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ABC County's Welfare-to-Work (WTW) Program Participation Rate

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Abstract

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by

Alberto Banuelos

MPA, Arkansas State University, 2014

BA, Fresno Pacific University, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Welfare-to-work (WTW) programs are an essential part of societal assistance made available to families in need. In ABC County, CA, problems have been found with the implementation and success rates of their WTW program: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Even with funds allotted for the program, ABC County has not been able to design a WTW program that meets the TANF program work participation requirement of 50% of active TANF recipients in a WTW activity. The purpose of this study was to address this need as it related to the TANF program specifically. A qualitative, exploratory, single case study was used to explore how TANF personnel interacted with TANF recipients and how that interaction influenced recipients' decision to participate in this WTW program. Data was collected from 12 TANF workers using semi-structured interviews, observation sessions, and document reviews. The results of this study indicated that the most relevant strategies TANF eligibility staff could use when interacting with TANF recipients were: cultural sensitivity, motivating, providing information, and empathizing. Shortcomings that were identified and that still need to be addressed and improved upon were communication skills, a general lack of encouragement, judgmental behavior, and personal insecurities. In terms of TANF staff perceptions regarding their influence on client decisions to participate in the program, there were mixed results. Seven study participants believed that they had an influence on client participation in this WTW program while the rest of the participants disagreed with this statement for various reasons. As a result of this research, potential social implications include the improvement of the TANF program overall and an increase in the participation rate of the beneficiaries within the program.

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Dedication

Este trabajo lo dedico a mis padres, Maurilio y Elena Banuelos quienes han sido mis mejores maestros. Ellos me enseñaron que todo en ésta vida se pueded lograr trabajando. Muchas gracias, espero que resiban ésta pequeña muestra como un simbolo de todo mi agradecimineto.

To my sister Yolanda and brother Carlos, I pave this path to demonstrate anything is possible if you are willing to put in some hard work. Follow your dreams. Noemi, my biggest cheerleader. I share this with you, if I win you win.

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To my committee, I appreciate you. Dr. Escobedo, Dr. Barringer-Brown, and Dr. Yu, without your guidance I would have not been able to reach my goal, Thank you.

I would like to acknowledge all my friends that have become family, your support throughout this journey has been such a motivating factor in my ability to cross this finish line. To my co-workers, thank you for your encouragement…BOOM.

Lastly, to my cousin Alynna, you sitting at that dining room table concentrated in your studies was the example I needed. Thank you, Dr. Peña, you are my role model.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The topic of this study was Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and the Welfare-to-Work (WTW) program participation rate in ABC County. TANF has two goals: (a) to provide aid to needy families and (b) to enable these families to reenter the workforce (Haskins, 2016; Ziliak, 2015). The main concern of this program is the latter objective, which is to ensure that families obtain regular job positions that will enable them to sustain their basic needs at the very least after graduating from the program. However, a problem in the translation of WTW exists, with only 38% of low-income families gaining employment postwelfare program (CDSS.ca.gov, 2017). Even with the funds allotted, ABC County has not been able to design a WTW program that meets the TANF program work participation requirement of 50% of active TANF recipients in a WTW activity.

The project in ABC County has failed in different aspects (Danziger, Danziger, Seefeldt, & Shaefer, 2016). Therefore, this study was conducted in order to identify areas of weakness of the TANF program in ABC County. By addressing this need, the data collected and analyzed could be used to formulate and/or change policies on how county employees impact the TANF work requirement, thus improving the overall program. Therefore, the possible social implications of this study are the improvement in the TANF program and the participation rate of the beneficiaries.

In Chapter 1, I focused on the problem that was addressed in this study. I discussed the different sections of Chapter 1 in relation to the problem of the study. The

different sections of this chapter include: (a) background;, (b) problem statement, (c) purpose of the study, (d) research questions, (e) theoretical framework, (f) nature of the study, (g) definitions, (h) assumptions, (i) scope and delimitation, (j) limitation, and (k) significance. A summary of Chapter 1 is provided at the end of the chapter.

Background

Historically, social welfare programs, such as TANF, arose out of colonial programs originally intended to support widowed mothers; but these programs have evolved over time. TANF is a social welfare program with the objective of reaching out to needy families and then ensuring that these families do not permanently stay in the program (Pavoni, Setty, & Violante, 2016). Instead, the goal is to have these families enter the workforce for sustainability in terms of providing for their members' needs (Pavoni et al., 2016). Haskins (2016) characterized the central tenets of the TANF reforms and overall expressed support for the idea behind the WTW aspect of TANF legislation. Haskins further argued that, after 20 years, the program still rests on a solid practical foundation (2016). The current iteration of the social welfare program is TANF, whose members seek to integrate assistance for needy families with the desire to ensure that those being assisted are not just staying on public support forever but rather that they are instead in reentering the workforce (Ziliak, 2015). With the effectiveness of social welfare programs such as TANF, a positive change in society may be realized through improved participation rates of program beneficiaries and overall social sustainability.

For TANF to be successful, the staff working in the program must be effective in performing their roles and responsibilities. In this case, the staff is composed of public

workers serving needy families to improve their way of living through employment (Mafini & Dlodlo, 2014). Mafini and Dlodlo (2014) conducted a study and found that public employees have gone above and beyond their roles and responsibilities when they have had a good work environment. If the staff members involved in the TANF program performed well, the objectives of the program were easily achieved. Most public workers believe that treating all customers the same is the same as treating them fairly (Taylor, 2014). Taylor (2014) found that, although most of the workers who participated in their study stated they would not break any of the program rules, some workers would make decisions based on county-preferred outcomes rather than following the program guidelines. Therefore, social change will be needed to change the behavior of TANF eligibility staff (Preister, 2014; Taylor, 2014).

Because of the different requirements related to staff performance, several scholars, including Danziger et al. (2016), Bitler and Hoynes (2016), and Pavetti and Schott (2016), leveled criticisms at the current implementation of TANF and/or suggested ways in which it could be improved. Overall, a significant body of scholarship supports the need to improve the program and its work-related outcomes. Specifically, there is a gap in research about how county staff members interact with TANF recipients and may act to influence those recipients in their decisions about WTW activity. Therefore, I explored this research gap in the current study.

Problem Statement

The general problem was the inability to meet the TANF work requirement in ABC County, CA. The specific problem was that the TANF participants found that the

WTW program staff did not assist in terms of finding employment. While the TANF program replaced prior cash assistance programs with a work-based safety net, it did not actually guarantee work to its participants (Danziger et al., 2016). In County Fiscal Letter number 16/17-16 (dated September 20, 2016), the State of California allocated over 15 million dollars to ABC County to develop WTW activities in order to assist TANF recipients in finding and securing employment for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. An additional six million dollars was allocated to assist participants of the WTW program to cover childcare costs (CDSS.ca.gov, 2017) and yet, even with the funds allotted, ABC County has not been able to design a WTW program that meets the TANF program work participation requirement of 50% of active TANF recipients in a WTW activity.

According to the most recent WTW report submitted to the State of California (CalWORKs AB1808 Data Master Plan), ABC County has a work participation rate of 38% (CDSS.ca.gov, 2018). This problem has impacted the low-income families that the TANF program is trying to assist and weakens the overall program; thus, understanding why it has failed to work in spite of such investments is imperative.

A significant body of existing literature has looked at issues relating to TANF recipients themselves, seeking to characterize the program's failures based on recipients' shortcomings—specifically in terms of education, training, or motivation (Cebulla, 2018). However, other researchers have looked at mistargeting within the structure of the program itself, claiming that it did not direct enough funds to its core purposes (Pavetti & Schott, 2016). Although these points are important, they ignore another important factor: the role that is played among the county staff agents who actually mediate the enrollment

process. None of the literature reviewed looked at how county employees might influence clients in their decision to participate in a WTW activity. In this study, I sought to fill this gap by providing data that public policy decision-makers may use to formulate and/or change policies on how the county employees impact the TANF work requirement participation rate.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory case study was to explore how county staff members interacted with TANF recipients and how they could act to influence those recipients in their decisions about WTW activity. In this study, I drew data from qualitative, semi-structured interviews, document collection, and participant observations to study the affect that interaction with staff members had on the effectiveness of WTW programs in the specific context of ABC County, CA. Drawing on social construction theory (Sabatier & Weible, 2014), I sought to determine how staff workers interacted with TANF recipients and how the recipients decided to participate in a WTW program.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

RQ1. How do county eligibility staff members interact with TANF recipients in the specific context of ABC County, CA?

RQ2. How do county eligibility staff members perceive their interaction with TANF recipients as potentially influencing the likelihood of the recipients to participate in WTW programs in the specific context of ABC County, CA?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this qualitative research study was social construction, a central concept that Berger and Luckmann (1966) introduced to social sciences in the book *The Social Construction of Reality*. The social construction approach to reality contended that learning was a socially constructed activity, wherein a learner (e.g., person) builds upon or develops new meanings by means of communication, collaboration, social negotiation, and information exchange with other individuals (Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004). The concept of constructivism suggested that individuals learned when they belonged to a community of practice with existing social and natural resources for purposes of developing knowledge (Chin, Williams, & Amiridis 2006).

The social construction framework (SCF) explains how individuals and groups participate in the construction of their perceived social reality (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). The SCF posits that, like much else, official policies are socially constructed and, thus, they reflect in many ways the social environment in which they are rooted. Therefore, policies are necessarily political, because politics are an important aspect of the social background underlying those policies. The nurture approach in relation to social construction theory stated that, rather than genetics or inborn traits, normally accepted ideas and categories (e.g., stereotypes) are socially constructed and are accepted as reality despite any facts to the contrary (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). On the other hand, the nature approach of social construction stated that human traits were inborn and fixed at

birth (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Therefore, the exploration of perceptions in this study was guided based on these two approaches.

The core components of the construction framework are presented in Figure 1. Social constructionism has two major components: (a) idea constructionism and (b) object constructionism. Idea constructionism suggests that a phenomenon is constructed as an idea, concept, or theory instead of immediately being part of reality. On the other hand, object constructionism suggests that a phenomenon is being constructed not just as an idea or theory but an object (or event or state of affairs) existing in the world.

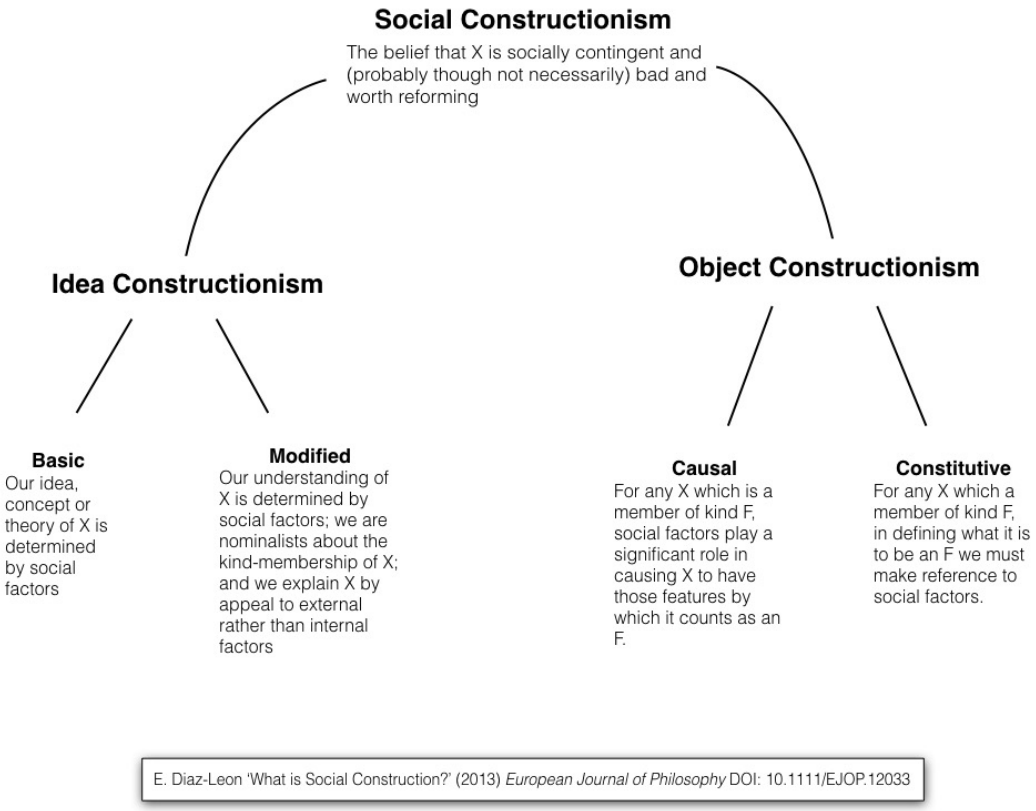

Figure 1. Social construction theory.

For this study, I learned, through the perspective of TANF recipients, to understand interactions and decisions to participate in WTW programs. I explored the history of TANF and the programs it was descended from. For example, social welfare programs prior to the Great Depression often relied on almshouses and private charity because this practice reflected the views of the time; however, as this fell out of political favor, the programs shifted toward providing "outside" aid, such as payments (Ziliak, 2015).

When work requirements were first introduced to the programs preceding TANF, they were effectively nominal; however, since politics and social perceptions have shifted to oppose the idea of explicit welfare, these requirements have become real and considerably more stringent (Ziliak, 2015). If policies create politics as it is believed by the SCF (Sabatier & Weible, 2014), then I planned to use this theory to investigate whether or not county staff allowed their values or emotions to play a part when working with the public and administrating the TANF program. The TANF recipients were dependents or wards to the individuals who conducted the program. Since these wards were politically "weak," it was easy to design coercive or punitive policies against them (Kessel & Masuoka, 2009). Per Kessel and Masuoka (2009), therefore, when you can identify the underlying agendas of the staff, it was easier to understand policy outcomes. Therefore, I extended the SCF by looking at how staff interaction influenced the program outcomes for WTW as a part of TANF.

Nature of the Study

The methodology implanted for this study was qualitative. Studies utilizing the qualitative methodology are based on the desire to obtain an in-depth understanding of a case in a real-world context (Yin, 2017). Based on the problem of this study, an exploratory procedure was implemented. The explanatory nature of the research questions indicated a need for a qualitative study (Yin, 2017). Unlike quantitative methodology, which is focused on establishing any existing significant relationships between variables, qualitative methodology research does not require numerical data and statistical analysis (Silverman, 2016). Instead, the focus of qualitative studies is the in-depth exploration of a phenomenon through detailed information and explanation from data sources, usually human participants, to provide meaning to the topic and problem being explored. Therefore, a qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study.

The specific research design was that of an exploratory, single case study. Case study research is ideal for studying phenomena that cannot be divorced from their native contexts (Yin, 2017). Case studies are apt for studying such phenomena because they draw upon multiple data sources to paint a comprehensive, contextual picture of the subject, one who depicts the phenomenon and the context surrounding it together (Yin, 2017). For example, Stevens (2017) adopted a case study approach to studying welfare medicine by focusing on the specific program of Medicaid and the circumstances surrounding it.

Other research designs, such as narrative inquiry and grounded theory, were also considered as the design to be used for this study. A narrative design would not have

been appropriate, as the purpose of the study did not involve eliciting stories or storied data (Bruce, Beuthin, Sheilds, Molzahn, & Schick-Makaroff, 2016). A grounded theory, which required theoretical development based on standardized data, would not have been appropriate, as the gap in the literature and correlating problem statement did not suggest a lack of theory or need for sequential research (Clark, 2017). Therefore, these two options were not used for this study.

The phenomenon under study was one that could not be separated from its context, as the nature of the interaction between county agents and TANF recipients may vary considerably based on contextual factors such as the specific training provided by the agency, the demographic characteristics of both parties, or the economic circumstances of the county itself. This contextual aspect of the issue under study made the case study, with its multiple sources of data and triangulation analysis (Yin, 2017), ideal. Furthermore, case studies inherit the exploratory aspect of more general qualitative research, especially with an exploratory case study.

An exploratory case study explores a new phenomenon that has not yet been theoretically mapped, by contrast to the descriptive case study that serves to confirm the existing theoretical understanding of a phenomenon qualitatively (Yin, 2017). This made the exploratory case study superior for the purposes of this study. Case studies can also be single or multiple. While a multiple case study offers additional contextual information by comparing across two or more cases in different contexts, this approach also requires significantly more resources (Yin, 2017). On the other hand, single case studies are useful for either typical or extreme cases. Since the county under study was

one that struggled with WTW program requirements, it represented an extreme case, making it of interest in a single case study. Therefore, the single case study approach was adopted.

The primary source of data for the study was qualitative, semi-structured interviews. Therefore, an interview guide was used to collect data for the study. In addition, case studies generally require at least three separate sources of data in order to fully understand and contextualize the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2017). Accordingly, a second source of data was participant observations, wherein I scheduled a short (30-60 minute) observation session with each participant to observe him or her interacting with TANF participants. Finally, training and regulations material from the TANF/WTW agencies under study were collected as reference material. Data was obtained from TANF program workers in ABC County, CA. Data was analyzed through thematic analysis.

The populations under study were the TANF workers in ABC County, CA. Sampling was done through the agencies providing TANF, which I contacted for site permission. Once site authorization was obtained, I requested that the agencies forward a recruitment e-mail to their employees. In addition, I carried out document collection at this stage by requesting policy statements, program specifications, and other relevant data regarding WTW programs from the agencies. County workers who contacted me to participate in the study were verified through their agency and then I set up an interview in a private location. Although qualitative research does not target specific sample sizes

(rather, saturation, or the point at which new participants no longer contribute new data), a sample size of 10-15 participants was in line with case study research standards.

Definitions

Social construction theory. A theory that explains how individuals and groups participate in the construction of their perceived social reality (Sabatier & Weible, 2014).

Social welfare program. A social welfare program is designed to provide help to members of society to address problems related to their well-being (Ziliak, 2015).

Temporary assistance to needy families (TANF). TANF is a program promoting social welfare to low-income families wherein they are given short-term aid to have access to basic needs until they are able to sustain their own needs without the help of the program (Danziger et al., 2016; Ziliak, 2015).

Welfare-to-work (WTW). A WTW program is designed for families in need and unemployed families to give them access to temporary income support and programs (e.g., job search, assisted search) that will help in obtaining permanent employment to sustain their family's needs in the future (Pavoni et al., 2016).

Assumptions

Assumptions refer to potentially influential aspects of a study, which the researcher cannot fully demonstrate as true based on data or cannot fully control (Ledford & Gast, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). There were two assumptions for this study. The first assumption was that the public, especially low-income families, was aware of the benefits and objectives of TANF and WTW programs. This assumption was important because the topic of the study was TANF and WTW for low-income families.

However, the perceptions of staff and employees were the data collected to understand the failure and success of the study. I could not fully ascertain the extent of knowledge of low-income families about TANF and WTW. Therefore, it was assumed that knowledge about these programs among low-income families was not the main cause of the success or failure of the program. The second assumption of the study was based on the implementation of a qualitative methodology. I assumed that the data collection and analysis was inductive, emerging, and shaped based on my experience in data collection and analysis.

Scope and Delimitations

Scope defines the coverage of the study whereas delimitations define the aspects of the topic that will not be explored based on the valid preferences of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The first delimitation of the study was that the phenomenon to be explored in the study was the interaction of TANF staff with WTW program beneficiaries in terms of finding employment. This chosen phenomenon aligned with the purpose of the study. Therefore, I did not explore any other phenomenon.

Another delimitation of the study was that I only recruited 10-15 TANF workers, who satisfied the eligibility criteria, to participate in the study. Nevertheless, this sample size was enough to collect valid data and reach data saturation for a qualitative study.

Data collection was through interviews, observations, and document reviews. Having three data sources allowed for data triangulation in order to improve the credibility of this study. No other data sources were used.

Another delimitation was the geographical area of focus, which was ABC County in CA. I chose this setting because the problem has been observed in this area. No other area was considered for this study.

Limitations

Limitations are aspects of the study that define the boundaries to be explored in the study. These limitations are naturally occurring to the study and cannot be controlled based on the preferences and decisions of the researcher. The first limitation was the topic, which was focused on TANF and WTW programs only. The topic limited the aspects that could be explored for this study. Nevertheless, the topic was the focus of the problem identified for this study. Another limitation of the study was that the findings could not be generalized to other populations or settings. Nongeneralizability is a unique and common characteristic of a qualitative case study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2017). Nevertheless, I ensured the transferability of the study so that readers and future researchers could assess the applicability of the findings to other settings through replication. Another limitation of the study was the existence of the researcher's bias, which could influence the study results. Nevertheless, I acknowledged the sources of my bias to minimize possible interference of such bias(es) to the study results.

Significance

The study is significant for a number of reasons. Scholars generally agree that there is a need to improve on the current state of the TANF programs. Ziliak's (2015) review of the program's history noted how its current iteration incentivizes states to deny any aid at all to those who are unlikely to successfully find work, thereby undermining

the very purpose of the program. Some scholars have gone so far as to condemn it as a failure for replacing assured aid with work-based aid but doing nothing to guarantee that finding work is even possible (e.g., Danziger et al., 2016). In the specific case of ABC County, CA, the WTW participation rate remains a mere 38% despite over 21 million dollars being allocated to the county's WTW program by the state in 2016-2017 (CDSS.ca.gov, 2017). Understanding why an investment of this magnitude has not been enough to make the program more successful is, therefore, a clear issue of practical concern.

In that regard, few, if any, prior studies have looked at the role of the county staff in influencing WTW participation. However, the staff members represent a critical link and have been identified as a significant point of failure for other aspects of TANF, like identifying cases of domestic violence (Lindauer, 2016). Per social construction theory, the social and political backgrounds of these workers may have a significant influence on how they interact with potential TANF recipients (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). Overall, understanding the role of staff members in determining the effectiveness of TANF WTW programs will not only fill a gap in the literature, but it will also contribute to letting WTW programs more effectively help those they are designed to help. The current study may identify both positive and negative effects from staff actions that could be used to create better training programs for staff members and improve the deficient rates of WTW participation in ABC County, CA, and other locations in general.

