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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to conduct a case study summative evaluation of a municipal agency’s employment and training program that receives federal, state, and local government funding to prepare urban youth for eventual economic self-sufficiency. This is the first summative evaluation of a local government’s after-school youth employment and training program, which was designed to address the unemployment problem in general and, specifically, the employability and soft skills gap between youth and employers. This study measured the effects of youth participation in a 6-week intervention that incorporated three distinct elements: work-based experience, job-readiness skills training, and soft skills training. To determine the effectiveness of the program, the researcher analyzed historical data from two groups, youths (n = 44) and employers (observers) (n = 20) utilizing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Content analysis revealed the similarities between the program’s training materials and the tools used to measure outcome data. Findings derived from the scores of the Resume Scoring Rubric, the Work Personality Profile Self-Report, and the Work Personality Profile demonstrated overall positive effects of the program on youth participants based on the perspectives of the youth and the employers. The results of this study will aid stakeholders in improving their understanding and decision making regarding future use of this particular program and for other government-funded youth employment and training programs, which are designed to increase the employability of urban youth.

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Dedication

I am eternally grateful to God for enabling me with the fortitude and mercy to complete the dissertation process. From childhood to adulthood, I have survived many challenges and overcome what may be perceived as insurmountable. Yet, God, my family, and dear friends have supported me through it all. If it were not for the love, sacrifice, and support of my family, this journey would not have been possible. I am a living testimony that resilience and perseverance will serve as armor for the turbulent times. During this process, I was blessed with the birth of my third daughter, Callie, and the shattering of my heart evidenced by the loss of my brother, Donnie, and my mentor and dear friend, Art. Yet, the blessings and heartaches have strengthened me beyond measure and have encouraged me through this journey.

I wish to thank my beloved husband, John, who instantly became “Mr. Mom,” once I decided to begin this journey. I am exceedingly thankful to my mom, Ruby, who has sacrificed her entire life to ensure that I would be successful. She has worked tirelessly as a proxy for me with my three children. Additionally, the support of my mother in-law was a tremendous help. I want my children to know that my sacrifice was mostly for them, and while I cannot express how conflicting it has been to watch them grow without me, throughout this process, my desire is for them to use this experience as motivation to surpass any milestones that I have achieved. To Ashley (11), Brooke (3), and Callie (1), this dissertation is for you.
If it were not for the expertise and patience of my dissertation team – Chair, Dr. Wallis; Committee Member, Dr. Girardi; Advisor, Dr. Jallow; and D2D (Ann, Kathy, Kim, and Kishon), I would not have finished this endeavor. And, last, but certainly not least, I am extremely grateful to Dr. Gilbert Louis, who served as more than an Executive Mentor but as a “sponsor.” Thank you, Dr. Louis, for the countless hours spent prying my eyes open to the bountiful dimensions of statistics.

This dissertation would not be possible if it were not for the support of three youth serving agencies: the Westchester County-Putnam Workforce Development Board, the Westchester County Youth Bureau, and a local municipal agency that shall remain anonymous. Your expertise and dedication to the most vulnerable populations of youth within Westchester County is appreciated. Finally, it is essential to thank the agency and program staff who implemented this particular program. Although anonymous in this dissertation, their diligence and genuine desire to cultivate the skills and aspirations of disadvantaged, urban youth is greatly appreciated.
Biographical Sketch

DaMia Harris-Madden is currently the Executive Director of a mid-sized government agency in New York. Mrs. Harris-Madden attended University at Albany-SUNY from 1999 to 1995 and graduated with a Bachelor of Sciences degree in 2000. She attended Mercy College from 2004 to 2006 and graduated with a Master of Sciences degree in 2007. She came to St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2015 and began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Mrs. Harris-Madden pursued her research in measuring the effect of youth participation in a government funded urban after-school employment and training program under the direction of Dr. W. Jeff Wallis and Dr. Janice Girardi and received the Ed.D. degree in 2017.
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to conduct a case study summative evaluation of a municipal agency’s employment and training program that receives federal, state, and local government funding to prepare urban youth for eventual economic self-sufficiency. This is the first summative evaluation of a local government’s after-school youth employment and training program, which was designed to address the unemployment problem in general and, specifically, the employability and soft skills gap between youth and employers. This study measured the effects of youth participation in a 6-week intervention that incorporated three distinct elements: work-based experience, job-readiness skills training, and soft skills training.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The customary desire for and pursuit of self-sufficiency is cross-generational (Haskins & Morgolis, 2014). While the human capital investments of education and training are the hallmarks for self-sufficiency, employment is the third leg of the self-sufficiency stool (Schwartz, Leos-Urbel, Silander, & Wiswall, 2015; Strong-Blakeney, 2013; Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006). Employment facilitates the personal desires of financial autonomy, and it is an integral element to a would-be worker’s “future life course” (Mortimer, 2003, p. 11). “From young people hoping to become self-sufficient adults to adults trying to escape dependence on welfare, a job is the ticket to success” (Haskins & Morgolis, 2014, p. 3578).

Yet, self-sufficiency has become a distant marker of achievement for many disadvantaged youths. The lack of employability, a status wherein this study encompasses a dearth of skills and work experience, can divert youth from the pathway of financial, social, and emotional independence (Lomasky, 2016; Sachdev, 2012). Research suggests that disadvantaged youth often lack the characteristics of a shovel-ready employee, as they do not possess the job readiness skills and knowledge of how to find and secure a job (Annie E. Casey Foundation [ACF], 2012; Belfield, Levin, & Rosen, 2013; Keim & Strauser, 2000; Phillips, 2010; Sum, Khatiwada, Trubskyy, Ross, & Palma, 2014b; Taylor, 2005; Westchester Children’s Association [WCA], 2013).

The lack of work experience and readiness, along with the perceived notion of employers that youth are ill prepared to enter the labor market, has lent to the youth
unemployment dilemma. Research indicates that the outlook for youth seeking employment following the 2008-2009 economic recession is “grim” (Lomasky, 2016, p. 6; Matsuba, Elder, Petrucci, & Marleau, 2008, p. 2). Hence, governments have invested resources into employment and training programs aimed to reduce the barriers to youth employment and the consequences of the poor outcome of delayed self-sufficiency and transition to adulthood (Schwartz et al., 2015).

**Youth Unemployment**

Youth unemployment has significant effects on the global economy (Arteaga, Fernandez, Haspel, Houlihan & Ozel, 2014; Cheung & Ngai, 2010; Jain & Anjuman, 2013). With youth unemployment rates as high as 60% in developed countries, the increasing number of youth who are disengaged from the labor market presents a worldwide challenge (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017; O’Reilly et al., 2015). Like many global nations, the United States unemployment rates for youth seeking employment has been double and even triple the unemployment rate for adults (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011; Lomasky, 2016). While unemployment rates of youth have historically been more affected by business cycles than adult unemployment rates (Matsumoto, Hengge, & Islam, 2012), the economic recession of 2008-2009 and its aftermath has had long-lasting effects. Between 2010 and 2016, the youth unemployment rates for active U.S. job seekers, ages 16-24 years, fluctuated between 9 and 20% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). In a recent article, “Fleecing the Young,” Lomasky (2016) lamented:
If, however, you are a would-be worker aged 16 to 24, your chances of being unemployed is more than twice as great – indeed, greater than the worst chances experienced by the overall labor force during the height of the recession. (p. 5)

The unemployment dilemma for disadvantaged youth is even more troublesome (Allegretto, 2013; Geh, 2016; Sum, Khatiwada, McHugh, & Kent, 2014a). Disadvantaged youth are typically the “youth left behind,” who reside in economically challenged areas, and are of minority and or immigrant backgrounds (O’Reilly et al., 2015, p. 2). Disadvantaged youth often experience challenges to adulthood and self-sufficiency due to the lack of access to human and social capital (Yu, 2013), resulting from financially stressed educational systems, low academic performance, (Borghans, Weel, & Weinber, 2014), and social networks (Phillips, 2010). Immigrant youth, who have yet to develop adequate language skills, are considered to be disadvantaged as they are less familiar with the majority culture, and therefore perceived to be deficient in soft skills and people tasks (Borghans et al., 2014. Consequently, disadvantaged youth who are on the margins of employability are subjected to suboptimal wages and job prospects that may be long lasting (Matsumoto et al., 2012).

Disadvantaged youth, particularly minorities, may be subjected to increased socioeconomic conditions and inequities as a result of limited participation in the labor market (O’Sullivan, Mugglestone, & Allison, 2014). Data collected through the U.S. Department of Labor demonstrates a disparity between overall youth unemployment rates and minority youth unemployment rates (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). During July 2013, the peak month for employment amongst youth, the unemployment rates were: 28.2% (Black); 18.1% (Hispanic); 13.9% (White) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).
During July 2015, the overall youth unemployment rate was 12.2%, while the Black and Hispanic youth unemployment rates were 20.7% and 12.7%, respectively (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). As recent as last July, the disparity between youth unemployment rates amongst Blacks and Whites were alarming, 20.6% of Black youth experienced double the unemployment rates of their White counterparts (9.9%) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).

Moreover, youth who live in urban and low socioeconomic communities experience elevated unemployment rates when compared to youth who live in moderate-to high-income locations (Borghans et al., 2014; Sum et al., 2014a). A study analyzing labor force and employment activities amongst youth residing in the 100 largest U.S. metropolitan areas revealed that the youth employment rate for young people from low-income families ranged approximately 8% less than youth who resided in households that exceeded $40,000 in income annually (Sum et al., 2014b).

The youth unemployment dilemma in the US is expected to persist until 2024 (Morisi, 2017). According to a recent analysis of the Current Populations Survey (CPS) data, there has been a 30% decline in labor force participation amongst youth ages 16 to 19 over the past 40 years (Morisi, 2017). This trend is a significant concern given the broader economic implications for young people and society as a whole. While there are a number of economic effects of persistent youth unemployment, to include the lost government revenue and increased fiscal burdens on taxpayers (Belfield et al., 2013; Lomasky, 2016), additional consequences include increased social challenges such as crime, mental health issues, unhappiness, and income inequality (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011). Moreover, missed opportunities to engage in the workforce will limit young
people’s ability to familiarize themselves with the cultural and societal attributes required to enter into the complex world of work (Bandaranaike & Willison, 2015).

**Youth unemployment in New York State.** Youth unemployment is a major concern in New York State (Cuomo, 2016). It is estimated that approximately 14.5% of the 2.5 million youth, ages 16 to 24, who want to work are unemployed (Cuomo, 2016). The unemployment dilemma is growing within New York and particularly within Westchester County, NY, where the unemployment rates for youth ages 16-24 is nearing 45% (*Selected Economic Characteristics 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*, n.d.). The unemployment rate for youth ages 16-19 is 27.9% and 15.5% for 20-24-year olds (*Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2015 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)*, n.d.). In Westchester County, NY, disadvantaged youth are perceived to have the most difficulty in obtaining employability skills, particularly in the soft skills domain (*Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board*, 2016). The problem of youth unemployment is acute in New York State’s urban centers amongst disadvantaged youth, where there are higher incidents of poverty, school drop outs, homelessness, and youth incarceration (Cheng et al., 2016). Research concerning New York State’s urban areas are consistent with national findings of higher unemployment rates amongst low socioeconomic and minority youth populations (Borges-Mendez, Denhardt, & Collett, 2013; Hossain et al., 2015; Matsuba et al., 2008; Quane, Wilson, & Hwang, 2015; Sachdev, 2012; Sum et al., 2014a). The case for this study is an urban city located in the southern tier of Westchester County, NY, where the unemployment rate amongst young people, ages 16 to 19 years, is 59.4%, and it is 19.4% amongst 20-24-year olds (*Selected Economic Characteristics 2010-2014*, n.d.).
**Determinants of youth unemployment.** There are a number of contributing factors that lend to the quandary of youth unemployment (Arteaga et al., 2014; Shipps & Howard, 2013; Martin, 2009; Smith, 2012). Researchers have attributed youth unemployment to existing economic conditions to include a retracting economy, adult unemployment, diversion of domestic job opportunities, population growth, and intergenerational competition for employment (Arteaga et al., 2014; Shipps & Howard, 2013; Smith, 2012). Other researchers have acknowledged that the great recession has created structural unemployment (Kahn, 2015; Matsumoto et al., 2012). The lack of mobility, and family and financial obligations may also lend to youth joblessness (Kim, 2015). Additionally, the dearth of social capital contributes significantly to disadvantaged youths’ ability to develop social connections to employers through their families and friends (ACF, 2006).

However, research suggests that a salient determinant of youth unemployment is the perception amongst employers, those who are in positions to hire, that youth are unprepared for the rigors of work. Employers are critical gatekeepers that assist youth in gaining exposure to work behaviors, business expectations, job tasks, and potential career pathways (Sachdev, 2012). The perceptions of employers regarding youths’ skills and abilities have shaped much of the narrative concerning youths’ readiness to enter the workplace (Cunningham & Villasenor, 2014). Research suggests that a common view of employers is that youth lack the characteristics of an ideal employee due to their lack of work experience and employability skills that are required to demonstrate a plethora of skills, to include but are not limited to, communication, dependability, goal setting,

**The skills gap.** The skills problem in the US is concerned with the skills shortage, mismatch, and subsequent gap that occurs when the supply of skills that workers possess do not meet the demand for skills that are required in the labor market (Cappelli, 2015). The skills gap is a salient risk factor that contributes significantly to youth unemployment across New York State (Cuomo, 2016). Some researchers have suggested that the skills gap is the result of a misalignment in understanding between the educational system and the business sector (Martin, 2009). Modern literature has suggested that youth are leaving school without the knowledge of the non-negotiable skills that are required in a work environment (Cappelli, 2015; Cunningham & Villasenor, 2014; Williams, 2015). Current criticism of the U.S. educational system and the perceived failure of that system to prepare youth for employability has impacted the level of confidence of employers who are positioned to hire youth (Cappelli, 2015; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Dibenedetto, 2015; Lippman, Ryberg, Carney, & Moore, 2015; ManpowerGroup, 2013; Richey, 2014; Taylor, 2005; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2015). It is believed that students particularly are leaving school without the soft skills that are transferable to most environments (Cappelli, 2015). There is a plethora of studies that suggest the critical nature of soft skills supersedes the technical or hard skills that can be taught through company training programs or hand-on work experience (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Dibenedetto, 2015; Lippman et al., 2015; ManpowerGroup, 2013; Richey, 2014; Taylor, 2005; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2015).
The soft skills gap. Soft skills account for a significant portion of the employability skills that are required universally in most employment contexts (Cappelli, 2015). Employers have attributed 75% or more of individuals’ job success to the possession of soft skills (Cunningham & Villasenor, 2014; Dabke, 2015; Groh, Krishnan, McKenzie, & Vishwanath, 2016; Pandey & Pandey, 2015; Robles, 2012; Singh, Thambusamy, & Ramly, 2014). Employability skills are the combined work attitudes, values, habits, and behaviors that are required within the contemporary work environment (Bolton, 1992; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Richey, 2014; Sachdev, 2012; Staff & Schulenberg, 2010; Sum et al., 2014a, The White House Council for Community Solutions, 2012; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2015; U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). Employability skills, also documented in the literature as job readiness skills or work readiness skills, are considered teachable and are facilitated through a combination of approaches to include soft skills development and work experience (Curtin, 2008; Jain & Anjuman, 2013; Keim & Strauser, 2000). According to various employer studies, the consequences of the soft skills gap impacts the bottom-line costs to businesses (AMA, 2012; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Groh et al., 2016; Hart Research Associates, 2015; ManpowerGroup, 2013). The deficit of soft skills impedes the ability for employees to interact professionally with customers, teams, and supervisors (Groh et al., 2016).

Solutions to address the skills gap. In New York, the skills gap reported by employers suggests that the dearth in the current and future labor force’s skills foreshadow underperformance relative to contemporary work environment demands (Cuomo, 2016). In New York State, 350,000 jobs are expected to become available by
2020; yet, many of these jobs will not be occupied by the future generation of youth because of the skills gap (Cappelli, 2015; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Cuomo, 2016). Realizing that the ability for youth to participate in New York’s existing and prospective economy is at stake if the skills gap persists, local governments have enhanced their workforce-development programs to include strategies that employers recommend will increase employability amongst youth. Organizations that receive federal funding, such as One Stop Centers and Workforce Investment Boards, have funded youth employment and training programs throughout the state to develop the human capital that will be needed to fill positions.

The 2017 Winter After-School Youth Employment and Training Program (the Program). According to a recent government guidance report, employment and training programs that utilize comprehensive, integrated models, which include pilot programs that focus on delivering work experience, job readiness training and soft skills training will increase employment outcomes amongst youth (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). The municipal agency to be studied is a “workforce intermediary” that collaborates with employers to provide employer-informed education, skills development and training, and work experiences to youth (Hossain et al., 2015, p. 30-31). In an effort to better prepare youth for the labor market, this particular organization expends approximately $300,000 in federal, state, and local tax levy dollars annually to expose youth to integrated models of workforce development initiatives.

This case study examined a local municipality’s model for increasing the employability skills of disadvantaged youth. At the time of this study, the program
integrated three promising interventions (job readiness skills training, soft skills training, and subsidized work-based experiences) that were recommended by federal and state governments as positive youth development offerings that might improve future employment outcomes (Biden, 2014; Cuomo, 2016; Haskins & Morgolis, 2014; U.S. Department of Labor, 2014).

Throughout the year, the agency offers three cycles of its after-school employment and training program to youth (fall, winter, and summer). Programming during the fall and winter sessions are offered for 6 weeks. The subject of this case study summative evaluation is the 2017 Winter After-School Youth Employment and Training Program, which is referred to as the program. The agency facilitates youth placement in local businesses in a collaboration with the public and private sectors. The agency requires that youth who are placed in a job complete a series of job readiness trainings conducted by professionals. The topics covered through the job readiness component are derived from the New York State Department of Labor’s guidance book, Your Winning Edge: Resume and Interview Preparation (Appendix A), which outlines the protocols for job searching and writing a resume (New York State Department of Labor [NYSDOL], 2011).

Most recently, the agency incorporated a new element, READI (Respect, Enthusiasm, Articulate, Dependable, and Initiative), a guide (Appendix B) developed by the Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board (WPWDB), to increase soft skills amongst youth (WPWDB, 2016). Established as a response from Westchester County employers’ feedback regarding the employability concerns of local youth, READI’s training modules (Appendix C) were created to focus on the
work behaviors that address self-awareness, communication, problem solving, work ethic, and goal setting. READI’s foci are consistent with Neath and Bolton’s (2008) research concerning the appropriate work personality, which Keim and Strauser (2000) asserted reflects an individual’s ability to “satisfy fundamental work requirements, work attitudes, work habits and behaviors that are essential to achieve and maintain employment” (p. 14).

While the program expends government resources to deliver this multi-skills building program, there have been no provisions made for a formal evaluation. Consequently, the agency has not measured the effect of the program or its elements of work experience, job readiness skills training, and soft skills training on youth who have participated in the program. Hence, there is no empirical data to support whether or not this program has aided youth in becoming employable. This summative evaluation is the first evaluation of this particular agency’s employment and training programs.

**Problem Statement**

There are more than 75 million young people unemployed throughout the world (Lippman et al., 2015). Between 2010 and 2016, the youth unemployment rates for active U.S. job seekers ages 16-24 fluctuated between 9 and 20% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Research indicates that youth labor participation rates in the US have declined by approximately 30% over the last four decades, and it is expected to continue along this trend (Mixon & Stephenson, 2016; Morisi, 2017). While the US has seen some improvement in the youth employment rates since the 2008-2009 economic recession, youth who are disadvantaged due to their race, neighborhood, or socioeconomic status continue to experience high unemployment rates nationwide (Bremer, 2000; Freeman &
Wise, 1982; Hirsch, 2015; Sachdev, 2012; Staff, Johnson, Patrick, & Schulenberg, 2014; Sum et al., 2014a). As recent as July 2016, the disparity between Black and White youth unemployment rates was stark. The unemployment rate for Black youth was 20.9%, while unemployment rates for White youths were 9.9% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). The location of this study site has experienced youth unemployment rates at 83% (Selected Economic Characteristics 2010-2014, n.d.).

Research suggests that there are two major culprits of youth unemployment: (a) employers’ perceptions that youth lack the required employability skills for the workplace, and (b) the skills gap experienced by youth, based on the lack of work experience, the lack of knowledge concerning the various workplace norms, and the overall deficit of soft skills (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Hart Research Associates, 2015; Ju et al., 2014; ManpowerGroup, 2013; Robles, 2012; Staff et al., 2014; Stout, 2015; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2015). Since the 1960s, the government has invested billions of taxpayer dollars into social programs aimed to decrease youth unemployment (Haskins & Margolis, 2014). Yet, there is a lack of evaluation of government-funded programs that address the determinants of youth unemployment particularly from the perspectives of the youth and employers (Heinrich & Holtzer, 2011; Hossain et al., 2015; Stout, 2015; U.S. Department of Labor, 2014).

This particular study is concerned with the lack of evaluation of a local government agency’s after-school employment and training program that targets disadvantaged youth. Although the agency has a 50-year history of implementing social programs to address the persistent unemployment challenge, there is no evidence to suggest that there have been systematic evaluations of its employment and training
programs. Hence, this case study sought to evaluate the agency’s after-school youth employment and training program using a summative approach.

**Theoretical Framework**

Multiple theoretical frameworks were utilized to anchor this research. The researcher included program evaluation and the New York State Touchstones Framework as its foundation. The case study summative evaluation methodology uses a convergent parallel, mixed-methods design to analyze the outcome data of the program. Mixed-methods researchers utilize diverse, social science theories that form an overarching framework for answering research questions (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) suggested that the theoretical framework for a mixed-methods study should adhere to the following:

- a priori structure and guidance concerning the research questions; evidence that the theory informs both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study; the major variables and how they are related within the study; influence on the quantitative and qualitative data collection analysis, and interpretations (p. 69).

This study conforms to the research concerning theoretical frameworks described by Creswell (2014) because the rationale was established in the beginning of the study, demonstrating a program evaluation lens and a contiguous discourse concerning the program’s variables and outcomes.

**Program evaluation.** Program evaluation employs social research methods to examine the efficiency of social interventions (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011; Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). Russ-Eft and Preskill (2009) noted that “evaluation is said to have a particular logic that influences its process and makes it a unique enterprise” (p. 553). A program can be evaluated as a whole or in parts; however, it is necessary to
consider the program’s needs, design, implementation, and service delivery. Additionally, program evaluation’s life cycles include an examination of its bearings or outcomes, and efficacy (Rossi et al., 2004). For the purpose of this study a summative evaluation was conducted to examine the program’s outcomes and its effects on youth program participants.

