This study examined the social interactions demonstrated in the workplace by adult individuals formerly identified as students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). This study asked participants to describe the social interactions they demonstrated while employed. They were also asked to describe how they maintained social interactions in order to sustain employment.

Eight employed adult males ranging in ages from 20-26 participated in this study. Four of the participants were high school graduates and 4 had chosen to exit high school early.

The participants were involved in several interviews and a focus group in order to provide information regarding their employment and the social interaction in which they engaged as employees. The participants also completed a Workplace Interpersonal Skills Inventory (WISI) indicating how they perceived their social interaction during employment. Fellow employees, supervisors, and others knowledgeable about the participants’ social interaction at work also completed the WISI.

The participants were reluctant to engage in the interview process and required encouragement in order to offer their perspectives about their social interactions during
employment. In general, graduates tended to be more productive in the interview process than did nongraduates. Graduates also suggested others who might participate in the study to corroborate their responses. However, one graduate and all nongraduates refused to suggest others and would rather quit the study than provide informants. The lack of informants nominated to complete the WISI made it only possible to make general descriptive observations regarding the WISI data.

The participants’ interviews and the WISI indicated five major themes regarding their social interaction in the workplace: (a) challenge to gain employment, sustain employment, and be promoted to higher levels of employment, (b) graduates and nongraduates rated their workplace interactions more highly than did informants with nongraduates rating themselves highest, (c) graduates when compared to nongraduates indicated school had a slight positive impact on them as employees, (d) most participants noted extensive substance abuse as students but few indicated this behavior continued as adults, and (e) pivotal life events prompted 3 graduates and a nongraduate to make a distinct change in their employment/personal behavior.
SOCIAL INTERACTIONS IN THE WORKPLACE
BY FORMER STUDENTS IDENTIFIED
AS HAVING AN EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

A dissertation submitted to the
Kent State University College and Graduate School
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Individuals with a history of emotional and behavioral disabilities in their K-12 school years are likely to experience challenges integrating into the community once they become adults. Gaining and sustaining employment will be one of the challenges facing this disability group. Does a history of emotional and behavioral disabilities for an individual indicate an enduring condition into adulthood and impact employment? Do deficits in interpersonal skills associated with emotional and behavioral disabilities constitute a barrier to work performance and employment? What employment expectations will an individual with a history of emotional and behavioral problems in K-12 education encounter in the contemporary workplace?

Carnevale, Gainer, Meltzer, and Holland (1988) indicated increased competition, technological change and innovation require additional skills of the future workforce. They noted that competitive demands require workers to demonstrate the ability to innovate, adapt, and exhibit strong interpersonal skills. It will be a workplace requiring high performance from employees in areas of innovation and teamwork. Referred to as high performance workplace, fewer jobs will require individual workers to accomplish a specific task in the 21st century (Overtoom, 2000). The expectation that employees will be working more closely in a problem-solving manner may increase the likelihood of peer conflicts (Carnevale, Gainer, & Meltzer, 1990). These trends in the workplace will require the contemporary laborforce to demonstrate employment skills beyond literacy, numeracy, and technological expertise. North and Worth (1996) indicated interpersonal skills demonstrated by employees, such as the ability to communicate effectively, are
most frequently requested by potential employers. Richens (1999) noted employers believe competent interpersonal skills are a primary requirement for prospective employees. Furthermore, employees who demonstrate these skills will contribute to their businesses’ overall profitability and productivity. Richens indicated that advertisements soliciting new employees cited interpersonal skills more prominently than any other requirement. Effective interpersonal skills contribute to collaborative work environments that are necessary for empowering workers to increase self-direction and contribute to overall production (Carr, 1991). An example of a collaborative environment is the trend toward a participatory management resulting in service and production employees being more involved in decision making (Carnevale et al., 1988; Carnevale et al., 1990). Research suggests interpersonal skills are expected in new employees with an ability to communicate collaboratively to others being a fundamental requirement in the contemporary workplace. The ability to be productive, adapt, innovate, and effectively function as a team member in the workplace is a function of interpersonal skills and valued by employers. The research that specifically addresses interpersonal skills in the workplace is discussed next.

The seminal research defining employability skills in general and interpersonal skills in specific was generated by a federal commission. The Secretary of Labor’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, SCANS (1990, 1991) evaluated the expectations employers require of their employees. SCANS (1990, 1991) points out that the increase in global competition has required corporations to reach high performance standards (e.g., commitment to excellence, product quality, customer satisfaction). In order to meet employer expectations, employees will demonstrate abilities beyond
technological expertise. Effective employees will adapt readily to rapidly changing work technology, learn and innovate, and work collaboratively (Carnevale et al., 1988; Carnevale et al., 1990; Carr, 1991; Elksnin & Elksnin, 2001; O’Neil, 1997).

The United States Department of Labor established SCANS in May 1990. SCANS was commissioned to inquire into the expectations of the workplace and the capability of the workforce to meet those expectations. The commission interviewed owners of businesses, public employers, managers of employees, union leaders, and employees in factories and offices. SCANS met with individuals in businesses, government offices, stores, and industrial manufacturing sites. The SCANS report of 1991 suggested implications for education to prepare young people for work. The SCANS report established the national standard for fundamental workplace skills (Richens, 1999). Most of the recently developed systems of industry skill standards are derived from SCANS skills (Bailey & Morest, 1998; Overtoom, 2000).