Summary

The focus of Chapter 1 was the problem of the study. The general problem was the inability to meet the TANF work requirement in ABC County, CA. The specific problem was that the TANF participants found that the WTW program did not assist in terms of finding employment. Exploring or addressing this problem was significant because of the potential benefits of the findings in advancing scientific knowledge and practices related to social work and welfare. Based on the problem, the purpose of this qualitative, exploratory case study was to explore how county staff members interacted with TANF recipients and how staff could influence those recipients in their decisions about WTW activity. The research questions were also defined based on the problem and purpose of the study. In order to establish the relevance and existence of the problem, Chapter 2 includes the discussion of literature that was relevant to the topic of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

There was a problem in meeting the TANF work requirement in ABC County, CA. Specifically, TANF participants found that the WTW program did not assist them in finding employment. The State of California allocated over 15 million dollars to ABC County to develop WTW activities in order to assist TANF recipients. In addition, six million dollars was added to cover childcare costs of WTW participants (CDSS.ca.gov, 2017). However, ABC County has not been able to design a WTW program that meets the TANF program work participation requirement of 50% of active TANF recipients in a WTW activity. ABC County has a work participation rate of only 38% (CDSS.ca.gov, 2017). This fact has impacted the families participating in the TANF program.

It is important to determine why the program has failed and whether it is a result of the recipients' shortcomings in terms of education, training, or motivation (e.g., Cebulla, 2018) or the structure of the program itself (e.g., Pavetti & Schott, 2016). Another factor that has been overlooked was the role of county staff agents who have mediated the enrollment process. The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory case study was to explore how county staff members interacted with TANF recipients and might act to influence those recipients in their decisions about WTW activity.

The major sections of this literature are as follows: overview of TANF, structure of TANF, TANF outcomes, recommendations to improve TANF outcomes, characteristics of TANF recipients, barriers to employment among TANF participants, factors to address barriers to employment among TANF recipients, programs and models

to address employment barriers among TANF recipients, and TANF frontline staff or county staff agents and their role in TANF. The literature review is divided into three major categories. The first category involves the TANF program itself and will include a discussion of its strengths and weaknesses. In this category, studies exploring its structure will be discussed to determine whether the program structure should be revised to improve employment outcomes among TANF recipients. The second category involves TANF recipients. In the literature, it has emerged that the employment outcomes of the TANF program are poor because of the characteristics of the recipients. The third category involves the frontline staff of TANF. These individuals have a significant role in assisting TANF recipients with their employment. They might have a significant impact on TANF recipients' employment outcomes but this possibility has remained unexplored.

Search Strategy

A search strategy is an organized structure of key terms used to search a database. The search strategy accounted for possible search terms, keywords and phrases, truncated variations of search terms, and subject headings. The databases used for this literature review included OvidSP databases, Google Scholar, Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO, ProQuest, ERIC, Science Direct, Taylor and Francis, and Emerald. The keywords used in the search strategy for this review included: *Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Welfare to Work (WTW) program, social construction framework, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, history, effects, outcomes, employment rate, poverty rate, crime rate, recipients, structure of the program,* and *government employees*.

Boolean logic was also used to search for specific studies related to the current study. One search string for one concept included the following: (1) Temporary Assistance to Needy Families AND Welfare to Work (WTW) program AND employment rate, (2) Temporary Assistance to Needy Families AND recipients, (3) Temporary Assistance to Needy Families AND structure of the program, and (4) Temporary Assistance to Needy Families AND government employees. There were 75 studies included in this literature review. The majority of the studies (86%) included were published from 2014 to 2018. This inclusion criterion was followed to ensure that the information in the review reflected the current knowledge about the research problem. There were 10 studies (14%) included that were published before 2014. These studies were included because the information in these studies was deemed relevant to the current research problem.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this qualitative research study was Berger and Luckmann's (1966) SCF. Berger and Luckmann (1966) stated that institutions emerged from repeated actions that formed a pattern. Habitualization refers to the process where actions are patterned and frequently repeated (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Thus, institutionalism occurs when there are habitualized actions by several kinds of actors (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Through the important role of the habitualized actions of institutions, they have become embodied in experiences of individual actors (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Individuals also have roles in institutions, as they might be one of the actors performing

such actions. As individuals play a role, they also participate in a social reality where all members find these experiences meaningful and plausible (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This process is called legitimation, which explains reality and justifies the role of actors (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Due to this process, meanings attached to these institutions are produced.

The need for legitimation arises whenever the meanings attached to institutions have to be transmitted to a new generation. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), there are various levels of legitimation: incipient legitimation, theoretical legitimation, explicit legitimation, and symbolic universe. The incipient legitimation refers to the "This is how things are done" principle (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The second level, theoretical legitimation, contains propositions of the theory in its basic form (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Folk tales and proverbs are used in order to explain reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The third level contains explicit theories that are legitimated due to the institutional order; the knowledge is passed and transmitted through formal initiation processes such as education (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The fourth level is symbolic universe, the highest level of legitimation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

According to the SCF, official policies are socially constructed and reflect in different ways the social environment in which they are rooted. Thus, policies are necessarily political because politics has a role in the social background underlying the proposed and implemented policies. This can be demonstrated by examining the history of the TANF program. For instance, social welfare programs prior to the Great Depression relied on almshouses and private charity because the social background at

that time promoted the perspective that the government had no role in welfare programs. Over the course of time, the social welfare programs shifted towards providing outside aid (Ziliak, 2015).

One of the tenets of the TANF program was the work participation requirement. When this was first introduced to programs before TANF, they were nominal; however, politics and social perceptions have shifted and explicit welfare programs have been opposed (Ziliak, 2015). The current social background has promoted the idea of welfare programs assisting individuals for a short period of time and this reality has resulted in work participation requirements becoming real and stringent (Ziliak, 2015). In line with this change, the SCF lends itself to the idea that the policies created politics and were influenced by the social and political background (Sabatier & Weible, 2014).

SCF was used to investigate whether county staff allowed their values or emotions to play a part when working with the public and administering the TANF program. The TANF recipients are dependents or wards to the individuals who administer the program. Since these wards are politically weak, it is easy to design coercive or punitive policies against them (Kessel & Masuoka, 2009). Per Kessel and Masuoka (2009), therefore, when you can identify the underlying agendas of the staff, it would be easier to understand policy outcomes. Therefore, this study extended the SCF by looking at how staff interaction influenced the program outcomes for WTW as a part of TANF.

Review of Research Literature

In this literature review, I provided an expanded background on the research problem. The first section includes a description of TANF: its history, its purpose, and its structure. The second section has a discussion of one of the main criticisms about TANF: its structure. The third section includes a discussion of the outcomes of TANF, specifically about poverty rates, crime rates, and employment rates. The fourth section includes recommendations for researchers to improve TANF outcomes. The fifth section lists the characteristics of TANF recipients. The sixth section includes a discussion of the barriers to employment among TANF recipients. The seventh section has a discussion of the factors to address employment barriers. The eighth section has a discussion of the programs and models to address employment barriers among TANF recipients. The last section includes a discussion of the role of TANF frontline staff or county staff agents and their role in TANF program outcomes. The chapter ends with a summary and conclusions from the literature review.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

TANF was created by the 1996 welfare reform law, which replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) that provided cash assistance to families in need (Cebulla, 2018; Ziliak, 2015). The 1996 welfare reform law was the culmination of the debate about the need to overhaul programs that helped struggling families with children, especially families headed by single mothers (Cebulla, 2018; Ziliak, 2015). Most of the legislative activities about TANF involved program funding and financing authority.

Brief history of TANF. The emergence of cash assistance programs for families in need, especially families headed by single mothers, can be traced back to as early as the 1900s (Cebulla, 2018; Ziliak, 2015). The objective of the programs was to assist single mothers so that they could stay at home and take care of their children (Cebulla, 2018; Ziliak, 2015). This program was later named the AFDC program (Cebulla, 2018; Ziliak, 2015). Many of the reforms from the 1960s to the 1990s focused on concerns about employment and about the effect of providing cash to nonworking, single mothers on both employment rates and marriage rates (Cebulla, 2018; Ziliak, 2015). In the United Kingdom, social security benefits were tied to participation in active job searches and job placement programs (Cebulla, 2018). The United States has been experimenting with this method as well since the 1980s, with the implementation of WTW programs (Cebulla, 2018).

Since the 1980s, scholars have been providing increasing attention to welfare dependency (Ziliak, 2015). At that time, researchers showed that while many mothers were on cash assistance programs only for a short period of time, a large percentage of minority mothers received cash assistance for an extended period of time (Ziliak, 2015). This dilemma led to the Family Support Act of 1988, which established the notion of mutual responsibility between the state and the cash assistance recipient. The Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Training program was created to help cash assistance recipients in terms of education, training, and employment (Ziliak, 2015).

In 1994, President Clinton proposed a welfare reform that provided a 2-year limit on receiving cash assistance through AFDC followed by required participation in wage

paying work after 2 years (Bitler & Hoynes, 2016). This proposal was not passed by the House nor the Senate; however, an alternative proposal was developed to stop grant proposals to AFDC (Barrilleaux, 2018).

Congress created the TANF block grant through the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Chan, 2018). This was part of federal efforts to end welfare programs. TANF replaced AFDC, which provided cash assistance programs to struggling families with children since 1935 (Chan, 2018). Table 1 summarizes some of the major differences between AFDC and TANF.

Table 1

Major Differences between Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

Provision	AFDC	TANF
Statutory Purpose	Encourage mothers to take care of their children in their own homes or in the homes of relatives through providing financial assistance and rehabilitation as well as other services to needy families with children. Help parents, relatives, or caregivers to receive maximum self-support	Increase state flexibility to achieve four goals: "(1) provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes or homes of relatives, (2) end dependence of needy parents on government benefits, (3) reduce out of-wedlock pregnancies, and (4) promote the formation and maintenance of two-parent families"

Funding	Federal government reimburse states for their share of expenses for the AFDC, Emergency Assistance (EA), and the Job Opportunity and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program.	A basic block grant to each state. The amount of funds vary from one state to another.
	No limit on the federal funding nationwide and for each state.	Supplemental grants provided to 17 states that met low historic welfare spending per poor individual and high growth rates of population in each state. Approximately $2 billion was provided for the contingency fund.
	Funding was authorized with annual appropriations per state.	Funding for basic block grant of TANF and bonus funds was appropriated.
State Funding	States share expenditures in the programs. However, it was lower in states that have relatively low per-capita incomes and higher in states that have relatively high per-capita incomes.	States were required to spend a minimum amount or at least 75% of what they spend in FY 1994.
Use of Funds	Under AFDC, states were reimbursed for cash assistance. Under JOBS, states were reimbursed for employment and training services. Under EA, states were reimbursed for emergency needs.	TANF funds may be used for other activities that achieve the statutory purpose and four goals of the program.

Individual Entitlement to Benefits	Granted a fair hearing for individuals whose claim was denied.	TANF law "shall not be interpreted to entitle any individual or family to assistance under any State program funded [under TANF]."
Time Limit	There was no time limit on cash assistance.	Federal funds of TANF cannot be used to support a needy family more than 60 months. Extensions for needy families comprised 20% of the caseload.
Work and Job Preparation Requirements		
Performance Measure for States	A percentage of caseload is set. Certain individuals were exempt from work requirements.	A percentage of the caseload is set that must be working or engaged in job preparation activities. No exceptions for work requirements.
Sanctions on Individuals	Recipients who do not comply with the requirements were removed.	Sanctions were given to individuals who failed to comply with the state work requirements.

Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS) (2013)

Overview of TANF legislation. The TANF program was administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (Brooks, Mack, Chaney, Gibson, & Caplan, 2018). The program was a joint program between the federal and state governments to support low-income families (Danziger, Danziger, Seefeldt, & Shaefer,

2016). In 2017, the federal government spent $16.0 billion on the TANF program (Brooks et al., 2018).

TANF provided cash assistance to low-income families but the program evolved into different services for families in need as modified by states and approved by the federal government (Danziger et al., 2016; Sykes, Kriz, Edin, & Hakpern-Meekin, 2015). The added programs included child care services, pregnancy prevention, and other support services (Danziger et al., 2016). TANF and its other predecessor welfare programs paid cash to those in need (Danziger et al., 2016; Sykes et al., 2015). Approximately 30% of the program was providing cash assistance, as most parts of the program provided in-kind services (Danziger et al., 2016; U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2012).

Funds of TANF. The federal government provided a block grant to states, and these funds could have been used by states to operate their own programs (Danziger et al., 2016; Ziliak, 2015). However, states had to allocate some of their funds to TANF programs in order to be able to receive federal funding (Danziger et al., 2016; Ziliak, 2015). The states defined the percentage that they would allocate to TANF programs or they would receive severe fiscal penalties. This state-spending requirement was known as the “maintenance of effort” (MOE) requirement (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2012). States could use both federal and state funds to meet the four goals of the 1996 law:

> (1) provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; (2) end the dependence of needy parents

> on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; (3) prevent and reduce the incidence of out of wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and (4) encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families. (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2012)

Eligibility criteria in TANF. TANF was not an entitlement program and did not require states to provide benefits to all families (Danziger et al., 2016). Moreover, TANF did not require states to assume responsibility in ensuring unemployed recipients who reached their time limit a job if they could not find one (Holcomb et al., 2017).

The eligibility for cash assistance was decided by the states (Danziger et al., 2016; Holcomb et al., 2017). However, there were some restrictions from the federal law, including time limits and immigrant eligibility (Danziger et al., 2016; Holcomb et al., 2017). While states could apply their own time limit policies to the TANF program, the time limit could not exceed 60 months—with an exception (Danziger et al., 2016; Holcomb et al., 2017). The exception was that states could provide cash assistance that exceeded the 60-month limit for up to 20% of their caseload based on hardship (Danziger et al., 2016; Holcomb et al., 2017). Moreover, there were no time limits on child-only families (Danziger et al., 2016; Holcomb et al., 2017).

Federal law barred states from using federal TANF funds in assisting most legal immigrants (Danziger et al., 2016; Schott, 2016). This restriction not only applied to cash assistance but also to other services of the TANF program, such as work support, child care services, transportation, and job training (Danziger et al., 2016; Schott, 2016).

Children who were U.S. citizens could qualify for the program even if they had noncitizen immigrant parents. Also, states could ause their own MOE funds to provide assistance to immigrant families (Danziger et al., 2016; Schott, 2016).

TANF work requirements. According to the Congressional Research Service (2017), federal TANF guidelines included a work requirement described as:

> TANF's main federal work requirement is actually a performance measure that applies to the states, rather than individual recipients. States determine the work rules that apply to individual recipients. TANF law requires states to engage 50% of all families and 90% of two-parent families in work activities, though these standards can be reduced by *credits.* Therefore, the effective standards state face are often less than the 50% or 90% targets, and vary by state. (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2012, p. 1)

States faced new TANF work participation rates to ensure that families receiving cash assistance were actively engaging in work participation activities (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2012). States could lose their funding if they did not meet these new targets (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2012).

Core work activities. Core work activities were activities that were engaged in by parents of families who were TANF recipients, which had to be hands-on work and they needed to secure employment immediately (Floyd, Pavetti, & Schott, 2017; Goddard et al., 2016). These activities included community service, subsidized and unsubsidized employment, work experience, childcare assistance to other TANF recipients, and on-the-job-training (Floyd et al., 2017; Goddard et al., 2016). The time limit for job searches and

job readiness activities was 4 weeks consecutively and no more than 6 weeks total in a year (Floyd et al., 2017; Goddard et al., 2016). Also, there was a time limit in pursuing education—which was only 12 months, which, it should be noted, was not sufficient time to finish a degree (Floyd et al., 2017; Goddard et al., 2016).

Noncore work activities. Noncore work activities were permitted only after the TANF recipient met the 20 hours of required core work activities (Brooks et al., 2018; Goddard et al., 2016). Noncore work activities included General Educational Development (GED) participation, pursuing secondary education or adult basic education, and participating in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs (Brooks et al., 2018; Goddard et al., 2016). In addition, these activities included training activities and education directly related to employment (Brooks et al., 2018; Goddard et al., 2016).

In 2017, the participation rate in TANF averaged 1.4 million families. These families were referred to as caseloads and represented 9 million adults and 2.5 million children (Brooks et al., 2018; Goddard et al., 2016). The amount of cash assistance given varied by state. For instance, a family in Mississippi received $170 a month versus $923 a month in Alaska (Brooks et al., 2018; Goddard et al., 2016; U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2012). Each state had its own formula of computing for the amount of cash assistance allowed (approved by the federal government) and this formula included the income of the family and work requirements (Brooks et al., 2018; Goddard et al., 2016; U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2012).

Structure of TANF program

TANF limits created a system that provided a safety net to very few families in need (Moffitt, 2015; Pavetti & Schott, 2016). Moreover, the program did not prepare low-income parents or caregivers to be successful in the labor market (Moffitt, 2015; Pavetti & Schott, 2016). Bitler and Hoynes (2016) asserted that the objective of TANF was to provide for families in need but the implementation of the program failed to reach a large percentage of families in need. The program was not marketed to many families in need and did not actually reduce poverty (Bitler & Hoynes, 2016). Bitler and Hoynes (2016) stated that the current structure of the program did not expand during economic crises, when families needed the programs the most. This was problematic, as the objective of the program was to be able to help the families with the most need in the country.

This assertion was supported by Pavetti and Schott (2016), who argued that the two decades of the implementation of the program showed that the program was not working according to its original purpose and it was leaving families and children worse off compared to when AFDC was implemented. Similarly, Muennig, Caleyachetty, Rosen, and Korotzer (2015) evaluated the economic benefits of TANF compared to AFDC. Muennig et al. (2015) pooled mortality hazard ratios from two randomized controlled trials—Connecticut Jobs First and the Florida Transition Program—as well as previous estimations of health and economic benefits of TANF and AFDC. The researchers found that the AFDC program would cost $28,000 more than TANF program (Muennig et al., 2015). However, AFDC would result in 0.44 additional years of life for

AFDC recipients. Similarly, Danziger et al. (2016) examined the transition from a purely welfare system to a work-based safety net system. Danziger et al. (2016) indicated that the current structure of the program did not guarantee unemployed recipients who reached their time limit a job if they could not find one, which resulted in an incomplete transition. Danziger et al. (2016) recommended that there should be a revision to the structure of the TANF program in order to have a complete transition and to be able to help more families in need.

TANF Outcomes

In the existing literature, most of the researchers explored TANF outcomes. Specifically, researchers were focused on the impact of TANF on poverty rates (Mather, 2017), crime rates (Liebertz & Bunch, 2018), and employment rates (Seefeldt, 2017) as well as whether the program improved these outcomes.

TANF and poverty rates. Several scholars explored the effect of TANF in relation to poverty rates in various states (Bunch, Liebertz, & Militia, 2017; Mather, 2017). Bunch et al. (2017) reexamined the effects of TANF on poverty levels between 1996 and 2012 and found evidence that the federal-to-state welfare transition had eased states' caseload burden and poverty rates. Moreover, there were reduced poverty rates in states that implemented welfare restrictiveness (Bunch et al., 2017). However, states that implemented high levels of welfare restrictions did not gain any benefits (Bunch et al., 2017).

In another study about TANF programs on Native reservations, Mather (2017) examined the results of the implementation of TANF in 75 household surveys on the

Rosebud Sioux Reservation. The results indicated that implementation of the program resulted in a 5%-point drop in the poverty rate (Mather, 2017). This was the highest poverty reduction rate compared to any other state programs implemented on Native reservations. In Mather's (2017) study, citizens seemed to prefer local programs compared to federal programs because of the geographical proximity and the administrative proximity.

TANF and crime rates. The TANF program had crime-related restrictions and allowed for state and local administrators (McCarty, Falk, Aussenberg, & Carpenter, 2015). Welfare laws barred fleeing felons and fugitives from receiving TANF benefits, and crime rates were often associated with poverty rates (McCarty et al., 2015). It would be logical to conclude that crime rates would reduce due to the implementation of TANF programs as a way to address poverty rates (Wright, Tekin, Topalli, McClellan, Dickinson, & Rosenfeld, 2017). Previous research consistently found a negative relationship between the effects of welfare assistance and crime rates. In one recent study, Liebertz and Bunch (2018) explored the relationship between the introduction of a TANF program and crime rates. The authors conducted a longer time-series and utilized propensity score weighting to model the likelihood of the selection of states to implement stricter welfare programs. Liebertz and Bunch (2018) concluded that there was a strong association between greater levels of welfare restrictiveness and higher rates of violent crimes. Liebertz and Bunch (2018) showed that restrictiveness was associated with higher rates of crimes. As such, states might not consider implementing welfare restrictiveness if they wanted lower crime rates.

TANF and employment rates. Haskins (2016) examined the federal and state-wide TANF program after 20 years of its implementation. There had been assertions that welfare programs affected work effort and the work participation of recipients (Haskins, 2016). In the neo-liberalist view, the role of the welfare system was to promote behaviors that supported the market by turning welfare recipients into workers (Seefeldt, 2017). As such, work requirements had been included in TANF to offset these unintended effects (Haskins, 2016). Haskins (2016) provided support that the WTW aspect of TANF legislation still had a practical foundation that would be able to increase employment rates among recipients. On the other hand, Butz (2015) provided another perspective about the quality of TANF outcomes: privatization of the TANF program. Butz (2015) examined the relationship between TANF program outcomes and administrative privatization. The data collected included work participation activities, employment closure, unsubsidized employment, and monthly income of individual welfare participants in FL (Butz, 2015). Butz (2015) stated that there was evidence that nonprofit welfare delivery was associated with high TANF employment closure outcomes. The result indicated that privatization of TANF might not deliver the best outcomes for TANF beneficiaries.

In another study, Ko and Cho (2017) examined the effectiveness of an employment-oriented welfare state. In this study, the quality of the job was also considered in evaluating the employment outcomes of a program (Ko & Cho, 2017). Ko and Cho (2017) collected data from 19 developed countries from 1991 to 2013 and analyzed the employment outcomes of their welfare programs as well as the quality of the

jobs of the recipients. The results showed that expenditure in welfare programs negatively affected fiscal soundness; however, when participants obtained full- and part-time employment, it positively affected the fiscal soundness of the country (Ko & Cho, 2017). Ko and Cho (2017) argued that TANF should be concerned not only with the increase of employment rate but the quality of employment of the recipients.

Recommendations to Improve TANF Outcomes

Several scholars have suggested recommendations to improve TANF through providing a safety net (Edin & Shafer, 2015; Pavetti & Schott, 2016), adequate resources (Pavetti & Schott, 2016), helping families with the greatest need (Danziger et al., 2016; Meunnig et al. 2015), and providing access to victims of domestic violence (Cohen, 2017; Ragavan et al., 2019).