A summative evaluation is a tool used to determine the merit, worth, or value of a program, and it is carried out through multiple forms, including outcome evaluation (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011; Mertens & Wilson, 2012). Through the measurement of a program’s outcomes, greater understanding of the program serves to form an evaluative judgment of that program and its components (Spaulding, 2008). An approach to a summative evaluation is the deployment of an outcome-focused evaluation. An outcome-focused evaluation furthers the understanding of the program’s efficacy in changing the knowledge, attitudes, and practices that are the result of program intervention (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009).

Logic model. A logic model is used in tandem with theory-based evaluation approaches (Mertens & Wilson, 2012) and may be presented as a picture depicting how a program operates (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). Logic models are constructed to elucidate a program’s properties and products that are levied to produce an expected change (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). The main tenants of the logic model include inputs, which are the program’s resources such as funding, staffing, supplies, and activities; measurable elements, also known as outputs, which demonstrate the quantity and quality of the program’s services; and the outcomes, which include the behaviors, knowledge, skills, or attitudes demonstrated by those who received the program’s resources (Mertens &
While there are multiple types of logic models, this study utilized an outcomes-based logic model, which highlights the linkages between the objectives and the outcomes (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). The researcher created a logic model in an effort to map the program’s theory and expectation for increasing youth participants’ skills.

**New York State Touchstones Framework.** The New York State Touchstones Framework guided the development of this program’s goals and objectives. This framework is utilized across New York State, particularly within programs that are funded through the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to provide a holistic approach to address the needs of children, youth, and families, and align statewide and local efforts to increase access to the knowledge, skills, and resources that are required for them to thrive in society (New York State Council on Children and Families, n.d., para. 2). Touchstones is used as a tool to “increase the effectiveness of the various systems” and “develop a common set of measurable goals and objectives that lead to improved outcomes for children and families” (New York State Council on Children and Families, n.d., para. 2).

The framework comprises six life areas: (a) economic security, (b) physical and emotional health, (c) education, (d) citizenship, (e) family, and (f) community. Each life area’s goals and objectives are intrinsically associated, and each connects services, opportunities, and supports (New York State Council on Children and Families, n.d., para. 2). The overarching goal of the program is that youth will be prepared for their eventual economic self-sufficiency. The two objectives of the program derived from the Touchstones framework are: (a) “Youth who can work will be provided with opportunities for employment,” and (b) “Youth will have skills, attitudes and
competencies to enter college, the work force or other meaningful activities” (New York State Council on Children and Families, n.d., para. 2). The anticipated participant outcomes of the program were:

1. By the end of the 6-week program, 85% of youth selected to participate in the program will have completed 60 hours or more of work based experience;
2. By the end of the 6-week program, 70% or more of youth participants will increase their job readiness skills by receiving a score of 80 percent or higher on the resume writing rubric;
3. By the end of the 6-week program, 85% of youth participants will increase soft skills.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to conduct a case study summative evaluation of a municipal agency’s employment and training program that receives federal, state, and local government funding to prepare youth for eventual economic self-sufficiency. As an intermediary agency, the intent is to continuously improve programs for youth and employers. Similar to other youth-serving organizations, the agency assessed the effects of its employment and training programs through anecdotal means (Bloom, Thompson, & Ivry, 2010). Bloom et al. (2010) asserted that assessment practices of employment service programs fall short of rigorous evaluation, allowing practitioners to define their own “best practices” (p. 6).

In an effort to lend credibility and rigor to the agency’s evaluative efforts, the researcher conducted the first formal evaluation of the After-School Employment and Training Program (the program). At the time of this research, the program offered three
elements: work experience, job readiness skills training, and soft skills training. This study may be of practical significance to employment and training professionals within New York State as it examined READI, a new soft skills intervention that was specifically developed by a Westchester County government agency (WPWDB) to increase the soft skill attributes of disadvantaged youth (WPWDB, 2016). Although the available research on employment and training program evaluations focuses on educational outcomes (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014), this case study summative evaluation will add to the small body of research on employment and training programs that focus on the outcome of job readiness and soft skills development.

The comprehensive answer to the program’s efficacy question requires the examination of intermediate and long-term outcomes and is beyond the scope of this study; therefore, the inquiry was limited to only short-term effects. The two research questions that guided this study are:

1. To what extent did the program meet its objective of providing the youth participants with opportunities for employment?

2. To what extent did the program meet its objective of providing the youth participants with the skills, attitudes, and competencies needed to enter the work force?
   a. To what extent did participation in the program have an effect on the youth participants’ job readiness skills as it relates to job searching and resume writing?
b. To what extent did the perceptions of the youth participants indicate that participation in the program had an effect on the youth participants’ soft skills?

c. To what extent did the observer ratings completed by the employers indicate that participation in the program had an effect on the youth participants’ soft skills?

d. Is there an alignment between the youth participants’ perceptions and the employers’ perceptions concerning the youths’ soft skills?

e. To what extent was there alignment between the youth participants’ perceptions and the employers’ perceptions concerning the program’s effect on the youth participants' employability skills?

**Potential Significance of the Study**

This study was effort to assess the elements of a government-funded employment and training program and its effects on disadvantaged youths’ employability skills. Although this particular agency has been tasked with the onus of evidencing meaningful outcomes, the lack of evaluation has yielded little concerning its programs’ effectiveness (Haskins & Margolis, 2014; Joseph, 1994; Sachdev, 2012). This present lack of evidence is a barrier to the understanding of the program’s elements, and merits (ETA, 2011; Fitzpatrick et al., 2011; Haskins & Margolis, 2014).

Furthermore, the scope and size of publicly funded employment and training programs often dictate the extent to which resources for evaluation are allocated (Hossain et al., 2015). Smaller programs that aim to provide skills building through training and work experiences may be assessed anecdotaly but not through rigorous designs (Hossain
et al., 2015). These factors explain why many programs have yet to accumulate substantial empirical research (Haskins & Margolis, 2014). Hence, a case study summative evaluation aids in establishing the groundwork for an evidence base and for increased learning concerning this particular program’s benefits to its youth and employers (Carman, 2009; Preskill, 2004; U.S. Department of State, 2012).

Moreover, given the unknown future of government and private funding for youth employment and training, it is critical that youth-serving organizations begin to build a case that these programs are worthy of financial investment (Trimble, 2013). Given the agency’s reliance on government grants and shrinking local resources, the evidence gathered from this case study summative evaluation may provide a competitive advantage during grant-writing initiatives. The data accessed and analyzed may strengthen grant applications and requests to funding sources for financial support of these types of programs. Ultimately, this study will aid stakeholders, particularly elected officials and executive leaders, who allocate funding, in making informed decisions regarding continuance, modification, expansion, or elimination (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011; Mertens & Wilson, 2012; Sylvia & Sylvia, 2012).

**Definition of Terms**

*Communication Skills* – “Verbal, written, and listening skills that encourage effective interaction with a variety of individuals and groups to facilitate the gathering, integrating, and conveying of information” (Williams, 2015, p. 16).

*Disadvantaged Youth* – individuals who are between the ages of 14 and 21-years old who receive an income or reside within households that receive less than 70% of the state’s lower living standards (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015), and the present one or
more of the following barriers to employment: (a) basic skills deficiency; (b) English language learner; (c) youth offender status; (d) homeless, runaway, or foster care status; (e) pregnant or parenting; and/or (f) disabled. The researcher utilized the Deluca et al. (2010) study definition of “at risk” (p. 306) youth interchangeably with the Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act WIOA definition (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015) because disadvantaged youth are deemed by employers as having characteristics that lend to a deficit in employability skills.

Employability Skills – abilities, knowledge, and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to secure a job and be successful in the workforce (Sachdev, 2012). Employability skills within this dissertation encompasses both job readiness and soft skills (Pandey & Pandey, 2015; U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). The researcher has specifically defined employability within the data analysis as the five Analytic Skills found in Neath and Bolton’s (2008) research, which are: (a) task orientation, (b) social skills, (c) work motivation, (d) work conformance, (e) personal presentation.

Job Readiness Skills – Generic employability abilities to include written communication that demonstrates to employers an understanding of how to search for and apply to a job (Moore & Morton, 2017; U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). Within this dissertation, job readiness skills include resume development, and they are measured by the four domains of the Resume Scoring Rubric(Appendix D).

Skills Gap – a general form of mismatch that describes the shortage of employability abilities that include technical and non-technical skills (Cappelli, 2015).

Soft Skills – refer to a broad set of skills, competencies, behaviors, attitudes, and personal qualities that enable people to effectively navigate your
environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals.

Soft skills are “nontechnical skills, behaviors, attitudes, and character traits.” (Robles, 2012, p. 11)

In this dissertation, soft skills include the 11 rationally derived skills found in Neath and Bolton’s (2008) Work Personality Profile (WPP) (Appendix E), and they include: (a) acceptance of the work role, (b) ability to profit from instruction or correction, (c) work persistence, (d) work tolerance, (e) amount of supervision required, (f) the extent to which the trainee seeks assistance from supervisor, (g) degree of comfort or anxiety with supervisor, (h) team work, (i) ability to socialize with coworkers, (j) social communication skills, and (k) communication skills.

*The Agency* – the pseudonym of the organization under this study. The name and the location of the agency was redacted to protect the entity of it and its employees.

*Unemployment Rate* – the number of individuals in a labor force who are not employed and not actively looking for employment, but they are available to work (Sum et al., 2014a).

*Underutilization* – description of a population of people who are officially unemployed, hidden unemployed, and underemployed (Sum et al., 2014a)

*Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board (WPWDB)* – an agency situated within Westchester County government that is responsible for implementing employment and training strategies that are in alignment with federal public policy. The WPWDB is the convener of county and municipal government, for-profit, and nonprofit stakeholders who aim to increase employment opportunities for Westchester County residents. As a result of the WPWDB’s 2011 meeting of employers and stakeholders, and
subsequent strategy to increase employability skills of youth, the READI guide was created and implemented in local government employment and training programs (WPWDB, 2016).

Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA) – the main source of funding and policy guidance concerning government strategies to address youth and low-skilled workers (Biden, 2014; U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

Work Ethic – values of commitment, dedication, determination, and discipline that are demonstrated in the workplace (Griffin et al., 2014). Soft skills training prepares workers to acquire a strong work ethic including dependability, punctuality, patience, attitude, business etiquette, and maturity (Williams, 2015).

Work Personality – construct of an employee’s abilities, behaviors, and attitudes that is predictive of success in a labor environment (Guerra, Modecki, & Cunningham, 2014; Neath & Bolton, 2008; Strauser, O’Sullivan, & Wong, 2010; Strauser, Waldrop, & Ketz, 1999). Work personality demonstrates an individual’s ability to display the soft skills that are required to secure and maintain a job (Keim & Strauser, 2010).

Youth – for employment and unemployment purposes, youth is generally defined as the period of a person from the age when mandatory schooling ends through age 24 years (Martin, 2009).

Chapter Summary

The objective of inquiry is to provide a case study summative evaluation of a local government-sponsored employment and training intervention that is offered during out-of-school hours to disadvantaged youth in a New York State city. Recognizing that persistent youth unemployment presents impediments to youth and society, the program
studied recalibrated its strategies to include employer recommendations for preparing future workers for employability in the global market, but also added the requirements of local businesses’ feedback within the community of study. However, the program has not collected and analyzed empirical data to evaluate its effectiveness.

The researcher used a convergent, parallel mixed-methods design to examine if the program’s elements (work experience, job readiness skills training, and soft skills training) had any short-term effects on the dependent variables, youth participants’ soft skills (DV) and employability skills (DV). The summative evaluation case study was conducted as a part of the agency’s first internal evaluation.

Guided by the limited literature on job readiness skills training, the researcher reviewed program documents to examine the extent to which the program offered training on job searching, resume writing, and interviewing (Keim & Strauser, 2000; Moore & Morton, 2017). The researcher elucidated the program’s usage of the New York State Department of Labor’s guide and the Resume Scoring Rubric. This study also examined the new soft skills training guide, READI, which was developed in 2016 by a Westchester County government agency, to increase the employability and work behaviors of disadvantaged youth. The uniqueness of the case is demonstrated by an analysis of the self-reports and employer observations of youth participants using the Work Personality Profile (WPP) and the Work Personality Profile Self-Report (WPP-SR) (Appendix F) (Bolton, 1992), which have been previously utilized amongst individuals with disabilities who were observed within rehabilitation contexts. The aim of the study is to increase knowledge concerning the short-term changes in youth participants’ skills and work behaviors according to the youths themselves, and their employers (observers).
after participating in a 6-week work experience. The study illuminates whether the program effects translate into opportunities for disadvantaged youth to become employable.

Chapter 1 of the study provided the background information, including the problem statement and theoretical frameworks that guided this study. Chapter 2 provides a review of extant literature on youth unemployment and the elements of the program (work experience, job readiness skills training, and soft skills training). In Chapter 3, the methodology, including the study’s design, population, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures are presented. Chapter 4 presents the results of the mixed-methods analysis, and the implications of the findings and recommendations are discussed in Chapter 5.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

While youth employment may be regarded as commonplace in 21st century American culture (Staff & Schulenberg, 2010), there is evidence to suggest that youth participation in the labor market has steadily been declining. Since the resolution of World War II, youth unemployment has become a serious concern for governments, as joblessness amongst young people has led to a number of social and fiscal consequences to society. Although the literature has cited a number of reasons for youth unemployment, the perception amongst employers that youth are unprepared for the labor market because of a lack of employability skills has been a major determinant. To address the employability skills problem between youth and employers, governments have allocated billions of dollars to employment and training initiatives. These programs combine numerous strategies to facilitate practical learning of workplace expectations and the transferrable skills that develop the human capital needed for a person to enter a competitive labor market and gain self-sufficiency (Sachdev, 2012; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2015). Yet, there are limited evaluations conducted on employment and training programs, which have called into question the effects, if any, on the most challenged populations, which includes disadvantaged youth.

Given the limited evidence in the field concerning the evaluation of youth employment and training programs, this study aimed to investigate the effects of a youth employment and training program. This chapter provides an increased understanding of the youth unemployment dilemma by providing a review of the literature to include the
topics of: (a) youth employment, (b) the history of youth employment, (c) the consequences of youth unemployment and the implications of youth unemployment after the 2008-2009 economic recession, (d) the determinants of youth unemployment and the soft skills gap, (e) governments’ response to youth unemployment, to include youth employment and training programs, and (f) the lack of evaluation of youth employment and training programs.

**Youth Employment**

It is estimated that 97% of American youth have experienced employment by the age of 22 (Child Trends Data Bank, 2016). Research indicates that many young people have performed work activities in exchange for pay by the time they have entered the eighth grade (Greene & Staff, 2012). Employment in the US may be considered a “rite of passage” (Mixon & Stevenson, 2016; WAC, 2013, p. 2), allowing young people to focus on developmental assets to build self-concept, self-sufficiency, and positive identity (Piert, 2007). Cochran & Ferrari (2009) asserted that there is a relationship between age and employment, and that by the age of 15, it is estimated that a young person would have gained work experience. According to Mortimer’s (2003) longitudinal youth development study conducted in 1987-1988, which examined 1,000 high school freshmen, more than 90% of the youth studied gained employment and were engaged in part-time employment activities by their sophomore year of high school (Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006).

The process of obtaining and securing a job lends to the development of valuable skills that are useful during the transition to adulthood (Schwartz et al., 2015). Youth employment imposes responsibility, time management, and other positive work habits
(Child Trends Data Bank, 2016). For young people aiming to acquire more adult roles (Eliason, Mortimer, & Vuolo, 2015), employment prepares them for the positive and negative realities of work (Greene & Staff, 2012; Mortimer, 2003; Sachdev, 2012). At a minimum, early incidents of employment expose youth to the jobs and careers that they may or may not want to pursue in the future (Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006).

The immediate benefits of youth employment can be characterized as human, financial, and social capital investments (Caspi, Wright, Moffitt, & Silva, 1998; WCA, 2013). Sum et al. (2014a) summarized the significance of employment concerning the human, financial, and social capital investments that are deposited during a young person’s transition toward self-sufficiency:

Finding and keeping a job is a key step in a young person’s transition to adulthood and economic self-sufficiency. Employment obviously allows young people to cover expenses for themselves and their families, but it also provide[s] valuable opportunities for teens and young adults to apply academic skills and learn occupation – specific and broader employment skills such as teamwork, time management, and problem – solving. Additionally, it provides work experience and contacts to help in future job searches. (p. 1)

Youth employment enables young workers to gain human capital through work-based experiences and on-the-job training. Caspi et al. (2003) asserted that human capital investments, including skill training and acquisition, and the development of vocational identity, increase employability amongst youth. Soft skill development is a form of human capital that lends to the development of social skills, which are transferable in the labor market (Caspi et al., 1998; O’Sullivan et al., 2014; Sum et al.,
Exposure to the workplace enables young people to develop the hard or technical skills that are required in many workplaces, which include basic mathematics or use of technology. Young people who are engaged in employment activities are likely to increase their attendance and graduate from high school, explore careers, and develop a greater understanding of workplace norms and employer expectations (Sachdev, 2012).

An immediate benefit to work is the financial capital yielded through income (Hirsch, 2015; Mortimer, 2003, 2010; Staff & Schulenberg, 2010; Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006). The lesson of leveraging performance in exchange for a paycheck supports the building of financial capital (Hirsch, 2015). Studies on youth employment have suggested that early work experiences increase opportunities for higher earnings during adulthood (Caspi et al., 1998; O’Sullivan et al., 2014; Richey, 2014; Staff, 2014; Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006).

Additionally, social capital achieved through workplace interaction and exposure to adult role models enables youth to understand the realities of work through personal interactions with others (Bremer, 2000; Sachdev, 2012). Bremer (2000) asserted that youth have a limited understanding of the actual work context, and they are misled concerning the concept of work by the media. By interacting with adults in the workplace, the images distilled through television concerning careers and job expectations are counteracted (Bremer, 2000).

**History of youth employment.** Youth employment has been commonplace in the US for many centuries (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1980, 1986; Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006). Greenberger & Steinberg (1986) discussed the religious roots of U.S.
youth employment, noting the Calvinist and Puritan ideology of child labor. Prior to the 20th century, children as young as 8 years were commodified to pay family debts and contribute to a family’s income (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986). Youth have been present throughout U.S. history in roles that support subsistence farming, sharecropping, and, later, industrialization and apprenticeships (Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006).

As societies began to modernize, and education was introduced as a method of acquiring human capital, the value of youth work was debated (Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006). While youth were once expected to expend their waking hours to work and support their families (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1980; Mortimer, 2003; Staff, 2014; Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006), parents began to value the role of education. Moreover, industrialization led to dangerous jobs in factories and mills, and children and youth were subjected to fatal work conditions (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986).

Child labor laws, such as the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, supported the transition from work to school and delineated the types of jobs that youth could perform (Gardner, 1985). Gardner (1985) described the passage of the various failed legislations leading up to the Fair Labor Standards Act, which provided language that supported the overall well-being of youth workers and encouraged the link between school and work. By 1941, legislation required that the minimum age to work in hazardous conditions be 1 and that employers who hired youth ages 14-17 abide by set rules concerning specific tasks and worksites (Bresnick, 1984; Gardner, 1985). As the laws strengthened, employers were deterred from hiring youth. Adults who were impacted by the competition caused by cheap child labor also encouraged employers to hire adults (Bresnick, 1984; Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986).
The “lowered demand” for child labor, coupled with the integration of education, changed the paradigm of youth employment (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986, p. 13).

During the late 1970s and 1980s, the benefits and consequences of youth employment were well studied (Bremer, 2000; Hirsch, 2015; Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006). According to Staff et al. (2014), research conducted during the 1980s and 1990s suggested that the majority of youth were working part time and attending school, and that employment was regarded as a “key developmental context of adolescence” (p. 175). Yet Bremer (2000) noted that the debate as to the appropriateness of youth employment had been debated. Generally, moderate youth employment, consisting of part-time hours worked, was accepted as an activity that facilitated the development of internal and external assets (Bremer, 2000).

**Internal and external assets of youth employment.** Research from the Search Institute provides a framework for positive youth development. According to the 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents, ages 12-18, internal assets include: (a) commitment to learning evidenced by school engagement; (b) positive values that demonstrate personal responsibility and caring for others; (c) social competencies, such as planning, decision making, and conflict resolution skills; (d) positive identity, including high self-esteem and optimism toward the future (Scales, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 2011). External assets include: (a) support from the community, family, and adult role models; (b) empowerment, which is demonstrated when adults in the community value youth, and youth are utilized as resources; (c) boundaries and expectations that are made clear through adult role models, schools, and community members; (d) constructive use of time including youth programs that occur in the
community that aim to develop skills and positive developmental outcomes (Scales et al., 2011).

The internal and external assets provided through youth employment are significant to disadvantaged youth who reside in low socioeconomic neighborhoods where there are fewer protective factors such as community supports and access to adult role models (Bremer, 2000). Internal assets, such as commitment to education, positive decision making, and resilience, are critical for disadvantaged youth who reside in distressed neighborhoods, because employment offers alternatives to the lures of illegal means of earning money and crime (Heller, 2014; Schwartz et al., 2015), the use of alcohol and drugs, and other risky behaviors (Duerden et al., 2014; Sachdev, 2012; Sum et al., 2014). Teen pregnancy and parenting have also been reduced by youth spending unsupervised time at work (Sachdev, 2012).

During 1999-2000, the Search Institute surveyed 217,277 6th-12th grade students, which included 69,731 minority youth, to assess the extent to which developmental assets were important for youth from varying racial ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. The study found that young people who possessed internal and external assets were less likely to engage in risky behaviors such as underage drinking, substance use, and violence (Sesma & Roehlkepartain, 2003). The study also found that developmental assets, such as decision making and time spent in youth programs, were strong predictors of positive developmental outcomes (Sesma & Roehlkepartain, 2003).

Mortimer (2003) conducted a longitudinal study 1987 through 1988 that supported the development of internal assets through youth employment. The study assessed youth annually to determine the extent to which youth employment had an effect
on adolescent development and educational attainment. The researchers were interested in collecting and analyzing data using the Youth Development Survey (YDS) that was developed to capture information concerning the patterns of time use and the extent to which youth were able to balance the commitments of work and school, and the benefits of work when seeking educational attainment. Additionally, the researchers were interested to know whether or not youth employment during adolescence impacted employment during adulthood. This quantitative study began with a random sample of 1,000 ninth-grade students, ages 14 to 15 from an urban city in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Of the youth surveyed, 90% were in their senior year reported that they had participated in paid employment as early as their sophomore year of high school. Findings demonstrated that employment promoted positive assets such as responsible behaviors (Monahan et al., 2011). One of the greater benefits found was that youth who worked 20 hours or less per week while in school demonstrated increased earnings immediately following high school when compared to youth who did not participate in employment activities (Mortimer, 2003; Monahan, 2011).