The implications of the SCANS report for young people with emotional disabilities were the focus of this research. The purpose of this study was to examine how individuals identified as having an emotional disturbance interacted within the workplace. Their pattern of negative interpersonal skills would suggest difficulty sustaining employment. Despite limited academic performance and interpersonal difficulties, research indicates some individuals with emotional disturbances demonstrate employability. The reasons for their success that are attributable to interpersonal skills were the subject of this research. The following section provides an overview of the competencies and skills presented in the original SCANS report of 1990.
Employment in the contemporary workplace will require employees to demonstrate a broad range of foundational skills and competencies (SCANS, 1990). Three sets of multiple skills compose the category of foundation skills. Basic skills of reading, writing, numeracy, and communication comprise the first foundational skill category. The second foundational set of skills is described as thinking skills. These skills involve the ability to learn, reason, think creatively and decisively, and then apply these skills towards problem solving. The third foundational skill category is personal qualities. Personal qualities are displayed by the individual exhibiting responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity in the workplace. SCANS (1990) suggests that five competencies are derived from the foundational skills.

The first of the five competencies suggested by SCANS (1990) for successful job performance is resource management. This competency involves ability to allocate time, money, materials, space, and staff. The second competency is interpersonal skills. This competency skill category enables the worker to work on teams, teach others, serve customers, display leadership, negotiate with others, and work well with people of culturally diverse backgrounds. The third competency is information management. This requires the worker to be able to acquire, evaluate, organize, maintain, interpret, communicate data, and use computers and other technology to process it. The fourth competency is systems management. Here, the worker is to understand social, organizational and technological systems with the ability to monitor or correct these systems as well as design and improve them. The fifth competency is technology. This ability requires the worker to select appropriate equipment for a technological task and to maintain and troubleshoot that equipment is important in this competency area. An
individual demonstrating these five competencies and three foundational skills is considered to be prepared for the contemporary workplace (SCANS, 1990). This research examined the SCANS second competency, interpersonal skills, as demonstrated by graduated individuals with ED in the workplace.

The SCANS reports (1990, 1991) summarized the skills and competencies of successful employees in the workplace. Researchers indicated the continuing relevance of the findings of the SCANS report in the workplace (Bailey & Morest, 1998; Elksnin & Elksnin, 2001; Richens, 1999; Overtoom, 2000). O’Neil, (1997) cited commonalities of the SCANS with other research (i.e., American Society for Training and Development, Michigan Employability Skills and Task Force, New York State Education Department, and National Academy of Sciences) related to workplace skills and competencies. O’Neil (1997) report that all five research bodies judged interpersonal and teamwork skills to be essential in successful employees. Furthermore, all five research bodies identified a similar interpersonal subset skill of negotiation/conflict resolution as characteristic of productive interpersonal and teamwork skills in the workplace (O’Neil). In particular, this finding has altered the management style and organizational structure of the workplace. The contemporary workforce will be expected to function with shared tasks and responsibilities rather than operating individually. Leadership responsibilities, not necessarily at the direction of management, will be expected to be demonstrated by employees. In the present workplace, both technical and highly skilled interpersonal abilities will contribute to a competitive edge for employer’s businesses (Overtoom, 2000).
The SCANS reports of 1990 and 1991 established the benchmarks for employment expectations in the contemporary workplace. O’Neil’s (1997) reported that the findings of the SCANS report, What Work Requires of Schools, were supported by other research. They were the American Society for Training and Development that reported Workplace Basics: The Essential Skills Employers Want (Carnevale, Gainer, & Meltzer, 1990); Michigan Employability Skills and Task Force report titled Michigan Employability Skills Employer Survey (Mehrens, 1987); Basic and Expanded Skills (New York State Education Department, 1990), and High Schools and the Changing Workplace: The Employer’s View by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS, 1984). In the states of Connecticut, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, and Wisconsin, the SCANS concepts provide guidance for graduating secondary students in the creation of personal portfolios in preparation for employment (Wonacott, 2002). As a result of the seminal research of the SCANS reports the description of interpersonal skills generated by SCANS were utilized. Interpersonal skills as described in the SCANS (1990, 1991) reports refer to a personal competency that enables an employee to be effective. For the purposes of this research interpersonal skills refers to the competency that enables the worker to work on teams, teach others, serve customers, display leadership, negotiate with others, and work well with people of culturally diverse backgrounds.

Individuals with Emotional Disabilities

Personal qualities and interpersonal competencies in the workplace, as indicated by the SCANS (1990, 1991) reports, are important for all young adults. However, they are particularly relevant for individuals with emotional disabilities whose disability may negatively affect employment. Employers hiring individuals with emotional disabilities
are required by law (see Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990) to make reasonable accommodations enabling employment. As a result of this legal obligation employers should be aware of characteristics of this disability category.