Safety net and adequate resources. Edin and Shafer (2015) and Pavetti and Schott (2016) suggested that there should be an effective safety net for struggling families with children. Specifically, Edin and Shafer (2015) recommended that there should be an expansion of the "in-work" safety net for families around the poverty threshold. Pavetti and Schott (2016) recommended adequate resources be provided for achieving the goals of the TANF program.

Help the families with the greatest need. There was a need to assess whether the purpose of TANF was being achieved—that is, whether the program was helping the U.S. families with the greatest need (Danziger et al., 2016). According to Meunnig et al. (2015), the value of TANF could be improved by ensuring that additional attention was given to the families with the greatest need who were denied cash assistance. In addition,

Lindauer (2016) suggested that there were other ways to assist families in need, such as permitting cash advance on social security or providing microloans. Another way to add to welfare programs was crowdfunding and emergency work opportunities (Lindauer, 2016).

Provide access to victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence was an experience that threatened the health and well-being of individuals (Cohen, 2017; Ragavan et al., 2019). The majority of these victims were women who significantly depended on government aid once they decided to leave their respective households. In addition, these female victims needed government aid not only to support themselves but also to support their children (Cohen, 2017; Ragavan et al., 2019). Cohen (2017) recommended that the TANF program should provide access to protection and funds for victims of domestic violence so that they could support themselves and their family.

Characteristics of TANF Recipients

The characteristics of TANF recipients were important to take into consideration when discussing the outcomes of TANF. Several scholars explored whether there were similar characteristics that could help in understanding the outcomes of TANF, especially employment outcomes (Cheng & Lo, 2018; Sun et al., 2018; Sykes et al., 2015).

Race. Exploring the impact of race on TANF outcomes might have been beneficial in determining how best to assist families belonging to minority groups. Cheng, Lo, and Weber (2015) examined racial disparities in relationships between welfare dependence and financial dependence. In a sample of 6,737 parents, Cheng et al. (2015) found that the restrictive TANF policies reduced African Americans' likelihood of

welfare use and increased the likelihood of their financial independence. The existence of poverty in a state increased the welfare use of Caucasians and the likelihood that Hispanics would be part of the working poor (Cheng et al., 2015). Moreover, the existence of poverty also decreased financial independence among Caucasians and African Americans (Cheng et al., 2015).

In a more recent study, Cheng and Lo (2018) examined whether the restrictiveness of TANF policies was associated with the racial composition and economic conditions of the state. Cheng and Lo (2018) collected data from various government reports from 2000 to 2014. Restrictive TANF policies resulted from dramatic increases in the Hispanic population (Cheng & Lo, 2018). Restrictive TANF policies were negatively associated with larger populations of African American individuals in a state (Cheng & Lo, 2018).

In these two studies, the researchers showed that race of an individual might influence the effectiveness of TANF programs; however, it should be noted that all individuals who were qualified recipients should receive help (Cheng et al., 2015; Cheng & Lo, 2018). These researchers showed that one demographic characteristic was more common among TANF recipients (Cheng et al., 2015; Cheng & Lo, 2018).

Parents of young children. TANF cash assistance was only applicable to families with children (Kim, Padilla, Zhang, & Oh, 2018; Sun et al., 2016). Approximately 57% of TANF families have at least one child whose age is 5-years-old or younger (Kim et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2016). Moreover, 14% of TANF families have infants whose age is below 1-year-old (Kim et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2016). The other 24%

of TANF families have at least one child whose age is between 6- and 12-years-old and goes to school, but childcare was still needed if their parents were training or working after school hours (Kim et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2016). The majority of TANF families have young children, which might have an impact on their employment outcomes.

Low income families. The family's income must be below half of the federal poverty level in most states for them to be eligible to receive TANF benefits (Halpern-Meekin, Tach, Sykes, & Edin, 2016; Joyce et al., 2015; Sykes et al., 2015). This meant that TANF families had to earn less than $1,000 per month to be able to support a family of four (Halpern-Meekin et al., 2016; Huber et al., 2015; Joyce et al., 2015; Sykes et al., 2015). The income limit varied by state; there were some income limits that were higher and some states had lower income limits (Halpern-Meekin et al., 2016; Huber et al., 2015; Joyce et al., 2015; Sykes et al., 2015). There were some states that generally allowed a TANF family to receive benefits even if their income rose above the initial income eligibility limit (Halpern-Meekin et al., 2016; Huber et al., 2015; Joyce et al., 2015; Sykes et al., 2015). However, the upper income limits for a family to continue being a TANF beneficiary was about $1,033 per month (Huber et al., 2015).

Limited education and work history. Parents with the low income that made then eligible for TANF benefits tended to have both low education levels and limited work histories due to different factors such as physical or mental health issues, caregiving responsibilities to their children with special needs, experiences of domestic violence, and chronically ill children (Carlson, Rosenbaum, & Keith-Jennings, 2016; Zedlewski, 2012). These factors made it difficult for individuals to complete their education or

maintain a stable job. According to research, TANF recipients usually had at least one barrier to employment while approximately 40% of TANF recipients had multiple barriers to employment (Carlson et al., 2016; Zedlewski, 2012). The more barriers that the TANF recipients had, the less likely they were to be employed (Joyce et al., 2015; Zedlewski, 2012).

Challenges in providing parental support. The direct issue of living in poverty together with physical or mental health difficulties may have caused parents to find it difficult to provide parental support to their children (Hahn et al., 2016). The multiple stresses linked to living in poverty might have influenced the executive function skills of adults (Hahn et al., 2016). Executive function skills affect the ability to remember details, make plans, pay attention, perform routine and complex tasks, control emotions and behavior, and solve problems (Olson et al., 2016). These are all skills crucial for an individual to be successful in school, work, and parenting. Executive function skills are easily influenced by external factors such as poverty and adverse life experiences, such as exposure to violence that is common in poor neighborhoods or impoverished areas (Olson et al., 2016; Pavetti, 2014). Executive function skills are important to the employment outcomes among TANF recipients.

Children at risk for harm. Children growing up in poverty might put themselves at a greater risk for hardship and negative consequences (Ratcliffe, 2015). According to researchers, poverty during childhood has a negative impact on the development and life outcomes of the child including completion of high school, graduation from college, premarital births, and having a stable job (Ratcliffe, 2015). The developing brain and

executive functions of children were susceptible to the negative influences of living in poverty (Olson et al., 2016; Ratcliffe, 2015). The toxic stress from living in poverty or extreme poverty can have long-lasting negative affects on the learning, behavior, and health of an individual across their lifespan (Olson et al., 2016; Ratcliffe, 2015).

Experienced adversity. Caregivers who were recipients of TANF experienced significant adversity during their childhood years (Sun et al., 2016; Yang, 2015). Moreover, these individuals were exposed to violence during their adulthood years (Boosheri et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2016). Also, they experienced poverty-related stressors that could limit workforce success (Sun et al., 2016).

Barriers to Employment among TANF participants

To escape poverty, TANF recipients needed good jobs that were stable and that provided self-sufficient wages. However, it was often a challenge to be able to connect TANF recipients with good jobs. A lot of good jobs require education, training, and credentials that were beyond the high school level, which most TANF recipients lacked (Chong et al., 2017; Rosa, 2016). In addition, without the right tools and information, it was difficult to determine which jobs were stable and paid decent wages. There were several barriers to employment among TANF participants.

Lack of education and training. Levels of education might have affected TANF outcomes among recipients. Individuals with a higher educational background reduced their likelihood of welfare use and working poor status and increased their likelihood of financial independence (Chong et al., 2017). Rosa (2016) conducted a literature review of studies that explored the impact of TANF to families in need in Puerto Rico. Rosa (2016)

wanted to determine the common characteristics of the recipients of the program. Most of the TANF participants were heterogeneous in education levels and work history (Rosa, 2016). The majority of the recipients in Rosa's (2016) study either only graduated from high school or did not graduate at all. This fact would impact their chances of obtaining employment that would be sufficient for their family to be financially independent. As a result, the recipients had low occupational skills that hindered them from successfully entering the labor market. In this way, they were not prepared to enter the workforce in terms of education and training. The TANF program should have provided support services that prepared low-income parents for success in the labor market (Pavetti & Schott, 2016).

In one study, Sun et al. (2016) described the impact of trauma-informed financial empowerment and peer support intervention programs in assisting TANF recipients. Sun et al. (2016) conducted a 28-week intervention called the Building Wealth and Health Network to improve maternal and child health as well as the financial security of individuals participating in the TANF program. The participants completed questionnaires to obtain baseline scores about health and wellbeing, career readiness, exposure to challenges and violence, economic status, and interaction with the law. These factors influenced the difficulty that the caregivers had in obtaining stable employment. This meant that recipients of TANF would need to receive adequate support in order to reach financial independence. The Building Wealth and Health Network could provide the recipients with opportunities for them to be successful in the workforce (Sun et al., 2016).

In a similar study, Booshehri et al. (2018) investigated the effectiveness of financial empowerment among TANF participants combined with trauma-informed peer support compared to the standard support and training programs in the TANF. Booshehri et al. (2018) conducted a single-blind randomization and assigned 103 caregivers into three groups: control group (standard support and training programs in the TANF), partial group (a financial education program that lasted 28 weeks), and full group (a financial education program that lasted 28 weeks together with informed peer support program). The study lasted for 15 months (Booshehri et al., 2018). The participants who were in the full intervention program reported that their self-efficacy levels and depressive symptoms improved (Booshehri et al., 2018). In addition, the intervention program reduced economic hardship among the participants (Booshehri et al., 2018). Booshehri et al. (2018) commented that the TANF programming was less effective than financial empowerment education.

Health factors. Poor health outcomes among recipients might have influenced their work participation activities (Sheely & Kneipp, 2015). In another study, Wahler, Otis, and Leukefled (2015) conducted a quantitative study in a nonprobability sample of 2,156 female TANF recipients to determine whether learning problems were a predictor of depressive symptomology. Wahler et al. (2015) concluded that, due to learning difficulties, many TANF recipients were at risk of experiencing depressive symptomology—which could affect their work participation activities.

Some of the recipients of TANF had a history of substance use and alcoholic abuse. To date, limited research exists about the prevalence of substance use, alcoholic

drinking, and opioid use among TANF participants. Oh, DiNitto, and Kim (2018) examined substance use and use disorders as well as substance disorder treatment among adults in families receiving TANF. Using data collected from the 2003-2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), the results revealed that the recipients' binge drinking and use of marijuana remained stable. Among adults in TANF families, 10.8% of women had history of substance abuse disorder in the past year and only five women received treatment (Oh et al., 2018). In another study, Germain (2018) provided the current data on the prevalence of opioid use disorder and treatment services of TANF participants in the TANF-eligible population. Germain (2018) stated that individuals in poverty were more likely to be dependent on opioids compared to individuals with income of more than 200% of the federal poverty line. This appeared to be harmful to the TANF population. Substance abuse and alcohol drinking might influence the capacity of TANF recipients to obtain employment and to remain employed at a workplace. To address this issue, state and local administrators of TANF in 15 states have required all individuals to undergo mandatory drug testing for public assistance recipients as of March 2017 (Germain, 2018).

Sheely and Kneipp (2015) examined the extent to which a criminal conviction might influence the health among women due to limited access to TANF and employment. Sheely and Kneipp (2015) reviewed 434 peer-reviewed articles and 197 research reports about TANF. The results revealed that among disadvantaged women, there has been no full examination of the pathways that could link employment, receiving TANF, and health (Sheely & Kneipp, 2015).

Violent and traumatic experiences. Interpersonal violence was also a primary barrier for employment for women in poverty. Experiences of interpersonal violence could affect the ability of a woman to meet work requirements (Thomas, Collier-Tenison, Maxwell, & Cheek, 2017). In a sample of 525 female TANF recipients, Thomas et al. (2017) found that women who reported interpersonal violence were less likely to be employed. Female recipients who reported experiencing interpersonal violence in the past year were less likely to be self-sufficient (Thomas et al., 2017).

Factors to Address Barriers to Employment among TANF Recipients

State and local TANF offices often used specialized strategies to help individuals with the greatest need to obtain employment. Common components included assessments, effective work programs, and enhanced support programs (Joyce et al., 2015; Stancyzk et al., 2018). Some TANF offices implemented trainings and services to increase access of TANF recipients to education. In the case of some states, some TANF recipients with disabilities were assisted with connecting to Supplemental Security Income (Joyce et al., 2015; Stancyzk et al., 2018). Some states also moved TANF families who wer considered the hardest to employ to state-funded programs that did not include federal funds in order to provide services to assist the poor families without being limited by federal restrictions (Joyce et al., 2015; Stancyzk et al., 2018).

Assessment tools. TANF frontline staff conducted assessments in order to identify potential barriers to employment among TANF recipients (Joyce et al., 2015; Stancyzk et al., 2018). The majority of the recipients did not self-report certain barriers because either they did not know that it was a barrier, they did not want to be

discriminated against because of it, or they did not want to face the consequences (Allard et al., 2018). TANF case workers expressed that they were often uncomfortable in addressing these issues with the TANF recipients (Allard et al., 2018). Moreover, if the TANF recipient did not disclose this information, in the long run, it only made the process longer and more difficult (Allard et al., 2018; Joyce et al., 2015).

TANF offices put value on assessment tools, as they could help them to determine the assistance to be provided to a specific family or individual (Joyce et al., 2015; Stancyzk et al., 2018). Some states have used comprehensive initial assessments to be able to make the process easier for both the TANF case workers and the TANF families (Joyce et al., 2015; Stancyzk et al., 2018). Some states used work tests to identify individuals who found it difficult to meet work requirements (Joyce et al., 2015; Stancyzk et al., 2018). Some TANF officers specifically targeted TANF recipients who were nearing the time limit for the program and provided them with additional assessments or additional services (Joyce et al., 2015; Stancyzk et al., 2018).

State assessments included disability screening, functional needs assessments, psychological assessments, and vocational assessments (Allard et al., 2018; Joyce et al., 2015; Stancyzk et al., 2018). These assessment tools were important because they sometimes uncovered previously undetected disabilities or disorders and could help case workers to suggest appropriate services to address issues or concerns that might have arisen from the assessment results. For instance, specialized screenings administered by trained TANF staff could identify substance abuse problems compared to generic screenings. The results of the assessment helped TANF state agencies to decide on work

exemptions in addition to the federal restrictions and to develop individualized employment plans (Allard et al., 2018; Joyce et al., 2015; Stancyzk et al., 2018).

Effective work programs. States must meet minimum work participation requirements or they will suffer financial penalties (Floyd et al., 2017; Pavetti & Schott, 2016). The work participation requirements varied from state to state and would depend on caseload reduction credit and funding choices (Floyd et al., 2017; Pavetti & Schott, 2016). In general, states required TANF recipients to work for a specified number of minimum average weekly hours in a month (Floyd et al., 2017; Pavetti & Schott, 2016). In some states, there were exemptions to these work requirements especially if the recipient had disabilities or health issues (Floyd et al., 2017; Pavetti & Schott, 2016).

Some TANF offices generated work opportunities outside the competitive labor market as one of the steps to ensure that individuals would obtain permanent unsubsidized employment for TANF recipients that have multiple work barriers (Floyd et al., 2017; Pavetti & Schott, 2016). Some programs provided intensive support programs to assist individuals with disabilities to be able to prepare them for work. For instance, New York City's Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment, Rehabilitation, and Employment (WeCARE) provided unpaid work experience that would be helpful for TANF recipients without work experience (Desai, Garabedian, & Snyder, 2016). The WeCARE program also offered on-site support and monitoring so that individuals could determine strengths and points where improvement was needed (Desai et al., 2016). Another example would be Utah's Diversified Employment Opportunities that provided

transitional employment for TANF recipients and coordinated mental health assistance with other professional services (Kauff, 2008).

TANF frontline staff could have used these tools to gather information about the interests and skills of the TANF recipient, applied the information gathered, and conducted a job search personalized for that individual (Joyce et al., 2015). Several assessments could help in measuring an individual's vocational skills and abilities that could determine his or her work readiness. Frontline staff of TANF programs could improve matching jobs between TANF individuals and available education and training programs. This was important as educational and training resources for TANF recipients were limited and using these tools would ensure that the resources were being used properly (Joyce et al., 2015).

Career pathways could also help TANF individuals. According to the Alliance for Quality Career Pathways (2014), a career pathway is an approach "that connects progressive levels of education, training, support services, and credentials for specific occupations in a way that optimizes the progress and success of individuals with varying levels of abilities and needs" (p. 12). TANF agencies and frontline staff should collaborate with other organizations and engage with local employers (Joyce et al., 2015).

TANF administrators and staff could also use labor market information (LMI) (Joyce et al., 2015). LMI could provide data about good jobs in their location that they could recommend to TANF recipients (Joyce et al., 2015). In addition, LMI could help TANF administrators and staff to identify available jobs that were stable and had self-sufficient wages.

Access to education. Researchers have recommended removing barriers between TANF recipients and educational opportunities (Goddard, Gould, Smith, & Thompson, 2016). States could analyze their work participation rate and, when it is above the federal target rate, they could expand access to education for TANF recipients (Goddard et al., 2016). If it is the case that the work participation was not met, then states could fund a program to make education accessible to TANF recipients (Goddard et al., 2016; Wetherill & Gray, 2015). If possible, states could fund postsecondary education activities for TANF recipients so that they could pursue higher education and training programs that would increase their employability without sacrificing their financial security (Goddard et al., 2016; Wetherill & Gray, 2015). In this way, states could ensure that their work participation rate was met.

Aside from postsecondary education, states should evaluate whether their education programs included access to basic education (Goddard et al., 2016; Joyce et al., 2015). Some participants might not be able to pursue 2- or 4-year degrees. As such, these TANF participants should have meaningful access to basic education, ESL, and GED programs. These programs could provide TANF participants with foundational educational opportunities that might make it easier for them to pursue postsecondary education in the future (Goddard et al., 2016; Joyce et al., 2015).

Ensuring effective educational programs was as important as removing barriers to education for TANF participants. States should have ensure that programs in place were designed to help low-income students to stay in school and to smoothly transition into the workforce once they obtained their degrees (Goddard et al., 2016). Low-income students

may need additional support, such as tutoring or guidance regarding the procedures of registration and financial aid (Hamilton, 2016). Trainings and workshops could include writing an effective résumé (Wetherill & Gray, 2015). States could form partnerships with community colleges so that they could promote career pathways for TANF recipients that were in high demand and paid high wages (Goddard et al., 2016; Joyce et al., 2015).

States could create flexible compliance requirements to ensure that students could meet the requirements even when unexpected life events occurred. Caseworkers could have the responsibility to assess whether the situation of the individual merited an exception or not (Houser, Schram, Soss, & Fording, 2014; Goddard et al., 2016). In addition, there should be training for caseworkers for them to determine how these exceptions worked (Houser et al., 2014; Goddard et al., 2016).

Also, it should abe required that TANF recipients are informed of the option to participate in education and training activities more than once a year (Goddard et al., 2016; Joyce et al., 2015). The frontline staff, or the county staff agents, and caseworkers should be able to inform TANF recipients so that they can be self-sufficient—which is the goal of TANF. This requirement was implemented in Kentucky and it has led to an increase in the enrollment and increase in WTW participation rates (Goddard et al., 2016; Joyce et al., 2015).

The work first approach of TANF has led to disturbing trends about the TANF program regarding its outcomes (Wetherill & Gray, 2015). It has increased employment rates among its recipients but it has not shown any improvement when it comes to

ensuring that the recipients would achieve self-sufficiency (Wetherill & Gray, 2015). While the TANF program has its limitations regarding federal funds and time limits, states could put their TANF funds toward education opportunities that would help TANF recipients (Goddard et al., 2016; Joyce et al., 2015). States could use funds for state-funded programs that would remove barriers to educational opportunities among TANF recipients (Goddard et al., 2016; Joyce et al., 2015).

Specialized support services. States also provide a range of support services besides work support programs to eliminate some of the employment barriers among TANF recipients, such as intensive case management, job coaching, rehabilitative services, and referrals to other services that the individual might need (Farrell, Smith, Reardon, & Obara, 2016). The majority of TANF case workers created individual plans to help individuals overcome barriers to employment. Intensive case management models connected individuals with mental health counseling, domestic violence services, and substance abuse treatment programs (Farrell et al., 2016). Several TANF local offices facilitated program interactions through different organizations and institutions (Farrell et al., 2016).

One of the barriers to work among TANF families has been child wellbeing. California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) is a program that that addressed barriers to work and supported the wellbeing of children in TANF families (Stanczyk et al., 2018). Stanczyk et al. (2018) examined the implementation of CalWORKs in 11 CA county human-service agencies. The results revealed that the state-

encouraged flexibility still needed to be evaluated to determine whether it helped TANF families (Stanczyk et al., 2018).

Solely state-funded programs. Researchers argued that states should create solely state-funded programs to be able to ensure that hard-to-employ individuals in TANF would not suffer from the stringent federal restrictions (Floyd et al., 2017; Goddard et al., 2016). In this way, states should be able to help families that have not been able to comply with the regular TANF program work requirements (Floyd et al., 2017; Goddard et al., 2016).

Programs and Models to Address Employment Barriers

The different strategies by local TANF offices reflected the different philosophies and ideas about how to prepare individuals to work and how to be able to make them overcome one or more barriers to employment. Some people believed that work experience was the most effective way to ensure that individuals could build their human capital and be able to identify possible employment barriers, while others believed that programs should evaluate and address barriers even before TANF recipients were introduced to work to improve their employment prospects (Goddard et al., 2016; Joyce et al., 2015; Pavetti & Schott, 2016). The TANF program models differed because these intervention programs targeted different groups of people (Goddard et al., 2016; Joyce et al., 2015; Pavetti & Schott, 2016). Some targetted individuals with long histories of being a welfare recipient or with histories of a lack of success in the labor force while others targeted individuals diagnosed with specific health conditions that affected their ability to work (Goddard et al., 2016; Joyce et al., 2015; Pavetti & Schott, 2016).

Most of the implemented programs have had positive effects as well. For instance, Philadelphia Hard-to-Employ site and Personal Roads to Individual Development and Employment (PRIDE) resulted in an increase in employment rates to some extent (Bloom et al., 2009; Pavetti, 2016). In fact, it lasted for several years in PRIDE. However, the majority of the participants of PRIDE still never found jobs (Pavetti, 2016). Two-thirds of participants under the PRIDE program never worked in a job when a follow-up was conducted 2 years after the study (Pavetti, 2016). In fact, approximately 80% of the participants in the PRIDE program still received cash assistance during the follow-up (Pavetti, 2016).

