-study, and the federal Pell Grant. Furthermore, with the increase in the cost of living come increases in the cost of education, which make the differences on tuition even bigger in between community colleges and four-year institutions (Gabert & Phi

Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1991). The California State Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education (1987), established in the renewed educational master plan that the community college fees should stay low for Californian citizens, and in the event of increases, these fees it should be modest, steady, and foreseeable.

Wellman and California State Postsecondary Education Commission, (1987) posits the way the state of California funds community colleges is different than how it supports the two public university systems. Wellman and California State Postsecondary Education Commission (1987) noted that there are two main differences why the funding differs. One is the history of the creation of community colleges, as they were initially a high school continuation; the other is the size of community colleges, which numbers 72 districts that manage 113 colleges (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016e). Wellman and California State Postsecondary Education Commission, (1987) described that funding for the two public university systems is included in the state budget at the start of each annual funding cycle. The four-year schools are the primary part of state operations, while the provision for community colleges is a local assistance law that sets the level of funding through formulas; these funding formulas are implemented by state statutes and can't be change unless the state legislators vote to change them.

California Governor Jerry Brown proposed an increased budget for California community colleges for the 2016–2017 academic years. The increase consists of $8.3 billion that gets split among 113 community colleges, representing an increase of almost 8% from last year's budget (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016f). Wellman and California State Postsecondary Education Commission (1987), explained that community colleges received from the state a lump sum not tied to any particular allocation, such as curriculum or administration.

Community college finances are linked purely to their average daily attendance, which measures student enrollment (California State Department of Education, 1960).

California is and has to be one of the leading states in higher education (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016d). Providing access to higher education to all the people who seek an opportunity to attain a postsecondary education is one of the most important guarantees the state of California can offer its citizens (Brossman, 1973). California community colleges utilized an open-door policy that allowed for open enrollment at any time of the year, as long as the students who apply establish the intellectual potential for success (Gabert & Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1991). For the open-door policy to work, California colleges provide a variety of student support programs, including recruitment, admission, academic and personal counseling, among other services (Gabert & Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1991; Simpson & California State Legislature, Senate Office of Research, 1984).

A significant amount of California community colleges that serve Californians offer a broad array of programs for the state's diverse population. The classes offered vary among these institutions, as their main focus is to provide a range of courses based on the served community and the communities' primary needs (California State Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education, 1987; Gabert & Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1991). The community colleges serve a very diverse population. The curriculum and programs they offer are to meet the diverse population's needs while committing to teaching excellence (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016d). The community college curriculum has also changed since its inception, as the job market has changed as well; there are more technological programs offered in all California community colleges (Petty, 2014).

Among the programs and services, community colleges provide transfer classes that fulfill the lower division requirements of majors in four-year institutions. They also offer job-training programs in which the students have the ability to attain skills and a certificate to work in entry-level jobs (California State Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education, 1987). California community colleges also offer noncredit adult education in which its citizens can learn basic skills, such as English as a Second Language, citizenship classes, and more (Community College League of California, 2002). These services and classes are offered because the students who attend these institutions have extensive, varied backgrounds, and their needs are also very different.

California Community College Student Characteristics

The population served by community colleges has changed immensely, as the California population has changed. When community colleges started, their focus was to educate high school students who, at that time, were financially or academically disadvantaged and who were unable to continue higher education (Rodda, 1986). Community colleges serve a heterogeneous student population that differs in social and economic background, age, academic skill, previous level of education, and reason for attending a community college; hence, the need for community colleges to emphasize classroom teaching (Gabert & Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1991).

First-generation students tend to concentrate in community colleges (Planty et al., 2008). They are more likely to have socioeconomic disadvantages, their goal of obtaining a degree is nonexistence, these students family and friends do not encourage them to attain higher education, and they struggle to adapt to the system (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). First-generation college students refer to students who are the first in their families to attend an institution of higher

education (Tinto & Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2004). Ishitani (2006) defined first-generation students as individuals who belong to families that have never attended college, which makes these students the first to enroll in a community college.

First-generation students are often at a disadvantage concerning knowledge and information about higher education. Lack of necessary information such as the application process, financial aid resources, educational degree, and lack of academic preparation can be detrimental to their success in a community college (McConnell, 2000). First-generation students navigate unknown territory while attending a community college, as they have limited knowledge of the system. These students do not understand the importance of networking to establish relationships and locate resources (Alfonso, Bailey & Lumina Foundation for Education, 2005).

Based on a report from the California Community College Chancellors Office (2016e); student characteristics for the 2014–2015-cohort year were as follow: the total population served was 2,318,781, out of that total 51% were females. The report continued stating of the students, 70% enrolled in their first two years of higher education, and 23% were enrolled only part-time, the equivalent of six units or less. The ages of the largest group of students were between 20 and 24 years old, and the most prominent ethnicities of the 2014–2025 student cohort were 44.66% Hispanic, 28.22% White, 11.3% Asian, and 6.75% African American (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016a).

The populations served by the community colleges are so diverse that the services they provide play a significant role in their success (Alfonso et al., 2005; Petty, 2014). One of the biggest groups in community colleges comprises adults who attend these institutions either to learn new skills or improve the skills they already have, allowing for a second chance to obtain

higher wages to escape poverty (Jenkins et al., 1998). The retention and completion rates among diverse minority populations in community colleges are small. Policy makers and educators are focusing on improving existing programs to help these specific populations (Tinto & Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2004). They are also creating and implementing new programs the primary focus of which is to improve retention and completion rates among disadvantages student populations (Alfonso et al., 2005).

Community colleges have increased their resources in financial aid to help students who only attend part-time, and these institutions offer a more diverse schedule of classes throughout the day and especially at night for students who work full-time (Petty, 2014). Community college campuses are providing childcare for students who have children to utilize, and to save time and money on transportation (Kates & Smith College, 1993). The financial aid offices and other categorical programs such as the CalWORKs program and Student Success and Support Programs (SSSP) have increased work-study for students who need to earn money while in school (Bland & Lieberman, 1997; California Community College Chancellors Office, 2014).

Students who are first-generation differ from nonfirst-generation students in demographic characteristics. First-generation students tend to be low income as well; they also vary in the knowledge and behaviors they have about college, the skills and the importance they place on education, family support to obtain postsecondary education, and the commitment they put into college (McConnell, 2000). Tinto and Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education (2004) noted that students who attend community colleges are more likely to be working full-time, belong to a minority group, have an uneducated family background, and be the first person in their family who started their higher education road at a two-year public institution instead of a four-year institution. These students also have several personal challenges

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and barriers that complicated their road in community college (Pavetti & Olson, 1996).

According to Tinto and Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education (2004), the retention and completion rates among first-generation, low-income students are very low in community colleges compared with the achievement of students whose parents have accomplished a Baccalaureate degree and have middle to high socioeconomic status. Tinto and Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education (2004) noted the following reasons for the differences: first-generation, low-income students lack academic preparation, as when enrolled in high school they have not attained other academic curriculum to help them improve their regular classes. Furthermore, first-generation, low-income students lack social and cultural enrichment, which is detrimental when they are placed in a community college (McConnell, 2000). These students tend to feel out of place, and because of their lack of financial resources, they worked at least 20 or more hours per week during which they lacked time to be involved in campus activities. All these factors contribute to the low retention rate among these students (Petty, 2014).

The Department of Education and Community Colleges administrators are aware of the problems with retention and completion they have in the community colleges with specific populations such as low-income, first-generation, minority, and single parent students. There are federal and state programs created to help these students complete their goals in community college. Purnell, Blank and Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (2004), described some of the programs that exist to help these populations.

The Puente program. The Puente program is a state funded program that aims to help Latino students transfer to four-year institutions (Purnell et al., 2004). The program provides academic counseling and mentoring, the goals to support students in their career goals and their

academics, and the mentors help to build the necessary skills to be successful in a community college setting (The Puente Program, 2016). The Puente program operates in different community colleges across the state. The community colleges that have this program have entered into a memorandum of understanding with the University of California Office of the President to received funding for their operation (Nunally & Robinson, 2014).

The student support services program (TRiO). The Student Support Services Program is a federally funded program. Its main goal is to help first-generation and low-income students successfully transfer to a four-year institution (Purnell et al., 2004). The Department of Education funds the Student Support Services through special grants, and the colleges that have the program have competed to obtain these grants (United States Department of Education, 2015). The services the Student Support Services program must provide to first-generation, low-income students they are helping are academic counseling, academic tutoring, assistance applying for financial aid and other funding resources, attendance to cultural enrichment events, and mentoring.

Extended opportunity program and services (EOPS). EOPS is a state-funded program that serves first-generation, low-income, and full-time students to attain a community college degree in any major and transfer to a four-year institution (Purnell et al., 2004). The goal of the EOPS program is to increase enrollment, and to retain and transfer to four-year institutions students who are economically, socially, and educationally disadvantaged. The EOPS program, to accomplish these objectives, provides priority registration, counseling, mentoring, tutoring, educational workshops, and financial aid (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016f).

The cooperative agencies resources for education. This program is a supplement to the EOPS program and is also fund by the state of California (Purnell et al., 2004). Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education serves EOPS students who are a single heads of households with children younger than 14 years old and who are receiving welfare benefits. The Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education program provides the same services as EOPS plus cash stipends, book vouchers, food coupons, and vouchers to pay for child care (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016f).

The CalWORKs program. The CalWORKs program serves low-income single parents who have being referred by GAIN workers to obtain new skills, an Associate's degree, or a certificate to enable them to attain self-sufficiency through education. The program is funded by the state of California (Purnell et al., 2004). The CalWORKs program's goal is to help students achieve long-term self-sufficiency through the attainment of education. The program offers work-study, childcare, transportation, academic counseling, workshops, and job placement (California Community College, 2015a).

Student success and support program. SSSP was formerly known as matriculation and is also funded by the state; its goal is to enhance the access of disadvantaged student populations to community colleges and to promote their success and achievement (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2014). The Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act of 2012, California Education Code, Sections 78210-78219; created the SSSP in California community colleges. To increase orientation, assessment, and placement of students entering the school, they improve counseling services to become more intrusive in the planning of students' goals and academic intervention for students considered at risk of failing classes or dropping out of college (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016d).

All the programs that aim to help special populations in the community colleges are necessary for the retention, completion, and graduation of those special populations. Tinto (1993) discussed the importance of commitment community colleges have toward students who are nontraditional students such as the CalWORKs students, among others. The possibilities of retaining and graduating a CalWORKs student increase if these students feel they belong to the campus community they are attending. CalWORKs students place a high level of commitment and satisfaction if they feel their interactions with members of the school do not go unnoticed (Peterson & ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, 2002). Tinto and Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education (2004), posits four important actions that should be taken by community colleges to retain and graduate students. These follow below.

Providing support. Academic support is critical especially for these populations that enter community college with little academic skills (Tinto & Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2004). Counseling support, as many students come with family issues, work problems, and sometimes mental issues that can interfere with their academic progress (Alfonso, et al., 2005). Child care is another important support for many students who attend community college, as many in the population are parents (Kates & Smith College, 1993).

Engaging students' academics with their daily lives. It is important for students to make links between what they learn academically through curriculum and how learning influences or interacts with their everyday lives (Tinto & Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2004). Students learn more effectively if they can relate to the issues taught in the classroom such as those focusing on academic survival skills that are essential for their success in the community college (Alfonso et al., 2005). According to Jenkins

et al. (1998) if the campus has the possibility to provide work study to its students, the engagement of these students will improve.

Successful placement. Placing students in the correct level of classes when they enter the community college helps to improve their future success at college (Tinto & Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2004). The intrusive monitoring of student academic success is imperative for their retention and graduation; it is most important to first-generation, low-income students (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2015d). The chancellor's office implemented several intrusive programs in the community college to guarantee students are placed in the right levels of math and English within one semester after they start attending a community college (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2015d).

Connecting students to learning. Students should have the opportunity to work in groups and learn from each other (Tinto & Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2004). Student engagement in campus activities, participation in school clubs, and creation of a net of a network with other students will improve student retention; college persistence is a positive influence by social integration (Alfonso et al., 2005). According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), campus involvement creates a sense of belonging, which increases student success academically and developmentally.

California community colleges are also seen as doors of opportunity to help the state fight poverty levels among its population (Martinson, Strawn, Center for Law and Social Policy & National Institute for Literacy, 2003). Jenkins et al. (1998) posited California community colleges have the ability to train and teach needed skills to Californians and place them in a position to attain well-paid jobs and not just entry-level positions, which will benefit not only the

student but the state as well. Jenkins et al. (1998) also noted that the position the California community colleges has to influence the state economy is unique, as these institutions have the ability to connect the poor populations with resources and help them acquire self-sufficiency skills (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2015d). Further, this population can either receive higher education in the community colleges that will lead its members to a career path, or that population can obtain the necessary skills to lead its members to a technical or occupational well-paid job (Jenkins et al., 1998).

Commuter schools tend to focus on training and teaching, and the students who attend these schools live off campus; some of them live at home with their parents or their families (Alfonso et al., 2005). California community colleges do not provide housing for their students and the sense of belonging can be a bit harder to acquire, more so in special populations such as first-generation, low-income, CalWORKs students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Student grades are most of the time the measure of success and persistence of a student in academia (Alfonso et al., 2005). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) stated that student grades are a good measure of performance but do not determine the level of intelligence or academic preparation. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) claimed that grades are a reflection of students' motivation and willingness to succeed in community colleges, combined with how they feel fit on their campuses.

There are several benefits of an educated population. According to Kates and Smith College (1993) women constitute the greatest population in poverty and are often the sole providers at home with either one or two children in their care. Further, Kates and Smith College (1993) noted that if these specific populations attain higher education, their rate of poverty will decrease, as these individuals will obtain better-paid jobs with higher wages, which will increase

their productivity, and their family and personal lives will improve. The children of these women will have a better opportunity also to become educated individuals who will help society by becoming productive taxpaying citizens (Mathur & California Community Colleges, 2002).

Tinto & Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, (2004) noted that an educated population is beneficial for the nation as these individuals are active participants in the country's government, are large contributors to the economies of the states they live, and have little participation in crimes, if any. Further, Tinto & Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education (2004) continued, these educated citizens collaborate monetarily to services in their community. A community that is populated by higher earning citizens, has better services for all the population than communities with lower earning citizens. The Pew Research Center (2014) surveyed 2,002 adults of which some obtained at least a bachelor's degree and others had not obtained any postsecondary degree. The findings of the study concluded that adults between the ages of 25 and 35 who have accomplished a Bachelor's degree or higher have more job satisfaction and higher earnings than others in their same age group with lower education attainment (Martinson et al., 2003; Pew Research Center, 2014).

Figure 2 represents the results of the survey of individuals between 25 and 35 years old, and their annual earnings based on their educational level, from a high school diploma, two years degree and a Bachelor's degree. Figure 3 accounts for the unemployment rates according to the degree of education, amongst the same individuals between 25 and 35 years old. Figure 4 accounts for the percentage of individuals living in poverty, based on their level of education, 25 to 35 years old; that have obtained a high school diploma, two years degree or a Bachelor's degree (Pew Research Center, 2014).
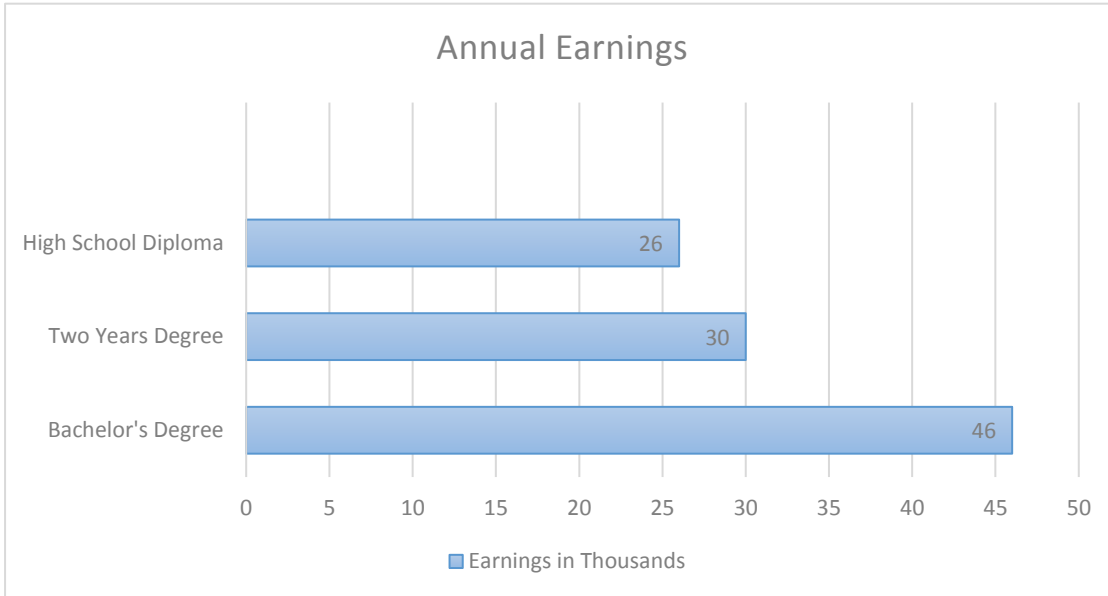
Figure 2. Annual earnings. From The rising cost of not going to college. "Annual earnings" based on educational levels, by Pew Research Center, 2014. (http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2014/02/SDT-higher-ed-FINAL-02-11-2014.pdf). In the public domain.
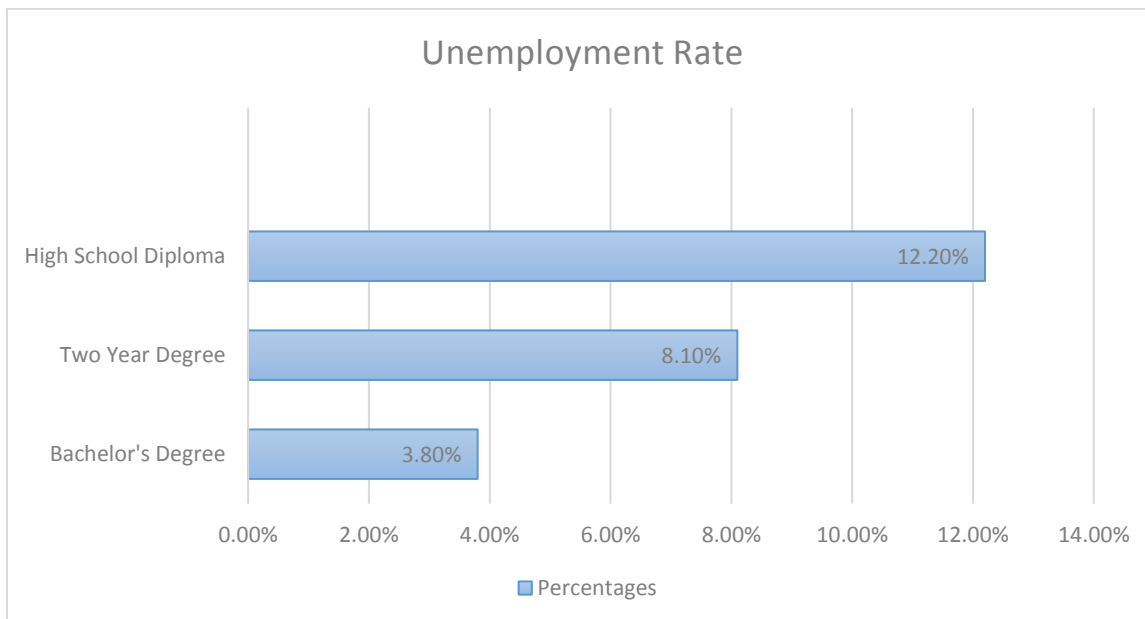
Figure 3. Unemployment rate. From The rising of not going to college. "Unemployment rate" based on their educational attainment," by Pew Research Center, 2014, (http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2014/02/SDT-higher-ed-FINAL-02-11-2014.pdf). In the public domain.
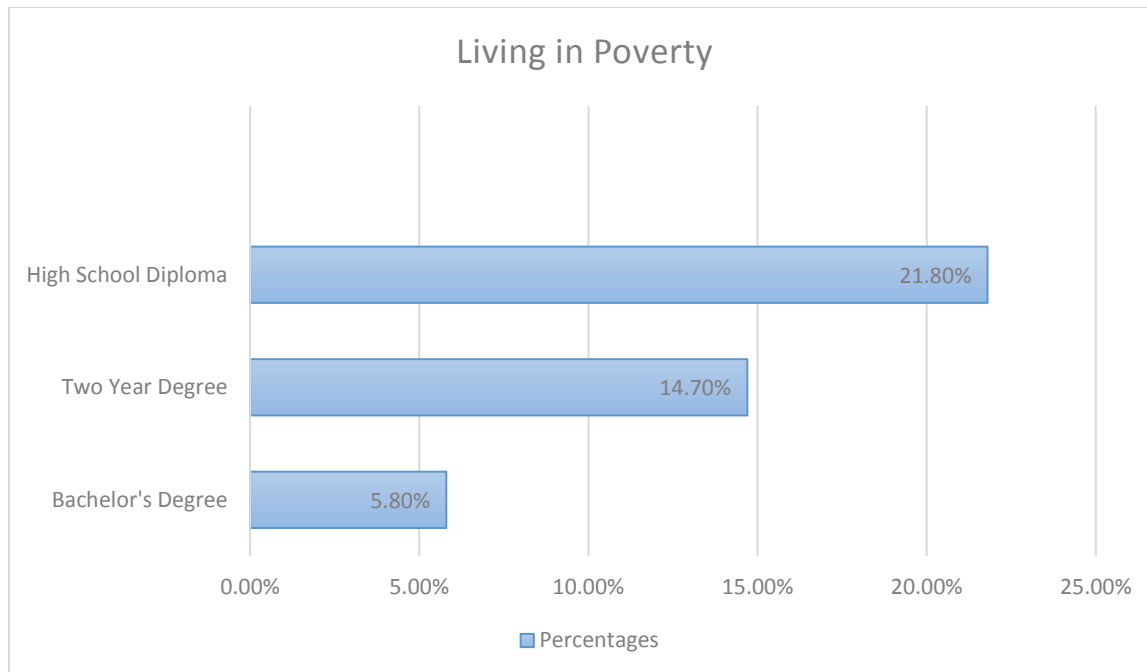
Figure 4. Living in poverty. From The rising of not going to college. "Living in poverty" based on their educational level, by Pew Research Center, 2014. (http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2014/02/SDT-higher-ed-FINAL-02-11-2014.pdf). In the public domain.

The findings of the report concluded that education is more important than 40 years ago. The reasons the author listed were the striking differences in earnings among Millennials, who were the individuals they interviewed and were between 25 and 35 years old (Pew Research Center, 2014). In a changing technological economy, people are obtaining high paying jobs with education beyond high school. Millennials with a high school diploma earn only 62% of what college graduates make in 1979 (Pew Research Center, 2014).