As defined by PL 105-17 (1997) school-aged individuals with an emotional disturbance (ED) demonstrate difficulty building and maintaining relationships (Asher, 1983; Bullis & Davis, 1996; Claes, 1992; Hardman, Drew, & Egan, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1987). These individuals are also judged negatively by their peers (Connolly, 1987). Individuals with emotional disabilities display low levels of empathy and lower qualities of interpersonal relationships with their nondisabled peers (Schonert-Reichl, 1993). In general, students with emotional disabilities display sustained patterns of behavior that have a detrimental effect on productive social interactions (Heward, 2006). These behavioral patterns lead to negative outcomes while in school and are likely to provide barriers to assimilation into the community as a functioning adult.

Research data for this disability group indicate limited academic success, problems sustaining adequate employment, and difficulty adjusting within the community as sources of concern. Researchers of this disability group have noted the history of academic failure (Armstrong, Dedrick, & Greenbaum, 2003; Kortering & Blackorby, 1992; U. S. Department of Education, 2002), high dropout rates (Kortering & Blackorby; Scanlon & Mellard, 2002), high unemployment (Armstrong, Dedrick, & Greenbaum; Blackorby & Wagner; Neel, Meadows, Levine, & Edgar, 1988), limited pursuit of postsecondary education (Blackorby & Wagner; Malmgren, Edgar, & Neel, 1998; Neel et al.), low levels of adult adjustment (Armstrong, Dedrick, & Greenbaum; Blackorby & Wagner; Carson, Sitlington, & Frank, 1995; Frank, Sitlington, & Carson, 1991; Sample,
1998), social isolation (Armstrong, Dedrick, & Greenbaum; Neel et al.), and involvement in juvenile and adult crime (Bullis & Davis, 1996; Greenbaum, Dedrick, Friedman, Kutash, Brown, Lardieri, & Pugh, 1996; Maag & Katsiyannis, 1998). Considering this literature, individuals with emotional disabilities demonstrate personal and interpersonal skills that do not meet employment expectations indicated in the SCANS (1990) report.

Legal Definition of Emotional Disturbance

This research intended to study adults who have exited from high school as a graduate or a nongraduate. In high school these adults were identified as having an emotional disturbance and received special educational services. The term emotional disturbance is defined by Public Law 105-17 (1997) and denotes an individual demonstrating one or more of the following characteristics over a period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects educational performance. The characteristics are: (a) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers; (c) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; and, (e) the tendency to develop symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

An individual who exhibits one or more of these characteristics demonstrates a pattern, intensity, and focus of ineffective management of behavior. A student’s ability to become an effective modifier of his/her own behavior is termed self-regulation behavior (Alberto & Troutman, 2006). An individual who demonstrates ineffective self-regulation or an inability to manage any of the five characteristics cited in PL 105-17 (1997) in their behavior is considered to have an emotional disturbance. Placement into any disability
category under Public Law 105-17 qualifies the student to receive compensatory services (e.g., Work Study, Counseling/Guidance, Social Work, Transitional Services) as part of their Individual Education Plan (IEP). These services help students with disabilities to make the transition from student toward adulthood.

The term Emotional Disturbance (ED) (PL 105-17, 1997) is a recent modification of the older designation of Serious Emotional Disturbance (PL 94-142, 1975). The recent ED criteria deleted the modifier ‘Serious’ but retained the remaining defining criteria of the older definition. For example, states continue to utilize a number of variants of the term ED as descriptors requiring specialized services for students. A partial list of alternative terms would include the following: behaviorally disordered, emotionally disturbed, emotionally handicapped, emotionally impaired, behaviorally impaired, socially and emotionally maladjusted, socially and emotionally disturbed, and personally and socially maladjusted (see Kauffman, 1997). This research will use the term emotional and behavioral disorder (EBD).

Integration into the Workplace

The workplace into which graduates with EBD will enter requires individuals who possess strong interpersonal skills. Research indicates the contemporary workplace demands employees who demonstrate technical skills as well as interpersonal skills. Five state and national studies identified interpersonal skills and teamwork skills as fundamentally important in employees (O’Neil, 1997). Of the five SCANS competencies, employers ranked interpersonal skills as most important for entry level employment (Richens, 1999). A particular subset of interpersonal skills, conflict negotiation, was identified by the five state and national research studies as important (O’Neil, 1997).
The identification of interpersonal behavior patterns and self-management strategies utilized in employment by former EBD students would contribute to the current limited knowledge base. Researchers and practitioners may further refine educational methodologies for effective employment readiness in EBD programming. More effective transitional service practices may be indicated by the responses of this group. Former EBD students’ self-reflections could offer insight into the adjustment processes required for effective adult transition and functioning in the workplace and community. Finally, former EBD students’ self-reflections may suggest strategies used to cope effectively with their disabilities as adults.

