A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

by

LYNN SUSAN REICH

(Under the Direction of Clifton L. Smith)

ABSTRACT

As students, teachers, administrators, parents, businesses, and the community express interest in the work place as a viable learning environment for youth, additional knowledge is needed to guide youth apprenticeship programs and improve the effectiveness of school-to-work initiatives. Participants of programs involving transition from high school to post-secondary education and/or to the world of work can provide valuable insights for educators, businesses, and other involved in such programs. Examining student experiences and gathering information from the students’ perspectives will assist program stakeholders and planners to design and modify programs to provide greater effectiveness in programs linking education and work. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to explore and illuminate the experiences and opinions of students who have participated in a high school youth apprenticeship program.

Qualitative research techniques using a case study design were utilized to obtain rich descriptions from personal interviews with twenty student participants who graduated from high school in a mid-sized school system in northeast Georgia during the years 1997 - 2001. Data analysis followed a constant comparative approach. Line by line coding and the use of identifying descriptors assisted in the organization and reduction of data that sought to answer guiding research questions.
The overarching theme of empowerment emerged along with the following categories and sub-categories: 1) Supportive relationships with others (peers, adults), 2) Educational empowerment (high school experiences, post-secondary experiences), 3) Career empowerment (career goals, work behaviors, career opportunities), and 4) Self-empowerment (self-confidence, self-development, self-esteem).

It was concluded that supportive, meaningful relationships with others (mentors, caring adults, peers, the youth apprenticeship coordinator) who provided support, encouragement, and guidance were important and contributed to student successes. Students placed high value on YAP’s hands-on, real world, life experiences and were able to make more relevant and sound career and post-secondary educational choices. Program participants acquired general and specific work place competencies and skills that enabled them to obtain entry and advanced level part and full-time jobs. Students expressed increased sense of responsibility, confidence, self-esteem, and had more motivation to set and attain higher academic as well as career goals.

INDEX WORDS: Youth apprenticeship, School-to-work programs, High school to post-secondary transition programs, Student perspective of high school programs, Career and technical education programs, Vocational education, Empowerment, Supportive relationships between students and adults, Educational empowerment, Career empowerment.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale of the Study

The work place has changed considerably in the last few decades. The United States has shifted from a manufacturing-based economy to one that predominantly provides information and services (Judy & D’Amico, 1997; Levesque, Lauen, Teitelbaum, Alt, & Librera, 2000). With this new economy comes “lives that are more frenzied, less secure, more economically divergent, more socially stratified” (Reich, 2001, p. 8). Businesses and industries are challenged to make important changes in both how products and services are delivered as well as how “to equip today’s workers with the education and skills they need to prosper in an information-based, global economy” (Kappner, 1997, p. 28).

Changes in the kinds of jobs performed and in the work place itself are transforming the types of skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success (Stasz & Brewer, 1999). A demand for skilled labor has increased substantially and jobs are being produced faster than the available supply of workers (Smith, 2000; Topel, 1997). “Today’s high-skill job market requires advanced academic knowledge and workplace skills and training, yet young entrants to the work force are not meeting these criteria” (Brown, 1998, p. 1).

According to the projections by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2001) for future job growth through the year 2010, the service sector will have the largest share of employment growth. Jobs in this sector include those in health, business, and social services, as well as engineering and management.
Service, professional, and related occupations are projected to increase at the greatest rate, accounting for more than one-half of the total job growth over the years 2000 through 2010.

Additionally, employment in areas that require a college or other post-secondary credential is projected to grow at a more rapid rate than the average for all other occupational areas, with eight of ten of the fastest growing areas in computer-related occupations. These jobs, while increasing at a rapid rate, represent a small portion of the total number of new jobs added to the labor market (the bulk being in the service sectors). It is important to note that the median age of the labor force will continue to increase with a more rapid rise in the overall youth labor force (those aged 16 to 24). Participation rates for women, Hispanic, Asian, and others are projected to increase the most for all categories in the civilian labor force (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001).

Unlike employees in Henry Ford’s assembly line, today’s workers must have the ability to be part of a collaborative team where communication and people skills play a vital role (Smith, 1995). Managers and workers are actively involved in planning and in problem-solving processes. Employees must be effective communicators, critical thinkers, and effective team players (National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1996). Today’s expanding global economy mandates innovation and flexibility of both business and individuals in order to remain competitive (Warnat, 1997) as well as to insure economic well being (Marcotte, 1999).

In order to meet the challenges of the modern, changing work place, employees must have a strong foundation in the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and have the willingness and ability to quickly acquire and understand new and different skills (Giddens & Stasz, 1999; Stasz, Chiesa, & Schwabe, 1998). Workers in the 21st century need to be continuous learners, problem solvers, adaptable to change, effective communicating members of a team (O’Dwyer, 1997). They
must be technologically savvy, self-motivated to perform an increasing number of diverse tasks with less and less supervision, and able to set and achieve goals (Rhoder & French, 1999). Employees must be effective problem solvers and have the ability to utilize modern technology systems found in today’s work place (Kincheleoe, 1995).

**School-to-Work Transition**

As workers struggle to grasp new information and learn new technologies, there has been a growing demand for educators at both the secondary and post-secondary levels to better prepare students for the transition from school to work. As American businesses struggle for success in the global marketplace, educators have been challenged to provide more relevant learning experiences which increase connections between learning and real-world situations (Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1991).

There are increasing concerns about how educators are preparing students to enter the work force. Efforts have focused on students’ abilities to translate educational skills into occupational skills, basic work entry habits such as dependability and flexibility, as well as general socialization to the work world (Lent & Worthington, 1999). Hughey and Hughey (1999) stated that the modern work place “requires that students develop skills that will enhance their opportunities for success” (p. 206). According to Bragg (1999), “For students to be successful in the shift from the secondary to the post-secondary level, they need to be supported by a well-planned and well-executed educational transition system” (p. 3).

Many high school graduates are deficient in basic work place skills and unprepared for the complex challenges that await them on the job (Brown, 1998; Murnane & Levy, 1996). Many lack “both the academic preparation necessary for post-secondary education and the broad knowledge,
habits of mind, and personal and social skills necessary for success in the workplace and in a diverse,
democratic society” (Cohen, 2001, p. 3). Furthermore, Bailey (1991) indicated that in many
occupations, such as those in manufacturing and other highly technical areas, there has been a greater
need for employees with good basic English and mathematical skills due to “substantial changes in the
nature of work” (p. 13).

With greater international competition and market opportunities, the changing economy has a
need for workers who have new kinds of skills, workers who are prepared to meet the demands of “a
more fluid employment environment” (Stasz, et al., 1998, p. 26). Accordingly, schools have been
challenged to rethink modes of educational delivery systems to find better and more efficient ways to
prepare learners to acquire more transferable skills for future work place experiences (O’Dwyer,
1997; Rhoder & French, 1999). “As students prepare for their future, it is important for them to know
that learning is a lifelong process” well beyond their high school years (Hughey & Hughey, 1999, p.
210).

Poczik (1997) offered a vision of work as something more than “a necessary means of
supporting oneself after leaving school and before retirement. Work should be thought of as a natural
act” (p. 74) and we should begin to think of work and the work place along with school and learning as
interconnected entities that revitalize each other, ultimately resulting in better preparation of young
people for work and careers. Marcotte (1999) suggested that in order to sustain national as well as
individual well being, we must re-evaluate they way we view and deliver training for gainful
employment. “Education and training should not be limited solely to an intensive period prior to
entrance into the labor force, but should be undertaken regularly throughout workers’ careers” (p. 5).
School Reform Efforts

Many recent educational reforms have focused on how to (a) provide the nation’s youth with experiences to prepare them for a lifetime of learning and (b) assure that America’s future work force has the expertise and skills necessary to produce world-class products and services (Dole, 1990; Phelps, Hernandez-Gantes, Jones, Sanchez, & Nieri, 1995). School-to-work and work-based learning programs have emerged as one of the solutions to problems facing business and industry. These programs have been designed to help businesses meet their need for more qualified workers in order to remain globally competitive. At the same time school-to-work programs have sought to provide school experiences for students which are relevant, interesting, and personally rewarding (U.S. Department of Labor, 1992; Worthington & Juntunen, 1997). Leaders in both education and business are beginning to realize that school-to-work transition programs, those such as career academies and apprenticeship that connect students to what they learn on the job and their academic studies in high school, can be a way to make learning more relevant for students (Gehring, 2001).

Apprenticeship and Youth Apprenticeship

Historically, apprenticeship has been an enduring form of education and skill development whereby novices observe and are trained by experts in a craft. Over time, the novice/apprentice practices and further develops his/her skills and talents under the watchful eye of the master (Wolek, 1999). Youth apprenticeship is a current reform effort that prepares students for successful school-to-work transition. The program gives students a combination of academic, technical, and work place learning that helps prepare them to step into high-skills jobs and/or continue toward post-secondary degrees and provides a way for employers and schools to work together to prepare future workers (Bottoms, 1993; Bremer & Mazdar, 1999). School personnel collaborate with business personnel to
plan structured classroom and work place experiences designed to help bridge the gap between skills learned in the classroom and those used on the job appropriate to career aspirations of students. A work place mentor is assigned by the employer to each student in order to help ease the transition from the classroom to the job situation. Linking schooling more closely to the work place through youth apprenticeship fosters interactive links between schools and employers while incorporating authentic work-related learning into the education of large numbers of adolescents (Bailey, 1993; Glover & Marshall, 1997).

**Statement of the Problem**

The literature identified that there is very little student generated information about the value of school-to-work programs, in particular the youth apprenticeship program. This study provides the viewpoints of students who have participated as youth apprentices in high school. It also provides insights into the post-secondary experiences of these students and of the value of participation in the youth apprenticeship program from the perspective of students.

There is an ongoing debate about the lasting impact and value of school-to-work reforms. Missing from the debate, however, is student-level information describing the impact of these reforms on learning and post-high school transition experiences (National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1996). When assessing the strengths and weaknesses of school-to-work transition programs in order to replicate effective strategies and to avoid problematic areas, all stakeholders involved in such programs should be consulted. Students are a stakeholder group that has traditionally not been consulted widely in educational evaluations, and in particular, has not had significant voice in the school-to-work discourse (Hollenbeck, 1996).
As youth apprenticeship and other programs that emphasize integrated academic and vocational learning strategies become more commonplace, it is crucial to understand how they are experienced by participating students. Most research and evaluation studies available to date, such as those by Klerman and Karoly (National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1995) and Hershey, Silverberg, Owens, and Hulsey (Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 1998) reflect a program-level focus, overlooking the voices and views of students. There is relatively little information from students describing how and why they entered school-to-work programs, such as youth apprenticeship, nor about their perceived benefits from participating in these programs (National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1996). Much of the research dealing with the study of student perceptions is varied, uneven, and does not significantly contribute to the understanding of students’ perceptions of school reality (Weinstein, 1983). Damico & Roth (1993) reported that very few studies have asked students what they think about school practices and policies.

Students’ experience and perspectives are valuable resources for improving and refining the implementation of current reforms. Identification of students’ perceptions is vital if educational programs are to have credibility with potential students, employers, and the community (Offredy, 1995). Womble, Jones, & Ruff (1995) reported that the personal experiences of students participating in school-to-work programs and their perspectives cannot be ignored when seeking to improve or redesign programs. It is important for educators to examine ways in which students view their school experiences and to become aware of how their behaviors influence students. Assessing student perceptions is an important strategy to aid in communication between teachers and students and also in the evaluation of the successes of planned programs (Weinstein, 1983). “Schools have a valuable
resource for improving their academic productivity, the combined intelligence and interests of their students” (Damico & Roth, 1993, p. 7).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to illuminate the experiences and opinions of youth apprenticeship students through the utilization of qualitative research techniques. Educational research techniques in natural settings that seek to understand human behavior, feelings, thoughts, and actions through participant perspectives are also referred to as qualitative, ethnographic, or phenomenological (Wilson, 1977). Seeking students’ perceptions about their experiences as members of a high school youth apprenticeship program directly relates to what Filstead (1979) referred to as the “qualitative paradigm [that] perceives social life as the shared creativity of individuals . . . it also includes an assumption about the importance of understanding situations from the perspective of the participants in the situation” (pp. 35-36).

As students, teachers, administrators, parents, business leaders, and community members express interest in the work place as a viable learning environment for youth, additional knowledge is needed to guide youth apprenticeship programs and improve the effectiveness of school-to-work initiatives (Evanciew, 1994). “As graduates of these programs move into the work world and post-secondary education, their transitional experiences become invaluable sources of insight for students, educators, and local program advocates” (Phelps et al., 1995, p. 99). Educators should be interested in the kinds of learning these programs promote and in the quality of such programs. Examining student experiences and gathering information from the students’ perspectives will help educators design effective programs (Stasz & Brewer, 1997). Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to explore,
discover, and describe the experiences of a sample group of youth apprentices who participated in a youth apprenticeship program of a mid-sized school district located in northeast Georgia.

**Research Questions**

All research questions were directly related to students’ experiences as participants in the school district’s youth apprenticeship program (YAP). The following overall guiding research questions provided us with answers toward the purpose of this study: 1) Was the youth apprenticeship program meaningful to students and in what ways? 2) How did the program make a difference in students’ choices for post-secondary education? 3) How did the program affect students’ career choices? 4) How did participation in the youth apprenticeship program affect aspects of students’ post-secondary education, career/job, and/or life after high school? 5) How can the Clarke County School District improve youth apprenticeship program experiences for future students?

**Theoretical Framework**

The underlying theoretical framework for this study was John Dewey’s Theory of Experience. Contemporaries such as Kolb (experiential learning theory), Levine and Moreland (work culture, socialization), and Garrison (contemporary social constructivism) point to the centrality of experience to the acquisition of knowledge and learning as a social phenomenon.

*John Dewey*

John Dewey wrote of both society’s and education’s ills. He called attention to problems such as the school drop out rate, juvenile delinquency, the need to study changing technology in the work place, and the need to change the school curriculum to serve the majority of students who would not attend college. Dewey advocated the need to teach teamwork, problem solving skills, work ethics, and effective communication skills in the schools. In addition, he spoke about the need for social tolerance
in a complex society and the need to teach children how to learn so that skills may be upgraded when necessary.

John Dewey believed that the school was a place for various members of society, from all classes, races, and paths of life to come together. He attributed the need for the school to be the center where information and ideas mingled with recent industrial inventions and machinery of the time that “forced members of classes into the closest association with, and dependence upon, each other” (Dewey, 1976, p. 84). His philosophy was that the community and all its members should help in the efforts to provide appropriate, real-life knowledge and experiences so that young people could adjust to the many demands of the modern society in order to make of themselves good, productive, contributing citizens, and moral family members. “The community must see to it, by some organized agency, that they are instructed in the scientific foundation and social bearings of the things they see about them, and of the activities in which they are themselves engaging” (Dewey, p. 89).

Dewey believed that it was the job of the schools to provide training which would allow students to keep pace with modern changes in the community – which included the work place, home, and community at large. He advocated a cooperative system of vocational guidance among the school and industry in order to encourage students to remain in school until they had received adequate training to procure good jobs in which they were interested and for which there were ample current and future work opportunities. The use of vocational guidance as a means for simply placing young people in any trade or job was discouraged by Dewey. “It must interpret to him the intellectual and social meaning of the work in which he is engaged: that is, must reveal its relations to the life and work of the world” (Dewey, 1976, p. 90).
John Dewey was progressive in his advocacy of democratic schooling for all in the arts, sciences, and vocations. He condemned the idea of separating the curriculum to “separate training of employees from training for citizenship, training of intelligence and character from training for narrow industrial efficiency” (Dewey, 1979a, p. 102). Dewey believed that in order for schools to reflect democracy, classes of future citizens would be trained in all aspects of the curriculum, not simply for the “personal motives of the bankers and manufacturers who have been drawn into the support of the measure” (Dewey, p. 102) or to “monopolize the benefits of intelligence and of the best methods for the profit of a few privileged ones” (Dewey, 1979c, p. 127). He fervently rejected the European training system (including the apprenticeship program) where business was involved in the design and delivery of the school curriculum. Dewey warned of the danger in doing so as was to narrow down the school curriculum into training for industry as a means toward “a better grade of labor – at public expense – for employers to exploit” (Dewey, 1979b, p. 126). In his letter to William Bagley, he wrote that his “chief preoccupation in behalf of opportunity for direct and active experience by pupils in the school is that they may thereby be better enabled to assimilate the experiences of others – so important and so difficult is that accomplishment” (Dewey, 1979d, p. 415).

Another belief of Dewey was that the curriculum of the schools should reflect the reality of life – “learning is a necessary incident of dealing with real situations” (Dewey & Dewey, 1979, p. 212). Dewey suggested that adults should look at the experiences of young children, where the first learning in life takes place. He blamed the artificial realities of school where drilling of information unusable to students took place because adults had forgotten their early learning years and other life experiences that forced them to learn what was useable and necessary (Dewey & Dewey, p. 213).
Peters (1977) further provided us with an explanation when he stated the following about John Dewey:

as a Hegelian, he strove to remove the dichotomy between both ‘the child’ and ‘the curriculum’, and ‘the school’ and ‘society’. On the one hand, therefore, he insisted that the curriculum should embody what he called the sociological and the psychological principles. The sociological principle demanded that the pupil be initiated into the customs, habits, values, and knowledge which constitute the culture of a community. The psychological principle demanded that this should be done with due regard to the pupil’s individual needs, interests, and problems. (p. 110-111)

Rather than “covering the ground” with prepackaged, preplanned sets of meaningless drill and practice lessons, Dewey believed that the school curriculum should be made of meaningful experiences – meaningful at the time of learning, in the proper context, and at the right time in the child’s development. In detailing some of the faults of the current school curriculum, again we point to a reference of Dewey to Rousseau, who described the difference between teaching about things as opposed to providing meaningful, relative experiences. “You think you are teaching him what the world is like; he is only learning the map” (Dewey & Dewey, 1979, p. 218-219).

Dewey saw experience as a social relationship, a relationship between the individual and the environment (Bell, 1993), the natural environment as advocated by the philosopher Rousseau (Peel, 1951). If teachers were to provide interesting learning experiences, students would be motivated by the learning that would naturally take place, “for learning comes unconsciously as a by-product of experiences which [the student] recognizes as worth while on [his] account” (Dewey & Dewey, 1979, p. 228).
John Dewey believed learning should be an active process where the child’s development and growth as well as personality and character are at the center and forefront of all school experiences (Dewey, 1902). He stated that the end aim of the schools should be to provide a “small number of typical experiences . . . and present situations that make pupils hungry to acquire additional knowledge” that would enable and motivate students to go about creating and finding new knowledge for themselves when their needs arose (Dewey & Dewey, 1979, p. 219-220). “To find out how to make knowledge when it is needed is the true end of the acquisition of information in school, not the information itself” (Dewey & Dewey, p. 221).

Kolb, Levine, Moreland, and Garrison

The theories of contemporary scholars David A. Kolb (experiential learning) and Jim Garrison (contemporary social constructivism) are rooted in Deweyan epistemology. Human beings, as they adapt to their particular surroundings and situations are continually engaged in a learning process. “...our survival depends on our ability to adapt not only in the reactive sense of fitting into the physical and social worlds, but in the proactive sense of creating and shaping those worlds” (Kolb, 1984, p. 25). Levine and Moreland (1991) placed an emphasis on the social interactions of the work place, as groups of individuals engaged in similar and related tasks and goals share knowledge and practice routines or customs within and among the group.

Kolb’s theory of experiential learning is based upon the premise that “ideas are not fixed and immutable elements of thought but are formed and re-formed through experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 26). He also credits Piaget’s theory of how intelligence is shaped by experience and Kurt Lewin’s experiential learning model that incorporates the feedback loop (concrete experience → observations and reflections → formation of abstract concepts and generalizations → testing implications of concepts
in new situations). Both the theories of Dewey and Lewin embrace the social and integrative aspects of learning in “describing how learning transforms the impulses, feelings, and desires of concrete experience into higher-order purposeful action” (p. 22). Garrison (1995) compared modern social constructivist epistemology to Dewey’s pragmatic, naturalistic philosophy, which he referred to as pragmatic social behaviorism.

Meaning for Dewey was a social construction; it was primarily a property of social behavior and only secondarily of socially constructed and shared objects that are dependent on the original coordinated behaviors for their construction, meaning, and significance. ... individual minds emerge without discontinuity when natural organisms having that capacity learn to participate in social activities involving labor, tools, and above all, language. (p. 719)

Garrison (1996) reminded us that all meanings according to Dewey, are socially constructed, with language as the core vehicle in achieving the construction of all meaning. As individuals act and react to their natural surroundings, habits and customs are formed through the social environment. Communication with others, where listening is an integral part, and with ourselves is the basis for the creation and refinement of knowledge and the achievement of new understandings. Our behaviors, actions, social constructions, deconstructions, and reconstructions become significant in the total scheme of the universe (Garrison, 1994). “To listen is to participate in an open and democratic conversation is to commit ourselves to creating new understandings among people, and this implies a willingness to change one’s own understanding and ways of being in the face of new challenges and insights. Listening cultivates growth” (Garrison, 1996, p. 446).
John Dewey’s Theory of Experience

John Dewey’s concept of a new education and progressive school was a result of the discontent with traditional education. He criticized the existing education structure as imposing “adult standards, subject-matter, and methods upon those who are only growing toward maturity” (Dewey, 1938, p. 18-19) and employing a system of studying facts and ideas that have little to do with the realities of the present and future. His concept of the experiential continuum emphasized that experiences must be the result of a plan “to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences” (Dewey, p. 28).