History of Welfare in the United States

The Great Depression in 1929 was a global economic crisis that brought the first changes in the relationship between the United States government and its citizens. The United States stock market crash resulted in instant poverty, higher rates of unemployment, and families that were not able to provide for their children (Ginsberg & Miller- Cribbs, 2005). After this crisis

started, U.S. citizens elected President Franklin Roosevelt, who made several critical changes in the social welfare policy of America. According to Ginsberg and Miller-Cribbs (2005), under President Roosevelt the two most significant shifts in welfare policy were the idea that the citizens were no longer consider solely responsible for their well-being, and that the federal government took an active role in the welfare of its citizens by creating welfare policies.

In 1935, one of the most significant policies on human services was passed. It was the Social Security Act. This act had the potential to improve the lives of all American citizens (Ginsberg & Miller-Cribbs, 2005). The primary idea of the act was to create an insurance system at low cost to the government and its citizens, consisting of monthly contributions that working people make. When they no longer worked, they receive benefits (Freedman, Mitchell, Navarro & Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1999). The Social Security Act started with the following major provisions:

- Old-age and survivors' insurances provided pensions to employees when they retired and in the event of their death, the pension goes to the surviving spouse and minor children.

- Disability Insurance, payments to employees either physically or mentally disabled.

- Medicare provides medical insurance for people 65 years of age or older.

- Unemployment compensation provides cash benefits for citizens who have lost their jobs.

- Family Assistance provides aid to low-income families with children (Ginsberg & Miller-Cribbs, 2005).

The Social Security Act became the cornerstone of social and economic assistance in the United States. One of its most relevant and controversial policies was the family support plan,

initially called Aid to Dependent Children (Ginsberg & Miller- Cribbs, 2005). Hombs (1996) described that the creation of the Aid to Dependent Children was to help needy families with young children to raise them at home by providing cash assistance from federal and state funding. There were no restrictions on a number of times families could receive welfare benefits.

The Aid to Dependent Children program changed its policies in 1962. Its name changed to AFDC. The focus of the program is to provide cash assistance to single mothers with young children who could not count on the support of the father because of death, disability, or lack of support and involvement in the life of the child (Karoly et al., 2015). According to Johnson and Schwartz (1997), two criteria were considered for families applying for AFDC to qualify. Families must have at least one child younger than 18 years old in the home who did not receive support from one of the parents, and the family must supply verification of the monthly household income. Federal poverty guidelines were utilized to determine the amount of need in the home. The AFDC primary focus was to help families to become self-sufficient through employment (Johnson & Schwartz, 1997).

Changes to welfare services continued. In 1967, the Federal Work Incentive program was created, which required adults in the household to work to receive benefits, but the focus of the program was also to educate and train its recipients with new skills (Axinn & Stern, 2001). During the 1970s and 1980s, welfare came under attack, its federal funding did not increase, and the money already allocated froze until new policies passed. These new policies were more focused on work and not education (Bos, Scrivener, Snipes, Hamilton & Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2002). In 1981, Congress passed the Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Act, which allowed states to invested time in creating welfare-to-work programs to help families receiving benefits from the state and federal government. Most states took the

approach of working first instead of training or education (Katz, 2001).

During the early 1980s, organizations and programs working directly with welfare recipients argued with policymakers the importance of including adult education as part of the services given to the beneficiaries (Martinson et al., 2003). These prowelfare organizations believe that sending low-skill participants directly to work is just a short-term solution, but allowing them to learn or improve new skills and attained a degree is a long-term solution to transition the welfare recipients to work (Bos et al., 2002). That is how the Human Capital Development started, as a strategy created by research evidence that provides necessary academic skills and education credentials that are prerequisites to obtain stable employment and get welfare families out of poverty by gaining self-sufficiency and higher paying jobs.

The World Economic Forum (2016) defines the human capital development theory as a resource that must be cultivated to grow. The report noted knowledge and skills must be placed with individuals to help them create an economic value that in the long-term benefit the individual. Human capital is critical not only for the individual who acquires the knowledge and skills but also, and most important, for society as a whole (Bos et al., 2002). For every person who receives human capital, society's productivity increases because these individuals become greater contributors of economic resources, and political, social, and civic institutions benefit from this person's contributions (Freedman et al., 1999).

Human capital is global. The technological advances of this era make human capital evolutionary and complex but necessary for a country's healthy economy (World Economic Forum, 2016). The expectations of a global, fast-growing economy are that by 2020, in developed countries, at least 25,000 new workers will enter the job market. However, at least 200 million individuals around the globe are without jobs. Economists predict that a shortage of

skilled workers, at least 50 million, will hit during the next decade (Bohn, 2014). Globally this is a real problem when around the globe 90 million children do not have access to primary school, 150 million do not have access to secondary education, and hundreds of millions young adults and adults are unable to attend higher education because of its cost (World Economic Forum, 2016).

In the 1990s, the Human Capital Development strategy changed because of the Labor Force Attachment, which primarily concentrates on a work-first approach (Danielson, 2012). This plan provided rapid job entry to welfare participants instead of education first (Bos et al., 2002). The philosophy of a work-first approach is followed by different states and consists of the lack of information provided to participants about education; the state eligibility workers guide the participants to job activities only (Dozier, 2013).

Another program implemented at the same time was the Federal Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program, which focuses was on providing welfare recipients with skills and some restricted access to higher education, restricting the time participants can spend in school and the types of degrees they were able to pursue; the idea was to move the participants fast to obtain a job (Katz, 2001). The implementation of JOBS also changed the requirements of work for single mothers with children younger than 3 years old. Prior to JOBS, these parents were able to attend school if they wanted. With JOBS, if they want to go to school, they must also work (Dave, Reichman, Corman, Das & National Bureau of Economic Research, 2011).

Another problem participants encounter while participating on JOBS is the time limit they have to attend school (Freedman et al., 1999). According to Kates and Smith College (1993), the majority of welfare recipients are women, and when they go back to school these women feel out of place, as they are older and carry responsibility for a child. Compared with

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other students in the classroom, they lack academic skills and feel stigmatized as welfare recipients. These are barriers and challenges that other students don't have. To help them and provide them with resources, more time is needed for them to be successful, but the time constraints that the JOBS program has are not realistic (Kates & Smith College, 1993).

Welfare reform 1996. PRWORA of 1996 completely shifted the welfare system; its primary goal was to move the welfare recipients from cash assistance to the labor force (California Department of Social Services, Welfare to Work Division, 2016). President Bill Clinton signed this act into law. It was designed to end welfare, as we know it, with the primary goal of moving families from receiving state and federal benefits to self-sufficiency (Karoly et al., 2015). The legislation created more rules and restrictive policies on the welfare recipients, time limits were imposed, and mandated work requirements expanded; states were also allowed to impose more sanctions on the participants if they did not comply with the new regulations (Dave et al., 2011).

The time limits imposed on PRWORA were one of the most controversial features of this Act (Farrell et al., 2008). The legislators argued that the time limit imposition was necessary to send a secure message, as the benefits they were receiving were only temporary, and when the time ended the welfare recipients must have a job or other economic resources (California Department of Social Services, Welfare to Work Division, 2016). Social services organizations argued that imposing time limits on welfare beneficiaries who have low education and lack skills added other challenges and barriers unique to this population, would do great harm to poor and already vulnerable families (Farrell et al., 2008).

One of the biggest issues the time-limit requirement created for welfare parents was the quality of time and the lack of parenting involvement in the lives of these poor, needy children

(Dave et al., 2011). Shiffman (2013) noted that the time limit imposed on welfare parents impacted the quality of parenting tremendously they provided. As welfare parents, they were required to comply with the core activities imposed by the system, which limited the time they spend with their children attending parent-teacher conferences, helping the child with homework, doing activities, and setting a high expectation for education. When compliance to requirements took precedence, it resulted in taking the whole family even deeper into poverty.

According to Brock, Matus-Grossman, Hamilton, and Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (2002), PRWORA sanctions can send a strong message of compliance to its participants. However, the financial incentives that it offers can be equally or even more powerful (Student Services and Special Programs Division and the Office Communication, 2010). A policy known as earnings disregard consists of a combination of a higher earned income and federal earned income credit, which allows welfare participants to increase their monthly cash aid as long as they work, even in a low-wage job (Brock et al., 2002).

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (2002) also disagreed with the time limits mandated by PRWORA. Its members believe the requirements are unrealistic and the expectations imposed on TANF students are unfair and lack equality as compared with regular students attending an educational institution. Bland and Lieberman (1997) added that TANF students have greater disadvantages from the start of their path to education. They lack academic preparation, have low skills, and other challenges. Their being single parents should be taken into consideration when laws and policies are created to help students out of poverty.

Time limits though were not the only new strict rule. Some work requirements were also not realistic, as they did not account for attending school as an approved activity and resulted in sanctions for noncompliance being enforced (Dave et al., 2011). With the work-first approach of

PRWORA, states were also mandated to meet work participation rates for participants by engaging them in particular federally approved activities (California Community College, 2015). Person et al. (2008) described the requirements as follow: There are nine core activities already approved by the federal government. Participants will be allowed to choose one of the core activities for a requirement of 20 hours a week, one of the core activities is adult education, but it can only be approved after the participant has passed the assessment test to be placed on it. If the child in the household receiving benefits is 6 years or older, the adult in the home must participate in a core activity for 30 hours a week. If the home is a two-parent household and does not receive state-funded child care, they must work for 35 hours a week in the core activity, but if they do receive state-funded child care, then the hours per week increase to 55 (California Community College, 2015; Person et al., 2008).

Under PRWORA, AFDC ended, and TANF replaced it. Through TANF, states receive federal money in the forms of block grants. The block grant allows the states freedom for how the money gets distributed to the counties and the policies states impose on welfare recipients, resulting in the variation that exists among states and their beneficiaries (Dave et al., 2011). The TANF block grants place the federal government welfare policies while providing lots of flexibility to states to manage programs to benefit the needy, with an annual amount of $16.5 billion that gets distributed to the 50 states (Brown & United States Government Accountability Office, 2010). TANF follows a consistent program model. All counties in the state of California adhere to it. The flexibility the federal government allows to run the day-to-day operations of the programs is given to the counties that operate welfare offices, and helps counties to provide services to fit the local populations (Friedlander & Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1993).

According to Brown and United States Government Accountability Office (2010), TANF was designed for four primary purposes:

- Provide cash aid to single mothers or a guardian with a young child, to be able to care for the child in their home.

- Promote job preparation, skills training, work, and marriage to end family's dependency on state benefits.

- Try to reduce and prevent teen pregnancies and pregnancies outside a marriage.

- Promote, encourage, and maintain two parent families.

Each state can implement and elaborate how they fulfill the four purposes of TANF. If the states did not comply with monitoring the recipient's participation, the states might have to pay a penalty to the United State Department of Health and Human Services. Penalties can be pardoned if the state can provide in writing to the federal government the reasons why it did not meet the requirements and a plan for what it is doing to resolve it (Brown & United States Government Accountability Office, 2010).

The United States had a critical recession that began in 2007. Social programs are usually overwhelmed during and after a recession with citizens applying for social benefits. The United States government responded creating the Recovery Act that provided an additional $5 billion as an Emergency Contingency Fund for the state's TANF program (Brown & United States Government Accountability Office, 2010). The states were able to qualify for the emergency fund based on families applying and qualifying for TANF in each state. California, because of its large population, qualified for it (Brown & United States Government Accountability Office, 2010). Under TANF, education and training count as permitted welfare-to-work activities, and community colleges are the best institutions to provide it (Student Services and Special Programs

Division and the Office Communication, 2010).

History of CalWORKs

In California, the GAIN program started through TANF in 1985 (California Community College, 2015). The GAIN program goal was to reduce long-term dependency on benefits by helping recipients, who have not completed a high school diploma, attain basic education and other services that would lead them to a job (Danielson, 2012). The CalWORKs program allows its applicants to participate in attaining a GED and continue their education, if appropriate, to obtain higher education (Karoly et al., 2015). Welfare recipients who have not received at least a high school diploma have difficulty getting jobs in the current market (Pavetti & Olson, 1996). The adults in the family can attend school if it benefits them to gain or develop new skills. They can also attend training programs, and the participants can get help with job search and placement (California Community College, 2015).

To meet basic needs, members received cash aid; the quantity is based on the family size, geographic location, and exempt status (California Community College, 2015). Exempt families are the ones in which the adults are disabled and receive worker's compensation, In-home supportive services, supplemental security income, or received disabled state insurance. These households receive the higher amount of cash aid provided in the area they live (World Institute on Disability, 2016). The cash grant amount that families received is based on geographical location and is higher in region one, as the cost of living is more expensive than region two. Region one consists of the counties with the highest cost of living. These counties are Alameda, Contra Costa, Los Angeles, Marin, Monterey, Napa, Orange, San Diego, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Sonoma, and Ventura. Region two, with the lower cost of living, are Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Del Norte, El

Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Lake, Lassen, Madera, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Riverside, Sacramento, San Benito, San Bernardino, San Joaquín, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Tulare, Tuolumne, Yolo, and Yuba (California Community College, 2015).

Table 3 shows the CalWORKs maximum grant cash aid amount that participants in region one and region two receive. It also shows the award amount for exempt participants in each region (World Institute on Disability, 2016).

Table 3

CalWORKs Maximum Aid Grant Amounts by Region

Family Size	REGION ONE		REGION TWO	
	Exempt	Nonexempt	Exempt	Nonexempt
1	$392	$355	$374	$336
2	$645	$577	$616	$549
3	$799	$714	$762	$680
4	$949	$852	$904	$810
5	$1,080	$968	$1,031	$922
6	$1,214	$1,087	$1,157	$1,035
7	$1,334	$1,195	$1,272	$1,136
8	$1,454	$1,301	$1,385	$1,239
9	$1,571	$1,407	$1,498	$1,340
10 or more	$1,689	$1,511	$1,610	$1,438

Note. From "CalWORKs maximum aid grant amounts by county regions," by World Institute on Disability, 2016. (https://ca.db101.org/ca/programs/income_support/calworks/program.htm). In the public domain.

The state of California allows its counties to manage and create policy on how the TANF block grant money will be utilized to serve welfare recipients (Friedlander & Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1993). In Los Angeles County, the entity in charge of

administering the block grant is the California Department of Social Services. In 1993, the

California Department of Social Services administrators decided to switch the education focus to

an employment focus. GAIN started with a work-first approach. The primary goal for GAIN at

that time was to place participants in any possible job to take them out of the system (Dozier,

2013). Furthermore, the California Department of Social Services believed that its first services

should be to offer job-search assistance, as this encourages welfare recipients to start working as

soon as possible and attain self-sufficiency (Freedman et al., 1999).

After President Clinton signed PRWORA into law in 1996, states had the freedom to

establish their policies while still following federal guidelines. The eligibility requirements are

the same throughout the state, but the Welfare to Work requirements may vary accordingly to the

county where the recipient lives (California Community College, 2015). California on August

11, 1997, enacted the Assembly Bill 1542 Thompson-Maddy-Ducheny-Ashburn Welfare-to-

Work; this same legislation replaced California's AFDC and GAIN with CalWORKs, which

took effect January 1998 (California Community College, 2015; Karoly et al., 2015). Assembly

Bill 1542 officially identified the California community college system as a primary partner in

the services provided to TANF students, as well as forced state and county organizations to work

together in creating policy, procedures, and resources for the CalWORKs program (Student

Services and Special Programs Division and the Office Communication, 2010). Education

through the community colleges finally seemed like a link to economic development for TANF

participants (Academic Senate for California Community College, 2002).

As states were given the freedom to impose the regulations of PRWORA as they saw fit,

the CalWORKs program in California became one of the most generous TANF programs in the

nation (Dave et al., 2011). California's time limit was 60 months and only affected the adults

receiving welfare—not the children. Children were allowed to continue receiving benefits until they reach 18 years old or their parent or guardian's financial situation improved. The sanctions for noncompliance with the requirements were modest (Karoly et al., 2015).

The structure of CalWORKs was as a work-first program, in which most of the resources the program provided where aimed at helping participants find jobs. At the time, the policies were intended to help participants move forward to self-sufficiency (Dave et al., 2011). Job club was one of the first activities participants engaged in while receiving welfare benefits; job club was a structured program to help the participants look for jobs (Karoly et al., 2015). The California legislature in December 2004, under Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, passed Senate Bill (SB) 1104, an assembly bill that imposed very strict guidelines on the CalWORKs program (California Department of Social Services, 2007). Requirements for core work added that parents must work 20 hours a week, and they must be involved in other allowed activities such training or education the other 12 hours for a complete 32 hours of activities per week (Karoly et al., 2015).

In June 2012, California Governor Jerry Brown signed the California Budget Act of 2012. This act, among other trailer bills, included the SB 1041; this bill brought significant changes to the CalWORKs program. According to Karoly et al. (2015), the most important change was the time clock: CalWORKs no longer allowed 60 months of benefits. It was reduced to only 48 months one time in a person's life. Another change was the work requirements for families with small children. For households with a child younger than 6 years of age, the work required hours reduced from 32 hours to only 20 hours per week (Nelson et al., 2003; World Institute on Disability, 2016). One important change was the financial work incentive, which increased the cash aid the recipients received on a monthly basis, as well as increased the size of

the earned income disregard (Karoly et al., 2015).

After SB 1041 passed, the creation of the welfare-to-work activities became a condition for participants to continue receiving cash aid (California Community College, 2015). Some of those welfare-to-work activities were participation in on-the-job-training, community services assistance, vocational education, domestic abuse services, skills training-development, and other activities that assist welfare recipients to obtain self-sufficiency through employment (California Community College, 2015; Danielson, 2012). Families considered exempt did not have to participate in welfare-to-work activities (World Institute on Disability, 2016).

California is one of the states with the highest income thresholds for participants because California is one of the most expensive states in the nation (Bohn, 2014). Moreover, the work incentives California provides are one of the most generous nationwide, and motivate CalWORKs recipients to work (Karoly et al., 2015). Furthermore, even though the state limits adult benefits to 48 months, for the children in the household the benefits of cash aid and services are unlimited as long as the home income is within the federal poverty guidelines (California Community College, 2015).

History of CalWORKs and California Community Colleges

After the passing of the PRWORA at the federal level, the California legislature passed Assembly Bill 1542 Thompson-Maddy-Ducheny-Ashburn, which recognized the community colleges as partners in the development of skills and training of their CalWORKs students (Academic Senate for California Community College, 2002; California Community College, 2015). The state also formed partnerships for its Welfare-to-Work program through the department of social services and community colleges. Because the academic curriculum is out of the department of social service's control, the partnership became a trio among the

Department of Social Services, community colleges, and the California Community College Chancellor's Office (Person et al., 2008).

The CalWORKs programs in the community colleges received its funding through the California Community College Chancellor's Office. The colleges decide how they will implement it on their campuses, as long as they do not violate state law by duplicating services already in existence on their campuses for which they receive state funding (Student Services and Special Programs Division and the Office Communication, 2010). CalWORKs in the community colleges focuses on providing necessary, technical, and academic skills to its TANF students. The program provides specific services to cater to this population as well as coordinates and manages their cases in collaboration with GAIN, which students have through the department of social services (Person et al., 2008).

In September 2005, the California Community Colleges CalWORKs State Advisory Committee (California Community College, 2015) presented to the state and the colleges its mission statement:

> We are California Community College program serving CalWORKs students and their
> families by providing educational and career opportunities combined with an array of
> high-quality support services that enable students to complete their educational goals,
> find meaningful employment, and successfully transition into the workforce. Through
> collaboration and advocacy with our college and community partners, we prepare a
> segment of California's workforce by promoting the economic self-sufficiency of
> CalWORKs students through the attainment of a higher education. (p. 1)

Welfare-to-work programs in community colleges have specific services and resources that aim to help the particular population of CalWORKs students (Student Services and Special Programs

Division and the Office Communication, 2010). The goal is to help them move off welfare and become self-sufficient through newly acquired skills an academic education (Mathur & California Community Colleges, 2002). According to Peterson and ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges (2002), CalWORKs programs in community colleges have the necessary resources and adequate personnel who understand the unique barriers CalWORKs students have. By understanding the issues and pressures faced by these students, the community colleges' CalWORKs programs can contribute to the personal and academic development of these students and help them succeed in their goal to obtain higher education and reach independence from state benefits (Karpilow & Reed, 2010; Peterson & ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, 2002).

The funding for CalWORKs programs is distributed directly by the California State Chancellor's office. The specific services that these programs must provide to CalWORKs students are detailed in the California Education Code 79200-79203, and these six services are child care, work-study, job development and placement, case management, service coordination, and curriculum development and redesign (California Community College, 2015).

Child care. The program helps students with vouchers to pay for child care for their children under 14 years. CalWORKs students also receive support completing their monthly paperwork to receive child care subsidized by the state (California Community College, 2015). Child care is a service that is essential for CalWORKs students to succeed. When community colleges can provide child care on their campuses or provide vouchers for state centers that have flexible hours such as the weekends and evenings, those accommodations help students to handle school and parenting (Mathur et al., 2004).

Every CalWORKs participant receive free child care as long as he or she meets any of the following three criteria (a) if the child is younger than 10 years of age, (b) if the parent has any physical or mental disability, and (c) if the child in under court supervision (Dozier, 2013). California provides child care services to CalWORKs participants in three stages. The county manages stage one. Stages two and three, the California Department of Education contracts with alternative payment program agencies to be able to provide child care to the increasing amount of children in the program (California Community College, 2015).

Work-study. This consists of CalWORKs students participating in work-study at their community colleges. They gain work experience, and the CalWORKs program places them in offices on campus that are related to the majors they are pursuing (Bland & Lieberman, 1997). The wages they earn do not count against their monthly cash aid because payment from work-study is subsidized, and, more important, the hours they work at the college are added into the core hours they must fulfill for TANF requirements (Mathur et al., 2004). The CalWORKs programs in the colleges paid 75% of the student's' wages; the other 25% comes from either financial aid or any other subsidized partnership the program has (Student Services and Special Programs Division and the Office Communication, 2010).

The California Community College (2015) stated that the director, in collaboration with the financial aid office, county agencies, or community businesses, should be able to help students obtain work-study or to acquire work experience while enrolled in the college. Work-study is a valuable opportunity for CalWORKs students to get paid job experience that contributes to the development of basic workplace skills, such as punctuality, problem-solving techniques, communication, and the opportunity to learn to manage work and school (Student Services and Special Programs Division and the Office Communication, 2010). According to

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Peterson and ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges (2002), work-study programs that concentrate on building workplace skills increase the ability of the participant to have a higher rate of job retention.

