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Employment Outcomes for Participants in the Workforce Investment Act Youth Program

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Abstract

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by

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MA, University of Westminster, 2001

BS, Texas State University, 1999

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Human Services

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Abstract

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 created programs to promote gainful employment across the United States. Extant studies on WIA's effectiveness have not examined youth workers, however, and youths are excluded from federal and Texas employment measures. This study was designed to address a research gap regarding postprogram employment outcomes for WIA youths and the types of services received: remedial or remedial plus job training. The study was guided by the theory of experiential learning and examined prior work experience as a variable, using a quasi-experimental design and secondary data. Data were obtained from the Texas Workforce Commission's database and the Unemployment Insurance wage database for a 4-year period after program completion, covering all youths in Texas who completed the WIA program between July 2007 and June 2009 who could be matched on relevant demographics across service groups. No significant difference was found in the mean number of postprogram employment quarters with respect to services received; however, youths with work experience prior to program exit had significantly more quarters of employment afterwards compared to those with no experience. The study findings do not support a return on investment from job training in terms of future employment; however, post hoc nonparametric analyses suggest such services might be helpful to youths without prior work experience. Reexamination of the job training services have resulted in positive social change by identifying more effective use of funds to promote employment among youths, especially those without work experience. Also, this study suggests efforts to help youths obtain early employment experiences and to help them remain employed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 is a federal law that consolidated dozens of public employment and training (E&T) programs in the U.S. These programs were intended to help people find jobs and lessen dependence on welfare (WIA, 1998). The WIA is both a law and in itself, an E&T program. The WIA program includes workforce services for adults, dislocated workers (people who have been laid-off from work), and a youth component for people between 14 and 21 years of age at program entry who are economically disadvantaged (Legislative Budget Board, 2011). These youths have the options to enroll in WIA academic and employment services. The WIA program is operational in all 50 states but this study will be used to examine data from Texas.

This study was inspired in part due to a lack of available information regarding the postprogram employment outcomes of WIA youth participants. Labor officials from the U.S. federal government and the State of Texas do not track youth employment information to the same degree of detail as is done with the adult and dislocated worker WIA program populations (Decker & Berk, 2011; DeRocco, 2006). The literature search for this study identified only a limited number of studies conducted on the WIA youth demographic, suggesting a research gap and lack of critical scrutiny. This study was designed specifically to address this research gap by identifying which types of WIA services are most effective at helping youths find and retain employment. The resulting research is intended to enable WIA-related program case managers to better serve those

clients and help meet the program goals of achieving self-sufficiency, as suggested by Decker and Berk (2011).

Background

The WIA was signed into law two years after the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 became law and these two acts brought about major changes to welfare programs in the U.S. (Bitler & Hoynes, 2010; PRWORA, 1996). Under the PRWORA, welfare recipients faced new time limits for receipt of benefits, sanctions for noncompliance, reduced cash benefits, and had to meet work requirements (Bitler & Hoynes, 2010). The WIA was then used as an umbrella type law to bring dozens of public E&T programs together under a more uniformed administration system to carry out the reforms of the PRWORA.

One-Stop career centers, established under the WIA, are locations where case managers administer workforce services from multiple E&T programs (Targett, Young, Revell, Williams, & Wehman, 2007). The purpose of the One-Stop system is to provide a variety of program services in one location and to make program administration more efficient (Targett et al., 2007). The WIA, combined with the use of the Earned Income Tax Credit and a robust economy during the latter half of the 1990s, contributed to a significant reduction of people on welfare by the end of the 20th century (Bitler & Hoynes, 2010). Employment for program participants also significantly increased (Bitler & Hoynes, 2010).

The WIA is one of the largest federal E&T programs in the U.S., but has not been analyzed in-depth in current literature (Decker & Berk, 2011). Decker and Berk (2011)

described an experimental study-in-progress that was designed to evaluate the WIA program; however, this study was not expected to be complete until late 2015 and notably does not include the youth population in its scope. Multiple studies (Decker & Berk, 2011; Hopkins, Monaghan, & Hansman, 2009; Moore & Gorman, 2009) have been conducted in order to determine the postprogram performance of the adult and dislocated worker population groups that WIA serves, but WIA's youth demographic has not been examined in detail (Decker & Berk, 2011). Youths are receiving services that cost tens of millions of dollars per year without then knowing the effectiveness of those services (Legislative Budget Board, 2013).

WIA is only one of many public E&T programs that serve youths. WIA youth program participants are economically disadvantaged and between the ages of 14 and 21 at program entry (Legislative Budget Board, 2011). The goal of the youth portion of the WIA program is to aid young people in reaching educational or occupational goals through a set of services that can include remedial education and job training courses (Legislative Budget Board, 2011). Several important studies on other youth education and employment programs have taken place since the passage of the PRWORA and WIA. These studies were performed to determine how effective programs such as Job Corps, National Guard Youth ChalleNGe, Partnerships for Youth, and Youth Build were at helping participants receive education credentials and enter employment (Dworsky, 2011; Mekinda, 2012; Muthumbi, 2008; Shandra & Hogan, 2008). The above mentioned programs offer similar services as the WIA youth program and in general, youths participating in these programs had positive outcomes, including finishing school and

then finding a job (Campbell, Lamming, Lemp, Brosnahan, Paterson, & Pusey, 2008; Doren, Yan, & Tu, 2013; Ogletree & Hancock, 2010).

Federal and state labor agencies use performance measures developed by Department of Labor (DOL) officials to determine how many people receive E&T program services. This information is also used to track how many program participants find and retain employment after exiting from the programs (DeRocco, 2006). The performance measures currently being used by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the DOL have been in place since 2006 (DeRocco, 2006). These measures are used to capture only short-term employment outcomes (DeRocco, 2006). The employment retention and average earnings measures are used to determine employment outcomes and wages over a period of nine months after program exit (DeRocco, 2006). The only measure used at the TWC to determine youth employment outcomes is whether or not someone was placed in employment or an educational program in the first quarter after exiting from the program (DeRocco, 2006). Youth groups are not included in any other DOL or TWC employment performance measures (DeRocco, 2006). However, once a year, the number of employed WIA youths is calculated using the state's employment metric (i.e., wages greater than zero in the exit quarter or the first quarter after program exit). That data is reported to the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC) (Legislative Budget Board, 2011).

It is important to examine the WIA youth program outcomes because studies of similar programs have noted significantly divergent results. For example, an experimental nationwide study of the Job Corps program showed that the employment outcomes of

participants differed significantly based on when the measurements were taken (Heinrich, 2008). Program participants had significantly higher earnings up to two years after leaving the program as compared to a control group whose members did not receive services (Heinrich, 2008). However, after four years, the earnings for both the treatment and control groups became similar as program benefits eroded (Heinrich, 2008). There is little knowledge about the employment outcomes for WIA youths after program completion and what types of services may lead to youths finding and retaining employment. I will begin to fill that knowledge gap with this study.

Statement of the Problem

This study will address the problem of high youth unemployment. The most current unemployment data for Texas including an age breakout is for 2014 and shows a 12.8% unemployment rate for youths age 16-24 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b). Adults 25 and older had a combined unemployment rate of 3.84% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b). WIA program is one of the more populous public E&T programs, and it has not been properly studied since its inception (Decker & Berk, 2011; Muthumbi, 2008). The youth population has been particularly overlooked and not much information is available regarding youth program success with regards to employment outcomes (Decker & Berk, 2011). The goals of many modern E&T programs, including WIA, are to help participants learn job skills and become self-sufficient (Decker & Berk, 2011; WIA, 1998). There are no processes in place at the federal level or at the state level for Texas to routinely track employment outcomes of WIA youths with the exception of the combined education and employment measure (DeRocco, 2006) and the annual report to

TWIC (Legislative Budget Board, 2011). If the workforce services youths receive are not helping them to meet the employment and self-sufficiency goals of the WIA program, they may need to either enroll in a different set of services or in a different program altogether.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quasi-experimental quantitative study was to learn the employment outcomes of WIA youths. These outcomes, at the time of the study, were not being calculated and tracked by TWC or DOL officials. Youths in these programs can enroll in secondary education after completing WIA youth services or transition to the WIA adults program. At the time of the study, however, there was no method in place for tracking employment outcomes for youths who do not choose those options and instead enter the workforce directly. This study was used to determine if there was a difference in long-term employment outcomes based on the level of service WIA youth participants received.

There are three different service levels in the WIA program: core, intensive (hereafter referred to as remedial), and training (WIA, 1998). Core services are the most basic services offered through the program and include activities such as using One-Stop center computers to search job databases or receiving help in developing a résumé (Decker & Berk, 2011). Remedial services include activities such as learning basic educational skills, developing an employability plan, or receiving a GED. Training services include examples such as being enrolled in an occupational or vocational

training course. Remedial and training services require direct assistance from program case managers working at the One-Stop centers (Decker & Berk, 2011).

This study was designed to evaluate employment outcomes for WIA youths over a 4-year period. It specifically did so for youths who had completed the program and who received remedial services or a combination of remedial and training services. I chose those two types of services as they require direct involvement from case managers and are more expensive to provide than the basic core services. If for example the more expensive training services are not effective at helping youths find employment, then that money could be redirected elsewhere where it will do the most good. Service-level and prior work experience were the independent variables (IV) for the research questions. The dependent variable (DV) was the number of postprogram employment quarters. This study was not a full evaluation of the WIA youth program, but was instead conducted to determine long-term employment outcomes based on the receipt of different types of services and whether prior work experience was present or not.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Is there a significant interaction between the level of service received (remedial vs. remedial and training) and prior work experience (yes/no) on the number of postprogram employment quarters for WIA youth participants?

$H1_0$: There is not a significant interaction between the service level and prior work experience on the number of postprogram employment quarters.

$H1_1$: There is a significant interaction between the service level and prior work experience on the number of postprogram employment quarters.

RQ2: In the absence of a significant interaction, is there a significant main effect of service level on the number of postprogram employment quarters?

$H2_0$: In the absence of a significant interaction, there is not a significant difference between service level and the number of postprogram employment quarters.

$H2_1$: In the absence of a significant interaction, there is a significant difference between service level and the number of postprogram employment quarters with remedial and training participants having more quarters of postprogram employment.

RQ3: If a significant interaction is present, are there significant simple effects for level of service received and prior work experience for WIA youth participants with respect to the number of postprogram employment quarters?

$H3_0$: With a significant interaction present, there are no significant simple effects for service level and prior work experience with respect to the number of postprogram employment quarters.

$H3_1$: With a significant interaction present, there are significant simple effects for service level and prior work experience with respect to the number of postprogram employment quarters.

Theoretical Foundation

Young adults are more likely to lack job skills and academic experience and often have a more difficult time finding employment than older workers (Perry & Wallace, 2012). The WIA youth program offers adolescents the ability to receive academic credentials and to also learn job skills in various industries (Decker & Berk, 2011). The WIA services offered to youths correspond with the theory of experiential learning

(Chisholm, Harris, Northwood, & Johrendt, 2009; Yardley, Teunissen, & Dornan, 2012). The theory was popularized near the end of the Great Depression and has been expanded upon and updated by researchers over the following decades (Chisholm et al., 2012). Experiential learning primarily involves people having hands-on experiences to learn as opposed to simply receiving lectures in classrooms (Yardley et al., 2012). WIA services such as on-the-job training and internships offer youths learning experiences outside the traditional classroom settings.

Young adults will especially benefit from programs offering workforce services using experiential learning techniques as they receive traditional instruction along with practical experience (Symonds, 2012). Career and technical education (CTE) courses use experiential learning models and, over the past 30 years, have become a mainstream part of many high schools and community colleges across the U.S. (Campbell, Trzesniewski, Nathaniel, Enfield, & Erbstein, 2013; Levesque et al., 2008; Ogletree & Hancock, 2010). CTE courses and the types of workforce services programs such as the WIA offer, have been shown to have positive outcomes including a reduction in poverty due to participants finding employment (Hirschy, Bremer, & Castellano, 2011). Youths who have completed job training programs still struggle to find a job if they do not have any prior work experience (Aisami, 2010; Cheng, 2010). The combination of having at least some prior employment along with having completed E&T program services can in tandem aid WIA youths in finding a job after program exit.

Nature of the Study

The TWC collects data consisting of hundreds of variables for participants in E&T programs including WIA youths. I used TWC's data to perform a quantitative study as that type of analysis fit best with the available data. Researchers use experimental designs to determine if a treatment had an effect on an outcome such as I did with this study to determine which types of WIA services affected postprogram employment rates (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). I used secondary data and the program participants were not randomly assigned to different treatment groups so I could not perform a true experimental study but instead used a quasi-experimental design (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002).

This study tracked two IVs and one DV. The first IV for this study included the type of services received which were either remedial services, or a combination of remedial and job training services. I excluded participants who received any other type of WIA service or services from any other TWC programs as I wanted to determine the effect of only the specified WIA services on employment outcomes. The second IV of prior work experience showed participants who had at least two quarters of employment any time during a two-year period prior to program completion. The DV was the number of postprogram employment quarters each participant had during the 4-year period following WIA program completion. I decided to test for an interaction between the IVs and the DV, as according to research found during the literature review, work experience may have a positive effect on finding employment.