Employment

An important aspect of successful independence of an adjusted adult is being employed in a position providing adequate salary and benefits. Sample (1998) reported that competitive employment for former students with EBD was likely to be self-sustaining if that work experience was initiated during high school. Blackorby and Wagner (1996) reported that early work experiences for these youth appear to encourage engagement in successful work opportunities as adults. Frank and Sitlington (1997) surveyed graduates with EBD from 1985 and 1993 one year after graduation. The in-school vocational and work experience seems to have contributed to greater employment for the class of 1993. The 1993 graduates had an employment rate of 68% compared to that of 54% for the 1985 class one year after graduation. Armstrong, Dedrick, and Greenbaum (2003) surveyed a six state-wide cohort of individuals having EBD regarding their employment status. The authors reported that 57.8% were competitively employed.
Competitive Employment

Using National Longitudinal Transition Study data of 1985, 1987 and 1990, Blackorby et al. (1996) examined postschool outcomes of approximately 2000 individuals with disabilities up to 5 years after exiting school. Rates of competitive employment for students with EBD less than 2 years out of school were less than 41%. Three to 5 years out of school the rate of employment rose to 48%. Compared to individuals with EBD who did not graduate, graduates with EBD were twice as likely to be successfully employed full or part-time (Frank et al., 1991). Adult adjustment of graduated versus nongraduated individuals with EBD one and 3 years after exiting school were compared by Carson et al. (1995). Both categories demonstrated slightly higher rates of employment in this later research. One year out of school graduates had a 55% employment rate compared to that of 36% for dropouts. Three years out of school, dropouts had closed the employment gap with a rate of 60% compared to that of 68% for graduates.

Full-time vs. Part-time Employment

Researchers have noted employment differences when part-time employment was compared to full-time employment. Frank et al. (1997) compared full-time and part-time employment rates of graduates with EBD from the classes of 1985 and 1993 one year after graduation. Graduates of 1993 had a lower rate of full-time employment than graduates of 1985. However, recent graduates one year out of school were less likely to be employed full-time when compared to an older sample.

When dropouts with EBD were compared to graduates with EBD by rates of full and part-time employment a difference was noted. Carson et al. (1995) indicated that
dropouts with EBD had a 75% rate of full-time employment compared to a 61% rate of
employment for graduates. The gap increased 3 years out of school with dropouts
employed at a 93% rate compared to the graduates’ 59% rate. Graduation from high
school does not appear to result in full-time employment for individuals with EBD at
comparable rates to EBD dropouts.

Unemployment

The rate of unemployment of individuals with EBD when compared to
nondisabled peers was noteworthy. Neel et al. (1988) pointed out that compared to
nondisabled peers individuals with EBD demonstrated an unemployment rate nearly three
times that of the national average of 15%. D’Amico and Blackorby (1992) reported that
the unemployment gap narrowed for former students with EBD to 60% while
nondisabled peers had slightly more than 40%. However, the employment gap reportedly
increased when Frank et al. (1997) indicated that individuals with ED had an
unemployment rate of 25% compared to 2% for nondisabled peers.

Unemployment rates of graduates with ED when compared to dropouts with EBD
were notable. Carson et al. (1995) indicated that one year after graduation graduates with
EBD had lower unemployment rates than dropouts (45% vs. 64%). This gap closed 3
years after graduation (32% vs. 40%). Overall, individuals with EBD are more likely to
be unemployed compared to nondisabled peers. Unemployment rates are higher for
dropouts with EBD compared to graduates with EBD but the gap closes within 3 years.

Employment Skill Levels

Researchers examined skill levels required for employment. Carson et al. (1995)
indicated that one year after graduation graduates with EBD when compared to EBD
dropouts were nearly twice as likely to be employed as a laborers or service workers. However, dropouts fared better with skilled employment (e.g. craftsmen, technician, manager) at a rate twice that of graduates with EBD one year after leaving school. Frank et al. (1997) compared full and part-time skilled employment of 2 graduated classes of individuals with EBD one year after leaving school. One year after school graduates of the 1985 class were employed full-time in skilled positions at slightly lower rates of than the 1993 class (36% vs. 42%). However, the rate of full-time unskilled employment (e.g. laborer or service worker) was higher for both the 1985 and 1993 classes (64% vs. 58%). Frank et al. reported that part-time skilled employment for the 1985 class was one third that of the 1993 class (14% vs. 42%). Part-time unskilled employment rate for the 1985 was 85% compared to 57% rate of the 1993 class. Graduated individuals with EBD were more likely to be employed but their employment was more likely to be part-time and low skilled employment. Dropouts with EBD were more likely to be in skilled employment than graduates with EBD.

Researchers and practitioners note the low graduation percentage rate and the high dropout rate among students with emotional disabilities (Armstrong, Dedrick, & Greenbaum, 2003; Corbett, Clark, & Blank, 2002; Edgar, 1987; Kortering & Blackorby, 1992; Scanlon & Mellard, 2002; Wagner, Newman, & Shaver, 1989). Researchers and practitioners are infrequently provided feedback from graduates with EBD (Malmgren et al., 1998; Mithaug, Horiuchi, & Fanning, 1985). The database gathered from and about graduated students with EBD is predominately of an outcome-based orientation (i.e., rates of employment, types of employment, living status, postsecondary attendance). There is limited research relative to personal and social adjustment of the graduated
students with EBD (Carson et al., 1995; Malmgren et al., 1998). This limited information regarding individual, personal, and social adjustment restricts evaluation of effective special education services provided. A postgraduation evaluation procedure based on the EBD placement criteria may generate a basis for comparing pre-and postgraduation personality and behavioral strategies.