Almost all of the programs focused on the immediate goal of increasing participation of TANF recipients to substance abuse and mental health services. Individuals who participated in the Substance Abuse Research Demonstration (SARD) had an increased treatment completion rate as well as decreased rates of substance use (Kuerbis, Neighbors, & Morgenstern, 2011). TANF recipients who participated in the program group (22%) reported obtaining full-time employment 2 years after compared to the rate of individuals in the control group who obtained full-time employment (9%) (Kuerbis et al., 2011).

In other studies, an increase in treatment participation did not necessarily translate into an increase in health outcomes or obtaining full-time employment. In the Substance Abuse Case management study, which operated on a larger scale compared to SARD, the participation rate of the individuals did not lead to long-term improvements in terms of employment and health outcomes (Lawrence, Chau, & Lennon, 2004).

The Building Nebraska Families program was different from these other approaches (Babcock, 2018; Pavetti, 2014). This program presented an expensive model that enabled the staff to handle small caseloads and conduct home visits to recipients every week or every other week to teach life skills (Babcock, 2018; Pavetti, 2014). The results revealed that there were small impacts that happened with the participants (Babcock, 2018; Pavetti, 2014). The results for least job-ready participants (individuals with multiple employment barriers) were better and more positive as they experienced significant increase in earnings, employment, and overall outcomes (Babcock, 2018; Pavetti, 2014). However, this model was conducted in an area where there were small caseloads (Babcock, 2018; Pavetti, 2014). Babcock (2018) recommended that the program be evaluated in an urban area with a larger TANF caseload.

Among the programs, the least positive results came from programs that targeted intensive assessment and case management models such as the Minnesota Tier 2 and Success Through Employment programs (Bloom, Loprest, & Zedlewski, 2002; Jacobs & Bloom, 2011). In these programs, there were only a few positive employment impacts (Bloom et al., 2002; Jacobs & Bloom, 2011). Moreover, these programs experienced difficulty in engaging participants for long periods (Bloom et al., 2002; Jacobs & Bloom, 2011). In fact, some participants did not complete the assessments required for the first phase of the program (Bloom et al., 2002; Jacobs & Bloom, 2011).

These programs were not evaluated on a regular basis. In fact, most of the studies have not been updated for more than 5 years. There is a need to gain a deeper understanding of the issues in TANF, especially aspects and programs that could improve

employment outcomes among TANF recipients so that they will no longer be dependent on the TANF program (Babcock, 2018; Bloom et al., 2002; Jacobs & Bloom, 2011). In Table 2, a summary of the models and programs and results has been provided.

Table 2

Models and Programs to Address Employment Barriers

Program	**Target Group**	**Program Model**	**Sample Size**	**Results**
Transitional Work Corporation	TANF recipients for at least one year or those who do not have a high school diploma	Two-week preemployment class that led to subsidized transitional jobs, job placement, and retention services	Approximately 2,000 TANF recipients from Philadelphia	Increase in employment outcomes during the program but did not have long-term effects and reduction in participation in TANF programs
Personal Roads to Individual Development and Employment (PRIDE)	TANF recipients with physical or mental health conditions that might limit their capacity to do work	Combination of unpaid work experience, job search assistance, and educational activities	Approximately 3,000 TANF recipients in New York City	Significant increase in employment outcomes that have been maintained for four years
Minnesota Tier 2	TANF recipients who failed to find jobs in the usual services in TANF	Intensive case management and some subsidized job slots	Approximately 1, 700 TANF recipients in Hennepin County	No sustained positive impact to employment or TANF assistance outcomes

Success Through Employment Preparation	TANF recipients for at least one year or those who do not have a high school diploma	Intensive assessment followed by services and strategies to remove employment barriers	Approximately 2, 000 TANF recipients from Philadelphia	No significant impact on employment, TANF receipt, or earnings
Building Nebraska Families	TANF recipients who need to comply with work participation activities	Home visitation and life skills education	Approximately 600 TANF recipients in rural Nebraska	Only small impacts to the participants
Substance Abuse Research Demonstration (SARD)	TANF recipients with substance dependence or abuse	Intensive case management to promote participation to treatment programs	302 TANF recipients	Increase in participation and completion of treatment

TANF Frontline Staff or County Staff Agents and Their Role in TANF

County staff agents mediate the enrollment process in the TANF program. However, few, if any, prior studies have looked at the role of the county staff in influencing WTW participation. However, the staff represents a critical link and has been identified as a significant point of failure for other aspects of TANF such as identifying cases of domestic violence (Lindauer, 2016).

Satisfaction. There are many factors that might affect job satisfaction and life satisfaction for government employees. Lack of job satisfaction might influence the performance of government employees, which might result in high turnover rates. Mafini

and Dlodlo (2014) conducted a study that examined relationships between motivation, life satisfaction, and job satisfaction among public employees. A questionnaire was administered to 246 employees in a South African public organization (Mafini & Dlodlo, 2014). The job satisfaction of government employees was motivated by salary, supervision, quality of work life, and teamwork (Mafini & Dlodlo, 2014). The results revealed that public employees went above and beyond what was required of them when they had a good work environment and they improved their work performance as result as well (Mafini & Dlodlo, 2014). Satisfied government employees could mean better performance and better services to citizens.

The number of caseloads affects the work performance as well as the job satisfaction of case workers (Ziliak, 2015). This might be similar to the situation of government employees who assist families in the TANF program. In terms of caseload, Haider and Klerman (2005) found that there were reductions in the amount of households in TANF program but mostly due to decreased entry.

Behavior and experiences. The welfare work environment could be described as highly constrained and contradictory (Taylor, 2015). Taylor (2014) conducted a case study in NC and identified that most public workers believed that treating all customers the same was the same as treating them fairly. Although most of the workers who participated in the study stated they would not break any of the rules, the case study revealed that some workers would make decisions based on county-preferred outcomes rather than following the program guidelines (Taylor, 2014).

Cortis and Eastman (2015) examined whether the level of control an individual had over his or her work influenced job performance of frontline practitioners in Australia. The researchers examined data from human-service agencies from 2003 to 2012 (Cortis & Eastman, 2015). The results revealed that the human-service workforce had not experienced an increase in job control for more than 10 years (Cortis & Eastman, 2015). This has resulted in poor work performance and poor service quality (Cortis & Eastman, 2015). Having control over objectives, tasks, and pacing could improve the work experiences of frontline practitioners, which also enables them to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of the individuals they serve (Cortis & Eastman, 2015). Having control over their work improved their service quality and their overall wellbeing (Cortis & Eastman, 2015).

In another study, Taylor (2015) examined the emotional management of workers in terms of how they coped with problems in their jobs. The data was obtained from an in-depth case study of 19 welfare-to-work workers (Taylor, 2015). Taylor (2015) conducted one-on-one interviews and observations. In their work environment, the case workers recreated and redefined themselves as good workers and good people at the same time punishing program participants (Taylor, 2015). In general, they did not want to punish recipients of TANF but had to do so in order for the participants to learn from their mistakes and take their situation more seriously (Taylor, 2015). In order to do this difficult task, the case workers managed their emotions through institutional rhetoric and tough love paternalism (Taylor, 2015).

Social change will be needed to change the behavior of eligibility staff. Preister (2014) examined the field experiences of social workers in order to build theories of social change. Preister (2014) concluded that there should be a dialectic of reflection and action among social workers when they are doing their job. In this way, the social workers can improve their behavior toward their clients.

Training and support. There have been few studies about training and support given to county staff agents. In the existing literature, it was found that there was limited support for caseworkers in providing assistance to citizens or TANF recipients in getting a job (Boulus-Rødje, 2018). Boulus-Rødje (2018) investigated collaborative practices of welfare workers in a public welfare agency. Boulus-Rødje (2018) aimed to determine the knowledge practices of caseworkers in assessing citizens to obtain employment. In this study, the researchers determined that there was a need for training programs so that the knowledge of caseworkers in assessing unemployed citizens would improve (Boulus-Rødje, 2018). This would also lead to a faster and easier matching of skills of unemployed citizens and job openings (Boulus-Rødje, 2018). The caseworkers stated that they received limited training and support programs to be able to improve their knowledge and skills and to make it easier to assist citizens or TANF recipients (Boulus-Rødje, 2018). Since TANF staff heled individuals from different races, they needed to receive cultural-competence training to ensure that they did not demonstrate discrimination while helping TANF recipients (Cheng, Lo, & Weber, 2017).

Summary and Conclusion

TANF is a welfare program meant to replace AFDC (Cebulla, 2018). The main differences between AFDC and TANF were about their rules on cash assistance and work requirements (Cebulla, 2018; Pavetti & Schott, 2016). States face new TANF work participation rates and they could lose their funding if they do not meet the new targets (Cebulla, 2018). One of the main criticisms about TANF was regarding its structure (Moffitt, 2015; Pavetti & Schott, 2016). Another concern about TANF was whether it was resulting in positive outcomes. Several scholars found that TANF led to a decrease in poverty rates (Bunch et al., 2017; Mather, 2017), crime rates (McCarty et al., 2015; Wright et al., 2017), and employment rates (Haskins, 2016). Several scholars also suggested recommendations to improve TANF through providing a safety net (Edin & Shafer, 2015; Pavetti & Schott, 2016), adequate resources (Pavetti & Schott, 2016), helping the families with the greatest need (Danziger et al., 2016; Meunnig et al., 2015), and providing access to victims of domestic violence (Cohen, 2017; Ragavan et al., 2019).

In the existing literature, several scholars explored the characteristics of TANF recipients to determine whether these characteristics affected the effectiveness of the program. Scholars found that TANF recipients were parents of young children (Kim et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2016), low-income families (Halpern-Meekin, et al., 2016; Huber et al., 2015; Joyce et al., 2015; Sykes et al., 2015), had limited education and work history (Carlson et al., 2016; Zedlewski, 2012), experienced challenges in providing parental support (Olson et al., 2016; Pavetti, 2014), put children at risk for harm (Olson et al.,

2016; Ratcliffe, 2015), and experienced adversity during childhood (Boosheri et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2016). These characteristics might become one of the barriers for employment outcomes among TANF recipients.

A significant body of existing literature includes discussion of issues relating to TANF recipients themselves, seeking to characterize the program's failings in terms of the recipients' shortcomings in the areas of education, training, or motivation (e.g., Cebulla, 2018) while others have looked at mistargeting within the structure of the program itself, claiming it did not direct enough funds to its core purposes (e.g., Pavetti & Schott, 2016). While important, these claims ignore another important factor—which was the role played by the county staff agents who mediated the enrollment process. None of the literature reviewed looked at how the county employees influenced clients to participate in a WTW activity. I sought to fill this gap by contributing to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem by providing data to public policy decision-makers to formulate and or change policies on how the county employees impact the TANF work requirement participation rate.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The general problem was the inability to meet the TANF work requirement in ABC County, CA. The specific problem was that the TANF participants found that the WTW program did not assist in terms of finding employment. The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory case study was to explore how county staff members interacted with TANF recipients and might act to influence those recipients in their decisions about WTW activity. Based on the problem and purpose, the phenomenon of interest for this study was the interaction of TANF staff with WTW program beneficiaries in terms of finding employment. In order to address the problem and fulfill the purpose, a qualitative methodology with a case study design was employed.

The phenomenon explored for this study required in-depth data collection and analysis. A qualitative methodology enabled me to explore the phenomenon of interaction of TANF staff with WTW program beneficiaries in terms of finding employment through in-depth data collection using interviews and other qualitative data collection techniques. Through interviews, which are the most common tools used for data collection in qualitative studies, the researcher can collect in-depth data by asking for explanation and further discussion of the initial answers of the participants. This procedure could only be accomplished through qualitative measures.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the use and appropriateness of qualitative methodology, case study design, and other related processes that were implemented to fulfill the purpose of the study. The sections included in this chapter are: (a) introduction, (b)

research design and rationale, (c) role of the researcher, (d) methodology, (e) issues of trustworthiness, and (f) ethical consideration. The chapter ends with a summary of the discussion and a transition to Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

RQ1. How do county eligibility staff members interact with TANF recipients in the specific context of ABC County, CA?

RQ2. How do county eligibility staff members perceive their interaction with TANF recipients as potentially influencing the likelihood of the recipients to participate in WTW programs in the specific context of ABC County, CA?

Research Methodology

Based on the research questions of the study, the methodology used was qualitative. Qualitative research seeks to examine participants' perceptions and subjective experiences and generally targets the human side of an issue, asking open-ended and exploratory questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative studies ask "why" or "how" questions (Yin, 2017), and the research questions that guided this study were both "how" questions. Moreover, the phenomenon under study was one that had not yet seen significant theoretical development, warranting an exploratory study. In this regard, qualitative research was ideal for studying new a phenomenon and exploring the theoretical landscape that defined this phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). By contrast, quantitative research is ideal for studying the nature of the relationship between

variables (O'Sullivan, Rassel, Berner & Taliaferro, 2017), but this requires a more well-developed theoretical understanding of the issue in advance. Without such an understanding, identifying the correct variables to measure in a quantitative study can be problematic—making the quantitative approach a poor fit for this type of exploratory research.

Research Design

The research design for this study was a case study. A case study design is appropriate for studies that are focused on exploring a phenomenon based on participants' perceptions (Yin, 2017). Moreover, a researcher uses a case study when aiming to explore a phenomenon in-depth; case studies allow the use of multiple data sources for this type of qualitative research (Yin, 2017). In case studies, the questions asked are usually about how or why something happens in relation to the phenomenon. For this study, the research questions began with asking how participants perceived specific aspects of the phenomenon explored. The focus of this study was on exploring the perceptions of staff members involved in the TANF program. Therefore, the case for this study was how the staff members were involved in the TANF program.

The purpose of the study required me to focus on staff members' perceptions because the problem could be addressed using this type of information from the participants. Moreover, data was collected from multiple sources in order to collect the needed in-depth information that would address the research questions fully. Therefore, based on the alignment between the description of a case study and the different

requirements for this research, a case study was determined to be the appropriate design to be used for this research.

Other research designs were also considered. However, these other designs, such as phenomenology, grounded theory, narrative inquiry, and ethnography, were found to be inappropriate for this study. Phenomenology is a design used when conducting deep exploration of human participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). However, the focus of the study was staff perceptions rather than lived experiences. Hence, case study was preferred over phenomenology. Grounded theory is conducted when aiming to develop a theory about a topic through data collected and analyzed in a systematic manner (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). However, a case study was preferred over grounded theory because the study did not warrant the development of a theory from the collected data. A narrative inquiry was not appropriate for this study because I did not have to present and analyze data in a storied or chronological manner (Clandinin, 2016). Furthermore, ethnography was not suitable for this study because I did not have to focus on culture to explore the phenomenon in relation to the problem of the study (Pink, 2016). Therefore, a case study was used as the appropriate design for this research.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study was experiences and perceptions of TANF recipients regarding their interactions with co-recipients and their decision to participate in a WTW activity. This unit of analysis aligned with the purpose of the study, which was to explore how county staff members interacted with TANF recipients and might act to influence those recipients in their decisions to participate in a WTW activity. Therefore,

the chosen unit of analysis was the basis for understanding the phenomenon of interest for this study. The exploration of the unit of analysis was performed through interviews, observations, and document reviews.

Role of the Researcher

I, as the researcher, assumed the role of an observer for this study. I recruited participants, collected data, and analyzed the data. During recruitment, I obtained permission from chosen sites where the participants worked. Also, I personally invited potential participants (e.g., TANF staff members) to be a part of the study. Because I personally recruited and selected participants for this study, I aimed to minimize any conflicts of interest. Therefore, when recruiting participants, I made sure that I did not invite any members of my family, relatives, co-workers, peers, or subordinates in order to minimize any potential conflicts of interest.

I served as the main data collection instrument by becoming an interviewer, observer, and document reviewer. I interviewed TANF staff members about the study topic. Also, I conducted observations of the participants in their workplaces. I collected relevant documents for review for data triangulation as well. The documents included training and regulations materials from the TANF/WTW agencies under study. To minimize researcher bias and avoid leading and irrelevant lines of questioning during data collection, especially during the interviews, I used an interview guide to ensure the structure and alignment of the questions to the problem and purpose of the study.

Aside from using an interview guide to minimize researcher bias, I reduced possible influences of personal bias by acknowledging my beliefs, experiences, and

perceptions in relation to the topic being studied. If unaddressed, sources of bias may interfere with the trustworthiness of the study. As I did research on the topic of financial and accountability policies in charitable institutions, I may have developed familiarity, personal preferences, and perceptions in relation to the topic. Therefore, by acknowledging these sources of bias, I improved my cautiousness for making interpretations and conclusions related to my personal views and perceptions.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

Target population. Overall, the target population for this study was the TANF workers in ABC County, CA. In the problem and purpose, the population of TANF workers were explicitly included and identified as central to the issue addressed in this study. Moreover, based on the discussion of the problem, ABC County has not been able to design a WTW program that meets the TANF program work participation requirement of at least 50% (Danziger et al., 2016). The project in ABC County has failed (Danziger, 2016). The area of ABC County, CA was chosen because of the failure of the TANF program to achieve the goal of enabling transition to employment under the WTW program. Therefore, the target population was determined based on the relevant experiences and perceptions that these individuals have had in relation to addressing the research questions of the current research in a complete manner.

Based on the target population, the case for this study included the staff members involved in the TANF program. This case was selected based on the purpose and research

questions of this study. Exploring the perceptions of people from the chosen case produced relevant data that was significant for addressing the research questions.

Sampling strategy. I used purposive sampling as the recruitment strategy for this study; using purposive sampling as the recruitment technique for participants is common among qualitative studies, including case studies (Barratt, Ferris, & Lenton, 2015; Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015; Sun et al., 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015). When conducting a purposive sampling procedure, a researcher selects participants based on a specific set of characteristics that are aligned with the topic of interest; therefore, a purposive sampling technique was appropriate for selecting participants for this case study (Barratt et al., 2015; Gentles et al., 2015; Sun et al., 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015).

Sampling criteria. I recruited participants based on a set of eligibility criteria, which aligned with the concept of purposive sampling. The criteria for considering a participant eligible for this study were: (a) must be a TANF worker in ABC County for the past 2 years, (b) have at least five cases of program beneficiaries that failed to transition to permanent employment phase within the past 2 years, and (c) currently handle TANF beneficiaries transitioning in the WTW program. I ensured that the participants had these three characteristics by including these criteria in the invitation to participate. Also, I asked a series of questions during the recruitment phase for interested TANF workers to screen eligible and noneligible participants.

Sample size. Identifying the correct sample size for a qualitative case study does not involve strict computation or large data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The basis is usually the point of data saturation, wherein the following criteria have been satisfied: no new

data found, no new codes identified, and no new themes emerged (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Tran, Porcher, Falissard, & Ravaud, 2016). In most cases, 6-25 participants would be enough to reach data saturation (Yin, 2017). Although qualitative research does not target specific sample sizes (rather, saturation, or the point at which new participants no longer contribute new data), a sample size of 10-15 was in line with the norms for case study research (Mason, 2010; Yin, 2017). Therefore, I recruited 10-15 TANF workers who satisfied the eligibility criteria.

Instrumentation

In case studies, researchers commonly use multiple data sources to conduct in-depth data analysis. Three data sources were used for this study: (a) semi-structured interviews, (b) observations, and (c) document reviews.

Semi-structured interviews. The primary source of data for the study was qualitative, semi-structured interviews. Qualitative interviews are a standard and typical source of data in qualitative research, ideal for capturing the opinions and perceptions of a study's participants (Turner, 2010). Semi-structured interviews have structure from an interview-guide, but also allow the researcher the freedom to ask additional follow-up or probing questions where appropriate to more fully explore a participant's experiences.

I developed the questions in the interview guide. The basis for the content of the interview guide was the existing literature about the phenomenon of interaction of TANF staff with WTW program beneficiaries in terms of finding employment. When developing the interview guide, the research questions and purpose of the study were

considered. The questions in the interview guide had a direct relationship to answering the research questions of the study.

The interview guide was prepared in advance and reviewed by three experts in the field of public management to ensure that the contents of the guide were sufficient to answer the research questions (Turner, 2010). Each expert had at least 10 years of career experience in the field of public management. To access these experts, I wrote a formal letter of intent to invite five known experts in the chosen field to share their expertise as reviewers of the interview guide for this study. The first three experts who responded favorably were scheduled for the expert review session.

In the review, the experts evaluated the items in the interview guide based on the following criteria: (a) appropriate use of words, (b) appropriate sentence structure, and (c) complete questions in terms of addressing the research question. The experts provided feedback about how the instrument satisfied the review criteria. The words and sentence structure had to be easy to understand for TANF workers. The terms used had to be common for the study participants. Moreover, the experts provided feedback about the completeness of the items in the interview guide in addressing the research questions of the study in a complete manner. The experts gave recommendations for possible changes that would improve the questions in the interview. Based on a consensus, changes to the interview guide were applied before conducting any data collection for this study.

Observations. In addition, case studies generally require at least three separate sources of data in order to fully understand and contextualize the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2017). Accordingly, a second source of data was participant observations

wherein I scheduled a short (30-60 minute) observation session with each participant to observe him or her actually interacting with TANF participants. Data collection for this source of data consisted of field notes using a prepared and reviewed template. Therefore, the main instrument for observations was an observation guide. The observation guide included questions for the observer to answer in the duration of the session. The answers to the observation guide questions served as the field notes to be used as data for the second source for this study.

Document reviews. Finally, a document review was conducted for triangulation purposes. The documents reviewed included training and regulations materials from the TANF/WTW agencies under study. These documents were collected from the different agencies where the participants worked. I asked each participant to provide these documents after the observation session. These documents represented document collection, the study's third source of data.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The procedures for recruitment and data collection followed a series of phases provided in Figure 2.