I used data collected by TWC program case managers and housed in a TWC operated database to determine the participants for the study and to gather service and demographic information. I then collected employment information from a separate database, the Unemployment Insurance (UI) database, to identify participants who entered employment. I planned to use a 2x2 Factorial ANOVA to analyze the data for the research questions.

Definitions

I have included the operational definitions of variables and term definitions in the sections below.

Variables

I obtained the study's data from two sources. The first source was the TWC's database that included information on services received for WIA program participants. The UI database was the second source, and that database included employment information and earned wages.

Dependent variable. The DV was the number of postprogram employment quarters worked by WIA youths. I calculated the number of employment quarters by using UI data. People with wages greater than zero dollars in a quarter counted as being employed.

Independent variables. The IVs were service level and prior work experience. There were two service levels in the study: remedial or remedial and training. The service level variable included WIA youth program participants who received remedial services or a combination of remedial and training services. Remedial services require assistance

from program case managers and can include basic educational skills, guidance counseling, job readiness/employment skills, learning English as a second language, mentoring, completing high school or receiving a GED, developing an employability plan, tutoring/study skills instruction, or leadership development. Training services also involve direct assistance from program case managers to help the participants decide which courses to take and to get enrolled in an institution offering occupational or vocation training that will result in a certificate or credential. Other job training services include receiving work experience through internships and a summer employment WIA program component. I counted participants as having prior work experience if wages greater than zero were found in at least two quarters during the 2-year period prior to program exit. I chose that time frame so a participant who was 18 at program completion would have had the opportunity to have work experience from the age of 16 to 18.

Terms

Employment and training (E&T) program: A general term referring to public programs that include employment and job training services.

Exiters: A term referring to E&T program participants who have gone 90 days without receiving program services administered by the TWC.

One-Stop centers: Workforce offices in the U.S. that were created by the WIA of 1998. One-Stop centers are designed to function as places where people can receive workforce services through a variety of public E&T programs.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA): A federal program established in 1998 to deliver workforce services to adults, dislocated workers (people who have received a

layoff notice), and economically disadvantaged youths between 14 and 21 years of age at program entry (Department of Labor, 2000; WIA, 1998)

Unemployment insurance (UI) database: A database that tracks quarterly submissions by employers of the amount of taxable wages paid to each of their employees. State and federal workforce officials use UI data to track employment information for official performance measures.

Assumptions

I assumed that case managers at the One-Stop centers correctly collected and entered the WIA youth participant's data into the TWC's database. The interface WIA program case managers use to enter data into the TWC database has many edits in place to guard against incorrect data elements being entered into the system. These edits preclude the data entry of extraneous values for characteristics such as gender, race, exclusion reason codes, and not putting a person in the WIA youth program if they are not the correct age.

Scope and Delimitations

I used data from the UI database, which included wage data for the majority of the Texas labor force, to determine which participants had a job after program exit (Texas Workforce Commission, 2011a). I also used WIA data from the TWC database but I was not able to determine if study participants received any additional services from programs offered through another agency or if participants enrolled in an educational institution during the 4-year postprogram study period.

The TWC's performance reporting process does not include tracking long-term employment outcomes, and WIA youths are excluded from the existing employment outcome measures. I designed the research questions for this study with the lack of youth employment information in mind. Youth participants are eligible to receive academic and workforce services under the WIA program, and I examined the difference in employment outcomes based on which workforce services were received (WIA, 1998). The study included WIA youth participants who completed the program's services between July 2007 and June 2009 and were at least 18 years old at exit. The participants were matched together for the analysis groups on multiple demographic variables to make the groups as comparable as possible using available data. This study was conducted to gain insight as to the effectiveness of the WIA's services in aiding youth participants with finding and retaining employment. The results of this study cannot be generalized to the WIA youth population of other states.

Limitations

I minimized some of the threats to internal validity by matching participants in the different analysis groups of the research questions on multiple demographic variables to make the groups comparable. I also minimized the external validity threat of attrition by excluding participants who had certain characteristics that precluded them from finding a job such as being incarcerated or deceased. I limited how many employment quarters a participant could have during the 4-year postprogram period to 16 so there would not be any outliers that might skew the results of the research questions (Shadish et al., 2002).

Significance of the Study

WIA youths are excluded from all employment-based performance measures with the exception of the placed in employment or education measure that is used to look at outcomes in the first quarter after program exit (DeRocco, 2006). That measure combines the job and education outcomes so we cannot determine how many youths specifically entered employment. Through this study, I have begun to fill a knowledge gap regarding WIA youth employment outcomes in Texas based on program services received.

The WIA youth program in Texas was allocated $56 million for the July 2012 – June 2013 program year, and that number dropped to $53 million for the last completed program year (July 2013 – June 2014) (Texas Workforce Commission, 2013). Program administrators must make the best use of the money available, and that means offering services that will give the youth program participants the ability to succeed. Finding employment is one potential successful outcome and offering services that may not be beneficial to that end would be a gross waste of shrinking resources.

TWC officials will now have more information on WIA youth performance than what is currently reported due to this study. Information is also now available regarding which services (remedial/occupational and vocational training) are useful in helping participants find and keep employment. Case managers at the local levels will be able to make more informed decisions about which service, or combination of services, may be most useful for the WIA youth participants in becoming employed.

Summary

The PRWORA brought about many changes to public welfare programs. The most significant change included a shift from cash-based benefit programs to E&T programs offering workforce services with the goal of helping people find a job and leave public assistance (Bitler & Hoynes, 2010). The results were mixed as participants of some E&T programs have had success in reducing the level of public assistance needed thus becoming somewhat self-sufficient (Aisami, 2010; Decker & Berk, 2011; Targett et al., 2007). The WIA program has been in effect for over 15 years and to date there have been very few studies performed to determine the program's success; the youth population in particular has been practically ignored (Decker & Berk, 2011; WIA, 1998).

Remedial and job training services are offered as part of the WIA program in order to aid participants in learning a variety of skills necessary to find employment (Targett, Young, Revell, Williams, & Wehman, 2007; WIA, 1998). Through this study I aimed to determine the employment outcomes over a 4-year period after WIA program exit for youths who participated in either remedial or a combination of remedial and training services. Employment outcomes are not officially tracked for youth participants, and this study was used to learn what effect remedial and training services had on youths entering the workforce after program completion and what role, if any, prior work experience also played. In Chapter 2, I will detail the results of previous studies performed to evaluate the outcomes of various E&T programs. I will also explain the methodological details of this quasi-experimental study in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth participants who are economically disadvantaged and between the ages of 14 and 21 at program entry can enroll in both academic and job training services as part of the program (WIA, 1998).There is not much information available however about the employment outcomes of WIA youths and the data that is available only examines one quarter of data past program completion and does not show detailed information such as which services participants received. The purpose of this study is to determine employment rates over a period of four years after program exit for WIA youth participants who received remedial and job training services.

Throughout this chapter I have detailed multiple studies that have been performed on various youth E&T programs and whether the programs have successfully helped youths find employment. I will also explain how youths can best learn job skills and then transitions into employment after program exit using the theory of experiential learning.

Literature Search Strategy

I used the following keywords to search through existing research: *active labor market policies*, *career development programs*, *customized employment*, *employment and training program*, *employment assistance*, *employment outcomes*, *evidence-based policy*, *experiential learning theory*, *industrial welfare*, *job training*, *Job Training Partnership Act*, *low-income youth*, *occupational/vocational training*, *one-stop system*, *outcome measures*, *performance analysis*, *performance management*, *performance measurement*, *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act*, *positive youth*

development, *program evaluation*, *public employment services*, *quasi-experimental*, *school-to-work transition*, *school-to-career transition*, *self-sufficiency*, *unemployment, vocational rehabilitation*, *welfare history*, *welfare reform*, *welfare-to-work*, *work-based education*, *Workforce Investment Act*, *Workforce Investment Act reauthorization*, *workforce development*, *working poor*, and *youth employment*. I searched the following databases for relevant literature: Academic OneFile, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, CINAHL Plus with Full Text, Computers & Applied Sciences Complete, Education Research Complete, MEDLINE with Full Text, Political Science Complete, and SocINDEX with Full Text. I used studies from peer-reviewed journals and information from government agency websites.

History of Public Assistance in the U.S.

Privately and publicly funded assistance programs have been a part of Western culture for centuries and are commonly referred to as welfare (Paz-Fuchs, 2008; Pimpare, 2008). Public relief groups in the U. S. have historically been administered by local authorities, a practice that predates the American Revolution and continues in the present day (Katz, 2010). In the early decades of the twentieth century, however, the U.S. federal government began to play a larger part in providing assistance and welfare benefits (Pimpare, 2008). The Social Security Act of 1935 is a federal program that was set up to be administered by the states and has been used to provide cash benefits to older Americans (Katz, 2010; Social Security Act, 1935). Social Security was one of the first relief programs that were not strictly means-tested, as benefits were not given to people because they were needy, but because the recipients were in a specific age group (Katz,

2010). Entitlement programs that were used to give certain groups cash assistance including the elderly, widows, and people with disabilities grew during the Depression years and through the 1960s (Katz, 2010). However, throughout U.S. history, pure entitlement programs have waxed and waned in popularity as self-sufficiency is a quintessential American value (Katz, 2010; Srinivas, 2010).

The public approval of entitlement programs in the U.S. began to decline mid-century (Katz, 2010). As a result, the first modern public E&T program was enacted in 1962 with the Manpower Development Training Act (MDTA) (Decker & Berk, 2011; MDTA, 1962). The MDTA was later replaced in 1973 with the passage of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) (CETA, 1973; Decker & Berk, 2011). The decline in the U.S. economy in the late 1970s and early 1980s spurred further welfare changes that lasted through the 1990s (Paz-Fuchs, 2008). Programs such as the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), which replaced CETA in 1982, were put in place by the federal government and then state officials were given the authority to make many administrative decisions including adjusting the amount of monetary benefits that were distributed to recipients (Edelman, 2009; Paz-Fuchs, 2008). MDTA, CETA, and JTPA all included job training services as well as distributing cash-benefits (Decker & Berk, 2011)

In the mid-1990s, the purpose of many public programs in the U.S. was changed to reflect new goals of helping participants learn job skills and to become self-sufficient (Decker & Berk, 2011). The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) became law in the U.S. in 1996 and made many changes to existing public welfare programs (PRWORA, 1996). Work requirements, participating

in workforce services, time limits for collecting benefits, and sanctions for not meeting program requirements were included as reforms in the new legislation (Dave, Reichman, Corman, & Das, 2011; Katz, 2010). Under the PRWORA, welfare program participants began to transition from earlier types of cash-based welfare to new programs that included work-related services such as occupational and vocational training for able-bodied adults (Dave et al., 2011). State legislators had more flexibility under the PRWORA than with any previous pieces of welfare legislation and were able to tailor E&T programs to meet the specific needs of their residents (Edelman, 2009). Two years after the enactment of the PRWORA, the WIA was signed into law replacing the JTPA and consolidating over 60 existing E&T programs (Decker & Berk, 2011; Targett, Young, Revell, Williams, & Wehman, 2007; WIA, 1998).

The WIA made it easier for people to get the help and public services they needed by consolidating multiple program administration in One-Stop career centers (Targett et al., 2007). Also as a change from the JTPA, youths were eligible for a greater number of academic and employment services (Decker & Berk, 2011). Youth participants in the WIA program count in only one of the performance measures used by TWC officials to determine employment outcomes and that measure also includes academic outcomes (DeRocco, 2006). Due to this omission, the effectiveness of the services received by WIA youths with regards to postprogram employment cannot be determined. Short- and long-term employment outcomes can differ significantly for E&T program participants (Heinrich, 2008) and currently only short-term measures are used at the TWC to track employment outcomes of adult populations participating in the WIA program (DeRocco,

2006). In the quasi-experimental study I conducted, I examined the impact of two different types of WIA services, remedial and job training, on employment outcomes for WIA youth program participants. I also examined if having prior work experience or not had an effect on youths finding employment after WIA program completion.

Theoretical Foundation

The Bureau of Labor Statistics releases a comprehensive report about youth employment each August and data from the 2013 report showed that the number of unemployed youths (age 16-24) dropped across the U.S. year to year between July 2012 and July 2013 to a rate of 16.3% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). The July 2014 youth unemployment rate was 14.3% for a decrease of two full percentage points (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). These rates are consistently higher than the adult unemployment rate (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a). The labor force participation rate for youths reached a peak of 77.5% in July 1989 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). In contrast, the July 2014 youth labor force participation rate was 60.5%, the same as the prior two years (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). In Texas the youth unemployment (ages 16-24) rate for 2014 was 12.8%, a bit lower than the national rate but still high (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b). Youths can face an uphill battle in finding employment in today's job market and without proper academic credentials or any marketable job skills, finding a job becomes even more difficult (Perry & Wallace, 2012). The one million youths who failed to receive a high school diploma in 2010 are estimated to lose over $300 billion dollars in wages and other job benefits throughout their lives (Perry & Wallace, 2012). Providing youths the opportunity to receive academic credentials and employment

training has had positive results in many varied programs over the past 40 years and may continue to be a useful resource (Perry & Wallace, 2012).