Summary

In summary, students with EBD have difficulty as adults in gaining competitive employment. Early work experiences while attending school appear to result in successful work opportunities as adults. Graduated individuals with EBD were more likely to be employed than nongraduates. However, individuals with EBD were more likely to be employed part-time rather than full-time. EBD dropouts, however, were more likely to be employed full-time compared to graduated individuals with EBD. Nonetheless, the rate of unemployment for individuals with EBD was significantly higher than nondisabled peers. Employment leading to advancement was limited. Individuals with EBD were more likely to be employed as laborers or service workers rather than as skilled employees. Hourly wages were higher for dropouts with EBD than graduated individuals with EBD and this trend continued after 3 years. The gap between wages earned by individuals with EBD and nondisabled peers was expected to widen. Finally, while benefits earned by individuals with EBD remained low there were some indications of improvement.

Former students with EBD demonstrate a pattern of employment that is compromised in terms of quality of employment, rate of employment, type of employment, and benefits provided by employment. Research outcomes of students with
EBD could be enhanced by determining how these outcomes were achieved and the
decision-making processes utilized.

Research Questions

This study was designed to examine the following questions:

1. What patterns of social interactions do graduated and nongraduated
   individuals with EBD demonstrate during employment?

2. How do graduated and nongraduated individuals with EBD manage social
   interactions in the workplace?

3. Are there differences in the patterns of social interactions demonstrated in
   employment by the graduated and nongraduated EBD samples?

This study examined patterns of social interactions and strategies exhibited in the
workplace by high school graduates with emotional disabilities. While research reflects
upon employment rates and types of employment (e.g., laborer, truck driver, service,
craftsman) about this disability group, there is little information regarding social
interactions attributable to maintaining employment (Carson et al., 1995; Malmgren et
al., 1998). There is a paucity of research regarding effective management of workplace
interactions by adult individuals with emotional disabilities. Nonetheless, some adult
individuals with emotional disabilities maintain employment despite the appearance of
deficient interpersonal skills.

Significance of Study to Educational Problem

Current research focuses on employment status of individuals with EBD (e.g.,
rate, type, length of employment, salary, benefits). There is little research data regarding
management of social interaction demonstrated in the workplace by former students with
EBD. An examination of what behavior is demonstrated in the workplace by individuals with EBD is lacking in the research. Furthermore, there is little information regarding how individuals with EBD manage their behavior in the workplace and maintain employment. This study intended to reveal social interaction patterns former individuals with EBD demonstrate in the workplace. The management strategies of former individuals with EBD were also examined to determine how they contributed to productive social engagement and interaction with employers/employees, and customers/clients.

The employment experience of former students with EBD presents three research questions for this study. These questions relate to one of the original five behavioral criteria of Public Law 105-17 (1997) determining initial placement into the EBD category. Public Law 105-17 (1997) defines this criteria as “the inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships.” The first research question asked what patterns of social interactions do former students with EBD demonstrate during employment. With this research, one objective was to probe patterns of social interaction from the perspective of preparedness for adult employment, perceptions of daily expectations and functioning, and perceptions of long-range goals. The second research question asked how do former students with EBD manage workplace-related social interactions. Here the intent was to provide a description of behavioral styles demonstrated by graduated individuals with EBD as expressed in the workplace. The third research question asked if there were differences in the patterns of social interactions demonstrated in the workplace between graduated and nongraduated individuals with EBD. The question sought to determine if there was a relationship
between graduation status of individuals with EBD and demonstrated social interactions in the workplace.

The examination of these research questions regarding former students with EBD may add a context for the existing criterion-variable data generated by numerous studies of other researchers. Research regarding individuals with disabilities in the workforce focuses on those with cognitive disabilities (e.g., Butterworth & Strauch, 1994; Holmes, 2003; and McGuire & Chicoine, 2002) or those with serious mental illness (see Bond, Resnick, Drake, Xie, McHugo, & Bebout, 2001). However, individuals with EBD, by legal definition, do not necessarily have a psychiatric diagnosis. Individuals with a psychiatric diagnosis were not necessarily EBD when enrolled in school. These characteristics of individuals with EBD would appear to contribute to this disability group’s ability to merge unseen into the general workforce. Nonetheless, the current research reveals little about adult individuals with EBD and their social interactions in the workplace. There is little explanation for the poor employment status demonstrated by individuals with EBD. Nor are reasons offered as explanations for the successes that individuals with EBD achieved. When successes are achieved there is not an explanation how this was achieved in spite of their disabling condition of EBD. As one researcher indicates (Sample, 1998), the favorable factors associated with successful employment have not been adequately researched. This study provides research information suggesting observations and participant explanations of employment outcomes that have received scarce focus in current research. This research generated descriptions regarding how students with EBD address specific outcomes encountered in the workplace. The research indicates the pervasiveness of the disability condition of individuals with EBD.
in employment. An investigation of self-management strategies in the workplace by students with EBD suggests factors for future research. Finally, more effective practices are indicated as well as the identification of existing practices or favorable factors that contribute to employment success for individuals with EBD.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Current research pertaining to contemporary outcomes of graduated students with EBD is presented in the first section. The second portion of this chapter explores the theoretical framework and concepts relevant to this study.