Job development and placement. The CalWORKs programs should help the students create their résumés, practice mock interviews, and provide other resources that can help them prepare for a job interview (California Community College, 2015). According to Mathur et al. (2004), job development and placement must fulfill two purposes for CalWORKs students. First, they help students comply with the weekly hours they must complete as a requirement and second, they help students learn new skills in a workplace and provide them with extra subsidized income.

Case management. The program must have a person who manages the cases of each CalWORKs student and serve as a liaison for the student to other services. Each student's file should be kept separate and the case manager should collect all the eligibility documents that allow the student to be part of the CalWORKs program (California Community College, 2015). Furthermore, Mathur et al. (2004) noted that the case manager should also track the academic progress of the student on a semester basis, collaborate and work in close cooperation with the welfare offices, complete forms and documents needed to maintain the student eligibility in the system, request books, and supplies vouchers as well as child care and transportation vouchers for the active students to the welfare worker.

Service coordination. The program must have a director or coordinator who employs 100% of his or her time to direct the program. The director serves as a liaison with the other services on the campus, the county partners, and the community. This person also has to work directly with the dean in the chancellor's office to complete the annual budget reports and

request or return funding throughout the year as the program may need to do so (California Community College, 2015). The coordination of services also requires the director to work in close cooperation with the college financial aid office to provide financial assistance to the students who qualify. The director must also assure the students are working with the academic counselor and following their education plan that has being approved by the welfare office (Mathur et al., 2004).

Curriculum development and redesign. Curriculum development and redesign creates specific classes if necessary based on the CalWORKs students' need when prior state approval is required (California Community College, 2015). College CalWORKs programs are also allowed to increase short-term vocational programs, English as second language classes, and any other essential education if the number of CalWORKs students is significant enough (Mathur & California Community Colleges, 2002).

Person et al. (2008) highlighted some of the specific resources community college CalWORKs programs maintain to serve their TANF students. Community colleges match TANF students to curriculum already offered on their campuses, which benefit the student, either by providing them the path to a certificate (short-term) on a particular vocational job or by matching them on the road to an associate degree (long-term) that may lead them to a career. The community colleges also have a particular location on the campuses with personnel who serve TANF students, and they are the link in between the community colleges and the GAIN offices. This staff usually consists of a director, and academic counselor, and a case manager, among others (California Community College, 2015).

Another important service is work-study. TANF students work in different offices on or outside the campus while they earn their certificate or an Associate's degree, they get paid by

weekly, and their earnings through work-study are exempt from taxes and do not count against their monthly income (Person et al., 2008). Jenkins et al. (1998) noted that community colleges are in a prime position to provide access to new skills and attainment of higher education to the poor population. By doing so, they also have the ability to help these communities move out of poverty by helping them with the necessary skills to obtain higher earning jobs.

The community colleges have the capacity to help welfare recipients to leave poverty, as they provide the initial and continual technical or academic training that has become a necessity in the current job market (Johnson & Sengupta, 2009). Furthermore, community colleges are the only educational institutions that are capable of providing access to a large group of people at any time during the year (as they have an open-door enrollment policy) and also can educate populations from so many diverse backgrounds (Jenkins et al., 1998). According to Mathur and California Community Colleges (2002), for welfare recipients, postsecondary education and training play a significant role in their ability to become self-sufficient. The attainment of higher education improves their economic outcomes and ability to obtain higher paid jobs and leave the welfare system (Student Services and Special Programs Division and the Office Communication, 2010). According to Friedlander and Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. (1993), training and education increase participants' skills and knowledge, enhance the possibility of obtaining a job with higher earnings, and most important for the participant increase his or her ability to retain it. Mathur and California Community Colleges (2002) believe that states should invest more money in providing support to welfare students. When they enroll in a community college, those support services they received will help these students not only navigate the higher education system, but also train them to be self-reliant and independent.

According to Martinson et al. (2003), core competencies and educational credentials are necessary for the labor market, not only to obtain a job but also to have upward mobility in the workforce. Welfare recipients with low skills and lack of higher education can find employment with the help of the TANF program, but those jobs are low paying and have little or no potential for growth (Friedlander & Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1993). Pavetti and Olson (1996) noted that CalWORKs recipients with low skills find jobs with irregular hours, which make it difficult to obtain daycare, keep their wages very low, and these jobs most likely don't offer benefits.

The main issue Martinson et al. (2003) noted was these welfare recipients find the low-level jobs and within a year or less they will be back on the welfare system because they still do not have the adequate skills or education to be self-sufficiency in this high technology job market era. Education is a strong force against poverty (Danielson, 2012). To obtain social change for CalWORKs students, the educational programs they are part of can be the useful bridge they need to leave state welfare behind and cross into self-sufficiency by acquiring lifelong skills and employment that will pay high wages with the opportunity to grow professionally (Academic Senate for California Community College, 2002).

Person's et al. (2008) CalWORKs policy research study concluded that TANF recipients who attend community colleges are better prepared to secure higher paying jobs after graduating from one of these institutions, even if the student entered without a high school diploma. Person et al. continued noting that TANF students increased their earnings by 42% on average after the first year of leaving community college, even if they did not complete a certificate. If they do complete and obtain a degree, then their average earnings increase at least 78%. They concluded that through the collaboration of the community colleges and the department of social services,

TANF students are more likely to be successful after attending community college and to become self-sufficient and leave the welfare system altogether (Person et al., 2008).

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (2002) strongly agreed that TANF students who attend community colleges could escape welfare as they prepare and enhance their life for a career through education; these educational programs are well designed to help create social change among their poorest populations. Furthermore, Aroner and Maxwell-Jolly (2001) noted that participants exiting CalWORKs after obtaining a low-earning job will continue living in poverty, and most of these families will return to the welfare system within a year after leaving it. The collaboration between the local county welfare offices and community colleges is the best partnership to help welfare recipients to engage, succeed, and achieve an education to obtain long-term economic self-sufficiency (Student Services and Special Programs Division and the Office Communication, 2010).

From jobs to careers was a study made by the Center Law and Social Policy in May 2004, data was collected from the 1999–2000 community colleges student cohort; the idea of the study was to see the economic outcomes of these students four years later. The study only collected data from women in the CalWORKs program and from women traditional college students. The significant findings were welfare participants who attend community colleges even if they started without a high school diploma earn more than welfare participants who did not participating in a community college (Cohen, 1998; Mathur & California Community Colleges, 2002). CalWORKs students who attend community colleges for nonvocational programs have lower earnings than CalWORKs students who attend community colleges for a vocational program even while they are still attending school. When entering college, women who are not in CalWORKs have a higher earning gap precollege when compared with CalWORKs women

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entering college at the same time, but this gap narrows and the earnings of CalWORKs women go higher after college (Mathur & California Community Colleges, 2002). Last, CalWORKs participants have higher earnings by the second year after they leave school if they completed at least an AA degree or higher. The more education a member attains, the higher their earnings go (Martinson et al., 2003; Mathur et al., 2004).

According to Brock et al. (2002), community colleges are the perfect fit to help TANF students obtain new skills, higher education, or transfer to a four-year institution. They described the advantages community colleges have to serve TANF students and operate welfare-to-work programs as community colleges have open-door policies on admission, students can enroll in most any class at any time, and they served students from varied backgrounds, levels of education, ages, and socioeconomic status (Brock et al., 2002). Community colleges offer a broad range of curriculum, from noncredit to credit classes; community services and vocational classes; and all these are offered at any time of the day or evening.

The cost of attending a community college class is $46 per unit, the lowest price among higher education institutions (Pierce College, 2016b). Last, community colleges have programs and resources aimed at helping specific populations such as TANF students. Brock et al. (2002) concluded that given all these offerings by community colleges, they are the perfect fit to help TANF participants to end welfare dependency and put them on the right path to self-sufficiency (Student Services and Special Programs Division and the Office Communication, 2010).

Characteristics of CalWORKs Students

High-risk students are students who face barriers and challenges while attending community college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). CalWORKs students are usually labeled high-risk students. These students enter college lacking academic preparation. They come from

low socioeconomic backgrounds, enter college facing tough barriers such ass lack of financial resources, lack of information on how to navigate college, have parenthood responsibilities, lack family support and working obligations, they feel socially marginalized, and college has become an unfit challenge for them (Tinto, 1993). CalWORKs students are a high-risk population because of the difficulties and barriers they encounter while attending community college in comparison to other student populations. Following are some of the obstacles the CalWORKs students face.

Balancing work and school. It is hard for CalWORKs students to balance the responsibility of working part-time or full-time sometimes while attending community college, but because of the unrealistic requirements of TANF, students must work and go to school to maintain their eligibility for benefits (Brock et al., 2002). Having time to study, completing homework, and working is tough for CalWORKs students and a juggling act (Dayton, 2005). Community colleges' flexible schedules of classes allow CalWORKs students to balance their obligations better by fitting their class hours between work and children responsibilities (Peterson & ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, 2002).

Their family demands and accountability. The balancing act becomes an art for CalWORKs students who must learn how to manage their time as students, workers, and most important parents (Brock et al., 2002). Being parents, most of the time, is the motivation they need to succeed in community college, but they also struggle with the sacrifices they make away from their children. If they are not able to balance all this, their success is at risk (Dayton, 2005).

Academic barriers. CalWORKs students are academically disadvantaged either because they have been out of school for several years or have barely finished a GED certificate. Their educational background is lacking as a result of the little importance education has had in their

lives (Brock et al., 2002). CalWORKs students are categorized by the department of education as a disadvantaged student population that enters community colleges with low academic preparation, and for which the state has created programs such as SSSP that aim to help students to be successful at community college (California Community College, 2015).

Personal barriers such as domestic violence, mental illness, or substance abuse. Participants who suffer from drug addiction most likely also have suffered from domestic violence. Increased services with specific treatments for these members can be beneficial for them to obtain academic success (Aroner, & Maxwell-Jolly, 2001, January). Participants with mental health problems may be unable to undertake school tasks. CalWORKs offers services to help them overcome these barriers (Pavetti & Olson, 1996).

Language barriers. Dayton (2005) claimed that English as a second language is one of the most challenging problems CalWORKs students face. She continued stating that social workers placed them on vocational certificates only if their assessment scores are low. Bland and Lieberman (1997) posited that by providing and allowing the welfare recipients to receive primary education, these students learn the elementary academic curriculum necessary to obtaining a degree that can lead them to job retention and out of poverty.

Financial cost. Some CalWORKs students may not be able to afford to attend school as they may not qualify for financial aid because of past performance in community college (Brock et al., 2002). According to Dayton (2005), the insufficiency of economic funds is a real struggle for CalWORKs students. This need sometimes is so hard that students are overwhelmed and drop out of school for a low-paying job. After a few months, they often return to the welfare system.

Access to information. CalWORKs students have many commitments: work, family, school, and homework. These commitments do not allow them time to invest in the campuses, and they do not obtain all the information necessary to help them move through the higher education system (Brock et al., 2002).

There are two types of welfare recipients: those who attend community colleges or a higher educational institution and those who received benefits but do not attend any educational institution (Cohen, 1998). Then, according to McIntyre and Chan (1997), there is no surprise that the welfare recipients who enroll in community colleges have higher education and skill levels than those who are not registered. However, when to compared with other student populations, welfare recipients still fall flat on academic preparation. Danielson (2012) posited that lack of educational attainment by CalWORKs parents creates a terrible situation for them when searching for employment, as the skills they possess make it difficult to compete for jobs. Also, McIntyre and Chan (1997) claimed that welfare student recipients are mostly females, a bit older, usually immigrants, and receive financial aid in comparison with other college students.

The following requirements must be met to be a CalWORKs student in community college. The student must be a parent of a child younger than 18 years old, and that child must live at home with the parent and must attend school full-time. The parent must receive the cash portion of the TANF program; the parents can attend community college as part of their welfare-to-work activity (Martinson et al., 2003). The GAIN county offices determine the eligibility of the participant. After approval, it refers students to a community college CalWORKs program (Student Services and Special Programs Division and the Office Communication, 2010).

Table 4 shows the eligibility requirements and the priority the GAIN workers give to participants applying for CalWORKs benefits (California Community College, 2015).

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Table 4

California Community College CalWORKs Student Eligibility Matrix

ELIGIBLE	NOT ELIGIBLE
Priority: ● TANF recipients who are receiving cash aid and have a welfare-to-work plan ● Self-initiated (SIP) participants ● Exempt TANF recipients with an education program must have clear goals completion ● Cal-Learn students (High school students) ● Must be in good standing Second priority: ● Former TANF beneficiaries who received cash aid within the last two years must be employed	● Sanctioned student ● "Child-only" cases ● Students who are only receiving food stamps, not the cash aid ● Tribal TANF students ● Students receiving SSI ● Former TANF student that time-out of benefits

Note. From "California Community College CalWORKs student eligibility matrix," by California Community College, 2015. (http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/SSSP/CalWORKs/Policies/August%202011%20CalWORKs%20Handbook.pdf). In the public domain.

When welfare participants are allowed to participate in higher education, society benefits (Mathur et al., 2004). The majority of CalWORKs students are women involved in postsecondary education to help them to have higher paying jobs, and increase their self-esteem as they become independent from the welfare system (Aroner, & Maxwell-Jolly, 2001; Danielson, 2012).Their children learn the importance of education and grow with higher ambitions to attend postsecondary education, and overall, the quality of their lives and the lives of their children improves dramatically (Center for Women Policy Studies, 2001). Jing and Mayer (1995) described a single-parent student as extraordinary because of all the challenges and barrier he or she faces while juggling school, work, and parenthood. These students still aspire to attain higher education. All they need, according to Jing and Mayer (1995), is a supportive environment and resources to help them succeed.

According to Ganzglass and Center for Law and Social Policy (2006), many of the welfare recipients lack the necessary skills and education to be able to compete in the labor

market. Sometimes they lack even the basic skills for an entry-level job. More than half of the welfare population lacks a high school diploma (Mathur & California Community Colleges, 2002). Furthermore, several studies on welfare populations determined that 45% of these residents suffer from learning disabilities and or cognitive impairments (Martinson et al., 2003). These barriers make it even harder for welfare recipients to succeed in education or even in a job (Ganzglass & Center for Law and Social Policy, 2006).

Cerven (2013) claimed that women head the households with the highest poverty levels in the United States. Single mothers are the largest group in California receiving welfare benefits, but also they are the largest group in California attending community colleges to improve their lives and the lives of their children (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016a; Danielson, 2012). In 2010, according to Cerven (2013) the poverty levels of households led by a single woman were the highest. They started at 31.6%, compared with 15.8% when the head of the family is a single male and even lower at 6.2% when the head of the household is a married couple (Cerven, 2013).

To break the cycle of poverty that impacts the CalWORKs women heads of households is to provide them with the opportunity to become self-sufficient through education. These participants attend school while dealing with significant challenges as parents, workers, and students trying to improve their employability and hoping for higher salary jobs to end dependence on the welfare system (Karpillow & Reed, 2010). Figure 5 shows the percentages of females and males for the 2015–2016 academic year attending a community college while receiving CalWORKs benefits. The amount of female heads of household participating in a community college is significantly larger than males.
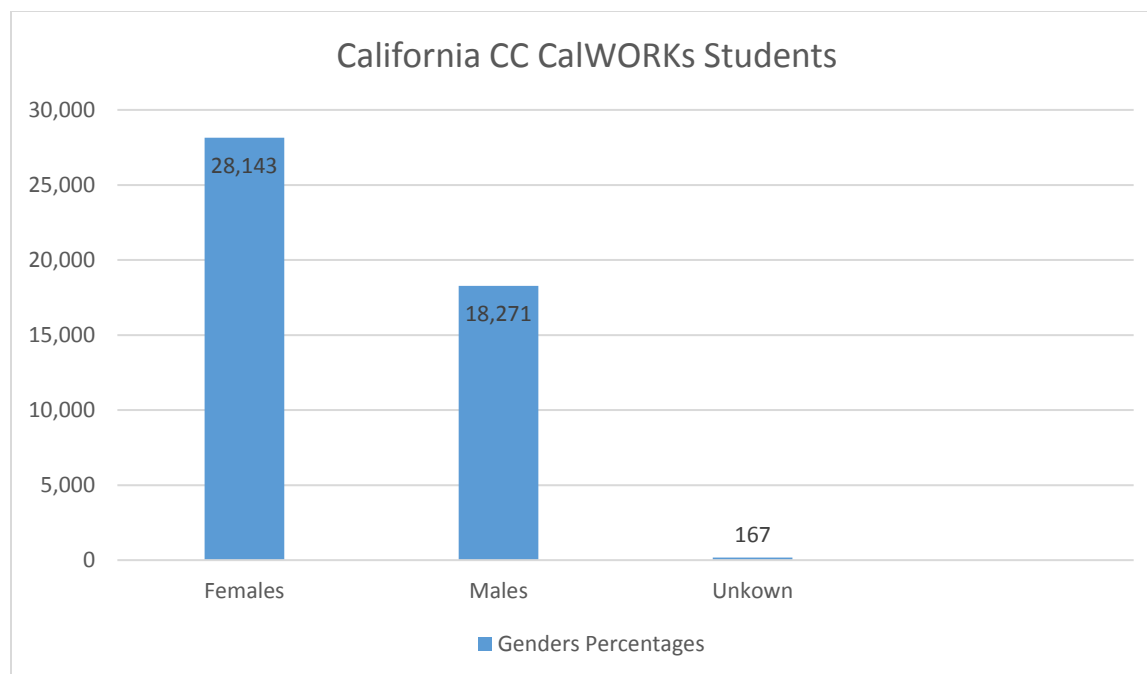
Figure 5. California community college CalWORKs students. California Community College Chancellors Office. (2016a) CalWORKs Student Population in the State of California 2015–2016 Academic Year. Retrieved from http://datamart.cccco.edu/Services/CalWORKs_Status.aspx.

According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), one of the biggest obstacles CalWORKs students face is their lack of social capital, which influences how they interact or engage in a relationship with faculty and their peers, as well as the expectations they may have from their education. The social capital that CalWORKs students lack can block or inhibit academic success. For these students, the lack of a parental role model may significantly influence whether students attend and succeed in college and it is their mother's level of education that influences this most (Perna & Titus, 2005).

For students whose parents have not attained college degrees, the combination of first-generation, single parents, welfare recipients, and social class influences educational outcomes more strongly than race or gender (Ishitani, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The value of relationships with faculty members, peer mentors, tutors, and staff members provides social support and assistance to CalWORKs students. Ishitani (2006) claimed that social capital is

critical to the development of network relationships for CalWORKs students. Social capital helps them learn to manage and navigate an unfamiliar environment so these students can find support, information, and emotional support and guidance on their path of attain higher education and become independent citizens.

CalWORKs Program at Pierce College

Los Angeles Pierce College is a two-year public institution located in Southern California. It was founded in 1947 through the efforts of Clarence W. Pierce, M.D. The original name of the college was the Clarence W. Pierce School of Agriculture. As the San Fernando Valley grew, the need for a comprehensive community college to serve the region was apparent. The college changed its name and its mission when it became Pierce College (Los Angeles Pierce College, 2016). Pierce College offers more than 60 disciplines and 111 degrees, and has a variety of vocational programs and occupational training; 22,000 students attend each semester and 366 of those students are CalWORKs members. Pierce College belongs to the LACCD, the biggest college district in the nation (Los Angeles Community College District, 2016).

The CalWORKs Pierce College program serves students who are receiving TANF benefits, have been approved for the education portion of the welfare benefits, and have enrolled in at least one class at the campus. The Pierce College CalWORKs program serves 366 students through the 2015–2016 academic year (California Community College, 2015). CalWORKs students can be Self-Initiated Participants (SIP), these participants have been attending a community college before applying for welfare benefits, for which the GAIN program allows them to continue their education and this participation counts as the core hours they must fulfill for the welfare-to-work program. Students who are non-SIPs or vocational students are those who have gone through an appraisal process with the county welfare offices before enrolling in

community colleges and the results of their assessment indicated they will benefit from attending

a community college (Student Services and Special Programs Division and the Office

Communication, 2010).

Figure 6 shows the percentage of CalWORKs female and male populations attending

Pierce College for the 2015–2016-cohort year; these percentages are only of SIPs. The

percentages reflect higher numbers of female students than male students; the Pierce College

population reflects the general CalWORKs population statewide (California Community College

Chancellors Office, 2016b).
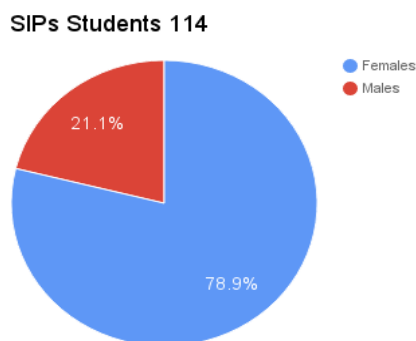
Figure 6. SIP students. California Community College Chancellors Office. (2016b)
Pierce CalWORKs SIP Students, 2015–2016. Percentages of CalWORKs student's (SIP's) females and
males attending Pierce College. Adapted from
http://datamart.cccco.edu/Services/CalWORKs_Status.aspx

Figure 7 shows the percentage of CalWORKs female and male populations attending

Pierce College for the 2015–2016 cohort year; these percentages are only of Non-SIP or

vocational participants. The percentages reflect higher numbers of female students than male

students; the Pierce College population reflects the general CalWORKs population statewide

(California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016c).

Non SIP Students 252

Female
Male

23.4%

76.6%
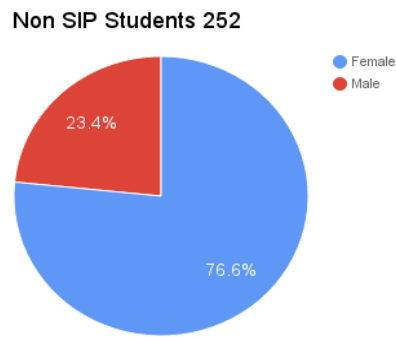
Figure 7. Non-SIP students. California Community College Chancellors Office. (2016c) Pierce CalWORKs Non-SIP Students, 2015–2016. Percentages of CalWORKs student's Non-SIP or vocational females and males attending Pierce College. Adapted from http://datamart.cccco.edu/Services/CalWORKs_Status.aspx

The CalWORKs program at Pierce College is fund by the State of California and the federal government, which makes it a categorical program (Community Colleges Categorical Programs, 2011). The purposes of the program are to provide services to participants receiving welfare benefits and who enroll in classes at Pierce College. This student CalWORKs cases are managed and coordinated by the staff in the program, and the CalWORKs program staff also serves as a liaison for the student to other services available for them at the college (Pierce College, 2016a). The team also works and collaborates closely with the department of public social services, Gain workers, the TANF program, and agencies in the community that provide services to CalWORKs students. Advocacy services are available to the students. Other services the students receive are work-study placement, completion and certification of all county documents related to school, child care, transportation and work-study. Students also, if they need it, receive references to domestic violence, mental health, legal, and social services programs (Pierce College, 2016a).