The theory of experiential learning was developed in the early 20th century and continues to be studied and updated (Chisholm, Harris, Northwood, & Johrendt, 2009; Yardley et al., 2012). The basic principle of the theory is that people are able to learn best in environments where students get real-life or hands-on experience of the subject they are studying (Yardley et al., 2012). Work-based learning programs are currently popular across much of Western Europe and are also spreading across Canada and Australia (Chisholm et al., 2009). These international work-based learning modes of study are similar to programs in the U.S. such as the WIA program and the Pathways to Prosperity model (Symonds, 2012). Students in the WIA occupational and vocational training services are given practical hands-on experience to learn their particular field of study.

For most high school students, the standard academic course option offered by guidance counselors has been to move on to four-year universities, but this one size fits all approach is leaving many students behind (Symonds, 2012). Young people between the ages of 16 and 24 are at a critical time in their lives as they begin to gain work experience and learn job skills (Symonds, 2012). The Pathways to Prosperity learning model includes offering a variety of choices such as vocational education rather than a traditional university path to high school students (Symonds, 2012). Subjects such as history, science, and math are standard for high schools students but, over the last few decades, career and technical education (CTE) classes have also become a part of high-school level curriculum across the U.S. (Bersudskaya & Chen, 2011). CTE courses

involve hands-on learning where students have the opportunity to learn and then actually perform the job they studied (Campbell, Trzesniewski, Nathaniel, Enfield, & Erbstein, 2013; Ogletree & Hancock, 2010). Ninety percent of American students who graduated from public high schools in 2005 had been enrolled in at least one CTE course (Levesque, Laird, Hensley, Choy, Cataldi, & Hudson, 2008). Out of that group, around 20% received three or more CTE credits compared with two or fewer credits received from subjects such as fine arts or foreign languages (Levesque et al., 2008). The increase in the number of CTE credits, as opposed to traditional academic areas, has also occurred in postsecondary schools (Levesque et al., 2008).

Students who attended CTE courses at secondary schools in Texas, including community colleges, within the first year after leaving high school entered employment or moved into higher education at an average rate of 71% between the years of 2008 and 2012 (Legislative Budget Board, 2013). One year after CTE students either received an advanced technical certificate or an associate's degree, the entered employment or advanced to higher education rate reached an average of 86% during the same 5-year period (Legislative Budget Board, 2013). Occupational and vocational training, including CTE courses, have been shown to both reduce poverty by improving employment prospects and leading to higher earnings (Hirschy, Bremer, & Castellano, 2011). Additionally CTE courses can be particularly helpful for students who are planning on entering the labor force after high school graduation, as opposed to going directly into postsecondary education. Students across the U.S. who graduated from public high schools in 1992 and earned four or more CTE credits, were three and a half times more

likely to go directly into the workforce, as compared to students who did not take any CTE classes (Levesque et al., 2008). The majority (85%) of those same students with the CTE credits were employed full time as of the year 2000, but only 76% of the students with no CTE classes had full-time employment (Levesque et al., 2008). Youths with CTE credits or other job training program credentials may still have a problem finding employment without a history of work experience (Aisami, 2010; Cheng, 2010). Even a minimal amount of work history may assist WIA youths in finding a job after program exit.

Literature Review

Public Youth E&T Legislation

Many public E&T programs include youths who are eligible to receive both educational and employment services. The federal Job Corps program was established in 1964 as part of the Economic Opportunity Act to provide employment training to low-income youths ranging in age from 16 to 24 (Economic Opportunity Act, 1964; Mekinda, 2012; Schochet & Burghardt, 2008). Job Corps is similar to a university system as students attend classes and often live on the program's campus (Bloom, 2010). Sixty-thousand new students enter the Job Corps program every year with operations spanning all 50 states (Dworsky, 2011). Youths who are most in danger of not graduating from high school are the majority of the program's participants, and they receive intensive educational instruction and employment training (Mekinda, 2012). The Job Corps program has remained in operation through many legislative changes. During the 1980s

the program was funded by the JTPA and from 1998 to the present has been covered by the WIA (Schochet & Burghardt, 2008).

The CETA became law in 1973 (CETA, 1973; Decker & Berk, 2011) and included a youth employment training component. Programs operated under CETA were quite unstable as the legislation was amended eight times within a 9-year period, and funding shortages were also a constant problem (Guttman, 1983). CETA was replaced by the JTPA in 1982 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001; JTPA, 1982). JTPA had a much longer lifespan and was in operation until 1998 providing both youths and adults who had barriers to employment with workforce and training services (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001; JTPA, 1982). A special summer employment and training program was instituted for youths under the JTPA along with the other E&T services available year round including job search assistance, occupational skills training, and subsidized on-the-job training (Plesca & Smith, 2007).

Other legislative efforts including the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) of 1994 (Muthumbi, 2008; STWOA, 1994) and the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) of 1999 (FCIA, 1999; Henig, 2009) were smaller in scope than the CETA or the JTPA but offered similar services. The STWOA enabled collaborations between school officials, parents, and local businesses to aid students in receiving job training and work experience (Muthumbi, 2008; STWOA, 1994). The Chafee Foster Care Independent Living Program was founded through the FCIA and was used to provide life skills, housing, a Medicaid extension, as well as education and E&T services for youths up until age 21 (Henig, 2009).

In 1998, two years after the sweeping welfare reform of the PRWORA, the WIA became law and replaced the JTPA (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001). The WIA program has a youth component and along with the Job Corps program is one of the longest running federal youth education and E&T programs (Targett et al., 2007). Disadvantaged youths between the ages of 14 and 21 can enroll in education or E&T services depending on their ages and goals and are able to receive more comprehensive services than under the earlier JTPA program (Decker and Berk, 2011).

WIA Program

In order for E&T program services to be more easily administered to recipients, a system of One-Stop Career Centers was established under the WIA (Targett et al., 2007). Case managers and other program support staff operate the One-Stops, funded by the Department of Labor (DOL), where program participants can apply for benefits and receive various workforce services from multiple E&T programs including the WIA program (Targett et al., 2007). The WIA program serves adults, dislocated workers, and economically disadvantaged youths (Targett et al., 2007). Youths between the ages of 14 and 21 who too often end up in low-wage employment or incarcerated (Campbell, Lamming, Lemp, Brosnahan, Paterson, & Pusey, 2008) may receive various types of WIA services at the One-Stops. Remedial services and occupational training services are available to WIA youth participants as well as mentoring programs and internships with local businesses (Targett et al., 2007). WIA program participants who receive training services are able to use funds set up in Individual Training Accounts (ITA) to pay for the courses (Hipp & Warner, 2008). Having an ITA for each person allows them to have

more flexibility when deciding which training institution, either public or private, they would like to attend. Participants receive funds in the form of vouchers to pay for the training classes (Hipp & Warner, 2008). One study by Moore and Gorman (2009) took the type of training services received into account when examining postprogram employment outcomes for WIA adults. They did not find a significant relationship between the type of training service received, either on-the-job training or occupational training courses, and postprogram employment as compared to participants who did not receive those same services (Moore & Gorman, 2009).

The WIA was reauthorized in July 2014 and renamed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and will be effective July 1, 2015 (Department of Labor, 2014a). The current WIA legislation is still in place however and with flexibility written into the law, state labor agency officials have continued to modify the WIA program to fit the needs of people in each state (Decker & Berk, 2011). The sequence of WIA program service delivery as specified in the law begins with case managers at the One-Stops administering core services then moving on to remedial services and then finally reaching occupational training services (Decker & Berk, 2011; WIA, 1998). In practice though, case managers have often found that providing either remedial or training services immediately have been more beneficial to some participants as opposed to following the service sequence and by law this service sequence deviation is allowed (Decker & Berk, 2011).

A lack of occupational skills and work experience have been found to be a factor leading to low-level wages and high unemployment in populations with similar demographic characteristics to the WIA youth group (Aisami, 2010; Cheng, 2010). E&T program participants who received short-term job training services but had no prior work experience, continued to struggle in finding employment (Aisami, 2010). The Youth Guidance program, whose counselors work in high schools providing WIA services, has had success in helping students find employment (Harris, 2014). This pilot program has been operating in Chicago schools and 69% of participants have either found employment or enrolled in a job training program, the military, or college (Harris, 2014). The counselors understand that some type of work experience is often necessary in order for the students to move up the career ladder and continue to find better jobs so they work with the students to determine each one's strengths and find a job that is a good fit (Harris, 2014).

Youth Program Population Demographics

Youth participants in programs such as the WIA program or Job Corps are typically economically disadvantaged, but other characteristics may also be present putting them at greater risk of not finishing school or being able to find and retain employment (Decker & Berk, 2011). At-risk youths are defined as having the following barriers to education and employment: being homeless, having a mental or physical disability, having a substance abuse problem, not having finished high school, having a criminal record, having young children, or being in the foster care system and not having

family support (Campbell et al., 2008; Matsuba, Elder, Petrucci, & Marleau, 2008; Henig, 2009).

Between 3.5 and 6 million youths aged sixteen to twenty-four do not have high school diplomas and thus face hardships in finding employment (Bloom, 2010). Unemployment rates for youths without a high school diploma can range as high as 50% (Bloom, 2010). The reasons vary as to why youths leave high school without graduating and those reasons often include feeling disengaged and bored by the curriculum, having to work more than 20 hours a week, having little family support, or having a child while still enrolled in school (Ogletree & Hancock, 2010; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009).

Youths who age out of foster care also often face significant employment difficulties as they usually lack a family support system to help in the transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency (Henig, 2009; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009). Former foster youths may face high unemployment rates of 25% to 50% on average, and many who have jobs receive poverty level wages (Henig, 2009). A study examining the unemployment rates of former foster youths at the age of nineteen from the states of Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin showed unemployment rates of 40% with wages generally under $10,000 per year putting those youths with a job firmly under the poverty line (Henig, 2009). Disabled youths also have high rates of unemployment with 40% out of work and on average also have lower wages than their nondisabled youth peers (Doren, Yan, & Tu, 2013). Youths, regardless of foster care status or other at-risk factors, are three times more likely to be without work as adults in a currently evolving labor market with fewer and fewer jobs for low-skilled young workers (DeLuca et al., 2010).

Positive Youth Development

Historically, programs for disadvantaged and at-risk youths were often developed to help the participants deal with existing problems such as high rates of unemployment or substance abuse (Campbell, Trzesniewski, Nathaniel, Enfield, & Erbstein, 2013; Park, 2009). The concept of positive youth development (PYD) is meant to be proactive instead of reactive and entails giving youths the life skills necessary to hopefully avert behaviors that may put them in the at-risk group (Campbell et al., 2013). PYD related services include mentoring, individual counseling, group therapy, and various types of employment activities all designed to build self-confidence, self-esteem, and overall good character (Campbell et al., 2008; Park, 2009). Good character may be defined as having certain strengths such as being empathetic, having self-control, being tolerant of others, and having a sense of personal responsibility (Park, 2009). Programs including PYD elements have been found to correlate significantly with success in school and an overall lessened likelihood of being an at-risk youth (Campbell et al., 2013). Flexibility within the WIA program allows program administrators to include PYD as a part of local initiatives (Campbell et al., 2008). Mentoring, counseling, community service, and leadership development are categorized as remedial services under the WIA youth program (Department of Labor, 2000).

Youth Program Services

There are many remedial and occupational or vocational training services available to WIA youths that are used to help participants gain credentials and work experience hopefully leading to employment (WIA, 1998). Remedial services include

mentoring, counseling, participating in subsidized employment, and enrolling in GED and other basic skills classes (Department of Labor, 2000)**.** Training services can include on-the-job training, apprenticeships, self-employment assistance, and other customized training courses (Department of Labor, 2000)**.** Many other youth E&T programs offer a combination of similar services.