“Every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after” (Dewey, 1938, p. 35). Dewey believed that the educational process should be a purposeful one of continuous growth, an active process that takes into consideration the desires, attitudes, inclinations, and feeling of the learner. “There is no such thing as educational value in the abstract” (Dewey, p. 46). “Attentive care must be devoted to the conditions which give each present experience a worthwhile meaning” (Dewey, p. 49). Learning is a continual, social process, consisting of interactions between the learner and his/her environment and the conditions that exist within the moment. “Education as growth or maturity should be an ever-present process” (Dewey, p. 50).

Dewey believed that it was the responsibility of the teacher to understand the needs and capabilities of students in order to provide experiences that have “educative quality with particular individuals at a particular time” (Dewey, 1938, p. 46). Educational experiences should be thoughtfully planned in an organized, progressive manner so that all individuals (teachers and students) “have an opportunity to contribute and to which all feel a responsibility” (Dewey, p. 56). “The development of
experience comes about through interaction means that education is essentially a social process” (Dewey, p. 58). “When education is based upon experience and educative experience is seen to be a social process, the situation changes radically. The teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities” (Dewey, p. 59).

Dewey stated that experience should be the means and the goal of education and that a sound educational experience was a continuous blend of meaningful interactions between the student and the curriculum. “At every level there is an expanding development of experience if experience is educative in effect” (Dewey, 1938, p. 88). For Dewey, education should be grounded in everyday experience, “the actual life-experience of some individual” (Dewey, p. 89). This study rests on the philosophy of John Dewey’s theory of experience. The experiences of students in their everyday lives are illuminated in the stories that are presented in this study.

Significance of the Study

Students’ opinions and descriptions of their experiences are useful and informative for both policy development and practical considerations in adjusting and implementing educational reforms and school curriculum in programs linking education and work. It is hoped that a better understanding concerning what happens to students who have been enrolled in the program may be built. This new understanding may help to further shape the program to better serve youth with more meaningful, relevant, and personally fulfilling experiences in their transition from high school through post-secondary education, and ultimately to their career and the work place. Results of the study may also be an effective recruiting tool for students and their parents who may be reluctant to participate in vocational, career and technical, school-to-work programs.
This study also provides additional desired feedback to participating employers in their quest to provide students with worthwhile and useful experiences. Students’ voices and perspectives may strengthen existing school and business ties thereby providing for a strengthened continuance of the existing program. If is found that the program has been worthwhile, this may also attract new businesses to the school and industry partnership arena. Business and industry representatives seeking to recruit and train quality employees may find the study results attractive enough to seek to “buy-in” to the youth apprenticeship model as an effective tool for “growing their own.” A broader, more diverse business group may provide students with a wider variety of occupational area choices in which to explore their career aspirations and the various paths to obtain their goals.

Assumptions of the Study

Prior to conducting the research, the following assumptions were made:

1. Youth apprenticeship participants will be honest and forthright with their responses to study questions.

2. The researcher will be as impartial as is possible (based upon the fact that the researcher was also the youth apprenticeship coordinator for the majority of the students in the study) and will respect all students opinions and responses.

3. Some students will answer some questions in more detail than others due to their individual experiences.

4. Responses of students can be analyzed and categorized into broad themes via qualitative methods.
Limitations of the Study

1. The populations of this study was limited to graduates of the northeast Georgia school district who have participated in the youth apprenticeship program and graduated from high school during the years 1997 through 2001.

2. The youth apprenticeship program in the school district is unique unto itself while at the same time follows Georgia Department of Education guidelines for program implementation as well as the goals and philosophy of the Federal Carl Perkins Act, Tech Prep initiative, and other school-to-work philosophies, such as those of the Southern Regional Education Board and Jobs for the Future.

3. Findings of this study may be but are not necessarily generalizable to other groups of youth apprentices or youth apprenticeship programs.

4. The findings of this study reflect the responses and opinions from former youth apprentices via personal interviews conducted between June and December 2003.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined according to their use in this study:

Articulation is a process for coordinating linkages of secondary to post-secondary education to help students make a smooth transition from one to the other, without experiencing delays, duplication of courses, or loss of credit (The STW Glossary of Terms, 1999).

Constructivism is a general view of the nature of knowledge and the mind that applies equally to cognitive and social cognitive development. The essential characteristics of constructivism include the assumption that knowledge is constructed by the active child through interactions with the environment. From a constructivist viewpoint, our knowledge can only fit our experience of reality in a way that a key fits a lock. Knowledge that is viable will fit the world and allow us to achieve our goals (Carpendale,
1997). According to the strong constructivist assumption, everything an individual knows is personally constructed (Resnick, 1991).

**Contextual knowledge** is learning that occurs in close relationship with actual experience. Contextual learning enables students to test academic theories via tangible, real world applications. Stressing the development of authentic problem-solving skills, contextual learning is designed to blend teaching methods, content, situation, and timing (The STW Glossary of Terms, 1999).

**High performance workplace** is a workplace that employs sophisticated, technically advanced and efficient production techniques. In order for this type of workplace to function, workers must be equipped with advanced thinking and occupational skills that enable them to learn on the job, adapt to rapidly changing technology and work in teams to solve problems. In addition to their economic development potential, high performance workplaces may help drive school reform by providing educators with a set of occupational skill standards that are required for marketplace success (The STW Glossary of Terms, 1999).

**Integrated learning** is the horizontal bridging across academics and vocational areas of the curriculum to provide students with exposure to both disciplines and ultimately how to apply them (The STW Glossary of Terms, 1999).

**Mentors**

1. A school site mentor is defined as a professional employed at a school who is designated as the advocate for a particular student, and who works in consultation with classroom teachers, counselors, related service personnel, and the employer of the student to design and monitor the progress of the school-to-work opportunities program of the student.
2. A workplace mentor is defined as an employee or other individual, approved by the employer at a workplace, who possesses the skills and knowledge to be mastered by a student, and who instructs the student, critiques the performance of the student, challenges the student to perform well, and works in consultation with classroom teachers and the employer of the student (The STW Glossary of Terms, 1999).

   **On-the-job training** is hands-on training in specific occupational skills that students receive as part of their workplace experiences (The STW Glossary of Terms, 1999).

   **Perception** is defined as observation, a mental image, appreciation, awareness of the elements of environment interpreted in light of experience, or intuitive cognition (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary).

   **School-based learning experiences** (as a part of work-based learning programs) are defined as those programs that have been built around curricular approaches that bring school and work career issues into the classroom (Kazis, 1993).

   **School-to-work coordinators** are individuals assigned or hired to oversee and implement the required components of a school-to-work system, including school-based activities, work-based activities, and connecting activities. At the local level, school-to-work coordinators may be involved in drafting local plans, recruiting and coordinating business partners, organizing technical assistance, follow-up and placement assistance for local STW stakeholders, and monitoring local partnership plans and activities for program improvement purposes (The STW Glossary of Terms, 1999).

   **Tech Prep** is the name given to programs that offer at least four years of sequential course work at the secondary and post-secondary levels to prepare students for technical careers. Programs typically begin in the eleventh grade and result in an award of an associate’s degree or certificate after
two years of post-secondary training. Tech Prep is designed to build student competency in academic
subjects and to provide broad technical preparation in a career area. Course work integrates academic
and vocational subject matter and may provide opportunities for dual enrollment in academic and
vocational courses at secondary and post-secondary institutions (The STW Glossary of Terms, 1999).

Work-based learning experiences are activities at the high school level that involve actual work
experience or connect classroom learning to work. The least intensive level of exposure to work-based
learning might occur in traditional work experience and vocational programs that do not offer work site
experience. The next level of exposure may entail the integration of academic and
vocational/occupational curricula, as in the case of Tech Prep programs, but would not include work
site experience. At the highest level, there is full integration of academic and vocational/occupational
curriculum with work site experience (The STW Glossary of Terms, 1999).

Work group (a) consists of three or more persons who interact regularly to perform a joint
task, who share a common frame of reference, who have affective ties with one another, and whose
behaviors and outcomes are interdependent (Levine & Moreland, 1991).

Work group culture is critical to worker socialization because a group’s culture (the group’s
common frame of reference) embodies the task and social knowledge that new members must acquire
to participate fully in the life of the group. Socialization begins after the new member enters the group.
During socialization, the group attempts to change the individual so that he or she can contribute more
to the achievement of group goals, whereas the individual attempts to change the group so that it can
better satisfy his or her personal needs (Levine & Moreland, 1991).
Youth apprenticeship is a program that integrates school and workplace learning by emphasizing learning by doing under the tutelage of experts, and which addresses the personal and occupational development of young people (Bremer & Madzar, 1999).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 includes background and rational of the study, a discussion of school-to-work transition and school reform efforts, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, theoretical framework for the study, significance of the study, assumptions and limitations of the study, and definition of terms.

Chapter 2 includes a review of related literature and research. A discussion of adolescents and their relationships with adults along with a description of current trends in youth transition from school-to-work strategies is included. A synopsis of various school-based and work-based learning programs is provided. In addition, traditional registered apprenticeships, European and American youth apprenticeship, and successful youth apprenticeship programs in the United States are summarized. A description of the Georgia Youth Apprenticeship Program and of the northeast Georgia school district’s youth apprenticeship program is provided. The chapter concludes with a summary and justification for the research.

Chapter 3 includes specific information about the qualitative research method and how the study was conducted. A description of the case study design as well as a discussion of the rationale for utilizing this method for this particular study is included. The qualitative research method and its relationship to the constructivist epistemology is detailed. An in-depth description of the northeast Georgia’s youth apprenticeship program and its participants is included. Youth apprenticeship students and research participants are discussed and described. The chapter also includes a discussion of data
collection, data sources, and coding and analysis methods, including data verification, reliability, validity, triangulation, and researcher bias.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Brief biographical sketches of each research participant are included. Background information about the northeast Georgia school district’s youth apprenticeship program as well as a discussion of format and delivery of the program from the perspective of students is provided. Findings from the interview data analysis is followed by a summary.

Chapter 5 presents conclusions drawn from the study, implications for practice, recommendations for further study, and an overall summary of the research study.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of the literature was undertaken to establish a need for the study and to assist in determining the appropriate research methodology. This chapter contains four sections: (1) A discussion of adolescent relationships with adults as pertaining to youth in their transitions from school to the work place, (2) An overview of current trends in youth transition from school-to-work, (3) A descriptions of youth apprenticeship as a school-to-work transition program, and (4) An explanation of the northeast Georgia school district’s youth apprenticeship program, and (5) A summary and justification for the research conducted for this study.

Adolescents and Their Relationships with Adults

Adolescents and Self-Concept

The self-concept has been defined by LaBenne and Greene (1969) as a “person’s total appraisal of his appearance, background and origins, abilities and resources, attitudes and feelings which culminated as a direction force in behavior . . . what he thinks, feels, is that which primarily guides, controls, and regulates his performance and actions” (p. 10). Both self-efficacy (one’s sense of mastery and effectiveness in dealing with his surroundings) and self-worth (the extent to which a person sees himself as worthy and moral) contribute to a person’s overall sense of self-esteem (Schwalbe & Gecas, 1988). LaBenne and Greene stated that self-concept is constructed through experiences with others in social situations and is partly a result of how he/she perceives that others see or think of
him/her and “strong self-concepts are the result of actual positive experience” (p. 20). During adolescence, the self-concept is achieved through continued social experiences and contacts with “significant others” such as parents, teachers, and peers. For the educator, this is especially important, because there is a direct relationship between a student’s self-concept, perceptions, and academic performance.

**Adolescents and Adult Relationships**

“Students must be provided real experiences in which they can have success and from which they can draw the inference that they are successful” (LaBenne & Greene, 1969, p. 32). Darling (1991) found that adolescents who have adults (either parents or other adults) in their lives who set high standards, present challenging experiences, and are supportive perform better on standardized tests than those who do not. Darling also stated that these relationships grow in importance in later adolescence. In their longitudinal, multi-class, multi-racial, and multi-ethnic study of over 20,000 adolescents, Steinberg and Darling (1994) found that overall, parents are relatively unimportant influences on students’ school performance, despite the fact that most prior studies of adolescent school achievement point to the family as the most important factor.

**Family.** Schools and work places have taken over functions previously held by the family. The spread of the public school system during the late 1800’s led to further segregation of children from their families for a larger portion of the day. The length of the school day and year increased thereby creating more segregation of children from adults, and a uniform grading system further segregated students into their peer age groups. The school and peer groups became important competitors with the family for children’s involvement and time. Over the past two centuries, demographic factors
combined with cultural and social factors have affected the status of children in the family and in the community (Hareven, 1989).

In the past, young people went through a relatively small period of adolescence. In an agricultural and early industrial society, young people moved rather easily into the work force. Families were large and it was expected that everyone, including young children, would help out. As children grew, they naturally took over more and more responsibility, and before they realized it, they were adults, on their own, with their own families (Kohler, 1981). Over the last few decades, American family patterns have changed tremendously. Families have become smaller, there has been a rise in single parent families, and increasing psychological demands are placing more and more stress on the nuclear family tradition (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984).

Perhaps to make up for their shortcomings in the nuclear family structure, parents often attempt to shield their children from responsibility. “Instead of being seen as contributing to their families, young people are more often seen as a burden to them” (Kohler, 1981, p. 426). Nightingale and Wolverton (1993) stated that many adolescents have become “takers” rather than “givers” – those who work during high school in jobs unrelated to career aspirations solely for money to buy luxury and/or personal items. Coupled with the risk of school failure, peer pressure, and other social pressures, it has become clear that in order to make a successful transition to adulthood, young people need support from all directions – school, family, and community, which includes parents, neighbors, friends, peers, teachers, and other adults with whom they come in contact in order to provide them with opportunities to be responsible, contributing adults (Kohler; Price, Cioci, Penner, & Trautlein, 1993).

The widespread family breakdown, time demands of parent work, erosion of neighborhood ties, and other conditions in which young people live have increasingly created situations where many
young people have very few, if any, meaningful relationships with adults (Stern, Finkelstein, Stone, Latting, & Dornsife, 1995). In his study of several experiential learning programs, Hamilton (1981) reported that “consistent with the claim that today’s adolescents are isolated from adults, . . . more than half of the respondents could not name five adults who were important to them” (p. 27). The family, peer group, and school isolate youth from contact with adults and provide few limited opportunities to demonstrate responsibility or to exercise accountability toward the completion of socially and economically productive tasks (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1981).

**School and community.** Participation in work-based programs provides students with opportunities to perform work tasks under the guidance of experienced adult coaches and mentors who among other duties, a) monitor and critique youths’ performance, b) initiate youths into the work place culture, c) serve as role models, d) explain why tasks are performed in certain ways, e) help students to resolve problems, f) show students that learning is a continuous process, g) communicate expectations and provide feedback, and h) give advice and guidance about career possibilities (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1997).

There has been increasing evidence in the study of adolescents’ relations with adults outside the family, such as teachers, coaches, mentors, friends, and others, and that these individuals play a major role in the healthy development of adolescents. Strong, supportive adults who engage youth in goal-directed, challenging activities appear to have particularly beneficial effects in youth transition to adulthood. Adolescents often see qualities they admire or want to emulate in particular teachers, coaches, or mentors. Sometimes unrelated adults become important because they hold a personal or skill related vision of the adolescent that the adolescent wants to share (Darling, Hamilton, & Neigo, 1994). Supportive relationships with work place supervisors and others boost adolescents’ self-
esteem, well-being, and help to reduce family related stress (Call, 1996). Mutually respectful, loyal relationships with older adults foster adolescents toward successful adulthood. These bonds are especially important for those youth who have been deprived of adult advice, encouragement, and assistance at home due to various personal, social, and economic situations (Hamilton, 1990).

**Current Trends in Youth Transition From School to Work**

*Secondary Vocational Education*

“Secondary vocational education is no longer just about preparing students for entry-level employment of jobs requiring other than a baccalaureate or an advanced degree” (Bottoms & Makin, 1998, p. 1). Quality vocational education programs challenge all students to pursue the same academic core classes while providing for authentic learning experiences that prepare students for further education and for work. “Success in the workplace and further education is based on academic knowledge and skills” (Bottoms & Makin, p. 1). The integration of academic and vocational course work and creating clear pathways from secondary to post-secondary education are major objectives of current trends in the school to work movement (Steinberg, Cushman, & Riordan, 1999; Urguiola, Stern, Horn, Dornsife, Chi, Williams, Merritt, Hughes, & Bailey, 1997).

*Tech-Prep and Curriculum Integration*

Integration of academic and vocational education was mandated via 1990 Amendments to the Perkins Vocational Education Act so that students could receive instruction in both academic and vocational competencies through a coherent sequence of courses designed to help students make intelligent career choices and to see connections between school and society (Kazis, 1993; Ramsey, 1995). Consequently, Tech Prep programs, promoted by Dale Parnell and by the Center for Occupational Research and Development (CORD), which provide for an alternative to the college prep
curriculum, received a boost of encouragement and hope for improved student engagement in the instructional process. “Tech prep requires the development of formal agreements between the secondary and post-secondary partners for integrating or articulating high school and post-secondary curricula” (Glover & Marshall, 1997, p. 143).

Tech prep’s hands-on curricula was developed to motivate students to see the importance of not only staying in high school, but also continuing on at the post-secondary level. Tech Prep focuses on serving those students in the middle two quartiles, commonly referred to as the “neglected majority” and has provided funds to all states in order to provide opportunities for students to be technically prepared in at least one field of applied science, engineering technology, health, business, agriculture, mechanical, industrial, or practical art or trade. It is expected that upon completion of the program, students will have earned an associate degree or two-year certificate of mastery, leading to effective employment placement or transfer to a four-year baccalaureate degree program (Dutton, 1995; Newsom-Stewart, 1995)

School-to-Work Transition Programs

“It is critical to prepare all students for a smooth transition from school to work or further education” (Hernandez-Gantes & Phelps, 1995, p. 3). School-to-work and work-based learning programs have emerged as an answer to the problems facing business and industry as well as America’s youth. “The school-to-work movement has arisen out of the recognition that the career paths of youth who do not attempt college or fail to succeed in college lead to an average of 6 to 8 years of floundering in the workforce” (Krumboltz & Worthington, 1999, p. 314). These programs have also been designed to help businesses meet their need for more qualified workers in order for them to remain globally competitive. At the same time, school-to-work programs have sought to
provide school experiences for students which are relevant, interesting, and personally rewarding (U.S. Department of Labor, 1992). “School-to-work teaches skills and abilities useful in careers and helps students think about and plan their future” (Hughes, Bailey, & Mechur, 2001, p. 39).

Glover and Marshall (1997) suggested that any school-to-work initiative consider the following features which have been gleaned from approaches used in other countries and adapt them as fit to the local situation: (a) connect student achievement in school to economic opportunity in the job sector; (b) make a variety of learning services and training opportunities available to meet the needs of both youth and employers; (c) have in place a sustained commitment from the business community to provide long-range efforts available for all youths, especially for those in the minority or disable population; (d) provide and maintain a data system which allows for communication between all parties at various levels of the process and have that information ready and available to the public; (e) provide students with better and earlier occupational guidance and provide opportunities for practice of necessary work place skills, (f) provide a strong academic-vocational educational content so that all youth will have the skills necessary to upgrade to keep pace with work place needs; and (g) always keep open the college option for any student wishing to pursue a post-secondary degree.

Career Awareness Programs

Career awareness programs have been offered to students at all school levels and vary in time from one hour to one day. Employers and their representatives visit classrooms and speak to students about the types of jobs in their businesses and industries as well as explain work and educational requirements. Career days and/or career fairs are special school events where students meet with employers, employees, human resource personnel, post-secondary educators and representatives.
These events have been designed to help students explore their personal and career interests and abilities (Southern Regional Education Board, 1996).

**Career Exploration**

Career exploration is conducted through tours of local industry, job shadowing, and job rotation experiences in a broad base of occupational clusters. During industry tours, students have an opportunity to observe workplace activities and speak with employees (National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1996). Job shadowing experiences may last for one day or as long as an entire summer (Olson, 1997) and can help students learn about particular jobs or industry. During job rotation, students transfer among a number of positions requiring varying levels of skills and responsibilities with the intent on understanding the various steps, stages, and team effort that are involved in a particular product or service, as well as learning about efficiency, production, quality control, and customer service (Southern Regional Education Board, 1996).

**Career Academies**

Career academies are usually separate small schools or schools within a school that specialize in broad career themes such as health-care, arts, science, math, communications, or technology. They emphasize applied academic instruction and simulation of work environments. Although there is often not a strong link between experiences in the work place and in the classroom, students participate in job shadowing activities, have adult mentors, and engage in paid summer internships (Melnik & Doty, 1997; Olson, 1997). Career academies have worked especially well with students at risk of failure because of the small size and the promise that those who stay with the program are promised a job upon graduation from high school (Glover & Marshall, 1997).
School-Based Enterprise Programs

Students engaged in school-based enterprise programs produce goods or services at the school site for sale or use by others in an integrated school environment where normal work place pressure for productivity is absent and intrinsically pleasing aspects of work are emphasized (Lewis, Stone, Shipley, & Madzer, 1998; Olson, 1994; Stern et al., 1995). In a questionnaire to junior and senior students participating in school based enterprises (SBEs), Stern, Stone, Hopkins, McMillion, and Crain (1994), found that students think SBEs give them more opportunities to learn new things, to apply on the job what they are learning in school, and that “their SBE experience reinforces school learning more strongly than their outside jobs do” (p. 11). In an earlier study, Stern, Stone, Hopkins, and McMillion (1990) reported that students who participate in SBEs are more likely to report seeing a connection between school and work.