The county of Los Angeles in partnership with the Pierce College CalWORKs program provides students with books, schools supplies, uniforms, and all the necessary tools to allow the

CalWORKs participants to complete their academic endeavors. The goal of providing these services is to support the students to overcome any barriers they may have and earn certificates or AA/AS degrees, transfer to four-year institutions, or upgrade their employment skills to prepare for economic self-sufficiency. The program staff collaborates with the CalWORKs county offices to verify student enrollment, document their educational activities, provide child care, and support and track their academic success. CalWORKs personnel offer necessary assistance to students to find the way to navigate the county public benefits and welfare-to-work bureaucracies. The staff also models advocacy skills and encourages students to grow their self-advocacy competence (Pierce College, 2016a).

Chapter Summary

The global economy is changing, the emerging working force must have attained postsecondary education to be able to be employed and have higher annual earnings (Martinson et al., 2003). The United States is one of the countries that may face a lack of educated and skilled workers, as the price of higher education continues to rise and many of the millennial generation are not able to afford it (Pew Research Center, 2014). There is no doubt California community colleges play an essential role in providing access to higher education to the American citizens. These institutions are the only ones in higher education prepared to help special populations such as the CalWORKs students, but the problem lies in the policies and absurd requirements the state CalWORKs program places on these students, such as time limits, which are the most controversial barriers (Student Services and Special Programs Division and the Office Communication, 2010).

The welfare system has gone through different challenges since its creation. Most of the time has been seen as a program that helps lazy people in our society, but the reality is any

family at any moment may have the need to refer to the services welfare provides to survive (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, 2002). The welfare system also plays a critical role in helping America's neediest families to have a shelter, food, and the necessities to survive (Danielson, 2012). Education has and continues to play a primary role in society, and a critical piece of California's safety social net is the CalWORKs program (Martinson et al., 2003). The collaboration and partnership of the welfare system with community colleges is becoming the solution to help those families in poverty to attain higher education, to be able to leave the welfare system, and to become self-sufficient (California Community College, 2015; Student Services and Special Programs Division and the Office Communication, 2010). Chapter 3 outlines the research design and data gathering process of this study. This outline includes a description of the population utilized within the study, a discussion of validity and reliability, and an explanation of the interview protocol.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to identify the best practices among successful CalWORKs students attending a community college in California. The importance of identifying what worked best for these successful students was the categorizing their challenges and how they navigated them. This chapter answers the research questions of the study and what research methods were utilized to obtain a response with the intent of creating a framework for the research. Compiling the experiences of successful CalWORKs students through their personal recollections was best achieved by utilizing a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. This chapter describes the method of qualitative research and the reason it was used for this study. A discussion of the population utilized for this study, the method used to identify this population, as well as the process of protecting human subjects is explained. Furthermore, Chapter 3 also discusses the interview format and the data collection. Biases, validity, and reliability of the investigator were addressed. Additionally, the chapter ends with an analysis of the data and the findings obtained through the phenomenological approach.

Restatement of Research Questions

According to Patton (2002), open-ended interview questions allow for the person being interviewed to provide more detailed knowledge of how they feel, their opinions, and their experiences. The following research questions are addressed in this study to examine the current successful practices of CalWORKs students:

- Research Question 1: What challenges are faced by CalWORKs students in implementing strategies and practices in community college?

- Research Question 2: What strategies and practices are employed by CalWORKs students to succeed in community college?

- Research Question 3: How do CalWORKs students measure success while attending community college?

- Research Question 4: What recommendations would CalWORKs students make for future students in their same situation to succeed in the community college?

Nature of the Study

The study design is a qualitative descriptive study. A qualitative research was chosen to study best practices of CalWORKs students in community colleges to understand the needs and issues CalWORKs students have to be successful. Creswell (2013) posited a qualitative study is necessary to provide a voice to issues and needs that a group of the population may have. Given a voice to a particular group of the population is considered the strength of qualitative research. Furthermore, these identifiable variables cannot easily be measured by any other methods. How people see their experiences, how they interpret those experiences, and what those experiences mean to them is the principal interest of an inquirer in a qualitative study (Merriam, 2009).

The nature of a qualitative study, according to Gray (2014), is the role of the principal investigator. Another strength of a qualitative study is that the investigator gains in-depth knowledge and understanding of the context being researched by interacting with the everyday lives of the individuals, groups, communities, and organizations, obtaining a holistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena within the subjects' context-specific settings (Gray, 2014). For the investigator to gain a comprehensive knowledge of the participants and their success in CalWORKs, open-ended questions were asked. Patton (2002) suggested that gathering responses to open-ended questions enables the inquirer to capture and understand others points of view without a predetermined response created by the inquirer. Patton (2002) also noted that qualitative data are descriptive, tell a story, allow the reader to place himself or herself in the

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time and situation the participant is describing, and capture someone else's story in their words. This is also strength of a qualitative study.

Gray (2014) noted a qualitative research is highly contextual; the information collected in a natural, real-life setting makes it a strength of the study; and the participants provide an account of how and why things happen, using their motivations, emotions, and prejudices while describing their story. Creswell (2013) mentioned that having face-to-face interaction with the participants is essential for the researcher. It allows the principal investigator to talk directly to people while observing their behavior (Creswell, 2014). The focus of a qualitative study is the perceptions of the participants on the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 2009).

Merriam (2009) noted that the investigator plays a primary role in analyzing and collecting data from the participants while doing so through the perspective of the participants. Patton (2002) posited that to understand the phenomenon studied, the researcher's insights and personal experiences play a critical role in the inquiry of the research. Another strength of a qualitative study is that the principal investigator utilizes multiple methods to gather data, in the forms of interviews, observations, and collection of documents to then process and categorize themes and to reference across all the information sources (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Inductive analysis and creative synthesis are part of a qualitative study, patterns, and cross-referenced themes discovered to explore and then confirm rational principles to create a synthesis of the issues being studied (Patton, 2002). The information is built from the bottom up, and uses emerging themes and categories to analyze whether gathering more information is needed to support an issue. The process requires the inquirer to have the ability to go back and forth between the database and the collected themes (Creswell, 2014).

Creswell (2014) posited that the entire qualitative research process comes from the participant's meaning, as the primary objective is to understand the problem from the subjects' point of view and personal meaning of the issue and not the literature or the researcher's views. The focus is to understand how participant's account for their actions and how they act and react in their daily lives to the phenomenon at hand (Gray, 2014). Qualitative studies are richly descriptive (Merriam, 2009). These studies are open and flexible to new designs. As themes emerge, new paths may get discovered. Gray (2014) posited a qualitative study combines several strategies and methods within the research, which make these studies highly flexible in nature.

The voice of the principal investigator is also important in a qualitative study. Gray (2014) described this voice as reflexivity; the researcher is not an unbiased observer. On the contrary, the investigator becomes part of the interpretation of results. Patton (2002) reminds the inquirer that reflexivity means to be attentive and conscious of political, cultural, social, linguistic, and ideological personal background to put into perspective the voices of the participants interviewed. Qualitative studies utilize a holistic approach, derived from a complex system that cannot be analyzed thoroughly by discrete variables and cause and effect relationships (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Creswell (2013) concluded that a qualitative study is complicated, and exploring an issue or problem using this method requires multiple perspectives and the identification of several factors to obtain an emerging picture of the issue.

Creswell (2013) posited that as a weakness of a qualitative study there are three assumptions that the principal investigator must take into account when utilizing a qualitative method. These three assumptions are that knowledge is obtained through experiences, knowledge exists as to what individuals make of it, and knowledge gets mixed with biases (Creswell, 2013). Another weakness of a qualitative study, according to Merriam (2009), is the

quality of research heavily depends on the skills of the principal investigator and can be easily influenced by personal idiosyncrasies and biases of the person conducting the study.

Methodology

Gray (2014) described phenomenology as a method that aims to understand social reality from the reality of the population being research. A phenomenological study considers the life experiences of a group of individuals and the meaning of its knowledge. The information is categorized into themes to find the universal significance of these experiences for a particular population or group (Creswell, 2013). According to Merriam (2009), the phenomenon being studied has an essence that is shared among all the participants, contains the group culture, and reveals the meaning of their experiences.

Phenomenology is best applied when the focus of the study is to make sense of human experiences of a particular phenomenon and how people perceive, judge, feel, and remember their experience of the issue or problem (Patton, 2002). A phenomenological study focuses, according to Patton (2002), on how people experience what they live and how they described their view. Phenomenology uses individuals as the unit of analysis (Gray, 2014). Interviews are used exclusively in a phenomenology analysis, as these discussions are directly related to the individual (Gray, 2014), the information obtained is clear, and they are the right opinions and perceptions of the persons providing the responses (Creswell, 2013).

Structured process of phenomenology. According to Creswell (2013), phenomenology has two different approaches: hermeneutical phenomenology and transcendental, existential phenomenology. Hermeneutical phenomenology is an interpretative process in which the observer interprets what he is seeing (Creswell, 2013). Patton (2002) posited hermeneutical phenomenology considers the perspective of a human science orientation where the meaning of

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an experience is seen from different points of view. Transcendental, existential phenomenology studies a phenomenon by analyzing data, putting together similar experiences and beliefs in which the investigator set aside biases and beliefs (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002).

Appropriateness of phenomenology methodology. Utilizing a phenomenological approach is the best way to understand the whole human experience, and what those experiences mean through the lens of the particular group studied (Gray, 2014). Patton (2002) noted that the phenomenon studied could be a program, in this case, the CalWORKs program in a community college setting and whether this program has any impact on the success of its CalWORKs students. Transcendental phenomenology is the approach utilized for this study. Creswell (2013) noted that identifying a phenomenon to study, collecting data from several individuals involved in the same event, and analyzing the data while bracketing out the researcher experiences is the best way to do a transcendental phenomenology study.

According to Gray (2014), one of the advantages of using phenomenological research is that it utilizes full descriptions of people's perspectives and personal views in their natural setting, which allows for a deeper understanding of an issue or problem of a particular individual or a few individuals. The observer is a party to what is observed. Some researchers may claim that a weakness of a phenomenological research is that it cannot be replicated and a lot of work gets invested in a small population (Gray, 2014). Another weakness, according to Creswell (2013), is that participants must be carefully selected, as these individual must have experienced the phenomenon being studied, and this can sometimes be difficult.

Research Design

The analysis unit for this study is a first-generation CalWORKs student who has completed three consecutive semesters with an overall grade point average of 2.2 or higher, and

these CalWORKs students will be applying to a four-year institution the fall of 2016. These students are part of the CalWORKs program at Pierce College. From the CalWORKs program population, samples of 15 CalWORKs students were invited to participate in interviews.

Sample size. Patton (2002) stated that there are no rules in qualitative inquiry when it comes to the sample size of qualitative research. Qualitative studies are abundant in ambiguity, which makes the decision challenging as to how many participants the inquirer should interview (Merriam, 2009). The sample size of a research study will greatly depend on how much information the principal investigator wants to gather, how the information obtained will be used, what is at stake, and what level of credibility the information will have, as well as how much information can be gathered based on the available time and resources of the researcher (Patton, 2002). For a qualitative study, in practice, sampling size should not be so small that it creates difficulty achieving data saturation or so large that it makes it difficult to extract rich and full descriptions of an issue (Gray, 2014). Creswell (2013) posits that qualitative studies do not focus on a large example size, but rather the focus is to obtain meaningful data rich on real experiences of the participants. In short, the sample size of qualitative research has minimum importance; the center of a qualitative study has more to do with the richness and depth of the information and the ability of the researcher to provide validity and meaningfulness to the study (Patton, 2002). For the purpose of this study, 15 CalWORKs students were invited to participate. The literature emphasized (Gray, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002) the size of a qualitative study is not the focus of the research. Instead, qualitative studies concentrate on obtaining rich, in-depth information from the people interviewed. The 15 Pierce CalWORKs students have real life expertise on what it takes to become a successful student in the community college, while dealing with many other responsibilities. Based on experts' reviews above, 15 students utilize as

an example size is often recommended as a good threshold for qualitative interviews that study best practices of successful CalWORKs students.

Purposive sampling. For this study, the sample method used was purposive sampling, using a strategy of maximum variation. According to Patton (2002), using a purposive sampling is powerful and logical, as the researcher obtains rich and in-depth information on the central issue of the inquiry instead of just empirical generalizations. The principal investigator used purposive sampling because this allowed her to choose people who could provide relevant information that otherwise may not have been obtained in any other sampling form (Gray, 2014; Merriam, 2009). By using purposive sampling of 15 participants, the investigator will be obtaining maximum saturation and the data results will be rich and depth on information. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants in this study. The participants on this study have at least 2 years of experience in the CalWORKs program. Careful consideration was taken to protect the subjects' rights as required by Pepperdine University and the Institutional Review Board (IRB). For this study, the master list of Pierce CalWORKs students was provided to the inquirer by the dean of student success at Pierce College.

Participant selection. In summary, the following three-step process took place to select the participants in this study: (a) the master list was secured with all pertinent information to reach out to the subjects; (b) access was also granted to obtain inclusion and exclusion criteria for the participants from the dean of student success at Pierce College. Information such as overall GPA, length of time in the CalWORKs program, amount of units accumulated by each student, student's goals (ex, obtaining an AA degree, transfer to a four-year institution, certificate, etc.). The researcher was provided with the access to get the information and; (c) the

maximum criteria variation applied helped to reduce the 366 CalWORKs student population to an initial sample size of 35 students.

Sampling frame to create the master list. Creswell (2013) continues the most important element in a phenomenological study is that all participants have experienced the same phenomenon and can articulate their lived events. Creswell (2013) noted that a phenomenological study the ideal research would be for the participants to be on a single site. For the purpose of this study the participants are located and attend one single site.

Pierce College currently serves 31,160 students; 366 of those students belong to the CalWORKs program. The sample of this study consisted of 15 Pierce CalWORKs students selected by purposive sampling with maximum variation criteria. The source used to obtain a master list of potential participants was requested as follows. An initial meeting between the dean of student success, who oversees the program at Pierce College, and the researcher took place. The purpose of the meeting was for the inquirer to inform the dean of the objective and the research plan for this study and obtain an initial verbal approval. The researcher obtained full consent from the dean of student success and the master list of the names and student e-mail addresses for the 366 CalWORKs students attending Pierce College. Afterward, the principal investigator also requested, through a permission letter, the second approval to interview Pierce CalWORKs students. Approval from the vice president of student services at Pierce College was granted. Appendix F shows a copy of the permission letter sent to members participating in the study.

Criteria for inclusion. The inclusion criteria is to ensure CalWORKs students with more years of experience in the program. Gender, ethnicity, marital status and the number of kids were

not taken into consideration while selecting the participants. The 15 participants for this study selected under the following standards for inclusion:

1. They must be part of the Pierce CalWORKs program for the last year in a half consecutive semesters (counting only fall and spring).

2. Being first-generation college students.

3. Possessed an overall GPA of 2.2 or higher.

4. Intent to apply during fall 2016 for transfer to a four-year institution.

Criteria for exclusion. Some characteristics exclude participants from participating on this study. Individual subjects that initially met the established criteria were disqualified based on:

1. Transferable units' requirements; if they have accumulated less than 45 transferable units, they would not be able to successfully apply to a four-year institution for the Fall 2016 semester.

2. Also, participants that did enroll in three consecutive semesters but did not finish with a passing grade at least half of the units enrolled for any given semester as their grade point average will be lower than 2.0.

3. Lack of interest to participate on the study.

Maximum variation. Utilizing a maximum variation sampling allows the principal investigator to focus on describing central themes (Patton, 2002) essential for the depth understanding of the phenomenon to be a first generation CalWORKs student in a community college setting. The focus of this sampling is to gather and describe repeating themes (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002), the strength of maximum variation sampling is that any repetitive patterns capture the core experiences of the individuals for the phenomenon

being studied. Patton (2002) continued describing two significant kinds of findings yielded from maximum variation sampling in qualitative research: (a) documenting uniqueness of a phenomenon through high-quality, rich descriptions of an issue or problem; and (b) repetitive patterns emerge from across individuals, which constitutes heterogeneity sampling. Gray (2014) added that capturing core values and experiences of participants is of particular interest in determining the central themes of a particular group. Overall, CalWORKs participants were selected, who vary by age, ethnicity and marital status but share the life experiences of being a CalWORKs student at Pierce College. In order to create a maximum variation example, and after running the inclusion and exclusion criteria the following was taken into consideration:

1. Participants will vary in age to capture if the services are beneficial for the whole CalWORKs population.

2. Participants will vary on marital status, to see if the benefits of the program are equally amongst single or married parents.

Human Subject Consideration

Any study that involves contact and research of human populations includes ethical considerations (Gray, 2014). The ethical principles of a research study fall into four main categories. According to Gray (2014), these are: (a) obtain prior consent from the participants is required; (b) the participants must be informed with sufficient and clear information of what the study is about so they can freely decide if they want to participate; (c) avoiding harm to participants in any form is imperative; and (d) the privacy and confidentiality of the participants must be respect, and deception must be avoided.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher will submit an exempt application to the Pepperdine University IRB office (Appendix A) and will start recruiting after approval is

obtained. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. In the event participants elected decided not to continue with the study, assurance of their ability to withdrawn at any time was given. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants' personal information will be protected by using codes with numbers instead of students' names, and the master list with the initial information will be destroyed after approval of the dissertation.

According to Creswell (2013), an investigator must plan ahead for ethical issues that may arise in a qualitative study in any of the phases of the research. Creswell (2014) posited that avoiding ethical issues before conducting the study is a best practice for gaining access and permission from the site and the participants who will take part of the research. Creswell continued, saying that to avoid ethical issues at the beginning of the study, the researcher must disclose to participants as clearly as possible the intent or purpose of the research. While collecting data, avoid deceiving the subjects and collecting damaging information. Whereas analyzing the data, the participants' confidentiality and anonymity must be protected last, while reporting and storing data avoid falsifying information and safeguard the information obtained in a safe, locked place (Creswell, 2014).

The individuals interviewed for this study were all adults who did not belong to an at-risk or protected class. The research study adheres to the policies of protection of human subjects from the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Pepperdine University's protocols of submission for approval to its IRB were followed. After the dissertation committee reviewed and approved the study, a formal request for approval was sent to the Graduate School of Education and Psychology IRB approval board. After its approval, the researcher started contacting the participants to invite them to interview, providing them with a consent form. The subjects were recruited using a script, and they received information about the confidentiality of

their names, examples of the informed consent form, and recruitment script, which are in Appendix D, and Appendix B.

Data Collection

The 15 individuals selected to participate in this study were contacted using the researcher's Pepperdine student e-mail account. The purpose of contacting the individuals using the investigator's student e-mail account was to avoid any misperception of power from the researcher by using her Pierce College e-mail account, which students may perceive as a mandate to participate in the study. With the invitation e-mail message to join the study, the subjects also received the recruitment script already approved by the IRB.

Three days after sending the e-mail message, the inquirer contacted the participants by phone to verify that they received the e-mail message and whether the individuals agreed to participate in a one-hour face-to-face interview. If the participant agreed, the interview was scheduled. The researcher had obtained prior approval from the dean of student success to use the single classroom from the Educational Opportunity Program and Services program to meet privately with each participant to conduct the interviews. The reason the investigator used a room where the individuals attend college was to facilitate the participants traveling and meeting time, as such persons were already pressed for time as a result of the responsibilities they manage as students, parents, and workers. The interviewed questions sent to the individuals who agreed to participate were sent through e-mail a week before their meeting appointment. An e-mail reminder indicated that the interview's duration would be for a maximum of one hour. The individuals were also contacted by phone the day before the scheduled interview to remind them about the meeting's time and location.

The day of the scheduled interview and before the start of the meeting, the participants were provided again with the consent form and a copy of the interview questions. Each participant was also reminded of the allocated time for the interview, and the inquirer assured him or her of the study's confidentiality. Consent to record the interview was also requested and they were reminded that the researcher would also be taking notes. At the end of the meeting, each participant received a $10 Starbucks card.

Interview Techniques

In qualitative research, it is best to create open-ended questions to interview subjects to capture their points of view (Patton, 2002). Qualitative studies have findings that are deep in content and rich in details, which make the responses neither systematic nor standardized, so the researcher will not be allowed to predetermine people's points of view. The principal investigator plays a significant role in the amount, the depth, and how real the information a participant provides on his or her answers. The researcher has the ability to obtain high-quality information from the subject.

There are three different types of structuring and creating interviews, according to Merriam (2009). Those types are: (a) highly structured or standardized, the order and the wording of questions are predetermined; (b) semistructured, questions are flexible, and accurate data are required from all participants; and (c) unstructured or informal, is more like a conversation, the knowledge of the inquirer on the issue is limited. Semi-structured interviews were utilized in this study to obtain data from the participants. Merriam (2009) posited that in a phenomenology study in which the participants see the world in their way, open-ended questions and a semistructured interview format are best to obtain responses generous in depth and detail. The goal of studying the phenomenon is to collect information through the participant's lens. In

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qualitative interviews, a framework is provided for the participants to be able to respond on their terms (Patton, 2002).

Patton (2002) noted that some strength of qualitative research interviews is that those interviews get conducted in a friendly conversation. If there are any gaps in data, these can be expected and closed. The researcher's knowledge and awareness increase as the data becomes regular. Flexibility and phrasing of the questions may sometimes present as a weakness because individuals may answer the questions with different perspectives in mind (Patton, 2002).

Compelling interviews will provide reinforcement and feedback to the subject interviewed, as these create rapport with the inquirer, increasing the possibility of obtaining more in-depth responses (Patton, 2002). Gray (2014) posited that the more comfortable an interview feels the more enthusiasm this person will have to participate in the study and he or she will provide more honest responses. Active listening is a must when analyzing data for qualitative research, such as paying attention to body language, intonation, and emphasis on responses, which will disclose how the individual feels while answering questions (Gray, 2014). Creswell (2013) recommends some steps to follow for an effective interview: (a) before the meeting starts, remind the individual the purpose of the study, ask permission to record the interview, and take notes of things like body language and gestures that will not be noted otherwise; (b) try to maintain visual contact with the individual not to miss body queues, acknowledge the responses, and use transitions in between the questions; (c) ask follow-up questions to clarify any doubt before thanking them for their time them for their time and participation.

Interview Protocol

In a qualitative study, the goal is to understand and view the world through another person's lens. Interviewing these individuals who are part of the phenomenon being studied

allows the principal investigator to find out what is on their minds, and allows the researcher to collect their stories (Patton, 2002). Interviews are the best way to collect and analyze data, as behaviors or feelings cannot be captured through other methods. Information through interviews provides answers to understand how people see the world that surrounds them (Merriam, 2009).