Remedial services. A WIA funded program in California, Workforce One, made use of PYD principles and provided youths the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to their community by participating in public service works such as planting trees downtown, repairing and cleaning the public city pool, and building new dugouts and fences for the baseball park (Campbell et al., 2008). The youth's efforts were appreciated and recognized by city officials giving the young men and women involved a sense of pride in a job well done (Campbell et al., 2008). Over time, services were expanded to include lawn maintenance and minor home repairs and the initiative became a paying business (Campbell et al., 2008). Another successful program operated in Georgia's Carroll County public school system, 12 for Life, was developed using the principles of PYD and gave selected at-risk high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to stay engaged in school and learn valuable job skills (Ogletree & Hancock, 2010). The CEO of a local wire manufacturing company, Southwire, worked with school district officials to build a factory on school grounds thus allowing students to work and learn job skills in the same location where classes were taught (Ogletree & Hancock, 2010). Program participants had both work and school shifts and if a student did not attend their school shift, they were then not allowed to work that day either (Ogletree &

Hancock, 2010). Students could also earn bonuses along with regular pay if they had a perfect attendance record in each pay period (Ogletree & Hancock, 2010). A mentoring component was part of the program and students met with a mentor each week who provided them with support, encouragement, and extra tutoring if needed (Ogletree & Hancock, 2010). The young men and woman chosen for the program often cited in interviews with researchers that they felt special upon being selected and that they also felt that people cared about them and wanted them to succeed (Ogletree & Hancock, 2010). One student named Jerry said:

> Last year I was looking at dropping out of school and selling drugs just to survive. Now I am looking at actually graduating from high school with a diploma and having a real job waiting on me when I graduate. If it had not been for the '12 for Life' program I know that I would be in jail right now. I have a sense of pride and accomplishment that I have never felt before. I feel as if I am part of something special and I know others feel that way too. (Ogletree & Hancock, 2010, pp. 48-49)

In Minnesota, the Anoka County Transition and Customized Employment (ACTCE) project included a subsidized employment component for youths with disabilities (Rogers, Lavin, Tran, Gantenbein, & Sharpe, 2008). The subsidized jobs were developed specifically for each individual with their skills and interests in mind and were intended eventually to transition into unsubsidized positions (Rogers et al., 2008). Only 3% of the out-of-school youths received subsidized employment and had an average hourly wage of $7.06 with an average of 22.5 hours worked each week (Rogers et al.,

2008). Participants in unsubsidized employment who made up 72% of out-of-school youths had a higher average hourly wage of $8.26 and on average worked 28 hours a week (Rogers et al., 2008). Sixty-seven percent of subsidized out-of-school youths as compared to 88% of participants in unsubsidized employment kept a job for three consecutive months (Rogers et al., 2008).

The Youth Entitlement Project (YEP), the CYSC (Bloom, 2010), and the Orange County Conservation Corps (OCCC) (Campbell et al., 2008) also all provided subsidized employment to youths. The YEP, which provided summer jobs to disadvantaged youths with the condition they would stay in school, was successful in significantly reducing the gap in employment rates between African-American and White youths (Bloom, 2010). The CYSC also resulted in a significant increase in employment for male African-Americans albeit over a short-term period (Bloom, 2010). Members of the OCCC performed various work projects to improve and beautify the community and were given performance reviews and raises when earned just as if it was a regular unsubsidized job (Campbell et al., 2008). Subsidized employment is not ideal as there is no guarantee it will transition into unsubsidized work, however that type of employment can be very useful in helping youths learn work skills, gain work experience, and get used to the responsibility of having a job (Campbell et al., 2008).

Many youth programs offer GED classes along with other types of remedial education courses (Bloom, 2010). The Mathematica Policy Research (MPR) group conducted an experimental study of the Job Corps program during the 1990s to determine levels of education, employment outcomes, earnings, and other factors such as welfare

receipt and crime trends for treatment and control group members (Mekinda, 2012). Job Corps participants were significantly more likely to receive a GED or another vocational certificate than nonprogram youths (Dworsky, 2011; Mekinda, 2012) and also had significantly higher scores on literacy tests (Dworsky, 2011). Both groups however had similarly low rates of postsecondary graduations (1% for the treatment group and 2% for the control group) (Dworsky, 2011).

Another comparable program established in the early 1990s, the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe (NGYC), was used to help disadvantaged youths aged 16 to 18 who had left school without a diploma (Dworsky, 2011). In 2009, 10,000 students were enrolled in the quasi-military program that aimed to instill self-confidence and discipline in the participants as well as help them to receive a GED and employment training (Dworsky, 2011). The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation performed an experimental evaluation of the NGYC program spanning three years and 10 states and found that 72% of the participants went back to school and received a diploma or GED compared to 56% for the control group and were also two times more likely than control group members to have received some college credits (Dworsky, 2011). Overall, participation in the Job Corps program resulted in lower levels of incarceration and lessened dependence on welfare benefits as compared to control group members in the MPR evaluation but the NGYC program did not fare as well with participants being as likely as nonparticipants to report having an arrest or being convicted of a crime a year after leaving the program (Dworsky, 2011).

Unfortunately, many employers do not view the GED as being equivalent to a high school diploma and people with a GED may earn significantly less than people who graduated from high school (Bloom, 2010; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009). People with a high school diploma were significantly more likely to have a job with benefits such as health insurance and paid sick days than people without a diploma (Shandra & Hogan, 2008). However, having a GED is still preferable to being a high school dropout with no education certificate (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009).

Training services. The Job Corps program has an employment training component including a wide variety of careers in trades such as carpentry, electrical work, and automotive repair (Dworksy, 2011). Jobs in the healthcare, hospitality, information technology, and culinary industries are also offered, and these career options differ for each program site (Dworsky, 2011). Job Corps participants had higher postprogram wages compared to members of the comparable control group up to four years after beginning the program (Dworsky, 2011). Wages later became comparable from the fifth to the ninth year of the study period between treatment and control group members with the exception of the older youth Job Corps participants (20-24 years old at program entry) whose higher earnings persisted year after year (Dworsky, 2011; Mekinda, 2012). NGYC participants also had higher earnings and more months of employment than people in the control group (Dworksy, 2011). However, the researchers for these two studies did not separate the earnings or employment numbers based on the type of services the participants received.

The ACTCE program is similar to Job Corps in that both offer remedial and training services to youth participants. The older youth participants, those who are no longer in school, primarily enrolled in job training services (Rogers et al., 2008). Almost three-quarters of these out-of-school youths later entered unsubsidized employment while one-quarter remained unemployed (Rogers et al., 2008). Eighty-eight percent of the out-of-school youths who were employed remained in the workforce for at least three consecutive months and half of that group had employment for up to six months (Rogers et al., 2008). Only 39% of the participants who had jobs at least three months remained employed for an entire year as compared to 66% of the total youth population including both in- and out-of-school youths (Rogers et al., 2008).

Multiple school-to-work programs, also known as vocational rehabilitation, were established and operated during the 1990s after the passage of the STWOA with some programs specifically used to help youths with disabilities (STWOA, 1994; Shandra & Hogan, 2008). Disabled youths often have lower employment rates than their nondisabled peers and are more likely to be working below minimum wage and in jobs without benefits (Shandra & Hogan, 2008). Many of the vocational rehabilitation programs from the 1990s are no longer in operation or no longer receive funding under the STWOA as this legislation has been superseded by laws such as the WIA (Shandra & Hogan, 2008). Giesen and Cavenaugh (2012) evaluated the services provided by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, which is the largest employment program in the U.S. aimed at serving youths who are legally blind or have other vision difficulties. Not surprisingly the researchers found that participants with the most severe vision disabilities (legally blind

or worse) were less likely to find employment and overall fewer than 50% of the people who exited the program in 2010 found a job (Giesen & Cavenaugh, 2012). Participants who had any income (i.e., employment wages or government benefits) when they applied for the program were more likely to find or keep a job after program exit, and also people who received training and job placement services were more successful than persons who did not receive those services (Giesen & Cavenaugh, 2012).

The Future Cents program is primarily an employment training initiative, but the services were developed to include PYD components with the intent to help at-risk youths develop psychological well-being along with learning job skills (Matsuba, Elder, Petrucci, & Marleau, 2008). In-school and older youths between 16 and 30 years of age are eligible for services and case managers first find the participants part-time jobs to give each person time for further job skills and training services (Matsuba et al., 2008). Part-time work also gives the participants time to deal with any employment barriers such as alcohol or drug addictions and when the time is right, each person is helped with the transition to full-time employment (Matsuba et al., 2008). In contrast to many other programs such as Job Corps or the WIA, only 10 youths are enrolled in each Future Cents program term lasting about seven months in order to allow the case managers to spend quality time with each participant and work on solving each person's barriers to employment (Matsuba et al., 2008). The Future Cents program has an impressive track record with approximately 85% completing the program and 88% of the completers entering full-time employment (Matsuba et al., 2008).

In New York State, the Partnerships for Youth (PFY) program was established to work in tandem with the WIA program in assisting unemployed youths with disabilities (Muthumbi, 2008; WIA, 1998). The program was operational between January 2005 and June 2007 in five locations across the state and included disabled persons aged 18-24 who were either in special education classes or who were out-of-school (Muthumbi, 2008). The PFY program was used to offer both remedial and training services to disabled at-risk youths, but the main goal of the program's developers was to determine how well multiple agencies and programs could be used together to aid youths in need (Muthumbi, 2008). Partners were able to share information each had about the disabled youth community and offer ideas on how to help youths find employment as well as to pool resources and services (Muthumbi, 2008). However, the PFY initiative showed that the service delivery between different types of programs and agencies could differ quite a bit, causing confusion amongst program participants (Muthumbi, 2008). The researchers suggested further examinations including the long-term tracking of participant's employment outcomes to determine program success and which changes, if any, may be needed to program components (Muthumbi, 2008).

Performance Measures

Performance measurement is a key part of modern E&T programs and as an evaluation and management tool has been in use dating at least as far back as the 1870s (Bromberg, 2009; Mackor, 2010). Employers initially used performance measures in business settings to track and study worker efficiency with Frederick Winslow Taylor and Henry Ford being two of the first business magnates to use a performance measurement

system within their businesses (Mackor, 2010). Taylor also believed performance measurement systems could be expanded to include public social services and other government activities (Mackor, 2010). The shift from using performance measures as a rules-oriented management system to a results-oriented system coincided with the welfare reforms of the mid-1990s (Barnow & Heinrich, 2010; Bromberg, 2009). E&T program directors are now given more flexibility in administering programs but are still expected to achieve measurable results (Bromberg, 2009). Outcome measures that are used to track behavioral changes, as a result of receiving program services, are often the most resource intensive type of performance measurement and are used as a compliment to other types of research methodologies (Epstein & McFarlan, 2011). Tracking employment and job retention after program completion are types of outcome measures. As opposed to a typical study where a sample is taken from the chosen population, researchers often use the entire program group when calculating outcome measures (Schochet & Burghardt, 2008). The primary limitation of performance measures is that it is not feasible to have a control group available that can continuously be compared to the treatment group (Schochet & Burghardt, 2008). Despite the lack of a comparable and readily available control group, performance measures can be a compliment to other research methodologies especially when a long-term time frame, three to four years, is examined (Decker & Berk, 2011; Schochet & Burghardt, 2008). Creaming can be a problem for programs that are evaluated using performance measures as case managers may choose to enroll people who are likely to have a positive outcome (Decker & Berk,

2011). However, the use of creaming has often been found to be minimal (Schochet & Burghardt, 2008).

State labor agency officials have quite a bit of latitude in determining the development of state performance measures (Barnow & Heinrich, 2010). The state level measures are developed with the specific needs and demographics of each state's population in mind and very populous states such as Texas have taken advantage of that option and developed both unique performance measures and regression models for target setting (Barnow & Heinrich, 2010). Officials in Oregon also used the flexibility granted to them by the PRWORA and between the mid-1990s and 2001, labor agency staff put their own welfare reforms into place (Michaux, 2008). Program evaluations, studies, and performance measurement data are often used by representatives in Congress to determine whether publicly funded programs should continue or be modified thus making the availability of up to date program data critical (Balducchi & Wandner, 2009).

Summary

One of the largest and oldest educational and job training programs for disadvantaged youths is the Job Corps initiative (Bloom, 2010). After a 9-year experimental study of the program had completed, researchers found Job Corps to be successful in reducing criminal activity, improving earnings, and aided participants in receiving degrees or credentials as compared to the control group for the first two postprogram years (Schochet & Burghardt, 2008). Other youth programs including the ACTCE program, Future Cents, NGYC, PFY, Workforce One, and 12 for Life also offered a variety of remedial and training services and had varying degrees of success.

Subsidized employment was useful in helping youths to gain work experience as part of the ACTCE program, and many youths received GEDs by participating in Job Corps and NGYC programs (Dworsky, 2011; Mekinda, 2012; Rogers et al., 2008). Workforce One and PFY were established to work in tandem with the WIA program, and similarly to Job Corps, offered employment training services and were successful in helping youths find jobs (Campbell et al., 2008; Muthumbi, 2008). More often than not, however, the effects of many of these youth programs have been found to wear off after a few years, and even programs that appear successful such as Job Corps have costs that may greatly outweigh any benefits (Bloom, 2010; Schochet & Burghardt, 2008).

Short-term performance measurement results can often differ significantly from measures using longer time frames (Heinrich, 2008). Heinrich (2008) found that employment outcomes measured at intervals of six months, two years, five years, and 10 years or more from multiple program studies showed very different information. Outcome measurements should be taken at various intervals for many years after program completion to understand the impact and success of an E&T program. I measured the postprogram employment data for four years after participants left the WIA youth program in order to fill in the gap of knowledge regarding youth employment outcomes.