Service Learning Programs

Service learning programs enable young people to work and learn in unpaid experiences through their participation in community service projects, developing increased social awareness about themselves in relation to their community (Billig, 2000; Kazis, 1993; Melnick & Doty, 1997). Another program which has been successful in rural areas and focuses on young people’s energy in responding to social needs is the youth service program. “Youth service and Youth Conservation Corps programs typically involve paid work – minimum wage for the work component and, often, post-graduation scholarships for further education” (Kazis, p. 9).

Work-Based Learning Programs

To date, there have been many local, state, and national programs directed at providing opportunities for young people to make the transition from school to work. Some have been more
comprehensive and others more specific. While the distinctions between school-based and work-based programs have not always been clear, there has been a commitment to coordinate and integrate efforts along the following dimensions: (a) academic and vocational learning, (b) school-based and work-based learning experiences, (c) secondary and post-secondary opportunities (Kazis, 1993). It has been suggested by Hoerner (1995a; 1995b) that work-based learning has the potential to bring together two major themes that, in the past, have been perpetually separate in the American educational system: learning for knowing and learning for doing. He offered the following two definitions of work-based learning which are worthy of noting at this time (in addition to the definition provided in Chapter One) to help clarify and broaden the understanding for readers of this study.

(Definition one): Those kinds of learning experiences and activities that are based in some type of work setting or simulated work setting, i.e. apprenticeship, internship, co-op, OJT [on-the-job training], career academies, simulation, occupational/vocational labs, etc. This first definition is more common and deals with learning experiences that are as real to the work setting as they can be made.

(Definition two): The knowledge/learning imparted to every student from the beginning of schooling which maintains a theme or focus that people work in order to live and that there is a positive “connectedness” between the schooling process and living productive lives. (1995a, p. 23), (1995b, p. 6)

**Internships**

Internships are carefully monitored work or service experiences where students who have identified specific learning goals, work for an employer for a specified period of time, usually without pay. The internship experience is part of the formal academic curriculum and during the process, the
student is expected to actively and regularly reflect upon his/her learning experience (Melnik & Doty, 1997; Southern Regional Education Board, 1996).

**Co-Op**

Cooperative (also commonly referred to as co-op) education programs are similar to internships, except that it is normally expected that students will be remunerated for their services to the business or industry and the co-op program normally falls within the realm of the vocational curriculum (Southern Regional Education Board, 1996). Co-op programs “were established around the turn of the century as part of a movement to create experience based education. In fact, the first co-op programs looked more like what we now would call apprenticeships” (Ascher, 1994, p. 1). Today, the most common arrangement is for students to take academic and a related co-op vocational class in the morning, and then work in the afternoons at their paid jobs. Elements of successful co-op programs include adherence to training agreements (a written detail of skills expected to be learned by the student) by employers, schools, and students, and periodic work site supervision by high school coordinating co-op teachers (Ascher; Lewis et al., 1998).

**Apprenticeship**

The concept of apprenticeship dates back to ancient times, running through the Middle Ages to colonial days in America, up to modern times. Apprenticeship has changed considerably from the master/apprentice system of indenture (Glover, 1980). Both registered and youth apprenticeship programs have been designed to upgrade the vocational and academic skills of students, as well as to ease their transition from school to the work place. Registered apprenticeships are training programs that meet specific federally-approved standards and are primarily run by employers, unions, and trade organizations. Although a very few high school students are enrolled in such programs, they generally
serve students and/or adults at the post-secondary or post-school levels who seek jobs in the skilled construction industries or in large-scale manufacturing plants (Olson, 1994; Southern Regional Education Board, 1996).

Youth Apprenticeship

“European, especially German, youth apprenticeship systems caught the attention of U.S. policymakers in the 1980s” (Packer & Pines, 1996, p. 4). Olson (1994) described youth apprenticeship as “the most ambitious of the current work-based programs” (p. 22) and Berson and Elksnin (1996) stated that “youth apprenticeship is considered to be the most intensive path for training in the vocational content areas” (p. 84). Stern, et al (1995) stated that definitions of youth apprenticeship in the United States vary and are still evolving; however, the core idea of the program “is to provide structured work-based learning for high school students, who are too young and too numerous to qualify for the small number of formal, registered apprenticeship programs that exist in the US” (p. 26). Berryman (1995) stated that the current interest in the United States has focused on a work-based approach to apprenticeship where the work place is the central focus of student learning, both the needs of students and the work place are addressed, and “the inherent power of the location to motivate the learner also affects learning effectiveness” (p. 209).

Based upon his one year study of the West German apprenticeship system, Hamilton (1990) delineated four key features of effective youth apprenticeship systems:

(a) workplaces and other community settings are exploited as learning environments, (b) work experience is linked to academic learning, (c) youth are simultaneously workers and learners with real responsibilities, and (d) close relationships are fostered between youth and adult mentors. (p. 61)
The American Youth Apprenticeship System

Youth apprenticeship program advocates in the United States have acknowledged the differences between US industrial and educational structures and those of other countries that currently have in place systems of youth apprenticeship (Kazis, 1993; Packer & Pines, 1996) [such as Germany, Sweden, Japan, Switzerland, Denmark, and others]. In addition to the four essential features of the West German apprenticeship, Hamilton (1990) stated that an American system of youth apprenticeship would need to be diverse, flexible, and open by including in its design (a) an exploratory element that would provide opportunities for both middle and high school youth to work cooperatively with professional adults in community settings for short periods of time; (b) a school-based element that would focus on occupational training, simulated work experiences, and related classroom work skills training; and (c) a work-based element focused on training at the work site for a specific occupation. “In its most elaborate form, work-based apprenticeship trains skilled workers at the level of technician beginning during the junior year of high school and continuing through the completion of a two-year associate’s degree at a technical college” (p. 141).

Jobs for the Future (1991) provided guidelines to include the following elements for any youth apprenticeship program:

1. Employers should actively participate by providing jobs, training, and mentoring for students and also help to develop school-based curricula and industry standards. As the apprentice moves through the program, job duties should progress in line with clearly specified levels of mastery.

2. Work place and classroom learning activities should be planned by both employers and school personnel in an effort to coordinate experiences that reinforce each other.
3. The development of academic and vocational skills should be planned in an integrated manner so that students see connections between the two in an effort to raise the academic standard level to which students may strive to attain.

4. There should be planned, well structured linkages between high school and post-secondary studies which provide for seamless continuation to the two-year technical school. It is also highly suggested that post-secondary credentials be transferable to four year programs for those students who may desire to pursue further studies.

5. In addition to a high school diploma and secondary certificate or degree, students should be awarded a broadly recognized certificate of occupational skill mastery that is widely recognized by various categories of industry.

**Successful Youth Apprenticeship Programs in the US**

“Youth apprenticeship programs are designed to place students in a community of expert practitioners where they have an opportunity to learn the work and social skills needed to become effective and productive workers in today’s competitive market place” (Evanciew & Rojewski, 1999, p. 26). From their case study evaluation of two high school youth apprenticeship partnerships, Berson and Elksnin (1996) concluded that effective programs “include the following components: administrative support, integration of applied curriculum in school settings, implementation of a comprehensive selection process for participation, formal instruction of social skills, training in and the opportunity to use reflection, and family involvement” (p. 84). Apling (1996) stated that well conceived, carefully planned youth apprenticeship programs that contain well balanced, integrated academic instruction and on-the-job skill training have potential benefits which may help students complete high school, improve
academic achievement, acquire necessary and specific work place skills, obtain post-secondary credentials, as well as ease their transition from school to the adult labor market.

Youth apprenticeship has been suggested as one solution to address the majority of America’s students who will not go to college (Bailey, 1993; Szabo, 1992); however, youth apprenticeship programs are appropriate for any student, regardless of socioeconomic status or cognitive skill level. By making the program available to any student, there is little, if any stigma attached to applying or participating (Hamilton, 1990; Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992). Most programs, however, are targeted to those youth in the middle majority achievement range – students who are doing fairly well in school, will need to improve their academic and occupational skills if they are to find good-paying jobs, but may not expect to enroll in a four-year college upon graduation from high school (Ludtke, 1994; Szabo).

Successful youth apprenticeship programs have a strong student/mentor relationship component that provides students with an opportunity to work one-on-one with an adult supervisor who serves as a role model and confidant. Apprenticeship programs also seek to involve parents and community members in the decision making processes which affect their youth apprentices (Hamilton, 1990).

Youth apprenticeship provides incentives for students to learn by tying good school performance in the middle school and early high school grades to eligibility for preferred apprenticeship positions in the 11th and 12th grades (Filipczak, 1992; Lerman, 1994; Lerman & Pouncy, 1990). “The curriculum for an apprentice’s learning at school and at work includes goals, competencies, sequencing, and assessment” (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992, p. 45). “Well-designed apprenticeship programs teach many skills that can be generalized and applied broadly” (Lerman & Pouncy, p. 72). The youth apprenticeship program seeks to provide experiences where students may use and apply factual knowledge at the work site – thereby making learning meaningful to them. When students recognize
how math, English, science, and other academic subjects are useful for the particular career aspirations, they are motivated to learn (Apling, 1996).

Stern, McMillion, Hopkins, and Stone (1990) stated that when school and job experiences are more closely related, working has a more positive correlation with school performance. Applied, contextual learning experiences that are tied to students’ career aspirations help to make school studies, such as reading, writing, and math, meaningful and relevant. Apprentices’ supervisors at school and at work can help to identify new areas of knowledge to be pursued for future skill acquisition, both academically and work-based (Filipczak, 1992; Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992; Lerman, 1994). In her study of employment among high school youth, Carol D’Amico (1984) generalized that employment and classroom activities serve to reinforce each other by fostering personality characteristics conducive to academic achievement.

In addition to preparing students for more high skilled jobs with increasing emphasis on high order thinking skills, the youth apprenticeship program provides an opportunity for students to learn and practice basic work place skills such as teamwork, communication, problem solving, planning, getting along with others, and getting to work on time (Filipczak, 1992; Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992). Steinberg (1982) referred to the adolescent process of work experience which facilitates acquisition of values, attitudes, and learning other information seen as crucial to the success of an adult work as “socialization.” Hamilton and Hamilton (1997) referred to this process as “personal and social competence.” Through their work experience and contact with adults, adolescents would learn the basics of getting and keeping jobs, have a better understanding of the work place, healthier attitudes toward working and related responsibilities, and a great commitment to their career.
In Hamilton and Hamilton’s 1997 study of 100 youth apprentices over a four year period, students reported that after a period of time, they noticed a difference between their behaviors at work and at school. Their youth apprenticeship experience helped them to develop personal competence, including self-confidence, commitment to continuous improvement, initiative, and motivation.

When students are paid wages as part of their youth apprenticeship program activities, they have opportunities to responsibly apply what they have learned in school to real-life, constructive settings (Filipczak, 1992; Lerman, 1994). In his study of the effects of working during high school, March (1991) concluded that the social self-concept of students earning money during their high school years is increased because of the autonomy and greater power that the experience affords them. Work experience appears to lead to increased self-reliance and the development of a more mature individual who takes pride in successful completion of assigned tasks (Steinberg, 1982). Greenberger and Steinberg (1981) stated that unlike the classroom, the work place provides a place for young people to function independently and responsibly with minimal adult supervision and also provides opportunities for students to influence and practice authority over others. Mortimer and Lorence (1979) concluded that over time, a worker’s self-concept is greatly enhanced when given the opportunity to successfully perform self-directed, autonomous work activities.

The Youth Apprenticeship Program (YAP) in Georgia

Smith (1995) as well as Smith and Clarke (1999) reported that the Youth Apprenticeship Program in Georgia is a result of Georgia Code #20-2-161.2 – legislation passed by the Georgia General Assembly in 1992. The law mandates the Georgia Department of Education to work collaboratively with the Departments of Labor as well as Technical and Adult Education to develop standards, policies, and procedures to implement the program in the state school systems. It directed
that students (1) at least 16 years of age in the 11th or 12th grades may enroll, (2) be given release time from school in order to work as apprentices in businesses, (3) be granted school credit for his/her time at the work site. The legislation further mandated that “the department shall develop pilot projects for the fiscal year 1994 and fiscal year 1995 school years and shall implement and direct a comprehensive apprenticeship program for all school systems by fiscal year 1996” (Youth Apprenticeship Program Code 1981, ss20-2-161.2, enacted by Ga. L. 1992, p. 2772, ss1).

The Georgia legislation also required the following school-based and work-based components: (a) a detailed training plan between employer and apprentice that identifies specific work tasks that will develop workplace competency, (b) a minimum of 144 classroom hours of related academic instruction and training, (c) a minimum of 2,000 hours of on-the-job training, (d) a progressive wage schedule established by the participating employer, (e) on-site evaluation of the student’s performance, (f) training remediation as necessary at the school site, (g) a broad range of skills which focus on manufacturing and engineering technology, administration and office technology, and health care, and (h) structural linkage between secondary and post-secondary components of the program leading to the awarding of a high school diploma and post-secondary certification of occupational skills. (Smith, 1995, p. 2-3, Smith & Clarke, 1999, p. 8)

Additionally, the authors reported that school systems were to coordinate all design, implementation, and evaluation efforts through joint planning activities among all program stakeholders, to include teachers, counselors, and administrators from both secondary and post-secondary institutions, business and labor representatives.
The Northeast Georgia School District YAP Program

The mid-sized school district in northeast Georgia offers the Youth Apprenticeship Program (YAP) to interested juniors and seniors in two high schools with an approximate enrollment of 1500 students each who wish to explore possible careers in the following areas: Health Occupations, Pharmacy Technology, Banking and Finance, Public Safety (Police & Sheriff’s Departments), Computer Technology, Hospitality (Restaurant), Education and Teaching, and other areas as expressed by students (Clarke County School District, 2001a). Each student must submit a detailed application for the program and participate in a personal interview with a team of business representatives. The YAP coordinator works with students in the application process, but the businesses make the final decisions as to which students are selected to participate (Clarke County School District, 2001b).

The targeted participant population is the “middle majority” – students with grade point averages in the range of 70 to 85. The district has a policy of that all students are invited to apply and students with averages above and below the 70-85 range are selected to participate in the program (Moore, personal communication, September 9, 2001). Students are monitored throughout the process by the YAP coordinator. The first semester focuses heavily on personal development and enrichment activities which stress the importance of a good attitude, regular attendance, effective communication skills, working as a team member, high work ethics, and leadership. Each student is assigned a work place mentor and an individual training plan is developed which includes progressive skill mastery levels. Students receive school credit for time spent at the work site, and currently, students may earn up to two Carnegie units during the junior year and four Carnegie units during the senior year (Clarke County School District, 2000).
Summary and Justification for the Research

In *Schools of To-Morrow*, John Dewey stated, “Learning is a necessary incident of dealing with real situations” (Dewey & Dewey, 1979, p. 212). John Dewey advocated the articulation of studies from one level to the next and from one institution to the next for the purpose of aiding in the child’s development from the school to his eventual career . . . “the means by which they shall be made a more effective means of connection between the present powers of the individual and his future career” (Dewey, 1976, p. 293). Dewey supported, as does the apprenticeship concept, the idea of broad based career exploration . . . “that the pupil shall be touched, shall be stimulated on all sides; that he shall be given a survey . . . through this survey he may get his orientation” (Dewey, p. 312). Subsequently, after the initial orientation period, a student would be in a position to choose a course of study in the direction of his/her chosen career.

“We are living in a period of applied science . . . [a period of] the full necessity of this interdependence of theory and practice” (Dewey, 1976, p. 310-311). Dewey advocated modern day applied learning methods which bridge the gap between theory and practice. He believed in making learning experiences relevant and meaningful. Subjects such as geography can touch almost all other subjects in the curriculum and Dewey believed that the teacher’s job was to show students how to apply facts in ways that were meaningful to them. “Facts present themselves to every one in countless numbers, and it is not their naming that is useful, but the ability to understand them and see their relation and application to each other” (Dewey & Dewey, 1979, p. 318). In teaching the application of facts, teachers help students to achieve their fullest development, learning “becomes active instead of passive, the child becomes the questioner and experimenter” (Dewey & Dewey, p. 318).
Dewey’s Cincinnati factory shop was very similar to modern day youth apprenticeship programs and tech prep plans. There, students alternated weeks between work in factories and their general and academic courses. Students were given opportunities to come back to school and apply what they had learned and they received pay for their work which was under the direction of an adult supervisor. Alternating between the school and the work place continued for two years during high school and continued through the post-secondary experience. Students were also allowed to change if they felt they did not make the right career choice. The aim of Dewey’s Cincinnati factory program was “to give the pupil some knowledge of the actual conditions in trade and industry so that he will have standards from which to make a final intelligent [career] choice.” (Dewey & Dewey, 1979, p. 385)

John Dewey believed that the aim of the schools is to give the child an education which will make him a better, happier, more efficient human being, by showing him what his capabilities are and how he can exercise them, both materially and socially, in the world he finds about him . . . If schools are to recognize the needs of all classes of pupils, and give pupils a training that will insure their becoming successful and valuable citizens, they must give work that will not only make pupils strong physically and morally and give them the right attitude towards the state and their neighbors, but that will as well give them enough control over their material environment to enable them to be economically independent. (Dewey & Dewey, pp. 247 & 400)

The voices of the participants of the youth apprenticeship program in discussing their experiences while enrolled in high school as well as their post-secondary educational and life experiences beyond high school provides educators with insights into the worth of the program. The research participants in this study provide answers to the questions, (1) Is the youth apprenticeship program meeting its goal in providing relevant, meaningful experiences for students?, (2) Has the
program provided students with appropriate experiences in order that they believe they have been able to make more informed choices about their careers? (3) By participating in the youth apprenticeship program, do students feel that their educational and personal lives have been improved? The results of the study may help educators decide if the youth apprenticeship program is an effective school-to-work strategy that results in young people becoming productive members of society as ascribed by Dewey, wherein both society and the individual may perpetuate, change, and better themselves in the process.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the design and research methods that were utilized to conduct this study. It includes specific information about the qualitative research method with particular emphasis on the case study design. The rationale in utilizing the case study design for this research study is described as well as an explanation of the relationship of the qualitative research design to the epistemology of constructivism. A description of the research site, the educational program under study, and student participants, as subjects of the study, is included as well as a discussion of the selection process for inclusion in the research. Data collection, analysis, and verification methods are presented, including information about triangulation and researcher bias. A list of questions asked of the research participants is provided in the appendix.

The purpose of this study was to illuminate the experiences and opinions of youth apprenticeship students through the utilization of qualitative research techniques. The research sought to understand students’ behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and actions. It is important to understand the nature of situations from the perspective of students who participated in the youth apprenticeship program. As graduates of school-to-work programs such as youth apprenticeship move into post-secondary education and the work place, educators should take an interest in the quality and results of such programs. Examining student experiences and gathering information from the students’ perspectives
will help educators implement, deliver, and evaluate the effectiveness of programs that provide school-to-work and school-to-career experiences.

**Qualitative Research Design**

“Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena ... “ (Merriam, 1998, p. 5). Creswell (1998) suggested that the qualitative research method be chosen when 1) the research question seeks to describe how or what is going on, 2) a particular topic needs to be explored, 3) the topic needs to be explored and presented in detail, 4) it is necessary to study individuals in their natural setting, 5) there is an interest to write in a literary or storytelling style, 6) resources to spend on extensive data collection are available, 7) the audiences of the research are receptive to the qualitative design, and 8) the research can be told from the participants’ perspective with the researcher taking on the role of active learner (as opposed to expert passing judgment on the research participants).

According to Gregson (1998), “qualitative research is based on a phenomenological, interpretive, or postpositivist philosophy. ... reality is socially constructed through individual or collective definitions of a situation” (pp. 265). “Phenomenology aims at getting a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of our everyday experiences” (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). Because the qualitative researcher tries to see the world from the perspective of the research participants, it is more likely that the phenomenological research approach provides a better understanding (Mostyn, 1985). Phenomenological human science inquiry seeks to interpret and describe lived experiences with richness and in depth and asks questions such as, “What is this particular learning experience like for students?” or “How is this learning experience significant to the student?” (van Manen). Studying the experiences
of humans, their relationships to each other and their environments is the “starting point and key term for all social science inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

**Case Study Design**

Qualitative research is a broadly described method of scholarly inquiry in the field of educational research. The qualitative researcher may employ a variety of procedural approaches. According to Creswell (1998), the case study design focuses on the development of an in-depth analysis of a single or multiple cases that may consist of an event, a program, an activity, and an individual or individuals where the data is rich in context. Case study design is used in many situations when the object of study is a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context and when the case chosen is thought to be instrumentally useful in furthering understanding of a particular issue or concept (Schwandt, 1997; Yin, 2003).

Merriam (1988; 1998) suggested that the case study design exhibits four characteristics. It is 1) particularistic (focus on a particular phenomenon, event, program, or situation), 2) descriptive (the end product of the study will be a rich, thick description of the phenomenon), 3) heuristic (the study will enlighten and heighten the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon or situation under study), and 4) inductive (the study will lead from the understanding of the particulars of specific case or cases to a more generalized understanding of the phenomenon).