Semistructured interviews do not follow protocol, as the order of the questions depends on the responses of the participants guiding the direction of the conversation. Some responses may need the participant to expand on their answer (Gray, 2014). Patton (2002) posited that semistructured interview strengths are that collection of data can be systematic because of the comprehensiveness of the data and interviews are mostly situational. He continued, noting weaknesses of semistructured interviews as a result of the flexibility of the questions' order, which may perhaps elicit different responses from different perspectives (Patton, 2002).

The relationship between research and interview questions. The eight interview questions for this study were based on the four research questions. The investigator's goal was to capture as much data as possible from the participant's point of view to analyze later how the CalWORKs population defined success in the community college setting. A direct relationship exists between the research questions and interview questions. Each interview question is related to one of the four research questions. Table 5 shows the relationship between the research questions of the study and the corresponding interview questions asked to participants. Only one question was modified, based on the response from the panels of peer-reviewers.

Table 5

Relationship Between Each Research Question and the Corresponding Interview Question

RQ1: What challenges are faced by CalWORKs students in implementing strategies and practices in community college?	1. As a CalWORKs college student, what has been some of the challenges you faced? 2. What kind of strategies you use, as a CalWORKs student to be able to manage successfully school, parenting, work, and program requirements obligations on a semester basis?
RQ2: What strategies and practices are employed by CalWORKs students to succeed in community college?	3. What resources provided by the CalWORKs program are useful to you? 4. What other support or resources, were instrumental to your success?
RQ3: How do CalWORKs students measure success while attending community college?	5. What has being the greatest reward or most positive aspect of belonging to the CalWORKs program? 6. As a CalWORKs student what success means to you?
RQ4: What recommendations would CalWORKs students make for future students in their same situation to succeed in the community college?	7. What advice or recommendations would you give to future CalWORKs students? 8. Knowing what you know now, what would you have done different than when you started?

Note. The table shows the four research questions in a relationship with the interview questions, question 1 was modified as advised by the panel of peer-reviewers.

According to Patton (2002), in a qualitative study, there are six types of questions asked of participants: (a) experience and behaviors, aim to find out the actions, behavior, and experiences of the individual. This study question 1 presented above covers students' experiences and practices as CalWORKs students; (b) opinion and values, the goal is to understand the cognitive and interpretive processes of individuals. In this study, questions 5 and 6 cover students' views and values as CalWORKs students; (c) feeling, aim to analyze individual's emotions. This study question 4 covers students' feelings as CalWORKs students;

(d) knowledge includes factual information. Study questions 2 and 7 cover the knowledge the

individual has about the program; (e) sensory, stimuli experienced by participants. Study

questions 3 and 8 cover students' incentives as CalWORKs students; and (f) background and

demographics, age, gender, occupation, etc. For this study, no questions included the

demographics, as the individuals interviewed had the same demographics because of the nature

of the CalWORKs program in which they participated.

Validity of the study. In a qualitative research analysis, details provide and substantiate

the investigator's conclusions (Merriam, 2009). The inquirer applies specifics procedures to

check the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2014). According to Gray (2014), there are two

processes of validity in a qualitative study: (a) internal validity, consisting of inspecting the

research's procedures, which is done by other researchers. Internal validity is cause and effect

and the correlation of questions and the conclusions that are drawn; (b) external validity consists

of externally generalized data from other cases and situations (Gray, 2014).

This study required a three-step validation process: prima facie validity, peer review

validity, and expert review validity. The following discusses this three-step process.

Prima facie validity. The principal investigator carefully matched the study's research

questions to the interview questions to generate the best responses possible. The construction of

the questions, based on the knowledge acquired through the literature review on the phenomenon

studied, accomplished the prima facie validity. To accomplished facie validity, the instrument

created for the study must at least appear to measure that there is a need for it (Gray, 2014).

Peer review validity. Peer review validity is used to increase the truthfulness of the

account. Another person reviews and asks questions about the study to check if the study echoes

the inquirer's conclusions (Creswell, 2014). In this study, peer review validity was obtained

through the participation of three doctoral students who were part of the EDOL at Pepperdine University. The three doctoral students proposed their dissertation research with similar methodology.

A table of the research questions matching the interview questions was provided to them with a request to revise the questions and let the researcher know if each interview question addressed the corresponding research questions; if the interview questions were to be kept as stated; if the questions were irrelevant and should be deleted; if the questions should be modified, and they were asked to provide a suggestion if such modification was needed it; and if they recommended adding more relevant interview questions. The three doctoral reviewers did their reviews separately and provided the responses directly to the researcher.

The results of the peer-review indicated that question 1 should be revised as follow:

- Original Question 1: What actions or programs have you used-participated in that provide support for you at community college?
- Modified question: What kind of strategies do you use, as a CalWORKs student, to be able to manage successfully school, parenting, work, and program requirement obligations on a semester basis?

Expert review. The final validity step consisted of the review and validation of the questions by the dissertation committee members. The committee requested modification on the order of the questions and also modification of two interview questions. The modifications the committee requested were as follow:

1. Research question 2, was moved to research question number 1 to reflect the challenges faced by CalWORKs students at the community college.

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2. Research question 1, was moved to research question number 2 to reflect the strategies CalWORKs students utilize to be successful students.

3. Interview question 4: How have these challenges impacted your ability to obtain a college degree? Was eliminated, the expert review committee agreed it will create a yes or no answer; no depth can be obtain through that question.

4. Interview question 1 was modify to: As a CalWORKs college student, what has been some of the challenges you faced?

5. Interview question 3 was also modify to: What resources provided by the CalWORKs program are useful to you?

6. A new interview question 4 was added: What other support or resources were instrumental to your success?

7. Interview question 6 was also modify, as follow: As a CalWORK student, what does success means to you?

Research questions and interview questions were modified as advised by the expert review committee (Appendix D).

   Reliability of the study. Merriam (2009) explained reliability as the repetition of a study that yields the same results. She continues that it is nearly impossible to repeat results in the social sciences, as there is no static human behavior. A qualitative study is reliable if the results of new research are found to be consistent with the data collected. Gray (2014) posited that if interviewers received training, the reliability of a study will increase.

   After the inquirer completed the validity process through prima facie, peer review, and expert review, the next step was to conduct a reliability review. The investigator conducted a pilot interview with one individual who met the criteria for participation in the study. At the end

of the interview, the researcher asked the person for feedback about the clarity and wording of the questions. If the individual provided negative feedback, modifications were incorporated before interviewing the rest of the participants.

Statement of Limitations and Personal Bias

Patton (2002) posited that in a qualitative study, the principal investigator becomes the instrument of the study, and it is important the researcher provides information about herself. The inquirer has worked in the field of education for 12 years, working directly with students facing disadvantaged situations. The inquirer is a product of the community college system and has experienced situations similar to those the interview subjects experienced. She is also the director of the CalWORKs program, but has no direct contact with the individual's interviewed, as her role is administrative and there are no daily interactions with the subjects. Furthermore, the researcher is aware of her personal views and that it is important for her to bracket her prior acquired knowledge of the phenomenon being studied.

Epoche. "[Epoche] is a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment" (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). Merriam (2009) described epoche as an internal study of past experiences and viewpoints the investigator has on the phenomenon being studied. This allows the inquirer to become aware of his or her personal prejudices and perspectives as not to allow them to guide the research. Instead, they help the researcher understand the issues and place everything else aside. Setting everything else aside is called bracketing (Merriam, 2009). According to Creswell (2013), for bracketing to work, the investigator must have a fresh perspective on the phenomenon being studied. Bracketing the researcher's prior views will help to obtain a clear, new view of the phenomenon.

Data Analysis

Patton (2002) described data analysis of a qualitative study as "unique" (p. 433). Patton (2002) continued stating that this description, based on the inquirer's human factor, experience, training, and inquiry will guide the style of the analysis. Merriam (2009) posited that data analysis of a qualitative study can extend for a long time if the investigator is not organized. She continued, noting that there are signs the study has gone on too long such as saturation of categories, and more interviews will only bring tiny amounts, if any, of new information. There is a lack of new sources, and there are no more subjects to interview at the study site. There is a lack of time and resources, and the investigator may have specific due dates and deadlines to submit the study (Merriam, 2009).

Qualitative studies required an immense amount of raw data. The researcher, while analyzing the data, should reduce the raw data information, categorizing patterns and creating a framework that only reveals the essence of the data (Patton, 2002). Gray (2014) noted the analysis of qualitative data as the product of meaningful data obtained through a rigorous and logical process. Creswell (2013) described the process of analyzing qualitative data in a spiral analysis following these four steps:

- Organizing the data, transcribing interviews, typing field notes, and arranging data into different types. Merriam (2009) posited the organization of data as a coding procedure, assigning some designation to different data to be able to access it easier later on the study.

- Reading and Memoing to help the investigator's memory. Creswell (2013) suggested writing notes on the side of the field notes about the subject's gestures, attitude, etc., to make it easy to remember those details when transcribing data. Keeping track of

the inquirer observations and speculations about a subject will be handy in the analysis of the data (Merriam, 2009).

- Describing, classifying, and interpreting data will create categories, themes, and detailed descriptions of the raw data (Creswell, 2013). Bracketing chunks of data will help the researcher interpret the data on the same themes (Creswell, 2014).

- Representing and visualizing the data. At this point, the inquirer may create a matrix to compare the categories and topics found in the data (Creswell, 2013). The investigator will begin to make sense of the data collected, and the findings will be analyzed (Merriam, 2009).

Interrater Reliability and Validity. For the researcher to ensure interrater reliability and validity of this study, a three-step process took place:

- The investigator coded the data. Naming and categorizing of the data was done by a close examination of the data (Gray, 2014).

- Two peer-reviewers worked with the inquirer to analyze the coding results. The reviewers agreed with the coding and consensus was obtained, so no findings were incorporated.

- An expert review was pursued by the researcher through the committee members. The committee approved.

Chapter Summary

Qualitative research takes place in a natural setting. The principal investigator collects data from the subjects on the phenomenon being studied, then these data are analyzed inductively and deductively to provide a voice for the individuals who participated in the study (Creswell, 2013). The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the methodological approach and

research design used for the phenomenological study of CalWORKs students in the community

college setting. A full description of how individuals were identified and the steps taken to invite

them to the interview were summarized in detail, as well as how the inquirer obtained validity

and reliability. The findings of the research are given in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Findings

According to Johnson and Sengupta (2009), postsecondary education provides citizens with higher possibilities for social and economic mobility. Johnson and Sengupta (2009) also stated educated citizens foster economic growth. For CalWORKs students in the community college, it is important to obtain the necessary services and support that provide them with the ability to attain higher education so they can become productive members of society and have the capacity to leave poverty behind for them and their children's. Contrary to traditional college students who have the family and economical support needed to succeed in the community college, CalWORKs students lack the family support, and they are the primary providers of their families, which can make attaining higher education a difficult path to take. The purpose of this phenomenology study was to attempt to emphasize best practices that current CalWORKs students followed to succeed in attaining higher education while managing the external demands from school such as parenting and meeting the regulations that the CalWORKs program imposes on them. Four research questions were asked:

- Research Question 1: What challenges are faced by CalWORKs students in implementing strategies and practices in community college?

- Research Question 2: What strategies and practices are employed by CalWORKs students to succeed in community college?

- Research Question 3: How do CalWORKs students measure success while attending community college?

- Research Question 4: What recommendations would CalWORKs students make for future students in their same situation to succeed in the community college?

Furthermore, 15 CalWORKs students were interviewed. The interview consisted of eight questions that the principal investigator crafted and presented to a panel of two interraters and three experts for validation. After their approval, the following eight questions were asked of the participants:

1. As a CalWORKs college student, what has been some of the challenges you faced?

2. What kind of strategies do you use as a CalWORKs student to be able to manage successfully school, parenting, work, and program requirements obligations on a semester basis?

3. What resources provided by the CalWORKs program are useful to you?

4. What other support or resources were instrumental to your success?

5. What has been the greatest reward or most positive aspect of belonging to the CalWORKs program?

6. As a CalWORKs student, what does success means to you?

7. What advice or recommendations would you give to future CalWORKs students?

8. Knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently than when you started?

The participants interviewed provided their personal responses and perceptions on the challenges and strategies they utilize to be successful as their account of what success means to them. The data obtained from the 15 semi structured interviews have been studied and are presented in this chapter. This study made a complete analysis of the responses of the participants to attempt to provide a clear view of what resources, if any, are needed at the community college to provide help and support to CalWORKs students to succeed on their path of attaining higher education.

Participants

The 15 members interviewed were all women who belong to the CalWORKs program at Pierce College. The CalWORKs program at Pierce College served a total of 366 students, 283 of them are females (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016a). All participants were selected via purposive sampling. By choosing them through a purposive sampling method, the investigator assured that all participants were able to relate to the phenomenon being studied. Participants were informed about and promised confidentiality. The interview questions were sent to the participants via e-mail prior the interview date. All the participants applied to transfer to a four-year institution in fall 2017. Four participants (30%) had a 3.3 grade point average, nine of them (60%) had a 3.1 grade point average, and two of them (10%) had a 2.8 grade point average at the time the interviews took place. The higher their grade point average on the scale of 0 to 4, the higher the possibilities these students have to be accepted at the four-year institution (see Figure 8).
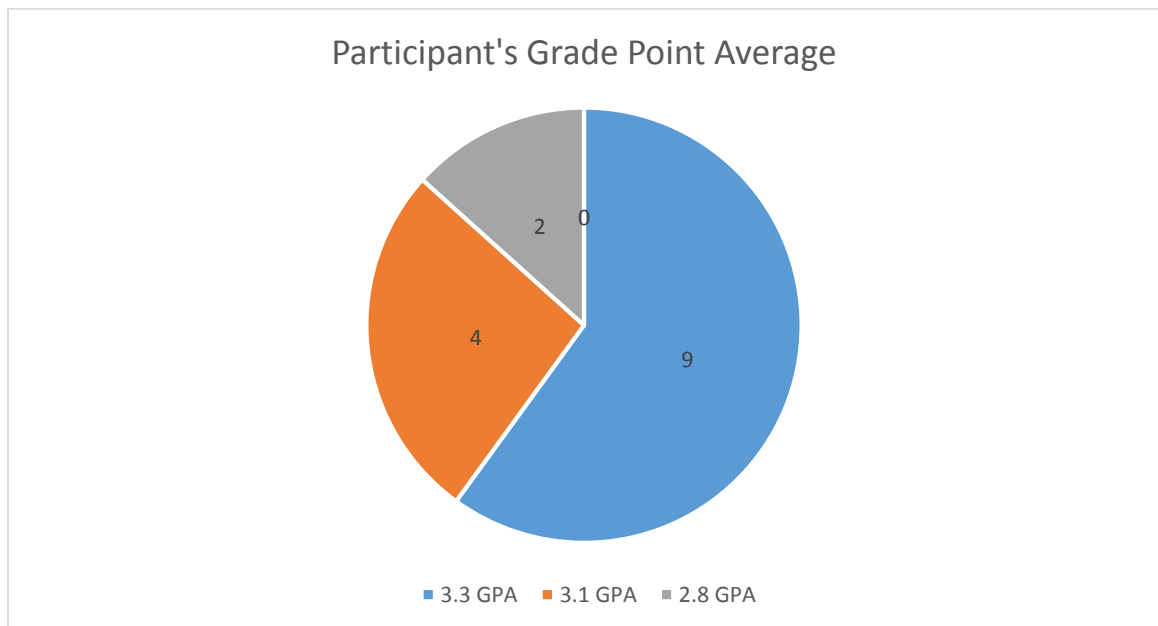
Figure 8. Participants' grade point average. This figure demonstrates the grade point average of the 15 students interviewed. (2017).

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All participants were current students who have completed at least 60 college units. The original 15 subjects identified as meeting the inclusion criteria accepted the invitation to be interviewed. All of them attended their scheduled time to be interviewed.

Data Collection

The inquirer received IRB approval from Pepperdine University on December 20, 2016. An e-mail message to the participants was sent from the researcher's Pepperdine e-mail to invite them to participate in the study, following the approval script from Pepperdine University. Because the college was not in session the last two weeks of December, the investigator didn't receive any responses. The college returned to session the first week of January 2017, and the investigator resent the invitation to the 15 participants; eight of them responded within that first week, five more two weeks' after, and the last two responded at the end of January. A phone call was made after each participant had accepted the invitation to schedule the interviews. Table 6 displays the dates the interviews were scheduled and completed.

Table 6

Schedule of Interviews

Participant	Interview Date
P1	January 9, 2017
P2	January 9, 2017
P3	January 11, 2017
P4	January 13, 2017
P5	January 13, 2017
P6	January 13, 2017

(continued)

Participant	Interview Date
P8	January 19, 2017
P9	January 25, 2017
P10	January 27, 2017
P11	January 30, 2017
P12	January 30, 2017
P13	February 1, 2017
P14	February 13, 2017
P15	February 13, 2017

A day before each participant interview took place, the inquirer called them to remind them of the date, location, and time of the meeting. The 15 interviews took place in a reserved classroom located on the campus, to avoid issues of transportation and lack of time for the participants. On the day of the interview, participants' questions, if any, were answered before the start of the interview. The investigator requested the use of an audio recorder and all of the participants agreed to its use. A time frame of 45 minutes was scheduled for each interview. After each interview concluded, the researcher requested each participant to listen to the audio recorded before he or she left to verify accuracy. Accuracy was checked by the inquirer and the subjects interviewed.

Data Analysis

According to Saldana (2013), qualitative studies require particular attention to language use by the participants as well as deep consideration on the human experience each participant is sharing. Saldana (2013) continued stating that each interview will have similar patterns with one another as all the subjects interviewed are experiencing the same phenomenon. In this study, the

participants are CalWORKs students in community college.

After the 15 interviews were concluded and audio recorded, the investigator transcribed them. After transcribing each interview, the inquirer listened to them once again while reading the transcripts to assure accuracy for the third time. The transcriptions were saved individually, any identifier was removed, and they were stored in the order they were obtained and named P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, and P15.

After transcribing all the interviews, the audio recordings were destroyed to preserve confidentiality. The researcher initiated the coding process by reviewing the transcripts and searching for main themes. A two-step interrater reliability process took place:

1. A basic unit of analysis was formed by identifying distinct concepts and categories obtained from the data. Common themes emerged, and were combined and placed in a bucket by the researcher.

2. Two doctoral candidates with qualitative research experience from Pepperdine University served as interraters to provide validity for this study. The table initially created by the principal investigator was given to the two doctoral candidates for their independent review. After they had reviewed it, suggestions for editing were provided to the investigator, and a consensus was reached among the investigator and the two doctoral students on changes it needed.

Table 7 demonstrates the changes suggested by the two doctoral students; these changes were agreed necessary to provide clarity to the study. Four changes were recommended. Two of those changes were the themes for questions one and three, and the other two changes were to move two items from one bucket to another one, that according to the reviewers made more sense.

Table 7

Interrater Edit Suggestions

Interview Question	Item	Move From	Move To
2	Theme three		The name recommended for theme three was "Self-management."
6	Feel Supporter	Independence	Achieving Goals
6	Independency	Achieving Goals	Independence
7	Theme One		The name recommended for theme one was "Maximize Resources."

Note. The table shows the suggestions provided by the interrater reviewers.

The changes suggested by the two experienced doctoral candidates were made. Each question provided between three to four themes; graphs were created per each theme. By setting up the graphs, the frequency with which themes occurred were more apparent.

Data Display

Four research questions and eight interview questions were organized based on their relationships to each other. Research question 1 was organized with interview questions 1 and 2; themes were categorized individually by each question and graphs were crafted to show frequency of each common theme. The same was done for research question 2, which was paired with interview questions 3 and 4. Research question 3 was paired with interview questions 5 and 6. Finally, research question 4 was paired with interview questions 7 and 8. There are several similarities among themes throughout the different questions, but the researcher made these themes relevant only to the specific question analyzed. Direct quotes from the participants were added to the analysis of the data. The participants mentioned three common factors' experiences directly.

Research question 1. Research question 1 asked: What challenges are faced by CalWORKs students in implementing strategies and practices in community college? To answer

the question, two interview questions were posed.

Interview question 1. As a CalWORKs college student, what has been some of the challenges you faced? Three common themes emerged from this question: parental responsibility, student responsibility, and financial responsibility (See Figure 9).
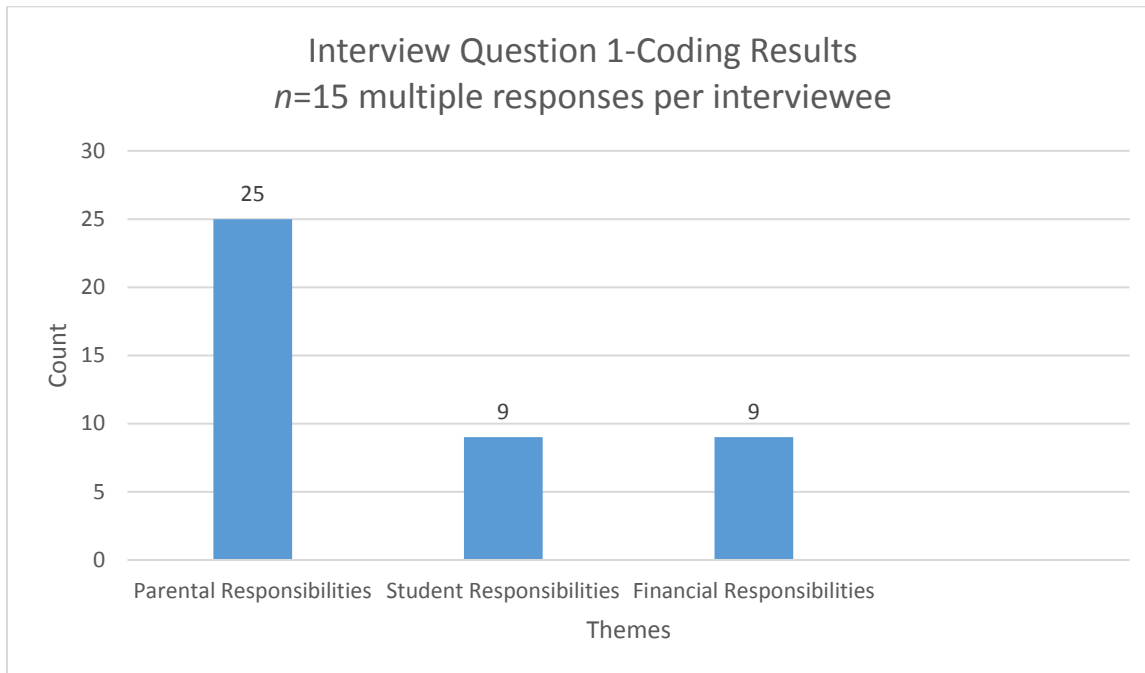
Figure 9. IQ 1: Challenges faced by CalWORKs students. This figure demonstrates the three themes that have emerged from responses answering the stated interview question, presented here in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers below each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Parental responsibilities. This category emerged as the top theme related to interview question 1. Three common factors emerged from this theme. The first factor identified by seven participants was time management. Time management was identified as the biggest challenge CalWORKs students faced because the amount of responsibility they have to juggle every single day. Having the ability to manage successfully their time is tough. P6 indicated, "My biggest challenge is time management, it is hard to be a full-time student, parent and worker at the same time." Seven respondents all stated that not being able to accomplish all the responsibilities they have throughout the day creates a lot of stress for them.