**Criticisms of youth employment.** Studies contrasting the benefits to employment have mostly focused on work intensity amongst in-school youth, citing that 20 hours or more of work detracts from youths’ participation in school and extracurricular activities (Monahan, 2011; Staff & Schulenberg, 2010; Staff et al., 2014). Other studies have established a linkage between longer hours of work and underaged drinking (Duerden et al., 2014). However, Monahan et al. (2011) asserted that the impact of youth unemployment has been unclear due to the lack of controls for differential selection in the workplace. Essentially, Monahan et al. (2011) maintained that
youth choose to work for different reasons, and their orientation toward or against education and participation in risky behaviors, such as substance use, can influence the effects of employment and or educational attainment.

Monahan et al. (2011) re-analyzed the data from Steinberg, Fegley, and Dornbusch’s (1993) study, which found that youth who departed from the workforce experienced positive effects on academic performance. The researchers used longitudinal data, spanning over 20 years, to examine the effects of change in work intensity amongst 1,792 youth in Grades 10-11 during 1987-1988 and 1988-1989. Two types of propensity score matching were used to account for selection effects. An ANOVA was used to test across various groups of youth from different races, ethnicities, and family backgrounds. The analysis demonstrated that youth who exceeded 20 hours of work each week were likely to be disengaged from school and involved in risky behaviors, such as substance use and delinquency, when compared to youth who were unemployed. The researchers also found that there were insignificant effects on academic, psychological, or behavioral outcomes of youth who worked 20 hours or less per week while in school (Monahan et al., 2011).

An earlier study conducted by Greenberger & Steinberg (1980) employed a mixed-methods cost-benefit analysis to study part-time employment amongst in-school youth. The researchers found that the benefits of youth employment were exaggerated. They gathered longitudinal quantitative and qualitative data from 531 high school students and their parents in California during 1978 and 1979. Findings from the study demonstrated an association between employment and increased absenteeism, alcohol, and substance use. There was no evidence of significance concerning the impacts of
employment on educational and career development. However, the researchers found that there was congruence regarding independent studies today concerning independence on task, personal responsibility, and skills development. Self-reports from the youth observed demonstrated that youth perceived their work as beneficial to others.

The extent to which youth employment has been of importance in the US has been cyclical and temperamental (Matsumoto et al., 2012). The competitiveness of the labor market and the requirement of specialized skills have exhorted government and the public education system to bridge the gap between high school instruction and the world of work (Bremer, 2000; Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986). Given the studies on the negative consequences of youth unemployment, contemporary policies and programs have been developed to encourage youth employment and reduce youth unemployment (Sachdev, 2012).

**Youth Unemployment**

There are more than 75 million young people unemployed throughout the world (Child Trends, 2016). Twenty-first century youth are particularly disadvantaged when compared to youth who sought employment during the 1980s (Staff et al., 2014). There is evidence to suggest that the trends of youth unemployment have persisted for longer durations when compared to the effects of labor force disconnection on youth during the 1980s (O’Reilly et al., 2015). Recent analysis of the Current Populations Survey data revealed that there has been a significant decline in labor force participation amongst youth ages 16 to 19 over the past 40 years, and it is expected to continue along this trend (Mixon & Stephenson, 2016; Morisi, 2017).
Morisi’s (2017) quantitative study indicated that youth labor participation rates declined by approximately 30% between July 2016 and July 1978. In Baum & Ruhm’s (2017) quantitative study concerning the changes in the benefits of youth employment amongst high school students, data from the NLYS of 1979 and 1997 was compared to the data extracted from the NLYS during 2008 to 2010. The research reported that the annual earnings of senior high school students declined between 1979 and 1997 by 17.4%, and the annual earnings from 1987 to 1989 fell an additional 12.1%, evidencing a 29.5% decrease over 30 years (Baum & Ruhm, 2017).

**Youth unemployment after the 2008-2009 economic recession.** Economic challenges spawned from the 2008-2009 recession have been identified as a major contributor to employment declines amongst youth within contemporary literature (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011; Staff et al., 2014). Staff et al. (2014) observed that employment amongst youth in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades has been “disappearing” since the recession (p. 184). Utilizing the ongoing Monitoring the Future (MTF) data, Staff et al. (2014) explored the effects of the great recession on youth unemployment trends using data collected from six cohorts of middle and high school youth between 2006 and 2011. Their research states that 75% of high school seniors and 40% of high school sophomores were employed 20 years ago. Yet, 60% of seniors and 25% of sophomores are likely to work today (Staff et al., 2014). The researchers noted that the decline in youth employment amongst high school students was in part due to youths’ work in informal jobs such as “babysitting and yard work” (p. 184). The Staff et al. (2014) study included a multinomial logistic regression on 208,761 students from the MTF cohorts to predict the likelihood of two sets of youth, those who worked moderately (1 to 20 hours per
week), and others who worked extensively (20 hours or more per week). The researchers found that seniors in high school experienced an increased likelihood for unemployment after the recession. Moreover, Hispanic and Black youth had increased chances of not working when compared to White youth (Staff et al., 2014).

Borges-Mendez et al. (2013) supported the Staff et al. (2014) research regarding the adverse impact of the recession on minority youth. The researchers suggested that the unemployment amongst disadvantaged youth was exasperated after the economic recession. Allegretto (2013) agreed that the cataclysmic effects of the 2008-2009 recession demonstrate a reverberation of loss in jobs in communities of the disadvantaged. Allegretto (2013) noted, “recessions do not uniformly affect everyone, and as in the past, the brunt of the Great Recession fell on those with less education, racial and ethnic minorities, and the young” (p. 323). Despite the health of the economy, disadvantaged youth have historically experienced the least favorable employment outcomes in the labor market (Bremer, 2000). Bremer (2000) stated, “disadvantaged youth, and particularly minorities, are less likely than middle-class young people to be employed during high school. They are also less likely than higher income youth to complete high school and to be prepared to begin postsecondary education” (p. 55).

**Disadvantaged youth unemployment after the 2008-2009 economic recession.**

Despite the presence of a recession or its aftermath, studies indicate that disadvantaged youth are the most susceptible to youth unemployment (Bremer, 2000). Research over the past 40 years has demonstrated that minority youth generally constitute higher rates of unemployment in comparison to White youth (Bremer, 2000; Freeman & Wise, 1982;
Hirsch, 2015; Sachdev, 2012; Staff et al., 2014; Sum et al., 2014). The hardest hit populations of unemployed youth in the US are minority youth who are also economically disadvantaged (Bremer, 2000; Staff et al., 2014; Sum et al., 2014). Hossain et al. (2015) noted that youth employment activity varies as the result of a number of variables, including race and neighborhoods. Urban communities that comprise disproportionate numbers of low-income African Americans and Hispanics have historically demonstrated higher accounts of youth unemployment (Borges-Mendez et al., 2013; Freeman, 1982; Hirsch, 2015; Kim, 2015; Quane et al., 2015; Sachdev, 2012; Stern & Eichorn, 2013; Sum et al., 2014). Bremer (2000) suggested that youth from middle-class neighborhoods are more likely to work and possess employability skills, while disadvantaged youth are perceived to need and benefit most from employment and training programs.

The racial and socioeconomic divide in the US was captured in the Sum et al. (2014) study of youth unemployment in 100 U.S. cities. Three national surveys, the Current Population Survey (CPS), the CPS supplements, and the American Community Survey (ACS) were used to examine youth unemployment after the economic recession. During the period of 2000 to 2011, there was a dramatic decline in employment rate amongst youth ages 16 to 19 years in the largest cities in the US, with 42% of African Americans and 32% of Hispanics, experiencing a decline in employment opportunities. The researchers found evidence that is consistent with other studies concerning minority youth residing in low socioeconomic neighborhoods (Allegretto, 2013; Borges-Mendez, et al., 2013; Bremer, 2000; Darder & Torres, 2014; Hirsch, 2015). Young people living within households with incomes less than $40,000 per year had unemployment rates of
20%, eight percentage points less than youth from households exceeding $40,000 annually (Sum et al., 2014). Additionally, there was a reported 22% increase between 2010 and 2011 in the underutilization rates for all youth. Hirsch (2015) noted that, such as youth unemployment in general, the figures recorded by the federal government did not include individuals who were underutilized, or not actively seeking employment. Sum et al. (2014) reported that 60% of African Americans and 52% of Hispanics were underutilized according to the CPS of 2011. In addition, the researchers found that high school graduates who were not enrolled in college had the highest unemployment rates at 72% and 53%, respectively.

Darder & Torres (2014) predicted that the impact of the great recession on youth unemployment will be felt for at least a “full generation” before the country experiences an upward pattern of employment amongst African American and Hispanic youth (p. 65). According to the Borges-Mendez et al. (2013) quantitative study of the wealth gap among Latinos, Puerto Ricans had the least favorable labor market outcomes after the 2008-2009 recession. This finding reflects a national trend, which indicates that Puerto Ricans had less participation in the labor force and or in school (Borges-Mendez et al., 2013). Darder and Torres (2014) noted that Puerto Rican and Mexican populations, the two largest Latino groups in the United States, were devastated by the global recession, citing one out of five Latino youth as “jobless” (p. 65). Part of the explanation for this was the economic implications on businesses situated within poor neighborhoods. There were an estimated 11 million jobs lost as a result of the 2008-2009 recession, with many being employment sources for youth (The AECF, 2012). Retail, fast food, and other service industries found in urban settings dissipated after the recession (Hirsch, 2015; Kim, 2015;
Reichert, 2014; AECF, 2012). Yet, the dissipation of such businesses has classically had adverse impacts on neighborhoods where disadvantaged youth, and particularly minorities, live (Borges-Mendez et al., 2013; Bremer, 2000; Hirsch, 2015).

**Economic, social, and political costs of youth unemployment.** Research suggests that unemployed youth who are in the latter part of their teens and early 20s have an increased likelihood of earning less wages and not attaching to the labor market (Dewitt, 2014). Research suggests that early exposure to the labor market is connected to future labor market success (Dewitt, 2014; Mortimer, 2003; Staff et al., 2014). The impacts of youth unemployment are felt by the citizenry who absorb the financial costs of lost contributions to retirement systems and social security unemployment benefits (Lomasky, 2016; O’Reilly et al., 2015), along with increased government subsidies and safety nets such as welfare, healthcare, and housing (Belfield et al., 2012; Matsumoto et al., 2012).

Much of the available literature concerning youth unemployment in the US references the millions of youth who were disconnected from school and employment (Burd-Sharps & Lewis, 2012; O’Sullivan et al., 2014; Smith, 2012; WCA, 2013). From stunted economic growth to civic unrest, the economic, social, and political fabric of society begins to unwind when a nation does not prepare its future generation for participation in a global economy. Researchers have warned that chronic youth unemployment yields less income, opportunities to work, and productivity (Belfield et al., 2012; White House Community Solutions, 2016).

In the Belfield et al. (2012) study, the researchers calculated the economic burden of the U.S. 2011 cohort of 6.7 million youth ages 16 to 24 who were
disconnected from work and school using the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and the 2002 Educational Longitudinal Survey. Using a forecasting model, it was determined that the combined lifetime direct and indirect costs to the taxpayer of this cohort may be as high as $4.7 trillion (Belfield et al., 2012; O’Sullivan et al., 2014; White House Community Solutions, 2016). According to the O’Sullivan et al. (2014) study of the same 2011 cohort, one unemployed youth will cost U.S. taxpayers $4,100 annually as a result of lost tax revenue. O’Sullivan et al. (2014) also noted that the cost of youth unemployment is not only relegated to the taxpayer, but also to the young person who is unemployed. The researchers stated, “by one calculation, young Americans aged 20 to 24 will lose about $21.4 billion in earnings over the next 10 years” (p. 5).

**Scarring effects of youth unemployment.** Extended unemployment has been known to produce a “scarring effect” on youth and national economies Morsy (2012, p. 16). The scarring effects of the great recession on youth and the economy are the long-term “debilitating effects,” such as less income earned over time, and income inequality (Morsy, 2012, p. 16). Mroz and Savage (2006) posited that perpetual youth unemployment may lead to eventual adult unemployment and that “a spell of unemployment can lead to suboptimal investments in human capital among young people in the short run (p. 260). Scarring effects are problematic for most economies as evidences of less income earned and poor employment quality amongst workers (Belfield et al., 2012; Kahraman, 2011; Krahn and Chow, 2016; Matsumoto et al., 2012; Matsuba 2012; Mroz & Savage, 2006; White House Community Solutions, 2016). The scarring of youth residing in countries such as Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain was explored in Morsy’s (2012) quantitative study, which asserts that there is a positive
correlation between youth unemployment and income inequality. Morsy (2012) used the Gini coefficient to demonstrate that the increased youth unemployment in European countries after the economic recession has had long-lasting adverse effects on wages. Morsy’s (2012) study highlights the scarring effects during the 1990 economic downturn in Japan as an example of the long-lasting nature of scarring effects. Japanese youth who graduated from college during the economic downturn experienced longer spells of unemployment, which were attributed to the fact that during the economic uptick, Japanese employers preferred to hire the most recent youth graduates rather than those who had been displaced from the labor force for extended periods of time.

In a 14-year longitudinal study of Canadians ages 18 to 32 years, Krahn & Chow (2016) concluded that the scarring effects of youth unemployment impact career development and quality of jobs. The researchers conducted a mixed-methods study that involved a survey administered to a sample of 983 high school seniors, ages 17 and 18 who attended six different high schools within mixed-income, urban communities. Education and employment data was collected during follow-up telephone interviews on approximately 50% of the sample during a 14-year period. Data indicated that by age 32, 74% were employed part time or full time. However, 58% reported that they had been unemployed for an average of 9 months during the duration of the study. Findings demonstrated that the study participants who experienced frequent unemployment earned less and were employed in poor quality jobs when compared to those who did not experience multiple incidents of unemployment.

Youth joblessness has been known to delay the activities of autonomy, such as living on their own, purchasing a home (Berridge, 2014), developing a career (Staff &
Schulenberg, 2010), or becoming married (Kim, 2015). Still, much more is at stake when youth transition to adulthood without the potential for economic well-being (Sachdev, 2012; Schwartz et al., 2015; Strong-Blakeney, 2013). The social repercussions on society when youth remain out of work are evidenced by higher incidents of unhappiness (Dillon, 2016) and mental health impairment (Paul & Moser, 2009) to include depression and anxiety (Bell & Blanchflower, 201).

Strandh, Nilsson, Nordlund, and Hammarstrom’s (2015) study examined the effects of youth unemployment on mental health scarring. A significant relationship between youth unemployment and mental health was reported from a 27-year longitudinal study of high school youth in Sweden. Researchers surveyed a sample of 1,083 youths at the ages of 16, 18, 21, and 30. An ordinal regression of mental health using data collected from questionnaires administered at ages 21 and 43 were used to determine the probability of mental health scarring based on exposure to unemployment and youth programs. The findings demonstrate that there was a strong link between youth unemployment and mental health during adulthood. The researchers concluded that exposure to youth programs may reduce the long-term effects of mental health scarring on adult.

The political implications of youth unemployment include the potential for civil unrest (Flowers, 2014; Matsuba et al., 2012; Mauto, 2013; Morsy, 2012). Flowers’s (2014) quantitative study examined countrywide youth unemployment and global terrorism data from external databases from 2000 to 2009 to examine the relationship between youth unemployment and terrorism. Results from a regression analysis demonstrated a small association between youth unemployment in particular countries.
and terrorist activity. In Mauto’s (2013) mixed-methods study of the UN Habitat Youth Fund, a project designed to improve the livelihood assets of Sub-Saharan Africa urban economies, the researcher sited the causal effects of youth unemployment on countries within Europe, Africa, Asia, and the United States. Mauto (2013) included a discussion of the “Occupy Wall Street movement” that occurred in 2011 in the US, which indicates that the potential for continued civic unrest globally is a reality. Given the wide span threat of youth unemployment and its connections to adverse externalities that upset the economic, social, and political balance in society (Matsumoto et al., 2012), governments have continuously been tasked with the onus of providing scaffolding to young people through policy (Haskins, 2015).

**History of Government Policies to Address Youth Unemployment**

As youth employment began to decline, so did the employability skills of the younger generations. The consequences of youth who are leaving high school unprepared to work impacts youth unemployment rates and the overall the U.S. economy (Bremer, 2000; Gardner, 1985;). As a result, policies have been developed in response to the fluctuating youth employment rates (Baum & Rum, 2016; Mortimer, 2003; Sachdev, 2012; Staff & Schulenberg, 2010; Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006). The U.S. Congress passed two significant legislations, the Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA) of 1962 and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) of 1973, which provided funding and policy guidance to youth employment programming (Bremer, 2000; Gardner, 1985).

By the late 1970s, policies to integrate both employment and skills training became essential, and initiatives, such as Youth Employment and Demonstration Projects
Act (YEDPA) of 1977, the Job Partnership Training Act (JPTA) of 1982, the School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994, and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) (Fernandez & Gabe, 2009; Hirsch, 2015) were enacted. The passing of these legislations enabled governments to develop local employment and training programs that focused on disadvantaged youth (Gardner, 2000). The most recent iteration of policy to address the most distressed youth populations—the disadvantaged youth who are disconnected from work and school, is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act of 2014 (WIOA) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). WIOA has recalibrated its former efforts to provide the financial and legislative infrastructure for youth employment and training; however, it requires an employer-driven approach to addressing the issue of youth joblessness and their lack of skill development (Biden, 2014).

**The Skills Gap**

The aftermath of the 2008-2009 economic recession may be linked to the challenge of employers hiring youth today, but first-time labor entrants demonstrate an inherent deficit in employability skills due to the lack of former work experience, training, and skills development (Lomasky, 2016; Staff et al., 2014). Staff et al. (2014) underscored youths’ disadvantage amongst employers by surmising that youth are “often the last hired and first fired” due to the perception amongst employers that youth are less “dependable and trustworthy” than adults (p. 184). Employer studies have evidenced employer dissatisfaction with youth, and they perceive youth as lacking the essential job-readiness skills that are necessitated by the workforce.

There is an expectation amongst employers who are positioned to hire, even for entry-level jobs, that individuals should possess the fundamental employability skills,
which are the combined work attitudes, values, habits, and behaviors that are required within the contemporary work environment (Bolton, 1992; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Richey, 2014; Sachdev, 2012; Staff & Schulenberg, 2010; Sum et al., 2014, The White House Council for Community Solutions, 2012; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2015; U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). Employability skills include personal skills, critical thinking skills, and basic skills that are required to perform in a job (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006).

Employers have opined that one of the greatest impediments to employability is that youth are unprepared to communicate, solve problems, and display the appropriate work ethics and behaviors (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Cunningham & Villasenor, 2014; Dabke, 2015; Groh et al., 2016; Pandey & Pandey, 2015; Robles, 2012; Singh et al., 2014). Employability skills, also documented in the literature as job-readiness skills or work-readiness skills, are teachable (Jain & Anjuman, 2013) and may be facilitated through a combination of approaches that include job-readiness skills training, soft skills development, and work experience (Curtin, 2008; Keim & Strauser, 2000).

Studies concerning the skills gap. In a study conducted by the Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006), it was revealed that employers perceived that one-half of high school-level job entrants as deficient in key soft skills such as communication, work ethic, and problem solving (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). Of the 400 employers who were surveyed nationally, 40% indicated that the high school graduates and college students who were selected to
fill entry-level positions were ill equipped with the employability skills that are required for workplace success (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). According to the College Board’s Workforce Readiness Report Card, the reality concerning the skill level of new labor force entrants departs from the expectations of employers (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006).

The ManpowerGroup (2013) conducted a study of over 38,000 employers across 42 countries to assess employer perspectives regarding the skills gap. Data from the 2013 Talent Shortage Survey revealed that one out of five employers recognized soft skills deficiencies as a contributor to the challenge of filling job positions. The survey also revealed that approximately one in four employers attributed a lack of job experience as a contributor to the skills shortage (ManpowerGroup, 2013).

Robles (2012) underscored the importance of soft skills training when compared to hard skills training according to employers. The researcher referenced one study, Klaus (2010), which indicated that 75% of job success relies on personals skills, while technical skills accounted for 25% of the required competencies needed for long-term success. Robles (2012) cited and John (2009) and Watts and Watts (2008) when describing employer sentiments regarding soft skills as a priority for entry-level success. Robles’s (2012) qualitative study, using questionnaires from 90 business executives, to identify 10 of the most critical soft skills, has been used by other researchers (Dabke, 2015) when developing social skills inventories. Of the 490 soft skills identified in Robles’s (2012) study, 26 soft skills were integrated into a questionnaire, which used a 5-point Likert-type scale to determine the top 10 soft skills attributes. The most essential skills deemed by business executives were: “integrity, communication, courtesy, responsibility, social
skills, positive attitude, professionalism, flexibility, teamwork, and work ethic” (p. 455). Like other employer-based assessments of preferred soft skills, integrity and communication were the most salient skills desired.

Dabke (2015) referenced Robles’s (2012) framework in assessing soft skills in a 14-week college internship program in Mumbai, involving 60 college freshman who were enrolled in management courses and who were matched with mentors from the business industry management. The mentors maintained the onus of evaluating the performance of the interns using a questionnaire designed to measure the degree to which soft skills were displayed by the intern, the mentor’s perception of the intern’s effectiveness at work, and if the intern would potentially be hired. Of the 10 groups of soft skills suggested by Robles (2012), positive attitude, courtesy, and interpersonal skills were considered to be the most important to the mentors. Dabke (2015) described a relationship between the top-three attributes of positive attitude, courtesy, and interpersonal skills and how they impact teamwork, professionalism, punctuality, and adaptability.

Like Robles (2012) and Dabke (2015), Deepa and Seth’s (2013) study underscored the importance of communication, interpersonal, and teamwork skills to middle to upper level executives when recruiting MBA students. The purpose of the study was to enable business educators to improve their curriculum and improve the employability skills of graduating business college seniors. The researchers requested that 160 business executives respond to a questionnaire rating seven broad categories of soft skills. While 100 responses coupled with the feedback from telephone interviews were collected, analysis revealed that leadership qualities, time management, and conflict management were also essential within the workplace.
Weber, Crawford, and Dennison (2012) examined 726 human resource professionals’ perceptions of soft skill competencies within the hospitality industry. There were 116 items assessed for importance through a web-based survey using a Likert-type scale. The study found that the following competencies were found in literature: communication/persuasion; performance management; self-management; interpersonal, leadership/organization, political/cultural, and counterproductive. When compared to the other skills, communication appeared to be the most important asset. Still, the government has integrated a wide array of soft skills into its youth employment and training programs (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014).