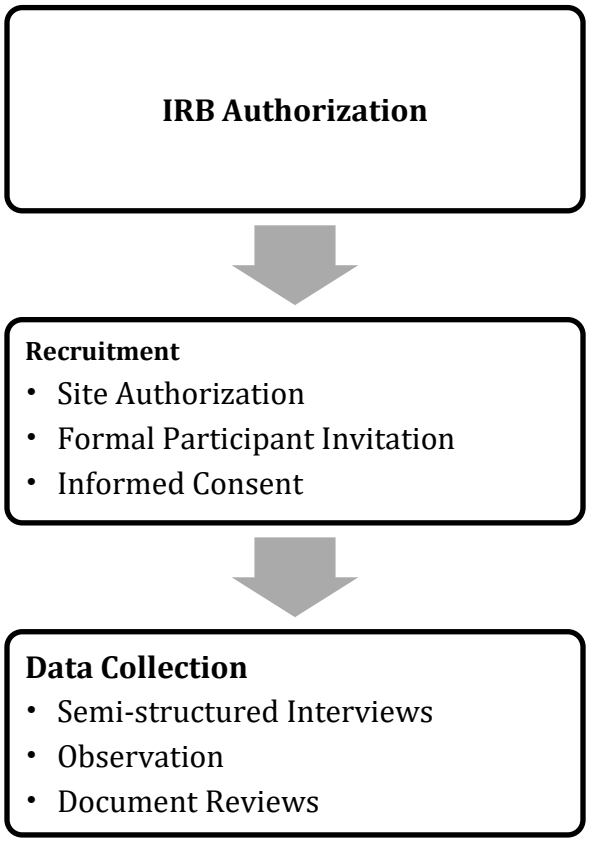

Figure 2. Recruitment and data collection process.

Procedures for recruitment and participation. I ensured that I had University Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission before I proceeded with any data collection techniques or recruitment steps for this study. I submitted a copy of the proposed procedures to the IRB. I presented the processes of how I would address ethical issues and protect the rights of participants for this study in order to obtain the permission of the IRB to conduct this study with TANF recipients.

The sampling was done through the agencies providing TANF, which I contacted for site permission. Using the purposive sampling technique, I conducted recruitment in three phases: (a) site authorization, (b) participant invitation, and (c) informed consent. In

the first phase, I contacted five TANF/WTW agencies to ask permission to recruit and collect data from their workers. Once site authorization was obtained, I went into the second phase. I requested that the agencies forward my letter of invitation to participate to the e-mail addresses of their employees. In addition, I carried out document collection at this stage, requesting policy statements, program specifications, and other relevant data regarding WTW programs from the agencies. County workers who contacted me to participate in the study were verified through their agency. Also, I asked a series of screening questions to assess the eligibility of the TANF workers to participate in this study. All the eligible and interested participants had an interview and observation session scheduled.

Procedures for data collection. I conducted data collection in three phases: (a) semi-structured interview, (b) observations, and (c) document review.

Semi-structured interview. Interviews were used to collect in-depth data from participants (Robinson, 2014). Interview locations must be convenient and comfortable for the participants to encourage eager participation when answering questions (Silverman, 2016). Therefore, I conducted the interviews in an empty meeting room inside the TANF facility where the participant worked. Each interview lasted for 30 to 60 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded, which was made known to the participant through the informed consent form.

I began the interview by greeting the participants appropriately. I reviewed the background of the study and the purpose of the interview. I discussed the flow of the interview session to manage the expectations of the participants. I began asking questions

using the interview guide. Because the interview was semi-structured, I asked follow-up questions to collect further explanations for the participants' answers. After asking all the questions in the interview guide, I told the participant that there were no more questions. I allowed the participant to ask questions for clarification, if there were any. If the participant had questions, I addressed them. After all questions and comments had been addressed or acknowledged, I thanked the participant for their time and effort. Also, I reminded the participant about the observation schedule and the documents to be collected after the next data collection session.

Observation. I conducted an observation session during the participants' working hours. During the observation, I took note of gestures, facial expressions, and behaviors that provided insight into the interaction between the TANF workers and their clients (e.g., beneficiaries of the TANF/WTW program). However, I did not interact with the client because they were not the focus of this study. Also, I refrained from collecting any information about the client, especially their identification. Instead, the focus of the observation was on the TANF worker while performing his or her tasks and responsibilities. Each observation lasted for 1 hour. After each observation session, I approached the participant and inform him or her that the session had ended. I collected the documents to be used for the review.

Document review. The documents reviewed included training and regulations materials from the TANF/WTW agencies under study. These documents were chosen because they were useful in verifying data from interviews and observations about the phenomenon being studied. To review the documents, I read each document from each

participant. From the documents, I identified information about the interaction between the TANF workers and the beneficiaries. Also, I identified information about the outcome of the program and problem areas. Moreover, I read the documents and highlighted the words, phrases, and sentences that could directly address the research questions of the study. I made a soft copy of the relevant texts from the document reviews.

Data Analysis Plan

I analyzed data using thematic analysis (Braun, Clark, & Terry, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The six steps for thematic analysis are shown in Figure 3.

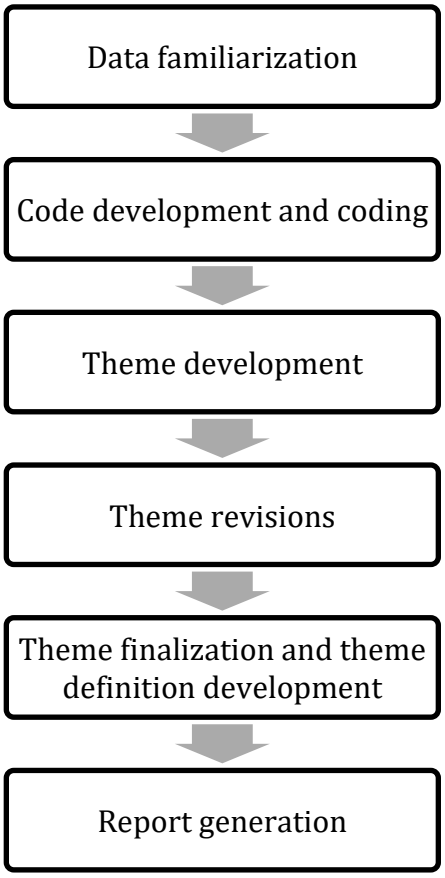

Figure 3. Thematic analysis. Source: Braun et al., 2014.

I performed the first four steps for each of the three data sources separately. I combined the results for the first four steps for all three data sources in order to conduct the last two steps for the analysis. I used Nvivo software to aid in analyzing the data.

For the first step, I read the data twice. I highlighted important words and word segments that could address at least one of the research questions. For the second step, I coded the data. I assigned a code to each highlighted phrase to identify how they related to the research question. In the third step, I grouped similar codes to form a theme that had a direct answer to the research question. In the fourth step, I eliminated negligible themes, combined smaller themes, or decomposed large themes, as needed.

For the fifth step, I compared all of the themes from the three data sources. I identified the major and minor themes. Themes that were present for all data sources were considered major themes. Themes that were present for one or two data sources were minor themes. Also, I developed a description for each theme to link the themes to the research questions of the study. In the sixth step, I wrote the discussion of the findings and presented the final report in Chapter 4.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the measure of validity and reliability for qualitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness has four elements: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To improve trustworthiness, procedures for improving these four elements must be ensured.

Credibility

I improved credibility of the study by performing member checking of the interview transcripts (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). I provided each participant with a copy of his or her interview transcript. Each participant reviewed the contents of the transcript for correctness and completeness. The ideas presented in the transcript were confirmed through member checking. Any changes that needed to be made were discussed between me and the participant over the phone. Aside from member checking, I improved credibility of the study by using an expert review of the interview guide. Scholars claimed that by conducting an expert panel review, a researcher could improve the validity of an interview protocol (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Transferability

To improve transferability, I enabled future researchers and readers of this study to assess the applicability of the findings to another setting through replication (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I improved transferability by discussing the procedures and findings of the study in a detailed manner (Miles et al., 2014). By performing this task, I expected that output for the study could be useful to other researchers for other studies. Therefore, future researchers will be able to replicate the study to apply to other populations or settings.

Dependability

I improved dependability through an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail is the compilation of relevant documents (e.g., consent forms, interview questions, and field notes) that can help improve the accuracy and dependability of the data for the

benefit of future researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through an audit trail, information can be gathered that serves as a second opinion of the processes and products of the study (Cope, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability

I improved confirmability by reducing the subjectivity of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I reduced subjectivity by using a valid instrument that had been expert reviewed. In this manner, researcher bias was reduced during data collection. With the use of multiple data sources, confirmability was improved because of data triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Procedures

When using human subjects for a study, a researcher has the responsibility of addressing ethical issues. I addressed ethical issues by obtaining IRB permission, providing informed consent, ensuring participant confidentiality, recruiting participants voluntarily, and ensuring security of data storage. I obtained permission from IRB before beginning the recruitment process. In this manner, the IRB assessed my methods and assessed if the rights of the participants would be violated through my study procedures. Moreover, all participants received a copy of the informed consent form to let them know about their rights and responsibilities as participants. Only those who read and signed the consent form were considered as participants for this study. Furthermore, I used pseudonyms to replace the names of participants to ensure confidentiality. I used these pseudonyms in the data sheets and reports to protect the identity of the participants. Moreover, all participants were volunteers. I did not force anyone to participate in this

study. No incentives were given to participants either. Finally, all information and documents will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home office. I will be the only one who can access these documents. I will keep them for 5 years and destroy the data after 5 years.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I focused on the methodology and research design for this study. I performed a qualitative methodology with case study research design to fulfill the purpose of the study. Moreover, the target population for study was the TANF workers in ABC County, CA. I used purposive sampling to recruit samples from the target population based on a set of eligibility criteria. The criteria for considering a participant eligible for this study were: (a) must be a TANF worker in ABC County for the past 2 years, (b) have at least five cases of program beneficiaries that failed to transition to permanent employment phase within the past 2 years, and (c) currently handle TANF beneficiaries transitioning in the WTW program. I collected data through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document reviews. I analyzed data using thematic analysis. To improve the trustworthiness of this study, I performed member checking of interviews. Moreover, I triangulated data through the three data sources, thus, improving the credibility of this study. Through a full description of the procedures and findings of this study, overall trustworthiness was improved as well. The findings from this study will be reported and presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The aim of this qualitative, exploratory case study was to explore how county staff members interacted with TANF recipients and might act to influence those recipients in their decisions about WTW activity. Based on the problem and purpose of this study, the phenomenon of interest for this study was the interaction of TANF staff with WTW program beneficiaries in terms of finding employment. The specific problem that I sought to address was that the TANF participants found that the WTW program did not assist in terms of finding employment. While the TANF program replaced prior cash assistance programs with a work-based safety net, it did not actually guarantee work to its participants (Danziger et al., 2016). This problem impacts the low-income families that the TANF program is trying to assist and weakens the overall program. Drawing on social construction theory (Sabatier & Weible, 2014), I sought to determine how staff workers interacted with TANF recipients and how the latter decided to participate in a WTW program. The anticipated goal was to provide data that public policy decision-makers may use to formulate and or change policies on how the county employees impact the TANF work requirement participation rate.

The accompanied research questions for this study were:

RQ1. How do county eligibility staff members interact with TANF recipients in the specific context of ABC County, CA?

RQ2. How do county eligibility staff members perceive their interaction with TANF recipients as potentially influencing the likelihood of the recipients to participate in WTW programs in the specific context of ABC County, CA?

This chapter will start with a description of the setting and demographics for the study. Subsequently, the data collection and data analysis procedures will be re-introduced and evidence of trustworthiness will be briefly recounted. Extracted themes will be explained and supported with participants' quotes.

Setting

The recruitment flyer for this study was shared by ABC County with all staff at their five TANF offices. Interested staff members were to reach out to me directly. Once I verified that the participants met the recruitment criteria, interviews were scheduled at their place of work, documents were obtained, and observations were scheduled. Interviews were conducted in an empty conference room and observations in the clients' interview rooms, at the employees TANF Office.

Demographics

In terms of study eligibility, participants had to meet a number of criteria. First, participants were required to have been a TANF worker in ABC County for at least the past 2 years. Second, participants were required to have been involved in at least five recorded cases of program beneficiaries that failed to transition to the permanent employment phase within the past 2 years. Third, only TANF workers who were involved in transitioning TANF beneficiaries in the WTW program at the moment of

interviewing were considered for participation. All TANF workers who met these requirements were invited to join the study, regardless of sex, age, and ethnicity.

In terms of demographics, out of the 12 participants, 10 participants were female and 2 were male. All participants identified as Hispanic. Participants' ages ranged from early 20's to early 50's. However, further personally identifiable information was not collected.

Data Collection

For this study, three data sources were used: participant observations, individual in-depth interviews, and organizational documentation. Twelve semi-structured interviews with TANF workers were conducted over the course of three days: July 1st, 2019 through July 3rd, 2019. Interviews lasted for approximately 45 minutes and were conducted in an empty meeting room inside the TANF facility where the participant worked. All interviews were audio-recorded, which was made known to the participant through the informed consent form.

A second data source consisted of 12 observations with the same 12 TANF workers. These observation sessions were conducted during the participants' working hours. During the observation, I made note of gestures, facial expressions, and behaviors that were used to provide insight into the interaction between the TANF workers and their clients. Each observation lasted for approximately one hour. After each observation session, I approached the participant and informed him or her that the session had ended. An important side note was that there was no interaction with the client in any way, and I refrained from collecting any information about the client, especially their identification.

A third data source was organizational documents. These documents included training and regulations materials from the TANF/WTW agencies under study. These documents were chosen because they were regarded as potentially useful in verifying data from interviews and observations about the phenomenon being studied.

Data Analysis

In order to address the problem and fulfill the purpose of the study, a qualitative methodology with case study design was employed. As the focus was on exploring a phenomenon based on participants' perceptions, a case study design seemed to be the appropriate choice (Yin, 2017). Moreover, the case study design allows the researcher to explore a phenomenon in-depthly by means of the use of multiple data sources (Yin, 2017). For this particular study, three data sources were used: participant observations, individual in-depth interviews, and organizational documentation.

To analyze all three data sources, a thematic analysis approach was employed (Braun et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) using Nvivo12 software. In the first step, all data sources were thoroughly read twice. Afterwards, all three data sources were coded separately and initial themes were formed. Once this process was completed, all codes were collected and combined to eventually develop five main themes. These main themes included: (a) type of interviews, (b) perceived role and needs, (c) strategies, (d) perceived influence on decision-making, and (e) identified shortcomings. All themes were divided further into several subthemes. Tables are used throughout the results section to illustrate the importance and significance of the themes and subthemes found.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the measure of validity and reliability for qualitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness has four elements: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To improve trustworthiness, procedures for improving these four elements must be ensured. Credibility was performed by means of member checking of interview transcripts. In practice, this meant that each participant was provided with a copy of his or her interview transcript and was asked to review the contents of the transcript for correctness and completeness. Aside from member checking, an expert review of the interview guide was used. Scholars claimed that by conducting an expert panel review, a researcher could improve the validity of an interview protocol (Miles et al., 2014). Transferability was satisfied by discussing the procedures and findings of the study in a detailed manner. By performing this task, future researchers will be able to replicate the study for other populations or settings. A third element was dependability and was fulfilled through an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail is the compilation of relevant documents (e.g., consent forms, interview questions, and field notes) that can help in improving the accuracy and dependability of the data for the benefit of future researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lastly, confirmability was satisfied by reducing the subjectivity of the study. This was done by using a valid instrument that had been expert reviewed, as well as through the use of multiple data sources.

Results

The thematic analysis of 12 semi-structured interviews, 12 observations, and additional documentation resulted in a number of themes that were attained in correspondence with the SCF, as formulated by Berger and Luckmann (1966), as well as the two research questions introduced in the introduction of this chapter. In accordance with these elements, I developed five main themes: (a) type of interviews, (b) perceived role and needs, (c) strategies, (d) perceived influence on decision-making, and (e) identified shortcomings. These themes will be discussed in-detail and supported with direct participant quotes pulled from the interview transcripts.

Theme 1: Type of Interviews

A first theme was called type of interviews and included general information regarding client interviews. The analysis resulted in two subthemes: (a) descriptions of interviews and (b) language. In the first subtheme, participants reported what kind of interviews they were involved in and what the specific purpose was of these interviews. In the second subtheme, information related to language barriers and ethnic groups were discussed. In the next few sections, these subthemes are explored further. Additionally, Table 3 gives a clear indication of both subthemes and their respective significance.

Table 3

Frequency Table Theme 1: Type of Interviews

Subtheme mentioned	Participant Code	Percentage (%; n=12)	Frequency
Descriptions of interviews	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12	100%	38

Language			
Working with non-English speaking clients	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12	91.7%	22
Bilingual	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P12	75%	10

Subtheme 1: Descriptions of interviews. In terms of the types of interviews participants were involved in, most mentioned more than one type. Eligibility interviews, work employment interviews, and face-to-face interviews were frequently mentioned. The purpose of each type of interview was rather specific. Participant 11, for example, described what a face-to-face interview would look like:

> I have face to face interviews with the clients, beneficiaries. I deal with them. Every single day we have somebody different in the office. We mainly ask questions during the interviews to gather information. And this information is used for eligibility purposes towards whatever program they might be applying for.

Participant 12 added to this that in this type of interview, "We are collecting information, gathering data, so we can make an appropriate decision as to where they fall within the government assistance programs."

Participant 2 was involved in application interviews and explained what this entailed:

> Clients come in to apply for CalWORKs benefits. I do the interview for eligibility. Then if I determine that they are eligible or potential eligible for

> employment services, Welfare- to-Work, then I will route the case over to the employment services unit.

The participant added that “The purpose of the interview is to find out household composition, liquid resources, property, to an income, to determine eligibility.

Participant 3 was involved in employment services and explained:

> So, we come in, talk about their plan, how is it going, if they have an activity, if they do not have an activity. What they have thought about, how much, as far as what they would like to do, whether to go back to school or be referred to a job search program, if they job ready. We talk about their time on aid and how they can take advantage of while they on cash aid and all the supportive services that we offer, and that's it.

These examples illustrate the different types of interviews that exist and their specific purposes. They also show how complicated the whole process is.

Subtheme 2: Language. Eleven participants (91.7%) confirmed that they often worked with nonEnglish speaking individuals, and more specifically with Hispanics. Of these participants, nine (75%) specifically claimed to be fluent in Spanish and English. Participants 1 and 3, respectively, stated it in this regard: “I am bilingual so the language barrier is not there” and “I am a certified bilingual worker, so I do assist Spanish-speaking beneficiaries.” Participant 12 added to this that “since I am a Spanish-speaking worker, the majority of my cases are going to be Spanish-speaking people.”

Besides Spanish-speaking beneficiaries, eight participants (33.3%) also said they often assisted individuals from other cultures. Participant 11, for example, explained:

> we also have a large Yemenis and Arabic population in local area. (...) Vietnamese, (...) we do get Filipinos here, Pacific Islanders. And then the other language would probably have to be Hmong.

None of the participants specifically stated that they spoke other languages besides Spanish and English, and eight of them (66.7%) reported different ways to communicate with beneficiaries who spoke other languages. Participant 3, for example, said: “We have an interpreter system that we use if they speak another language besides English and Spanish.” Participant 11 added to this: “Typically, the folks that speak Arabic bring in their own translator, so that's usually how we do it. Or we can call into to our translators and get set up with them to do the interview.” Something similar was raised by Participant 6 who said: “I first ask them ‘Do you have your own interpreter?’ and if they say ‘Yes’, of course we use theirs. If they say ‘No’, then I offer our services.” In addition to this, Participant 4 said that some beneficiaries will bring their children with them to translate, as they have a better knowledge of the English language: “The Oaxacas (...) We do get a lot of those, and usually their children are the ones who translate.”

Four participants specifically mentioned that they used a telephone service to do translations. Participant 2, for example, mentioned the Language Line and explained: “We use translators via phone.” However, this participant also recognized the limits of this approach and added that: “If needed, for sign language or stuff, we will set up an appointment for them to come to the office.” On top of this limitation, Participant 3 raised the issue of possibly missed connotations. This participant said that, regardless of these services being available, there would always be a certain language barrier:

> Even when we do use the automated system, I mean the telephone system, it's a little difficult to try to get the emotions across, I mean, they could just tell me what they are saying but you know, it's just how they say it.

Only Participant 10 said that he or she only worked with English-speaking beneficiaries. The participant said in this regard:

> I think of all my cases since I have been in the employment services, I have had one Spanish speaking and I rarely get to work with her. (...) Being in the employment services no. When I was in the face to face, I did work with the Lao and the Oaxacans. Basically, that was it.

Noteworthy here is that this participant specifically noted having worked with nonenglish-speaking beneficiaries before, but not anymore since he or she started working in the employment services. This implied that the majority of beneficiaries worked with in the employment services are English-speaking. However, this idea was contested by five participants (41.7%) (P1, P3, P4, P5, and P7) as these individuals stated that they also worked in employment services and had to deal with a great amount of nonenglish-speaking beneficiaries.

Theme 2: Perceived Role and Needs

A second theme was named perceived role and needs and it generated statements relating to how participants perceived their role as service providers as well as what they thought were beneficiaries' most pressing needs. In relation to this theme, two subthemes were identified: (a) beneficiaries' needs and (b) perceived role. Both subthemes, respectively, were about what participants thought beneficiaries needed the most and how

participants perceived their own role being a service provider. Table 4 indicates the importance of these subthemes along with information regarding which participant mentioned which subtheme.

Table 4

Frequency Table Theme 2: Perceived Role and Needs

Subtheme mentioned	Participant Code	Percentage (%; n=12)	Frequency
Beneficiaries' needs			
Shelter	P1, P2, P5, P6, P8	41.7%	5
Patience and understanding	P9, P11, P12	25%	3
Healthcare	P4, P7	16.7%	2
Childcare	P10	8.3%	1
Work and education	P3	8.3%	1
Perceived role			
Providing a positive experience	P1, P2, P3, P4, P8, P10, P11	58.3%	7
Job duty	P5, P7, P9, P12	33.3%	4
Collecting information	P6, P9, P11	25%	3

Subtheme 1: Beneficiaries' needs. The first subtheme covered ideas surrounding the most pressing needs of beneficiaries according to participants. In this regard, participants raised various needs. Five participants (41.7%) regarded shelter as beneficiaries' most pressing need. In this respect, Participants 1 and 2 (16.7%) observed that the number of homeless people applying for programs had significantly increased over the last few years. Participant 1 said in this regard: "I would say homeless is difficult, and I think that's a rise. I see it more now." Participant 2 said in addition to this:

> Lately, it's been the homeless program. I do not know if is because it's a trend that people have found out about the benefits that are offered, but sometimes it is the homeless needs and the resources like shelters, especially with those who have older male children that are not accepted in the other shelters.