The second common factor that emerged from this theme was keeping up with the requirements. Seven participants agreed that the requirements the state placed on them to be able to receive public assistance are too many and complicated to comply. P4 stated, "Keeping up with appointments is very challenging because between work and school there is no time to attend all the meetings with the Gain worker." P8 noted, "Gain workers are unorganized, they asked to bring certain things, and then they forget, they always need extra paperwork, so you have to make another appointment, and things to be solved can take a week or two."

The third common factor that emerged was being a single parent. Caring for the needs of a child can be a full-time job and for a single parent balancing many responsibilities can be a daunting experience. P6 stated, "I get exhausted by the end of the week trying to manage all my responsibilities, and then I feel bad because I don't get to spend too much time with my kids." Five participants agreed that being a single parent is a challenge they have as CalWORKs students.

Student responsibilities. This category also emerged as a challenge for CalWORKs students. Three common factors were mentioned by the participants. Four of the participants identified study time as a challenge they faced as students. P5 noted, "Keeping up with homework and not always finding enough time to study is a big challenge for me." The second factor on this theme reported by three students is attending school full time. CalWORKs students with children older than six years old are mandated by the program to enroll in 12 units per regular semester, which is the equivalent of attending four classes. P9 indicated, "Attending school full time is difficult as you have to spend almost your whole day at school, and the rest of the day at work. It's very tiresome."

Three participants indicated commuting as a common factor that is challenging for them.

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P3 noted, "[The] everyday commute is hard for me. I have five children, and in the morning I have to drop three of them in one school, two in another one. And then come to school and finding parking here on campus is hard sometimes, then when I leave I have to do it all over again." All the CalWORKs students have children, commute to several schools from home, and this can add an extra hour of responsibilities to the participants.

Finance responsibilities. This category also emerged as a challenge for CalWORKs students. All of them mentioned directly or indirectly that money plays a significant role in their daily life. Four participants mentioned that the lack of money creates extra stress on their lives. P6 stated, "The economic situation is very challenging. I don't have any extra money to do something fun with my kids." Five participants mentioned that they must work to have enough money to pay their rent.

Interview question 2. What kind of strategies do you use, as a CalWORKs student to be able to manage successfully school, parenting, work, and program requirements obligations on a semester basis? Three common themes emerged from this question: organization skills, study skills, and self-management (See Figure 10).
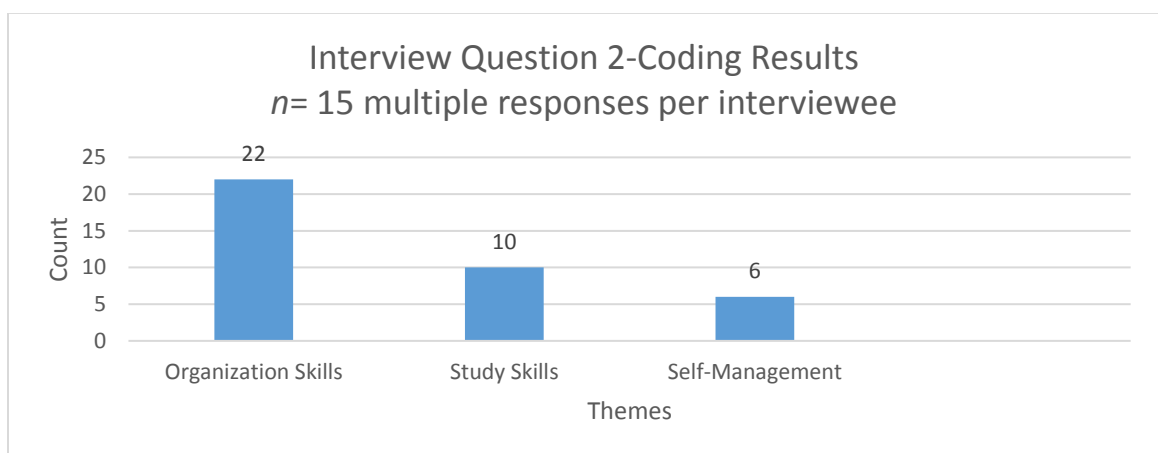
Figure 10. Strategies used by CalWORKs students. This figure demonstrates the three themes that have emerged from responses answering the stated interview question, presented here in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers below each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Organization skills. Organization skills emerged as the stronger theme and participants agreed is one of the best practices they can utilize to be successful. Three common factors were determined to be relevant to this theme. Stick to a schedule had seven participants agreeing that this helps them to manage their time. P1 indicated, "Sticking to my schedule is exhausting, but I get all my responsibilities taken care of." Six participants noted plan out as another common factor to be successful. P5 stated, "I am great on planning ahead; I make sure to get my homework done as well as study for tests while I am at a school that way I have time to spend quality time with my daughter." P9 noted, "Fixing my schedule around my son's schedule is very helpful for me." Participants agreed that planning their semester ahead is a must. Having a daily planner was also a common factor for six of the participants. P1 stated, "I use a daily planner, I write on it anything that I am responsible for; my class schedule, assignments due dates, school holidays for the children and me, kid's sports days and doctor's appointments."

Study skills. The second theme that emerged for interview question 2 was study skills. Three common factors were determined for this theme. Four participants agreed that doing homework is helpful to succeed academically. P12 noted, "When I enroll for classes, I look to combine easy classes with hard classes, doing so helps me to dedicate more time doing homework on the classes that are difficult for me." Participants noted that doing homework helps them study for the test. Attending tutoring was another common factor on this theme. Five participants mentioned that tutoring is helpful especially when they don't fully understand the class topic. P2 stated, "English is my second language, writing essays is hard for me, but the tutor at the Center for Academic Success is very helpful and easy to understand." Three participants mentioned that what works best for them on all their responsibilities is managing their time.

Self-management. Four participants pointed out that the reason they are successful is that they have determination. P10 indicated, "I have a lot of determination to complete my education. I know this is the key to help me obtain a better job and a better life for my kid and me." Two participants agreed that meditation and prayer help them to be able to do well every semester. P7 noted, "I am here today only by God's grace." The last common factor for this theme was support from others. P8 stated, "I feel like giving up sometimes, but the support I received from everyone at the CalWORKs office helps me keep going."

Summary of research question 1. Research question 1 sought to identify the challenges faced by CalWORKs students in community college? A total of two interview questions were used to inform research question 1. The two questions relating to research question 1 are:

1. As a CalWORKs college student, what have been some of the challenges you faced?
2. What kind of strategies do you use as a CalWORKs student to be able to manage successfully school, parenting, work, and program requirement obligations on a semester basis?

A total of six themes were identified by analyzing keywords, common factors, and students' experiences for the two interview questions. The six themes include parental responsibilities, student responsibilities, finances responsibilities, organization skills, study skills and self-management.

Research question 2. Research question 2 asked: What strategies and practices are employed by CalWORKs students to succeed in community college? To answer this question, two interview questions were posed.

Interview question 3. What resources, provided by the CalWORKs program, are useful to you? Three common themes emerged from this question: direct program services, economics,

and indirect services (See Figure 11).
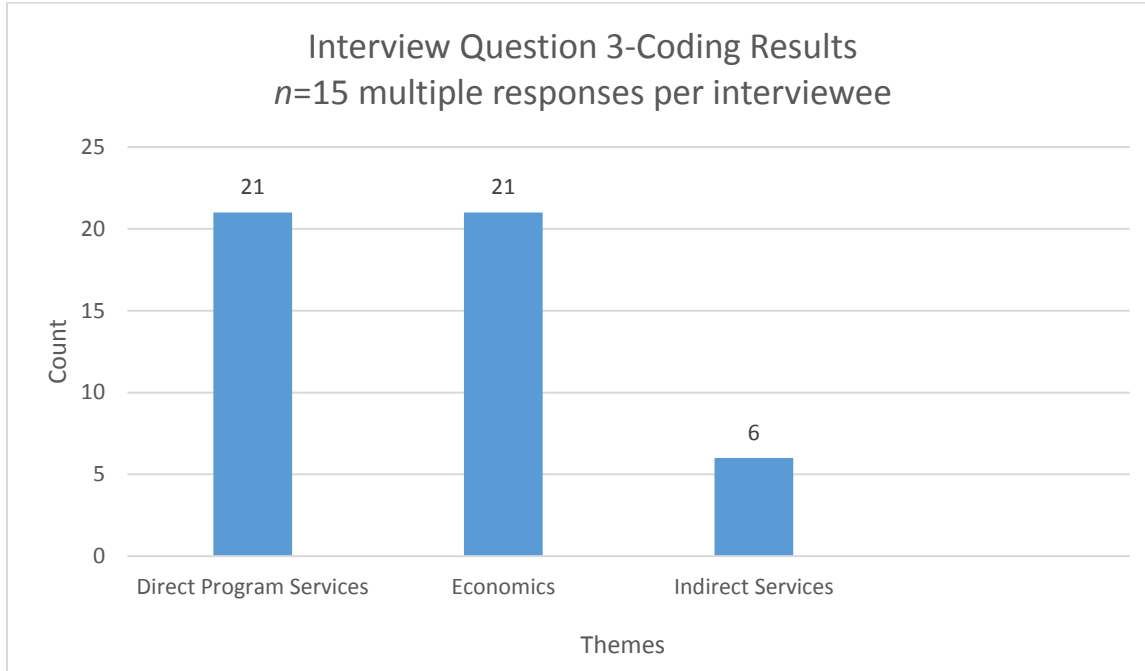
Figure 11. CalWORKs program resources. This figure demonstrates the three themes that have emerged from responses answering the stated interview question, presented here in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers below each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Direct program services. All the respondents mentioned that without direct program support it would be difficult to complete their educations. Three common factors emerged under this theme. Work study program was the biggest common factor, as 10 participants mentioned that because of work study, they have more stability in school and they feel they belong on campus. P1 noted, "I have had so many wonderful opportunities open up to me as a result of being CalWORKs student worker." Counseling was the second common factor identified by the respondents, and six of them agreed that following the counselors' academic advice help them fulfill all the academic requirements on time. P6 stated, "The counselor crafted an educational plan for me, which helped me complete all the classes I need to graduate and transfer at the same time." Child care was the third common factor; four students have their kids attending the child

care on campus. P9 indicated, "Because my son attends the child care here in campus, I have more time to study and I feel good that my son is close to me"

Economics. Money is one of the issues CalWORKs students lack, and it can make them leave school to work full time. Money for books was the biggest common factor for respondents, and 11 of them said that the money the books program provides is what keeps them in school. P13 indicated, "Because I can buy my books even before the semester starts, I can obtain good grades; the struggle others have with no books is real." Eight participants mentioned the financial assistance. P3 stated, "Thanks to the cash I received for rent, I don't have to work full time and go to school; I just need to work part time instead." The last common factor for this theme was transportation; six respondents mentioned that the extra money they received for transportation allowed them to complete all the program requirements. P14 noted, "I was riding the train before because gas is too expensive; now that I received money for gas I can go to class on time and drop and pick up my children's also on time."

Indirect services. Respondents also mentioned that the school supplies the program provides help them save money and time. P14 stated, "It's nice to receive scantrons and blue books every semester. Every time I have tested now I prepare to take it as I keep these supplies in my backpack all the time." The moral support received by the program personnel help us to continue going, respondents 3, 7, 12, and 15 said. P4 stated, "I have come crying to this office, because sometimes the stress is too much but every time I leave I am calmer and ready to continue."

Interview question 4. What other support or resources were instrumental in your success? Four common themes emerged from this question: special programs, special services, workshops, and tutoring (See Figure 12).
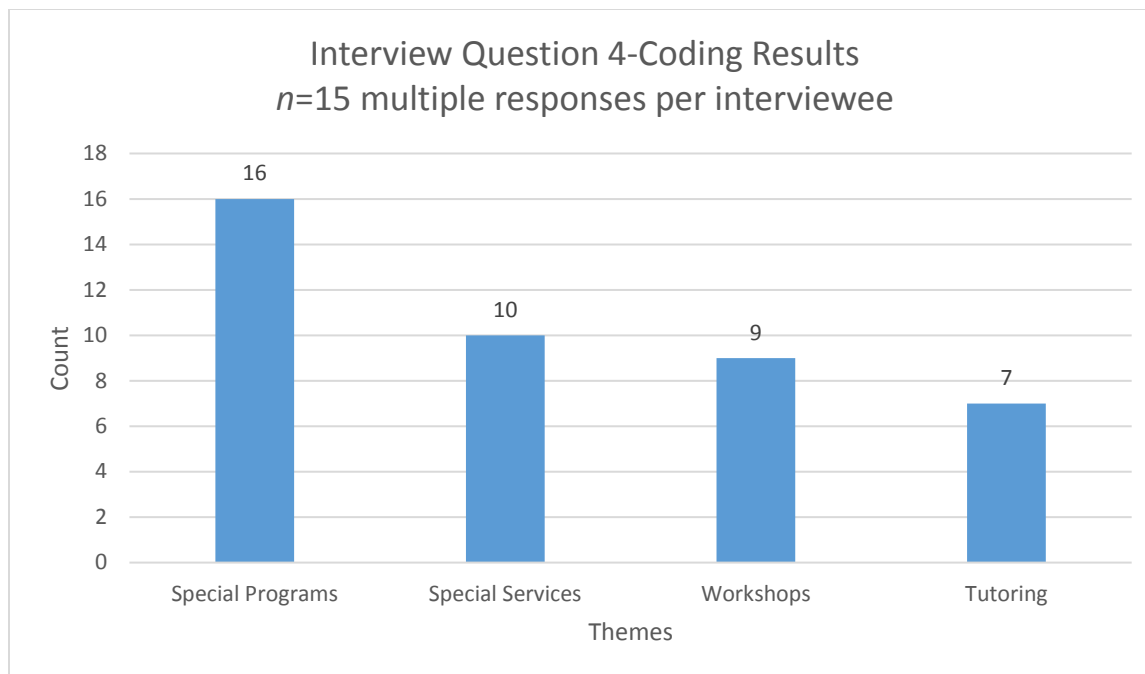
Figure 12. Other resources in campus CalWORKs students' used. This figure demonstrates the four themes that have emerged from responses answering the stated interview question, presented here in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers below each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Special programs. When respondents were asked what other resources they utilize that help them to succeed, they mentioned several other programs the college offers. Five respondents said that receiving financial aid helps them to have some money in case of emergencies, and participants 3 and 7 stated that financial aid money helps them pay for rent. P15 noted, "My car broke down last semester, thanks to financial aid money I was able to repair it without missing the semester." Five participants said that the Educational Opportunity Program and Services helps them buy books the first week of the semester. Six respondents agreed that general counseling had helped them to obtain information needed to transfer to a four-year university. P2 indicated, "A general counsel called Loyola Marymount University for me and I didn't have to pay for the application."

Special services. Two common factors were part of this theme. Seven students mentioned the health center as one of the resources that has helped them to maintain balance in their daily lives. P11 stated, "The psychologist at the health center has assisted me in finding ways to cope with my anxiety; thanks to her I can perform well on my tests." Four respondents have their children attending the child care on campus, and they are happy with the quality of services the center provides. P5 noted, "My daughter loves to sit at the table at dinner time and she also likes to clean up her plate. She has learned this at the center."

Workshops. Workshops also emerged as a theme for question 4. The respondents described three common factors. University application workshops were one of them. Respondents 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 14, and 15 said they had attended this workshops and they were able to complete their university applications. Four respondents have also participated in the university field trips the transfer center offers. P15 indicated, "I never thought I can have attended the University of California, Los Angeles, but thanks to a visit I was part of with the transfer center, I found out that this is one school I can attend in fall 2017. At the moment, I am waiting to see if I was accepted." Two respondents said that the general workshops the counseling center offers have taught them time management and study skills.

Tutoring. Tutoring was the last theme that emerged for interview question 4. Three common factors developed. Computerized lab was the first and four respondents said that the tutoring in the computer lab is useful to pass their classes. P2 noted, "English is my second language; I take advantage of the lab to enrich my vocabulary." Three respondents mentioned the tutoring lab. P13 stated, "The tutoring lab opens at seven in the morning, which allows me to received tutoring before I go to class." The last common factor is faculty tutoring. Faculty members are very involved in student life at Pierce College, and besides their office hours,

several of them provide tutoring hours for students. P3 noted, "My biology professor provides tutoring Saturday morning; because of his help, I passed my class with a B."

Summary of research question 2. Research question 2 sought to identify the strategies and practices employed by CalWORKs students to succeed in community college? A total of two interview questions were used to inform research question 2. The two used in research question 2 are:

3. What resources provided by the CalWORKs program are useful to you?

4. What other support or resources, were instrumental to your success?

A total of seven themes were identified by analyzing keywords, common factors, and students' experiences in the two interview questions. The seven themes include direct program services, economics, indirect services, special programs, special services, workshops, and tutoring.

Research question 3. Research question 3 asked: How do CalWORKs students measure success while attending community college? To answer this question, two interview questions were posed.

Interview question 5. What has been the greatest reward or most positive aspect of belonging to the CalWORKs program? Four common themes emerged from this question: self, academic success, sense of belonging, and career experiences (See Figure 13).
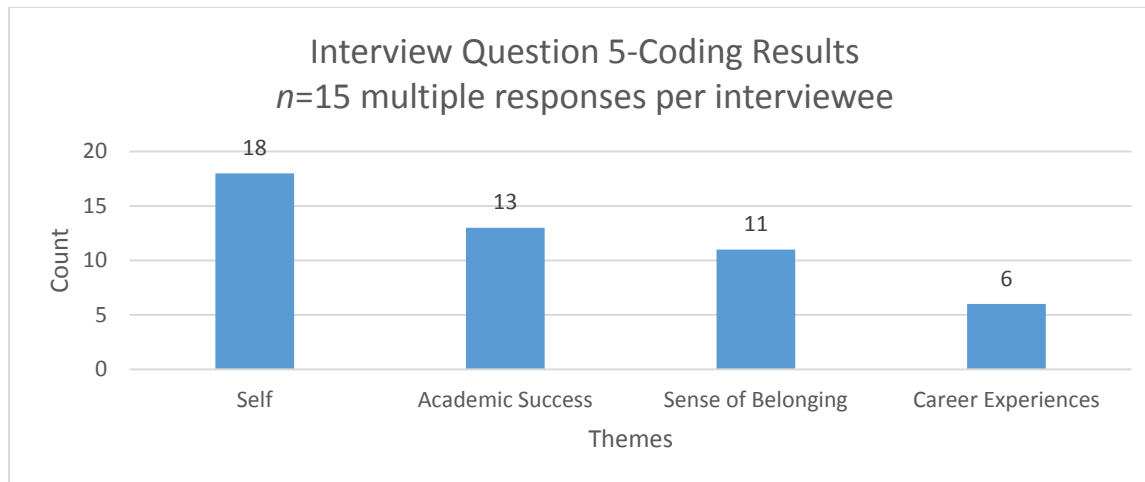
Figure 13. Greatest reward of being a CalWORKs student. This figure demonstrates the four themes that have emerged from responses answering the stated interview question, presented here in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers below each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Self. The most rewarding aspect of being part of the CalWORKs program is the participant's ability to be themselves. Three common factors were developed through this theme. Respondents mentioned self-improvement as the most rewarding aspect of the CalWORKs program. P1 noted, "I believe I was unintelligent and incapable. Being part of the CalWORKs program has shown me just how strong and amazing I am." Six participants defined self-sufficiency as the second most common factor and described this as a positive aspect of the program. Two participants noted personal opportunities as a positive aspect of being a member of the CalWORKs program.

Academic success. Academic success was the second theme that emerged from interview question 5. The participants noted two common factors. Pass classes was essential for nine of the participants. P5 indicated, "Having a 3.3-grade point average while working part time, and being a single mom is one of the most rewarding aspects of being a CalWORKs student." Transferring to a four-year university is rewarding for 13 of the respondents. P7 noted, "Transferring to California State University Northridge is a dream come true."

A sense of belonging. CalWORKs students sometimes are stereotyped as lazy by other colleges' students. Six respondents noted that they are happy to be members of the program because they feel they belong on campus. P8 indicated, "Knowing that I have a home and a family at school through the CalWORKs program is very comforting for me." Five respondents said the most positive aspect to them is the support they receive from the program personnel and other CalWORKs students.

Career experiences. From this theme, two common factors were developed. Work experienced was mentioned by three participants as a positive reward from being part of the program. P11 indicated, "I am planning to apply for a full-time job on campus; I have learned so much about the campus that I know I will be an asset working here." Three participants also mentioned working relationships as a rewarding part of being in the program.

Interview question 6. As a CalWORKs student, what does success means to you? Three common themes emerged from this question: achieving goals, independence, and self-improvement (See Figure 14).
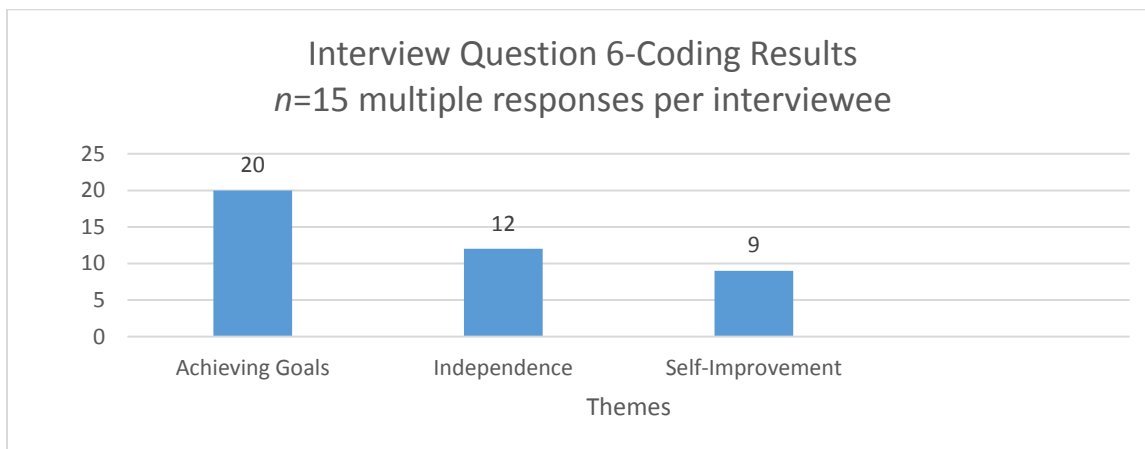
Figure 14. What success means for a CalWORKs student. This figure demonstrates the three themes that have emerged from responses answering the stated interview question, presented here in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers below each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Achieving goals. This theme was the most important for participants when measuring their success. Respondents described four common factors on this topic. Seven participants believe that success comes when you achieve your dreams. P5 noted, "Dreams don't become real overnight; it takes hard work and dedication to achieve them." Accomplishing higher education is a common factor for five of the respondents. Achieve a better lifestyle is a common factor for four of the interviewees. P14 indicated, "I am attending school because I want to provide a better lifestyle for my children, for us to have the ability to go on vacation so my kids can be open minded." The last common factor for achieving goals theme according to four respondents is to feel supporter.