**Youth Employment Programs**

Governments have developed strategies to provide disadvantaged youth with market valued skills (Hirsch, 2015; U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). When youth are unemployed, their ability to meet financial responsibilities, and access common milestones of self-sufficiency, such as education and housing, is compromised (Dworsky, 2005; Kim, 2015; Kunstler, Thompson and Croke, 2013; Strong-Blackeney, 2013). As a result, the skills gap, and the soft skills gap, in particular, U.S. youth employment policies have developed programming to integrate employers’ recommendations (Biden, 2014; Bird, Foster, & Ganzglass, 2014; Hirsch, 2015; Holland, 2016). Employers’ deferment to governments to solve the issue of the skills gap has encouraged government entities to allocate public resources to programs that aim to prepare youth for the workforce (Cochran and Ferrari, 2009; Duerden et al., 2014; Haskins & Morgolis, 2014; Hurrell, 2016; U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). In response to the concerns of employers, the government guidance report, “What Works In Job
Training: A Synthesis of Evidence” (2014) suggests that employment and training programs utilize comprehensive, integrated models, including pilot programs that focus on delivering work experience, job readiness training, and soft skills training that will increase employment outcomes amongst youth (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014).

**Job readiness skills training.** Muller and VanGilder (2014) defined job readiness skills as the rudimentary skills that suggest an individual’s preparedness to work. Job readiness skills are the skills required to conduct a job search, complete an employment application, and prepare a resume (Keim & Strauser, 2000; Moore & Morton, 2017). However, job readiness skills extend beyond looking for and applying to jobs. Job readiness skills envelope both cognitive and interpersonal capabilities (Robinson, 2000), which have been contemporarily summarized as soft skills. The basic strategy for imparting job readiness skills training within youth programs include educating youth on ways to identify interests, perform job searches, complete applications and resumes, develop interviewing skills and essential work behaviors, such as adaptability, dependability, problem solving, and communication (Keim & Strauser, 2000; Moore & Morton, 2017).

Research informs the literature by describing job readiness skills training as a strategy that incorporates process and performance approaches to job maintenance (Strauser, O’Sullivan, & Wong, 2010). By addressing job seeking and maintenance behaviors, youth are better equipped to identify and incorporate successful techniques to handle job interviews and screenings (Keim & Strauser’s (2000). In Keim and Strauser’s (2000) quantitative study, 77 disabled young adults who were exposed to a job readiness...
skills training program in an urban setting. Self-reports and instructor observations were analyzed to determine if job readiness skills training was perceived to have had an effect on self-efficacy and work behaviors. While the individuals who participated were not observed in an actual employment setting, the job readiness skills training included work simulations, role-playing, and interactive exercises. The researchers examined the extent to which participants and instructors perceived participants’ ability for task orientation, social skills, work motivation, work conformance, and personal presentation prior to and after the intervention. Although congruence was not found between the self-reports and instructor observations in all measured areas, the researchers were able to suggest recommendations to improve job readiness skills training. These recommendations included the integration of actual work experience and gender and ethnic considerations when developing job readiness skills trainings.

**Soft skills training.** While research confirms that technical or hard skills are important competencies for employment procurement and retention, employer studies suggest that at minimum, the majority of workplace success is attributed to the presence of soft skills (Dabke, 2015; Jain & Anjuman, 2013; Robles, 2012; Singh et al., 2014; Wats & Wats, 2009; Werner, 2015; Williams, 2015). The literature suggests that soft skills have become the larger aspect of employability skills, which include attitudes, behaviors, and competencies that are illustrative of one’s ability to perform and maintain employment (AMA, 2012; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Dean, 2017; Doyton, 2014; Groh et al., 2016; Hurrell, 2016; ManpowerGroup, 2013).

One of the challenges of addressing the skills gap is the dissonance inherent in the definition of soft skills and the lack of consensus between employers’ perceptions
regarding the most salient soft skills required in the workplace (Cappelli, 2015; Ibarraran, Ripani, Taboada, Villa, & Garcia, 2014; Lippman et al., 2015). The terminology used to describe soft skills covers a wide span. The vernacular used to demonstrate soft skills varies by context. There is inconsistency between different geographic areas, fields of study, and industries concerning the description of soft skills. Soft skills may also be identified as 21st-century skills (Dabke, 2015; Rateau, 2011), employability skills (Lippman et al., 2015), or social-emotional intelligence (Dean, 2017; Heckman & Kautz, 2013; Robles, 2012).

Deepa and Seth (2013) described soft skills as "an umbrella term covering various survival skills such as communication and interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, leadership qualities, team skills, negotiation skills, time and stress management and business etiquette” (p. 7). While Rateau (2011) reviewed multiple sources of literature within his dissertation, the lack of a consensus regarding shared terms describing soft skills led to “confusion between higher education, students, and potential employers” (p. 23). The researcher posited that, “Without commonly agreed upon definitions of the terms and phrases, it becomes difficult to completely understand and act on the needed improvements in employability skills” (p. 23).

Lippman et al. (2015) and Heckman & Kautz (2013) suggested that while there are no shortage of terms used as proxies, the various soft skill terms are not interchangeable. Just as the fields of education, psychology, and sociology differ, the terms referred to as soft skills are respective of diverse contexts and outcomes. For instance, school systems, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations define soft skills differently than other organizations. Non-cognitive skills or socio-
emotional skills are referenced within the economic and educational contexts (Lippman et al., 2015) and have been evidenced by career and technical education programs (Geh, 2016) and social-emotional learning standards (Brunello & Schlotter, 2011). Government agencies’ descriptions of soft skills were denoted by the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (1991) and applied when delivering workforce preparation through government programs (DiBenedetto, 2015; Kim, 2015). Non-profit agencies have utilized the psychology fields of research when describing soft skills that have been associated with the Big 5 Personality Traits and developmental assets (Lippman et al., 2015).

Additionally, the dissonance between youths’ awareness of soft skills, such as communication, problem-solving, positive work ethic, team work, and goal setting, and employer expectations for non-technical skills compromise employment opportunities for inexperienced job hopefuls (Williams, 2015). Unfortunately, there are few empirical studies that evidence job-seeking youths’ knowledge of the soft skills that employers require (Griffin, Cangelosi, & Hargis, 2011; Williams, 2015). Few studies that include self-assessments of youth job seekers exist; therefore, little is known regarding youth perceptions of soft skill efficacy (Griffin et al., 2014). As evidenced by a recent study of Community College students’ and employers’ perceptions of the soft skills that are relevant in the workplace (Williams, 2015), there appeared to be a significant knowledge gap concerning soft skills between young workers and their managers, a phenomenon that further exasperates the skills gap dilemma (Dean, 2017). Therefore, governments have sought the help of local employers to determine the most salient soft skills that are required for youth to obtain and maintain a job.
**Government youth employment programs that target disadvantaged youth.**

A recent study of a government-sponsored youth employment program was conducted by Sachdev (2012) in Washington D.C. Sachdev (2012) conducted a formative and summative evaluation of youth employment and training programs that targeted urban, disadvantaged youth. The program integrated employability skills and work experience. The researchers were concerned with whether the program demonstrated learning opportunities and health benefits of youth participants. Short-term behavior changes of a study sample of 931 youth ages 14 to 17 years who were selected to work during the summer in a subsidized job placement were examined using a pretest posttest design. Guided by a logic model of the program, the researchers examined the effectiveness and quality of the program that aimed to increase employability skills, develop responsibility, autonomy, and mastery in future of youth. The researchers were able to determine that the summer youth employment program had a positive effect on learning opportunities, skills development feelings of empowerment, as well as positive changes in academic performance and healthy behaviors. Findings demonstrated that youth who were rolled in the program were able to explore employment settings of personal interest, and develop skills of responsibility, dependability, work norms such as appropriate, financial management and computer skills.

The U.S. Department of Labor commissioned an implementation study of the newly funded Opportunities Youth Demonstration Pilots in Baltimore and Boston (Koball et al., 2016). Koball et al. (2016) conducted a qualitative study designed to inform the federal government of best practices and when to develop and implement a youth employment and training program for disadvantaged young people who were
disconnected from school and work. The researchers collected qualitative data during 2015-2016 on 25 youth from Baltimore and 75 youths from Boston who were between the ages of 18 and 24 years and interested in entering the medical field. The youth were partnered with adult mentors and employers to facilitate the acquisition of their general education diploma and certifications in Nursing Assistance. The program integrated basic and job readiness skills training. Of the 25 youth who completed the program in Baltimore, 40% were able to secure employment. Using questionnaires and observations, the researchers were able to assess the effectiveness of the program’s implementation. Overall, the researchers found that participation in a structured employment and training program that integrated job readiness and soft skills training to disadvantaged youth had positive effects on educational and employment outcomes (Koball et al., 2016).

Falxa-Raymond, Svendsen, and Campbell (2013) conducted a case study of a green jobs training program designed for disadvantaged 18 to 24-year olds who were disconnected from school and work, and the benefits of an urban conservation job training and employment initiative was explored. The program integrated hard and soft skills training. The study examined the Million Trees NYC initiative designed to address poverty by exposing youth to environmental organizations and green collar jobs throughout New York City. Qualitative data was collected from participants and their supervisors during their full-time employment in entry-level, green jobs. Participants voluntarily provided information during interviews to the researcher’s inquiry to whether or not the program have effects on participants’ employability skills and work behaviors. The research revealed congruence between supervisors and youth participants concerning the changes in attitudes towards self, work, and the environment. This study emphasized
the connection between employment opportunities for disadvantaged youth in the
development of soft skills that included interpersonal skills and positive attitudes toward
work.

Heller (2014) conducted a randomized controlled study of 1,634 disadvantaged
youth in Chicago between the ages of 14 and 21 years in an effort to measure the effects
of the program on youth who attended public high schools that were prone to violence.
During the summer months, youth were randomly assigned to participate in an
employment and training program that included job placement and soft skills training.
The researcher found that the summer youth employment programs had positive effects
of violence reduction within the city. Violent crime arrests among the participants
decreased by 43% when compared to a control group of non-program participants.

Conclusion

The descending trend of youth unemployment has become a worldwide
economic, social, and political dilemma. Youth unemployment rates have been the lowest
since World War II (O’Sullivan et al., 2014; Sum et al., 2014), and they have fluctuated
between two and three times the average national unemployment rate following the
2008-2009 economic recession (Borges-Mendez et al., 2013; Elder & Rosas, 2015;
Lomasky, 2016; Martin, 2009; Matsumoto et al., 2012; Morsy, 2012; O’Sullivan et al.,
2014; Richey, 2014; Sum et al., 2014; Wehman, Sima, Ketchum, West, Chan, &
Luecking, 2014). Youth unemployment has historically been driven by economic cycles;
however, the aftermath of the 2008-2009 recession is conspicuous given the scarring
effects that have been evidenced through perpetual unemployment and financial loss,
along with the social costs to youth themselves in terms of the threats of increased
barriers to self-sufficiency. Moreover, youth are subjected to the perception that they are poor candidates for jobs due to employers’ views of youths’ inexperience and skills deficiencies.

Disadvantaged youth, in particular, are the most challenged. For economically disadvantaged youth, a job could alter the prospects of poverty or other risk factors, such as early parenthood and unhealthy behaviors (Sachdev, 2012). For youth residing in low socioeconomic neighborhoods, a job may make the difference between earning money legitimately as opposed to illegitimately (Belfield et al., 2012; Gelber, Isen, & Kessler, 2016). The scarring of future workers, particularly disadvantaged youth, has evidenced adverse social conditions such as unhappiness, crime, inequality, and political unrest (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011; Matsumoto et al., 2012). Yet, in as much as disadvantaged youth benefit the most from employment opportunities, they are the least likely to be afforded entrance into the workplace (Bremer, 2000) and achieving economic self-sufficiency.

Although there are a number of pathways to becoming self-sufficient, the development of human capital through education and training have been the principal investments in ushering youth into the labor market (Allegretto, 2013; Bell & Blanchflower, 2011; Borges-Mendez et al., 2013; Emmenegger, Marx, & Schraff, 2017; O’Reilly et al., 2015; Sum et al., 2014). Research indicates that the 2008-2009 economic recession has rendered youth abysmally challenged to enter the labor market and gain on-the-job training and experience. As a result, the gap between youth skills and the skills required by employers has widened.
Realizing that the costs incurred to society when young people are devoid or opportunities to develop into self-sufficient adults are high, governments have invested in youth employment and training programs. Although government has historically focused on the demand side of the youth unemployment dilemma, research suggests that contemporary approaches to solving this problem have been employer-demand driven. Since the economic recession, government has encouraged the input of employer demands, such as soft skills training and work experience, into government-sponsored programs. Research indicates that the most effective strategies to increase positive employment outcomes for youth include integrated models of work experience and employability training.

However, in the federal report, *What Works in Job Training: A Synthesis of Evidence* (2014), key federal agencies, such as the U.S. Departments of Labor, Commerce, Education, and Health and Human Services, suggest that there is limited evidence on effective employment and training programs for young people. Former Vice President Joe Biden’s comprehensive review of federal workforce development programs illuminated the need for assessing the programs’ effectiveness in addressing the *skills matching* needs of employers (Biden, 2014). Although the lack of evaluation of social programs has been ongoing, the collection and analysis of evidence on youth employment and training programs has become a priority, given employer demands for employability skills amongst future workers.
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the strategy of the case study summative evaluation of the 2017 Winter After-School Youth Employment and Training Program (the Program). The summative evaluation case study was conducted using a convergent, parallel mixed-methods design. The program is an intervention that has yet to empirically determine if the elements of work-based experience, job readiness skills training, and soft skills training have had any short-term effects on the dependent variables, the youth participants’ soft skills (DV) and employability skills (DV). For the purpose of the study, the government agency is referred to as the agency and the Winter After-School Youth Employment and Training Program as the program. This chapter outlines the details of the case, including the research context, research population, and research design. The methodology is aligned with the two selected theoretical frameworks, program evaluation and New York State Touchstones.

There was an interplay between the program design and the research design that was be considered in order to effectively solidify what was being studied and how it was being studied as well as how the program was designed and carried out. The program design, included three elements or interventions, namely work experience, job readiness skills training, and soft skills training, which were measured at baseline and then at the outcome with data results from a pretest-posttest design for collecting performance data. The research design was a case study, which included a retrospective examination of
archival data collected that was analyzed through a mixed-methods approach for summative purposes.

**Elements of the program.** Throughout the year, the agency offers three cycles of employment and training to youth during out-of-school hours. Programming during the fall and winter sessions are conducted during after-school hours, 5 days a week for 6 weeks. The subject of this case study summative evaluation was the winter session program. The agency integrates work experience, which is the placement of youth to work in local businesses. The agency requires that youth who are placed in a job complete a series of job readiness skills trainings and soft skills training, which are conducted by professionals during the 6 weeks of the program. The topics covered through the job readiness component includes job searching, resume writing, interviewing, and job retention techniques. The topics covered through the soft skills training are based on the READI guide, which focuses on the social and emotional aspects of work behaviors including self-esteem/awareness, communication, problem solving, workplace behavior, and goal setting. READI’s foci are consistent with Neath and Bolton (2008) constructs of work personality, which Keim and Strauser (2000) asserted is reflective of an individual’s ability to “satisfy fundamental work requirements, work attitudes, work habits and behaviors that are essential to achieve and maintain employment” (p. 14).

**The program’s logic model.** The logic model for the program is a framework used to inform and illustrate the program’s theory, situation, inputs, outputs, and short-term outcomes. The assumptions of the program are the objectives of the program (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). The inputs, outputs, and outcomes are the program elements.
The logic model demonstrates the action plan that will be operationalized to increase employability skills amongst youth participants. The logic model shows the linkage between the program elements.

Figure 3.1 demonstrates the logic model that informs the study of the program. This case study summative evaluation documents the program through a “statistical and text analysis” concerning the program’s outcomes that were derived from the perspectives of the youth participants and the employers who observed the youth participants concerning the program’s effects (Creswell, 2014, p. 17). The study illuminates whether the program effects translated into opportunities for disadvantaged youth to increase their employability after participating in the employment and training intervention offered during out-of-school hours for 6 weeks (Carey & Posavac, 1992).

The research plan was designed to meet one evaluation goal and answer the two research questions:

1. To what extent did the program meet its objective of providing the youth participants with opportunities for employment?
2. To what extent did the program meet its objective of providing the youth participants with the skills, attitudes, and competencies needed to enter the work force?
   a. To what extent did participation in the program have an effect on the youth participants’ job readiness skills as it relates to job searching and resume writing?
### Inputs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Resource Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Funding for paid staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Funding for youth participants at minimum wage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Printing Costs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-Kind Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Your Winning Edge: Resume and Interview Preparation (New York State Department of Labor Resume and Interview Preparation Guide)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- READI (soft skills training) Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Facilities for Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Worksites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Employers’ Time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1: Youth Application Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Youth apply, interview, and are selected for the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Youth pretest resumes are scored</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 2: Youth Job Placement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Youth indicate the type of work they are interested in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Worksites are established by staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Youth are placed at a worksite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 3: Youth Skills Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Youth attend job search and resume-writing workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Youth attend Soft Skills (READI) training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Youth attend work-based experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Youth posttest resumes are scored</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Outputs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1: Youth Application Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- # of youth who apply and interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- # of employers who complete supervisor orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- # of youth who complete orientation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 2: Youth Participant Placement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- # of youth placed to work for 6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- # of youth who complete the WPP-SR pretest during 1st week of placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- # of employers who complete the WPP observations of youth during 1st week of placement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 3: Youth Skills Training and Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- # of youth who attend one job readiness training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- # of youth who complete 12 hours of READI training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- # of youth and employers who complete the WPP-SR and the WPP posttest during the last week of placement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short-Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- By the end of the 6-week program, 85% of youth selected to participate in the program will have completed 60 hours or more of work based experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- By the end of the 6-week program, 70% or more of youth participants will increase their job readiness skills by receiving a score of 80% or higher on the resume writing rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- By the end of the 6-week program, 85% of youth participants will increase soft skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Note.** Assumption 1: Youth who can work will be provided with opportunities for employment. Assumption 2: Youth will have skills, attitudes, and competencies to enter college, the workforce, or other meaningful activities.

**Figure 3.1.** Logic model showing the linkage between the program elements.
b. To what extent did the perceptions of the youth participants indicate that participation in the program had an effect on the youth participants’ soft skills?

c. To what extent did the observer ratings completed by the employers indicate that participation in the program had an effect on the youth participants’ soft skills?

d. Is there an alignment between the youth participants’ perceptions and the employers’ perceptions concerning the youth participants’ soft skills?

e. To what extent was there alignment between the youth participants’ perceptions and the employers’ perceptions concerning the program’s effect on the youth participants’ employability skills?

**General Perspective**

While many social programs have purported a societal benefit to the public (Sylvia & Sylvia, 2012), there is limited research to support that organizations are systematically acquiring evidence that demonstrates program effects and impact (Haskins & Margolis, 2014). This presents a barrier to the understanding of a program’s elements and merits (ETA, 2011; Fitzpatrick et al., 2011; Haskins & Margolis, 2014). One of the contributing factors to the lack of evaluation within government-administered programs is the lack of resources. The expectation for government to prioritize during the resource allocation process often obstructs program-evaluation activities. Due to the shortage of financial and human resources, evaluations of government-sponsored programs are more likely to occur within programs where funding is contingent upon an evaluative provision (Hossain et al., 2015; Spaulding, 2008; Sylvia & Sylvia, 2012). As a result, program
administrators find it challenging to assess the key elements of social programs (Sylvia & Sylvia, 2012).

The financial impediment to evaluation is evidenced in the case of the agency. As a result of the scarcity of resources, both internal and external evaluations of the agency’s employment and training programs are non-existent. The agency’s cycles of youth employment and training during after-school hours typically yield services to less than 200 youths annually (Agency, 2016). The operating budget comprises mixed funding sources; none of which require formal evaluation. In comparison to other programs administered through the agency, the program size is small. The size of the program, coupled with the lack of personnel who are efficient in program-evaluation methodology, have impacted the decision making concerning the allocation of tax levy dollars to evaluate each intervention offered. Moreover, the costs of external evaluations have justified decisions not to rigorously evaluate the agency’s smaller initiatives (Alkin, 2004; Haskins & Margolis, 2014; Hatry, Winnie, Fisk, & Blair, 1981; Sylvia & Sylvia, 2012).

Research Design

Case study. “Case studies are invaluable for exploring issues in depth, providing thick descriptions of programs in implementation, different outcomes, contextual issues, and needs and perspectives of various stakeholders” (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011, p. 414). The case study design is an appropriate approach within this study as its bounded nature is concerned with the effects of a single program on one cohort of youth participants (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). An integral component of the case is the perspectives of the
youth participants and the employers who observed and supervised the youths during two points in time—the beginning of the 6-week program and the end of the program.

**Summative evaluation.** The nature of a summative evaluation is conclusive, rendering judgement of “merit and worth of one part of a program” (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011, p. 21). Summative evaluations typically occur after outcome data has been collected (Spaulding, 2008) or once the program has been completed (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). Understanding that goals are broad (Sabatelli & Anderson, 2005) and often immeasurable (Shakman & Rodriguez, 2015), a program relies on its objectives and outcomes to tell its story (Spaulding, 2008). Therefore, the crux of this summative evaluation case study was to assess the program’s performance related to two objectives: (a) Youth who can work will be provided with opportunities for employment, and (b) Youth will have skills, attitudes and competencies to enter college, the work force, or other meaningful activities.

Summative evaluations are cost-effective tools that are used to understand a program’s key elements and design (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011; Mertens & Wilson, 2012), yet, a criticism of summative evaluations conducted by government agencies is that programs may be prematurely evaluated (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). Trimble (2013) noted that while summative program evaluations are commonplace within youth development programs, the conclusive nature of this form of evaluation presents limited opportunities to revise activities and explore the contextual factors that may impact outcome attainment. However, an evaluability assessment was conducted and suggested that the program’s history, manageable size, and data collection practices supported the use of this form of evaluation.
This case study summative evaluation utilized a convergent, parallel mixed-methods design to evaluate outcome data collected during Phases 1 through 3 of the program. Prior to this study, the youth participants had undergone the following three-phase process: (a) application process, (b) placement process, (c) job readiness training and work-based experience. Using the observational tools that the program required, the employers observed the youth participants during Phase 3.