Participant 5 explained that having a roof above one's head was crucial because "you cannot tell them, 'Go to school, go to work' if they do not have basic necessities." Participant 6 also shared his or her personal concern and said that "it is really hard, because you know they are out on the streets, in their cars." Participant 7 added:

> I see a lot of people that are homeless, that they come here and we are only able to help within those 16 days and when they finish the 16 days they have a lot of trouble trying to find a permanent place to stay.

A second perceived need was patience and understanding. This need was raised by three participants (25%). These participants said that the most pressing need was for the application process to go fast and for things to be simple. In this regard, Participant 11 said: "Having patience and having them wait is one of the biggest issues that we have." Participant 12 agreed and added:

> I think the reason why I say time is because it is relative in a perspective that, everybody wants everything now. I think that's the biggest issue I see is, there is only so much time allotted during the day for a specific thing. If we can reduce the time, the amount of time that we are wasting on other things, and providing our time more directed towards our public, or beneficiaries, I think that would solve a lot of things.

Another participant did not raise patience, but rather focused on the importance of understanding. The participant explained:

I think communication with the client and explaining the whole process. As workers, we forget that when they are coming in and applying, most of our clients do not understand our process and they are waiting for us to explain it.

A third need was healthcare and it was raised by Participants 4 and 7 (16.7%). Participant 7 explained that "a lot of the men and women, they come with a lot of mental health issues and they are not aware that they have them." The participant appended that statement by saying that "they just go out doing stuff but they are not really successful" and that "they cannot find or make a stable employment because once they get working, something happens and they go back to how it was, so they are not successful." These participants continued and added that although the office offered counseling services, he or she thought they were not good enough. The participant explained that clients with a mental health issue were only seen once a month and said that "For me, I do not think that is enough to help our clients with those needs."

To conclude, Participant 10 raised childcare as a primary need, but added that "with this program they obviously get those services." Participant 3 raised education and work as most pressing needs. Participant 3 explained: "probably not having enough education or work experience, so that we can send our participants out to the job, the job search world, they lack that."

Subtheme 2: Perceived role. All 12 participants (100%) evaluated their role of service providers as highly important. Six participants (50%) emphasized that their main

goal was to provide beneficiaries with the best possible customer service and a positive experience. Participant 8 stated in this regard: “I see my role as very important because that is the first face that they see when they come in. So I try to do as much as I can to be able to provide the best customer service to the clients when they come in.” In the context of this study, customer service was understood as making the beneficiary feel comfortable and making them feel helped and valued. Participant 1 explained:

> I see my role as helping them get to their goal. And helping them overcome their barriers. I see myself as kind of like a stepping stone or a guidance to help them move along, or anything that they may need.

Participant 11 added to this the importance of making sure that the beneficiary had a positive experience when visiting the program office: “my role is going to be and make sure that they have a great experience when they come in here. So if they do ever have to come in here again, it is a positive note for them coming back in here.” In accordance with these statements, Participants 2 and 4 (16.7%) explained that how service providers approached beneficiaries would at least partially determine whether or not clients felt comfortable enough to come back to the office. In this respect, Participant 4 shared: “I feel I am the one who can make them have a good day or a bad day.” Participant 2 agreed and added that helping and encouraging beneficiaries to take action was a must:

> The way that they are treated here in the office will determine if the client comes back. You never want to feel somebody feel humiliated (...). You want to make sure that they feel comfortable reaching out for their services that are needed.

> Never make them feel like we are not going to help them or the help is not there. Encourage them, let them know that we empathize with them and we could sometimes be on the other side or some of us that have received the benefits, we tell them our experiences like, "Hey, they helped me with this and this, so maybe you will be a candidate for these services as well."

These statements demonstrate the perceived importance of customer service and making sure that the beneficiary experienced his or her visit as a positive one.

Four other participants (33.3%) emphasized the importance of assisting clients because it was their duty to help them as service providers. These participants believed that it was up to them to help beneficiaries in the best possible way because, as stated by Participant 12, “Who else is going to do it?” The participant continued and added:

> It's one of those things where the bureaucracy of the whole thing, it is kind of like, yes, we have these programs, but who is going to process all the information that we need to do it? So, it is very important, vital, vital in providing service.

Participant 9 added to this that the center was “their last resort.” These words clearly illustrated how this participant recognized his responsibility and evaluated himself as playing a crucial part in the lives of the beneficiaries. Something similar was raised by Participant 7, who stressed that “we are the ones that issue them their benefits which is the money that they depend on, their food stamps.” Again, this signifies that participants put high responsibility on themselves to assist clients with their needs.

Besides wanting to provide the best possible customer service to enhance the experience of beneficiaries or out of perceived duty to assist clients with their needs,

three participants (25%) said that their duty was merely to collect information from participants. Participant 6 explained that his role was “to obtain the most information that we can from them to determine their eligibility.” Participant 11 added to this: “My role right now is to gather information as much as I can. And if I can see them and complete what I need to complete with them, that is great.” To conclude, Participant 9 explained that his or her main role was to ask questions and understand the client’s situation. This participant explained:

> I listened to their whole conversation during our interview, and if I see that, why I was fired, when we get into employment we start talking about stuff like that. “And do you mind sharing why you were let go?” And they would share. “And have you tried applying through work training? If not, do you have any children?” So then it leads to possible other programs.

Theme 3: Strategies

Having discussed the types of interviews, perceived needs of beneficiaries, and the role of TANF workers, a third theme was regarding the different strategies participants deployed to approach beneficiaries and convince them to partake in the program. The analysis of this theme resulted in seven subthemes, all strategies used by TANF workers. These subthemes included: (a) cultural sensitivity, (b) motivating, (c) providing information, (d) empathizing, (e) pushing, (f) providing solutions, and (g) creative approaches. The following sections provide an extensive explanation of these strategies. Table 5 shows which participants mentioned which subthemes.

Table 5

Frequency Table Theme 3: Strategies

Subtheme mentioned	Participant Code	Percentage (%; n=12)	Frequency
Cultural sensitivity	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12	100%	13
Motivating	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10, P11	75%	15
Providing information	P2, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11	66.7%	8
Empathizing	P1, P3, P5, P9, P10, P11, P12	58.3%	12
Pushing	P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8	50%	9
Providing solutions	P3, P4, P9	25%	3
Creative approaches	P6, P8, P11	25%	4

Subtheme 1: Cultural sensitivity. All participants agreed that it was important to take culture into account when speaking with non-Caucasian beneficiaries. Participant 8, for example, stated: “The first thing that I do when I work with other people is respect their culture.” Participant 11 explained that cultural sensitivity was crucial, “Especially when we have them here and they do not speak English.” Also, the participant observations showed that many participants used simple language to make sure the beneficiary would understand everything. Participant 11 further explained that there was a possibility that “they do not know the difference in our culture from their culture” and that, because of this, “there are things that are different that you have to take into effect when you are dealing with different cultures.”

In terms of specific situations and cultures, participants raised various examples. Participant 6, for example, said: “you should not go against their religious beliefs.” Participants 3 agreed and added: “do not judge, just let them know that we do not discriminate.” An additional observation regarding eye contact was made by Participants 1 and 11 (16.7%). Participant 1 said in this regard: “I know in some ethnic groups, giving too much eye contact makes participants uncomfortable.” In this respect, it was notable that half of the participants (50%) used lots of eye contact whereas the other half (50%) did not. Those who did not seemed to look mostly at their computer screen and not directly at the person. However, whether this was due to cultural sensitivity or not is difficult to say. Other participants raised more specific notes. Participant 11, for example, stated that in Arabic cultures “the most important person in the entire group is going to be the last person that walks in the door.” The participant further added: “So you never want to start off on a bad foot and maybe insult the family that walks in, or the husband, or the dad by allowing him to go in first.”

Participant 10 made a final culturally-bound observation:

> For the Oaxacans I noticed that it was more speaking with the male. I was not able to speak with the woman. And if I did ask the woman something, the male would answer right away. So would not give them the chance to answer for themselves.

Participant 11 remarked the same for Latin American cultures. With regards to these gender-related observations, Participant 2 emphasized that service providers should

always evaluate if this perceived power dynamic is cultural or if there is something more going on. This participant explained:

> Sometimes we do see that Mr. is the one answering all the questions, not letting Mrs. answer and sometimes we try to evaluate to see or observe if it is due to a domestic violence issue or if it is just something cultural, but we never try to judge just the book by its cover.

In addition to cultural sensitivity, Participants 7 and 9 (16.7%) both agreed that also individual-specific sensitivity was required. Participant 7 explained: “I am more sensitive depending on who it is. But the public in general is sensitive as to what situations they are going through. So you just try to be as sensitive as you can.” Participant 9 added to this that, sometimes, the differences were more age-related than culturally-bound: “Our elderly tend to want to see you face-to-face, they want you to look eye-to-eye, so you do more of the eye-to-eye, especially if they are telling you. There's some people they just want to look down.”

Subtheme 2: Motivation. Nine participants (75%) reported to use motivation as a core strategy when assisting beneficiaries. Participant 10 shared in this respect: “I think they just need a little bit of motivation to see the positive outcomes, to see that maybe there is something available for them, and it's not just a waste of time.” Participant 3 agreed and stated to use “other success stories that I have had in the past to try to motivate them.” Participant 9 used a different approach:

> I always tell them ‘This is your opportunity, this is your time!’ especially for CalWORKs. ‘Take advantage of our programs that we do offer in regards to

> employment services or if you want to go back to school, this is the time to be selfless.' (...) 'Give yourself that opportunity, be selfless. This is your time. Go and get a job, we will help you with that, the whole way!'.

Three participants (25%) emphasized that motivating beneficiaries was especially crucial because many may lack support from families and friends. Participant 1 stated:

> A lot of these participants come in and there is something dramatic that has happened in their life, and maybe they have never had anybody to tell them that they will be fine, and they will do great if they go to school. (...) So once they come in and you start interacting with them and encouraging them, they start moving to, 'You know what? I think I can do this activity'.

Participant 11 added:

> Some of these people, I will be honest, they have no one to talk to in their lives. They do not have that positive reinforcement anywhere. So when they are in front of me, that's all I am. I am not going to sit here and be derogatory, or yell, or anything. I am only going to be positive reinforcement for every single person that sits in front of me.

Subtheme 3: Providing information. A third subtheme covered statements relating to how TANF workers used the provision of information as a strategy to give beneficiaries the incentive to partake in the program. This subtheme was raised by eight participants (66.7%) who believed that by giving beneficiaries a lot of information regarding what they needed to do and what they may expect to receive in return, beneficiaries may become more interested in the program. Participant 6 explained: "I

always tell them it is not just a check, there is a lot to their background. There is mileage, childcare, that's a part of the services, and they usually decide to go with it." Participant 10 said that it might be helpful to "bring out the positives, showing them what can happen, what they can get, what will be waiting for them when it is time to retire." Participant 9 provided another example:

> I will tell them how long this is approximately again to take, and these are the verifications I am going to need, and what happens after we grant you whether it is CalWORKs or any other program, we kind of go into what to expect next.

Participant 7 stated that he or she would not only give the beneficiary all the necessary information, but would also emphasize the contrast between what the beneficiary could get in comparison to the TANF worker himself or herself: "I try to give them examples and let them know, 'I have to pay for childcare. I have to pay for transportation. You do not have to. You have this'."

Although it has been suggested that TANF workers do make sure to provide the beneficiary with sufficient and detailed information, Participant 5 believed that this was not done sufficiently. Participant 5 explained: "Just show them all the different options that they have. In my opinion, we need to get that out there more." With regards to the participant observations, it became very clear that all 12 participants (100%) found it crucial to provide the client with as much information as possible. All of the participants made sure that the client knew what to expect to happen during the interview and what exactly was happening as the interview went along. Three participants (25%) also

carefully explained the other available programs and made sure that clients had all the necessary information to make their decision regarding participation.

Subtheme 4: Empathizing. A fourth subtheme was named empathizing and raised by seen participants (58.3%). Empathizing referred to being able to empathize with the beneficiary, listen to his or her needs, and offer assistance in accordance with those needs. Participants 9, 10, and 11 (25%) stressed the importance of listening to beneficiaries' needs. Participant 10 stated:

> I start with trying to get comfortable with them, and I want to see what their goals are. Because a lot of times when they are here, they do not have any ideas of what they want to do. (...) So a lot of times it is just, 'Okay, what is your goal? How can I help you get there?'

In addition to this, Participant 11 strongly emphasized that "If you can get somebody to talk, they are going to give you all the information you need." The participant continued:

> Some people do not like to talk. But if you can get them to talk, and as a worker if you can get them to talk and just open up about themselves, you are going to learn a lot more about that person. That's really going to help you help them.

Participant 3 added that sometimes he or she would encourage someone to take a certain action, but that he or she would never push the client. The participant exemplified:

> We want you to get off cash aid but if you are, if you do not want to get off, you are not going to get off, so you need to want to get off for yourself, like I can push

> you and give you all the resources but if you are comfortable staying where you are at, you are going to stay.

Participant 5 added to this that it was important to always let beneficiaries express their dissatisfactions and expectations, and to not interrupt them: “A lot of times, they will come in here and just be mad. But a lot of times they just want to vent, so just just have to let them.” This was also emphasized by Participant 11, who added:

> You have to be able to understand where they are coming from. If you do not understand where they are coming from, or you are not willing to understand, you are never going to build that relationship with them. You are never going to get that opportunity to help them grow.

To conclude, Participant 1 (8.3%) shared her advice of making sure that the beneficiary knows that he or she was always welcome to contact him or her:

> I will say, ‘Okay, just know that you can call me, you know my number, (...) This conversation is not closed here, but you can always call me whenever you need to call me, you can call me or you can come in, and then we will talk about it then.’ So just leaving that door open for them, knowing that they are able to call and always reach out to me.

Based on the participant observations, all 12 participants (100%) seemed to make an effort to ask the clients if they could assist with anything else and if they had any more concerns they could assist them with.

Subtheme 5: Pushing. A fifth subtheme was pushing, and was closely related to the subtheme motivating. The difference between them was that in the former, the TANF

worker would be more involved in the decision-making of the beneficiary whereas in the latter the TANF worker would try to give the beneficiary as much space as possible to make their own decision. Participant 4 shared:

> Being more, I would not say aggressive, but being more attentive to your case load. Keep calling instead of just like "okay well they do not want to participate, just that's it," not giving up on the client, actually trying to get to the bottom of what it is that's holding them back.

Participant 8 added to this:

> You have to, how can I say, force them to this and maybe pushing them, (...) because if you do not help them then they are not gonna do it. (...) If you ask them to do that, and they do not do it, sometimes you need that extra push to be able to do the things.

In this sense, pushing someone to do something was evaluated as positive. According to Participant 8, pushing was even necessary because “If they say ‘I do not want to do it’ and just like that they are not going to do it because of the way their parents lived because nobody else guide them through.” This statement suggested that participants may have interpreted pushing as a synonym for motivating.

Participants 3 and 5 (16.7%) agreed with the aforementioned statement, and both gave examples of having pushed a client by sending them reminders or calling them when they would not show up. Participant 3 shared:

> I try to stress it to the clients that it is very important, I try to, you know, sending them reminder letters, giving them a courtesy call that this is due, and I need it by

> this day. I am offering home-calls if necessary to go get the paperwork that we need.

To conclude, Participant 7 found that, regardless of knowing what would be best for the beneficiary, “ultimately, it is their decision.” The participant continued and stated: “We have a lot of supportive services that we have and that we offer but again, a lot of the clients do not take advantage of those services.” Though these participants stressed the importance of pushing clients to a certain level, during the participant observations, only Participant 6 emphasized to the client what may happen in terms of loss of benefits if he or she was not compliant with the rules.

Subtheme 6: Providing solutions. A fifth subtheme referred to providing solutions when clients would hesitate to participate because of concerns such as childcare or transportation. This subtheme was raised by three participants (25%). Participants 3 and 4 raised the issue of transportation as a reason for beneficiaries not to come to the office. Both participants (16.7%) agreed that transportation could be an issue, but that this could be solved in various ways. In this respect, Participant 3 said:

> I try to give them ideas, like when you carpool with someone or can anybody you know, watch your baby while you do your activity, we would pay them, reimburse mileage as an incentive to get them to their activity.

Participant 4 provided another solution to this problem and said:

> I feel that I can provide the services that we have, I can give them bus routes, bus passes, let them know that it's not as hard as they think it is, especially if they have never used transportation like that. (...) and sometimes I do try to offer them

> bus passes just so they can take that route without being rushed to be somewhere just so they can feel like 'Okay, you know what? This is not so bad, I can do it.'

Another example was given by Participant 9, who explained that when a client who had recently lost her job came in and shared her concern about possibly losing her house, he or she provided her with a solution:

> (...) I realized that that was her main concern. So I just went in the system and I researched and I said, 'Let me see what I can do for you.' And I found Keep Your Home California. I said, 'Look, they say it is a simple process. I am going to give you the website. If you want to go through it, this is what they say they will ask. Because I went and I researched it. I called them and I found out more information on that.'"

Subtheme 7: Creative approaches. A last subtheme was raised by three participants (25%) and entailed creative approaches that could not be classified under any of the other subthemes. These included approaches to better assist beneficiaries. Participant 11, for example, said that by explaining to youth how they could access information and tools online, she or he could connect in a more efficient way with them. He or she explained:

> That is one of the biggest things with this younger generation. If we could do everything electronic for them, they would be 100% completely happy. And that is the goal, (...) try to make it easier for them because they are technically sound. They really are. They have been on phones their entire life. They have not known

> any different. So if we can set it up for them, and set it up for them in a way that they understand, then it helps them out.

Participant 6 stated to also use technology, but rather as a personal tool to make sure not to forget anything:

> The websites where we can find the rules, the regulations on that. I use my How To a lot. I do have one of those that I reference to a lot. (...) it's something that I have. I do screenshots then I will stick it in a binder and I go back to it when I do not remember how to do it. It's not really anything that the organization did, it is something that I came up with.

Lastly, Participant 8 had his or her own way of monitoring the quality of his or her own work:

> I have my own resources, I have my own cheat sheets to do my own work. I have my own questions that I ask the clients. (...) I made my own to make sure that I do not forget anything that it is needed for the program.

This participant stated that he or she mainly did this “to make sure the people do not have to come back.”

Theme 4: Perceived Influence on Decision-Making

A fourth theme explored the perceived influence of TANF workers on the decision-making process of beneficiaries. In this regard, opinions were divided and, therefore, the analysis resulted in two subthemes: (a) possible influence and (b) limited influence. Both subthemes are further explored in the following sections. Additionally, their respective significance is represented in Table 6.

Table 6

Frequency Table Theme 4: Perceived Influence on Decision-Making

Subtheme mentioned	Participant Code	Percentage (%; n=12)	Frequency
Possible influence	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11	83.3%	23
Sharing information	P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9	50%	6
Attitude and approach	P2, P4, P7, P9, P11	41.7%	8
Encouragement	P1, P2, P4, P5, P10	41.7%	7
Providing proof	P8	8.3%	2
Limited influence	P3, P5, P7, P11, P12	41.7%	9

Subtheme 1: Possible influence. Ten participants (83.3%) believed that the way they approached a client would at least partially influence his or her decision regarding whether or not to participate in the program. Participant 1 found that "Once you get their foot in the door doing the activity, and they find out they like it, then you will have a good outcome with them." Generally, participants raised four different methods to influence a client's decision: (a) sharing information, (b) attitude and approach, (c) encouragement, and (d) providing proof. These are further elucidated in the next sections.

Sharing information. Six participants (50%) believed that by sharing the correct and a sufficient amount of information with clients, they could impact their decision regarding whether or not to participate in the program. As Participant 5 stated, it is crucial to "just shown them all the different options that they have." If this was done in a correct manner, it would likely be, as Participant 4 cited, "a big factor in them deciding if they want to participate or not." Participant 2 further illustrated:

> I try to let them know about the short certificate programs that there are at the adult schools and sometimes that does help, by me giving them some of the information prior to them going to the actual orientation. That gets them starting to think about their options and hopefully that helps them make a decision when they go to the orientation.

Participant 6 appended this, saying: “I always tell them it is not just a check, there is a lot to their background. There's mileage, travel care, that's a part of services and they usually decide to go with it.”

Attitude and approach. A second method referred to adopting a certain attitude and approach and it was raised by five participants (41.7%). According to Participant 4, “It's all attitude wise” and whether or not the client would partake in the program depended largely on “the way you describe it to clients.” This participant continued: “You have to be excited for them so that they can see like, ‘Wow, it is something I want to do!’.” Participant 11 argued that not only attitude but also patience and understanding were important factors. The participant elucidated:

> I can tell you right now, when you are trying to convince somebody to do something, if you are willing to open up and let them feel like you have allowed them to be a part of your life, to a point, because there is still that business relationship. If you can make somebody believe that you have allowed them to be a part of your life, and you are going to be a part of their life in this relationship that you have here at the office, that is huge. People would be more willing to trust you, and they are more willing to participate.

Encouragement. A third method was encouragement and it was mentioned by five participants (41.7%). This method entailed motivating clients and giving them the confidence they needed. In this respect, Participant 10 felt that "the client is only going to do as much as you allow them to do and as much support you give them." This participant explained that, often, clients do not have a support system and that "if they feel comfortable with you, they are willing to do it." Participant 4 agreed with this statement and added that "making them feel like they can do it can make a big difference in them feeling like they can participate." Another statement was made by Participant 1:

> Encouraging them and giving them a positive outcome, or just being positive because sometimes they come in negative saying, 'I cannot do this,' (...) Just kind of switching that and just giving them a little push and encouraging them, 'You can do it!' That sometimes be like, 'Oh okay,' you kind of get a different reaction from them.

Although all five participants (41.7%) did believe that encouragement would influence clients in their decision-making, Participant 10 acknowledged that "it is a lot easier when they are already interacting instead of having to force them."

Providing proof. Only Participant 8 (8.3%) mentioned a fourth method: providing proof. This participant explained that "when they start saying they are not able to participate I find a way." The participant continued: "I usually get out all the papers so they can see it on writing, for me it is better if they can see on paper to show proof to them that it is not something that I am just saying." This participant believed that providing clients with hard proof would likely influence them "because when you are

saying the things, I feel like they do not trust them. And when I show the proof, I feel like they feel more comfortable."