Many types of research methods have been used to study E&T programs including qualitative, quantitative, experimental, quasi-experimental, and nonexperimental. Researchers have also used both primary and secondary data in studying various employment programs. An experimental evaluation of the adults and dislocated workers in the WIA program is being conducted through the DOL and is

expected to finish in 2015 but it will not include the youth participants (Decker & Berk, 2011). Youths are also excluded from state of Texas and federal employment, retention, and earnings WIA performance measures (DeRocco, 2006). WIA specific program studies have been conducted in the past but there is not much information available as to the program's effect on youths (Decker & Berk, 2011; Muthumbi, 2008). The quasi-experimental design is similar to experimental methodology in that pretests and posttests as well as control groups can be used, but study participants are not randomly assigned to the treatment or control group (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). This method is useful when studying an event that has already occurred as is the case with this study and is discussed further in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

This quasi-experimental study used a purposive sample design to investigate Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth employment outcomes and these outcomes' relation to services received. Study participant data were obtained from the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) database and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) database. TWC data included information about public employment and training (E&T) program participants. The TWC data were complemented by UI data on employment, including quarterly wages and employer information. These secondary data are used by TWC officials to calculate the State of Texas and federal E&T program performance measures, and formed the basis for this study.

WIA youth participants who exited from the program between July 2007 and June 2009, were included in the sample. The type of WIA service received and whether participants had work experience prior to exiting the program made up the study's independent variables (IV) and the dependent variable (DV) showed the number of employment quarters achieved after program exit. The study consisted of four analysis groups:

- remedial services with no prior work experience,
- remedial services with prior work experience,
- remedial and training services with no prior work experience, and
- remedial and training services with prior work experience.

The participants in these four mutually exclusive groups were matched together based on a series of demographic characteristics. Each group had an equal number of people therefore participants who did not match between each group were not included in the sample. The study's research questions included examination of interaction effects, main effects, and simple effects. A 2x2 ANOVA was planned to be used to analyze the data.

Overview of Research Design

This study tracked two IVs and one DV. The first IV, service level, identified which of two groups with mutually exclusive members the participants belonged. One group consisted of participants who had received WIA remedial services and the other group consisted of participants who had received a combination of remedial and training services. Youths were excluded from the sample if they received services from any other E&T program administered through the TWC. The second IV, prior work experience, also had two levels (yes/no) and the data were mutually exclusive between the levels. The DV included the number of postprogram employment quarters.

This study was designed to determine if there was a difference between the numbers of employment quarters over a 4-year period after program exit depending on the type of service received and whether prior work experience was present before program exit. A quasi-experimental design was appropriate because the study sample did not include random assignment and I wanted to determine if a treatment (i.e., workforce services received) had an effect on the number of postprogram employment quarters, as suggested by Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (2002). I used demographic variables to

match the analysis groups together and therefore strengthen the quasi-experimental methodology (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). In order to determine the long-term employment outcomes for the study sample, I collected 16 quarters of employment information from the UI database after the participants exited the program. UI data including wages were matched to the TWC data using Social Security Numbers (SSN).

This study was designed to address a research gap resulting from a lack of evaluations of the employment outcomes of WIA youths over a 4-year period. This long-term evaluation of youth employment outcomes based on services received will provide state and federal labor agency officials with the detailed information necessary to make informed decisions about possible program changes. Currently, official performance measures at both the Texas state and federal levels utilize only short-term examinations of participant performance and exclude youths from employment based measures (DeRocco, 2006). This study determined how many quarters of employment the youths who were at least 18 years of age at program exit had over a period of four postprogram years.

Methodology

Population

The study population consisted of WIA youths enrolled in the State of Texas who received either remedial or a combination of remedial and training services and have exited from the program. The time frame for this study covered two program years (PY): PY2007 (July 2007-June 2008) and PY2008 (July 2008-June 2009). The average number of exiters from the WIA youth program between July 2007 and June 2009 in Texas was

9,090 (Texas Workforce Commission, 2008; Texas Workforce Commission, 2009). Participants can have multiple periods of participation and could thus have multiple exits within the 2-year period I examined for the study. Youths who did have multiple exits were excluded from the sample. This population was further screened to ensure that no data were used from youths who had received services from any other E&T programs administered through the TWC during the 4-year period after program exit. This step was included to make sure only the WIA services received during the study time period were examined.

Sampling Procedures

I chose a purposive sampling strategy to identify participants who met certain characteristics such as having received the specified services during a certain time period. WIA youth program participant data are housed in the TWC database, and I selected participants who completed services and exited from the WIA youth program between July 2007 and June 2009. The selected time period follows the WIA program year (July-June) and was lagged back in order to collect four complete program years of postprogram employment data. Program participants were counted as exiters if at least 90 days had passed without their receiving a service, which is the standard state and federal definition of program exit (DeRocco, 2006). The sample also consisted of participants who were at least 18 years old at program exit in order to capture people old enough to participate fully in the workforce.

Certain characteristics precluded people from being a part of the study. I excluded any participants who reentered the WIA youth program or participated in any other

programs offered through the TWC during the 4-year follow-up period after their WIA program exit. Youths who left the WIA program due to health or medical reasons, were incarcerated, were a military reservist recalled to active duty, were court ordered into a mandatory residential program, were deceased, or had to take care of a family member full-time were also excluded from the sample as these youths had legitimate reasons for not having employment. Exiters with those reasons are also excluded from official TWC program performance reports so that they do not count against performance (DeRocco, 2006). Participants who were enrolled in secondary education, an advanced training program, were active-duty military, or engaged in an apprenticeship in the first quarter after exit were also excluded from the study, because I wanted to count people who were likely to go into the civilian workforce directly after program exit.

The study also used wage information from the UI database to identify which participants had prior work experience. I matched the participants' TWC data files with their UI files using SSN as a unique identifier. Each person's exit date was converted into a date showing the year and calendar quarter (e.g. an exit date of July 1, 2007 would be 2007Q3) because UI data are reported quarterly. Then I calculated the year and quarter periods that were two years prior to the exit quarter through the quarter just prior to exit. That period was 2005Q3 – 2007Q2 for youths who exited the WIA program in 2007Q3, the first quarter of the study's time frame. I searched the collected data for UI wages greater than zero in at least two quarters during the two years prior to exit, and classified matching participants as having had some work experience. The two quarters of wages did not have to be consecutive. I chose to count two quarters of wages as constituting

work experience as the students may have had summer employment during the two year period prior to exit as opposed to full-time work.

Data Collection

The State of Texas is divided into 28 workforce board areas; TWC E&T programs are administered through the One-Stop workforce board offices within these larger board areas. E&T program participant data elements are collected by case managers at the board offices and entered into TWC's database. Employers enter wage data for their employees on a quarterly basis and files from the UI database are sent to the TWC. I requested data, using the Freedom of Information Act, through the Open Records department at the TWC from the UI files and TWC database (Freedom of Information Act, 1966).

I specified in the request that I needed the following data fields from the TWC database: advanced training flag, age at start of program participation, barriers to employment, birth date, exclusion code, the highest grade completed, program code, program exit date, program participation start date, race, secondary education flag, sex, service begin date, service end date, services received, and SSN.

I collected employment information including wages earned per quarter from the UI files. I used that information to track the participant's employment outcomes for four years after WIA program exit and to determine if prior work experience was present. Each quarter employers upload information to the UI database and data are available only in a quarterly format (Texas Workforce Commission, 2011b). The dataset I received did

not have any personally identifiable information such as SSN as that variable was recoded into a random identification number thus protecting the participants' privacy.

Variable Specifications

Service level was set up as a dichotomous IV and included the services received by the participants, either remedial or a combination of remedial and training. Remedial services are provided by program case managers and can include basic educational skills, guidance counseling, job readiness/employment skills, learning English as a second language, mentoring, completing high school or receiving a GED, developing an employability plan, tutoring/study skills instruction, or leadership development. Training services also require assistance from case managers and include helping participants enroll in an institution offering occupational or vocation training that can result in a certificate or credential as well as receiving work experience through internships and a summer employment WIA program component. Service level data was represented by one data field with either a value of 1 for remedial services or a value of 2 for remedial and training services. I designated participants as having prior work experience, also an IV, if wages greater than zero were found in at least two quarters during a 2-year period prior to program exit. The variable for work experience also showed values of 1 and 2 for work experience or no work experience respectively. I chose to look at a period two years before program exit to catch people who were at least 18 at program exit so employment from 16 to 18 years of age was captured in the dataset. Both IVs were mutually exclusive. The DV was an interval level field and showed the number of postprogram employment quarters for the participants.

The participants in the sample were matched together on several demographic factors to make the analysis groups as comparable as possible using the available data. A possible problem with using matching when selecting a sample is not using enough variables to make the groups comparable and potentially to account for differences due to the intervention being studied (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Researchers often use age, sex, and race as standard demographic variables when matching participants, as well as any other characteristics unique to the treatment groups being studied (Mueser, Troske, & Gorislavsky, 2007). The variables I used to match the participants included age at program exit, the highest grade completed, employment barriers, race, and sex. Age at program exit was calculated by subtracting the participant's birth date from the date of program exit. There were multiple values for the highest grade completed variable in the TWC's database. I condensed the values to show participants whose highest completed grade was less than high school (i.e., twelfth grade no diploma or less), high school diploma or GED (i.e., attained high school diploma or attained GED or equivalent), and more than high school (i.e., attained associates degree, attained other postsecondary degree or certificate, attained bachelor's degree, or education beyond bachelor's degree). Employment barriers included being classified as a migrant seasonal farm worker, being homeless, being a runaway, not having a high school diploma or GED, being disabled, being pregnant, having been in the foster care system, having limited English skills, being a displaced homemaker, or having exhausted unemployment benefits. Those characteristics are collapsed into one variable showing if barriers were present or not. Race information is available in TWC's database, and I recoded that data to show people

who were classified as being only Black, only Hispanic, or only White as Black, Hispanic, and White. Participants coded as Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, or more than one race was defined as Other Race. Each race variable was coded as 0 or 1 with the largest group as the reference group. The sex variable was male or female.

I developed a code to look for all possible combinations of the demographic variables and for each combination I matched people among the analysis groups of the research questions. The four analysis groups for the three the research question were remedial participants with work experience, remedial participants without work experience, remedial and training participants with work experience, and remedial and training participants without work experience. A sample of the coding for the possible demographic combinations looked like this: If (gender_code = 1 & hispanic_code = 1 & age_at_exit_group = 1 & highest_grade_completed = 1 & with_employment_barrier = 1) demo_match_combo = 1. This example is one of the possible combinations and gets a value of "1" in the demo_match_combo variable.

Next, I ran a frequency on each of the four analysis groups to see which demographic combinations were within each group. For example, there were 20 people in group 1, 23 people in group 2, 25 people in group 3, and 28 people in group 4 who were in the demographic combination group 10. I wanted each of these four analysis groups to have the same number of people for each demographic combination group so I took the smallest number, in this case 20 people from group 1, and then randomly selected 20 people from each of the other three analysis groups. I only counted demographic combination groups if they were present in each of the analysis groups and I repeated this

step for each of the possible groupings. Then I calculated how many postexit employment quarters each person had by determining which UI data quarters would be 16 quarters after exit and then I summed the number of quarters with wages greater than zero.

Data Analysis Plan

I used the SPSS Statistics software package to analyze the data for this study. I planned to use a 2x2 Factorial ANOVA test to analyze data for the research questions as I had two IVs and one DV. I wanted to compare the average number of postprogram employment quarters between the two service levels with the interaction variable of prior work experience. Unfortunately, the data violated the test's assumptions and other tests were used. The standard 95% confidence intervals were used for the analysis. I needed at least 128 people, 32 for each of the four groups, to have power of 80% based on 1 degree of freedom, a medium effect size of $d = .50$, and an alpha level of .05 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). I determined the sample numbers needed for this study by using the G*Power software. I had more participants than what was needed as I had 488 people in the sample.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Is there a significant interaction between the level of service received (remedial vs. remedial and training) and prior work experience (yes/no) on the number of postprogram employment quarters for WIA youth participants?

Ha_0: There is not a significant interaction between the service level and prior work experience on the number of postprogram employment quarters.

Ha_1: There is a significant interaction between the service level and prior work experience on the number of postprogram employment quarters.

RQ2: In the absence of a significant interaction, is there a significant main effect of service level on the number of postprogram employment quarters?

Hb_0: In the absence of a significant interaction, there is not a significant difference between service level and the number of postprogram employment quarters.

Hb_1: In the absence of a significant interaction, there is a significant difference between service level and the number of postprogram employment quarters with remedial and training participants having more quarters of postprogram employment.

RQ3: If a significant interaction is present, are there significant simple effects for level of service received and prior work experience for WIA youth participants with respect to number of postprogram employment quarters?

Hc_0: With a significant interaction present, there are no significant simple effects for service level and prior work experience with respect to the number of postprogram employment quarters.

Hc_1: With a significant interaction present, there are significant simple effects for service level and prior work experience with respect to the number of postprogram employment quarters.

Reliability

Measuring employment by using data from the UI database is a much more reliable method than collecting employment information directly from members of the labor force via surveys or phone inquiries. Employers are required to enter wages paid to

their employees on a quarterly basis, and TWC officials run data matches with TWC program participant information against the information in the UI database to determine which participants were employed (Texas Workforce Commission, 2011a). Using only self-reported employment information for program participants would need to be further verified or the data may not be considered valid or reliable. The interface WIA program case managers use to enter data into the TWC database has many edits in place to guard against incorrect data elements being entered into the system. These edits preclude the data entry of extraneous values for characteristics such as gender, race, exclusion reason codes, and not putting a person in the WIA youth program if they are not the correct age.