According to Creswell (2014), a convergent, parallel mixed-methods study enables a researcher to merge quantitative and qualitative data in an effort to comprehensively analyze a research problem. This type of design enabled the researcher to access and analyze both forms of data at the same time and incorporate the information into the evaluation findings (Creswell, 2014). The researcher simultaneously analyzed archival program documents that served as evidence to determine whether or not consistency was achieved between the program objectives and program deliverables (Sylvia & Sylvia, 2012). The program independently collected data on its participants using a pretest-posttest design. Therefore, a determination of the program’s effectiveness was demonstrated by a preponderance of evidence that showed that most of the program’s objectives were met. Figure 3.2 demonstrates the strategy that the program used to collect pretest-posttest data while the youth participants were placed in the 6-week work-based experience.
Figure 3.2. Program strategy to collect pretest and posttest data while placed in the 6-week work-based experience.

Research Context

The study evaluated the program that occurred from the period of February-April, 2017 in an urban city located within Westchester County, NY. This diverse, urban community has a documented population close to 70,000, and it is situated within 4 square miles (Selected Economic Characteristics 2010-2014, n.d.). The population is documented as 62% African American, 23% Caucasian, and 14% Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). This particular city is one of the most densely populated cities in the United States. There are approximately 15,000 people per square mile.

The community shares a similar profile with New York City, and the youth who reside in this city are largely considered economically and socially disadvantaged as a result of indicators of high poverty, unemployment rates, violence and crime, poor academic performance, and health disparities. This particular city is the poorest community per capita ($27,059) in Westchester County. Of the total children in this city, 49% are living in poverty and/or are in low income families (Selected Economic Characteristics 2010-2014, n.d.). Within the public school system, 74% of the children are eligible to receive a free or reduced-fee lunch (New York State Education
The city has an unemployment rate of 11.1%, while the youth unemployment rate is 59.4% for 16-19-year olds and 19.4% for 20-24-year olds (Selected Economic Characteristics 2010-2014, n.d.).

The agency. The agency that sponsors the youth employment program is charged to develop and implement asset-building programs for more than 20,000 youths. The agency’s main offerings are dedicated to providing after-school and summer opportunities that prepare children and youth to meet academic learning standards, improve social and emotional skills, graduate high school, and enter college and/or the workforce.

The primary goal of the agency’s after-school employment and training program is to prepare economically disadvantaged youth, ages 14-24, for self-sufficiency. Youth enrolled in the program are eligible for services given their eligibility within the federally designated entitlement community. The agency receives grant funding from federal, state, county, and municipal government sources for its after-school youth employment and training programs. The program combines sources from Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) of 2014, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant, and a local municipal Youth Bureau (an agency within city government). This study retrospectively analyzed the data that was collected during the winter cycle of the program, which occurred during the months of February, March, and April of 2017.

Staffing. The agency employs up to 200 staff members during its peak seasons, and approximately 70 professionals throughout the year. However, the program staff were the key personnel involved in this study. The program staff includes a coordinator
(YEC), a teacher, and two teacher assistants. The YEC is the prime implementer of the program who develops and implements the program’s formative processes. The YEC is the gatekeeper of all the program’s documents and is responsible for collecting the program’s data and reporting outcomes to the various funding sources. The YEC supervises the program’s support staff, which comprises the teacher and the two teacher assistants.

Research Participants

Youth participants. This study consisted of a census population sampling of 45 youths (winter cohort) who were expected to be enrolled in a 6-week, employment and training program designed for disadvantaged youth between the ages of 14 and 21 years. The youths were interviewed, screened, placed in the program, and provided with an opportunity to work in various businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations during after-school hours.

The program’s youth participants were expected to meet the eligibility requirements for residency and authorization to work. The majority of the youth participants were students who were enrolled in the educational services through the local public school district (the district). The public schools comprise 74% African American students, 19% Hispanic students, and 5% Caucasian (New York State Report Card (NYSRC), 2016). Subgroup populations within the program included youth with varying characteristics in age, sex, race, ethnicity, and economic status. The youth enrolled in the district are struggling. The proficiency rate for students in Grades 3 to 8 in ELA is 23%, which is 15% below NY State’s average (NYSRC, 2016). Some of the youth
participants’ profiles include one or more barriers to employment, which may be youthful offender, homeless, disability, or foster care status.

**Employers (observers).** The program utilized individuals who worked within local businesses, government agencies, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations as worksite supervisors. The employers were referred to as *observers* within the analysis section of this study. The employers played an essential role in the program as they provided supervision to the youth participants during the 6-week, work-based experience (Sachdev, 2012). The employers were either the sole proprietors of their businesses, or they were in a managerial role within their organization. They agreed to on-the-job training for the youth, and to expose the youth to industry-specific careers. The employer’s involved in the program received worksite supervisor training during an orientation that included but was not limited to instructions on how to use the WPP rating tool. The study included approximately 23 employers (observers) who independently rated the youth participants 1 week after the program began and during the final week of the program.

**Instruments Used in Data Collection**

Three tools, the Resume Scoring Rubric, the Work Personality Profile Self-Report, and the Work Personality Profile, were used to measure the extent to which the program had an impact on the job readiness skills, soft skills, and overarching employability of the youth participants. The researcher examined retrospective qualitative and quantitative data derived from program documents that included: (a) youth participants’ pretest-posttest resume writing scores based on the existing scoring rubric (RSR); (b) youth participant perceptions recorded through the Work Personality Profile-
Self Report (WPP-SR), a self-rating instrument designed to measure work personality (soft skills) (Bolton, 1992); (c). employer perceptions of the youth participants’ work personality (soft skills), which was recorded through the Work Personality Profile, an observer-rater instrument (Bolton, 1992).

**The Resume Scoring Rubric (RSR).** The studied program utilized an existing pretest-posttest design to measure the quality of youth participants’ resumes before and after the program. The researcher assessed the job readiness training component through the raw scores derived from the program’s RSR and cut-off score. Prior to the evaluation, the RSR was created internally by combining multiple resources found through human resource management literature. The cut-off score is the minimum score of 80. The RSR consisted of four items, identified as skills, and the following ranking categories were used to rate the participants: (1) outstanding; (2) good; (3) average; and (4) unsatisfactory. Table 3.1 illustrates the skill and score connected to each category. The maximum number of points for a youth participant is 50. The program raw score is multiplied by 2 in order to retrieve a total score. The lowest score a youth participant could receive was zero (0) and the highest score was 100. This process of scoring was conducted during Phase 1 of the program (youth application) and during Phase 3 of the program (post-job readiness skills training).
Table 3.1

*Resume Scoring Rubric Description*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation Format</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Specific/Volunteer Information</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume Content</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling &amp; Grammar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Work Personality Profile (WPP).** The program collected pretest-posttest data to infer the program’s effectiveness in meeting its expected outcomes. To accomplish this task, the program staff administered the Work Personality Profile Professional Form (WPP) and the Work Personality Profile-Self Report (WPP-SR) to the youth participants and the employers. The WPP and WPP-SR are parallel instruments that are commonly used within rehabilitation centers and vocational programs amongst individuals who have been diagnosed with a disability (Bolton, 1992; Curtin, 2008; Neath & Bolton, 2008; Williams, 2015). Although the developers of the WPP and the WPP-SR stated that the instrument could be used in various contexts (Bolton, 1992), little research is available to support its use amongst groups who are not classified as having a disability. However, both tools are valid and reliable self-rating and observer-rating instruments that have been used in multiple studies involving youth (Bolton, 1992; Neath & Bolton, 2008). The WPP and the WPP-SR contain 58 items that assess work personality, a construct of soft skills, and work behaviors that suggest an individual’s readiness to maintain a job (Bolton, 1992).
**The WPP.** This study examined the pre-existing observer ratings that were completed by the employers (observers) to make judgments concerning the youth participants’ performance. The tool was developed to assess the extent to which an individual displays *employability strengths*, which the researcher refers to as soft skills, and *deficits*, which the researcher characterizes as the lack of soft skills (Neath & Bolton, 2008). Although the instrument was used to quantify direct observations, the qualitative feel, based on the recorded employer perceptions, are noted (Louis, 2011).

**The WPP-SR.** As a part of the program’s design, the youth participants’ were required to complete the WPP-SR as a pretest-posttest. The WPP-SR data was used to measure the extent to which the youth participants perceived themselves as having soft skills before and after the interventions of work experience and soft skills training (Neath & Bolton, 2008). This study compares the youth participants’ self-ratings to the employers’ observational ratings. According to the developer of the WPP-SR, this self-reporting instrument encourages the participation of those who are being observed (Bolton, 1992). The inclusion of the study participants’ perspectives is an element that Mertens & Wilson (2012) described as useful within a mixed-method design.

**Administration of the WPP and the WPP-SR.** According to the developers of the instruments, the WPP and the WPP-SR are straightforward, requiring “less than 5 minutes to complete” (Neath & Bolton, 2008, p. 8). The program staff provided an orientation for the employers (observers), as well as a youth participation orientation, where the instrument was explained. The program staff then collected the WPP and WPP-SR of each participant and retained the records within the central office. The WPP and WPP-SR were created for responders who possessed a seventh-grade reading
comprehension level. The instruments provided recommendations to administer the tool to responders who read at or below a sixth-grade level (Neath & Bolton, 2008). The WPP and WPP-SR were selected by the program staff prior to the implementation of the program because it was suitable for measuring the reading levels of the youth participants and the employers (observers).

**The WPP and WPP-SR rating system.** The WPP and WPP-SR rating system uses a 4-point format. Ratings were: “(4) definite strength; an employability asset; (3) adequate performance; not a particular strength; (2) inconsistent performance; potentially an employability problem; (1) problem area; will definitely limit the person’s chance for employment; (x) no opportunity to observe the behavior” (Neath & Bolton, 2008, p. 7). The scoring scales for the instrument were based on 11 rationally derived scales and five factor analytic scales. The rationally derived scales represent soft skills, and they are:

1. acceptance of the work role,
2. ability to profit from instruction or correction,
3. work persistence,
4. work tolerance,
5. amount of supervision required,
6. extent trainee seeks assistance from supervisor,
7. Degree of comfort or anxiety with supervisor,
8. team work,
9. ability to socialize with coworkers,
10. social communication skills, and
11. communication skills.
The five factor analytic scales represent employability skills and are:

1. task orientation,
2. social skills,
3. work motivation,
4. work conformance, and
5. personal presentation (Bolton, 1992; Neath & Bolton, 2008).

Technical features of the instrument. The WPP was constructed to assess the concept of work personality, defined as “the behaviors, skills, and attitudes needed for vocational success” (Neath & Bolton, p. 11). According to Neath and Bolton (2008), the 58 items of the WPP were the result of previous work done by Gellman (1963), Bitter and Bolanovich (1970), Gibson, Weiss, Dawis, and Lofquist (1970). These works include the “Scale of Employability for Handicapped Persons” (Gellman, 1963), “the Work Adjustment Rating Form” (Bitter & Bolanovich, 1970), and “the Minnesota Satisfactoriness Scales” (Gibson et al., 1970; Neath & Bolton, 2008, p. 11). The tool is reflective of the literature concerning the critical domain of skills that are required in the workplace. The reliability and validity of the instruments were obtained by two studies involving a sample of 243 participants from three rehabilitation centers and another including 181 participants from a comprehensive rehabilitation center. The sample shared similar demographics, and the participants were primarily males between the ages of 17 and 30-years old who had a full range of educational achievements (Neath & Bolton, 2008). Rationally derived scales and factor analytic scales were tested using multiple quantitative procedures that tested for internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and interrater agreement (Neath & Bolton, 2008). Validity was established to identify the
psychometric dimensions of work behavior. Studies of the two large samples revealed that the WPP responses were predictive of WPP-SR responses concerning participants who completed the program (Neath & Bolton, 2008).

**Procedures for Data Collection**

The data was accessed after gaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College. Due to the retrospective nature of the study, the researcher did not have any interaction with the youth participants or the employers (observers). While the researcher performed a content analysis of the program’s guides and tools through a document review, the focus was mainly to evaluate the outcome data that was collected previously by the agency’s staff. The staff’s records reflected the responses from the three rating instruments, the RSR, the WPP, and the WPP-SR. The procedure for collecting the data follows.

**Document review.** The researcher scheduled a meeting with the agency’s coordinator (YEC), followed by a meeting with the program staff to explain the aim of the study. There was an expectation that the program staff would have collected qualitative data on all of the participants during Phases 1 through 3, including the following indicators: Phases 1 (youth application), Phase 2 (youth placement), and Phase 3 (employers’ worksite agreements). The researcher reviewed the program records, which demonstrated the inputs and outputs described in the program’s logic model. These documents aided in determining the youth participants’ progress, regression, or no changes (work-based experience, job-readiness skills training, and soft skills training).

This review included an investigation into the resources used (inputs), such as training guides and the activities and levels of participation of the program participants.
Youth participants’ characteristics data, such as gender, age, race, and grade, was accessed. This information was gathered prior to the study by the program’s staff, and it was maintained confidentially. Additionally, the employer information that was collected by the program’s staff during Phase 1 (the worksite supervisor application process) was reviewed by the researcher. Employer characteristics, such as the type of industry of the worksite and the job positions that the youth participants were placed in to gain work-based experience, was described. The researcher accessed the following quantitative data sets that the staff collected during the program period: (a) pretests and posttests from the youth participants’ RSR; (b) retests and posttests of the youth participants’ WPP-SR; and (c) pretests and posttests of the employers’ observations of the youth participants recorded through the WPP form.

**RSR.** The researcher reviewed the resume scores that were rated by the program’s staff during Phases 1 and 3. Phase 1 required the youths to submit a resume along with their application to participate in the program. The program’s staff scored each participants’ resume using the Resume Scoring Rubric prior to placement at a worksite. The agency’s staff scored the quality of the resumes, with a standard score of 80. During Phase 2 of the program, the program’s staff conducted a job-readiness workshop to include techniques concerning job search and resume building. The staff derived its lessons from the New York State Department of Labor’s guidance book, *Your Winning Edge: Resume and Interview Preparation*, which outlines the protocols for completing a resume (NYSDOL, 2011). During the last week of the 6-week program, the program staff collected youth participants’ revised resumes and scored the documents to determine whether the job-readiness training and work-based experience had an impact on the youth
participants’ job readiness skills. The researcher assessed the job readiness training component through the scores derived from the RSR.

**WPP.** Phase 2 of the program included the administration of the Work Personality Profile Professional Form (WPP) to employers (observers). According to the WPP Examiners’ Manual, the instrument is appropriate for individuals who are engaged in a situational context that mirrors the workplace (Neath & Bolton, 2008). The program staff provided an orientation to employers (observers), describing the program elements and the tool used to measure youth participants’ soft skills demonstrated at the worksites. Employers observed youth participants up to 1 week after the work-based experience began and recorded their observations using the WPP rating form. After completing the pretest of the WPP, the employers (observers) submitted the WPP forms to the program staff, who then scored the assessments. During Phase 3, youth participants received job readiness skills training and soft skills training. During the final week of the work-based experience, employers (observers) utilized the same WPP rating form to observe the youth participants, and they returned the posttest of the WPP to the program staff. The program staff documented the raw scores electronically in an Excel workbook.

**The WPP-SR.** The process for the WPP-SR is identical to the process for the WPP (Bolton, 1992). During Phase 2, youth participants assessed their soft skills during the first week of the program. The WPP-SR was collected by the program staff and scored. During Phase 3, youth participants received job readiness skills training and soft skills training. During the final week of the work-based experience, youth participants utilized the same WPP-SR to document their assessment of their skills. The program’s
staff collected the posttest of the WPP-SR and documented the raw scores electronically in an Excel spreadsheet.

**Procedures for Data Analysis**

Given the researcher’s pragmatic worldview, the researcher employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods strategy to analyze the data (Creswell, 2014). Although the researcher examined the quantitative data, the use of observations and self-reports to collect data that integrated a qualitative aspect that promoted inter-subjectivity, which is an essential element in mixed-methods studies (Louis, 2011). To answer the research questions appropriately, the researcher analyzed the data both quantitatively and qualitatively and made use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The researcher answered questions 1, 2, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, and 2e, quantitatively. Questions 1, 2a, and 2b were mixed-methods questions. Therefore, qualitative and quantitative responses emphasized the content of the research (Creswell, 2014).

**Qualitative analysis.** The researcher provides a description of the program characteristics from the program documents. Key elements of the program, outlined through the logic model, were qualitatively presented through ordinal and categorical data.

To answer Research Question 1, *To what extent did the program meet its objective of providing the youth participants with opportunities for employment?* the researcher presents descriptive analyses of the program’s outputs, including the program phases and levels of participation from the youth participants and employers (observers), and they are compared to the stated objectives of the program.
To partially answer Research Question 2, *To what extent did the program meet its objective of providing the youth participants with the skills, attitudes, and competencies needed to enter the work force?* the researcher advanced a content analysis of the program’s guides and measurement tools. Content analysis is a common technique that is used to subjectively analyze text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A content analysis enables a researcher to classify text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The researcher utilized a content analysis to draw parallels to the program’s job readiness guide, *Your Winning Edge Resume and Interview Preparation* (YWERIP) (NYSDOL, 2011), and the Resume Scoring Rubric (RSR). The program utilized the New York State Department of Labor’s YWERIP as a guide for the job readiness skills training and collected baseline data through the use of the RSR, which is a resume scoring tool containing four scales (skills). The researcher demonstrated the similarities between the program’s soft skills guide, READI, and the 11 rationally derived scales (primary scales) of the WPP and the WPP-SR. Tables 3.2 and 3.3 are visual aids that illustrate the similarities in language, categories, and concepts.

**Quantitative analysis.** To answer Research Question 1, the researcher provided a descriptive analysis of the categorical study variables using cross tabulations, which enabled the identification and measurement of occurrences among one or more data sets such as youth participants’ age, gender, race, and school grade level (Huck, 2012). Characteristics of worksites, which include the type of industry and job positions held, were analyzed and presented through descriptive statistics.
Table 3.2

*Similarities in Language, Categories, and Concepts Between YWERIP and RS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Winning Edge Resume and Interview Preparation</th>
<th>Resume Scoring Rubric Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two – Selling Yourself on Paper</td>
<td>Presentation/Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Words for Resumes</td>
<td>Job Specific/Volunteer Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Employers’ Bottom Line</td>
<td>Resume Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye Appeal; Resume Do’s and Don’ts</td>
<td>Spelling and Grammar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3

*Similarities in Language, Categories, and Concepts Between READI and WPP*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>READI Skills and Scales</th>
<th>WPP Scales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Self-Esteem/Self Awareness (Respect)</td>
<td>S1. Acceptance of work role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Communication (Articulate)</td>
<td>S2. Ability to profit from instruction or correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Problem Solving (Enthusiasm)</td>
<td>S3. Work persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Goal Setting (Dependable)</td>
<td>S5. Amount of supervision required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S6. Extent trainee seeks help from supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S7. Degree of comfort or anxiety with supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S8. Appropriateness of relations with supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S9. Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S10. Ability to socialize with co-workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S11. Communication skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To answer Research Question 2, the researcher quantitatively analyzed the RSR, the WPP, and the WPP-SR data utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) analytics software. Since the program collects data utilizing a pretest and posttest design, the researcher identified areas where the participants and/or employers perceived behavioral changes. The Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) study explanation for using pretest and
posttest designs indicate that benchmarks before and after a program are appealing to stakeholders as they indicate the changes that have been made. The researcher identified the following variables that were used in the SPSS to study the program’s effects on the youth participants: youth pretest and posttest scores for job readiness skills training using the RSR; youth pretest and posttest scores for soft skills training using the 11 rationally derived scales (WPP and WPP-SR), and the youth participant employability skills using the five Analytic Skills (WPP and WPP-SR) (DV). To present the data, the researcher utilized cross tabulations and frequency distributions.

To answer sub-questions 2a-2e, the following strategy was employed:

2a. To what extent did participation in the program have an effect on the youth participants’ job readiness skills as it relates to job searching and resume writing? The researcher assessed job readiness skills quantitatively by conducting a repeated measures Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to compare the youth participants’ pretest and posttest scores from the RSR (Cronk, 2016). The repeated-measures MANOVA is a multivariate test that involves multiple dependent variables (DV) (Cronk, 2016). MANOVAs are used instead of univariate tests, such as the t-tests to decrease the risk of Type I errors that may occur when multiple tests are conducted for each DV. Like the ANOVA, which examines the levels of independent variables (IV), the MANOVA examines the DVs at one time.

The level of measure was adequate for the repeated-measures MANOVA; therefore, the researcher was able to use parametric testing methods to examine the differences in the mean scores within a related group (Huck, 2012). In an effort to mitigate the potential for a Type-1 error, the researcher used a repeated-measures
MANOVA to also assess the youth participants’ performance comparatively to the standard of 80, which is the minimum score a participant could receive to demonstrate the outcome of increased job readiness skills.

2b. *To what extent did the perceptions of youth participants indicate that participation in the program had an effect on youth soft skills?* Since there were no assumption violations in using a parametric test, the researcher analyzed the youth participants’ soft skills by conducting a repeated-measures MANOVA on the pretest and posttest scores from the 11 rationally derived scales of the WPP-SR. The researcher presented a bivariate analysis of the youth participants’ characteristics of age, gender, race, grade, industry, and job type, with scores reflecting pretest to posttest changes as indicated by the youth participants and the observers. Again, the MANOVA was used to examine the differences in the mean scores within a related group (Cronk, 2016).

2c. *To what extent did the observer ratings of the youth participants completed by employers indicate that participation in the program had an effect on youth soft skills?* Since the levels of measurement were sufficient for a parametric test, the researcher analyzed the employer observations of the youth participants’ soft skills by conducting a repeated-measures MANOVA on the pretest and posttest scores derived from the 11 rationally derived scales of the WPP (Cronk, 2011).

2d. *Is there alignment between the youth participants’ and employers’ perceptions concerning the program’s effect on the youths’ soft skills?* In his study of transformational leadership within a non-profit organization that received public dollars to assist individuals with disabilities, Louis (2011) suggested that “perception alignment” occurs when there is congruence between the individuals’ self-ratings and the observers’
ratings (p. 8). The researcher analyzed the perceptions of the youth participants and their employers concerning the program’s impact on the youth participants’ soft skills by conducting a bivariate correlation analysis on the posttest mean scores derived from the five factor analytic scales of the WPP and the WPP-SR (Cronk, 2011). A correlation test, also known as the Pearson $r$, was used to determine if a linear relationship exists between two variables. The data examined was continuous, and therefore met the parametric testing requirements. The researcher employed a bivariate correlation to determine if there was an association between the WPP-SR (youth participant self-report) posttest, 11 rationally derived scales and the posttest five factor analytic scales of both the youth participants and their employers (observers). Additionally, a Bonferroni post hoc test was employed to determine the direction of the scores, and the extent to which the difference between the mean scores were statistically significant (Huck, 2012). Statistical significance (p) was set at .05.