Subtheme 2: Limited influence. A second subtheme was regarding statements relating to the perceived low impact of participants on the decision-making process of beneficiaries. Five participants (41.7%) found that, in some scenarios, their possible influence was rather limited. Participants 5 and 11 (16.7%) accredited this to the fact that, as stated by the former, "Sometimes people become complacent in their positions." According to these participants, some clients did not feel the need to participate and increase their income or number of benefits. Participant 7 added to this that "ultimately, it is their decision. So sometimes, there is just nothing we can do." In addition, Participant 12 believed that TANF workers would not be able to influence clients at all. The participant explained:

> I do not think there is anything that I can sway them, to either accept benefits, or not apply for benefits. I think it comes more to a personal need or personal decision on their end. We can only provide them with the information that we have on hand, versus what they want to do, or decide, that's up to them. I do not think I influence their decision-making for programs, no.

Theme 5: Identified Shortcomings

A fifth and final major theme was regarding the perceived shortcomings and barriers of TANF workers, beneficiaries themselves, and the organization and program as a whole. All of these aspects were categorized under three subthemes: (a) shortcomings of TANF workers, (b) barriers for beneficiaries, and (c) structural problems. All three

subthemes were divided further into more specific shortcomings or problems. Table 7 gives an indication of the identified shortcomings and problems as well as their significance.

Table 7

Frequency Table Theme 5: Identified Shortcomings

Subtheme mentioned	Participant Code	Percentage (%; n=12)	Frequency
Shortcomings of TANF workers			
Communication	P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11	58.3%	13
Judgment	P1, P2, P4, P5, P10	41.7%	10
Encouragement	P2, P5	16.7%	4
Insecurities	P1, P4	16.7%	4
Barriers for beneficiaries			
Poor engagement	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12	83.3%	22
Childcare and transportation	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11	75%	14
Financial aspect	P1, P3, P5, P10	33.3%	5
Beneficiaries' patience and understanding	P6, P9, P11, P12	33.3%	10
Bad influence	P1, P4	16.7%	6
Structural problems			
Training	P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12	75%	22
Program structure	P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12	75%	16
Need for resources	P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10	58.3%	15
Insufficient information	P2, P4, P6, P7, P9, P11	50%	11
Staff	P1, P4, P5, P7, P12	41.7%	13
Supervision	P1, P4, P9, P12	33.3%	9

Subtheme 1: Shortcomings of TANF workers. Eleven participants (91.7%) raised at least one concern in terms of how TANF workers provided support for their clients. These concerns were divided into four smaller subthemes: (a) communication, (b) judgment, (c) encouragement, and (d) insecurities. These subthemes were explored in the following sections.

Communication. The first identified shortcoming of TANF workers was communication. This problem was raised by seven participants (58.3%) and entailed a lack of communication but also wrong communication and poor listening skills. Lack of communication was raised by five participants (41.7%). Participant 9 explained "As workers, we forget that when they are coming in and applying, most of our clients do not understand our process and they are waiting for us to explain it." The participant continued: "if we just take our time and I think that that's the issue, that we are not taking our time to explain the process further." Participant 6 explained that obtaining as much information as possible was crucial "to show we are getting everything needed." Thus, in this sense, insufficient communication was believed to lead to client dissatisfaction. Participant 8 stated:

> Make sure that when we interview the clients, we get all the required information the first time. We try to complete the interview the most accurate as possible, to do not have a client come back.

A notable observation was that, in alignment with this last statement, all 12 participants were very careful regarding the collection of information. All 12 participants

repeated certain questions and client responses several times to make sure that they did not miss anything or misunderstand certain statements.

Besides lack of communication, wrong communication was raised as an issue as well. In this respect, four participants (33.3%) believed that, sometimes, TANF workers did not know how to approach a client, which may have lead to a negative decision from the client. Participant 7 explained that “if we would know how to speak to the client or what to say or what to do, I think it would be a little bit different.” This idea was also very strongly emphasized by Participant 11:

> I think one of the biggest areas that can be improved is how to talk to people. Honestly, communication classes, something like that. (...) Especially because there is different roles. You have a role of a worker; they have the role of a client. Teaching people how to speak to them. That is huge. (...) it's not a positive thing when you sound like a bully, or you sound like you are yelling at somebody. Even though you might think you are not, if you do not have an understanding of what you are doing when you communicate to someone, it's not going to help them. (...) Once you learn how to talk to somebody, or how to make that person on that side of the table open up, two things should happen. They should cry, and they should be thankful at the end of the interview. And if you are doing that, honestly, you have opened this person up, they trust you. And now they are more willing to listen to what you have to say about the programs.

In accordance with this statement, the observations made during the work hours of participants indicated a strong willingness of participants to connect with clients and

make them feel comfortable. They did this by small gestures, such as holding the door open for clients, lots of smiling during the interview, and speaking with a calm and warm voice. However, in terms of eye contact, seven participants (58.3%) did not make frequent eye contact.

Participant 9 added the value of recognizing how overwhelming receiving information may be for clients. The participant explained: “Let them know, ‘It is okay, we provide you so much information, it is hard for you to understand what we all have to offer. (...) Like the documents are this big and it's intimidating, it's scary.’”

A third issue in relation to communication was having poor listening skills. This was only mentioned by Participant 10 (8.3%), who said:

> I feel like I could listen more, get a little more of what they need. Let them tell me what they need. That way, I know I could understand better and be able to offer exactly what they need and not just offer what I have because maybe something that we have is enough for them.

Judgment. A second problem in terms of how TANF workers provided assistance and helped beneficiaries was called judgment and referred to having premature assumptions about certain beneficiaries. In this respect, five participants (41.7%) admitted to sometimes letting themselves be guide by their judgment. This would subsequently result in unfair or poor treatment.

In this respect, Participant 1 acknowledged:

> Sometimes we feel that, ‘Oh well this person I think lied to me already and I think they are lying again,’ or we feel that they are making up excuses but to later find

> out that is not the case. It is something that is bothering them, there is a barrier. There is something that they do not want to bring out or say, and then once that conversation takes place, that, 'Oh you know, well this happened to me. I was embarrassed and this why I did not come in,' then I think we take a step back and we self reflect on the next participant, on not being so judgmental.

This idea of self-reflecting and trying not to be judgmental was shared by all five participants (41.7%). For example, Participant 4 found that "we should treat all of them like they want to." Participant 1 agreed with this statement and shared his or her own personal story of changing his or her behavior:

> when I first started in employment services, I had this mindset where, 'Well I did it, why cannot everybody else do it?' Or, 'I was a single parent, why cannot they do it?' At first that was my mindset, but then I started thinking that is unfair because I had my parents there. Other participants do not have their parents there. I had family to help me out, they did not have family to help them out. I had someone that could help with daycare, and I did not have to pay, they do not have that. So, seeing that now, helps me out a lot. I am not going to say that I am there because I am not, but I do try to open myself up more (...) Open my mind more.

Regardless of trying not to be judgmental, Participants 2 and 5 (16.7%) shared a common frustration regarding clients not engaging or trying to improve their situation. Participant 2 said: "Some you can see that, you know, no matter how much you try to encourage, they are not going to take that step. They do have the, just that generational mentality."

Encouragement. A third identified shortcoming was lack of encouragement. Two participants (16.7%) raised this issue. Participant 2 found that “Sometimes it may be the worker who doesn't encourage them as much.” Participant 5 agreed and added: “We should pound the pavement more.” These participants both believed that through encouragement more clients could be attracted to the program.

Insecurities. A fourth problem referred to was TANF workers’ insecurities. In this respect, two participants (16.7%) mentioned struggling or having struggled with insecurities in the past and how that fact directly impacting the quality of the service they provided. Participant 1 explained:

> For me it's discomfort seeing them, that when you are asking them a question and they do not feel like...you can tell by their body language or just the way it takes them time to answer, you just kind of hold back. However, with the training that I did receive, I feel more comfortable that I can ask them that question. Move forward and say, ‘Look, this is everything that we do in here is confidential. If there is something that is bothering you, something that you need help with, just let me know and I can help you.’”

Participant 4 added: “My difficulties are, right now, since I am so new to the unit, I am still not 100 percent sure, so I always just kind of feel like I want some reassurance.” However, Participant 1 stated that, eventually, “it is just trial and error when we are working with participants to see what works and what does not work.” Based on the participant observations, Participant 10 seemed to be rather shy. The participant spoke with a relatively low and soft voice and did not make much eye contact.

Subtheme 2: Barriers for beneficiaries. A second subtheme was the perceived barriers to participation for beneficiaries. All t12 participants (100%) identified at least one barrier. These barriers were divided into five smaller subthemes: (a) poor engagement, (b) childcare and transportation, (c) financial aspect, (d) beneficiaries' patience and understanding, and (e) bad influence. These subthemes are explored in detail in the next sections.

Poor engagement. A strong barrier to client participation was poor engagement from the side of the beneficiaries. This was mentioned by 10 participants (83.3%). In this regard, Participant 2 explained that "Some just want to come in here, get their cash aid and go." The participant continued and said, "you really try to encourage them, but they just do not want to." The participant accredited this to: "it's just them used to not working or not having that extra motivation I guess, or that need, that ambition to want to have more." Participant 1 agreed and added:

> The ones that already come in with the plan, once they come in with the plan, we are also excited. We are like, 'Okay, you want to go to school? Great. We will give you a referral. What do you need? Childcare? Okay, great. You want mileage? We will get you mileage.' Once they know what they want, we are like this is what we can do for you. (...) And then the ones that come in that do not have a plan, I feel that those are the ones that we need to take more time with. (...) Those are the ones that are a little bit more difficult.

Also, Participant 5 stated that this poor engagement was mainly due to a lack of motivation:

> A lot of times, people are not motivated, but I think a lot of that is that they have never really challenged themselves, or they are never really had anybody challenge them, like telling them, 'Hey, you need to get a job, you need to provide for your family'.

Participant 7 agreed with this statement in the sense that he or she believed that "a lot of the time, they have it in their mind or they think they are not going to be successful, so they do not do it." Participant 5 added t: "a lot of them, they are just used to the way their lives are and they are fine with it." This participant further claimed that "I think they come to a decision if they have had enough and they want to improve their lives, that's what makes or breaks it."

Unlike most other participants, Participants 11 and 12 (16.7%) accredited poor engagement not to lack of motivation but rather to laziness. Participant 11 explained:

> A lot of beneficiaries are going to consider how much work they are actually going to have to do in order to get their benefits. And that is the honest truth. They are like, 'No, you know what? This is just way too much work. This is more work than I had planned to do, or I intend to do. I am okay if you sanction me and leave me by myself as long as I keep getting for the kids.' And that's something that a lot of beneficiaries will take into effect is how much work do I actually have to do in order to get these benefits?

Participant 12 shared another example:

> There's been instances where we grant a CalFresh case, and it is for $15, or whatever. I have had them tell me to just, 'To close my case down, if that is all I

> am going to get.' I think the amount of benefit that they are receiving, versus the trouble that they have to go through to get the benefit, I do not think it is worth it to them.

Two other participants (16.7%) explained that sometimes clients make false promises, attesting to their lack of engagement. Participant 10 shared frustration with this occurrence:

> We do have those clients who just do not want to do anything, or they are saying, 'Yes, we will do this, we will do this, but can you give me two weeks, can you give me two weeks?" And, then you give them two weeks and then it is the same thing and then it's excuse after excuse and sometimes I run out of ideas on how to get them engaged and can only do so much.

All this suggests that lack of motivation, lack of support from family and friends, laziness, and false promises can lead up to poor engagement by beneficiaries.

Childcare and transportation. According to nine participants (75%), lack of childcare support and transportation prevented beneficiaries from participating in the program. In terms of childcare, Participant 10 believed that "they are going to college and it seems like it is going to take a long time and they have kids so some of them do not want to finish out college because of the kids." However, this participant added that "with this program they obviously get those services" and that this should be not a concern to them. Nevertheless, five participants (41.7%) explained that, regardless of the program offering free childcare services, most clients were not comfortable with letting others take care of their children. Participant 11 illustrated:

> Some people just do not feel comfortable leaving their kids with strangers. I mean it is what it is. They do not. And that is one reason. I just spoke with a gal about it yesterday. She said, ‘I am not going to leave my kid with strangers. No way. If that is going to keep me sanctioned, then I understand.’ I said, "I understand." You know what I mean? As much as we can tell her that they are great people, it is a good daycare, whatever it might be, some people will not do it.

Another statement was given by Participant 5, who said: “One of the main ones I have heard of people not participating, it's because ‘Oh, I do not trust anybody with taking care of my children’."

A second barrier was transportation and was mentioned by five participants (41.7%). In this respect, Participant 4 said:

> Transportation is the number 1, is that they have a way of getting there, then they are more up for attending it. But if there is no transportation or they feel like it's going to be too much of a struggle…

Participant 7 added the issue of time:

> They have to use the bus and public transportation alone takes a long time. We can have a person from [Town A] coming down to [Town B] and it can take them about three and a half hours just to get here. That is a half an hour drive from here to there where in the bus it takes them that long. So, imagine a person having to do that plus with their children.

Participant 3 reported how such issues were usually covered: “We offer them you know, mileage reimbursements, kind of try to offer you know, those bus passes.”

However, like childcare services, offering solutions to transportation issues was not believed to lead to a more positive decision concerning participation.

Financial aspect. A third perceived barrier to participation concerned financial contentedness. Four participants (33.3%) agreed that some clients were simply not interested in participating as they were happy with the benefits they were receiving already. Participant 3 explained that "if they feel they can get by on a reduced grant, which means they fall into a sanction, we reduce their benefits and they are okay with living on that amount then yeah, they are just not going to do it." Participant 1 confirmed this idea and added: "I believe that they make their decision on how tight they are going to be financially, or how much is given to them which would help them along the way." These statements illustrated the importance of financial security and stability in a client's decision regarding program participation.

Beneficiaries' patience and understanding. Four participants (33.3%) identified lack of patience and understanding as an important barrier to program participation. In this respect, these participants found that some clients simply did not understand what was explained to them or did not have the patience for it. Participant 9 accredited nonparticipation to "I think it is the fear of the not knowing." Participant 6 added to this that even when the process was explained properly, some clients still did not understand it: "You can tell them over and over, and they do not really understand the program. Sometimes it gets a little difficult. For example, like the student rule we have a lot of parents that do not understand why that child's not eligible."

Two other participants emphasized the lack of patience some clients had. Participant 11 explained:

> Patience is not something that a lot of beneficiaries have. Whether the person before them was able to process for whatever reason, or the person two times before them was able to get everything done for them. Having patience and having them wait is one of the biggest issues that we have.

Participant 12 added to this:

> everybody wants everything now. I think that is the biggest issue I see is, there is only so much time allotted during the day for a specific thing. If we can reduce the time, the amount of time that we are wasting on other times, and providing our time more directed towards our public, or beneficiaries, I think that would solve a lot of things.

Bad influence. A fifth identified barrier was bad influence. This referred to nonparticipation as a result of not being allowed by other family members or friends to study or work. This issue was raised by two participants (16.7%). Participant 4 explained that "Some spouses do not want them to participate." The participant continued and appended: "it's just like there is no way their wife or their husband is going to leave home to go do something, which I do not understand because I feel like it would benefit them." In addition to this, Participant 1 shared the following concern:

> I sometimes feel that one adult does not tend to do the activity because the other parent is holding them back. Whether it would be, whether there were drugs being involved or there was domestic violence at one point. I just feel sometimes there

> is something there with both parents that sometimes the male adult, for example, would say, 'Okay well she is going to stay home, and I am going to go do the activity'."

The participant added that "sometimes we try to put both parents in an activity, so they can both grow", but this does not always lead to a successful outcome.

Subtheme 3: Structural problems. A third group of identified issues concerned more general issues with the program or organization as a whole. All 12 participants (100%) raised at least one concern in this respect. These concerns were divided into six smaller subthemes: (a) training, (b) program structure, (c) need for resources, (d) insufficient information, (e) staff, and (f) supervision. An extensive explanation of these smaller subthemes follows.

Training. In terms of training, nine participants (75%) said that they were not fully satisfied with the current training sessions provided by the organization. In this respect, different issues were raised. A first issue concerned the lack of knowing what was going on in other departments and this issue was raised by three participants (25%). Participant 2 shared:

> I wish that Face to Face would have some type of ES training so that we, when our applicants do ask us these questions, we do have a little bit more knowledge of what goes on at the orientation and what other supportive services are offered to them. (...) especially since sometimes we do cover for them. It's like, 'Okay, okay, this person wants a childcare packet.' Most of us... I know what it is because I have been in an ES unit before, but most of the other people have to

> come out and ask for questions and come out and try to obtain the information. If we knew right off the hand what it is they need, I think we could probably help and service more clients at that time.

Two other participants (16.7%) added that there was a need for learning more about the different programs and how they should explain them to beneficiaries. Participant 11 stated the following: “As an eligibility worker, being educated about all the programs, being educated about what we are doing, and how to do the work. That is the biggest thing that we need.” The participant continued: “We really do not have an understanding of what the program is, or what it does exactly. So, we always are in a position where we are getting asked questions, and really, I hate saying, ‘Well the next worker that you meet is going to help you out’.” The participant later acknowledged that the organization was currently implementing changes regarding this issue and wasnbproviding more orientations “to have a better understanding”, but the participant did not evaluate these as sufficient yet. In alignment with the previous statements, Participant 6 stated that more training was required specifically for GA and CAPI programs:

> I think the programs we need more probably training on, would be GA, CAPI and then the sponsored individuals. Sometimes there we come across them and there are still questions to that where we have to get answers to.

A second issue was about the lack of training regarding updated programs and newer resources. Two participants (16.7%) raised this issue. Participant 2 reported: “A while back we had one of our trainers come in and brought us a listing of resources of

everything that went out there. I think that training would be more helpful." The participant explained that this training happened more than three years ago, and said:

> I wish it would happen a little more often, because I know there is resources and new agencies that come out with different services provided. And that would be a good one, so we can have a list of all those resources that are available for different clients.

Participant 8 made an addition to this statement and found that "the things that we have, it helps but we always have things changing, things coming out and it is important to keep getting training to keep getting updated."

A third problem concerned the training content. In this regard, Participant 12 said: "I think a more hands-on training approach would probably be best. What I mean by that is, the last time I went through training was basically just, 'Here you go, this is what you are going to be doing.'" Participant 3 agreed and added the following: "I feel like there should be more improvement in training instead of just being thrown out there. I felt like I should have been trained before I started to be out there and assisting clients." Also, Participant 6 said a more interactive training could be beneficial: "I think more role-playing. I think people would probably benefit from that more. Like a room, a group, and you just kind of interview amongst each other."

The importance of such interactive training sessions was that it could help in gaining more real-life experience. Participant 12 explained that: "I learned mostly everything that I know on the floor." The participant continued:

> There are specific things that you do acquire from the training program, but it is mainly routine stuff on how to work the program, or how to run MEDS, or whatever, just different applications. But when it comes to the actual policy and procedure and all that, I think it sticks more for me, working on the floor.

These statements suggested that interactive training sessions may provide such real-life experience and, as a result, they should be considered to improve the work quality of TANF workers. In addition to interactive sessions, two participants (16.7%) raised a concern regarding the importance of learning how to better communicate with clients and how to more efficiently assist them with their needs. Participant 9 stated that interactive training sessions may help TANF workers to improve their communication skills:

> I think what they really need is to see workers actually doing it, so they can hear their language that they use because it's different. It's not, okay, you are here to report, okay. It's not so direct. It's hi, so how is it? How's it going? They forget to do the interpersonal kind of pursuit.

Participant 7 added:

> I think the workers here, all of us, probably need more training in how to understand the client more or how to see and understand the needs that they have. Sometimes it is hard because we are expected to do so much for the client, yet the time allowed or the time that we have is not there.

This participant also stated to be insecure about his own communication skills, and said: “I do not feel I motivate people so it is like maybe a training where I can

motivate somebody or what words to say so that I can have them think, ‘Oh, I can do it’, or something like that.”

Participant 5 said that there was insufficient attention to address mental health issues during training sessions and that the possible occurrence of such issues should be taken into consideration more.

> I think we need to put a lot more into mental health because I think a lot of my participants would benefit from that. Not just the counseling. I know that we have that, and I see them, but it is once a month. I think they need to put more into mental health.

Program structure. A second structural problem concerned program structure and it was mentioned by nine participants (75%). In relation to this issue, three participants (25%) found that the program was outdated and needed an upgrade. Participant 2 said the following: “Instead of it being just a generational program, make it more of an actual Welfare-to-Work program and hopefully with the new CalWORKs 2.0, maybe that will happen.”

Also, Participant 9 mentioned CalWORKs 2.0 and said that, so far, it had not been implemented in his or her department. The participant said that this was unfortunate, as he orshe considered it an excellent vision:

> Like the CalWORKs 2.0 on our face-to-face. We have not done that for them, and I think that they would benefit from that, because that'll help them think outside the box, not just in the box. (...) I think that the CalWORKs 2.0 is the direction of getting the worker to think outside the box where they help no matter what.

Participant 12 added:

> There is only so much time throughout the day that you are allowed, and it takes so much time to process a case, that I wish I can touch a little bit more cases, and maybe, with an updated program, or something that's not so crude or rudimentary, that we could assist more people.

Another issue was raised by Participant 6; it was related to a shortcoming in legislation:

> I believe the student rules for food stamps, CalFresh, that should change. I feel that we should be able to assist them just little bit more only because they are students, working, and not able to work as many hours.

Participant 11 stated:

> I wish there was more liaisons to certain departments like shelters. We have to go out and contact these people by ourselves. There should be somebody that we can contact directly who speaks to these people and has the information for us. There are certain things like that. I wish there was a middleman to other certain areas.

Four participants (33.3%) evaluated the processes and functioning of the organization as too slow. In this respect, Participant 7 found that the county often took too long to process claims, which made clients have to wait a long time for their financial benefits and, subsequently, led to them missing appointments due to not being able to pay for childcare or transportation:

> I believe it does take the county a longer time to process those claims so a lot of the times, the childcare providers end up saying, ‘We cannot take care of your

> kids because we are not getting the payment on a timely basis.' The mileage is available to the clients after they have attended their activities. So, a lot of the times we get, 'I need an advancement,' or, 'I need the money now because I do not have money to get to my activity.'

Participant 8 raised the same issue and added: "When they ask why you did not come in, they say 'I did not have anybody to take care of my baby and I did not have money to pay.' So, then I ask myself, why do not we pay upfront for them?"