This research explores the outcomes of former students with EBD as they participated in the workforce. In particular, this research focuses on the social interactions of former students with EBD who are currently employed. The first research question seeks to reveal patterns of social interactions former students with EBD exhibit during employment. The second research question seeks an explanation of the behavioral strategies former students with EBD use to manage their social interactions in the workplace. The third question asks if there is a relationship between high school graduation status of individuals with EBD and their demonstration of social interactions in employment. The next section will review contemporary research regarding employment outcomes of graduates with EBD.

Current Research

This review of current research relevant to the research questions is presented in three sections and is guided by the questions proposed in this research. The first research question pertains to patterns of social interactions demonstrated by graduated individuals with EBD during employment. The first section of the review presents research examining relational patterns and related inaccurate self-perceptions presented by
individuals with EBD. The second section discusses graduation outcomes demonstrated by this special education population. The second research question examines how graduated individuals with EBD managed social interactions in the workplace. The third research review section presents issues relevant to employment as demonstrated by individuals with EBD.

Relational Patterns of EBD Individuals

Individuals with EBD by definition have difficulties in relationships with peers and authority figures. When individuals with EBD display behavior and feelings in social situations the behavior may be inappropriate (PL 105-17, 1997). This section of the literature review describes relationship building of children with emotional problems and indications of potential long-term effects. The literature cites difficulties in relationship building from youth into adulthood that individuals with EBD demonstrate. This section closes with a brief discussion of the negative impact of poor relationship building by individuals with EBD on employment.

Asher (1983) reviewed three peer relationship studies of preadolescent children and concluded that three dimensions of social competence influence the formation and maintenance of peer relationships. The first appears to be the ability of individuals to successfully engage in social interaction and then demonstrate ability to both read and adapt their behavior to the flow of interaction. Second, successful individuals seem to be able to not only positively initiate response but to also reciprocate positively. The third factor of successful interaction is the understanding that it is a process that takes time and is of a higher quality when the time is taken to achieve it. Not all individuals demonstrate social competence and are able to engage in successful social interactions.
Two groups of children may appear to be at-risk for adjustment problems (Asher, 1983). One group is identified as the rejected child, and the other group is referred to as the neglected child. The neglected child appears to be able to function in a more solitary style by not choosing to interact, and may, in fact, delay the establishment of relationships until later. In contrast, the rejected child, rather than allowing a slow process of relationship building, is more likely to be direct. The rejected child begins at a high rate of interaction, but it is of a negative or aversive nature, and is conducted with a wide range of peers. This interactional style generates a reputation for the rejected child that influences peers to reduce their interactions with them.

Children respond not only to overt behavior but attribute intentionality to other’s behavior (Asher, 1983). In normal social interactions, individuals typically focus on each other’s perceived intentions, thus permitting interactions to occur in spite of another’s social miscues. It is in this arena of social miscues that the rejected child is perceived as having lower status due to a continual display of socially incompetent behavior. Therefore, these individuals are likely to experience sustained difficulty in adaptive and socially acceptable relationships.

Claes (1992) evaluated the relationship of friendship and personal adjustment among a sample of 349 adolescents ranging in age from 12 to 18. These adolescents were able to discriminate levels of intimacy in their friendships and were able to sustain these friendships for about 3 to 10 years. Accordingly, it seems to be a North American tendency for 75% of the sampled adolescents to recruit their best friends from their peer group at school (Claes). It was, however, not the quantity of friends that determined high levels of personal adjustment but the quality of the friendship that positively correlated.
The dimensions of trust, loyalty, and frankness seemed to be the predominant factors for the formation and maintenance of these relationships (Claes). Feelings of alienation and conflict were found to hinder the development of adaptive social abilities and psychological adjustment. Claes noted that relationships characterized by conflict and alienation impede an individual’s abilities to socially adapt and psychologically adjust.

The research by Asher (1983) and Claes (1992) indicates the importance of sensitivity to others for the purpose of establishing social interactions. Successful social interactions appear to require an individual to demonstrate the ability to positively reciprocate social interactions. Furthermore, individuals must understand that building and maintaining relationships require an investment of time and effort. Individuals displaying negative or aversive social qualities are likely to make social miscues. Lower social status may be attributed by others to the individual making social miscues.

Schonert-Reichl (1993) investigated adolescents and young adults with EBD for a relationship between empathy and social competence. Thirty-nine males ranging in age from 14 to 19 years of age participated. The author selected males because of the small percentage of females identified with EBD. Empathy was defined as an individual’s temperament inclination toward another’s emotional experiences. In Schonert-Reichl’s study, subjects demonstrated social competence by participation in extracurricular activities, by the amount of contact with peers, by the number of close friends, and by the quality of relationships. Adolescent and young adult males with EBD reported lower levels of empathy, participated in fewer extracurricular activities, contacted with friends less frequently, and developed relationships of a lower quality. Schonert-Reichl (1993)
concluded that males with EBD demonstrated deficits in empathy and in the ability to respond sensitively.