2e. To what extent was there alignment between the youth participants’ and the employers’ perceptions concerning the program’s effect on the youths’ employability skills? The researcher analyzed the perceptions of the youth participants and their employers concerning the program’s impact on the youth participants’ employability skills by conducting a sample $t$-test on the posttest mean scores derived from the five factor analytic scales of the WPP and the WPP-SR (Cronk, 2016). The $t$-test is used to compare the mean scores from a related group if the variables are interval or ratio, and normally distributed (Cronk, 2016). The assumptions of the $t$-test were met; therefore, the five factor analytic scales of the WPP and the WPP-SR were used to measure employability skills and to determine if there was alignment between the youth
participants’ and their employers’ (observers) views concerning the effects of the program on employability skills of the youth participants.

Summary

This chapter delineated the methods used to conduct a summative evaluation case study on a government agency’s employment and training program that took place in an urban city located in New York State. Using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to analyze pre-existing pretest and posttest data, the researcher evaluated the perceived short-term effects of the program’s elements (work-based experience, job readiness skills training, and soft skills training). The aim of this study was to provide the first formal summative evaluation of the program’s efforts to address the overarching problem of youth unemployment and the skills gap amongst disadvantaged young people ages 14 to 24 years. The researcher utilized quantitative and qualitative data collected from program records to answer the two research questions of the study. The data graphically depicted the results of the analysis, including the means, standard deviations, degrees of freedom, and statistical significance. Triangulation of the data was performed by examining the results from the various methods to measure whether there was alignment between the youth participants’ and the employers’ perceptions concerning the extent to which the targeted population had improved its employability. This study has contributed to filling the gap in the literature concerning employment and training programs that incorporate three distinct elements: (a) work-based experience, (b) job readiness training, and (c) soft skills training.

The researcher reports the results of the analysis in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this case study summative evaluation was to assess the short-term effects of a municipal agency’s after-school youth employment and training program on the youth participants’ employability skills to include soft skills and job readiness skills. Research indicates that employers (observers) perceive youths as having deficiencies in the critical employability skills that are required to enter the workforce. Employability is often measured by work experience, skills, attitudes, and behaviors. The study investigated the elements of a particular program that integrates work-based experience, job readiness skills training, and soft skills training.

This chapter presents both the qualitative and quantitative findings to support whether the program met its stated objectives, as well as it reports on the results of this program evaluation, while answering the following research questions:

1. To what extent did the program meet its objective of providing the youth participants with opportunities for employment?
2. To what extent did the program meet its objective of providing the youth participants with the skills, attitudes, and competencies needed to enter the workforce?
   a. To what extent did participation in the program have an effect on the youth participants’ job readiness skills as it relates to job searching and resume writing?
b. To what extent did the perceptions of the youth participants indicate that participation in the program had an effect on the youth participants’ soft skills?

c. To what extent did the observer ratings completed by the employers indicate that participation in the program had an effect on the youth participants’ soft skills?

d. Is there an alignment between the youth participants’ perceptions and the employers’ perceptions concerning the youth participants’ soft skills?

e. To what extent was there alignment between the youth participants’ perceptions and the employers’ perceptions concerning the program’s effect on the youth participants’ employability skills?

To answer Research Question 1, which deals with the program objective to provide employment opportunities, and Research Question 2, which is to provide youth with the skills, attitudes, and competencies to enter the workplace, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, and 2e (concerning the programs effect on skill development), quantitative statistical analyses were utilized. For questions 1, 2a, and 2b both qualitative and quantitative analyses were employed to ensure comprehensive and tailored responses. Descriptive analysis of the program and its participants, and a content analysis of the program’s job readiness skills guide, soft skills guide, and the WPP and WPP-SR were conducted. The content analysis was used to demonstrate the likeness (relationship) between the program’s training guides and the tools employed to measure the content of the training. A content analysis provides the context for the quantitative outcome results from the program’s pretest and posttest data, measuring soft skills and work experience.
Data Analysis Plan

**Qualitative data analysis plan.** The researcher reviewed a number of documents to include the program’s stated goals and objectives, the program’s grant application, and electronic files (deidentified data) to understand the mechanics of the program. The program mechanics included the resources used (inputs), such as the job readiness skills training guides, the soft skills training guides, and the activities and levels of participation of the program participants (outputs). Additionally, youth participants’ characteristics data, such as gender, age, race, and grade, were accessed and subsequently descriptively analyzed to add clarity to the population that was supported through the program. Information concerning the industry and job types were extracted from the program’s documents to include worksite agreements between the agency and the organizations where the youth were placed to work. This aided in increasing the researcher’s understanding of the work-based experience context.

A comparative content analysis of the program’s guides for job readiness skills training and soft skills training was conducted. The job readiness skills training guide was related to the Resume Scoring Rubric (RSR), a tool utilized to assess the youths’ ability to develop a resume. The soft skills training guide, READI, was compared to the Work Personality Profile (WPP) and the Work Personality Profile Self Report (WPP-SR), which are two well-aligned tools to measure the same behaviors and attitudes from the perspectives of the observed participants and the employer (observer).

**Quantitative data analysis plan.** The outcome evaluation findings were derived from the results of the WPP-SR and the WPP. SPSS was used for the statistical analysis, which was conducted in two phases. First, all study variables were presented using
descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviation, and minimum/maximum values for continuous variables (interval/ratio level), and frequencies and percentages for categorical variables (nominal/ratio level).

Second, a series of bivariate tests (i.e., one-way ANOVA, repeated-measures MANOVA, correlation, and sample *t*-test) were used to answer the quantitative research questions. The covariate variables were not incorporated within the repeated-measure MANOVA models, which was due to issues related to statistical power. The covariate variables significantly related to pretest to posttest changes are noted in this analysis, but they were not covaried within a multivariate model.

All test assumptions related to parametric testing were examined and revealed no significant problems, including checks of normality (via the examination of pretest to posttest change scores), undue influence of outlier scores, and linearity. In terms of statistical power, the G*power software indicated that a medium-sized effect (*f* = 0.25) between the means of the pretest to posttest scores with power set at 0.80 and probability set at 0.05, would require a sample size of 34 study participants. Thus, the sample of 44 study participants provided sufficient statistical power for the pretest to posttest score analysis.

There were complete data for all research questions with the exception of the analysis of the scores from the resume scoring rubric. Specifically, there were only data for 29 out of 44 youth participants as the program records did not include complete sets of 15 youth participants’ pretest and posttest scores. Therefore, this analysis was a subgroup analysis and did not include the full sample of 44 study participants involved in the other research questions.
Data Analysis and Findings

Qualitative findings for research question 1. To what extent did the program meet its objective of providing the youth participants with opportunities for employment?

The program’s stated objective indicated in the logic model that by the end of the 6-week program, 85% of youth selected to participate would have completed 60 hours or more of work-based experience. An archival review demonstrated that the program operated during the agency’s winter session of its After-School Youth Employment and Training Program during the period of February-April 2017. There were 48 youth participants and 20 employers (observers) who completed Phases 1, 2, and 3 of the program. According to the program’s attendance sheets, all the participants worked 60 hours. The youth participants worked 2 hours each day for 5 days each week (10 hours), for 6 weeks. Although 45 youth participants completed the 6-week program, data cleaning yielded a sample population of 44 youths and 20 employers (observers). The completion rate for the youth participants was 98%. The completion rate for the employers (observers) was 100%. The youth participants were placed in various job industries that included the private and non-profit sector, as well as the government and education fields. The youth participants were afforded opportunities to work in various positions within the different job sectors to gain exposure to childcare, healthcare, business, and maintenance.

Quantitative findings for research question 1. Table 4.1 presents a descriptive analysis of the categorical variables, which are the youth program participants’ characteristics, the job sites, and industries. The data describing the youth indicates that there were predominantly male participants ($n = 24; 54.5\%$) when compared to the
female participants ($n = 20; 45.5\%)$. The youth participants were mainly of Black racial identity ($n = 29; 65.9\%$), and they were either in the $11^{\text{th}}$ ($n = 17, 38.6\%$) or $12^{\text{th}}$ ($n = 14, 31.8\%$) grades, and they worked in the non-profit job industry ($n = 25, 56.8\%$). As indicated in Table 4.1, regarding job type, most of the youth participants fell into the categories of childcare ($n = 10, 22.7\%$), clerical support ($n = 12, 27.3\%$), and tutoring ($n = 13, 29.5\%$).

Table 4.1

*Descriptive Analysis of Categorical Variables ($n = 44$)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Race</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (reported American)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not For Profit</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Profit</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Based</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Support</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2 presents a descriptive analysis of the continuous variables. The data within Table 4.2 indicates that the average youth participant was almost 17 years old ($M = 16.82$, $SD = 1.70$, minimum/maximum = 14.00-22.00). The average youth participants evidenced a score of 38.28 ($SD = 4.38$) at pretest and 39.64 ($SD = 4.09$) at posttest, with a resulting change in score of 1.35 ($SD = 3.25$). The average employer (observer) evidenced an average score of 35.47 ($SD = 7.53$) at pretest and 38.56 ($SD = 8.06$) at posttest, with a resulting change score of 3.08 ($SD = 8.04$). The average youth participant rating of the five factor analytic scales was 18.03 ($SD = 1.87$), and the employer (observer) rating of five factor analytic scales (employability skills of task orientation, social skills, work motivation, work conformance, and personal presentation) was 17.63 ($SD = 3.65$).

Table 4.2

Descriptive Analysis of Continuous Variables ($n = 44$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$M$ ($SD$)</th>
<th>Minimum/Maximum</th>
<th>Potential Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Participant Age</td>
<td>15.82 (1.70)</td>
<td>14.00-22.00</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Rated Pretest Score</td>
<td>38.28 (4.38)</td>
<td>21.00-44.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Rated Posttest Score</td>
<td>39.64 (4.09)</td>
<td>29.00-44.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Rated Pre/Post Change</td>
<td>1.35 (3.25)</td>
<td>–7.85-7.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Rated Pretest Score</td>
<td>35.47 (7.53)</td>
<td>0.00-44.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Rated Posttest Score</td>
<td>38.56 (8.06)</td>
<td>0.00-44.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Rated Pre/Post Change</td>
<td>3.08 (8.04)</td>
<td>–16.70-11.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Rating of Five Scales</td>
<td>18.03 (1.87)</td>
<td>13.02-20.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Rating of Five Scales</td>
<td>17.63 (3.65)</td>
<td>0.00-20.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3 presents a bivariate analysis of student characteristics with scores reflecting pretest to posttest changes reported by students. The bivariate analysis indicated that pretest to posttest changes were not related to gender, $r(42) = .25, p = .80$, race/ethnicity, $F(2, 41) = 1.07, p = .35$, grade, $F(3, 40) = .36, p = .79$. industry, $F(3, 40) = 1.70, p = .18$, or job type, $F(4, 39) = .39, p = .81$.

**Table 4.3**

*Bivariate Analysis of Youth Participant Characteristics with Scores Reflecting Pretest to Posttest Changes Reported by Youth Participants (n = 44)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
<th>t/F(df)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24 (54.5)</td>
<td>1.47 (2.36)</td>
<td>.25 (42)</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20 (45.5)</td>
<td>1.22 (4.14)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>29 (65.9)</td>
<td>1.86 (3.80)</td>
<td>1.07 (2, 41)</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>9 (20.5)</td>
<td>.49 (1.30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6 (13.6)</td>
<td>.18 (1.66)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>7 (15.9)</td>
<td>1.01 (2.69)</td>
<td>.36 (3, 40)</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>6 (13.6)</td>
<td>1.20 (1.00)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>17 (38.6)</td>
<td>1.99 (3.37)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>14 (31.8)</td>
<td>.82 (4.04)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>25 (56.8)</td>
<td>1.17 (3.24)</td>
<td>1.70 (3, 40)</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Profit</td>
<td>6 (13.6)</td>
<td>-.35 (3.95)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Based Org.</td>
<td>10 (22.7)</td>
<td>1.89 (2.34)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3 (6.8)</td>
<td>4.53 (3.47)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>10 (22.7)</td>
<td>.84 (4.10)</td>
<td>.39 (4, 39)</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical support</td>
<td>12 (27.3)</td>
<td>1.72 (4.24)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>6 (13.6)</td>
<td>1.06 (.83)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>13 (29.5)</td>
<td>1.93 (2.57)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3 (6.8)</td>
<td>-.33 (1.64)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4 presents a bivariate analysis of the youth participant characteristics with scores reflecting pretest to posttest changes as reported by the employers (observers).

Table 4.4

*Bivariate Analysis of Youth Participant Characteristics with Scores Reflecting Pretest to Posttest Changes Reported by Employers (n = 44)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
<th>t/F (df)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24 (54.5)</td>
<td>3.23 (7.89)</td>
<td>.14 (42)</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20 (45.5)</td>
<td>2.90 (8.43)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>29 (65.9)</td>
<td>3.21 (6.91)</td>
<td>.02 (2, 41)</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>9 (20.5)</td>
<td>3.03 (10.67)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6 (13.6)</td>
<td>2.54 (10.28)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>7 (15.9)</td>
<td>5.13 (10.21)</td>
<td>.36 (3, 40)</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>6 (13.6)</td>
<td>.52 (8.64)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>17 (38.6)</td>
<td>3.49 (6.26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>14 (31.8)</td>
<td>2.66 (9.12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>25 (56.8)</td>
<td>4.71 (7.27)</td>
<td>4.42 (3, 40)</td>
<td>.009¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Profit</td>
<td>6 (13.6)</td>
<td>-5.45 (7.04)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Based Org.</td>
<td>10 (22.7)</td>
<td>1.85 (7.96)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3 (6.8)</td>
<td>10.68 (.70)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>10 (22.7)</td>
<td>6.47 (6.77)</td>
<td>1.79 (4, 39)</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical support</td>
<td>12 (27.3)</td>
<td>3.10 (7.44)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>6 (13.6)</td>
<td>6.87 (4.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>13 (29.5)</td>
<td>.20 (8.95)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3 (6.8)</td>
<td>-3.30 (11.97)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* ¹Bonferroni post hoc analysis indicated that the For-Profit group evidenced significantly lower mean change scores relative to the Non-Profit and Other groups.

Table 4.4 indicates that youth age was also not related to the youth participants’ pretest to posttest score changes at a statistically significant level as reported by the employers (observers), \( r(42) = -.09, p = .56 \). Analysis indicated that pretest to posttest changes were not significantly related to youth participant gender, \( t(42) = .14, p = .89 \), race/ethnicity, \( F(2, 41) = .02, p = .98 \), grade, \( F(3, 40) = .36, p = .78 \), or job type, \( F(4, 39) \).
However, youth participant pretest to posttest score changes as reported by the employers (observers) were related to industry type at a statistically significant level, $F(4, 40) = 4.42, p < .01$. The Bonferroni post hoc analysis indicated that the *For Profit* group ($M = -5.45$, $SD = 7.04$) evidenced significantly lower mean change scores relative to the *Non-Profit* ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 7.27$) and *Other* ($M = 10.68$, $SD = .70$) groups.

Table 4.5 demonstrates a bivariate analysis of the youth participants’ age with scores reflecting the pretest to posttest changes reported by the youth participants and their employers.

Table 4.5

**Bivariate Analysis of Youth Participant Age with Scores Reflecting Pretest to Posttest Changes Reported by Youth Participants and Employers ($n = 44$)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Youth Age</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>−.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Youth Rated Pre/Post Youth Change</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Employer Rated Pre/Post Youth Change</td>
<td></td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Qualitative findings for research question 2.** To what extent did the program meet its objective of providing the youth participants with the skills, attitudes, and competencies needed to enter the work force?

There were two stated objectives indicated in the logic model concerning skill development. The first was: by the end of the 6-week program, 70% or more of the youth participants will increase their job readiness skills by receiving a score of 80% or higher on the resume writing rubric. Only 14 out of the 29 research participants received a score
of 80% or greater; therefore, the first objective was not met. The high mortality rate may have contributed to this failure.

The second was: by the end of the 6-week program, 85% of the youth participants will increase their soft skills. Of the total research participants, 85% showed an increase in soft skills according to the youth participants; however, the employers (observers) did not see it the same way. The findings indicate from the employer (observer) ratings that 77% of the employers (observers) perceived youth soft skills increased. To answer question 2 comprehensively, questions 2b (concerning changes in job readiness skills), 2c (concerning changes in soft skills), 2d (concerning alignment between youth participant and employer perceptions of youth soft skills), and 2e (concerning agreement between youth and employers (observers) perceptions of changes in youth employability) were answered.

**Qualitative findings for research question 2a.** *To what extent has participation in the program had an effect on youth participants’ job readiness skills as it relates to job searching and resume writing?*

The program records revealed that the program offerings included 2 hours of job readiness skills training to include job searches and resume building. Although 44 youth participants were exposed to the job readiness skills training, the data was available for only 29 youth participants. Of the 29 youth, 48% demonstrated the score of 80% or above on their resumes at the end of the program.

**Content analysis for job readiness skills training.** Using the NYS Department of Labor’s guide, *Your Winning Edge Resume and Interview Preparation* (2011), the
program covered four chapters that spoke of strategies for youth to search for employment, apply for employment, and demonstrate their ability to secure employment. Table 4.6 illustrates the title and content of each chapter.

In an effort to measure the job readiness skills training effectiveness, the program utilized the RSR, a tool employed to measure resume writing. Given the agency’s aim to increase the youth participants’ knowledge on job searches and first impressions, the RSRs focus on resume constructs complimented the training guide. One rater was used to score the RSR in an effort to mitigate inconsistency with judgements concerning the ratings of the resumes that were submitted before and after the job readiness skills training. The RSR consisted of four items that were identified as skills, and the following ranking categories: (1) Outstanding; (2) Good; (3) Average; and (4) Unsatisfactory. Table 4.7 illustrates the skill and the frequency of the youth participants’ pretest and posttest scores that were connected to each category.

Table 4.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Readiness Skills Training Guide</th>
<th>Key Content Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: You and the Job Market</td>
<td>Career planning steps, needs assessment, interest inventory, work values, skills identification, career goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Selling Yourself on Paper: Resumes, Cover Letters, and Applications</td>
<td>Resume and cover letter writing, first impressions, what employers look for in a resume, action words, resume do’s and don’ts, job application tips.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Networking</td>
<td>Job searching techniques, identification of people that may help find a job, sources of job information, recording references.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: Putting Your Best Foot Forward: The Successful Interview</td>
<td>Interview tips, legal rights, commonly asked questions, after interview checklist, sample follow up letter writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Quantitative findings for research question 2a.** The youth participants’ rated pretest to posttest changes are demonstrated in Table 4.8. Specifically, Table 4.8 presents a repeated-measures MANOVA analysis of the percentage of youth participants scoring 80% and above (Yes/No) on the RSR at pretest and posttest. The analysis indicated that a change in the percentage of the youth participants’ scoring was at least 80% from pretest at 31.03%, that is, 9 of the 29 youth participants ($M = .31$, $SD = .47$) to posttest at 48.28%, that is, 14 of 29 the youth participants ($M = .48$, $SD = .51$) approached statistical significance ($p < .10$), but they were not statistically significant, $F(1, 28) = 2.97$, $p = .096$.

Table 4.7

*Resume Scoring Frequency Distribution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pretest Skill</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation Format</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Specific/ Volunteer Information</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume Content</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling &amp; Grammar</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posttest Skill</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation Format</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Specific/ Volunteer Information</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume Content</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling &amp; Grammar</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.8

*Repeated Measures MANOVA Analysis of Changes in Youth Participant Rated Pretest to Posttest Youth Participant Change (n = 29)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>F(df)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Change</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>.31 (.47)</td>
<td>.48 (.51)</td>
<td>2.97 (1, 28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Qualitative findings for research question 2b.** The program records revealed that the program offerings included 12 hours of soft skills training. Although 45 of the youth participants were exposed to the soft skills training, data was available for 44 of the youth participants. Of the 44 youth, 85% of the youth participants demonstrated an increase in soft skills by the end of the 6-week program, according to self-reports, while 77% of the employers (observers) indicated an increase in youth participants’ soft skills.

**Content analysis for soft skills training.** To address soft skills and work experience, the program offered the required modules of soft skills training using the READI guide. READI’s acronym represents the following attributes: Respect, Enthusiasm, Articulate, Dependable, and Initiative. The foci of this training guide is the development soft skill attributes that include self-esteem/self-awareness, communication, problem solving, workplace behavior, and goal setting. Due to READI’s novelty, a valid and reliable tool was not provided for the implementing agency to use. Therefore, the agency utilized the WPP and the WPP-SR in the program. The WPP and the WPP-SR are identical 58-item observational tools used to assess work personality, which is a construct of work behaviors, attitudes, and skills. The 11 rationally derived scales (acceptance of work role, ability to profit from instruction or correction, work persistence, work
tolerance, amount of supervision required, extent trainee seeks help from supervisor, degree of comfort or anxiety with supervisor, degree of comfort or anxiety with supervisor, appropriateness of relations with supervisor, teamwork, ability to socialize with co-workers, and communication skills) measured work behaviors and skills. The five factor analytic scales (employability skills of task orientation, social skills, work motivation, work conformance, and personal presentation) measured separate employability behaviors and skills. Yet, there is correlation between the 16 scales. Table 4.9 illustrates the content of the chapters covered through the program, which were taken directly from the READI guide.

Table 4.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute/ Definitions</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect – Building Confidence</td>
<td>Giving and Earning Respect, Self-Awareness, Personal Well-Being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm – Let’s Focus</td>
<td>Developing Enthusiasm, Setting Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulate – Presenting My Best Self</td>
<td>Speaking Well, Listening, Confident Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependable – Count on Me</td>
<td>Positive Work Ethic, Solving Problems, Managing Emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative – Going For It</td>
<td>Taking Initiative, Overcoming Challenges, Working Towards Goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10 cross-references the WPP and WPP-SR 11 scoring scales, the WPP and WPP-SR descriptions of the 11 scales, the WPP and WPP-SR five factor analytic scales, and the READI attributes. To increase trustworthiness of the triangulation, the researcher utilized the program staff, the teacher who rated the resume scoring rubric, to
review the content analysis between the WPP and WPP-SR 11 scoring scales, the WPP and WPP-SR descriptions of the 11 scales, the WPP and WPP-SR five factor analytic scales, and the READI attributes. The findings demonstrate congruence between the researcher’s and the program staff’s alignment between the four content areas.