Independence. Independence was the second most important theme for question 6. Respondents 1, 3, 4, 8, 11, and 15 agreed that becoming independent from state benefits will be the biggest success they can accomplish. Another common factor was the ability to take care of themselves. P4 noted, "I can wait to graduate, find a job with benefits, and be able to be completely independent of the county. I will take care of myself."

Self-improvement. This was the last theme that emerged from question 6. Respondents established three common factors. P12 indicated, "Learn what I need to do and speak up for myself, and has been the biggest success for me." Three participants said that becoming stronger for themselves and their kids is a success. Having opportunities to improve their lives also means success for two of the respondents. P13 noted, "I feel satisfied, as I will be moving thanks to the university housing. My daughter will be able to go to a better school. We will live in a better city."

Summary of research question 3. Research question 3 sought to identify how success is measured by CalWORKs students in community college? A total of two interview questions were used to inform research question one. The two questions relating to Research Question 3 are below:

5. What has been the greatest reward or most positive aspect of belonging to the CalWORKs program?

6. As a CalWORKs student, what does success means to you?

A total of seven themes were identified by analyzing keywords, common factors, and students' experiences for the two interview questions. The seven themes include self, academic success, sense of belonging, career experiences, achieving goals, independence, and self-improvement.

Research question 4. Research question 4 asked: What recommendations would CalWORKs students make for future students in their same situation to succeed in the community college? To answer this question, two interview questions were posed:

Interview question 7. What advice or recommendations would you give to future CalWORKs students? Three common themes emerged from this question: maximize resources, stay persistent, and prioritize school (See Figure 15).

Interview Question 7-Coding Results
n=15 multiple responses per interviewee
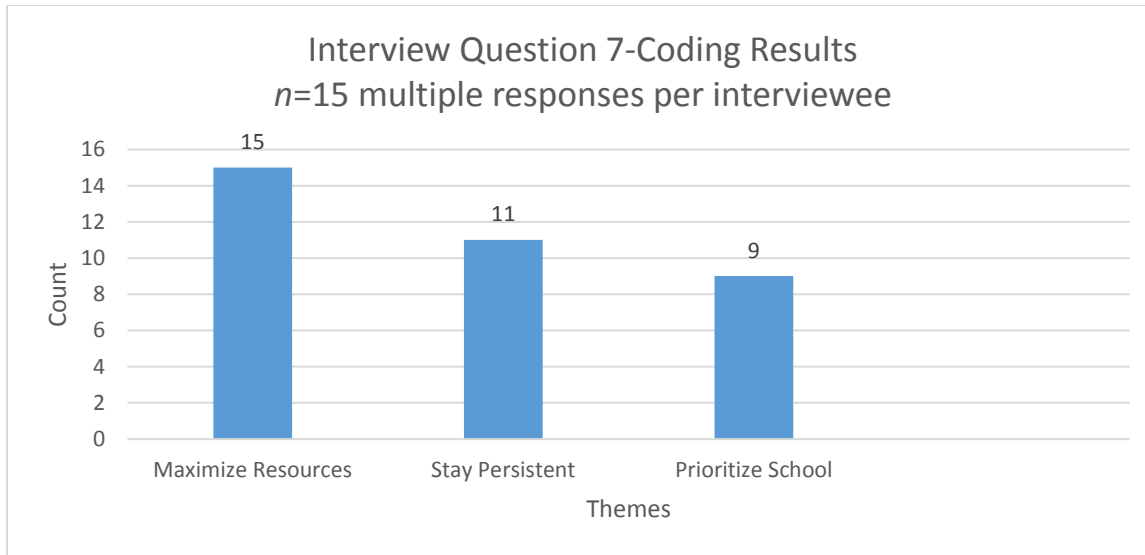
Figure 15. Advice-Recommendations for future CalWORKs students. This figure demonstrates the three themes that have emerged from responses answering the stated interview question, presented here in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers below each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Maximize resources. The theme for obtaining more input from the participants was maximize resources. Three common factors were developed. The participants' major advice to others was to participate in work study. Six respondents provided the same information to other CalWORKs students. Five respondents advised them to take advantage of all the resources. P3 indicated, "All the program resources are here for you, don't waste time and start using from the moment you start the program." Four advised others to do their program requirements paperwork on time.

Stay persistent. Stay persistent was the second theme developed for question 7. Five respondents advised others never to give up. P5 stated, "Never give up; everyone succeeds at a different pace." Three respondents advised new students to work hard for your dreams. P15 indicated, "Being a parent, a student, a worker, is not easy but if you work hard and persist your dreams will come true." The last common factor provided for this question was to take responsibility for your actions; three participants mentioned that it is important.

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Prioritize school. Prioritize school was the last theme that emerged for question 7. Two common factors developed. Seven participants suggested that getting good grades from the start should be a priority for others. P6 noted, "I can finish my degree in two years because I was a serious student from the start. Grades matter to me." Two participants said that maintaining open communication with the professors is helpful. P9 stated, "I plan ahead every semester if I know I have to miss class because I have an important activity with my child. I always let the professor know in advance. They work with you if you are honest and clear from the start."

Interview question 8. Knowing what you know now, what would you have done different than when you started? Three common themes emerged from this question: arrange your life, participate in school activities, and utilize all available resources (See Figure 16).

Interview Question 8-Coding Results
n=15 multiple responses per interviewee
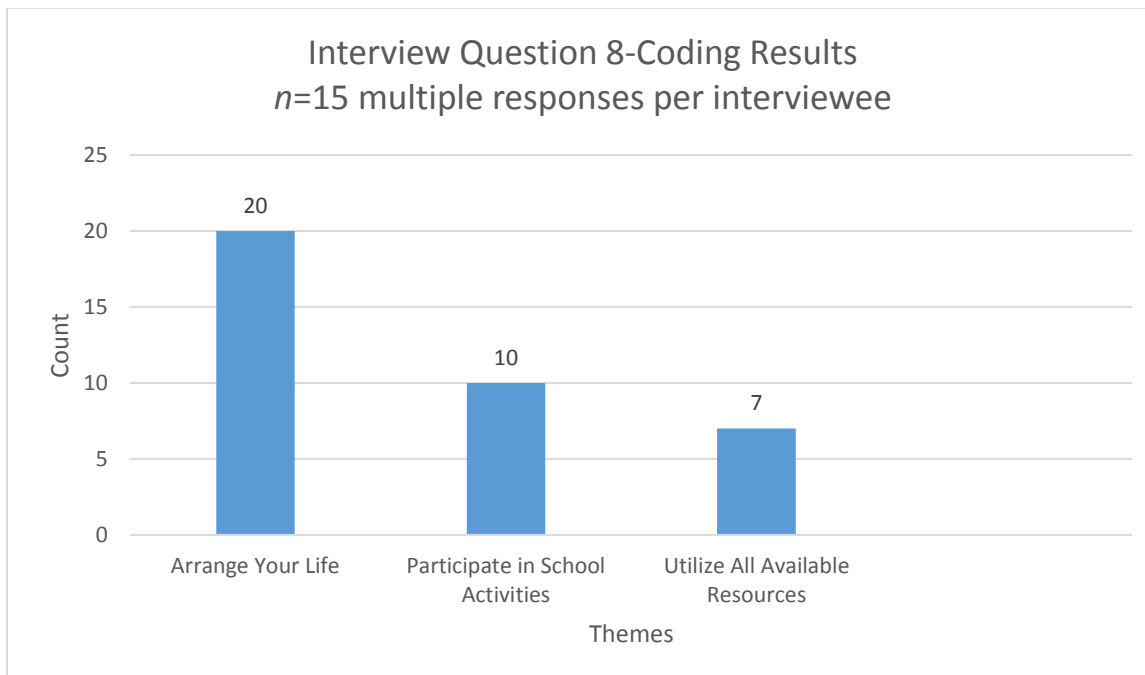
Figure 16. What a CalWORKs student have done differently. This figure demonstrates the three themes that have emerged from responses answering the stated interview question, presented here in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers below each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Arrange your life. This theme garnered the most importance as what CalWORKs students would have done differently than when they started. Three common factors were developed. Thirteen respondents said that they would of start attending school the moment they applied for the CalWORKs program at the county level. Four students said they would go back and take school seriously, and get good grades from the first semester. P8 stated, "My grade point average would be higher if I were to pay more attention and focus my first semester." Three participants mentioned taking care of their mental health is something they would have done when they started attending the campus.

Participate in school activities. The second theme for question 8 was to participate in school activities. Two common factors were crafted. Seven respondents said they would have wanted to participate in work study earlier on. P5 stated, "I wish I would have participated in work study from at least the second semester; being part of it now makes me feel like I belong on this campus." Three respondents said that program activities are beneficial, and participating in those activities is an enrichment for them.

Utilize all available resources. This was the last theme formed for question 8. Three common factors were crafted. Three participants indicated that they would network more with their professors, their classmates, and others on campus. Two participants suggested they would plan better. P1 noted, "Organization is a key to succeeding; you plan from the start, and things will flow." Two respondents indicated that they would not have done anything differently.

Summary of research question 4. Research question 4 sought to identify recommendations these CalWORKs students would like to provide to new CalWORKs students? A total of two interview questions were used to inform research question 4. The two questions relating to research question 4 are:

7. What advice or recommendations would you give to future CalWORKs students?

8. Knowing what you know, what would you have done different than when you started?

A total of six themes were identified by analyzing keywords, common factors, and students' experiences for the two interview questions. The six themes include maximize resources, stay persistent, prioritize school, arrange your life, participate in school activities, and utilize all available resources.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to categorize the best practices that CalWORKs students employ in community college that make them successful. Fifteen Pierce College CalWORKs students were recruited to become interview participants for the study. Eight semi structured questions were asked; all the interview questions were based on the following research questions:

1. What challenges are faced by CalWORKs students in implementing strategies and practices in community college?

2. What strategies and practices are employed by CalWORKs students to succeed in community college?

3. How do CalWORKs students measure success while attending community college?

4. What recommendations would CalWORKs students make for future students in their same situation to succeed in the community college?

Eight semi structured interviews were utilized to collect data for this study. The investigator initiated the coding of the data and obtained validation from two Pepperdine University doctoral candidates who have experience in qualitative research. Data analysis was

accomplished by utilizing a phenomenological approach as explained earlier in chapter 3. The

data analysis on this study generated 26 themes. Table 8 represents the themes extracted from the

interview responses. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of themes, implications, recommendations,

and conclusions of the study.

Table 8

Summary of Themes of the Four Research Questions

RQ1. Challenges for CalWORKs Students	RQ2. Strategies of CalWORKs Students	RQ3. Measurement of Success	RQ4.Recommendations Advices
Parental responsibilities	Direct program services	Self	Maximize resources
Student responsibilities	Economics	Academic success	Stay persistent
Financial responsibilities	Indirect services	Sense of belonging	Prioritize school
Organization skills	Special programs	Career experiences	Arrange your life
Study skills	Special services	Achieving goals	Participate in school activities
Self-management	Workshops	Independence	Utilize all available resources
	Tutoring	Self-Improvement	

Note. This table demonstrates a summary of all the themes derived from the data analysis
process.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

Citizens who obtain either a certificate or an associate's degree from California community colleges have the potential within three years to double their earnings (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016d). A workforce that has obtained a higher education has higher wages, is more productive, is more efficient, and will help to create a stronger economy. The community colleges have an open-door policy that accepts students year-round. Some of these students are considered high-risk; these are students who face barriers and challenges while attending community college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). CalWORKs students are usually labeled high-risk students. These students enter college lacking academic preparation. They come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, enter college facing severe barriers such as a lack of financial resources and a lack of information on how to navigate college, have parenthood responsibilities, lack family support and working obligations, they feel socially marginalized, and college has become an unfit challenge for them (Tinto, 1993). CalWORKs students are a high-risk population because of the difficulties and barriers they encounter while attending community college in comparison to other student populations. The findings of this study attempt to contribute to the literature in the field by categorizing the challenges CalWORKs students face in obtaining a higher education that will lead them to independence and the ability to leave behind poverty. Furthermore, the results of this study also identify the strategies successful CalWORKs students used in community college.

This chapter helps to examine the recommendations and conclusions of the study. A summary of the study is provided in this chapter, as well as a discussion of the findings. Moreover, recommendations for future research are shared, and finals thoughts close the chapter.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the best practices that CalWORKs students employ to make them successful in community college. Guided by the literature review, four research questions and eight open-ended interview questions were developed to generate this study. The study was designed as a qualitative study utilizing a phenomenological approach. The investigator undertook this study with the intent of understanding best practices used by CalWORKs students in community college. As Patton (2002) describes, phenomenology is best applied when the focus of the study is to make sense of human experiences of a particular phenomenon and how people perceive, judge, feel, and remember their experience of the issue or problem.

For this study, CalWORKs students attending Los Angeles Pierce College were invited to participate. The 15 participants invited to participate were selected through a purposive sampling approach with maximum variation sampling. Maximum variation sampling was utilized to try to discover similar patterns in the life experiences of the individuals who are part of the phenomenon. For a maximum variation sample, the following criteria were used: participants will vary in age to capture whether the services are beneficial for the whole CalWORKs population, and participants will vary on marital status to see if the benefits of the program are equally among single or married parents.

To respond to the four research questions, 15 participants who met the criteria for inclusion explained in Chapter 3. The eight semi structured interview questions asked of the participants were created by the researcher and then validated by two interrater experts who were doctoral candidates from Pepperdine University as well as a panel of experts. The 15 interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed to a Microsoft Word document. The investigator

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analyzed and coded the data to find common themes. The two doctoral candidates also served as interraters for the coding of the data; they provided suggestions and edits to the investigator's initial coding. As a result of the interrater review process, edits were made to the original codes as reported in Chapter 4.

Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this study was intended to identify the best practices that CalWORKs students employ to be successful in community college. Results of the study are reviewed throughout the following sections. Additionally, existing literature was compared to the findings of this study to corroborate the results.

Results for research question 1. Research question 1 asked: What challenges are faced by CalWORKs students in implementing strategies and practices in community college? An examination of the responses and themes originated indicate that the most critical challenges and most important strategies students faced in community college are the following six areas:

- Parental responsibilities: CalWORKs students have one or more kids.

- Student responsibilities: CalWORKs students carried full-time status, which is the equivalent of four classes per semester.

- Financial responsibilities: CalWORKs students are, the majority of the time, the sole providers at their household.

- Organization skills because these students juggle several issues at the same time.

- Study skills are necessary for CalWORKs students to be able to pass their classes.

Self-management: participants indicated that taking care of themselves is necessary to be successful in school.

Analysis of research question 1. Based on the six themes that emerged for interview questions 1 and 2, three of the six themes were presented as challenges the participants faced. These challenges are: parental responsibilities CalWORKs students have are the most challenging issues these students have to deal with daily. It is the most challenging, as these students have several full-time daily duties—be parents, be students, work, comply with requirements imposed by the county to receive welfare benefits—all these can be overwhelming for them, especially if they lack support from family and school. GAIN requirements mandated CalWORKs students to work 20 hours a week, and they must also be involved in other allowed activities such training or education the other 12 hours for a complete 32 hours of activities per week (Karoly et al., 2015). Imposing too many activities for them every semester can handicap these students' success. Attending 20 hours of work, 12 hours of school a week can be overwhelming for these students that lack of family support.

According to the literature, welfare parents are required to comply with the activities imposed by the county, which limited the time they spend with their children attending parent-teacher conferences, helping the child with homework, doing activities, and setting high expectations for education. Shiffman (2013) noted that the time limit imposed on welfare parents impacted the quality of parenting they provided. One of the biggest issues the time-limit requirement created for welfare parents was the quality of time and the lack of parenting involvement in the lives of these poor, needy children (Dave et al., 2011). When compliance to requirements took precedence, it resulted in taking the whole family even deeper into poverty.

The participants interviewed stated that time management is a problem for them, choosing between attending their kids' recital at school or studying for a test is a tough decision that sometimes they are required to make. The CalWORKs students interviewed also mentioned,

that the lack of participation in their children daily routines, leaves them with a sense of guilt. As single parents, most of the time they also lack of family support.

The second challenge students reported were their responsibilities as students. CalWORKs students indicated that most of them have to carry a full-time school load, which is the equivalent of four classes. The commuting time to school, study time, and attending four classes on a weekly basis requires a lot of time invested in schooling. Jing and Mayer (1995) described a single-parent student as extraordinary because of all the challenges and barrier he or she faces while juggling school, work, and parenthood. Work for these students is necessary to improve their economic conditions, but the time and energy consumed by work, affects the amount and quality of time available to devote to school and the family. These students still aspire to attain higher education. All they need, according to Jing and Mayer, is a supportive environment and resources to help them succeed.

The requirements of school are sometimes overwhelming for CalWORKs students. As Tinto (1993) noted, CalWORKs students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, enter college facing severe barriers such as a lack of financial resources, lack of information on how to navigate college, have parenthood responsibilities, lack family support and working obligations, they feel socially marginalized, and college has become an unfit challenge for them. All these issues place CalWORKs students as a high-risk population in community college. They have more difficulties and barriers to attending college than any other student population.

The third challenge the participants indicated was their financial responsibilities. Even though they received money from the county as CalWORKs participants, the cost of living surpassed the cash aid they obtain from the county. CalWORKs students look for other sources of income and have part-time jobs to supplement their finances. Working part-time is an added

responsibility for the lives of these participants. P2 stated, "I worked 20 hours in a fast food place. I need the extra cash to pay bills, and sometimes I have to miss class because of the schedule they have to place me for the week interferes with school, what can I do, I need the money."

Based on the six themes that emerged from interview questions 1 and 2, three of the themes were strategies used by CalWORKs students to be successful. Time management is the best strategy CalWORKs student used to be able to succeed in community college. The findings to this question suggest that a successful CalWORKs student can plan ahead and adhere to a schedule to manage all the responsibilities they juggle in a daily basis. According to Dayton (2005), having time to study, completing homework, and working is tough for CalWORKs students and a juggling act. CalWORKs students are aware of the time limitations they have, and managing their time and taking advantage of resources become important tools for their success. Peterson and ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges (2002) indicated that community college flexible schedules of classes allow CalWORKs students to balance their obligations better by fitting their class hours between work and child rearing responsibilities.

The second strategy participants indicated was part of their success was the utilization of learning tools. Participants referred to learning tools as having strong study skills, the use of tutoring, if necessary, and the ability to arrange the time for their education outside the class hours. Tinto and Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education (2004) stated that students learn easily if they can make links between what they learn academically through curriculum and how learning influences or interacts with their everyday lives.

The third strategy CalWORKs students used to be successful was self-management. P11 indicated, "I am a very strong woman, but I have my moments of crisis. I attend mental therapy

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twice a month, as that helps me keep my balance." CalWORKs students deal with a lot of stress on a daily basis; 13 of the 15 participants interviewed indicated they had suffered some mental abuse either through lack of self-esteem or domestic violence, among other issues. Being aware of this and receiving help is a strategy that helps them be successful on their road to obtaining higher education.

Results for research question 2. Research question 2 asked: What strategies and practices are employed by CalWORKs students to succeed in community college? An examination of the responses and themes originated indicate that the most important resources CalWORKs students in community college use to be successful are the following seven areas:

- Direct program services are extra services provided by the CalWORKs program at Pierce College.

- Economics: income that helps CalWORKs students to maintain the finances of their household.

- Indirect services: extra services CalWORKs students received that have no monetary value but are a resource for their success.

- Special programs: other programs located at Pierce College that offer support to the student population.

- Special services: programs or services provided by Pierce College for specific populations such as CalWORKs students.

- Workshops: mostly academic support for all students on campus.

- Tutoring is a service provided to all Pierce students in several ways.

Analysis of research question 2. Based on the seven themes that emerged for interview questions 3 and 4, three of the seven themes were resources within the CalWORKs Pierce

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program that students use to be successful. Direct program services are the resources most utilize by the students. Work-study is a resource offered by the CalWORKs program that nine of the 15 interviewees used as a source to earn money for the households. Work-study increases the engagement of students in community college (Jenkins et al., 1998). Under the direct program services themes, participants also noted childcare as the resource they take advantage of in community college. Because all CalWORKs students are parents, having the ability to obtain subsidized childcare is beneficial for them. Mathur et al. (2004) posited that if community colleges can provide childcare on their campuses or provide vouchers for state centers that have flexible hours such as the weekends and evenings, those accommodations help students to handle school and parenting.

Money was the second resource relevant to the interviewees. P7 stated, "Obtaining money for my books is essential. I can't afford to buy books otherwise; books are too expensive." The county of Los Angeles, in partnership with the Pierce College CalWORKs program, provides students with books, school supplies, uniforms, and all the necessary tools to allow the CalWORKs participants to complete their academic endeavors. Community college campuses provide childcare for students who have children to utilize and to save time and money on transportation (Kates & Smith College, 1993).

Indirect support as moral encouragement and priority registration were also two program resources the participants employed to be successful students. P5 noted, "I am thankful for the staff on this program; everyone is very helpful and friendly. I feel welcome and care every time I come to the CalWORKs office." Hendrick (1980) noted that California's educational institutions have tremendously influenced the growth of children and young adults and their moral and social values, as well imparting knowledge and vocational skills to them. CalWORKs students are in

need of emotional support.

It is vital that the people in community college and welfare office provide support to them and don't send these students chasing resources that are available in the CalWORKs offices. According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), one of the biggest obstacles CalWORKs students face is their lack of social capital, which influences how they interact or engage in a relationship with faculty and their peers, as well as the expectations they may have from their education. CalWORKs students tend not to ask for help and tend to give up on education easily if they do not find help in the CalWORKs and GAIN offices. CalWORKs students are allowed to register for classes two weeks prior to the general population of students every semester. By doing so, CalWORKs students can enroll in the classes they need in accordance with their hectic schedules of child care and work.

Based on the seven themes that emerged from interview questions 3 and 4, four of the themes were on the other support resources CalWORKs students use to be successful. They are the special programs offered to all Pierce students. The 15 CalWORKs students interviewed used some or all the extra services provided to them to attain higher education. The Educational Opportunity Program and Services is one of the program resources CalWORKs students employed to their advantage. Students enrolled in the program obtain priority registration, counseling, mentoring, tutoring, educational workshops, and financial aid (California Community College, 2016).