Parker and Asher (1987), in an analysis of 37 studies dating from 1952 to 1984, examined the hypothesis that difficulties in peer relationships in normal children are predictive of adjustment problems in adulthood. Three indices of relationship difficulties were identified: aggressiveness, acceptance, shyness/withdrawal. Three outcomes were examined: dropping out of school, psychopathology as an adult, and criminality. Parker and Asher’s findings supported the general hypothesis that poor early peer relationships indicated later adult adjustment problems. Peer relationships expressed in low acceptance and aggressiveness were more consistent in their predictions than was shyness/withdrawal. Shyness/withdrawal in fact had little predictive validity to later negative outcomes. Low acceptance was more predictive of school dropout than it was of criminality, while aggressiveness had a strong correlation with criminality. Parker and Asher concluded that peer difficulties have their greatest predictive value when applied to a school dropout and criminality.

Windle and Mason (2004) surveyed 1218 high school juniors and seniors regarding aspects (e.g., alcohol use, other substance abuse, delinquent activity, educational aspirations, educational performance, and percentage of friends using alcohol and drugs) of their lifestyle choices contributing to emotional and behavioral problems. These students also completed four standardized surveys measuring negative affect, temperament, stressful life events, and family support. The students were surveyed in two waves. These data sources provided 14 variables that the authors factored into four predictor domains of emotional and behavioral problems; polydrug use, delinquency,
negative affect, and academic orientation. In the first wave, Windle and Mason report that individuals engaged in delinquent behavior were more likely to be associated with peers who demonstrated delinquent behavior and engaged in polydrug use. Delinquent behavior in the first wave predicted higher levels of polydrug use and negative affect in the second wave.

Center and Wascom (1987) noted that deficits in social skills in social interactions demonstrated by individuals with EBD resulted in this group being viewed least favorably by authority figures (e.g., teachers). Center and Wascom asked teachers to describe the kind of behavior demonstrated by students with EBD. They found that the teachers observed less prosocial behavior and more antisocial behavior among the EBD sample. This trend was consistent from elementary through secondary school, but at the secondary level there was a significant improvement in both subject samples. The researchers attributed this improvement to developmental maturity. Nonetheless, despite developmental maturity, negative behavior demonstrated by individuals with EBD was still problematic in comparison to their peers.

A contributing factor to behavioral deviance may in fact be underlying psychiatric conditions. These psychiatric conditions make interactions with others not only problematic but a potentially lifelong feature of their personality. Vander Stoep, Davis, and Collins (2000) reported that few studies have focused on adult aged individuals with EBD who have psychiatric diagnoses. However, Vander Stoep et al. indicated that individuals with EBD possess one or more of the following psychiatric conditions: approximately 46% have a diagnosis of substance abuse, 35% have anxiety disorders, and 14% have depressive disorders. These researchers concluded that although individuals
with EBD have reached the age of majority, they “...struggle with intense feelings of anger and frustration, intense desires to avoid social and other stressful situations, feelings of sadness and worthlessness, and a lack of interest in fun or pleasurable activities” (p.10).

The workplace may require individuals with EBD to negotiate social interactions with nonEBD peers. Individuals with EBD will be expected to resolve conflicts in the course of their employment. This expectation is contrary to the behavior of an individual with EBD who appears to not benefit from experience. Instead individuals with EBD continue to respond in a reflexive and repetitive pattern (Bower, 1981). Jeffrey (1993) noted that individuals with EBD lack social interaction skills equipping individuals to withstand innocent teasing that can occur at a worksite. As a result, individuals with EBD are easily provoked and demonstrate inadequate ability to skillfully resolve conflict. Bullis and Gaylord-Ross (1991) indicated that employability can be negatively influenced by inappropriate social skills and antisocial behavior. It is unlikely that an individual who offends clients/customers and demonstrates difficulty modifying his/her behavior to meet others expectations is going to be hired. As a result, individuals with EBD are drawn to others who present behaviors similar to their own (Meadows, Neel, Scott, & Parker, 1984). Interestingly, individuals with EBD do not appear to perceive the problematic nature of their behavior. This confirmed a similar behavioral finding of Bower (1981). Instead of dissatisfaction with their circumstances, 64% of individuals with EBD participating in a study (Mithaug, Horiuchi, & Fanning, 1985) expressed a sense of positiveness and satisfaction with their lives.
Difficulties in productive interpersonal relationships for individuals with EBD are demonstrated by an inability to positively develop, maintain, and accurately self-evaluate one’s role in relationships. Others may perceive these expressions of deficits and incompetencies in interpersonal behavior by individuals with EBD as intentional. Individual with EBD do not initiate a behavioral change as a result of the discrepancy between themselves and nonEBD individuals. This response to problematic social interactions may limit constructive relationships.

Graduation Outcomes of Students with EBD

Individuals with EBD demonstrate difficulty learning that is not explained by limited intellect, perceptual, or health factors (PL 105-17, 1997). At the secondary level, students with EBD exhibit the poorest overall sustained attendance record of any segment of the special education population nationwide (U. S. Dept. of Education, 2002). Students with EBD fail more courses, have lower grade point averages, and are retained at grade more often than any other disability group (U. S. Dept. of Education). Their dropout rate is 51.4%, and in relation to dropout rates of other special education populations, the EBD population is nearly 50% higher (U. S. Dept. of Education, 2002). In contrast to the EBD dropout rate, the national dropout rate of students without disabilities is reported to be 10.9% (NCES, 2000).