Limitations

Maturation, the rate at which people change over time, is a threat to internal validity for this study (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). I controlled for the differences in maturation by selecting participants who completed the program during the same time frame and then I matched the participants on age at the time of program exit. By matching people together in the same age groups, consisting of two to three years in each group depending on the ages in the sample, they were more likely to have matured similarly during the study time frame. I attempted to control for the threat of selection caused by non-random assignment of participants to levels of the IVs variables by matching the participants on multiple demographic fields including age, sex, race, highest level of education, and whether barriers to employment were present. With these similar characteristics, the participants may have had comparable experiences as they went through the WIA program.

Sometimes study participants who receive different treatments will communicate with each other and that communication can affect outcomes and impact internal validity (Shadish et al., 2002). WIA youth program participants are not likely to know each other as services are most often delivered by case managers on an individual basis thus eliminating the diffusion of treatment as a validity threat (Shadish et al., 2002). Another potential threat to internal validity is compensatory rivalry or resentment that can occur when members of the control group feel anger over not receiving the study treatment (Shadish et al., 2002). Compensatory rivalry was not an issue for my study as youth program participants selected the services received with the help of a case manager, and no one is refused treatment if they are eligible.

I controlled for the threat of attrition by excluding people from the sample who left the WIA program due to one of the following reasons: health or medical issues, were incarcerated, were a military reservist recalled to active duty, were court ordered into a mandatory residential program, were deceased, or had to take care of a family member full-time (DeRocco, 2006). These exclusions reasons are used for the TWC's performance measurement system (DeRocco, 2006) but data is captured only for the time period when participants receive services so I was not be able to determine if any of these conditions occurred during the follow-up period. I put a specific limit on how many employment quarters a participant could have during the 4-year postprogram period so there would not be any extreme outliers. I did not use a test or other type of instrument to collect data so any issues related to tests were not a threat to this study.

I used a quasi-experimental design using secondary data and the participants were not randomly assigned to each of the study groups. I also used a purposive sampling technique as I wanted people with specific characteristics. Measuring ambiguous constructs can lead to trouble as those types of variables could be defined differently by different researchers (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). The construct being measured for this study is employment. I used the same definition for employment that is used by TWC staff for official state and federal program performance reports. Participants who exited the program without one of the above exclusion reasons and also had wages greater than zero in the UI database, were counted as being employed (DeRocco, 2006).

Scope and Delimitations

UI data was used to determine if participants had prior work experience or a job after program exit. Employment information for the following types of employees is not included in the Texas UI system: church employees, students who work at their school, students working as hospital interns, elected officials, a person working for a family member as an individual and not part of a family business, a person working for a foreign government, salespeople who are paid solely by commission, and employees of a state or federally funded work relief or training program (Texas Workforce Commission, 2011a). Any participants who found employment in one of the above categories was not counted as being employed in this study; however, the majority of the Texas labor force is included in the UI database.

I was not able to determine if members of the study group received any additional services from programs offered through another agency or educational institution during

the follow-up period. I could only detect if the participants were enrolled in an education program, advanced training program, enlisted in the military, or served an apprenticeship in the first quarter after program exit using existing administrative data.

There are no reporting processes in place at the Texas state or federal levels to evaluate the long-term employment outcomes of E&T program participants (DeRocco, 2006). WIA youths are excluded from official Texas stated and federal employment performance measures with the exception of the placed in employment or education measure (DeRocco, 2006). The lack of youth employment outcome information is what led me to develop the research questions answered with this study. Youth participants are eligible to receive workforce services under the WIA program, and I examined the difference in employment outcomes based on which services were received. I excluded participants who reenrolled in any E&T services from the available programs offered through the TWC during the 4-year period after the exit period of my study (July 2007 – June 2009). I also excluded people who were younger than 18 at the time of program exit so that I would capture people who were old enough to participate in the labor force without restrictions.

I matched the participants in the four analysis groups based on several demographic characteristics. Those characteristics included age at the time of program exit, the highest grade completed, race, sex, and whether the participants either did or did not have a barrier to employment in order to compare employment outcomes for similar participants between the two levels of program service. I was not able to determine if the receipt of different types of WIA services was the main factor related to long-term

employment outcomes for youths after program exit. However, I did gain insight as to which services are more likely to aid youths in finding and keeping employment. The results of this study cannot be generalized to the WIA youth population of other states. Further research expanding the sample to include either other WIA services or a combination of multiple program services with the same youth population may be useful in determining which combinations of services and programs are more likely to lead to employment.

Ethical Procedures

Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study and the approval number is 12-18-14-0099978. The data file I received did not have any personally identifiable or confidential participant information. Data from the TWC database and the UI data files were combined using SSN but that field was deleted before I received the file. The dataset I was given used a unique and randomly generated participant identification number that was not a part of the original data as an identification field. I am a TWC employee but a different employee at the agency put together the study data file after I received IRB approval as well as approval from the TWC to use the data. I will keep the data file on a disc for a period of five years in a lockable fire safe in my home, and I will then destroy the disc at the end of the 5-year period.

Summary

I conducted a quasi-experimental quantitative study to determine the long-term employment outcomes of the WIA youth population. The study participants included

WIA youths who received either remedial services or a combination of remedial and job training services, were 18 years old at program exit, and who exited between July 2007 and June 2009. Youths who received additional services from any other E&T programs administered through the TWC prior to exit were not counted in the sample. Also, youths who received services during the 4-year follow-up period after WIA program exit from any TWC administered E&T programs were excluded from the sample. Study participants were matched on multiple demographic characteristics in order to make the four analysis groups as comparable as possible. I intended to use a 2x2 ANOVA to analyze data for the research questions but the data did not fit the test assumptions so different tests were used. More information about the data analysis techniques is included in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative quasi-experimental study was to assess the effectiveness of two types of services provided through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth program. It specifically assessed these services in Texas by determining if there was a significant difference in the average number of postprogram employment quarters for WIA youths based on the type of service received. I also wanted to determine if having prior work experience or not had an impact on postprogram employment trends. I found that having prior work experience led to a significantly higher number of postprogram employment quarters regardless of the type of service received. In fact, there was no statistically significant difference in the number of employment quarters between the types of services examined.

I developed the following research questions for this study:

- Research Question 1 (RQ1): Is there a significant interaction between the level of service received (remedial vs. remedial and training) and prior work experience (yes/no) on the number of postprogram employment quarters for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth participants?
- Research Question 2 (RQ2): In the absence of a significant interaction, is there a significant main effect of service level on the number of postprogram employment quarters?
- Research Question 3 (RQ3): If a significant interaction is present, are there significant simple effects for level of service received and prior work experience

for WIA youth participants with respect to number of postprogram employment quarters?

Theoretical Foundation

Young adults in the U.S. are less likely than older adults to have enough academic credentials or job skills to find employment (Perry & Wallace, 2012). This is particularly true for youths who are economically disadvantaged, such as those who participate in the WIA program. The WIA program is one of many public initiatives that have been used throughout the U.S. over the past 50 years and that are designed to help Americans earn academic credentials and find employment (Perry & Wallace, 2012). The services offered through the WIA program align with the steps detailed by the theory of experiential learning (Chisholm, Harris, Northwood, & Johrendt, 2009; Yardley, Teunissen, & Dornan, 2012). Experiential learning primarily involves people having hands-on experiences as opposed to only receiving lectures in classrooms (Yardley et al., 2012).

Youths find the experiential learning technique especially beneficial as they receive both traditional instructions along with practical experiences (Ogletree & Hancock, 2010; Symonds, 2012). Experiential learning models are used for career and technical education (CTE) courses which have become a mainstream part of many high schools and community colleges throughout the U.S. (Campbell, Trzesniewski, Nathaniel, Enfield, & Erbstein, 2013; Levesque et al., 2008; Ogletree & Hancock, 2010). CTE courses and the type of workforce services the WIA program offers have been shown to have positive outcomes including reducing the poverty rate as course/program participants enter employment (Hirschy, Bremer, & Castellano, 2011). However, youths

with no work experience still face difficulty in finding employment even after completing an E&T program (Aisami, 2010; Cheng, 2010; Harris, 2014). The combination of having at least some history of employment along with having completed workforce services can help WIA youths to find and keep a job.

Study Data

Data from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) databases were used for this study. I obtained this data through a Freedom of Information Act request to TWC's Open Records office. The provided data elements included:

- the type of WIA services received,
- sex,
- race,
- age at program exit,
- date of program exit,
- highest grade completed,
- whether employment barriers were present or not,
- whether participants had prior work experience or not,
- wages by quarters during the 4-year postprogram period,
- exclusion codes, and
- an advanced training flag field.

Demographic fields including sex, race, age at program exit, employment barriers, and highest grade completed were also used as matching variables to make the analysis

groups of the research questions comparable. WIA youths who exited the program between July 2007 and June 2009 were included in the sample and that period covered two consecutive program years. WIA exiters were used from the 2007-2009 time period in order to collect four years of postprogram employment data after exit.

I have worked in the Division of Operational Insight at the TWC for the past 13 years. The data file that I received was compiled by another TWC employee and was placed on one of the agency's secure servers. I removed the file from the server after I burned the data to a CD.

Data Analysis

Data Demographics

All WIA youths who met the criteria for the study were included in the sample. The data screening process matched 488 participants, divided into 244 people for each level of the independent variables (IV) of service level and work experience. Table 1 shows the demographic breakdown of the sample participants based on the five variables used for data matching. The majority of people were Hispanic females, 18 years old at program exit, did not graduate from high school, and had barriers to employment such as being homeless, having a mental or physical disability, having a substance abuse problem, not having finished high school, having a criminal record, having young children, or being in the foster care system.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Age at Exit	*n*	Percent of Total
18	254	52.05
19	137	28.07
20	65	13.32
21	28	5.74
22	2	0.41
23	1	0.2
24	1	0.2
Barriers to Employment		
No	24	95.08
Yes	464	4.92
Highest Grade Completed		
Less than High School	440	90.16
H.S. Diploma/GED	48	9.84
Race		
Black	84	17.21
Hispanic	320	65.57
Other Race	4	0.82
White	80	16.39
Sex		
Female	280	57.38
Male	208	42.62

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Interaction Effect

I initially planned to use a 2x2 ANOVA to test the data for RQ1 but the dependent variable (DV), the number of postprogram employment quarters, was not normally distributed. The data had a skewness *z*-score of 1.80 and a kurtosis *z*-score of -6.77. For large samples a *z*-score over 3.29, regardless of a positive or negative value, indicates significant skewness or kurtosis (Field, 2009). The data were not significantly skewed but

significant kurtosis was present. I also ran the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test for normality and found the data significantly deviated from the normal distribution, $D(488) = 0.16$, $p < .05$. Both the z-score and K-S test can show significance in large samples even if the data are normally distributed (Field, 2009). However, visually examining the histogram in Figure 1 shows definitively the data were not normally distributed.

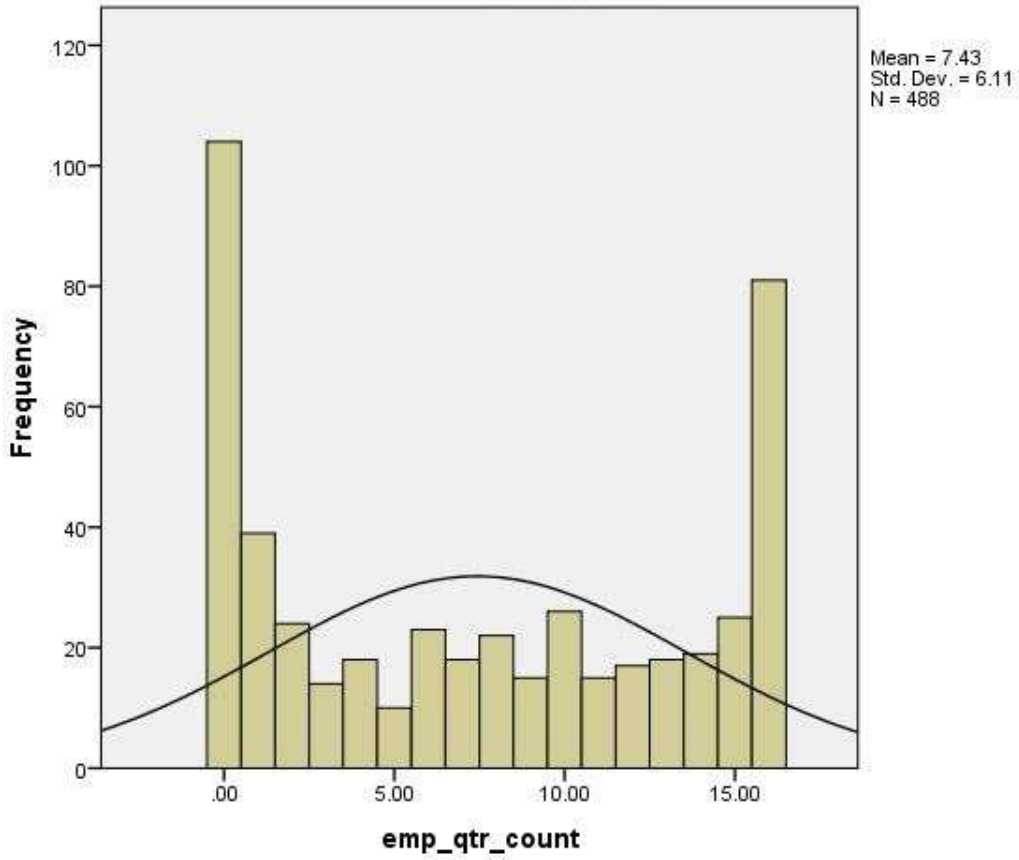

Figure 1. The histogram for the DV.