**Rationale for Case Study Design for This Study**

“Case studies . . . are designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data” (Tellis, 1997, p. 1). “When it is important to be responsive, to convey a holistic and dynamically rich account of an educational program, case study is a tailormade approach” (Merriam, 1998, p. 39). This study sought to uncover youth apprenticeship students’ personal stories
of their high school to post-secondary to career pathways. Additionally, it sought to illuminate educators, parents, community members, legislators, and school-to-work program partners as to the effectiveness of the youth apprenticeship program as a viable educational method of instruction. “We must be prepared to facilitate the curriculum implicit in new coalitions of teachers, curriculum developers, administrators, teacher educators, researchers and scholars, publishers, parents, and especially learners themselves” (Schubert, 1993, p. 111).

This study focused on one particular phenomenon or main unit of analysis (the context for the case study that addresses the main study questions) (Yin, 2003), the youth apprenticeship program in a mid-sized school district in northeast Georgia (herein referred to as the case). The results are drawn from a sample of student participants bounded within the case (Merriam, 1998) that provide the reader with a rich description of the program from the voices of students from the emic or insider perspective. The main focus was to gain understanding from the perspective of the research participants (as opposed to an outsider or etic viewpoint) (Merriam, 1998). In turn, this hopefully will broaden the reader’s insight of the program and the experiences of the research participants (youth apprenticeship students). By inductive reasoning, the results of the study lead us from the particulars of each student’s experience to a more generalized understanding of the total program “that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice” (Merriam, 1998, p. 41).

This research is phenomenological in nature because it attempted to seek understandings from the perspectives of the students who participated in the youth apprenticeship program. Initial and probe questions were asked to gain insights into students’ relationships to key program participants, such as the youth apprenticeship coordinator and work place mentors. It also sought to gain knowledge of how students’ future career and post-secondary educational goals may have been altered
because of their choice to apply for and participate in youth apprenticeship while in high school.

Students were asked to remember their experiences by telling their stories. According to Schank and Abelson (1995), “stories ... are the basis of our understanding. Understanding means retrieving stories and applying them to new experiences. ... the stories we create are the memories we have” (pp. 33-34).

The research attempted to find out if the program had met the needs and expectations of student participants. “Qualitative methods can effectively give voice to the normally silenced and can poignantly illuminate what is typically masked” (Greene, 1994, p. 541). In seeking to give voice to student participants, the research was democratic in nature. According to Giroux (1986), engaging students and listening to them as they describe their experiences, giving legitimacy to their individual and collective voices, sets the stage whereby schools can “cultivate a spirit of critique and a respect for human dignity that will be capable of linking personal and social issues around the pedagogical project of helping students to become active citizens” (pp. 66-67). Additionally, St. Pierre (1997), stated that qualitative research in the social sciences can help us to understand our knowledge, its production, our own subjectivity, and to find ways to produce knowledge differently, and urges us to “rethink our understanding of both knowledge and its production in order to envision revitalized academic and public discourses to guide our teaching and learning” (p. 175).

Qualitative Research and Constructivism

The qualitative design fits well with the researcher’s constructivist epistemology. Constructivism “is a philosophical perspective interested in the ways in which human beings individually and collectively interpret or construct the social and psychological world” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 19). According to Gergen (1995) “social constructionist inquiry is principally concerned with explicating the processes by
which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live” (p. 266). Knowledge and the process of understanding are constructed in the process of active, cooperative, social exchange and interaction among persons in a situation or relationship.

The “constructivist paradigm” (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) is also called naturalistic, hermeneutic, or interpretive. Individual values cannot be separated from the individuals involved in social interaction; therefore, all interactive social processes are value laden. Through open communication and the interactive sharing of common and conflicting value and personal constructions, new constructions of knowledge are formed within and among individuals. In the process, individuals come to make sense of their experiences (construct knowledge) which ultimately leads to better understandings (new knowledge) of self, others, and life experiences. “One should think of knowledge as a kind of compendium of concepts and actions that one has found to be successful, given the purposes one had in mind . . . . the goal of a coherent and conceptual organization of the world as we experience it” (von Glaserfeld, 1984, p. 7).

For this researcher, the choice to conduct a qualitative research study was one of personal taste and a preference for the literary style that this type of research permits, especially as related to the presentation of the results of the study. Like Peshkin (1982) the researcher was more comfortable with qualitative procedures and analytic techniques that allowed for a powerful portrayal and illumination of relationships and concepts. The process and experience of doing this research with the additional interactions between the researcher and many of the former youth apprentices has helped the researcher to grow both personally and professionally. It has also provided a rich sense and deeper meaning to her own experiences as an educator and former youth apprenticeship coordinator.
Description of the Research Site and Participants

The Mid-Sized School District in Northeast Georgia

The research was conducted in the a school district located in northeast Georgia, approximately one hour’s drive northeast of Atlanta. The county is classified as urban, although it is located within one-half hour’s drive in either direction of many rural, farm communities. The school system is comprised of 20 schools -- 13 elementary, 4 middle, 3 high (two comprehensive and one “non-punitive alternative” high school that includes the high school evening program), one pre-kindergarten program, and an alternative education program. There are approximately 12,000 students with a minority population of about 60% (Clarke County School District, 2002).

The School District’s YAP Program

The school district was one of five districts selected as pilot sites for the development of youth apprenticeship in Georgia prior to the 1992 legislation. The district was provided funds via a planning grant from the legislature for fiscal year 1994. With these funds, along with hiring a youth apprenticeship coordinator, a group of approximately fifteen representatives from various segments of the community (including hospitals, local area banks, the Department of Labor, news media, and district personnel) visited Project Pro Tech in Boston, Massachusetts to speak with project participants and to see if such a program would be viable and workable in the school district and community.

In 1995, along with the other 23 systems, the school district was selected to implement and establish the Georgia youth apprenticeship program. The school district decided to offer the health occupations program to interested 12th grade students at both high schools. Working with area hospitals, approximately 15 students participated during the first year. The following school year, the school district again participated in the competitive grant process offered by the Georgia Department of
Education. The district was successful in obtaining grant funds, and during the 1996/1997 school year, offered the program to both 11th and 12th grade students in the career areas of health occupations and banking and finance. The area hospitals continued to participate, as well as several area doctor’s offices. Twenty students participated in a variety of career awareness activities, including job shadowing, departmental visitations, clinical rotations, and volunteering. Five area banks collaborated to offer training and job placements to approximately 12 students (Hanks, 2001).

Description of Youth Apprenticeship Students

Youth apprentices range in age from 15 through 19 and are classified as juniors and seniors in their high schools. Upon graduation, most apprentices continue on to post-secondary education and/or the military. During the high school apprenticeship experience, depending upon the career cluster area and nature of the program in that area, students enter and exit at various places. Students are encouraged to join the program at the start of their junior year and continue through the second semester of the senior year. However, some programs, such as education, allow students to enter as late as the second semester of their senior year, for only one semester’s participation. Other programs that are designed as a entire two year, four semester sequence, allow students to exit prior to the completion of the apprenticeship experience. Some reasons for early exit may be: 1) lack of student interest, 2) employer dissatisfaction with the apprentice, 3) students wishing to switch apprenticeship cluster areas, 4) low academic performance requiring the student to drop apprenticeship and concentrate on core areas for graduation, 5) students moving out of the school district.

Some students elect to attend post-secondary institutions that may be technical or junior colleges offering certificate, diploma, and/or associate degree programs. Others choose to attend four-year, baccalaureate degree institutions. Youth apprenticeship students are “tracked” for up to four
years beyond high school graduation. Students are contacted in a variety of ways. Some students, especially those attending colleges in the community or closeby, and who also may be working in or near the community, have regular contact with the coordinator, either by phone, or in person when the coordinator visits the job site.

Periodically, the youth apprenticeship coordinator attempts to contact each student either by mail, e-mail, or by phone for purposes of follow-up after high school graduation. During these contacts, the coordinator seeks information about the student’s educational and work history since graduation. All data for current high school and youth apprentice graduates is kept on file by the program coordinator in the youth apprenticeship office. Since it’s inception since 1994 to the date of this writing, the school district’s program has served approximately 500 students (Moore, personal correspondence, June 3, 2002).

Selection of Research Participants

A purposeful sample was utilized for this study. Participants selected represented those that were typical of the range of students that participated in the school district’s youth apprenticeship program. According to Merriam (1998), a typical sample is one that is chosen because “it reflects the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 62). The researcher worked from student files and follow-up data of student graduates found in the youth apprenticeship coordinator’s office. From the pool of geographically convenient and willing participants, the researcher choose 20 participants who graduated from the district’s high schools during the years 1997 through 2001.

The group of participants have had a chance to develop an employment history of a minimum of two years or have had the opportunity to obtain a post-secondary credential (certificate, two or four
year diploma) or a combination thereof. The first two years (pilot and first year of full implementation) of program participants have been eliminated from the research pool, given consideration for improvements that have been made in the beginning years of implementation in the program. This also helps to account for the fact that the first year students only participated for one year of the program at the high school level and that the first two years were very limited in numbers of students participating in one of the two career area offerings – health and banking.

It was expected that not all students would be able or willing to participate. Some students had re-located to other areas which made accessibility difficult. Others were not able to be reached. Of those who fit the criteria of willing, able, and available, the researcher attempted to vary the program area concentrations, high schools, and the length of time since high school graduation. A demographic table detailing the research participants is included at the end of chapter four.

Data Sources and Collection

Data Sources

The principal data source for this study was from semi-structured personal interviews. According to Patton (1990), interviews are used to determine what is on a person’s mind. Merriam (1988) suggested that when behaviors, feelings, interpretations, or attitudes cannot be directly observed, the interview may be most beneficial for the researcher. In qualitative research, “occasionally all of the data are collected through interviews. The most common form of interview is the person-to-person encounter in which one person elicits information from another” (Merriam, 1998, p. 71). Holstein and Gubrium (1995) asserted that all interviews are “reality-constructing meaning-making occasions” (p. 4) that give us insights into both the reality as it exists in both the researcher and the respondent’s minds but also how that knowledge has been or is constructed. “Meaning is not
merely elicited by apt questioning nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter’’ (Holstein & Gubrium, p. 4).

According to Seidman (1998), interviewing is a basic mode of inquiry. “At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of their experience” (p. 3). The semi-structured, in-depth interview style allowed flexibility to modify the interview in order to explore new ideas as they emerged. This allowed the researcher to change the direction and choice of topics according to the flow of the conversation with each research participant (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). It also allows students to add or modify interview segments as they saw a need or desire. Participants were encouraged to “elaborate, provide incidents and clarifications, and discuss events at length” (Rubin & Rubin, p. 8).

The use of a tape recorder was optional at the discretion of the student participants; however after careful explanation of the consent form and process, all participants allowed the researcher to tape record their interviews. Participants were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and that only the researcher would be able to identify particulars known only to them. Pseudonames were used to code the interview tapes and typewritten transcriptions. Tapes of each interview were transcribed within a week and transcriptions were proofed against replays of audiotapes. All interviews went very smoothly and there were relatively few technical difficulties (during two of the interviews the researcher noticed that the tape had run out and had to go back to see where the interview had been “cut off” and repeat a portion of same). All participants were very cooperative and it was personally wonderful for the interviewer to have a chance to “re-connect” with former students. It seemed as if this were a mutual feeling with almost all of the participants.
Other sources of data included asking the participant to construct a chronicle of a given point of
time (from the time he/she decided to apply for the youth apprenticeship program to the present),
photographs, past assignments such as projects or portfolios, and journal writing from student files
located in the office of career and technical education. According to Clandinin and Connelly (1994),
chronicles are used as a way of having participants re-construct their experiences, a way for us to hear
their stories. Students in the YAP are regularly asked to keep records of their experience through
journal writing. Having students’ voices expressed in journals provides teachers with an understanding
of the impact of their teaching and program design on student learning (Phelps, et al, 1995).

Journal writings, along with photographs and projects, are often kept in the student’s file.
When available and with the student participant’s permission, the researcher shared some of these
documents during the interview process as a way of reviewing past and current reflections on the youth
apprenticeship experience. The inclusion of these items allowed for the addition of relevant and
meaningful information that may not have been necessarily conveyed or thought of during the question
and response portions of the personal interview sessions.

Photographs when available (those in the YAP office or those that the student may have) were
used to further clarify and gain insights into student perspectives of their participation in the program.
According to Walker (1993), it is important to relate photographs to interviewing and observation and
may play a vital part in the evaluation process of the research. Photographs are also effective tools as a
stimulus for writing. “People are as interested in seeing what they and their friends have said as they are
in the pictures themselves. This is especially true of students, who often have very different perceptions
of events” (p. 85).
Items contained within student files (records such as time-sheets, program applications, coordinator notes, student assignments, and photographs) were reviewed by the researcher and participant at the start of each interview. The initial greeting portion (where the researcher and student spent some time in “catching up” on events in each other’s lives) and the time reviewing items contained in student files was not tape-recorded, therefore not contained in the data analyzed. The time was, however, important in establishing rapport and as aiding as a stimulus for recollection of events as related to youth apprentices’ high school program experiences.

Analysis of the Data

Data analysis followed a constant comparative approach. According to Merriam (1998), this is a systematic comparative method that begins with particulars from one set of field notes, a document, or an interview which is compared with a similar set of data. Analysis of the data in this study began with the first interview and continued subsequently until the last (20th) interview. Each hard copy transcription was manually reviewed over and over to identify descriptors relevant to the guiding questions of the study. Units or chunks of data were analyzed for similarities and differences, then organized into more broad categories and themes. Experience with data generates insights, hypothesis, and questions, which may be pursued through further data collection. Indicators from the data are looked at for similarities and differences. From this process of organizing data, coded categories and themes emerged.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982), “Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others” (p. 145). Analysis during data collection provides the researcher a method for narrowing the
study by focusing on the specific problem associated with the study and also helps the researcher develop analytical questions that are relevant to the study to direct the research (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

**Data Verification**

To be credible, wherever ethnographic techniques are used, reliability and validity must be addressed. External reliability addresses the issue of whether independent researchers would discover the same phenomena in the same or similar settings. Internal reliability refers to the degree to which other researchers would match a previously generated set of constructs with data in the same way as did the original researcher (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The generalizability of case studies can often be problematic. Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggested the use of the terms “consistency” or “auditability” (p. 23) as being more appropriate to naturalistic inquiry. In an attempt to achieve maximum reliability, the researcher created an accurate and complete event trail and documented decisions and procedures so that others who may be interested in replicated a similar study might be able to do so.

**Validity and Triangulation of Data**

During each interview, the researcher paused occasionally to confirm what the interviewee had said. For example, she would state, “so what I’m hearing you say is . . . “ and then ask the participant for a response to confirm or add to the responses. All participants were given an opportunity to review their typewritten interview transcripts. According to Schwandt (1997), this type of procedure is often called member checking. Data was recorded as it actually occurred; data facts were kept completely separate from researcher interpretations, especially in the area of field notes. These checks for accuracy of data and accuracy of interpretations helped to establish validity of the study. According to Seidman (1998), one of the goals of this process is to “understand how our participants understand and
make meaning of their experience. If the interview structure works to allow them to make sense to themselves as well as to the interviewer, then it has gone a long way toward validity” (p. 17).

Additionally, data triangulation was utilized to enhance the validity of the study. Mathison (1988) stated that “good research practice obligates the researcher to triangulate, to use multiple methods and data sources” (p. 13). Each participant interview as a sub-unit of the case served as an individual data source as did the pictures, documents, and other student records contained in their files. Mathison further claimed that this strategy aids in the elimination of bias. Data from the study was shared with the current youth apprenticeship coordinator and with one of the high school youth apprenticeship facilitating teachers in order to further check for accuracy and to increase validity. The use of a variety of methods or data sources and the inclusion of multiple perspectives aids in guarding the researcher’s and others from viewing events in a biased or simplistic way (Anderson, 1994).

Researcher Bias

Schwandt (1997) defined bias as that which results from over-reliance on accessible or key informants, selective attention to dramatic events or statements, biasing effects stemming from the presence of the inquirer at the site of investigation, or biases which may result from the effects of the respondents and the site on the inquirer. In this study, the researcher is also an employee of the school district and former youth apprenticeship coordinator. The researcher supervised many of the students who participated in this study. Many of the program components in place at the time students were in high school were a direct result of the work of the researcher at the time (as youth apprenticeship coordinator). Consequently, predisposition for biasing effects posed a real threat.

Having been a youth apprenticeship coordinator for six years prior to conducting this study, with particular interest in the effectiveness of the program, the researcher was constantly concerned
with subjectivity and strove to conduct the research in what Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) call “the critical tradition.” Research in the critical tradition takes the form of self-conscious criticism – self-conscious in the sense that researchers try to become aware of the ideological and epistemological presuppositions that inform their research as well as their own subjective, inter-subjective, and normative reference claims. Thus critical researchers enter into an investigation with their assumptions on the table, so no one is confused concerning the epistemological and political baggage they bring with them to the research site (p. 140).

During the course of the research and the writing of the final paper, the researcher practiced regular critical reflection with a sincere hope that true understanding of self and the situation lessened bias in the study. The researcher mentally prepared herself for hearing things perhaps that would make her uncomfortable (such as criticism about the methods and means of delivery of the youth apprenticeship program and even criticism of the coordinator herself). Every effort was made, via verbal conversation prior to each interview, to assure each participant that all views and opinions would be honored and listened to in a fair and unbiased manner by the researcher.

Additionally, the constructivist epistemology of the researcher may also be considered a biasing effect in this study. The fact that the researcher so strongly believes in the concept of the youth apprenticeship program as an effective instructional strategy is a bias. Again, the researcher kept her “eye on the final product” of completing and presenting to the reader a true picture of the experiences of youth apprenticeship students while maintaining the most unbiased perspective possible based upon the entire situation.
**Interview Questions**

An initial list of 16 questions was asked of all research participants (see Appendix A for list). All questions revolved around the theme “Tell me about your experiences, both in school and on-the-job, as a youth apprentice.” This included student experiences while in high school and for the post-secondary years leading to the time of the research interview. The assumption was made that some students would answer some questions in more or less detail than others; therefore, additional probe questions were asked of program participants to gain more detailed and focused data. Interview questions have been sectioned into five parts to indicate which questions sought to answer the five overall guiding research questions. The overall guiding research questions as well as interview questions were formulated with consideration of and are tied directly to the underlying theoretical framework -- John Dewey’s theory of experience.

**Chapter Summary**

The qualitative research design provided the framework for which this study was conducted. The case study design was found to be the most appropriate method of scholarly inquiry to find the answers to the research questions that resulted from a review of the literature and the gap that lie therein. In-depth, personal interviews sought to illuminate the perspectives of students who had participated in the school district’s youth apprenticeship program. Students were asked general and subsequent probe questions to gain insights into how the program has affected their post-secondary educational, career, and life during and after high school. Student participants were selected from the pool of willing individuals who had graduated from high school at least three years from the time this study was conducted. This allowed for a period of time in which students have gained experiences which allowed them to reflect on previous school and work situations. A description of the research
site as well as how data was collected and analyzed has been provided. The researcher included a
discussion of her constructivist epistemology, personal/professional biases, and reflective activities so
that the reader of the two chapters that follow would have a better understanding and perspective in
making their own interpretation of the findings and conclusions.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The findings presented in this chapter are the result of the research conducted that sought to answer the research questions related to students’ experiences as participants in the school district’s youth apprenticeship program (YAP). The objectives of this study were to determine 1) if the youth apprenticeship program was meaningful to students and if so, in what ways, 2) how the program made a difference in students’ choices for post-secondary education, 3) if the program affected students’ career choices, 4) how participation in the program affected aspects of students’ post-secondary education, career/job, and/or life after high school, and 5) how the school district could improve program experiences for future youth apprentices. Personal interviews conducted with the twenty participants provided the data presented in this chapter.

This chapter is composed of four sections. Section one presents a summary and discussion of the research participants. The second section of this chapter provides the reader with a summary of background information about student participants and the youth apprenticeship program summarized from the voices of students based upon their responses to selected interview questions. Section three presents the findings from the analysis of the interview data that include the major themes and categories that emerged from the data. Section four presents a discussion of the findings as related to the objectives of the study. Included in section four is a summary of student responses related to the fifth research question, “How can the school district improve the youth apprenticeship program and
program experiences for future youth apprentices?” The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings of this study.

**Section One – Research Participants**

This section provides a description of the students interviewed during the course of the study. Table 1 provides demographic data for the twenty research participants. The table is followed by biographical sketches that contain more detailed information about participants’ journeys from high school graduation to post-secondary with details about past and current employment and future plans. Quotes are woven into the biographical sketches in order to provide the reader with a better understanding of each research participant. Careful consideration and time has been given to the presentation of the information contained in the demographic data and biographical sketches in order to honor the promise of anonymity to each participant. Only the most relevant data in relation to the objectives of the study has been presented. Section one concludes with a summary of post-secondary and career paths of the research participants.
Table 1

Demographic Data for 20 Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudoname</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Yr. Grad.</th>
<th>YAP Career Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Banking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Health/Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacklyn</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Health/Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Banking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Computer Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Public Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francine</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Health/Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Computer Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Public Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonya</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Health/Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Banking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Amy

Since her graduation from high school in 1997, Amy has continued to pursue her dream of becoming a dentist. “I’ve always wanted to go into the health field. Things in health always fascinated me. YAP helped me to realize that I do have a love for medicine and helping people with managing their health.” She participated as a health apprentice during her junior year. For several reasons, including a desire to take higher level academic classes in order to “get into a good school so that I could pursue a degree in the medical field,” she chose not to continue with YAP during her senior year.