Table 4.10

*Cross Reference of WPP 11 Rationally Derived Scales, WPP Five Factor Analytic Scale, and READI Attributes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WPP Rationally Derived Scales</th>
<th>WPP Descriptions</th>
<th>five factor analytic scales</th>
<th>READI Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of Work Role</td>
<td>Ability to conform to basic work expectations</td>
<td>Work Conformance</td>
<td>Dependable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Profit From Instruction or Correction</td>
<td>Capability to make recommended changes in work behaviors</td>
<td>Work Motivation</td>
<td>Dependable/Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Persistence</td>
<td>Ability to stay on task without prompting</td>
<td>Task Orientation</td>
<td>Dependable/Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Tolerance</td>
<td>Willingness to accept change without decreasing effort</td>
<td>Work Motivation</td>
<td>Dependable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of Supervision Required</td>
<td>Ability to work with minimal supervision and direction</td>
<td>Task Orientation</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent Trainee Seeks Help from Supervisor</td>
<td>Ability to ask supervisor for help</td>
<td>Personal Presentation</td>
<td>Articulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness of Relations with Supervisor</td>
<td>Ability to interact pleasantly and appropriately</td>
<td>Social Skills</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Ability to work cooperatively</td>
<td>Social Skills</td>
<td>Respect/Enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Socialize With Co-Workers</td>
<td>Capacity to establish friendships with co-workers</td>
<td>Social Skills</td>
<td>Initiative/Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>Ability to express oneself in social interactions</td>
<td>Personal Presentation</td>
<td>Articulate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quantitative findings for research question 2b.** The youth participant pretest to posttest change was analyzed through a repeated-measures MANOVA. Specifically,
Table 4.11 presents a repeated-measures MANOVA analysis of the student-rated pretest to posttest student change. The analysis indicates that the overall change in mean scores from pretest ($M = 38.28, SD = 4.38$) to posttest ($M = 39.64, SD = 4.09$) was statistically significant, $F(1, 43) = 7.62, p < .01$. Figure 4.1 displays the plotted graph of these relationships.

Table 4.11

*Repeated Measures MANOVA Analysis of Changes in Youth Participant Rated Pretest to Posttest Youth Participant Change (n = 44)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pretest M (SD)</th>
<th>Posttest M (SD)</th>
<th>F(df)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Change</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>38.28 (4.38)</td>
<td>39.64 (4.09)</td>
<td>7.62 (1, 43)</td>
<td>.008¹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.¹PES effect size = .15 (Large Effect Size)*

*Figure 4.1. Graph of Youth Participant Rated Pretest to Posttest Changes in Youth Participant Performance Scores (n = 44).* $*F(1, 43) = 7.62, p < .01$, PES effect size = .15 (Large Effect Size)

*Quantitative findings for research question 2c. To what extent do the employer (observer) ratings of youth participants completed by employers (observers) indicate that participation in the program has had an effect on youth soft skills?*
The employers (observers) pretest to posttest changes were analyzed using a repeated-measures MANOVA. Specifically, Table 4.12 presents a repeated-measures MANOVA analysis of the WPP employer (observer) rated pretest to posttest student change. Analysis indicates that the overall change in mean scores from pretest ($M = 35.47$, $SD = 7.53$) to posttest ($M = 38.56$, $SD = 8.06$) was statistically significant, $F(1, 43) = 6.47$, $p < .05$. Figure 4.12 displays the plotted graph of these relationships.

Table 4.12

Repeated Measures MANOVA Analysis of Changes in Employer Rated Pretest to Posttest Youth Participant Change ($n = 44$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>F(df)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Change</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35.47 (7.53)</td>
<td>38.56 (8.06)</td>
<td>6.47 (1, 43)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ¹PES effect size = .13 (Large Effect Size)

Figure 4.2. Graph of Employer Rated Pretest to Posttest Changes in Youth Participant Performance Scores ($n = 44$).* *$F(1, 43) = 6.47$, $p < .05$, PES effect size = .13 (Large Effect Size)
Quantitative findings for research question 2d. To what extent was there alignment between youth participants’ and employers’ (observers’) perceptions concerning the program’s effect on youths' soft skills?

The question of alignment seeks to figure out if the perceptions of the youths and those of the employers (observers) were similar or dissimilar. To assess if there was alignment between the youth participants’ perceptions and the employers’ (observer) perceptions of the youths’ soft skills and work experience, a test for association was conducted using a bivariate correlation analysis. Table 4.13 presents a bivariate correlation analysis of the youth participants’ posttest analytic scores with the employer (observer) WPP ratings and the youth participant posttest WPP-SR ratings. The analysis indicates that the youth participants’ posttest WPP-SR were significantly related to the youth participant-rated five Factor analytic scale scores, $r(42) = .998, p < .01$, but not the employer (observer) rated WPP five factor analytic scale scores, $r(42) = .19, p = .23$. Table 4.14 presents a bivariate correlation of the analysis of the employer (observer) posttest Analytic scores with the employer (observer) WPP ratings and youth participant posttest WPP-SR ratings. The analysis indicates that that employer (observer) ratings of the youth participants’ posttest scores were not significantly related to the youth participants’ rated five factor analytic scale scores, $r(42) = .22, p = .15$, but were significantly related to the employer (observer) rated five scale scores, $r(42) = .996$, $p < .01$. 

Table 4.13

*Bivariate Correlation Analysis of Youth Participant Posttest Analytic Scores with Employer & Youth Participant Posttest WPP Youth Participant Ratings (n = 44)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Youth participant Posttest WPP Scores</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.998**</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Youth participant Rated Five Skills</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Employer Rated Five Skills</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* **p < .01

Table 4.14

*Bivariate Correlation Analysis of Employer Posttest Analytic Scores with Employer & Youth Participant Posttest WPP Youth Participant Ratings (n = 44)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Employer WPP Scores</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.996**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Youth participant Rated Five Skills</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Employer Rated Five Skills</td>
<td>—</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* **p < .01

**Quantitative findings for research question 2e.*** To what extent was there alignment between youth participants' and employers (observers)' perceptions concerning the program's effect on youths' employability skills?

The youth participants’ and employers’ (observers) pretest to posttest changes were analyzed using a sample *t*-test. Specifically, Table 4.15 presents a sample *t*-test of the WPP employer (observer) and youth participant rated posttest change of the WPP and the WPP-SR five factor analytic scales. The five factor analytic scales of the WPP and the WPP-SR were used to measure employability skills. The analysis indicates that the overall change in mean scores was statistically significant from employer (observer)
posttest \((M = 19.63, SD = 2.3)\) to youth participant posttest \((M = 18.03, SD = 2.7)\), \(t(DF) = –.65(44), p = .59\). There was no statistical significance between the youth and employer (observer) posttest five analytic scale scores.

Table 4.15

**Paired Samples t-Test Analysis of Employer/Youth Participant Posttest Five Analytic Scores \((n = 44)\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Pretest (N)</th>
<th>Pretest (M (SD))</th>
<th>Posttest (M (SD))</th>
<th>(t(df))</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analytic Scores</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(-.65 (44))</td>
<td>(.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>19.63 (3.65)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth participant</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>18.03 (1.86)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

The findings of this case study summative evaluation suggest that the after-school youth employment and training program were effective in increasing youth participants’ overall employability (job readiness skills, soft skills, and work experience). Each element of the program was evaluated to determine if the combination of work-based experience, job readiness skills training, and soft skills training had at least a short-term effect on youth ages 14-21 years who participated in a 6-week after-school program. This should serve as a building block for further training.

The analysis of Research Question 1 revealed that the program met its objective of providing youth with opportunities for work experience. The program provided an equitable distribution of employment opportunities to males and females. The youth participants were afforded access to a diversity of job industries and employment positions.
The second research question explored the extent to which the youth participants were provided with the training to develop the required skills, attitudes, and competencies to seek employment on their own and demonstrate the behaviors that are needed to enter the workforce. The overarching question (question 2) was comprehensively answered through questions 2a-2e.

Question 2a examined the content of the job readiness skills training and drew comparisons to the tool, the Resume Scoring Rubric (RSR), which was used to measure the resume development of the youth participants. Although resume development was only one output of the job readiness skills training, the examination of pre and post resumes was selected for examination due to the research that suggests that resumes are not only necessary for job searches, but they also provide employers (observers) with a first impression of a potential employee. The findings suggested that the program did not meet its objective of increasing job readiness skills as measured by the RSR, and that there was no statistical significance between the change in pretest and posttest scores.

Research Question 2b explored the extent to which the youth participants perceived the program as having had an effect on their soft skills. The content of the soft skills training, along with the WPP and the WPP-SR, a tool used to measure soft skills and work behavior, was examined. A content analysis drew comparisons to the WPP and the WPP-SR to demonstrate alignment between the content of the READI soft skills guide and the 11 Rationally derived scales and the five factor analytic scales of the WPP. This comparison demonstrated face validity of the READI guide and the program’s soft skills training. The results of the statistical analysis revealed that there was a positive effect on soft skills development before and after the intervention, according to the
youths’ perceptions. Similarly, the analysis of Research Question 2c revealed that employers (observers) perceived a positive effect on youth soft skills as evidenced by the before and after observations.

Statistical analysis of Research Question 2d revealed a strong positive linear relationship between the youth participants’ perceptions of the soft skills as measured by the WPP-SR 11 rationally derived scales and the WPP-SR five factor analytic scales. Yet, the employer (observer) findings indicate a weak correlation between the WPP 11 rationally derived scales and the WPP five factor analytic scales. This misalignment suggests that the youth participants and employers (observers) did not envision the questions of each scale in the same manner. Moreover, it is likely that the youths, in general, tended to have subjective perceptions, lending to an elevated sense of their abilities, while employer independence lends to objectivity.

The analysis of Research Question 2e explored if there was alignment between the youth participants’ and employers’ (observers’) perceptions concerning the youths’ employability skills. The five factor analytic scales of the WPP and the WPP-SR were used to measure employability skills. The analysis reveals that there was no statistical significance between the mean post test scores of the five factor analytic scales according to the youth participants’ and employers’ (observers) results. Hence, there was alignment between the youth participants’ and employers’ (observers) views concerning the effects of the program on employability skills of the youth participants.

Chapter 5 presents the implications, limitations, and recommendations for future study.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the case study summative evaluation of the 2017 Winter After-School Youth Employment and Training Program (the program). The findings from Chapter 4 aided in the assessment of the short-term effects of the program and its elements (work-based experience, job readiness skills training, and soft skills training) on the youth participants’ employability skills from the perspectives of the youth involved in the program and the employers (observers). In addition to the implications of the findings on this particular program, this chapter presents the limitations of the study and recommendations for future programming and workforce development policy.

Overview of the Study

Research suggests that there are two major determinants of youth unemployment: (a) employers’ perceptions that youth lack the required employability skills for the workplace, and (b) the skills gap experienced by youth based on the lack of work experience, the lack of knowledge concerning the various workplace norms, and the overall deficit of soft skills (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Hart Research Associates, 2015; Ju et al., 2014; ManpowerGroup, 2013; Robles, 2012; Staff et al., 2014; Stout, 2015). Realizing that the baby boomers in the US are transitioning out of the workforce and that future generations will be looked upon to replace existing workers, it is critical that youth are prepared to enter the workforce. Moreover, research suggests that youth
who fail to enter the workforce early results in an increased chance for long-term unemployment. Unemployment impacts individuals and society, which is evidenced by individual loss of productivity, feelings of self-purpose and self-worth, and the inability to be self-sufficient. The consequences of unemployment on society is magnified by the financial and social burden on taxpayers because of the exorbitant costs associated with government safety nets of welfare, housing, healthcare, incarceration, and other social services.

Government has invested billions of taxpayer dollars into social programs aimed to decrease unemployment. Yet, the problem is that there is a dearth of rigorous evaluation concerning youth employment and training programs that are government funded. This case study summative evaluation examined the short-term effects of a program that was designed to improve youths’ work-based experiences, job readiness skills, and soft skills.

Although the agency has a 50-year history of implementing social programs to address the persistent unemployment challenge, there are three key points that guided this research: (a) the study area has experienced 60% youth unemployment rate amongst 16-19-year olds; (b) the adult unemployment rate is higher than most areas within the county; and (c) it is known that early employment begets later employment. At the same time, the program is special in three distinct ways: (a) the program offered a three-pronged approach to skills development, which included an existing job search and a resume development guide from the federal government’s Department of Labor, and a new soft skills training guide that was created by a local government agency to incorporate the critical skills that employers deemed necessary to enter the local
workforce; (b) research suggests that afterschool employment opportunities are rare when compared to summer employment opportunities, and therefore presented a unique case for inquiry; and (c) there was no evidence to suggest that there had been a systematic evaluation of any of the agency’s employment and training programs.

To understand the implications of the program, and its efficacy, the three elements of the program (work experience, job readiness skills training, and soft skills training) were assessed using the archival data from the winter session that was collected from both the youth participants and the employers. The uniqueness of this program evaluation is the incorporation of the perspectives of the youth and employers (observers) regarding the impact on youths’ employability skills. Therefore, the analysis of the collected data aided in increasing understanding of the program’s performance in specific areas of work readiness.

**Implications of Findings**

**Finding 1.** The purpose of Research Question 1 was to determine the extent to which the program meets its objective of providing youth with opportunities for employment. The program was expected to ensure that 85% of youth participants completed 60 hours or more of work-based experience. According to the literature concerning youth unemployment, a key factor is the lack of work experience. An archival review of the program’s records evidenced a 98% (44/45) completion rate. The program had a very low attrition rate; one youth participant was excluded from the analysis due to his release from the program.

Descriptive analysis revealed that there was a normal/almost equal distribution of females (20) and males (24) who attended and completed the program. The average age
of the participants was 17, and the majority of students were in the 11th and 12th grades of high school. These findings aligned with the research conducted on youth employment prior to the great recession of 2008-2009, which suggests that a number of high school juniors and seniors have been exposed to a part time job (Mortimer, 2003).

The youths were placed in various job industries including the private and non-profit sector, as well as the government, health services, and educational fields. There was a prevalence of youth who worked in the nonprofit sector. The youth participants were afforded opportunities to gain exposure to the responsibilities and duties of childcare, healthcare, business, and maintenance. The three top positions held by the youth participants were in education, business, and healthcare. These findings are important to note given the July 20, 2017 press release from the New York State Department of Labor concerning the industries that evidenced job growth over 2016-2017. The change in jobs by major industry sector from June 2016-June 2017 were: (a) Educational and Health Services, (b) Professional & Business Services, (c) Leisure & Hospitality, (d) Other Services, and (e) Government (New York State Department of Labor, 2017). Therefore, the findings demonstrate alignment between the program’s offerings of specific job types in specific job industries and the local areas of job growth.

Finding 2. The second research question was concerned with the program’s objective to provide youth with the skills, attitudes, and competencies needed to enter the work force. Research Question 2 was answered affirmatively through content analysis of the job readiness skills training and the soft skills training materials and measurement tools. The five research sub-questions (2a-2e), succinctly addressed the program’s effects on job readiness skills, soft skills, and work-based experience according to the youth
participants’ scores from the resume writing rubric (RSR) and the work personality profile self-reports (WPP-SR). Additionally, results from the work personality profile (WPP) indicated the employers’ (observers’) perceptions regarding the youth participants’ soft skills and work behaviors.

**Finding 2a.** Question 2a examined the extent to which youth participation in the program had an effect on the youth participants’ job readiness skills as it relates to job searching and resume writing. The program documents revealed that 44 of the youth participants received job readiness skills training. The emphasis of this training was on job search techniques and resume writing, which are the entry points of engagement when pursuing employment. A content analysis was performed by the researcher, and interrater agreement was confirmed through a peer review of NYS certified teachers of the job readiness skills training guide and the Resume Scoring Rubric (RSR). It was determined that the job readiness skills training covered topics that were reflected in the guide. Exercises from the guide demonstrated how to conduct a job search, develop a resume, and how to make a good first impressions. The focus on resume development was determined based on the principle that a first impression of an individual’s skills and experience is made during an employer’s resume review. The RSR measured the elements presented through the training guide, such as presentation, resume content, spelling, and grammar.

Additional analysis was provided quantitatively to answer question 2a. The evaluative objective was to determine if 70% or more of the youth participants increased their job readiness skills as measured by the score of 80% or higher on the RSR. To measure this element, the researcher examined the program staff’s scoring of the youths’
resumes before and after the training using the RSR. Only 66% of the youth program participants completed the RSR pretests and posttests. Therefore, there were only data sets for 29 youth participants. Of the 29 youth participants, 14 received a score of 80 or greater. Therefore, this particular objective was not met. The high mortality rate may have contributed to this failure. However, it is important to note that change was evidenced amongst the students who completed both measurements. There was a 5-point growth in the average total score of the youth participants. Analysis indicated that change in the percentage of students scoring at least 80% from pretest at 31.03% to posttest at 48.28% approached statistical significance but was not statistically significant.

These findings suggest that increased efforts should be made in future programming to ensure that resumes are collected before and after the program ends. Additionally, the impacts of a small effect size of the group affected the program outcomes. It is recommended that additional research be conducted on a larger sample size before casting final judgement on the job readiness skills training efficacy in the area of resume building. This is a gatekeeping element in the youth gaining employment and addressing it both stylistically and in making sure young people have appropriate and relevant experiences that they can report on to include volunteering must be part of the solution.

**Finding 2b.** Research Question 2b examined the extent to which the perceptions of the youth participants indicated that participation in the program had an effect on their soft skills. The program’s objective was to enable 85% of the youth participants to increase their soft skills. According to the program documents, 44 of the youth participants received soft skills training. The emphasis of this training was to increase the
youth participants’ knowledge of soft skills and behaviors such as self-awareness, respect for supervisors, communication, motivation, goal-setting, positive work ethic, problem solving, and managing emotions. The soft skills training that each of the youth participants received was 12 hours. Guided by the READI (Respect, Enthusiasm, Communication, Dependability, Articulate, and Initiative) curriculum, activities were implemented that included role plays, team building, and self-reflection.

A content analysis was performed by the researcher, and an interrater agreement was confirmed through a peer review of the soft skills training guide and the WPP and WPP-SR. It was determined that the soft skills training adequately addressed the WPPs 11 rationally derived scales: acceptance of work role, ability to profit from instruction or correction, work persistence, work tolerance, amount of supervision required, the extent the trainee seeks help from supervisor, degree of comfort or anxiety with supervisor, degree of comfort or anxiety with supervisor. appropriateness of relations with supervisor, teamwork, ability to socialize with co-workers, communication skills, which were used to measure soft skills.

The quantitative findings revealed that 85% of youth perceived the program as having increased their soft skills. Additional analysis of the soft skills training element was conducted through a repeated-measures MANOVA that indicated that the overall change in mean scores from the WPP-SR pretest to posttest was statistically significant, with a large effect size. This result compliments the qualitative analysis, which deemed the READI guide as having construct validity.

The WPP and WPP-SR constructs enabled the youth to rate themselves as having employability strengths or deficits concerning workplace norms. The WPP and WPP-SR
rating system uses a 4-point format. Ratings were: “(4) definite strength; an employability asset; (3) adequate performance; not a particular strength; (2) inconsistent performance; potentially an employability problem; (1) problem area; will definitely limit the person’s chance for employment; (x) no opportunity to observe the behavior” (Neath & Bolton, 2008, p. 7). The youth participants assessed their attitudes and behaviors 1 week after beginning the program and during the final week of the program. The WPP-SR rated behaviors such as: punctuality; appropriate dress; listening to instructions; steady work habits; recognition of personal mistakes and correcting personal mistakes; pleasant and appropriate interaction with customers co-workers, and supervisors; comfortability in working within groups; appropriate expression of likes and dislikes; and appropriate initiation of conversations with others. The youth typically rated themselves highly before the intervention, with two major areas for potential employability problems being the ability to socialize with co-workers (WPP-SR Rationally Derived Scale S10) and communication (WPP-SR Rationally Derived Scale S11).

**Finding 2c.** Research Question 2c examined the extent to which the observers’ ratings of the youth participants, completed by employers, indicated that participation in the program had an effect on the youths’ soft skills. The quantitative analysis was conducted using a repeated-measures MANOVA. Similar to the results in Research Question 2b (youth perceptions of soft skills increase as an effect of the program), findings of the employers (observers) pretest to posttest scores demonstrated positive changes in mean scores from pretest to posttest observations. The analysis indicated that the overall change was statistically significant, with a large effect size. This finding suggests congruence between two groups of informants, youth and employers.
(observers), regarding soft skills improvement of the youth participants by the end of the 6-week program.

Although positive change was found using the mean scores from pretests to posttests, the observer ratings demonstrated that 77% of the employers perceived youth soft skills having increased. This presents an 8 percentage point difference between youth and employer findings.

Additionally, there were three major areas where the employer (observer) perceptions revealed areas for potential employability problems. The results based on the WPP rationally derived scales indicated that the employers perceived the youths after the intervention as having difficulty accepting work role (S1), amount of supervision required (S5), and communication skills (S11).

**Finding 2d.** Research Question 2d examined the extent to which alignment occurred between the youth participants’ and the employers’ perceptions concerning the program’s effect on youths’ soft skills. Although the findings from Research Question 2b suggest that both the youths and employers (observers) perceived an increase in soft skills amongst the youth participants at the end of the program, there was incongruence found when the researcher analyzed the data to determine an association between the participants’ soft skills, as measured by the results of the WPP and WPP-SR 11 rationally derived scales, and work experience, as measured by the WPP and WPP-SR five factor analytic scales.

A test for association was conducted using a bivariate correlation analysis of youth posttest analytic scores with the employer (observer) WPP ratings and the youth participants’ posttest WPP-SR ratings. The analysis indicates that youth participants’
posttest WPP-SR were significantly related to youth rated five analytic scale scores. Although the correlation established a strong positive linear relationship between the youth participants’ perceptions of their soft skills as measured by the WPP-SR rationally derived scales and the WPP-SR Five Factor analytic scales, the employer (observer) findings indicate a weak correlation between the WPP rationally derived scales and the WPP five factor analytic scales.

A few conclusions may be drawn from this discord. The youth participants and the employers may not have had the same feelings concerning the progress made during the 6 weeks. This is supported by the areas of opportunity indicated by the youth and employers. The youth perceived themselves as less skilled in social interactions (20%), yet employers did not demonstrate agreement on this scale (14.6%). Another possibility is that the questions of each scale were not interpreted in the same manner. Alternatively, it is not uncommon for youth to rate themselves higher on skills in a self-assessment and for employers to observe youths’ performance through their own lens, which is one of autonomy. Further training in how to score and administer the tool may be needed to ensure uniformity of execution.