I ran three data transformations including the square root, logarithm, and logarithm base 10 transforms and the data were still not normally distributed. The data also violated the homogeneity of variance assumption, $F(3, 484) = 3.658$, $p = .007$. I could not confidently

run the 2x2 ANOVA as I had violated two of the test assumptions. I was therefore unable to test for an interaction effect. Table 2 and Figure 2 show descriptive output that was generated as part of the 2x2 ANOVA test. Useful information can be gleaned from this output even though the full test could not be used.

Table 2

Service Level & Work Experience Descriptive Data

Remedial Service	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
No Prior Work Experience	122	4.29	5.03
With Prior Work Experience	122	9.80	6.15
Total	244	7.04	6.25
Remedial & Training Service			
No Prior Work Experience	122	5.61	5.61
With Prior Work Experience	122	10.02	5.47
Total	244	7.82	5.96

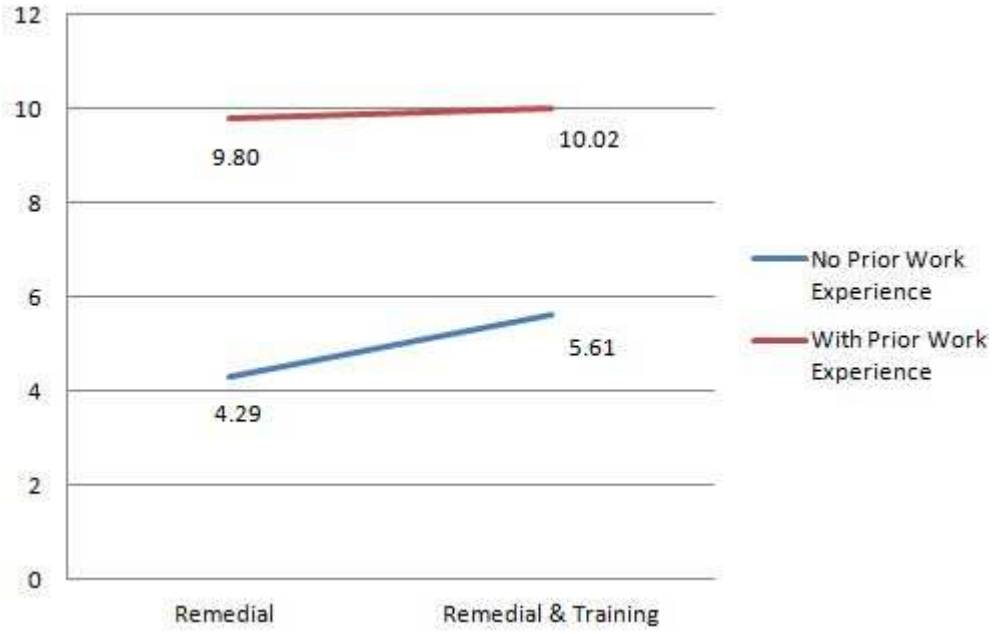

Figure 2. The number of postprogram employment quarters between the two IVs. Participants who received remedial and training services had a slightly higher average number of postprogram employment quarters compared to participants who received only remedial services. The mean number of employment quarters were nearly the same between people with or without at least two quarters of work experience prior to program exit. The average number of employment quarters for participants with prior work experience as compared to those without, regardless of service received, was noticeably higher.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Main Effects

Service level. I used the independent samples *t*-test to analyze the main effects of the two IVs on the DV. This type of *t*-test has assumptions similar to the 2x2 ANOVA (Field, 2009). The calculations for this test can also take violations of the homogeneity assumption into account and produce usable results if the assumption is violated (Field,

2009). First, I ran the *t*-test to determine if a main effect was present between the two service levels. Table 3 shows the results of the Levene's test.

Table 3

Service Level: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

Levene's test for equality of variances			Test for equality of means		
	F	Sig.	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	2.164	.142	-1.409	486	.159
Equal variances not assumed			-1.409	484.922	.159

The homogeneity of variance test was not violated and I found there was not a statistically significant difference on the average number of postprogram employment quarters between the two service levels ($p = .159$). The data was in violation of the normality assumption so I decided to run further analysis to confirm the test results.

The Mann-Whitney U test can be used as a nonparametric equivalent to the independent samples *t*-test (Field, 2009). This test is similar to parametric tests that are used to compare means except this test compares either medians or mean ranks (Laerd Statistics Premium, 2013). The Mann-Whitney U test has four assumptions. The DV should be ordinal or continuous and the IV must have two levels (Laerd Statistics Premium, 2013). Each level of the IV must also be mutually exclusive (Laerd Statistics Premium, 2013). These three assumptions have been met. The last assumption involves determining if the score distributions for the DV on both levels of the IV are the same or a different shape (Laerd Statistics Premium, 2013). This can be done by examining the

population pyramid that is generated as part of the test and is a necessary step in knowing how to interpret the test's output (Laerd Statistics Premium, 2013). The medians are compared if the distributions have a similar shape and if the distributions are dissimilarly shaped the mean ranks are compared to determine if a statistically significant difference is or is not present (Laerd Statistics Premium, 2013).

For the main effects analysis is RQ2, the DV's data were distributed similarly between the two service levels, as can be seen in the population pyramid in Figure 3.

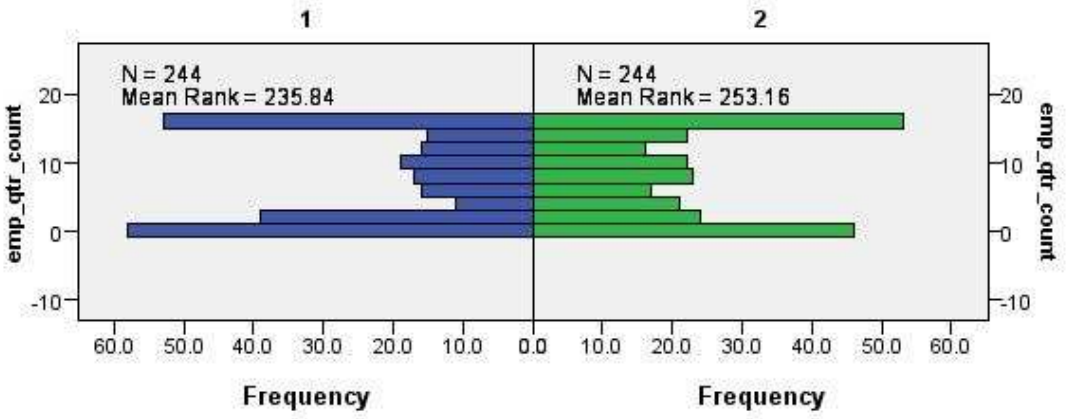

Figure 3. A breakdown of the study population pyramid according to service level.

The median number of postprogram employment quarters was not statistically significantly different between participants with remedial services (*Mdn* = 6) and participants with remedial and training services (*Mdn* = 8), *U* = 31,880, *z* = 1.367, *p* = .172. There was not a significant main effect between the two types of services and the number of postprogram employment quarters according to both the *t*-test and the Mann-

Whitney U test. The null hypothesis cannot be rejected as there was not a significant main effect present.

Work experience. I also decided to run the main effects analysis for the work experience IV even though it was not part of the research question. The homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated for the *t*-test as can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

Work Experience: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

Levene's test for equality of variances			Test for equality of means		
	F	Sig.	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	3.405	.066	-9.801	486	.000
Equal variances not assumed			-9.801	482.857	.000

The average number of postprogram employment quarters was significantly different between the groups of the work experience IV ($p = .000$). Participants with work experience prior to exit had a higher mean number of employment quarters ($M = 9.10$) than participants without work experience ($M = 4.95$).

I next ran the Mann-Whitney U test and found the data in the DV were not distributed similarly between the two levels for work experience as shown in Figure 4.

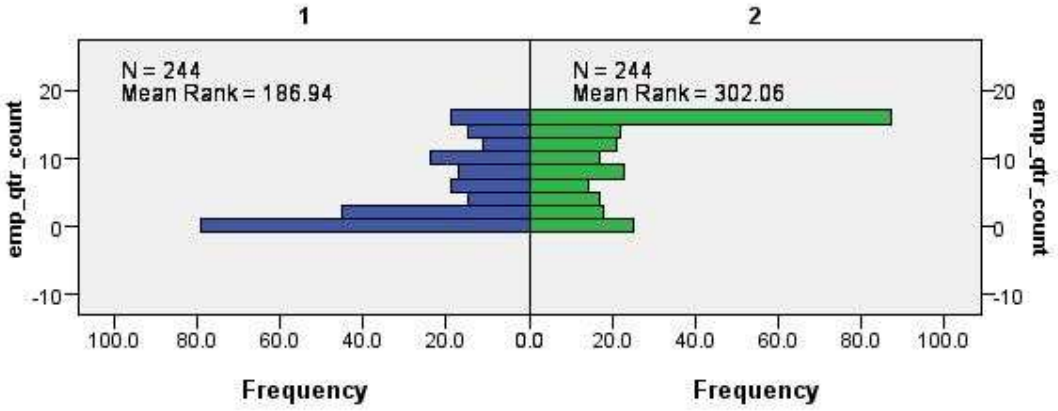

Figure 4. A breakdown of the study population pyramid according to the work experience DV.

When the distributions differ, the mean ranks are compared as opposed to the medians. There was a statistically significant difference in the mean ranks of postprogram employment quarters between participants without work experience prior to program exit (mean rank = 186.94) and those with prior work experience (mean rank = 302.06),U = 43,813.50, z = 9.089, p = .000. This analysis group had a large effect size (d = .89) and statistical power of 99% meaning there was only a 1% chance of making a Type II error. There was a significant difference between the average number of postprogram employment quarters between the work experience levels as shown by both the t-test and the Mann-Whitney U test therefore the null hypothesis of there being no difference has been rejected.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): Simple Effects

No prior work experience. Even though I was unable to test for an interaction effect, I decided to run the simple effects analysis using the independent samples *t*-test.

The data did not violate the Levene's test of homogeneity of variance for the group who had no prior work experience as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

No Prior Work Experience: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

Levene's test for equality of variances			Test for equality of means		
	F	Sig.	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	3.368	.068	1.946	242	.053
Equal variances not assumed			1.946	239.105	.053

Technically there was not a statistically significant difference between the two service levels with regard to the average number of postprogram employment quarters for people without prior work experience. However the *p* value of .053 is very close to the significance threshold of less than .05. Participants who received remedial and training services did have a higher number of employment quarters ($M = 5.61$) compared to people who received only remedial services ($M = 4.29$). There does appear to be a slight advantage with regard to the average number of postprogram employment quarters for people who received both remedial and training services when no work experience was present.

I also ran the Mann-Whitney U test for the simple effects analysis. The data in the DV were distributed similarly between the two service levels, as assessed by visual inspection of the population pyramid seen in Figure 5.

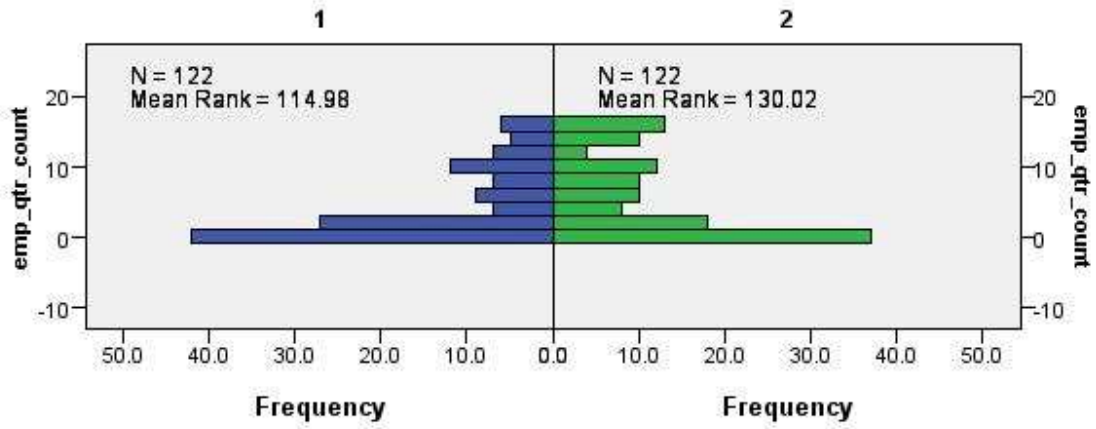

Figure 5. A breakdown of the study population pyramid according to no prior work experience.