Another statement was made by Participant 11, who complained that his or her department was "way behind", stating that:

> There is just thousands and thousands and thousands of RC's, or whether they be RRR, or RV's, or whatever it is, and telling somebody that they have to wait, or that they need to be patient and give us a little bit more time. That is a huge issue. And it is gotten better, do not get me wrong, but it is nowhere near where we need to be.

Need for resources. A third structural problem was the need for certain resources. Whereas five participants (41.7%) said they had all of the resources they needed, seven others (58.3%) claimed the opposite. In this regard, the most pressing need was for transportation. Participant 2, for example, said that "We do not have public transportation for them to get from one place to another." Four others (33.3%) also raised transportation as an issue. Participant 5 stated:

> I wish that if they did not have transportation, there was some way that you just do not dump them, give them a bus pass, and figure it out. You know what I

> mean. I wish almost like we could have some kind of transportation for people to get places.

Another needed resource was job security. This concern was raised by Participant 10, who found that:

> I feel like we need more job resources. Maybe even have like something here in this office where on Tuesdays, like a job fair so they have job search, they have a company go out and do interviews and hire. (...) Because a lot of our clients get discouraged knowing that they have to go to job search and then it takes four weeks possibly to get a job.

Participant 3 added the need for "more outreach stations for our community." This participant explained: "We need resources like, to help with the homeless situation, to refer our clients, we get a lot of homeless families that come in here asking for that and I do not think there is enough resources."

Insufficient information. Six participants (50%) raised the problem of not being provided with enough information by their organization to properly do their job. Participant 7 stated what information he or she would like to have received from his organization:

> Basically, knowing the resources available in our county. Where the shelters are, maybe the food link or the food banks. For the employment services part, us knowing we have providers that we refer our clients to, but I know there is also a lot more information out there for the clients. So basically, just knowing if a client comes in and if we cannot service them here, maybe knowing where to refer them

> where they can get that help. (...) Definitely a homeless list. Like where we can refer clients to for them to be able to maybe find a place easier. I do not know if a landlord list or something. Or maybe the low-income apartments. So, I have heard that [Town C] has a list of low-income apartments in their city, yet here in [Town B], we do not have that. So maybe someone should go out in the community and get that done.

Participant 6 added: "I think more resources on the sponsored individuals. The reason for that is we do not really find too much on them. I am having to go back a lot and ask those repetitious questions on it."

Participant 11 argued that "when you are working face to face, it would be nice to be able to have all the information." The participant continued: "there is a big difference from one department to the next department, or unit to next unit, and there is a miss there." He or she added that "until they start to communicate better, and have a better understanding of each other, it is always going to be a struggle." Participant 2 raised the same problem and found that knowledge of all available resources was especially important in Face-to-Face interviews because "we do not have the time to start searching for things." The participant explained:

> We depend on, 'Hey, maybe my supervisor and my lead worker' and, 'Can you research this for me while I see this client?' And if I spend too much time with this client, I will have to take a phone number and then call them back once I obtain the information I need.

Also, Participant 2 stated that TANF workers generally did not have sufficient knowledge of childcare and mileage services. The participant stated that:

> I think some of us do not even know where the childcare packets are, or what packet is required for the provider who is a licensed provider or the exempt provider or the TrustLine. I do not think a lot of the Face to Face workers know that there is such... three packets needed or even where the mileage applicant lists are out in the lobby to give to the clients. I think that information needs to be known for everybody who works with cash applicants, whether it be a potential ES eligible or not, because some of those are post aid services that are offered to them as well.

Staff. Another structural shortcoming concerned a shortage of staff. Five participants (41.7%) found that there were not enough staff members in their department, putting more pressure and a bigger workload on the participants. Participant 4 said: "I feel like we have everything that is working, everything that we have, but I feel like we are low on employees." Participant 5 added: "I need to have a full staff. It seems like a lot of times we will not have all the positions filled, and they keep throwing more on our table." Participant 1 said that having more staff would be particularly useful "to manage our caseload a lot better and be more thorough with it."

Three participants (25%) mentioned that not having enough staff negatively impacted their relationship with clients, as they could not invest as much time in them as they wanted to. In this respect, Participant 5 stated:

> I wish we had smaller caseloads too so I could actually... because a lot of times it is just like, it is just a number, it's this case number. (...) A lot of times I wish that the caseloads were smaller, that we could sit there and actually be more hands on and get to know her.

Supervision. Yet another structural problem was the lack of supervision. This shortcoming was mentioned by four participants (33.3%). Participant 1, for example, said: “maybe a supervisor that knows the program, where if I need a resource or I have any questions I can go to that person. At arms reach.” Participant 9 added that “they have to understand most of our workers are new, and they need the help.” The participant stated that “the more that the supervisors show that compassion towards the worker, that worker will show their compassion towards the client.” Thus, in other words, this participant implied that having committed and caring supervisors would positively influence the worker-client relationship.

Participant 12 found supervision important, but for a different reason. The participant explained that it was crucial “to have somebody that is showing people on a daily basis, how to implement policy, or how to fix a… because there is so many times where somebody calls me over for, ‘Hey, how do I fix this on my computer?’” The participant continued: “I do not have time to be going to everybody's computer, to fix a thing on a computer. Like, call IT, or, where's the trainer at? Go get him, you know?” Such statements signified that the presence of a supervisor was strongly valued.

Summary

I sought to answer two research questions in this study. The previous sections discussed in-detail the five themes that emerged from the data analysis. The conceptual model, which was social construction theory (Sabatier & Weible, 2014), helped with identifying these themes. With reference to the first research question, "How do county eligibility staff members interact with TANF recipients in the specific context of ABC County, CA?", seven strategies were identified. The most relevant strategies were cultural sensitivity, motivating, providing information, and empathizing. Participants believed that these were the best strategies to use to approach clients. However, a few shortcomings were identified, including lack of communication and encouragement as well as judgmental behavior and personal insecurities. Communication seemed to be an important subtheme, as both the interviews and the participant observation sessions showed that TANF workers paid special attention to the way they approached clients (e.g., nonverbal communication) and what language they used. Every participant started an informal conversation with the client at the beginning of the session. Only after some small talk did the conversation become more formal and structured.

With reference to the second research question, "How do county eligibility staff members perceive their interaction with TANF recipients as potentially influencing the likelihood of the recipients to participate in WTW programs in the specific context of ABC County, CA?", seven participants were convinced that the way they approached clients and explained the benefits of the program would strongly impact the client's decision regarding participation. Other participants disagreed with this statement and

found that, regardless of their efforts, some beneficiaries would remain unwilling to participate and this was due to several factors. These participants argued that most clients would simply lack the motivation and interest to participate while others were believed to decline participation because of childcare and transportation issues. A third group would decline because of financial contentedness. Other identified shortcomings and problems were discussed as well.

In Chapter 5, I discussed how the findings related to the previous literature in this field and how the results may contribute to a greater understanding of how county staff members interact with TANF recipients and might act to influence these recipients in their decisions about WTW activity.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

TANF and WTW are social welfare programs that aim to assist needy families and ensure that these families do not stay in the program permanently. The goal is for the families to receive assistance from the programs and enter the workforce so that they can provide for the needs of the members of their families on their own in the future. The general problem was the inability to meet the TANF work requirement in ABC County, CA. The specific problem was that the TANF participants found that the WTW program did not assist in terms of finding employment. Even if the TANF program replaced prior cash-assistance programs with a work-based safety net, the program did not guarantee work (Danziger et al., 2016). Millions of funds have been allocated to the TANF program, but the county has not been able to design a WTW program that meets the requirement of the TANF regarding the work participation requirement of 50%. Currently, the county only has a 38% work participation rate.

Researchers focused on the factors that appeared to be weaknesses of the program. Cebulla (2018) noted that most studies about TANF programs focused on the characteristics of the recipients. Pavetti and Schott (2016) explored the structure of the program and whether it was this factor that influenced the low participation rate. However, there were no studies that explored the role of the county staff agents who actually mediated the enrollment process. Researchers have not looked at how county employees might influence clients in their decision to participate in a WTW activity. The current study aimed to fill this gap in knowledge, providing data that public policy

decision-makers could use to formulate and/or change policies on how the county employees impact the TANF work requirement participation rate.

The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory case study was to explore how county staff members interacted with TANF recipients and how staff members may act to influence those recipients in their decisions about WTW activity. Semi-structured interviews, document collection, and participant observations were performed to determine the role of the staff members on the effectiveness of WTW programs in the specific context of this county.

For the first research question, seven strategies were identified, the most relevant strategies were cultural sensitivity, motivating, providing information, and empathizing. Participants believed that these were the best strategies to use when approaching clients. There were also shortcomings identified, such as communication and encouragement as well as judgmental behavior and personal insecurities. Communication was an important aspect in the enrollment process.

For the second research question, seven participants believed that the way they approached clients and explained the benefits of the program strongly impacted the client's decision regarding participation in the program. Other participants disagreed with this belief and found that, regardless of their efforts, some beneficiaries would remain unwilling to participate and this unwillingness was due to several factors. Participants stated that most clients would simply lack the motivation and interest to participate.

Chapter 5 is organized into different sections based on the research questions and the resulting themes that emerged during data analysis. The sections are as follows: (a)

interpretation of the findings, (b) limitations of the study, (c) recommendations, (d) implications, and (e) conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings

Themes 1-3 were related to RQ1: How do county eligibility staff members interact with TANF recipients in the specific context of ABC County, CA?

Theme 1: Type of Interviews

The county eligibility staff members interacted with TANF recipients through interviews. The types of interviews that the participants mentioned were eligibility interviews, work employment interviews, and face-to-face interviews. The face-to-face interviews determined whether an individual fell within the requirements of the government assistance program. This was somehow similar to eligibility interviews where individuals were assessed regarding whether they were eligible or potentially eligible for employment services or WTW. For work employment interviews, the staff member and the individual discussed the plans for, current status of, and preparation for a job. The use of such interviews was supported in previous studies about TANF programs, where researchers found that state and local TANF members conducted assessments, had effective work programs, and enhanced support programs (Joyce et al., 2015; Stancyzk et al., 2018).

The language used between staff and clients was also important, as this was how the staff members and the TANF recipients talked with one another. Most of the participants spoke English and Spanish, which meant that they could easily talk with people who spoke these two languages. However, the TANF program also assisted

individuals from other cultures with a different language. In these cases, an interpreter was needed for the interview with the staff member and the TANF applicant or recipient. Even with translators, the participants noted that communication barriers existed. These findings contributed new knowledge to how TANF services could be improved.

Theme 2: Perceived Role and Needs

The second theme was about the perceived role and needs of the service providers regarding their roles and their opinions about beneficiaries' most pressing needs. This theme contributed new knowledge to the existing literature, as there has been no study on the perceived role of TANF staff. The participants stated different needs of the beneficiaries, such as shelter, patience and understanding, healthcare, childcare, education, and work. The staff members stated that one of the reasons that employment was not successful among the recipients was because they did not have a roof over their heads. The participants wanted the application process to be fast and simple. As such, the applicants and recipients needed understanding from the staff members.

The staff members also mentioned that there were some applicants that had mental health issues but were not aware of them. This was consistent with the findings of previous researchers about challenges of recipients to find employment. Hahn et al. (2016) stated that living with physical or mental health difficulties may have served as a challenge for TANF recipients. Wahler et al. (2015) concluded that, due to learning problems, many TANF recipients were at risk of experiencing depressive symptomology—which could affect their work participation activities.

Childcare was also an issue, as some individuals in the program had children and could not take care of them while working. The TANF program provided childcare assistance to other TANF recipients (Floyd et al., 2017; Goddard et al., 2016).

Education and work were also a pressing need, as the staff members identified that the individuals in the program lacked education and work experience. This was consistent with the finding of previous researchers about the recipients' shortcomings in terms of education (Cebulla, 2018). Employers require education, training, and credentials that are beyond the high school level, which most TANF recipients lacked (Chong et al., 2017; Rosa, 2016).

For the perceived role, the main goal of the staff members was to provide beneficiaries with the best possible customer service and a positive experience with the program. Quality customer service meant that the beneficiary felt comfortable and the staff members made them feel helped and valued. The staff members also emphasized the need to ensure that the participants had a positive experience so that they would return to the program office. The staff members recognized that their treatment of the beneficiaries influenced whether the beneficiaries would return to the office.

The staff members recognized how important their role was in assisting the clients because they knew that their office was the last resort for their clients. For instance, some TANF officers specifically targeted TANF recipients who were nearing the time limit allotted with the program and provided them with additional assessments or additional services (Joyce et al., 2015; Stancyzk et al., 2018).

Some of the participants stated that their duty was just to collect information from participants. TANF frontline staff could use these tools to gather information about the interests and skills of the TANF recipient and apply the information gathered and conduct a job search personalized for that individual (Joyce et al., 2015).

Theme 3: Strategies

The participants also provided the different strategies they used in order to approach beneficiaries and convince them to partake in the program. These included: (1) cultural sensitivity, (2) motivating, (3) providing information, (4) empathizing, (5) pushing, (6) providing solutions, and (7) creative approaches. This contributes new knowledge to the discipline on how TANF staff members approach beneficiaries.

Themes 4-5 were related to RQ2: How do county eligibility staff members perceive their interaction with TANF recipients as potentially influencing the likelihood of the recipients to participate in WTW programs in the specific context of ABC County, CA?

Theme 4: Perceived Influence on Decision-Making

The fourth theme was regarding the perceived influence of TANF workers on the decision-making of beneficiaries. The participants stated that they had either a possible influence or limited influence on the decision-making process of the beneficiaries. The majority of the participants believed that the way they approached a client would at least partially influence the client's decision regarding whether or not to participate in the program. The participants articulated four different methods to influence a client's

decision: (1) sharing information, (2) attitude and approach, (3) encouragement, and (4) providing proof.

The staff members stated that they shared correct and a sufficient amount of information with clients. The attitude and approach during these conversations were also important. One of the participants shared that the staff members had to be excited about the program so that the beneficiaries would also be interested in participating in the program. Also, the participants noted that they had to motivate clients and give them the confidence they needed to take this step to receive assistance. Specifically, the staff members acted as the support system that provided encouragement to the recipients. The last approach was to provide the recipients with proof about the effectiveness of the program. However, there were also some participants who stated that they had limited influence on the decision-making processes of their clients.

Theme 5: Identified Shortcomings

The staff members discussed the perceived shortcomings and barriers of TANF workers, beneficiaries themselves, and the organization and program as a whole.

The staff members stated that the shortcomings of the TANF members included: (1) communication, (2) judgment, (3) encouragement, and (4) insecurities. The staff members had poor communication skills that included lack of communication or wrong communication and poor listening skills. Allard et al. (2018) found that TANF case workers expressed that they were often uncomfortable in addressing these issues with the TANF recipients. However, if the TANF recipient did not disclose this information, in

the long run, it only made the process longer and more difficult (Allard et al., 2018; Joyce et al., 2015).

The TANF workers also had premature assumptions about certain beneficiaries. As a result, they were not able to assist the beneficiaries to the best of their ability. There was also a lack of encouragement. The staff members did not encourage the beneficiaries to participate in the program.

The TANF workers also discussed the perceived barriers to participation for beneficiaries. These included: (1) poor engagement, (2) childcare and transportation, (3) financial aspects, (4) beneficiaries' patience and understanding, and (5) bad influence. Most of the findings were consistent with the findings of other researchers. The beneficiaries did not have the motivation to work and to improve their lives. Similarly, Cebulla (2018) stated that lack of motivation was one of the reasons that the TANF program was ineffective.

Beneficiaries with children also needed childcare whenever they went to school or work. Also, they found it difficult to study or work without transportation. This was consistent with the characteristics of TANF recipients that most recipients had at least one child whose age was 5-years-old or younger (Kim et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2016). The majority of TANF families had young children, which might have had an impact on their employment outcomes.

Some individuals were already content with the money they were receiving that they did not want to do something to change their lives. As long as the beneficiaries were receiving money, even if it was only a little amount, they were happy with it. The

family's income must be below half of the federal poverty level in most states for them to be eligible to receive TANF benefits (Halpern-Meekin, Tach, Sykes, & Edin, 2016; Joyce et al., 2015; Sykes et al., 2015).

Even if the TANF workers explained the process to the beneficiaries, they did not understand the whole process. They just wanted to get their benefits and get out of the office. The beneficiaries also experienced bad influences either through family members or friends.

The TANF workers also stated that they were issues with the program or organization as a whole, such as (1) training, (2) program structure, (3) need for resources, (4) insufficient information, (5) staff, and (6) supervision. The participants were not satisfied with the current training sessions provided by the organization. This finding was consistent with previous studies on training and support for TANF members. There was limited support for caseworkers to provide assistance to citizens or TANF recipients in getting a job (Boulus-Rødje, 2018). There was a need for training programs so that the knowledge of caseworkers in assessing unemployed citizens would improve. This would also lead to a faster and easier matching of skills of unemployed citizens and job openings. Also, Cheng et al. (2017) stated that TANF staff should receive cultural-competency training to ensure that they did not discriminate while helping TANF recipients.

In addition, some of the workers stated that they believed that they were not being provided with enough information by their organization to properly do their job. For instance, they wanted a list of shelters that they could give to the beneficiaries. Joyce et

al. (2015) stated that the TANF agencies and frontline staff should have access to other organizations, local employers, and LMI. LMI could provide data about good jobs in their location, which they could recommend to TANF recipients (Joyce et al., 2015).

The structure of the program was believed to be outdated and in need of an upgrade. The whole process of the program was too slow. This finding supported the conclusion of Pavetti and Schott (2016) that the structure of the program itself was the issue. Similarly, Danziger et al. (2016) indicated that the current structure of the program did not guarantee unemployed recipients, who reached their time limit, a job if they could not find one—which resulted in an incomplete transition. There needs to be an improvement in the structure of the program to better achieve the purpose of helping families in need.

The TANF workers stated that they did not have all of the resources they needed to carry out their responsibilities. The most pressing need was for transportation. Also, The TANF workers stated that there were not enough staff members in their department, putting more pressure and a bigger workload on participants.

The last identified structural problem was the lack of supervision. The TANF workers did not have any supervisor that they could approach with their issues and concerns. Cortis and Eastman (2015) stated that having control over objectives, tasks, and pacing could improve the work experiences of frontline practitioners, which also could enable them to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of the individuals they serve. While the TANF staff members had some control over their job, they still needed supervision.

Limitations of the Study

The following were the limitations of the current study. The first limitation was the generalization of the findings. The results of the study could not be generalized to other populations or settings. Nongeneralizability is a unique and common characteristic of a qualitative case study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2017). Transferability was ensured so that readers and future researchers could assess the applicability of the findings to other settings through replication.

The sample size of the current study was the second limitation. In qualitative studies, the sample size is small compared to quantitative studies. However, this limited the results of the study as to whether it is representative of the experiences of the target population.

Researcher bias was also a limitation. The opinions and beliefs of the researcher could have influenced the results of the study. To address this limitation, I acknowledged the sources of my bias in order to minimize possible interference with the findings of the study. In addition, I followed the data collection and analysis procedures meticulously.

Recommendations

There needs to be more research about the role of staff members in the effectiveness of TANF programs. The results of this study could provide a foundation for future research.

A quantitative study could resolve the methodological limitations of the current study, including the generalizability, sample size, and researcher bias. In a quantitative

study, future researchers could increase the sample size to recruit a representative sample in order to improve generalizability of the results (limiting researcher bias).

Other types of qualitative research designs could be implemented. For instance, a phenomenological design could provide in-depth detail about the experiences of case workers in the TANF. This could provide more information on how to address the problems in the program.

Future researchers could also conduct a study that includes the perceptions of the recipients, employers, and the caseworkers. Such a study could provide a holistic view of the issues in the TANF. The findings of this future study could bring insights into how to improve the program.

Implications

Researchers have argued that there is a need to improve on the current state of the TANF programs. For instance, Ziliak's (2015) review of the program cited that it has been unsuccessful in achieving its purpose; based on the results of the study, Ziliak (2015) called for a review of the structure of the program.

The county in the current study has a low participation rate of 38% despite over 21 million dollars being allocated to the county's WTW program by the state in 2016-2017 (CDSS.ca.gov, 2017). The results of the study could provide insights into why the program participation rate has not improved.

The results of the study highlighted the role of the county staff in influencing WTW participation. Since the role of staff members in determining the effectiveness of TANF WTW programs has been established, policymakers and administrators of the

program could address the issues raised by the TANF staff members to make the WTW program more effective (for instance, by filling the need to create better training programs for staff members).

Conclusion

TANF is a welfare program that replaced AFDC. There is a major difference between the two welfare programs, which is about their rules on cash assistance and work requirements (Cebulla, 2018). States need to meet TANF work participation rates if they want to receive funds for the program. TANF has led to a decrease in poverty rates (Bunch et al., 2017; Mather, 2017), crime rates (McCarty et al., 2015; Wright et al., 2017), and employment rates (Haskins, 2016) in states that have implemented it.

Previous researchers have studied whether the structure of the program or the characteristics of the TANF recipients were the problem. Critics asserted that the structure of the program was problematic, which was the reason it was not working (Pavetti & Schott, 2016). Scholars found that TANF recipients were parents of young children (Kim et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2016), were low income families (Halpern-Meekin, et al., 2016; Huber et al., 2015; Joyce et al., 2015; Sykes et al., 2015), had limited education and work history (Carlson et al., 2016; Zedlewski, 2012), experienced challenges in providing parental support (Olson et al., 2016; Pavetti, 2014), put children at risk for harm (Olson et al., 2016; Ratcliffe, 2015), and experienced adversity during childhood (Boosheri et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2016). These characteristics became barriers for employment outcomes among TANF recipients.

There has been no previous study about the role county employees may have in the success of TANF recipients. In the current study, I aimed to fill this gap. The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory case study was to explore how county staff members interacted with TANF recipients and how they could act to influence those recipients in their decisions about WTW activity.

For the first research question, the staff members interacted with TANF recipients through interviews and meetings. In these interviews and meetings, participants used seven strategies to help the recipients. These sevens strategies included cultural sensitivity, motivating, providing information, and empathizing. The staff members recognized the importance of their role in helping the TANF recipients.

For the second research question, the majority of the TANF staff members recognized that they influenced the decision of the recipients to participate in WTW programs. These staff members were convinced that the way they approached clients and explained the benefits of the program would strongly impact the client's decision regarding participation. Other participants disagreed with this belief and found that, regardless of their efforts, some beneficiaries would remain unwilling to participate, and this unwillingness was due to several factors.

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