Immediately upon graduation, she enrolled in a four-year university outside of Georgia and majored in biology. Amy devoted all her energies to her studies while in college. She did not work a part-time job. She did, however, continue to volunteer in health care during summer and semester breaks. She has spent considerable time volunteering in two dentist’s offices which she feels has helped to confirm her career aspirations. Amy earned a bachelor’s degree in four years and after graduation decided to “take a break.”

Amy has worked full-time for the past two years in the field of education. She is currently saving money and in the process of applying to graduate school with hopes of subsequently being accepted into a dental college. “It’s taken me longer than I thought it would, but I still haven’t given up on my dream. I am going to have DDS by my name someday.”

Laura

Upon graduation from high school, Laura was offered a full-time position in the hospital in which she apprenticed during her junior and senior years. “The YAP program basically got me the job I’ve had ever since I graduated.” She worked at the hospital for a year and a half while attending a four-year college as a biology major with hopes of possibly going on to medical school.
Midway through her second year in college, Laura decided to switch to a two year technical school, mainly because of the lower class sizes and her comfort with same. She changed her major to physical therapy, graduated with an associate degree and is now working full-time as a physical therapy assistant in the same hospital in which she did her youth apprenticeship experience. She is now married and said that “the program had an effect on my future in more ways than one.” Laura credits the youth apprenticeship program with providing the avenue to meeting her husband who also works at the same hospital.

Luke

Luke’s first interest was in pursuing a career in medicine. He enjoyed his two-year youth apprenticeship experience at the hospital so much that he continued to volunteer through the summer after high school graduation. The following fall, he enrolled in a four-year university with a major in biology with plans of pursing a career as a doctor. At the end of his sophomore year, he “had a evaluating moment which was organic chemistry. I just lost my drive for it. They call that the weed out course. That class makes it known what you want to do or not do.”

Luke believes that his strongest trait is that of helping others. All his life, he remembers helping his younger brothers, members of his family, and others in the community in a variety of situations. Teaching had always been among the top choices in the things Luke wanted to do with his life. “At the time I decided to make my change of majors, teaching just seemed to be a natural choice.” Luke is now in the first year of his first paid job as a high school teacher. He has many hobbies and is still wondering if perhaps sometime in the future he might want to further his education – perhaps in the area of law.
Sue

The summer after high school graduation, Sue continued in a paid full-time position at the bank in which she did her youth apprenticeship experience. She “thoroughly enjoyed working with the many wonderful and supportive people at the bank” and wished she could have continued; however, she had been accepted at the major university of her choice in a large city. She enrolled in the fall as a business administration major and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in June 2003. During her time in college, she worked part-time as an administrative assistant in several businesses – a bank, a communications company, and a law office. “YAP helped me to prepare for a career in a professional work setting in my chosen area of interest.” Sue is currently seeking full-time employment in the area of her degree, preferably in a large suburban city.

Rhonda

While still in high school and as a youth apprentice in health occupations, Rhonda earned a certified nursing assistant credential. She worked in a paid part-time position at a local hospital for the remainder of her senior year and in the summer following graduation. In the fall, she enrolled in a four-year nursing program. “The YAP program helped me in the work place by teaching me good work habits. It also made me want to continue to pursue a study in the health profession.” She is currently completing her last year toward her bachelor of science degree in nursing. During college, she worked in retail as a sales clerk and as a part-time nursing assistant. Upon graduation, Rhonda plans to return to her home community to work full-time in a local hospital as a nurse.
Jean

Jean was a youth apprenticeship student in health occupations. While apprenticing as a non-paid volunteer at the hospital, she also worked in a paid part-time position as a clerk in a food store. She always thought that she wanted to work in some area of health occupations but still hadn’t made up her mind when she graduated high school. She enrolled in a four-year nursing program in Georgia but after the first year, decided that the health field, after all, was not something she wanted to continue to pursue.

During the summer between high school and college Jean worked as telemarketer. During her first year in college she worked a sales clerk in two large retail stores. She decided to switch her major to marketing and is now in her third year pursuing a four-year degree in marketing at a college outside of Georgia. She still feels that youth apprenticeship was a worthwhile experience. “Even now I use my volunteer hours on applications to get a job and also to increase my position. I’m very glad that I have had this experience.”

Andrea

Andrea’s first career choice was that of dental assisting. While in high school, for the first semester of health occupations youth apprenticeship, she volunteered at the hospital. To meet her career desires, for the remainder of the first year and for her entire senior year, Andrea was placed in a volunteer apprenticeship position with a local dentist. She also worked in a paid part-time position as a clerk in a food store.

Immediately upon graduation from high school, Andrea worked full-time at the same food store. In January following high school graduation, she began taking some core classes at a local technical college, while continuing to work full-time at the grocery. A year later, Andrea enrolled in a
two year allied health program at a two year college in south Georgia. She completed the program last spring (2003) and is now working at a local doctor’s office as a nurse’s assistant. Andrea believes strongly in the value of the youth apprenticeship program for high school students “because students can get the inside scoop on a career and see if they really would want to do it for the rest of their lives.”

Karen

Karen had thought about being a lawyer but didn’t know if she could make it through law school. She had always worked with small children in activities such as babysitting and Sunday school and thoroughly enjoyed it. “I’m always around kids and they are always around me. In strange place, kids just come up to me and start talking to me. I think they are drawn to me and I’m drawn to them ... it’s just natural.”

During high school, Karen planned on going to college, majoring in early childhood education, and planned to become a teacher. “YAP firmed my choice and made it very obvious what I was supposed to do in life. I think I may have changed my major or my mind. I actually did change my major to interior design. I love that and it would be fun to do as a hobby, but that’s not what is going to be fulfilling and that is not what my gifts are in life, so I ended up going back to early childhood. I thought about what I had done in YAP, how much I enjoyed it and how it felt so natural, so it would have been different if I hadn’t done the program.”

At the time of our interview, Karen was in her last semester of college, completing her final student teaching experience in early childhood education. We planned an interview time late in the day before the Board of Education offices closed so that Karen could pick up an application for teaching in the school district. We were able to arrange to have her meet the director of personnel
where Karen enthusiastically spoke about her youth apprenticeship experiences and her desire to start her teaching career as well as her first paid work experience.

When asked where she planned to be in ten years, Karen replied “Hopefully I will be a ten year veteran teacher, married with kids, living the American dream. YAP was positive. It helped me to understand what I really wanted to be. I was able to get scholarships that helped me to get a degree in early childhood. If affected me in a very positive way.”

Rose

Rose always felt that she wanted to have a career in the health field. “At one point early in high school, I thought I might want to be a pediatrician. YAP gave me more alternatives as to what I could so and gave me more things to think about.” Rose spent her first semester in health occupations youth apprenticeship going through the clinical rotations at the hospital and finding about all the opportunities available in the health care field. During her first semester, a new apprenticeship opportunity opened up in the area of pharmacy. Rose expressed interested and after completing an additional application and personal interview was accepted to participate in the school district’s partnership with the a major research university in northeast Georgia.

For the balance of her high school experience (one and a half years), Rose worked every day for two hours in a part-time paid position as an assistant in the college’s labs. She also worked an additional part-time job as a clerk in a grocery store. Upon graduation from high school, Rose applied and was accepted into a four-year nursing program. She continued to work part-time as a manager of a retail chain of clothing stores while studying for her degree in nursing. In December of 2003, Rose passed the State Boards and earned a BSN in nursing. She currently lives in northeast Georgia and
works in a local hospital as a nurse. She is also planning to pursue an advanced degree... “maybe I’d like to be a nurse practitioner in a clinic or maybe pharmacy.”

*Jacklyn*

While in high school, Jacklyn participated as a youth apprentice in health occupations. She found that health occupations was something she did not want to pursue as a career and at the time of our interview, she expressed that she is still unsure of her career choice. “I still don’t know what I want to do. I know I want to work. YAP prepared me for work in general and that’s a sure thing, I want to keep working. I guess I should know by now, but I still haven’t figured it out. I did find out that nursing wasn’t for me. I probably would have gone to college just because they (meaning her parents) wanted me to go to school. But I am working now. YAP helps you to know that you do have choices .... there is nothing wrong with working.”

Jacklyn has worked in a variety of jobs during and after graduation from high school, ranging from retail, to manufacturing, to office work. She currently works full time as an office administrative assistant in an educational institution. She attends college part-time and is majoring in computer technology and she does want to continue until she earns a bachelor’s degree. “I want to move up in the work force. In the office that I work in, there’s a lot of opportunity to move up. I plan on obtaining my degree and moving up in the work force.”

*Mike*

Mike applied for the youth apprenticeship program because of his desire to become a microbiologist and his interest in botany. “I wanted to do something great, like finding a cure for aids with plants and genes.” He volunteered as a health occupations youth apprentice because “it was a good idea to get the opportunity to get into a field of interest before going into college.”
Upon graduation from high school, Mike enrolled in a four-year program in hopes of pursuing further studies in the field of biology. After his first year, he lost interest and decided to change his major. During that time, Mike was presented with an opportunity to volunteer with his church in another country. He did missionary work for two years in a country in South America. Mike returned to the United States fluent in Spanish but unsure of his educational and career direction. He thought about being a foreign language teacher, then, “one day I was driving and I drove by an accident and I couldn’t help them and it was then that I decided to be an emergency technician.” Mike is now enrolled in an emergency medical technician program. He is enthusiastic about his future plans to work full-time and an EMT serving and helping others.

Jim

Jim worked in a part-time paid position as a youth apprentice in the banking industry. He continued to work part-time at the same bank for the first year after high school while taking core academic classes at the local technical college. Because of a conflict in the work hours at the bank and hours that certain classes were offered, after his first year of college, Jim took a position in sales that offered more flexible hours. He continued to take classes at the technical college and work in sales during his second post-secondary year. He worked in several sales type jobs and is “trying to enjoy all the things that go along with college.”

In his third year after high school, Jim applied and was accepted into a four-year university. He is now pursuing a degree in communications with hopes of pursuing a career in sales. “Everybody wants a job that they would like doing and they make a lot of money. I’d like a job talking to people, working with people. I wouldn’t want to be at a job just stuck in a hole somewhere. I want to be doing something seeing some new things. Sales, public relations work, pharmaceutical sales, fly
around, see stuff, settle down, grab a house, be happy, having what you need, being content with
yourself.” While going to college and pursuing these goals, Jim also works full time as an administrative
assistant for an educational institution.

John

John had never worked in a paid position prior to applying for a position as a computer
technology youth apprenticeship student. “When I first heard about it, the reason I got into it was to go
to work, get paid for it, and get out of school for part of the day. When I heard there was a computer
apprenticeship, being that computers was what I was interested in, I applied right away.” Upon
graduation from high school, John enrolled in the local technical college in the computer technology
program. He has not taken the full “load” of courses each semester, electing to spend more time on a
lighter course load and “doing a better job with them rather than taking on more than I thought I could
handle.” He also works in the same part-time paid position that he has held since his senior year in high
school at a local graphic arts company.

John would like to graduate with an associate degree and pursue a job in the computer industry.
“Right now I’m just trying to get through with college, get my degree, get certified (in one or more areas
of computer technology such as M.O.U.S. or CISCO), get some type of job and start at the bottom
and work my way up.” He stated that he has learned that it is not always important to get a higher
degree (such as a 4-year) in the area of computers. “All you need is that initial certification, get in with
a good company and they will train you as you work.”
Rita

Rita applied for the youth apprenticeship program with an interest in law and because “YAP seemed a little more prestigious than the usual work studies program because it could teach you about actual career opportunities and things like that.” At the time she applied, there were no law offices in the community that were willing to take on a youth apprenticeship student, but the bankers that did the interviews were so impressed with Rita that they offered her a position in the banking apprenticeship program.

Rita spend her first semester spending time rotating through the four participating banks, learning about the various areas of banking industry. The participating business partners were aware of Rita’s interest in law and did their best to focus her training on the more legal aspects of banking and finance. She enjoyed her first semester and felt it had been a worthwhile experience. “I met a lot of different people that I don’t think I would have interacted with if I weren’t in the program.”

Still having a desire to learn more about law, Rita asked if it would be possible to switch her apprenticeship area to public safety. A personal interview was arranged and Rita was accepted. She spent the next year and a half working with public safety professionals and was offered a full-time job upon graduation from high school. Rita declined the position. “I found out about how the law and cities work, but I realized I didn’t like that much paperwork, a desk job. I wanted a job that lets you get up more and interact with people much more.”

Rita is now enrolled in a technical college pursuing a degree in physical therapy. She said she learned about and became interested in the area because a close friend was in the program. “There’s a program for traveling health occupations, physical therapists, and if I like it, then I’ll continue with it.”

During our interview, Rita responded to several probe questions concerning her decisions about a
career choice. She did not pursue a degree in law because her interest in that area grew less because of her experiences working in public safety. When asked why she didn’t originally apply for a YAP position in health occupations (as related to her current interest in physical therapy) she responded that she wasn’t aware that physical therapy was an option at the time. “I didn’t want to do the medical YAP because of all the blood and guts. Nursing wasn’t something I was interested in. At the time, I just never realized it was there, or maybe I didn’t think of it as a career option at that time.”

Ann

Ann volunteered as a health occupations youth apprentice during her junior year in high school. Her YAP experiences during that time “made me realize that I really did belong in the medical field. This is something I had thought about all my life and my first year of YAP really helped me to see that nursing was a good choice for me to pursue as a career.” During the first semester of her senior year, Ann completed the certified nursing assistant program at the local community technical college. She applied for a part-time position at the hospital as a nurses assistant and was hired. She continued to work at the hospital until the summer following high school graduation.

Ann was accepted into a four-year nursing program at a college in south Georgia. She is currently in her third year of the program. She comes home during the summers, semester breaks, and holidays. She has worked part-time as a nursing assistant and also in retail sales. She is excited about her future and credits the youth apprenticeship program for “giving me a chance to know what nursing is all about. I am not like most college students. Many college students enter college not knowing what they really want to major in. When they actually get into their majors, they find out that it isn’t really what they want to do. I have never had that problem and that is because of the YAP program.”
Francine participated as a health occupations/pharmacy youth apprenticeship during her junior and senior years in high school. Her job as a pharmacy assistant was her first and only paid job. She is still working with the same pharmacy chain. Francine has worked at two stores in the northeast Georgia area and is currently enrolled in a pre-pharmacy program at a major university. She looks forward to the day when she will become a full-time pharmacist and is committed to continuing her studies until she reaches this career goal.

“I am grateful that the youth apprenticeship program gave me the opportunity to practice working in a pharmacy and at the university. I am learning a lot about this career. Because of my experiences during high school in YAP, I know what to expect because I was given a head start through the YAP. This program has given me a chance to succeed in a career field that I am interested.”

Ernest

Ever since he can remember, Ernest had always been interested in the field of computers. As a high school student, he excelled in science and mathematics. He considered a variety of career choices related to those two subjects. He heard about the computer technology program from his guidance counselor. After discussing his interest in the program with his parents (he expressed that his parents were very strict about doing his best in school and insisted that he focus all energy on getting good grades), he decided to apply for the YAP program. Ernest had never worked before, either as a volunteer or in a paid position. His job as a computer technology youth apprentice with the school district was the first time he had ever been paid.
Admittedly a shy individual, Ernest said that the program “gave me the extra push I needed to talk to people and I learned more things, especially all about computers, hardware, software, and programming. I am definitely more confident because of my experiences in YAP.” He is currently in his third year as a computer engineering major in a large university in the northeast. He works part-time in a college sponsored work-study program. He plans to pursue an advanced degree, perhaps even a doctorate. His eventual career plans are to pursue a job with a major computer manufacturer in the area of network engineering.

Fred

Fred applied for a youth apprenticeship in public safety because of his commitment to serving others in his community. Along with his interest in pursuing a career in some facet of public service, his sincerity and seriousness, as well as his above average level of maturity, Fred was offered a part-time position in an office of a local public service agency during his senior year. Upon graduation from high school, he pursued a position in law enforcement and was offered a full-time job with opportunity for advancement and further training.

When asked if he might someday pursue a post-secondary degree, Fred responded, “Right now I’m just glad to be here doing what I’m doing and to have graduated from high school. It is a good job and I enjoy coming to work everyday.” There are opportunities for Fred to take a variety of training classes offered through his place of employment and he has taken several. He credits the youth apprenticeship program with giving him an opportunity to enter the work force with a job as a public servant and expressed gratitude in how the program helped him “get when I am today.”
Sonya

Sonya applied for a youth apprenticeship experience in pharmacy technology during her junior year in high school. This was her first job. “It gave me a chance to go out and work, to get a job while I was in school. It fit into my school schedule. I thought it would be better for me than to find a job myself.”

Academics were Sonya’s first priority in high school. “Academics were also the priority of my parents. My parents expected me to keep up with my grades and I promised that I would.” Sonya expressed disappointment in only being allowed to work as a cashier in the pharmacy where she was placed, because it didn’t give her a chance to see as much about the pharmacy field as she wanted or initially expected when she enrolled in the program. Nevertheless, she stuck with it during her senior year and through the summer following graduation because “I found out firsthand what it really means to be a pharmacist. It showed me that this is good and this is something I would like to do later in life.” She quit her part-time job at the pharmacy upon enrolling at the university in order to give her academics her full attention.

Sonya is currently a junior and still aspires to become a pharmacist. Her grade point average, however, is not high enough to apply for enrollment in her chosen college to pursue a degree in pharmacy. “It is a very competitive program and I have to work on getting my gpa up so that I can qualify for a spot.” She is not giving up and expressed great determination in fulfilling her career goal. She has continued to keep in contact with some of the people that she met while a youth apprenticeship student in high school. “I am not going to give up. My goals are pretty much the same as they were in high school. I will just have to work a little harder and hopefully I’ll be in a pharmacy company working in this field one day.”
Lisa

Lisa aspires to a career as a businesswoman or entrepreneur. She participated as a banking youth apprentice during her junior and senior year in high school. “I think they really liked having me at the bank. It was a good job and I think I worked hard to let them know that I appreciated the opportunity that I was given. I got several pay raises and they gave me a lot of responsibility. I learned a lot about money and finances that will help me throughout my life and career. It also helped me with my personal business by teaching me the behind the scenes of the banking business and also helped me with my accounting classes in college.”

Lisa is now in her third year of college in a major southeastern city pursuing a degree in business administration. She works part-time only in the summers and when she is on break between semesters “wherever I can get a job that will help me pay some of the bills.” She hopes one day to own her own business or work in a large corporation and “have my own employees that I can train.” She believes that YAP provided her with many experiences that have helped her since graduating from high school.

Post-secondary and Work/Career Status Summary

Since graduating from high school, fifteen of the twenty participants have pursued post-secondary education in the area in which they apprenticed. Four are currently pursuing post-secondary degrees in areas other than those in which they apprenticed. One student has not pursued any post-secondary training. Ten students are currently working or seeking employment in the area in which they apprenticed (two have recently earned bachelor’s degrees and are currently seeking full-time employment). Ten of the twenty are currently working in areas outside of their YAP career cluster area. Two of the five working part-time outside of their YAP area are currently enrolled in post-
secondary educational programs related to the career cluster area in which they participated as youth apprenticeship students. One student is not working full nor part-time, having chosen instead to devote her full energies to her education and related studies (Sonya). Table 2 shows a detail of the post-secondary and work status of the research participants. It is worthy to note that out of all twenty, only two of the students expressed genuine concerns over their uncertainty and the choices they have made for their current post-secondary educational and career paths.

Table 2
Post-Secondary Education and Work Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Secondary Education</th>
<th>Within YAP Area</th>
<th>Outside YAP Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3 Years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Status</th>
<th>Within YAP Area</th>
<th>Outside YAP Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section Two – Background Information

This section includes an analysis of responses to the question, “Why did you enroll in the youth apprenticeship program?” Section two continues with an analysis of details about the mechanics of the program (format of the program – how it worked on a day to day basis) from the emic perspective. The emic is also referred to as the native’s point of view -- “views of the actors in a group” (Creswell, 1998, p. 60) or “first-order concepts – the local language, concepts, or ways of expression used by members in a particular group or setting to name their experience” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 35). The reader will hear from the voices of students: How did the program work? In general, what kinds of experiences were planned and provided to students participating in the program?

“One of the most difficult dilemmas to resolve in writing up qualitative research is deciding how much concrete description to include as opposed to analysis and interpretation and how to integrate one with the other so that the narrative remains interesting and informative” (Merriam, 1998, p. 234). The background information that follows is provided to the reader so that he/she may have more familiarity with the research participants (such as why they chose to enroll in the program) and a description of the kinds of experiences they were provided while participating in the program (the “mechanics” of the program – how the program worked; the types of experiences provided to students in the YAP classroom and in their work places; descriptions of program settings and persons involved;) from the perspectives of students and from the personal experiences of the researcher while youth apprenticeship coordinator. This is provided in hopes of enriching readers’ understandings of the presentation of the findings that follow in part three of this chapter.
Reasons for Enrolling in YAP

Students interviewed for this study represented a wide range of abilities, interests, and backgrounds. There is no “one, typical” type of student that applies and/or participates in the youth apprenticeship program. Sixteen of the students responded that the main reason they applied for the program was related to their interest in exploring a particular career area of interest and in doing something different than in the classroom. In addition to finding out if a career area was something they wanted to pursue in post-secondary studies, four students had never worked before and said they applied because the program gave them an opportunity to get their first job. Eight students already had current or previous entry-level part-time job experience in retail or food service. Every student responded that one of the reasons for enrolling in the youth apprenticeship program was to have an opportunity to see if the career area they chose was something in which they were interested and to see if they wanted to pursue career and post-secondary educational studies after graduation from high school. All but one (Fred) stated that they wanted to go to college to continue their education before starting to work full-time.