**Finding 2e.** The overarching aim of the program was/is to prepare youth for the workplace. One of the barriers to employment is youth lack of work experience. Work-based experience was integrated into this program to increase the likelihood of employer-perceived employability. Research Question 2e explored if there was alignment between the youth participants’ and employers’ perceptions concerning youths’ employability skills.
In this study, the ratings of the five factor analytic scales (task orientation, social skills, work motivation, work conformance, personal presentation) determined employability. A paired-samples $t$-test analysis of the youth participants’ and employers’ (observer) WPP-SR and WPP posttest five analytic scores indicated that the employer (observer) scores did not differ from student scores at a statistically significant level. Therefore, there was agreement between both groups, which supported the assertion of the program having positive effects on youth participants’ employability skills.

**Limitations**

This case study summative evaluation assessed the effects and impacts on youth participants’ job readiness skills, soft skills, and work-based experience. Data analysis revealed that youth assessed the program as having a positive impact on their overarching employability skills. Yet, there are several limitations to this study.

First, the study was designed as a pilot evaluation that assessed the extent to which participation in the program had a short-term effect on the youth participants’ employability skills. Although the study demonstrated a well-rounded response to the research questions concerning the short-term effects of the program on the youth participants, according to the youth and employer (observer) perceptions, the comprehensive nature of the program’s efficacy question would require the examination of intermediate and long-term outcomes; however, this researcher determined that it was impractical, given the 6-week intervention period. The evaluation of the short-term effects, however, should not be discounted and may be considered the foundation upon subsequent intervention and evaluation.
The second limitation was the sample size. In the analysis of the job readiness skills training using the pretest posttest data from the RSR, it is evident that the analysis was underpowered. The missing data from the 15 youth participants affected the statistical analysis that was performed. A larger sample size would have enabled generalizable results.

The third limitation of the study was the retrospective data that was collected by the program staff. The collection of data on specific variables to include income level of the youth participants’ families, academic status, work experience (if any), and other distinguishable characteristics such as English language learners and disability status was not used. Additional information that distinguished the last grade of school completed would have also been useful. In addition, the data collected concerning grade level made no distinction between GED and 12th grade academic levels. These additions would have helped to narrow down the results.

A fourth limitation is the dissonance found within the literature concerning the definitions for soft skills. Similarly, there is a dearth in the research concerning the face validity and reliability of soft skill measurement tools.

Recommendations

This study concentrated on a program that provided a combination of work-based experience, job readiness skills training, and soft skills training youth participants. The elements of the program were measured by the data collected from the program’s staff, using a pretest-posttest design. A recommendation for future investigation would be the use of a time series design that would enable data collection for multiple points in time.
Although the results of this summative assessment may be used as a baseline for future study, a formative (process and implementation) evaluation would support the examination of the program holistically. By conducting an analysis of the planning, implementation and outcome stages, results would reflect short-term, intermediate, and long-term effects of the program. The formative evaluation would collect and analyze data to identify the ways to continuously improve the program, its elements, and its process, whereas the continuance of the summative evaluations would utilize data to help make future decisions based on the outcomes and impacts that the program had on the participants.

Additional recommendations include a follow-up study using a larger sample size and increased data collection concerning the youths’ and the employers’ characteristics. A larger sample with data to support variation of the subjects would illuminate any need for differentiated service delivery.

Moreover, a randomized control study is recommended because it would afford generalizability. The lack of a comparison group, and or the absence of a randomly controlled group, limited the researcher’s ability to compare two different groups of youth. An ideal study would involve an experimental and control group. A random assignment would have also increased the trustworthiness of the data collected and subsequently analyzed.

**Work-based experience.** The findings of this study indicated that 98% of the youth participants, and 100% of employers (observers) completed the 6-week program. According to program records, the winter session of this employment and training program provided 10 hours of work per week to the youth participants, for 6 weeks. The
research indicates that work intensity for in-school youth must be considered when implementing a youth employment program (Sachdev, 2012). Mortimer’s (2003) study demonstrated that youth who work 20 hours or less demonstrate higher academic performance. Moreover, there is extensive literature concerning the adverse effects of youth working long hours. Additionally, the New York State Department of Labor is known for its stringent policies concerning the number of hours youths who are enrolled in school can work.

This dosage of employment within this 6-week program was well below the New York State Department of Labor’s (2016) standards of 18 hours per week for youth ages 14 to 15 years, and 28 hours per week for youth ages 16 years and up. Although the mean age of the youth participants was 17, there were 18-21-year olds who participated in the program. Of the youth participants, 27% were in 12th grade. It is likely that these participants have had an abbreviated schedule in school, or they were pursuing a GED. Therefore, given the overall findings of the program, which suggests benefits to the youth who participated, it is recommended that the working hours be increased to 20 hours for older youths and to gather data regarding whether a participant is in 12th grade or pursuing a GED after having dropped out in ninth grade.

A final recommendation concerning the work-based experience element deals with the integration of external-site observations. While this study was concerned with analyzing the perspectives of the youth and employers, there is value in enhancing the data collection efforts to include additional raters. Data collection from the program staff who trained the youths and who had access to the WPP would increase interrater trustworthiness by having them observe the youth participants while at work. Future
study might include a correlation analysis between the multiple observers to determine
the extent to which there is alignment in perception concerning youth skills and work
behaviors. This recommendation of adding additional raters would lend to a time series
data collection, thus increasing robustness and continuous quality improvement within
the program.

**Job readiness skills training recommendations.** The analysis indicated that
change in the percentage of students scoring at least 80% from pretest to posttest was
positive. Yet, the findings only approached statistical significance of $p < .10$). This
finding encourages future study using a larger sample size. A few recommendations
include providing job readiness skills training prior to job placement. The program staff
could continue to collect resumes during the application stage, provide the job readiness
skills training, and require a completed resume before the training to ensure that all
participants complete the task of developing a resume. A final recommendation
concerning job readiness skills training is to identify or create a valid and reliable job
readiness skills training tool to measure all of the content areas, such as cover letter
writing, interviewing, and thank you letters. Although job readiness skills training
included multiple topics relative to job searches, the RSR solely measured the content of
the resume.

**Soft skills training recommendations.** According to the analysis of the WPP and
the WPP-SR, the changes in the pretest and posttest scores of the youth participants of the
employers demonstrated a positive change in soft skills and work behaviors. Both
participants, youths and employers, indicated that there were a few areas of opportunity
(Rationally Derived Scales S1, S5, S11) for the youth to further develop soft skills and
work behaviors. The analysis revealed that the employers perceived the youth participants as having weaknesses concerning the acceptance of work roles, conformation to basic workplace norms, and communication. The employers also perceived several youth as having challenges in working with limited supervision and direction. This insight from the WPP concerning the youth participants’ deficits inform future practice. Program staff can now have empirical data to support decisions to amplify instruction concerning these areas.

It is recommended that READI soft skills training be scaled up to the various employment and training programs throughout New York State who receive government funding. Beginning with the Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board grantees, additional studies could be implemented in an effort to establish reliability of the READI guide. Moreover, for the purpose of this outcome evaluation, the positive changes that were demonstrated can be associated with the use of the READI soft skills guide. This is the result of the program and evaluation design. Yet, it is critical to note that this evaluation did not include a process or implementation assessment. Therefore, there is no way of knowing the impacts of the staff on the skills development of the youth participants. A satisfaction survey including questions concerning the youth participants’ perceptions of the training that was delivered is recommended.

**Policy recommendations.** The federal government has released several guidance documents that elucidate job-driven strategies to ensure successful outcomes for both job seekers and employers. While the guidance documents and federal policy underscores the need to enhance skills, the government has yet to provide specific soft skills training recommendations for youth since the publishing of the U.S. Secretary of Labor’s report
(1992) SCANS. The Secretary of Labor convened a commission to investigate and define the most salient skills that youth are required to have to participate in the labor force. Although there is still some relevance between the suggestions presented through SCANS and the provision of soft skills training through the use of the READI guide, more research-based strategies and government-directed guidance are needed, given the complexities of youths’ experiences and interests, along with the changing dynamics and requirements of the workplace.

**Evaluation recommendations.** It is recommended that evaluation practices within the agency’s employment and training programs be ongoing and reflective. Participatory practice used to measure the programs performance and effectiveness are required within this context and within the field when attempting to make judgments concerning a program’s performance. The researcher recommends a meta-model of evaluation that includes a formative (process and implementation) and summative (outcome) evaluation that is aligned with the program’s logic model. The logic model displays the sequence of actions in the program and how the inputs and outputs link to the program outcome objectives. During the evaluation planning, realistic outcome objectives must be identified along with the indicators that evidence changes in student skill acquisition, behaviors, or attitudes as a result of program participation.

An additional evaluation recommendation is to improve the program’s documents to ensure that there is an assessment of the evaluability and formative elements such as interim evaluation reports that detail findings regarding the implementation, success and/or failure, and progress toward objectives. It is recommended that the program staff
complete and maintain good records of the training agendas, presentations, guides, activity logs, program schedules, and satisfaction surveys from participants.

Research indicates that evaluation is most effective, meaningful, and useful when conducted using collaborative and learning-oriented approaches. While this case study’s summative evaluation focused solely on outcome data, future study might include various sources of information including parental feedback. Parents play an integral role in this particular program’s model. Parents were responsible for attending a program orientation to increase their knowledge of the program’s expectations of the youth participants. Moreover, since the youth participants were likely to be involved in school, parent feedback would enable future evaluations to include academic progress or regress during the program period. It is recommended that a parent survey be used to collect this data, which would then be triangulated with other data sources to determine whether or not there had been improvements demonstrated in and outside of work.

**Conclusion**

The immediate objectives of the federal government’s employment and training strategies is to reduce the unemployment rates through service provision. The government’s long-term aims are to gain a competitive advantage in the global economy, and sustain economic growth. In order to accomplish this, the citizenry must be positioned to enter the labor market. Additionally, the government is interested in helping those who are currently in the workforce to realize increased wages and develop the skills required to sustain employment.

The federal government funding allocation formula to U.S. state governments through its various government agencies ensure employment assistance to those who are
struggling to become self-sufficient. The U.S. Department of Labor funds state departments of labor, which then subcontract with local governments for the provision of youth employment and training opportunities. In this particular study, funding for this project was combined, using government sources from Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) of 2014, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant, and a local municipal Youth Bureau (an agency within city government). The goal of the program was to prepare economically disadvantaged youth, ages 14-24, for self-sufficiency.

In an effort to better prepare youth for the workforce and adhere to evidenced-based practices of incorporating employer demands and needs into employability skills training, a local government agency implemented an after-school employment and training program to 45 unemployed youths. Without a bona fide evaluation, it was difficult to determine the effectiveness of the program and its elements were unknown. This phenomenon is not unusual as the literature points out that smaller, youth-serving programs have been known to assess the effects of their services through anecdotal means. The scope and size of publicly funded employment and training programs often dictate the extent to which resources for evaluation are allocated.

This case study summative evaluation contributed to this particular government agency’s ability to make informed decisions concerning its employment and training programs. The study provides empirical data that perceived overall positive effects on the 44 youth participants who successfully completed the program. Despite the limitations of the study, this dissertation established a foundation for the agency’s future investigation.
By exploring the perspectives of both youth participants and employers, there is increased learning concerning this particular program’s benefits to youths and employers.

This dissertation also enhances the fields of positive youth development and workforce development as there are few current studies that evaluate the effectiveness of youth employment and training programs that receive government funding. This study demonstrates three approaches to enhance youth employability: work-based experience, job readiness skills training, and soft skills training. The study’s elements have clear benchmarks and may be replicated within various contexts. It also highlights resources that are publicly made available through local government including the New York State Department of Labor’s Guide, *Your Winning Edge: Resume and Interview Preparation*, and *READI*, a Westchester county government guide for soft skills training. The program seems to merit continued funding because it is effective in delivering on its promises of increased soft skills and employability skills.
References


Dibenedetto, C. A. (2015). *Teachers’ perceptions of their proficiency and responsibility to teach the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of high school students to be career ready in the 21st century* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/openview/d8df30f275d74a3404f7d44132410dba/1?qtp-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y


Kim, E. (2015). *A soft skills training program for youth and young adults to increase their future employment opportunities: A grant proposal*, Long Beach, CA: California State University.


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Appendix A

Your Winning Edge: Resume and Interview Preparation

DIVISION OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Your Winning Edge
Resume and Interview Preparation
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You and the Job Market

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3 Your Ideal Job  
5 Your Work Values  
4 Skills Identification  
6 Career Goals

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Selling Yourself on Paper: Resumes, Cover Letters, and Applications

7 What is a Resume?  
8 The Employer's Bottom Line  
9 Action Words for Resumes  
10 Sample Resumes for All Occasions  
19 Cover Letters  
21 Filling Out Application Forms

## Chapter Three
Networking

22 Why Network?  
22 Other Sources of Job Information  
24 Record of Job Leads

## Chapter Four
Putting Your Best Foot Forward: The Successful Interview

28 Know Your Legal Rights  
26 Interview Tips  
26 25 Commonly Asked Questions  
28 After Interview Checklist  
29 Sample Follow-up Letter
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2. Who Am I? ........................................................................ 5 - 7  
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## Agenda - Enthusiasm

4. Showing Enthusiasm ....................................................... 13 - 18  
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## Agenda - Articulate

7. Speaking Well ..................................................................... 25 - 27  
8. Listening ............................................................................. 28 - 30  
9. Presenting Myself ............................................................. 31 - 34

## Agenda - Dependable

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## Agenda - Initiative

13. Taking Initiative .............................................................. 45 - 47  
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15. Working Towards Goals .................................................. 52 - 55

## Activity Sheets

A. Self-Esteem Quotes  
B. Strengths Inventory  
C. My Personal Style  
D. Self-Care Assessment  
E. Values: Inspiration Game  
F. Stepping Stone Goals  
G. Presentation Skills  
H. I - Message Scenarios  
I. Scenarios-Workplace Behavior  
J. Classifieds

*Note: Those lessons in 'Bold' have been designated as Core lessons*
Appendix B

READI Guide

Help Get Our Youth Workforce READI!

1) Register to become a READI Trainer or;
2) Book a trainer to deliver the curriculum to youth within your organization

The Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board is recruiting trainers to teach the READI Curriculum for job readiness preparation for youth entering the workplace. (See back of flyer for definition.)

Applications are being accepted on an ongoing basis. Submit online at goo.gl/TZy3dq or contact Allison Jones at 914-813-6153 | awl3@westchestergov.com
WHAT IS READI?

READI INSTITUTE BACKGROUND

In November 2011, the Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board appointed an ad hoc committee to examine the attributes that businesses look for when they hire youth and to develop a strategy for how to help youth prepare for the workforce experience. The committee was comprised of representatives from local colleges, universities, businesses, business membership organizations, youth services organizations, and religious organizations.

The committee’s recommendations became READI—an acronym that represents Respect, Enthusiasm, Articulate, Dependable and Initiative as well as a curriculum to teach these attributes to youth. The curriculum was developed and successfully delivered to a few pilot organizations serving youth in Westchester and Putnam counties to help youth prepare for the workforce. The Board is now preparing to implement the next phase; training for and distribution of the curriculum on a wider scale.

For maximum impact and efficiency, the Board created the READI Training Institute—a vehicle to be used to Train the Trainers. Volunteers from the counties are being recruited and trained in the instruction of the READI curriculum. These trainers will convene periodic, 2 to 3 day ‘train the trainer’ sessions for individuals and organizations interested in adopting the READI framework to be used to prepare their youth to enter the workforce.

WHAT DOES READI STAND FOR?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTRIBUTE</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RESPECT</td>
<td>Building Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENTHUSIASM</td>
<td>Let’s Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTICULATE</td>
<td>Presenting My Best Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPENDABLE</td>
<td>Count on Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INITIATIVE</td>
<td>Going For It</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Giving & Earning Respect
2. Personal Well-Being
3. Self Awareness
4. Developing Enthusiasm
5. What’s Important
6. Setting Goals
7. Speaking Well
8. Listening
9. Confident Communicating
10. Positive Work Ethic
11. Solving Problems
12. Managing Emotions
13. Taking Initiative
14. Overcoming Challenges
15. Working Towards Goals

Help get our Youth Workforce READI. Apply to become a READI trainer today!
Appendix C

READI’s Training Modules

READI... AIM... HIGHER

Workplace Attributes Initiative

Building a strong youth pipeline for Westchester/Putnam employers

LEADER’S GUIDE

January 2016
Appendix D
Resume Scoring Rubric

Resume Grading Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name:</th>
<th>Peer Evaluator:</th>
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<th>Skill</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
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<th>Average</th>
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<td>Typed or computer generated</td>
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<td>Balanced margins with eye appeal</td>
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<td>Format highlights strengths and information</td>
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<td>Appropriate fonts and point size used with variety</td>
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<td>JOB-SPECIFIC/VOLUNTEER INFORMATION</td>
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<td>All action phrases used to describe duties and skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information demonstrates ability to perform the job</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional terminology used when describing skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>RESUME CONTENT</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heading, objective, skills, experience, and education covered in detail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra information given to enhance resume</td>
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<td>SPELLING &amp; GRAMMAR</td>
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<td>No spelling errors</td>
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<tr>
<td>No grammar errors</td>
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<th>6</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
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</table>
Appendix E

Work Personality Profile – Professional Form

Section 1. Identifying Information

Name ________________________________ Female ☐ Male ☐
Date Completed ________________________ Examiner’s Name ________________________

Section 2. Performance Scale

Instructions: Please describe the client’s observed work performance by using the five options listed below to complete the 58 behavioral items.

1. Sufficiently alert and aware
2. Learns new assignments quickly
3. Works steadily during entire work period
4. Accepts changes in work assignments
5. Needs virtually no direct supervision
6. Requests help in an appropriate fashion
7. Approaches supervisory personnel with confidence
8. Is appropriately friendly with supervisor
9. Shows pride in group effort
10. Shows interest in what others are doing
11. Expresses likes and dislikes appropriately
12. Initiates work-related activities on time
13. Accepts work assignments and instructions from supervisor without arguing
14. Improves performance when shown how
15. Works at routine jobs without resistance
16. Expresses willingness to try new assignments
17. Carries out assigned tasks without prompting
18. Asks for further instructions if task is not clear
19. Accepts correction without becoming upset
20. Discusses personal problems with supervisor only if work related

4 3 2 1 x
4 3 2 1 x
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PRO-ED, 1201 West 7th Street, Austin, TX 78703-6897, www.proedinc.com

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<td>21.</td>
<td>Accepts assignment to group tasks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Seeks out co-workers to be friends</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Responds when others initiate conversation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Conforms to rules and regulations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Maintains satisfactory personal hygiene habits</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Changes work methods when instructed to do so</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Pays attention to details while working</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Maintains productivity despite change in routine</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Recognizes own mistakes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Asks for help when having difficulty with tasks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Comfortable with supervisor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Gets along with staff</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Works comfortably in group tasks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Appears comfortable in social interactions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Initiates conversations with others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Displays good judgment in use of obscenities and vulgarity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Arrives appropriately dressed for work</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Maintains improved work procedures after correction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Maintains work pace even if distractions occur</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Performs satisfactorily in tasks that require variety and change</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Initiates action to correct own mistakes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Performance remains stable in supervisor's presence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Supportive of others in group tasks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Joins social groups when they are available</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Listens while other person speaks, avoids interrupting</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Expresses pleasure in accomplishment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Listens to instructions or corrections attentively</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Moves from job to job easily</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Needs less than average amount of supervision</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Offers assistance to co-workers when appropriate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Is sought out frequently by co-workers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Expresses positive feelings, e.g., praise, liking for others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Displays good judgment in playing practical jokes or &quot;horseing around&quot;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Transfers previously learned skills to new task</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Handles problems with only occasional help</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Assumes assigned role in group tasks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>Expresses negative feelings appropriately, e.g., anger, fear, sadness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>Controls temper</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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Appendix F

Work Personality Profile – Self-Report Form

Section 1. Identifying Information
Name ___________________________ Female ☐ Male ☐
Date Completed ____________________ Examiner’s Name __________________

Section 2. Performance Scale
Instructions: Please describe your typical work performance by circling one of the four options listed below for each of the 58 items.

1. Sufficiently alert and aware
2. Learn new assignments quickly
3. Work steadily during entire work period
4. Accept changes in work assignments
5. Need virtually no direct supervision
6. Request help in an appropriate fashion
7. Approach supervisory personnel with confidence
8. Appropriately friendly with supervisor
9. Show pride in group effort
10. Show interest in what others are doing
11. Express likes and dislikes appropriately
12. Initiate work-related activities on time
13. Accept work assignments and instructions from supervisor without arguing
14. Improve performance when shown how
15. Work at routine jobs without resistance
16. Express willingness to try new assignments
17. Carry out assigned tasks without prompting
18. Ask for further instructions if task is not clear
19. Accept correction without becoming upset
20. Discuss personal problems with supervisor only if work related
21. Accept assignment to group tasks
22. Seek out co-workers to be friends

1. Definitely strength: an employability asset
2. Adequate performance; not a particular strength
3. Inconsistently performance; potentially an employability problem
4. Problem area, will definitely limit my chance for employment

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Respond when others initiate conversation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Conform to rules and regulations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Maintain satisfactory personal hygiene habits</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Change work methods when instructed to do so</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Pay attention to details while working</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Maintain productivity despite change in routine</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>29.</td>
<td>Recognize own mistakes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Ask for help when having difficulty with tasks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Comfortable with supervisor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Get along with staff</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Work comfortably in group tasks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Appear comfortable in social interactions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Initiate conversations with others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Display good judgment in use of obscenities and vulgarities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>37.</td>
<td>Arrive appropriately dressed for work</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>Maintain improved work procedures after correction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>39.</td>
<td>Maintain work pace even if distractions occur</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>40.</td>
<td>Perform satisfactorily in tasks that require variety and change</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>41.</td>
<td>Initiate action to correct own mistakes</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>42.</td>
<td>Performance remains stable in supervisor’s presence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>43.</td>
<td>Supportive of others in group tasks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>44.</td>
<td>Join social groups when they are available</td>
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<td>45.</td>
<td>Listen while other person speaks, avoid interrupting</td>
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<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Express pleasure in accomplishment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Listen to instructions or corrections attentively</td>
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<td>48.</td>
<td>Move from job to job easily</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>49.</td>
<td>Need less than average amount of supervision</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Offer assistance to co-workers when appropriate</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Sought out frequently by co-workers</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Express positive feelings, e.g., praise, liking for others</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Display good judgment in playing practical jokes or “horsing around”</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>54.</td>
<td>Transfer previously learned skills to new task</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>55.</td>
<td>Handle problems with only occasional help</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>56.</td>
<td>Assume assigned role in group tasks</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>57.</td>
<td>Express negative feelings appropriately, e.g., anger, fear, sadness</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>Control temper</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
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