The median number of postprogram employment quarters was not statistically significantly different between participants with remedial services (*Mdn* = 1) and participants with remedial and training services (*Mdn* = 4) who did not have prior work experience, *U* = 8,359, *z* = 1.695, *p* = .090. The t-test *p* value of .053 was close to the significance level but the Mann-Whitney U *p* value of .090 was more distant. Both values are above the significance threshold so I cannot reject the null hypothesis, however, the group without prior work experience did benefit more from the combination of remedial and training services.

With prior work experience. Next, I ran the same analysis but for people who did have prior work experience. The Levene's test was violated, so I used the significance data from the equal variances not assumed line. Table 6 shows the Levene's test data.

Table 6

Prior Work Experience: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

Levene's test for equality of variances			Test for equality of means		
	F	Sig.	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	4.639	.032	-.308	242	.758
Equal variances not assumed			-.308	238.827	.758

There was not a significant difference between the average number of postprogram employment quarters between the two service levels ($p = .758$). The average number of employment quarters after program exit for people with remedial and training services ($M = 10.02$) were nearly the same as the average number for people with remedial services ($M = 9.80$).

I also ran the Mann-Whitney U test for the group who did have prior work experience. The data in the DV for this group had a similar distribution for the two service levels (Figure 6).

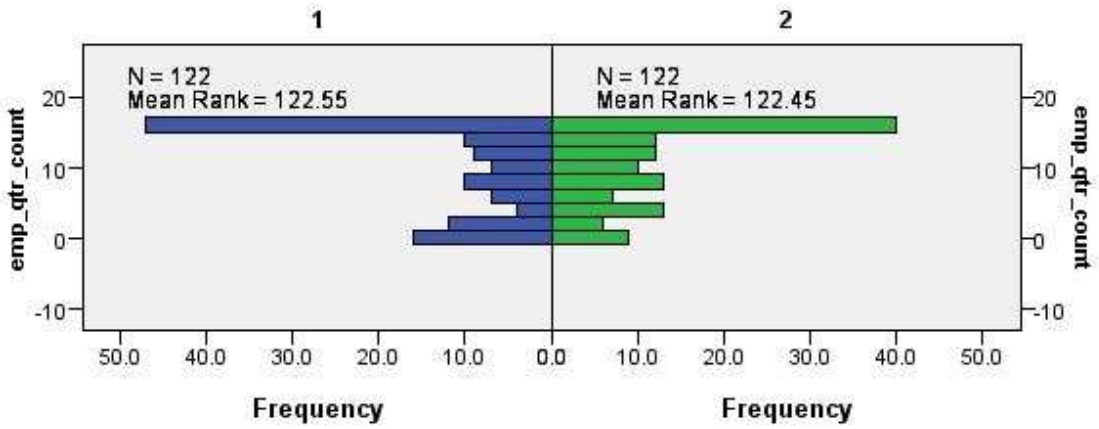

Figure 6. A breakdown of the study population pyramid according to prior work experience.

As with the group who had no prior work experience, the median number of postprogram employment quarters was not statistically significantly different between participants with remedial services (*Mdn* = 12) and participants with remedial and training services (*Mdn* = 11), $U = 7.435.50$, $z = -.012$, $p = .990$. The null hypothesis cannot be rejected as there is no significant difference of postprogram employment quarters compared to the types of services received for each level of the work experience IV.

Conclusion

I was not able to run the analysis for RQ1 as the data violated two assumptions of the 2x2 ANOVA so I was not able to answer that question. The null hypothesis of RQ2 was not rejected for the service level IV but it was rejected for the work experience IV. There was a significant difference between the average number of postprogram employment quarters between the two levels of the work experience IV. Participants who had prior work experience had a higher mean number of quarters of employment. I

rejected the null hypothesis for RQ3 for both of the IVs. However there was a slight advantage with regard to the average number of postprogram employment quarters for people who received both remedial and training services and had no prior work experience compared to people who had only remedial services.

Summary

This study used a quasi-experimental design and a sample compiled using data matching five demographic characteristics. I developed three research questions testing for interaction effects, main effects, and simple effects for the two IVs, service level and work experience, and the DV showing the number of postprogram employment quarters. I used both parametric and nonparametric tests to conduct the analysis as the data was not normally distributed and had significant kurtosis. Overall, the type of service received did not have a significant impact on the number of postprogram employment quarters. People who did not have prior work experience and received remedial and training services did have a slightly higher average number of employment quarters after program exit but the difference did not meet the significance threshold. The most significant finding was that having work experience before exiting from the WIA program was more likely to result in a higher mean number of postprogram quarters of employment.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

There was not a significant relationship between the two service types and the number of postprogram employment quarters. The only significant relationship found in this study was for the prior work experience independent variable (IV). Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youths with prior work experience had a significantly higher average number of postprogram employment quarters ($M = 9.10$) as compared to participants with no prior work experience ($M = 4.95$). This relationship had a large effect size ($d = .89$) and statistical power of 99% meaning there was only a 1% chance of making a Type II error.

The WIA was signed into law in 1998 and consolidated a variety of federal employment and training (E&T) programs (WIA, 1998). The goal of the WIA was to make it easier for people to receive employment services and find jobs thus lessening dependence on public welfare (WIA, 1998). A youth component was included to aid economically disadvantaged people aged 14-21 in receiving academic credentials and employment services (Legislative Budget Board, 2011). This study addressed a lack of prior research on WIA program outcomes for youth participants.

Officials at the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) use a series of state and federal performance measures to monitor and determine the outcomes of WIA program participants (DeRocco, 2006). The WIA youth participants are excluded from all but one of those employment performance measures, and the measure that group is included in also takes education outcomes into account (DeRocco, 2006). Even if the youths were

included in the TWC's performance measures, the corresponding data would only show short-term employment information of up to nine months after program exit and is not differentiated by service. Data trends can differ depending on the length of time being examined so employment outcomes nine months after exit and four years after exit could be significantly different (Heinrich, 2008).

The purpose of this quasi-experimental quantitative study was to identify the postprogram employment outcomes of WIA youths. Program participants were included in the sample if they received either WIA remedial or a combination of remedial and job training services, but did not also receive any other TWC program services. Each of the included participants exited from the WIA program between July 2007 and June 2009, a period chosen because it provided at least four years of archival postprogram employment data. The study participants were divided into four analysis groups that included the two different types of services received, people who had at least two quarters of work experience prior to program exit, and people who did not have work experience. The participants in each group had the same characteristics as they were matched together by age at program exit, highest grade completed, race, sex, and whether employment barriers existed or not. This study was used to determine if there was a difference in long-term employment outcomes based on the level of service received and if prior work experience was present. Having prior work experience was a significant factor in having a higher number of postprogram employment quarters while the type of service received did not affect employment.

Interpretation of the Findings

The study results showed that there was no significant difference in the average number of postprogram employment quarters between people who received only remedial services or both remedial and training services. However, the group that did not have prior work experience and received remedial and training services did have a slightly higher number of employment quarters after WIA program exit. This finding is consistent with prior studies that investigated the benefits of job training services in connection to employment rates (Hirschy, Bremer, & Castellano, 2011; Giesen & Cavenaugh, 2012).

Having even a minimal amount of work experience prior to exiting the WIA program had a statistically significant effect on postprogram employment. This finding is consistent with Aisami (2010) and Cheng's (2010) findings that people without some work experience struggled to find jobs even after completing job training courses. E&T programs often have high costs and the costs often outweigh the benefits received as skills learned by the program's participants may last only a couple to a few years (Bloom, 2010; Schochet & Burghardt, 2008). In this study, only 33% of the participants in the sample had between 12 and 16 quarters, or three and four years of postprogram employment. This result confirms previous findings that benefits of E&T programs do not last much longer than two years (8 quarters) as only one third of the participants maintained employment three or four years out.

Limitations of the Study

Both internal and external threats to validity were examined and controlled for in this study. I minimized internal validity threats by using a matching technique so that participants in each analysis group had many of the same characteristics. I excluded people who had specified characteristics such as being incarcerated that would have precluded them from being employed which minimized the external validity threat of attrition. I also limited how many employment quarters a participant could have during the postprogram study period to 16 (four years) so there would not be any extreme outliers that would skew the data (Shadish et al., 2002). The results of this study cannot be generalized to the WIA youth population of other states.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Future Research

I recommend replicating this study as a check on the validity and reliability of the results. A combination of services from multiple E&T programs may benefit youths in finding postprogram employment more so than just WIA services, so I also recommend a study that includes WIA youths who participated in other programs offered through the TWC. Collecting additional demographic information about the participants, such as why they may not have entered employment after program exit, would allow a more thorough understanding of the results. Customer satisfactions surveys used to be conducted by TWC officials for use in a state performance measure and a similar process would be useful to collect more detailed postprogram information.

Recommendations for Action

One action recommendation is to have the TWC's program case managers take work experience into account when helping youths decide which services to take. Youths with no work experience could benefit more from some of the job training services whereas those with work experience may only need minimal help in finding and keeping a job. The WIA program was reauthorized in 2014 as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) (WIOA, 2014), a reauthorization that includes many policy changes and a new set of performance measures. These policy changes will take effect for the program year beginning in July 2015 and its new performance measures must be implemented for the following program year in July 2016 (Department of Labor, 2014b). The WIA youth population will be included in postprogram employment, job retention, and earnings measures where currently that population is excluded (National Skills Coalition, 2014). These new measures will have similar time frames as the current performance measures meaning only short-term employment outcomes will be calculated, but including youth data is a step in the right direction. TWC officials are currently working on the early stages of developing the new measure calculations. Another recommendation is to then build off the new measures and to add the long-term tracking of youth employment outcomes by TWC officials as a standard state-level reporting procedure. TWC as an agency would not necessarily be held accountable for the results such as with official performance measures, but these data have a strong potential to inform program management. As the TWC works on implementing the new WIOA performance measures, they should take into account the findings of this research.

Implications for Social Change

I have begun to fill in the gap of knowledge about the WIA's youth postprogram employment outcomes through this study. A new state-level performance measure developed by TWC officials, in conjunction with the new WIOA measures, could be used to track long-term youth employment trends.

A significant difference between WIA and WIOA concerns the issue of funding. A minimum of 75% of WIOA funds are allocated for out-of-school youths ranging in age from 16 to 24 (Wu, 2014). That age group is comparable to the participants in this study who ranged in aged between 18 and 24 at program exit. Another 20% is also allocated for providing work services including on-the-job training, internships, pre-apprenticeship training, and summer job opportunities (Wu, 2014). This increased focus on helping youths gain work experience concurs with my findings that even a minimal amount of work experience, such as having a summer job, is helpful in finding future employment. The law was reauthorized before the completion of this study and was therefore not influenced by these findings even though they concur. These changes are expected to contribute to a sharper focus on job services and employment outcomes for youths under the new program giving a greater opportunity for more studies like this one where job trends are examined.

Conclusion

Public E&T programs have been in operation in the U.S. for over 50 years. The Manpower Development Training Act was signed into law in 1962 (Manpower Development Training Act, 1962) and since then dozens of other pieces of legislation

have been passed establishing E&T programs. The Economic Opportunity Act, (Economic Opportunity Act, 1964), the Job Training Partnership Act (Job Training Partnership Act, 1982), the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (School-to-Work Opportunities Act, 1994), and the WIA (WIA, 1998) are some of E&T programs that have been operated at the federal and then also state levels. The WIA included a component for economically disadvantaged youths between the ages of 14-21 at program entry (Legislative Budget Board, 2011). WIA youths could choose to participate in a combination of academic and workforce services with the goals of completing high school, receiving a GED, and finding employment (Decker & Berk, 2011).

The WIA was reauthorized and updated through the WIOA (WIOA, 2014). The WIOA will go into effect in July 2015 and this legislation allows for a greater emphasis on youths receiving employment services and gaining work experience (Wu, 2014). Work experience has been shown to be an important factor in helping both youth and adult E&T participants with finding a job after program completion (Aisami 2010; Cheng, 2010). I also found that having work experience, even as little as two quarters of employment, was a significant factor in having postprogram employment regardless of the type of service received. Very little research has been done regarding the postprogram outcomes of WIA youths and this study is a start in filling in that knowledge gap. Further studies should be conducted to replicate these results as well as to expand upon the analysis. Combinations of services from multiple E&T programs including the WIA and the new WIOA programs may prove beneficial in helping participants find and keep employment.

Overall, having some work experience prior to program completion, is an important factor in finding future employment. The WIOA's greater focus on providing work experience opportunities for youths is a step in the right direction. Case managers will now be able to direct the program's youths into the most beneficial services and reach the desired outcome of helping disadvantaged youths become self-sufficient.

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