Three students said that they were interested in cooperative education but that youth apprenticeship “seemed a little more prestigious than the usual work studies program because it could teach you about actual career opportunities and things like that” (Rita). “I already had a part-time job and I was interested in something that was going to give me some more direction into my future” (Laura).

Half (ten) of the students interviewed stated that the program was an elective that seemed interesting and could afford them the opportunity to get out of school early “to do something in the afternoons rather than just go to work, to volunteer while I was in high school and I might never get this
opportunity again” (Ann). Four expressed similar sentiments as did Jean, “plus it will look really good on your resume when you apply for college scholarships and other good jobs.” Five students also saw it as a way to get both a college prep and a vocational seal on their high school diplomas. Students were direct and very honest with their answers. A unique individual, Jim saw the program “as a way to get an easy A . . . not like going to class, it was like, hey, I’m going to leave school early, go to work and get paid for it!”

**Format of the School District’s YAP Program**

The first semester of the youth apprenticeship experience consisted of a combination of work place exploration and personal development training. Depending upon the career area, students spent three to four days a week at the work site and one or two days per week in the classroom. While at the work site, students were grouped according to career cluster area. Classroom days were spent in their respective high school with all youth apprentices grouped together.

Classroom experiences consisted of a variety of personal and professional development lessons aimed at preparing students for entry-level employment . . . “self work sheets, identifying your strengths, weaknesses, how to deal with people, how to get to know yourself” (Amy). Students came back together as a group to discuss their experiences at the work sites. “The reflection activities, like when you asked us to think and write about what we did and how we felt about things, that was pretty good and most of the students in the class seemed to like that pretty well” (Sue).

Overall, students expressed much more satisfaction with their experiences at the work site during the first semester. Students visited various areas and departments for one or more days to learn about the types of jobs, skills needed, and career ladder opportunities in a particular career area. “We got a chance to learn all about the various jobs at the hospital. We got to meet a lot of different people.
It wasn’t like being at school at all, sitting and doing worksheets or some other boring stuff like that. It was really interesting most of the time” (Andrea). “We got to see some areas that were willing to take a volunteer and then we were asked to make a list of our top three choices where we might want to go for second semester” (Laura).

Unlike the banking and health occupations students (and later in time the public safety, computer technology, and pharmacy) that were grouped together in afternoon YAP classes, students in teaching apprenticeship were individually assigned to one elementary school in the district under the mentorship of the vice-principal. First period/block students reported to their school between 7:30 and 7:45 am. Last/fourth period/block (Note: In 2001, the school district switched from an all year/six period to two semester/four block schedule) students reported anywhere from 1:00 to 2:15 pm, depending on their schedules. Students spent the first one or two months in the media center and school front office. This gave them a chance to get to know the teachers and to see the general operation of the school. For the balance of the first year, students rotated in every grade level and instructional area (such as special needs, ESOL).

As Karen explained “I was able to go throughout the whole school for one week in every subject. That allowed me to meet virtually every teacher in the school. I was working with students with very different needs in many grades.” For the second year, teaching apprentices got to choose the grade level they preferred and were allowed to work with teachers in that level for the entire year.

All but two students expressed overall satisfaction with their first semester experiences. Seven students made comments referring to the “boredom of the speakers during the informational classes, but overall we did learn a few good things that we didn’t know before that might help us later on” (Lisa). “Sometimes those speakers really put us to sleep. It would have been better if we had more
enthusiastic speakers some of the days, but I guess not everybody can be a really good speaker, especially around high school students... and some students acted out and I guess that didn’t help any” (Ann). During the second and subsequent semesters, students were assigned individually to businesses and departments. This was a more challenging time for both students and the youth apprenticeship coordinator. Apprentices expressed appreciation for being out of the classroom and doing “hands-on types of things” (Lisa). “I went in and I would go and help the tellers do their thing, help count large amounts of money. I’ve never seen that much money in my entire life. I did that plus a lot more. I learned about securities, loans, personnel, trusts, the little ink bombs, the little buttons to push when you are being robbed” (Jim). “I got to learn how to do blood typing, making slides, did a lot of paperwork” (Laura). “I remember seeing certain procedures, learning exactly what an EKG, EEG is. I remember that they had me doing a lot of office work, filing, but I really didn’t mind that at all” (Luke).

Because of business regulations and other considerations, students were assigned many supportive tasks (such as answering phones, filing, photocopying) especially at the start of the workplace assignments. Students understood that there were just some things that they couldn’t do (because of insurance regulations and the fact that they didn’t have formal training). Youth apprentices regularly participated in group guidance sessions, discussions in preparing and periodically updating individual training plans, and conferences with parents. Communication with students and parents that provided details about how apprentices would start out with basic, entry-level clerical duties was a major portion of the preparation during the first semester. “A lot of kids maybe thought they should be doing more – like some of the kids I think at the hospital thought they should be doing surgery or something” (John).
Two students expressed particular dissatisfaction with their experiences at the work site (which was not typical of the eighteen other participants). “I was stuck in that department that whole entire year. The nurses didn’t really know what to do with me. I didn’t get to do a lot and my expectations weren’t really filled. I wanted to do something, not just sit there. It was very boring. I dreaded going after the second or third month, but I stuck it out” (Amy). Sonya, who participated in the program several years later (than Amy) as a pharmacy apprentice, expressed similar dissatisfaction. She spent most of her time as a cashier in the pharmacy, rather than “in the back helping the pharmacists fill prescriptions where I really wanted to be.” Sonya did add, however, “one of the pharmacists did seem to take a special interest in me. He helped me a lot, showed me how to do things and explained the medicines and the symptoms. He treated me good, had a positive effect on me. I felt I could trust him and go to him.” At the end of her interview Amy also expressed that she still feels the youth apprenticeship program was worthwhile in helping her to confirm her desire to work as a health care professional. “From what I hear about it, it has changed a lot since the first year when I was in it and overall I do think it is a very good program for high school students to join, especially to get them to see if this is the career area they like or not.”

Section Three – Findings from the Interview Data Analysis

The analysis of the data in relation to the guiding questions of this study resulted in the identification of the main theme of empowerment. Page and Czuba (1999) defined empowerment as a “process that challenges our assumptions about the way things are and can be. It challenges our basic assumptions about power, helping, achieving, and succeeding” (¶ 2). In further defining the construct of empowerment, the authors suggest that it is a “multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives” (¶ 11). It is further suggested that the individual and society are
“fundamentally connected” (¶ 12) and that empowerment “is a process that fosters power in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important (¶ 11). In the context of this study, the word empowerment may be considered an excellent one-word descriptor of the experiences described by youth apprenticeship students. From the analysis of the interviews it may be concluded that participation in the school district’s youth apprenticeship program enabled students to gain power over their futures through the choices they made since enrolling in the program.

Constant comparative analysis and reduction of line-by-line coded data resulted in categories and sub-categories:

A. Supportive relationships with others
   • Peers
   • Adults

B. Educational empowerment
   • High school experiences
   • Post-secondary experiences

C. Career empowerment
   • Career goals
   • Work behaviors
   • Career opportunities

D. Self-empowerment
   • Self-confidence
   • Self-development
   • Self-esteem
Table 3 provides a detail of the categories and sub-categories, along with supporting data evidence.

Table 3
Category Detail and Supporting Data Evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supportive Relationships with Others</th>
<th>Data Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>YAP is a different peer group; different people than I usually hung out with; made new friends with similar career interests; got to know students from other high schools; felt I had an advantage over my peers; looked at my peers differently – felt sorry for some who didn’t seem to have goals, plans for future; peers looked up to me because I had goals and was working toward those goals; felt like a role model for peers; felt different than peers; others going home to hang out – I was doing something worthwhile and getting paid for it; adults in work place acted as if they were my peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Supportive; caring; let me take on more than I thought they would; met a lot of different people that I wouldn’t have if not in YAP; encouraging; helpful; honest; gave me independence; told us what to expect; always knew she was there; mutual respect for each other; positive influence; very professional; made me feel special; had lots of other important things to do but made time to help me; listened to me; the people you work with make the job; made me feel a part of the team; went out of their way to make me feel welcome; treated me like I was supposed to be there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Empowerment</td>
<td>Data Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Experiences</td>
<td>Made high school experiences a lot better; helped to choose what to do in college; took additional higher level academic classes; helped to get college scholarships; looks good on college application and resume; knew what to expect in college; got to leave school early and get paid for it; YAP was a choice student made (as opposed to required classes); took high school more seriously; YAP was break from monotony of high school classes; saw relationship between book knowledge and how used in real world; some high school classes not as important as once thought; realized importance of academic basics; need to include ethics in high school; didn’t feel challenged in high school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Secondary Experiences</td>
<td>Had desire to continue college study in chosen career area; college success led to plans to further education beyond bachelor’s; fortunate because YAP narrowed career choices before going to college – led to not skipping around, changing majors; remembered things familiar that were learned in YAP; helped with college speech class; not like most college students – confident about career major choice; higher confidence level led to higher goals to take more advanced classes in college; took college more seriously; saw difference in classes that had to do with life and those just to pass test/get degree; provided job to get through college; career goals very defined – felt motivated to work harder in college; made college choices for own benefit; college more challenging than expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Empowerment</td>
<td>Data Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Goals</td>
<td>More thought about career options; better outlook on career goals; realization career goal was or was not for them; got inside scoop on a career to see if this was what they wanted to do for the rest of their life; ruled out hobby choices vs. career choices; YAP made career choice feel natural; gave broader outlook on career opportunities; saw they could do this as a career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Behaviors</td>
<td>Professionalism; ability to multi-task; responsibility; good work habits; work ethics; importance of good attitude; prepared for work in general; customer service skills; ability to speak in front of people; how to introduce self to adults and important people; how to speak and act appropriately in a professional setting; developed professional relationships; interactions with others; business etiquette; important to like what you are doing – not just for the paycheck; no goofing off in the work place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Opportunities</td>
<td>Got part-time job in college and full-time jobs because of YAP; volunteer hours help on job application and resume; helped to increase position; provided opportunities to move up; better recommendations; made important connections; met important people; get in with a good company and they will train you; YAP taught about career opportunities; better interview skills; have so many skills to offer employers; opportunity to talk to adults in field and saw results of getting good education and higher degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Empowerment</td>
<td>Data Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Confidence</td>
<td>Realized they could do something worthwhile and meaningful; saw their potential; belief in self; motivated; got several pay raises; feeling of independence; given increased responsibility; not treated like a high school student, treated like an adult; had more information upon which to base decisions; people depended on them to be there [at work]; realization of wanting to be at work verses having to be there; you don’t work for a paycheck, you work because if fulfills you; YAP prepares you if you are prepared for something, then you can go ahead and do it; comfortable working by myself and being myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Development</td>
<td>Increased awareness of self; initiative; increased social skills; put things into perspective – you see reality, not just preconceived notions of what work/post-secondary education/real work is like; YAP teaches you how to make it in the real world; gives a new frame of reference from which to work; gave the extra push needed to take risks, stretch; worked harder to be in and stay in YAP; willing to work harder to reach other goals; increased communication skills; realized they needed to have a good attitude; relationships at work played a part in who they are today.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-Esteem

Felt special just being chosen for YAP; excited to get into program; recognized by others for achievements, made student feel good; encouragement boosted self-esteem; adults at work helped to build student up, to be a better person; people depend on them, felt good that others felt they were competent to do important jobs; saw that people appreciated their hard work; they were impressed with student; felt good when offered an important position; felt included; good feeling to be of some use to others in department, not in their way; nobody ever looked down on student just because they were a high school student.

Following in the remainder of section three of this chapter are more detailed explanations of the categories and sub-categories along with excerpts typical of chunk or units of data items. Quotes have been taken directly from transcribed audiotapes of interviews that represent the opinions and responses of the twenty student research participants.

*Relationships with Others*

The relationships with others category includes students’ relationships with their peers (in school and/or college in general and also with the youth apprentice peer group), relationships with adults a) those with whom they came in contact at the work site; b) their designated work site mentor, and c) the youth apprenticeship coordinator. Students described how they felt about the relationships among the youth apprenticeship peer group and also provided comparisons between themselves and their friends who did not participate in the program. Participation in the youth apprenticeship program
enabled students to form casual and more lasting professional and personal relationships with peers and adults both in high school and at the work place.

*Relationships with peers.* Students indicated that they felt special in being chosen for the program and that they had an advantage over other students who did not make the choice to apply for the program. Jacklyn expressed her feelings about being chosen for the program:

I think just being picked for YAP is something good. They picked you. She was selected, so that puts you above a little bit, instead of just taking other classes. She took her time to do this program, she had a goal. We worked hard – it wasn’t your average class. We went over and above. It taught me a lot about independence. I found myself being challenged and I like being able to overcome challenges.

Jim’s elaboration on how his youth apprenticeship experience has made him feel different from other students with whom he attended high school is typical of many of the responses from the other YAP participants:

Most of my friends are just getting jobs to get by, something to get their parents off their back. It’s like now when they go to look for a job, they are looking at where they can serve fast foods or where they can deliver newspapers. I’m like, where can I go site down at a computer and type out a bunch of stuff for somebody, do accounting, or payroll. Most of my friends work for fast food or work for their parents or don’t work at all. They are dragging on their parents coattails. I have a much better job than they do. I don’t even get paid that much and I have a better job than any of my friends, and that’s directly because of YAP and the experience and the skills I got from YAP.
The sub-category “peers” also revealed that students felt a sense of belonging to the youth apprenticeship peer group. As Rhonda said, “It was a really good experience to be with a group of students who were all interested in the same career as I was. It gave me an opportunity to meet and get to know a different group of people than I normally hung with.” Jacklyn provided a response typical of this sub-category when she said “I enjoyed being with the other students, hearing what was going on at their work place, what they were going through, writing in our journals.”

One aspect of this sub-category that was a pleasant surprise for this former coordinator was that fact that many of the students (eight students made direct, unsolicited comments during their interviews that contributed to this aspect of the peer group sub-category), no matter what their background, felt as if they were on an equal playing ground with the rest of their YAP peers. Rita explained, “I thought some of the YAP areas were only for really smart people but you made us feel like we were all the same, like this was something we all could do.” Additionally, John stated:

One thing that sticks out is the simple fact that all the people that I remember from the program, most of us were completely different . . . at the same time, we were all kind of alike. We were all different but we could all be there and go through the whole thing together. It seemed like there was no kind of discrimination or bias toward anybody. We were all treated as equals and given the same motivation. We were all at the same starting point, no matter where we came from. I didn’t think about it back then, but now I can look at it from a better perspective. I knew that some people were 10 times smarter than me at computers, but we were treated the same. For me, that was one of the benefits of the program as a whole.

*Relationships with adults.* All of the students spoke about the many relationships they had with adults involved in the program. Students felt like they were a part of the team and enjoyed being
treated as adult professionals. The great majority of comments were highly positive as evidenced by
the following example from Luke, “I felt like I was a part of the team officially, even though I may not
necessarily have been, but they made me feel like it and treated me just like an equal, so that’s one
reason it was such a good experience. They just went out of their way to make me feel welcomed, to
expose me to things.”

Laura provided an excellent example of the connections made with adults working with youth
apprentices:

They were all very helpful. They were all willing to take me aside and to show me something –
even if I wasn’t working in one department, one of the supervisors was working on something
they thought I’d like to see, they’d come over and ask the other supervisor if I could come with
them so they could show me what they were working on. I worked with all levels of people.
Here I was just a 16 year old and I wanted to make sure I wasn’t in the way, I’m here to help.
People got to know me and I felt like I was really a member of the department. It’s always
good to feel like you’re of some use and not in people’s way. It took some of the work load
off of them even if it was tedious work – I felt like I was helping them.

Sonya provided an example of the few typical instances that reflected negative experiences with
adults:

Those who I felt I could trust, I talked to. They were just nice to me and didn’t get frustrated
with me because I didn’t have any experience. Those who didn’t treat me too good, I was just
polite to them. They sometimes got very easily frustrated with me. If I slowed down because I
didn’t know how to do something, they would yell at me. It made me feel bad that they
disrespected me. I think they know that we were just a bunch of high schoolers that didn’t
know any better and they could push us around. I think I would have had a better experience if there were more people who were nice to me.

Each youth apprentice was assigned a designated mentor. The job of the mentor was to be an on-the-job advocate for the student, work with the student and coordinator to make sure that students received the support needed to attain skills detailed in the student’s training plan. There were a range of mainly positive responses from students. It was evident from the length of some of the responses that some mentors took more time with students than with others. Five students indicated that during their apprenticeship, their mentors changed – for example, one left due to a pregnancy, another due to a change in administration. As Rose stated, “they were different people, but overall they were always there, very professional, always willing to help me. I enjoyed everyone that I worked with – they were nice, made me feel good, supported me, gave me independence. I never felt like I couldn’t go to anyone that I worked with.”

Six students indicated that they continue to maintain a relationship with their mentor. Mike said about his mentor,

He really did a good job of taking me under his wing. I respect him now for that and I still go by and see him. He’s asked when I’m coming back to work for him. It makes me feel good about what I did and where I can go with it. . . . He had a huge impact on my life. He was always there for me, always understanding of things with me. I might have gotten a job bagging groceries if he didn’t give me the chance that he did. I might still be bagging groceries. I’d be hanging out with whoever I was bagging groceries with and doing whatever they were doing to fit in. I never got into that whole thing, not because I couldn’t, it was so easy to get in trouble in
high school, to fall into what somebody else wanted me to be. My mentor and working at the bank kept me out of all of that.

“Even thought I don’t work in that department any more, I make a point to stop by and say hello to [my mentor] whenever I get a chance. I will never forget what she did for me in paving my way to my career in the health care field” (Laura).

The students that participated in this study were under the supervision of one of two coordinators. This researcher directly supervised sixteen of the twenty participants. All students commented positively on their relationships with both coordinators. During the interviews, extra emphasis was provided to the students in the way of appreciation for honest responses in helping to make improvements in the program and for the benefit of growth in the way of constructive criticism for this researcher. The researcher made extra effort to help the students be comfortable with giving honest answers by reminding them that this was no longer a teacher/student relationship where grades were not a factor – that the reason and subject of the interview was them – that their opinions were of the highest importance, especially as related to program effectiveness and improvement for future youth apprentices. It was encouraging and heartening to hear the positive comments such as those from Rita and Jacklyn:

Rita: You were always there to help us. You showed us that you care. You were always very honest with us, told us what to expect, what the expectations were, laid it out for us.

Jacklyn: I had a great relationship with you, I think. You were nice and you meant business. You let us know this is what you need to do – it’s up to you – you can do it or not – not nasty about it. I enjoyed you a lot. You did everything to make us feel comfortable. If we didn’t like what was going on, we knew we could come to you and you would straighten it out. It made
us feel more comfortable knowing there was someone there to back us up. You listened to us, you didn’t take sides.

One student (John) elaborated on a time when his coordinator’s (a/k/a this researcher) temper probably got the best of her.

I remember how you liked to stress certain things like being on time. I remember a couple of times when some of the other students weren’t on time and you really let them have it. I was glad it was them and not me because you were really mad, but I could tell that you just wanted the best for them and it was for their best interest, not just to scold for any reason – kinda like a mom to us – I really mean that – you’d fix up everything.

Educational Empowerment

The educational empowerment category includes two sub-categories: High school experiences and post-secondary experiences. High school experiences include students becoming enabled to see the value of academics, how academics may relate to experiences outside of the school building, how their YAP experience may have affected other high school classes, and how they saw the apprenticeship experience in relation to other types of classes they took in high school. The post-secondary experiences category focuses on students’ reflections as they looked back on their high school and youth apprenticeship experience. As high school graduates, students described connections and disconnections they saw between high school and what they described as “the real world” beyond high school. This included their experiences as college students, as employees, about being on their own, having to depend on themselves, and how they now viewed their youth apprenticeship experiences from the lense of “adult – high school graduate.”
High school experiences. When asked if the youth apprenticeship program had an effect on their academic classes, nine students made comments indicating that they didn’t feel the program had any significant impact as far as they could remember. “It wasn’t positive or negative. I was a good student so that’s why I was able to do YAP. It didn’t take away from my study time because when I was released early from school to go to work, I still got home in time to do my homework and other things that I needed to do for school” (Ernest). As discussed earlier, the group in this study represented a mix of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, as well as achievement in school. Some participants described themselves as being “just a regular student, nothing significant” (Mike) and others described themselves as typical good students, “fairly bright, I generally got good grades” (Laura). Three students were very clear in stating that they really didn’t see that YAP made any difference in their academic classes in high school.