A second campus resource used by CalWORKs students is the Health Center. Alfonso et al. (2005) noted that problems such as family issues, work problems, and sometimes-mental issues could interfere with the academic progress of CalWORKs students. Meeting with a therapist on campus provided several benefits to students, as a therapist help them to cope with

stress, and the services are free, confidential, and conveniently located on the campus. P1 noted, "I am a recovering alcoholic; attending therapy is one of the resources I used to cope with my issues now instead of drinking."

The third resource CalWORKs student's use that is instrumental to their success is workshops offered by several entities on campus. P8 noted, "Thanks to the workshops provided by the honors program, I learned that I was able to apply for guaranteed acceptance to the University of California system. I have already been accepted to one of their schools." Higher education serves as a tool to leave poverty behind (Pew Research Center, 2014). The fourth resource employed by CalWORKs students to be successful is tutoring. Martinson et al. (2003) indicated that several studies on welfare populations determined that 45% of these residents suffer from learning disabilities and or cognitive impairments. Attending tutoring reinforced academic challenges students may have.

Results for research question 3. Research question 3 asked: How do CalWORKs students measure success while attending community college? An examination of the responses and themes originated indicate that the positive rewards and measurement of success CalWORKs students accomplished in community college are the following seven areas:

- Self: being able to improve themselves is a positive aspect for CalWORKs students.
- Academic success: having the academic ability provides self-assurance to CalWORKs students.
- Sense of belonging: being part of a group is rewarding for CalWORKs students.
- Career experience: obtaining experience that will serve them outside of school is a positive aspect of belonging to the program.
- Achieving goals: the capability to achieve is rewarding.

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- Independence: attaining independence are what success means to CalWORKs students.

- Self-improvement and the ability to be independent indicate success for CalWORKs participants.

Analysis of research question 3. Based on the seven themes that emerged for interview questions 5 and 6, four of the seven themes were presented as a rewarding or positive aspect of belonging to the CalWORKs program. These themes are self-improvement and personal opportunities. The participants indicated that one of the most positive aspects of being part of the CalWORKs program is their self-improvement. Self-sufficiency is when an individual can maintain a minimal degree of independence and financial security (Tinto & Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2004).

The second theme CalWORKs students see as a rewarding part of the CalWORKs program is academic success. P15 stated, "When I started this program, I thought I was not capable of passing a class; now not only will I be graduating, but I am transferring to a four-year university." Person et al. (2008) CalWORKs policy research study concluded that Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients who attend community colleges are better prepared to secure higher paying jobs after graduating from one of these institutions, even if the student entered without a high school diploma.

The third theme indicated by the CalWORKs student participants as a positive aspect was their sense of belonging. CalWORKs students are nontraditional students who come from a socioeconomically disadvantaged environment and are the first in their families to pursue higher education (Engle et al., 2008). Their chance of remaining in a community college after the first year is low. CalWORKs students have a place on campus. The CalWORKs office at Pierce

provides them with a home, so these students feel welcome in community college despite any differences between them and the general student population. The fourth theme recognized as a positive reward was the career experience they obtain through their education and by working in campus offices.

Based on the seven themes that emerged from interview questions 5 and 6, three of the themes were on how CalWORKs students saw success. Achieving goals was the theme that participants directly or indirectly choose as representing what success meant to them. Participants indicated that they have small goals every semester they attended; passing classes with good grades was a goal achieved every term. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) claimed that grades are a reflection of students' motivation and willingness to succeed in community colleges, combined with how they feel they fit on their campuses.

The second theme of what success means to CalWORKs students was to become independent. CalWORKs students know that through attaining higher education, they will be able to find jobs that will help them support themselves and their children. The goal of the CalWORKs program is to give upward mobility to families and to be independent of state or federal support (California Department of Social Services Welfare to Work Division, 2016; Office of Family Assistance, 2016). The third theme of success was self-improvement; nine of the 15 interviewees expressed that being able to speak for themselves has been one of the most successful goals they have being able to reach.

Results for research question 4. Research question 4 asked: What recommendations will CalWORKs students make for future students in their same situation to succeed in the community college? An examination of the responses and themes indicate that the current CalWORKs students are willing to provide recommendations to others in their same position,

who are starting the journey. They also reported that there are things they would have done differently than when they started. These themes are the following six areas:

- Maximize resources will be a recommendation from current CalWORKs students to new students in their same situation.

- Stay persistent is advice provided by the CalWORKs participants to others.

- Prioritize school: schooling will allow participants to improve their economic situation.

- Take care of self, arrange-deal with any issue that may get in their way of completing their education.

- Participate in school activities: participation in school is a step toward completion.

- Utilize all available resources: program and campus resources exist to provide help to students.

Analysis of research question 4. Based on the six themes that emerged for interview questions 7 and 8, three of the six themes were presented as advice or recommendations current CalWORKs students would provide to new CalWORKs students. The advice was to maximize resources. The CalWORKs program and the college campus have several resources that students can utilize to their benefit. Petty (2014) posited that community colleges had increased their resources in financial aid to help students who only attend part-time, and these institutions offer a more diverse schedule of classes throughout the day and especially at night for students who work full-time.

The second piece of advice the interviewees offered to new CalWORKs student was to stay persistent. P3 stated, "It is important for every participant to understand that they may fail several times, but as long as they don't give up; everyone is going to be ok." The last

recommendation the participants provided to others was to prioritize school. All the help they receive from the county, the CalWORKs program, and the school is based on their academic performance. Obtaining good grades is a must to stay eligible and to continue advancing in their education.

Based on the six themes that emerged from interview questions 7 and 8, three of the themes were on what CalWORKs students would have done differently if they were able to start again. Participants indicated that they would start taking care of their mental and physical health from the outset, as not doing so can stop their progress as a result of sickness or accumulation of stress. Some CalWORKs participants who suffer from drug addiction most likely have suffered domestic violence. Increased services with specific treatments for these members can be beneficial for them to obtain academic success (Aroner, & Maxwell-Jolly, 2001).

The interviewees also expressed that new CalWORKs students should participate in school activities. The possibilities of retaining and graduating for CalWORKs students increase if these students feel they belong to their campus community. CalWORKs students reported a high level of commitment and satisfaction if they feel their interactions with members of the school do not go unnoticed (Peterson & ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, 2002). The last thing they would have done differently was to utilize all resources available to them from the moment they started the program. Alfonso et al. (2005) indicated that student engagement in campus activities, participation in school clubs, and the creation of a network with other students would improve student retention; college persistence is a positive influence by social integration.

Implications of the Study

The study's intent was to understand the challenges CalWORKs community college students face and recognize the strategies they use to be successful, which will lead to community colleges and the county CalWORKs departments increasing and improving the services provided to this student population. Bland and Lieberman (1997) posited that by providing and allowing the welfare recipients to receive primary education, these students learn the elementary academic curriculum necessary to obtaining a degree that can lead them to job retention and out of poverty.

The findings on this phenomenology study improve the understanding of the CalWORKs students' needs in a community college. Merriam (2009) noted that a phenomenology study has an essence that is shared among all participants, contains the group culture, and reveals the meaning of their experiences. As the literature in this study has established, CalWORKs programs in community college provide several tools to help these students the ability to balance work, parenting and school to be successful.

Welfare reform. CalWORKs students in the California community college have an array of difficulties unique to their circumstances and these jeopardize the completion of their higher education, which impairs their ability to acquire self-sufficiency. The majority of participants are single mothers attending school, trying to improve their employability, and hoping for higher salary job to end dependence on the welfare system. These students must balance a challenging load of responsibilities: working, caring for their families, and carrying a full load of classes while doing so under very strict time limits. Providing access to educational opportunities for girls and women is the true key to welfare reform, to break the cycle of poverty and promote self-sufficiency (Karpilow & Reed, 2010).

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Benefits for society. As society continues advancing technologically and economically, it is vital that we as a society continue increasing education attainment of our citizens. CalWORKs students are already at a disadvantaged compared with general student populations Educational institutions should continue to provide and improve services for disadvantaged populations such as CalWORKs students. The findings of this study can be use by CalWORKs programs in community colleges to increase, extend, or change the services they provide to CalWORKs students. The results should be taken into consideration at the county level, to continue and improve the practice of allowing welfare recipients to attend and complete higher education, as the attaining of it will help the participants and their families to become self-sufficient and leave poverty.

Benefits of the study for CalWORKs directors. The findings in this study can be extremely beneficial for CalWORKs program directors in the community college in California. By understanding what are the challenges CalWORKs students faced in a daily basis while enroll in college, these directors can make the necessary changes on their programs to facilitate the success of these students. Furthermore, these professionals will have a better understanding of what success means to their students and their families, and how CalWORKs programs in the community college are a key to help students acquire self-sufficiency. These CalWORKs directors have also the ability to initiate change at the county level in which their campuses operate, as their work closely with their county partners. Attaining higher education offers the potential for CalWORKs students to obtain jobs that generate higher earnings, doing so these students and their families will be able to escape the poverty cycle; which benefit the students and society as a whole.

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Self-sufficiency. Through this study, the topic of self-sufficiency was one of the most talked about it, throughout the literature review and among the participants who were interviewed for the study. CalWORKs students in community college are trying to improve their life and their kids' lives. These students are convinced that through the attainment of higher education, their opportunities to obtain a full-time job with benefits increase. According to Jing and Mayer (1995) for CalWORKs students to be successful, all they need is a supportive environment and resources for them and their kids. Society will also benefit, as these current recipients of welfare become self-sufficient through education, they in the future, will become productive taxpayers who will enhance the economy of the cities and countries in which they live. They will have the ability to raise their kids out of poverty and increase possibilities for those kids to attain higher education.

Increase funding for CalWORKs students in community colleges. CalWORKs students in community college are productive members of society. Providing them with the ability to work on community college campuses not only allowed them to earn extra cash for their needs, but also provided them with working experience. By the time these students complete their education in community college, they will be prepared academically and will have the necessary skills to work in jobs beyond the entry level. Work-study programs that concentrate on building workplace skills increase the ability of the participant to have a higher rate of job retention (Peterson & ERIC Clearinghouse for Community College, 2002).

Improve policies and regulations at the county and state level. California needs to improve the policies the counties have for providing resources to welfare recipients, especially those who are attending an educational institution. The time limits imposed by the state are not realistic for allowing CalWORKs students to fulfill their degrees. The time limits do exactly that;

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they limit the opportunities CalWORKs students may have to leave poverty behind through education. Imposing time limits on welfare beneficiaries, who have low education and lack skills, does great harm to poor and vulnerable families (Farrell et al., 2008). Flexibility in the county requirements is also needed. The people in charge of creating these policies and limitations should take into consideration the real-life experiences these students had when they applied new rules and regulations for CalWORKs students.

Policy changes at community college level. According to Tinto and Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education (2004) academic support is critical especially for CalWORKs students that enter college with little academic skills. The Chancellor's office in the state of California is doing a great job providing support to disadvantaged student populations in community colleges, but it is still not enough. More resources must be created it to help these students. The more resources CalWORKs students have, the more possibilities they have to be successful on college campuses and later on in society. Productive members of society increase the economy in the cities where they live.

Programmatic changes at Pierce CalWORKs program. CalWORKs students need the help of someone at the college to access some of the available county services and supports. CalWORKs college staff advocate on student's behalf, help them to submit the necessary paperwork to have their cases revised, if necessary at the county level. According to Dozier (2013), academic, personal, career, and employment-related assistance provided by program staff helped many students persist in school, particular during time of crisis or doubt. Because the CalWORKs student population is increase, the program will soon find the need to hire more personal to help the students in a daily basis.

Study Conclusion

The investigator began this study with the desire to add to the existing body of literature on CalWORKs students in community colleges by seeking successful CalWORKs students and recognizing the best practices they utilized to make them successful while juggling parental, economic, and student responsibilities. To achieve this mission, the researcher interviewed 15 CalWORKs students from Pierce College, utilizing eight open-ended questions that were derived from the four research questions that initiated the study. By doing so, the researcher learned firsthand the experiences these participants encounter in their daily lives. As a result, the researcher was able to identify the following five key findings:

1. The biggest challenge CalWORKs students face in community college is their parental responsibilities. Being a single parent with no family support can be overwhelming.

2. The best strategy CalWORKs students in community college use to succeed are time management. Learning and using organization skills help them along the path of attaining higher education.

3. Program services are the light at the end of the tunnel for CalWORKs students; relying on those resources helps them to continue their education.

4. Other support services provided by the college campuses enhance the ability of these students to finish their studies.

5. CalWORKs students are resilient individuals who, when provided with the right tools, can and will become productive members of society.

The principal investigator summarized on Table 9 the necessary training and information that should be available for all CalWORKs students, to understand the college, state and program process; to attain success from the moment they start their education.

Table 9

Training and Information for CalWORKs Students.

Outreach/Recruitment	Colleges should initiated outreach at the Gain offices, and provide informational fliers to other programs in campus
Orientation	Offer twice a week orientation to new CalWORKs students, to inform them of all the services, resources and benefits the program offers
Personal Counseling	Offer hourly appointments at least two days a week for students
Academic Counseling	Offer hourly appointments and drop-in appointments, five days a week
Transportation Assistance	Assist students in accessing funds from the county and provide emergency bus passes from the program
Books and Supplies	Help students to access funding from the county, the CalWORKs program, financial aid and EOPs, if necessary
Childcare	Help students with referrals on and off campus, as well as provided vouchers so students can arrange their own childcare
Work-Study	Provide students with employment counseling, placement assistance and work study opportunities

Recommendations for Future Research

The goal of this study was to reveal and contribute the best practices CalWORKs students utilize in community college. The existing body of research is extensive, and yet there are still opportunities available to increase future research on this topic. Future investigators can contribute to the body of the literature by conducting studies that focus on the following:

1. Do a similar study, but consider including a second CalWORKs program within the community colleges. The reason to include a second program in another college is due to the fact that this study assumed all CalWORKs student have a unique set of needs and, perhaps the needs of this population may change based on the area they

lived. Every community college in California has a CalWORKs program operating on its campus; and each campus administrator have the ability to decide what services they can provide (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2016d).

2. Expand the population to include more male CalWORKs parents to see whether their parenting struggles are similar to women CalWORKs students. Most of the current literature on this topic is based on women in CalWORKs, but a small percentage of single males do exist. According to the California Community College Chancellors Office (2016d), the male population that received CalWORKs benefits in 2016 was 18,271 students.

3. Conduct a similar study, but examine the setting from a quantitative perspective. By doing so the investigator may have the ability to have a bigger group of students that may provide more in depth information of what are the challenges of CalWORKs students in a community college. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative survey research provides a numeric description of tendencies, thoughts, or views of a population by studying a sample of that population.

4. Focus on new CalWORKs students to see how much information they have to be successful through the program. This study demonstrated that lack of information at the entrance of the program could affect the time students have to complete their education. The philosophy of a work-first approach states follows, influence state eligibility workers to guide the participants to job activities only (Dozier, 2013).

5. Concentrate on addressing the same population but focusing only on county services. County services can sometimes be unrealistic to complete on the time frame they provide to the students. Social services organizations argued that

imposing time limits on welfare beneficiaries who have low education and lack skills

added other challenges and barriers unique to this population, would do great harm to

poor and already vulnerable families (Farrell et al., 2008).

6. Consider a study that focuses on determining whether different best practices exist
   among CalWORKs students of different counties jurisdictions. Because counties have
   the power to create their own regulations, students on other counties may have
   different best practices to be successful on their education. The eligibility
   requirements are the same throughout the state, but the Welfare to Work requirements
   may vary accordingly to the county where the recipient lives (California Community
   College, 2015).

Final Thoughts

This study was of particular interest for the investigator. As a CalWORKs director on a

community college campus, she has seen firsthand the tremendous potential CalWORKs students

have to be successful only if the right tools are provided to them, and despite all the challenges

they may face. Witnessing the resilience these students have to provide a better future for their

children has being a breathtaking experience. These students' success is to be celebrated.

Furthermore, as a first-generation college student and single mother, the researcher

understand the value education has to provide individuals the tools to become self-sufficient. Her

experiences as a community college student, provided the principal investigator with a deep

understanding of the challenges and most important the strategies CalWORKs students utilize to

be successfully as parents and also academically.

This study should encourage CalWORKs programs to continue working to improve the

lives of the CalWORKs students they serve, with the firm conviction that they are helping to

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raise the parents of the future of our nation. They are helping a family to leave poverty behind and breaking the cycle of living in poverty. Education is the key to a better future for these families. Thanks to a community college the researcher life has being enhanced, and her children are no longer living on a cycle of poverty. The valuable experiences gained at a community college helped the researcher towards academic and life success.

Thank you to all interview participants who took part in this study and contributed to making it a success. The honest, candid, and invaluable information of all the CalWORKs students interviewed will contribute to the literature review of CalWORKs students in community college for years to come. The results of this research study create a foundation for more investigation. CalWORKs students and their families play a significant role in the future of our nation, and through education, these families future improves.

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APPRENDIX A

IRB Approval Notice

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: December 22, 2016

Protocol Investigator Name: Claudia Velasco

Protocol #: 16-09-398

Project Title: CalWORKs STUDENTS AND THEIR BEST PRACTICES, HOW THEY SUCCEED IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE School:

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Claudia Velasco:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

APPENDIX B

Interview Recruitment Phone Script

Good morning/afternoon <Potential participant Name>,

My name is Claudia Velasco and I am a doctoral candidate at the Graduate School of Education

and Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am currently working on my dissertation entitled

CalWORKs STUDENTS AND THEIR BEST PRACTICES, HOW THEY SUCCEED IN

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The purpose of this study is to determine the best-practices that CalWORKs students employ to

make them successful in the community college. This study consists of 8 open-ended interview

questions that will focus on identifying the successes and challenges that current CalWORKs

students have experienced in community college. I am seeking out participants to help me in this

qualitative research study. Based upon specific qualifying criteria, I have determined that you

would be an excellent participant for this study. The interview will take approximately 45-60

minutes and will be conducted in-person at Pierce College.

Would you be interested in participating in this study?

If yes, thank you for your interest, what will follow next is setting an interview date, time, and

location. Approximately one week before the interview, I will provide you a copy of the

interview questions for review.

If no, thank you for your time and your consideration. Have a great day!

APPENDIX C

Interview Recruitment E-mail Script

Good morning/afternoon <Potential Subject Name>,

My name is Claudia Velasco, and I am a doctoral candidate at the Graduate School of Education
and Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am currently working on my dissertation titled
CalWORKs STUDENTS AND THEIR BEST PRACTICES, HOW THEY SUCCEED IN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

The purpose of this study is to determine the best practices that CalWORKs students employ to
be successful in achieving their goals in the community college. This study consists of eight
open-ended interview questions that will focus on identifying the achievements and challenges
that current CalWORKs students have experienced in the community college. I am seeking out
participants to help me in this qualitative research study. Based upon specific qualifying criteria,
I have determined that you would be an excellent participant in this study. The interview will
take approximately 45-60 minutes and will be conducted in-person at a location of your
choosing.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity as a participant will remain confidential
during and after the study. All audio recordings and interview transcripts will be password
protected. Neither your name nor any identifiable information will be used in the research study.

Thank you for your time and your consideration. If you have questions or would like to
participate, please contact me at Claudia.velasco@pepperdine.edu

Claudia Velasco
Doctoral Candidate
Pepperdine University, GSEP
Claudia.velasco@pepperdine.edu

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

Interview Question 1: As a CalWORKs college student, what has been some of the challenges you faced?

Interview Question 2: What kind of strategies you use, as a CalWORKs student to be able to manage successfully school, parenting, work, and program requirements obligations on a semester basis?

Interview Question 3: What resources provided by the CalWORKs program are useful to you?

Interview Question 4: What other support or resources, were instrumental to your success?

Interview Question 5: What has being the greatest reward or most positive aspect of belonging to the CalWORKs program?

Interview Question 6: As a CalWORK student, what does success means to you?

Interview Question 7: What advice or recommendations would you give to future CalWORKs students?

Interview Question 8: Knowing what you know now, what would you have done different than when you started?

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Form

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

(School Affiliation)

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

CalWORKs STUDENTS AND THEIR BEST PRACTICES, HOW THEY SUCCEED IN

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Claudia Velasco, M.S.HCM and Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D. At Pepperdine University, because you are a CalWORKs student at Pierce College. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will also be given a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to emphasize on best practices that current CalWORKs students follow to be successful in obtaining higher education while managing the external demands from school such as parenting and the meeting the regulations that the CalWORKs program imposes on them. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to determine: The best strategies and practices employed by CalWORKs students to succeed in a Community College. The challenges that are faced by CalWORKs students in implementing those policies and their best practices in the community college.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:
1. Review the provided interview questions.
2. Review the informed consent form.
3. Answer the 8 qualitative interview questions.
4. Allow researcher to audio record the interview.
5. If participant does not allow for audio recording, the researcher will take notes instead.
6. Review and approve your responses to the interview questions after your responses have been transcribed.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study include no more than minimal risk. Possible risks for participating in the study include, but are not limited to;

1. Potential Breach of Confidentiality
2. Potential risk to reputation

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

While there are no direct benefits to the study participants as this is a qualitative study, your responses will be used as data for a doctoral dissertation focusing on identifying best-practices of CalWORKs students in community college. Additionally, this information will help in improve program services at Pierce College to better serve CalWORKs students.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

You will receive $10 Starbucks gift card for your time. You do not have to answer all of the questions in order to receive the card. The card will be given to you when you return the questionnaire.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records collected for this study will be confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if you tell me about instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

The data will be stored on a password-protected computer in the principal investigator's place of residence. The data will be stored for a minimum of three years. The data collected will be transcribed and coded by for validity and reliability purposes. Upon an initial coding taking place, the data will then be provided to two carefully selected doctoral peer reviewers with a similar amount of training and preparation for conducting qualitative research. They will also code the information based on what they hear from the audio interview. Their coding will be used as comparison to the researcher to ensure the accuracy of what is interpreted from your provided commentary. Upon concluding the data gathering, this information will be provided to the principal investigator and any evidence deleted from their computers. You will then be provided a copy of the transcribed notes and coding to verify the information determined from the recordings. Upon your approval this information will be used all or in part of the findings section of the dissertation.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or only completing the items for which you feel comfortable.

EMERGENCY CARE AND COMPENSATION FOR INJURY

If you are injured as a direct result of research procedures you will receive medical treatment; however, you or your insurance will be responsible for the cost. Pepperdine University does not provide any monetary compensation for injury

INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Dr. Farzin Madjidi at Farzin.Madjidi@pepperdine.edu if I have any other questions or concerns about this research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or gpsirb@pepperdine.edu