Six students made specific comments about how they felt the YAP helped them to take their academic classes more seriously because they saw how academics such as math, science, and English related to some of the things they saw in their work placements. John, a computer technology apprentice, provided a poignant description of how he felt the program helped him with academics as related to his chosen career path:

YAP had a positive effect on a couple of my academic classes – math and science in particular. I remember taking algebra and trig my senior year which wasn’t required, but I wanted to do it because computers and math tie in together quite a bit. I didn’t want to skip math my senior year and then be rusty when I got into college. I wanted to keep myself in the loop of where I was going, and I probably wouldn’t have done that if I wasn’t in YAP.
John also said that during his junior and senior year, he was ready to leave high school and start college. He felt like he could have taken less strenuous courses in high school. After his first few college classes, John was glad that he took the more rigorous path. “YAP gave me a head start. It put me a little bit ahead of most everybody because I already had acquired some of the basic knowledge and understanding. If I had gone into college without these experiences, I would have been starting anew and would probably have had to study harder.”

All of the students, in one way or another through their responses to the sixteen initial questions and subsequent probe questions, commented about the difference between their youth apprenticeship class and other classes they had taken while in high school. In comparing his YAP experience in relation to his other classes, Luke said, “It didn’t hurt – if anything if helped. It was a release from the norm, what I was generally seeing in school. My senior year, I was taking anatomy and being at the hospital, it was like an extra resource for at least some of the stuff I was looking at.” “YAP was more enjoyable, there were life lessons” (Karen). Ann stated, “In high school, you are with the same kids, day in, day out, and sometimes you can loose focus of why you are there, what you are supposed to be doing. Apprenticeship was something to keep you interested, focused, gave you a reason to want to finish and set higher goals for yourself.”

All I wanted to do was to get my high school diploma and get a job so I could support myself. I can honestly say that of all the classes I took in high school, youth apprenticeship was really the only class that helped me to do that, it was really the only one that I took seriously, that meant something more to me than just sitting there to get a grade and pass the class (Fred).

Post-secondary Experiences. All of the students, except for Fred, talked about their post-secondary experiences in relationship to their career aspirations and current goals they had set for
themselves. The nineteen students that have pursued some form of post-secondary education expressed that they felt their YAP experience had helped them in one way or another, some more directly than others. For example, Francine said that if it weren’t for YAP, she probably wouldn’t be where she is today. “If I hadn’t enrolled in YAP in high school, I definitely wouldn’t have the job I have right now and I would not be at UGA studying for a degree in pharmacy. I would have never known about all the career opportunities and I just don’t think I would have been able to do all this on my own without the program.”

Students talked about how their youth apprenticeship experiences influenced a variety of aspects of their lives after high school graduation such as 1) their career goals, 2) how they planned their post-secondary programs of study based upon what they had learned as YAP students, 3) current and past part-time jobs, and 4) full-time jobs. However, the majority of the responses to the question, “Did YAP have an influence on your post-secondary experiences?” focused on students’ reflections as they looked back upon their high school experiences. A typical response was when Sue stated, “YAP teaches you real-world skills, things you can use in college, on the job, and in your life. A lot of what I learned as an apprentice has helped me in many areas of my life. I can’t say that about some of my other high school classes.” John provided a detailed example that expressed the sentiments of the other participants when he said:

I can’t really hit on one specific area. I guess it was like sometimes when we were having classes on these areas, it was kind of like what we were getting the book knowledge on what businesses were looking for. As I went through YAP working, that those things we had been taught (communication skills, conflict resolution, etc.) it became engrained. As I saw [his mentor] and saw for real how these things worked, how the reason those were stressed was
those were like the bare essentials . . . like your machete in the woods . . . you could have all
the book knowledge in the world and all the technical and special skills but it you didn’t have
those basics, that something wasn’t right, that you weren’t the best student or employee that
you could be. At first it didn’t hit, but then you starting working and using these skills.

In summarizing the large volume of data collected in the interviews with respect to reflections on
how students saw such a disconnection between high school and their post-secondary lives, it may be
said that what students felt they needed to know as graduates was not necessarily taught as part of the
regular high school curriculum. Following are some comments that typify the sentiments of students:
“You need to know how to dress for interviews, write a resume for jobs, how to fill out applications.
You don’t learn these things in English or math. You need to do a lot more than just read and write
when you leave high school” (Lisa). “High school prepares you for college. That’s it. It prepares you
for studying, doing homework, writing papers. It doesn’t teach you customer services or about
careers” (Jacklyn). Jacklyn compared YAP to more like the real world. “Doing your work at school
and homework is important, but you have to know about what is going on in the real world, how to
make it once you are in the real world.”

Four students made comments to the effect that they would tell their high school teachers to
remember that the students they are teaching will one day be citizens who need jobs, they won’t always
be students. They also said that some subjects are stressed far more than they should be and that more
subjects in high school should reflect what students will be doing later on in life. “High school teachers
want you to go for a college degree because that’s what they did – they have a college degree and they
feel it’s important. I could care less” (Jim). “I learned a lot of stuff I will never use – stuff that I didn’t
need then and I don’t need now. I can tell you that in high school I learned to get by, how to remember
all that book knowledge, how to cram for tests, memorize it long enough to regurgitate it and pass the test. If you call that learning, then maybe I learned a lot, but I don’t think so” (Jean). “That is why YAP is so good because it is not just book work, it’s interesting and it’s more hands-on and you see benefits of where it will help you later on in life” (Andrea).

Career Empowerment

“There would have been a long road ahead of me if I hadn’t done the program. I may not have realized that law isn’t what I wanted to do. It saved me a lot of time. It gave me insights I wouldn’t have had. You didn’t know before the program about what a particular career area was all about.”

The sentiments expressed by Rita in the preceding quote depict how the experiences of youth apprentices enabled them to be empowered with knowledge and abilities to set career goals and attain work behaviors that provided them with greater opportunities for jobs in their chosen career areas.

Following are examples that reflect typical responses in the three sub-categories: 1) career goals – data units that refer to how students were able to gain knowledge of specific careers in which they were interested and how they took this knowledge to set goals for their post-secondary educational and career plans, 2) work behaviors – how students were able to attain generalized work skills from their youth apprenticeship class and work place experiences, and 3) career opportunities – how their knowledge of careers and career ladder opportunities and acquired work behaviors enhanced their abilities to seek and attain jobs of their choice.

Career goals. The youth apprenticeship program provided students with a variety of school and work-based learning opportunities in which to explore careers in which they were interested, as well as related careers, job and career ladder opportunities, and educational credentials required to
attain the goals they may have set for themselves. As a result of these experiences, students were empowered to make more informed choices for themselves as expressed by John in the following:

I had an idea that this was an interesting area, I could do something with computers. After I got into apprenticeship, my goals changed from this is a possible career path to this is more, maybe I’m good at this and this fascinates me even more than I previously thought. The more I learned about computers and business the more I realized that I wanted to do both. When I first thought about actually having a career in computers, the stereotypical job was programming. In YAP I learned that there were many more options, more than just one position or goal – there was a wider range of things for me to choose from.

Students praised the program for helping them to set realistic goals for their futures. Only two students said that they really didn’t have any goals when they applied for the program – all they knew was that after high school they were going to go to college. “It gives you more direction, cuts out the whole wasting your time after you get out of school to figure out what you want to do” (Sue). Jim, who is now working in as an administrative assistant, mature and very sure of his future (as compared to when he first applied for the program – as stated by him and also witnessed first-hand by this researcher), articulated his take on how the program can help students:

I didn’t have any career goals. You sit there and figure how things work and you get a more realistic view on how things are. I’m gonna graduate from high school, go to college, go out making $150,000. a year – that’s not gonna happen, that just doesn’t happen, unless maybe you come out with a doctorate and even then you go out and see the reality of that. People say oh, you are in school, you go to college and when you get out you are going to make a lot of money when you graduate. No you’re not.
Luke’s statements reflect the general consensus of student participants, “It was good to get out there and actually observe what is going on and evaluate, is this something I want to do, and then being able to make that judgement for myself. The experiences I got helped me to clarify what I wanted to do.” The program also helped students decide that a field they thought might be of interest was not for them. “The YAP program played a big part in helping me to decide my future career. It helped me to determine that medicine was NOT the path to take” (Jean). Mike provided his opinions about how the career exploration aspect of the program gave him an opportunity to be more prepared for college and a career than some of his peers:

The real reason for college is so you can get that education that’s required for the job in the field you want to get into. You go to college for eight years to become a doctor then you get out and decide I really don’t want to be cutting people open all day, that’s eight years and a lot of dollars wasted. I had a better idea of what it’s all about. . . . These days you see too many college kids who go to school for three years, decide this isn’t what I want to do, change their major again cause that wasn’t what they wanted to do. So by the time they graduate, they’ve got enough college hours to have three doctorates and still have no major and no direction in their career because they never knew where they wanted to go in the first place. The YAP helps you define your career, to give you a head start, to know whether this is really for you or if it isn’t.

Work behaviors. Participants spoke at length about work behaviors they believed they had gained as a result of their participation in youth apprenticeship. The subject of work behaviors came up over and over again in the responses during the interviews with students. Prominent sub-categories in this area were the following: Work ethic, professionalism, communication skills, general aspects of
business and the work environment, business etiquette, dealing with different people in the work place such as conflict resolution, expectations of employers. “I learned a lot about professionalism in the work place – what’s appropriate, what’s not, helped me to learn what employers look for in a good employee, taught me how to a part of a team to work together to get things done” (Francine).

It was obvious that Rose was empowered by her experiences as evidenced by the following profound statements from such a young person, “We learned a lot in class and it did help, communication skills, dealing with others, having a good attitude, I carried these with me onto college and to other work places. A lot of people get employed, but not everybody is a good employee. A lot of what we learned in YAP helped to make us good employees.”

YAP gave me a sense of work ethic. Prior to YAP I never had a job. It helped me to be disciplined, to get there on time, to get my work done. I didn’t have a problem with it, I just had never done it before so it was a new experience and it was my first experience being a professional. I had to be presentable, dress like a professional, no jeans, t-shirts, tennis shoes. Communication skills – you had to grow up – you were just 17 years old, but you were working in an environment where people expected you to act like an adult – you’ve got to look and act the part (Karen).

Amy was one of the first group of students to participate in the program. Despite not having what she described as the most fulfilling experience, she was able to express her appreciation for the opportunity to be around adults in a professional environment, which did really help me to build a professional attitude and just learn to be a professional. Eventually you will have to go out into the work force and deal with professional people and have professional relationships. I had to learn how
to speak appropriately, how to introduce myself to doctors and to the patients. That was a very good thing.

Career opportunities. Student responses indicated that as a result of participation in YAP, they had gained skills and connections with adults that enhanced current and future career opportunities. Typical interview responses include:

Laura: One of the first and best recommendations I got for the job I have now was from my YAP mentor.

Rhonda: When I wrote the essay for my application to nursing school, I told them about my YAP experience and I know that helped me.

Fred: I’ve met a lot of people. I have connections all over Athens, YAP was where I began learning all that I now know about this field and I think that has helped me a lot in getting me the job where I am today.

Jacklyn: You make connections, you meet people, that helps a lot. I don’t think I’d have met those people otherwise. Here I was, 17, I know all these big people at the university. Those connections I made were very important to me. I got a good recommendation for my current job which is at the university.

Karen: Through the program I gained an edge. I will be better at meeting the needs of my students than someone who didn’t participate in YAP. Here I am now, sending in applications, they see all the college experiences, passed Praxis, I had the YAP experience for a whole year, not a six month practicum, not a 16 weeks student teaching. I saw from beginning to end a whole school year. The experiences I had, the relationships I built, the knowledge that I can draw on now is all very beneficial.
Self-empowerment.

The self-empowerment category was a result of student responses concerning their self-confidence, sense of responsibility, motivation, initiative, heightened sense of awareness of themselves in relation to others as well as their goals, and increased self-esteem as a result of their participation in the youth apprenticeship program. Students expressed increased self-confidence “just getting through the interview process and being chosen for the program” (Rhonda). Through their experiences both in high school and post-secondary, students said they felt more motivated and as if they could achieve any goal they set for themselves – a true sense of power of self. “Being involved in this program, to interact with and get to know different types of people, to have the opportunity to do something really different (such as YAP) has helped me to grow, to mature, and to become a better person” (Ernest).

Self-confidence. “I developed a lot of confidence in working with people that were much older than me and had many more years of experience, but I learned to hang with them, try, do what they did” (Karen). Almost all of the study participants’ responses contained something about self-confidence. Sonya put it very well when she said:

I didn’t see myself being able to handle work and school and so I didn’t trust myself. Then when I started, I found I could balance myself, my time between school and work and other things I wanted or needed to do and I saw, hey, it’s not that bad and I gained self-confidence. Now I can be more focused on grades and I know I can handle things with school, job, social life.

Self-development. From the perspective of this former YAP coordinator, the most prominent and rewarding feature about the program was how in just two short years that seemed
to fly by, students grew, matured, progressed, gained a heightened sense of who they were, where they were going, and the path that would take them to who they would become. They increasingly took on responsibility for their own development and saw that they had no one to blame but themselves if they felt short of their goals. It was fulfilling to know that students were able to realize this, as evidenced by some typical examples:

Luke: I remember breaking down boxes, but I didn’t mind because it was like, hey, I’m doing work, I feel like I have a job here. I think the large reward is having a sense of work ethics, having a major sense of responsibility. You see that people are depending on me to do this, they assigned me this job and they are expecting me to do it. For the first time I was a team player on my first job.

Mike: Unless you are one of those fortunate kids where dad and mom are still paying for everything, it’s a real wake-up call. It’s like hello – student loans, student fees, worry about where you are living, how are you going to be eating. This is real life, you’ve got to start working and paying for your own things, because no one is going to do it for you. YAP gets you into that mentality – you go to the hospital, mom is not there to hold your hand, dad’s not there to make the decisions for you – if you want to volunteer your time and make the grade, you’ve got to do it from your own will. You’re not getting anything out of it except what you put into it.

Rita: When you are put out in the work place, you are put out there as an adult and treated like an adult and have more adult responsibilities. In high school in just your regular classes you can kinda get away with more things. My YAP supervisor counted on me. If I didn’t get my work done, that made more work for someone else. You could be on the end where someone else
doesn’t do their work and it falls on you. I felt like I was part of the team. One of my supervisors told me if it wasn’t for me she wouldn’t have been able to organize her office and it helped her so much. That made me feel pretty good.

Jacklyn: A lot of students work part-time. I was working part-time at Burger King and doing YAP, but I wasn’t worried about my work at BK like I was with YAP. High school prepares you for college, it doesn’t prepare you for real work. The YAP program prepares you whether you want to go to college or not. I felt I learned a lot more responsibility with YAP. You had to have certain qualifications to be in the program and you had to work harder just to stay in the program. We had to make sure we did things we were supposed to. Some students do just enough to get by in high school and their part-time jobs. You can’t do that with YAP. That makes YOU different.

As a final comment in the area of self-development, one response from Rita that was unique from any of the other responses, yet seems important to this researcher to share with the reader,

Now that I look back, it was important to let people know we appreciated them. It’s important not just in YAP but in other areas, to show people that you appreciate them taking their time with you. Having to do things like writing thank you notes that you may not always want to do or may not make sense at the time, but when you look back you realize they were really important.

Self-esteem. For Ernest, self-esteem meant “having faith in yourself, believing in yourself, knowing that you can do it.” For Fred, it is “how you see yourself in relation to the world and the people around you.” For Rose, it was also “not being afraid to fail.” Karen described it as “feeling
good about yourself, knowing that you can do what you set out to do. If somebody else can do that, I
can do that and I can do it better. You feel good about yourself and the way you present yourself.”

Students expressed appreciation to adults in the work place for giving of their time, taking them
seriously, and treating them with respect. Two students’ responses made particular reference to the
fact that the way they were treated by adults with whom they worked had a lot to do with a heightened
sense of self-esteem. They indicated by their responses that they felt good about being treated as an
equal, even though they were “just in high school.” Two students remarked that they felt they gained
more than they gave as evidenced by a comment from Jim that was mirrored in essence by Ernest, “I
thought I was getting the benefit all the way around. I never got paid to go to school, I didn’t have to
sit in class, and I enjoyed what I was doing. I felt like it was more beneficial for me than for him – he
was taking up all this time with me when he could have been doing a lot of other things.”

John remembered a time when he felt especially good, when he and some of the other
technology apprentices were asked to do a presentation about the YAP for the school district’s central
office administrators. The statement that follows is of particular interest to this researcher as it clearly
equates to the overall reason for doing this study.

Most adults would just kind of look at you, some high school kid and wouldn’t take you
seriously. Here we were at the head of the table and we were talking about what we were
doing. You felt like you were important, that your thoughts and opinions in going through this
program, they were listening and taking me serious, as opposed to like administrators sitting in
their offices all day and making decisions about what we have to do in school – it was actually
the reverse of that.
Section Four – Discussion and Summary of Findings

The reasons for completing this study were to find answers to the research questions, 1) if the youth apprenticeship program was meaningful to students, 2) how the program may have made a difference to students’ choices for post-secondary education, 3) if the program affected students’ career choices, 4) how participation in the program affected aspects of students’ post-secondary education, career/job, and/or life after high school, and 5) how the school district could improve program experiences for future youth apprentices.

The analysis of data from personal interviews that is presented in the preceding section revealed clearly that participation in the youth apprenticeship program was meaningful to students in many ways. Comments from student participants that are presented in the concluding part of this section will provide the reader with additional details. It was also evident that the program had a positive impact on choices that students made for their post-secondary educational experiences leading to employment and careers. Data also revealed that overall, students felt that their lives beyond high school had been enriched, some more than others, but in all cases analysis of personal interviews indicated there was some degree of benefit derived by each participant.

Three students that participated in the earlier stages of the program expressed disappointment in not having more career areas from which to choose when applying for the program (prior to offering only health occupations and banking), “the only disappointment was that the program wasn’t in all the different fields – the program choices were limited in selection” (Mike). Mike’s sentiments were supported and expressed similarly by four comments from apprentices who participated later on in the program (Researcher note: Starting in 1999, the program application included the listing of major program choices such as health occupations, banking, technology, as well as a final line that stated
students could write in their career/apprenticeship area of choice.) In addition, three students indicated that they would have liked to see the coordinator more often, as Luke stated, “a better sense of guidance. Maybe give us feedback a little more often and visit the work sites more than just once a month, even if you had students who weren’t giving you any problems. I’m glad to see the program has grown to include more areas, more professions.”

All student participants expressed great support for the program in their responses. When asked the question, “What would you have done differently; what can be improved,” twelve of the students said very little other than statements similar to Andrea, “everything was good.” Three responded that there was nothing they felt that could be improved because they could not remember any negative experiences (when asked the question, “Tell me about some of the negative experiences you had while participating in the program.”) One student (Lisa) very sweetly explained, “It wouldn’t be the same if you changed it.” Two students alluded to the fact that it (their high school YAP experience) had been so long ago that they really couldn’t remember; one in particular stated, “I guess there wasn’t anything I didn’t like, that was really not good about it because I would have remembered that, and now that I look back, I really think it was all pretty good so I can’t think of anything that you could improve and I really don’t remember anything being negative . . . maybe sometimes a little boring, but nothing that I would call bad or not good for the students” (Sue).

Four students commented about the participation (lack) of the local business community. John articulated it best when he said:

One thing I know would probably be the hardest thing to do would be to increase the number of programs and increase the number of businesses. Get businesses from all over the community spanning a wide variety of career areas, even for just one or two kids. Go through
the interview process, get them to get their foot in the door, no matter what they wanted to, even if it were just a couple hours a week. It would be beneficial to give all students a taste of both worlds, both high school and the real world. Give them a taste of what they can expect after high school, get them ready for what is about to come. Even if they realized where they were working wasn’t for them as a career, it would give them a chance to see what the business world is like, to learn the things it takes to have a job. It would give them a chance to learn and at the same time experiment what they would like to do. I think any kind of work experience would be beneficial.

In summary, this researcher would like to offer the reader some especially poignant comments from students’ answers regarding what they thought were the best aspects of the youth apprenticeship program.

Luke: The opportunity to make sure this is what you want to do – that is definitely one of the best things I took from the program. For me, the people involved, all the way around, my peers, my mentors, the coordinators. It is just so rich with so many things, it’s kinda hard to name all of them. But above all, definitely the people involved and having a chance to evaluate yourself.

Jacklyn: If you aren’t comfortable with your job, you’re not going to do such a good job. The program gave us a chance to decide what we wanted to do. We had a choice. When we did well, we were rewarded for it. You always let us know when we were doing good and when we weren’t doing so well. I think if you aren’t told that you are doing something wrong, you’re going to keep doing it wrong, because no one tells you. That was good. I enjoyed all of it – even getting fuss ed at by you (researcher chuckling).
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter provides conclusions to this study that sought to illuminate the experiences and opinions of youth apprenticeship students through the utilization of qualitative research techniques. Following the research questions listed below are conclusions of the study based upon the findings presented in Chapter 4, a discussion as related to implications for theory and practice, suggestions for further study, and finally, a summary of the study.

Research Questions

The following research questions provided us with answers in this study: 1) Was the youth apprenticeship program meaningful to students and in what ways? 2) How did the program make a difference in students’ choices for post-secondary education? 3) How did the program affect students’ career choices? 4) How did participation in the youth apprenticeship program affect aspects of students’ post-secondary education, career/job, and/or life after high school? 5) How can the school district improve youth apprenticeship program experiences for future students?

Conclusions

Based upon the findings of this study, the following major conclusions were drawn in answer to the five guiding research questions:

1. Relationships with others such as peers, adults in the work place, the assigned work place mentor, and the youth apprenticeship coordinator were an important part of the overall
experiences of students who participated in the youth apprenticeship program. Adults who provided a nurturing, caring, and safe environment played a particularly significant role in the lives of students. Student responses indicated that relationships at school and in the work place were a central focus of their high school and post-secondary experiences. Students stated that they often compared themselves to other students in their youth apprenticeship and outside peer groups. Being around others who had similar career goals was a positive aspect of their youth apprenticeship experience.

Having adults who were readily available, that they trusted and in whom they felt they could confide in with regard to their feelings or resolution of problems provided a safe harbor and an atmosphere where students felt they could grow and learn.

It can be stated that the opinions of this group of students support similar conclusions found by Hamilton (1990) as well as Evanciew and Rojewski (1999) whereby mentors and other caring adults participating in youth apprenticeship programs provided support to students for making necessary connections between education and work. Additionally, Hamilton and Hamilton (1992) similarly reported that meaningful, assistive relationships between adult skilled practitioners and student novices contributed positively to students’ social, personal, and professional growth. In their qualitative case study, Evanciew and Rojewski elaborated on students’ appreciation for the time and effort provided by their work place mentors in helping them to gain skills and competencies in their chosen career areas. Students in this study expressed many of the same sentiments as did those in previous studies. The perspectives of youth apprentices adds a necessary component to the body of scholarly knowledge in the area of the mentor/mentee relationship.

2. The youth apprenticeship experience enabled students to make what they felt were more relevant and sound choices for their academic and post-secondary career aspirations. As a result of
their work place experiences while in high school, students realized the importance of academic competencies in subjects such as math and English in relation to skills necessary for success on the job and for post-secondary studies. Students were able to see the value of good communication skills and the relationship of higher level math to work related tasks and skills. After graduation, students saw the connections and disconnections between high school and what they often described as “the real world.” Youth apprentices expressed disappointment with the scheme of the high school curriculum in relation to the skills they needed to function as productive members of society.

Similar results have been found in studies conducted by Hollenbeck (1996) and the National Center for Research in Vocational Education (1996). As did the students in this study, the 60 high school students who participated in Hollenbeck’s group interviews “mentioned that they recognized that the school-to-work opportunities in which they were engaged were valuable for acquiring general employability and personal development skills in addition to the benefits of facilitating post-secondary education or career transitions” (p. 23).

The integration of work-based learning experiences for secondary students appears to lead toward improved career development through integration of education and work . . . and learning new and transferable skills. By bridging education and work, students acquire new and transferable skills aligned with future education and career aspirations. The work-based component of the programs add authenticity to school learning, provides grounds for meaningful connections between students’ schooling and career development, increases academic motivation, and creates awareness about related career opportunities upon graduation from the programs. (National Center for Research in Vocational Education, pp. 8-9)
3. Students in this study expressed support for the youth apprenticeship program in providing them with a solid base of career exploration opportunities as related to their chosen career goals. Every student interviewed commented in one way or another about the importance of receiving training and attaining general work skills that they could offer employers. Youth apprenticeship program participants expressed appreciation for the opportunities afforded them and the enhanced career opportunities that they were able to attain based upon their extra efforts and the efforts of caring adults who took time to nurture and share their knowledge with them. The opinions of students in this study support a major conclusion of the study conducted by Hernandez-Gantes, Phelps, Jones, and Holub (1995) that a supportive, friendly, and nurturing learning environment effectively serves the needs of students seeking to make sound decisions for their educational and career futures. Students’ views also confirm suggestions and conclusions of Apling (1996) in that “a well conceived and skillfully run program can help students improve academic achievement, acquire needed general and specific workforce training, complete high school, obtain post-secondary credentials, and ease the transition into the adult labor force . . . and socialize the student to the adult world” (p. 111).

4. As a result of the experiences provided to students as members of the school district’s youth apprenticeship program, students consistently expressed a heightened sense of self, confidence, esteem, as well as personal and professional development. Students indicated that they had better attitudes toward work and school, they took increased roles in their responsibility for their own success and learning, and they had more initiative to attain the goals they had set for themselves. In their study based upon a four year youth apprenticeship demonstration project, Hamilton and Hamilton (1997) noted that “personal competence encompasses self-confidence, initiative, motivation, commitment to continuous improvement, and career planning. Learning to act like an adult was a common theme in
our interviews with youth apprentices, who spoke of growing self-confidence and often noted a contrast between their behavior at work and their behavior at school” (p. 3). A major thread of this study of the youth apprenticeship program was that students repeatedly expressed feelings of being treated as a professional and learning to act like an adult in a professional setting which contributed to their self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as helping to shape their emerging professional competencies and attitudes.

“Researchers have shown that a work-based option is motivating” (Berryman, 1995, p. 209). Hernandez-Gantes and Phelps (1995) reported that career-oriented and programs that link classroom and work experiences provide “intrinsic motivators which foster in students a personal appreciation for academic and technical knowledge. . . The identification of career paths is a powerful motivator for students. . . . Students conveyed a strong enthusiasm for learning when they had a sense of purpose . . . [and that] all these experiences seemed to increase students’ self-confidence and perceptions of competence” (pp. 6-7). The experiences and perceptions expressed by students in the current study support the conclusions of these and earlier studies such as those by Mortimer and Finch (1986), Steinberg and Greenberger (1982), Steinberg, Greenberger, Vaux, and Ruggiero (1981), Hamilton and Crouter (1980) and Mortimer and Lorence (1979) that sought to understand the effects of work experience during the teenage years on adolescent development, self-concept, attitudes, and socialization.

During their interviews, students continually expressed appreciation for the experiences provided to them. Youth apprenticeship participants indicated that the program helped to prepare them
not only for post-secondary education, careers, and employment, but also for life. Table 4 provides a summary of brief student responses related to their quality of life as a result of participation in the youth apprenticeship program.

Table 4

Quality of Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Evidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My life would be completely different; YAP took up a lot of my time; it kept me out of trouble.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If not for YAP, I wouldn’t have met my husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned things I will use the rest of my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned how to take care of myself and to take better decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work is more than just a paycheck; you have to like what you are doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YAP gave me a chance to look outside the general school curriculum, it kept me interested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve made better choices and learned things that I need to succeed in the real world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After YAP, I had no more boring days at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge that I now have is richer because of YAP’s hands-on experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a better job; not dragging on my parents coattails; no handouts for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m way ahead of the game, compared to my friends, a lot of people I know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YAP had a big impact on my high school and college experiences; I made better choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had I not done YAP, I wouldn’t have all the experiences of the real job world and life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YAP prepared me for adulthood; it gave me a chance to balance school work and a job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YAP helped me become wiser; prepared me for living in the real world; taught me important life lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I built a work ethic I didn’t have before. YAP gave me the avenue and experiences to build it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wouldn’t be where I am now without YAP. I would have never gained these skills, gotten the good letters of recommendations. It started a chain of events I never expected in my life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Student responses to the question, “How can the school district improve the youth apprenticeship program for future students” indicated that they would like to see more of a variety of youth apprenticeship career areas offered as choices for future program participants. Apprentices suggested that participation of additional businesses in the community would help to provide additional career area choices. Students stated that they would like to see more businesses offer to sponsor students in both youth apprenticeship and job shadow opportunities. Additionally, all students expressed support for the youth apprenticeship program and praised the program for providing them with opportunities and experiences they would not have had if not for participation in the program. Over half of the students specifically stated that they would not change anything about how the program was delivered.

Discussion and Implications for Theory and Practice

Sharing the learning environments and under the tutelage of caring adults and skilled professionals in school and work settings, students gained knowledge and experiences that contributed toward their successes. Youth apprentices discussed their appreciation for being supported by their teachers, youth apprenticeship coordinators, work place mentors, and others at their job sites. The personal interviews conducted as part of this study revealed the importance and contribution of continued personal and professional relationships in the lives of students. A central theme repeated over and over again by research participants was the value of hands-on experiences in contributing to relevant and meaningful lessons whereby students acquired knowledge they felt would last them far beyond their high school years.

In his discussion of the school-to-work movement, Wraga (1998) stated that programs such as youth apprenticeship which allow students to explore all aspects of an industry place the student “in
control of his or her career choice” (p. 187). Students chose to participate in the youth apprenticeship program in order to explore careers of interest and also chose to continue or not to continue in the program. Central to the progressive educational view of John Dewey was that “there would be a close integration between the realization of individual potential and the sharing of common experiences, common interests, and common aims based on an intrinsically worthwhile and democratic educational process” (Carnoy & Levin, 1985, p. 15). Students in this study expressed feeling important in being chosen for the youth apprenticeship program and their appreciation in having an experience that helped them to make more educated decisions for their futures. Particularly beneficial to students was in being with others who had similar interests (both student peers and adults in the work place) and in being treated as equals despite coming from different backgrounds and having different levels of skill.

The research conducted illuminated the opinions of student participants that supports the underlying theoretical framework for this study, John Dewey’s Theory of Experience. The life experiences and voices of students as well as subsequent findings speak for themselves. For Dewey, “experience – which is always the actual life-experience of some individual . . . [is] the means and goal of education” (Dewey, 1938, p. 89). The school district’s youth apprenticeship program was organized as to create “a community where children are provided the opportunity and the direction for experimentation in methods of decision, planning, and cooperative effort that will best allow them to build and realize their aims” (Baker, 1955, p. 82). Students expressed that as a result of their participation in a program where they were allowed to take risks, make choices and participate in the planning and implementation of their individual paths, they were in a better position to make choices for their educational and career futures. If youth apprenticeship were an experiment in John Dewey’s time, based upon the findings of this study, it can be said that the “YAP experiment” is an opportunity to
“give the child an education which will make him a better, happier, more efficient human being by showing him what his capabilities are and how he can exercise them both materially and socially in the world he finds about him” (Dewey, 1979, p. 247).

In consideration of the scarcity of research and findings in the literature with reference to the opinions of students who have participated in school-to-work programs such as youth apprenticeship, this study provides meaningful insights. The voices of students who participated in this study provide an important contribution to the literature with regard how the youth apprenticeship program was meaningful to students and how the program made a difference in students’ post-secondary educational and career choices. Additionally, the opinions of this study’s research participants provide educators, administrators, business persons and others responsible for the planning, implementation, and continuation of support for youth apprenticeship programs with relevant and information about how the program affected students’ post-secondary education, careers, jobs, and lives after high school.

The substantial personal and professional benefits expressed by the twenty youth apprenticeship program participants who were interviewed for this study provides the northeast Georgia school district, the local area business community, local and state legislators, and the Georgia Department of Education with evidence of how the program empowers students to make more sound decisions for their career and post-secondary pathways. The results of this study can be used by administrators in the school district with planning and to support curricular initiatives that incorporate career awareness and opportunities for students in setting realistic goals for their education and life beyond high school. Local and state legislators as well as those in federal and Georgia departments of education should find students’ experiences as expressed in this study as worthy to continue and increase levels of financial support for school-to-work programs, in particular the youth apprenticeship program.
The efforts and time of caring and supportive professionals who have served as mentors to youth apprentices have been recognized by students as positively contributing to their self-confidence, self-development, and self-esteem. Students in this study discussed their increased levels of knowledge about career and educational opportunities afforded to them. Additionally, students reported that they increasingly took responsibility for their learning and in developing personal and professional work behaviors that contributed to their success in school and on the job.

Students suggested that there should be more businesses participating in the youth apprenticeship program and that a wider variety of career exploration opportunities be afforded to young adults interested in participating in school-to-work programs. The opinions and experiences of students in this study can be used as a tool for recruiting additional businesses to provide placements for youth apprentices. Results of this study can be used to help area business leaders in making decisions to support and participate in youth apprenticeship and similar programs that prepare students for entry level positions. Additional placements may result in increased student enrollment which may result in an overall better prepared and more educated work force in the northeast Georgia community in which the school district is located.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following suggestions for further study are provided:

1. Since this study focused on one youth apprenticeship program in Georgia, it would be of interest in conducting a multi-case study comparing youth apprenticeship programs in several Georgia school districts. Replication of the study comparing programs would provide a broader and more detailed analysis of students’ perceptions of the youth apprenticeship program.
2. As pointed out by Allen and Poteet (1999), the viewpoint of the work place mentor has been neglected in the body of scholarly knowledge that exists. A study of how work place mentors view their relationships with students participating in youth apprenticeship and/or other work-based learning programs (such as cooperative business education, diversified cooperative training, etc.) would provide additional knowledge with regard to the perceptions of caring adults in the work place who work directly with and train young adults entering the work force. This type of study would also provide an avenue for mentors to express their opinions to help guide those individuals (such as curriculum directors, youth apprenticeship and/or career/work-based learning coordinators) in making improvements and adjustments to such programs. The views of business owners or leaders who have participated in youth apprenticeship programs might be solicited as part of this study or one that is separate in order to provide them with an opportunity to voice their opinions and views.

3. A comparison study of the opinions of work-based learning students in other types of programs (i.e. cooperative education, internships, etc.) in the school district could be conducted to see if the experiences of students in these programs are similar or different. Additionally, as with the first suggested recommendation, a multi-case comparison study of opinions of work-based learning students might also be conducted. This would provide educators with useful information about the effectiveness of such programs and in guiding the direction of future career-based learning programs.

The following secondary recommendations for further study are provided:

1. A study of how administrators feel about the effectiveness of the program as an instructional strategy would provide an avenue for school and district-level based administrators to express their opinions and ideas in order to provide a true picture of the support (or non-support) and the reasons for same.
2. Since parents are the students first teacher and in many cases, parents play an integral part in supporting (or not supporting) choices students make during and after high school, a study of how parents feel about the youth apprenticeship program might be interesting and appropriate.

3. Since so many students in the current study expressed how they felt high school was so disconnected from (in their words) “the real world,” and how the youth apprenticeship program provided relevance and worthwhile “hands-on” experiences, a comparison study of students participating in applied learning classes (such as math and/or English) might reveal results that would benefit curricular direction, policy, and practices. In light of current initiatives to move away from applied courses, it would be especially interesting to solicit the opinions of students through “case studies, program monitoring, and process evaluation [that] can inform program managers responsible for the policy initiatives . . . [and] “can focus on such questions as the degree to which the program is reaching the intended target audience” (Rist, 1994, p. 550).

Summary of the Study

A review of the literature indicated that there was very little information about the value of school-to-work programs, in particular the youth apprenticeship program, from the student or emic (insider – those directly experiencing the phenomenon) perspective. This study provided the viewpoints of students who had participated as youth apprentices in high school and adds to the literature that previously existed. This qualitative study discovered and described student generated information about the value of participation in a high school youth apprenticeship program. The research was undertaken in an effort to gather the opinions and perspectives of a sample group of students who participated in the Clarke County School District’s youth apprenticeship program during the five-year period, 1997 through 2001.
The data came from twenty in-depth personal interviews that were analyzed using qualitative research methods. Students were honest and forthright in their opinions and provided suggestions for improvement. Research participants also provided their perspectives on their transitions from high school to post-secondary and/or to the work place and offered their insights into how the youth apprenticeship experience affected their post-secondary and career choices. The researcher, as a former youth apprenticeship coordinator of the majority of the students interviewed, also offered an insider perspective by providing comments in the last two chapters, thereby adding to the rich description of the qualitative research design.

In conclusion, the reader is offered two short, but especially pertinent and empowered comments. First from Rose, “What we learned in YAP is like the core of everything else – what you need to survive no matter where you go, college and on the job.” Secondly, as this researcher admits another bias, an unsolicited, highly powerful and personally wonderful comment from one of her most favorite and special students, Jim, “What you learned in YAP, you take home with you. It’s not written down, you just learn by doing it.” To all the students who participated in the study and to those with whom this researcher has had the privilege and honor of serving as an educator in the northeast Georgia school district, “Thank you for all the many blessings and joy you have brought into my life.”
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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTION LIST

Interview questions were derived from the five guiding research questions: 1) Was the youth apprenticeship program meaningful to students and in what ways? 2) How did the program make a difference in students’ choices for post-secondary education? 3) How did the program affect students’ career choices? 4) How did participation in the youth apprenticeship program affect aspects of students’ post-secondary education, career/job, and/or life after high school? 5) How can the Clarke County School District improve youth apprenticeship program experiences for future students?

Numbers to the right of each question in parenthesis indicate which guiding research question/questions the interview question sought to answer

1. Why did you enroll in the youth apprenticeship program? (1)

2. Before you enrolled, what were your expectations of the program? Were these expectations filled? Why or why not? (1)

3. Tell me about your school experience prior to becoming a youth apprentice. Now that you have participated in the youth apprenticeship program (and are in post-secondary, military, employed, etc.) how do you feel about your school experiences? (1, 2, 3, 4)

4. Tell me about your career goals prior to participating in the youth apprenticeship program. Did participation in the program change your career goals? Explain. (2, 3)

5. What are your goals for the future? Where do you see yourself in ten years? Has/did participation in the YAP have an effect on your future? (4)
6. Has/did your participation in YAP have any effect on your performance in your academic classes? High school? Post-secondary? (2)

7. Tell me about some of your most memorable moments as a youth apprentice. (1, 4)

8. Tell me about your relationship with your work place mentor. (1, 2, 3, 4)

9. Tell me about your relationship with your co-workers. (1, 2, 3, 4)

10. Tell me about your relationship with your YAP coordinator. (1, 2, 3, 4)

11. What did you learn from the YAP experience that has helped you in other areas of your personal and professional development (communication skills, dealing with others, being a member of a team, conflict resolution, etc.). (1, 4)

12. What does self-esteem mean to you? Tell me about your self-esteem prior to becoming an apprentice. Did the YAP experience have any effect on your self-esteem? Explain. (1, 4)

13. If you were to tell someone who knew little or nothing about YAP, what would you say? (1, 4, 5)

14. What areas of the program need improvement? Why? How would you improve those areas? (5)

15. Tell me about some negative experiences you had as an apprentice. (1, 5)

16. What areas of the YAP are especially good/beneficial? Explain. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in a study titled The Clarke County School District Youth Apprenticeship (YAP) Program: A Qualitative Study of Youth Apprenticeship Student Participants which is being conducted by Lynn Reich\Johns from the Occupational Studies Department of the University of Georgia. This study will involve gathering information and perceptions from twenty students who participated as youth apprentices during their junior and/or senior high school years.

With prior consent, I will engage each participant in face to face interviews to last one to two hours in length. When possible and with prior consent, these interviews will be audio recorded and later transcribed by me. You have the right to review your audio recording and transcripts. Transcripts and audio tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the research, on or before November 1, 2003.

I will ask approximately 16 probe questions to gather information about student experiences as youth apprentices while in high school and about subsequent post-secondary and work place experiences. Additional questions may be asked to obtain clarification or other pertinent information. After the initial interview, I may contact you again for another brief interview (to last no longer than one hour) or speak with you via phone or e-mail to gather further information or obtain clarification of previously gathered information.

You will have the option of ceasing the interviews at any time and answering only those questions with which you fell comfortable. No risk or discomforts to you are foreseen. All information about you will remain confidential. The only people who will know that you are a research participant will be you and the researcher. If information about you is published, it will be written in a way that you cannot be recognized.

The researcher will answer questions at any time and you have the right to have your question explained to your satisfaction.

Sincerely

Lynn Reich\Johns
APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

I, ______________________________________, agree to participate in a research study titled “The Clarke County School District Youth Apprenticeship (YAP) Program: A Qualitative Study” conducted by Lynn ReichJohns from the Occupational Studies Department at the University of Georgia (542-1682) under the direction of Dr. Cliff Smith (542-4208). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop taking part without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed. The reason for this study is to gather information and perceptions about high school and post-secondary experiences from students who participated as youth apprentices during their junior and/or senior high school years.

I will not benefit from this research. However, my participation may lead to information that could benefit future program participants by helping to improve the program and provide information to participating business partners for the benefit of students. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following: 1) Answer questions about my participation as a youth apprenticeship student while enrolled in high school which will last about one hour; 2) Answer questions about my post-secondary education and post-secondary employment experiences which will last about one hour; 3) Answer questions about how my high school youth apprenticeship experience has affected my education and life experiences to date which will last about one hour; 4) Allow my responses to be audio-taped; 5) Allow the researcher/investigator to call or e-mail me and respond to questions which will clarify my information or participate in an additional interview where the researcher will seek to gain additional information from me which may last up to one additional hour; 6) My information will be kept confidential.

No risk nor discomfort is anticipated and as a research participant, I may withdraw from the interview at any time. All information concerning me will be kept confidential unless required by law. If information about me is published, it will be written in a way that I cannot be recognized. The only persons who will know that I am a research participant will be me and the researcher/investigator.

I will be assigned an identifying number and pseudoname. The identifying number will be used on all audiotapes and transcripts. The pseudoname will be used in the research paper. I understand that the audiotapes and transcripts will be kept only by the researcher/investigator in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home and that all audiotapes and transcripts will be destroyed by the researcher/investigator on or before November 1, 2003. By my initials, I agree to allow the researcher to audiotape my voice during the interview/information gathering sessions: _______ Initials of research participant

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered by my satisfaction. I understand that I am agreeing by my signature to take part in this research and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Lynn ReichJohns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Researcher/Investigator</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone (706) 769-2350 (home); (706) 546-7721 x 262 (work); e-mail <a href="mailto:lynnr716@aol.com">lynnr716@aol.com</a></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher. Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Chris A Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; e-mail <a href="mailto:IRB@uga.edu">IRB@uga.edu</a></td>
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