Students with EBD demonstrate poor school attendance and poor levels academic performance resulting in a limited number of graduates. The U. S. Department of Education (2002) reported that 40.1% of students with EBD received a diploma or certificate in 1999-2000. Only students who are mentally retarded, deaf-blind, multiple disabled, and autistic have less successful rates of graduation. The pervasive influence of
behaviors associated with EBD compromises academic performance and ultimately the achievement of graduation. Lower overall grade point averages would indicate that students with EBD who graduate are likely to be poorly prepared for the technical skills required in the contemporary workplace. As a result graduated individuals with EBD are likely to experience difficulty competing for employment with nonEBD peers.

**Competitive Employment**

The second research question asks how graduated individuals with EBD manage social interactions in the workplace. One critical aspect of adult adjustment is gaining and sustaining competitive employment. The ability to be financially self-supportive and the opportunity “... for social interaction, personal identity, and contribution to others” are significant aspects of adult adjustment (Hardman, Drew, & Egan, 1996, p.149). This section relates current research relevant to employment for individuals with EBD.

The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) is a national database of 8,000 individuals with disabilities nationwide who were enrolled in special education in 1985, 1987, and 1990. Using this data, Blackorby et al. (1996) examined postschool outcomes of 1,990 individuals with disabilities up to 5 years after exiting school. These students may have graduated or dropped out of school. The rate of competitive employment for students with EBD less than 2 years out of school was 40.7% and rose to 47.4% 3 to 5 years out of school. Graduates with EBD were twice as likely to have successful full- or part-time employment compared to nongraduates (Frank et al., 1991). Carson et al. (1995) examined the adult adjustment of 92 graduated and nongraduated individuals with EBD 1 and 3 years after exiting school. These researchers reported slightly higher rates of employment. One year after graduation 55% of the graduates were
employed compared to 36% of the dropouts. Three years out of school dropouts had closed the employment gap with a rate of 60% compared to 68% of graduates. In general, individuals with EBD have employment rates from 40%-55%.

*Full-time Employment vs. Part-time Employment*

Researchers noted employment differences when part-time employment was compared to that of full-time employment. Frank et al. (1997) compared full-time and part-time employment rates 1 year after graduation of 89 graduates with EBD from the classes of 1985 and 1993. When comparing full-time employment, 53% of graduates from 1993 were employed compared to 60% of 1985 graduates. The part-time employment rate of 1985 graduates was 40% compared to 47% for 1993 graduates. In general, recent graduates were employed full-time at lower rates compared to an older sample. When comparing full and part-time employment of graduates with EBD to dropouts with EBD a marked difference is presented. Carson et al. (1995) indicated that 1 year out of school graduated individuals with EBD were employed full-time at a rate of 61% while dropouts with EBD had a 75% rate of full-time employment. The gap widened 3 years out of school with dropouts employed full-time at a 93% rate compared to 59% rate of graduates.

*Unemployment*

Neel et al. (1988) conducted a follow-up study of individuals with EBD and nondisabled peers, both of which had exited secondary school. These students may have exited by graduating, dropping out, or becoming older than 22 while enrolled in school. The purpose of the follow-up study was to determine postschool adjustment of individuals with EBD compared to nondisabled peers. A sample of 160 individuals with
EBD who had graduated or aged out of secondary school elected to participate. A cohort of 542 graduated peers who had graduated from secondary school represented nondisabled peers. The rate of unemployment of individuals with EBD was 40% compared to 30% unemployment rate for nondisabled peers of this study. Neel et al. pointed out the unemployment rate of individuals with EBD (40%) was nearly three times that of the national average (15%) for nondisabled peers. D’Amico and Blackorby (1992), however, found that unemployment for former students with EBD was near 60% while individuals without disabilities experienced unemployment at slightly more than 40%. Frank et al. (1997) report a similar gap in rate of unemployment for individuals with EBD having 25% compared to 2% of nondisabled peers.

Rate of unemployment between graduates with EBD and dropouts with EBD were notable. Carson et al. (1995) indicated that 1 year after graduation, graduates with EBD had an unemployment rate of 45% as compared to 64% of those that drop out of school. Three years later graduates with EBD had a 32% rate of unemployment compared to the 40% rate of unemployment of dropouts with EBD. Overall, unemployment rates were higher for individuals with EBD compared to other disability groups. Unemployment rates were even higher when individuals with EBD were compared to nondisabled peers.

Employment Level Skills

The level of skill required for employment was also examined. Carson et al. (1995) indicated that 1 year after graduation 70% of graduates with EBD were employed as a laborer or service workers. Dropouts with EBD were employed in a similar capacity at a 38% rate. Three years after graduation, 72% of graduates with EBD were employed
as service or laborer workers while 54% of dropouts were employed as labor or service workers. When comparing skilled employment of graduates to that of dropouts, the dropouts appeared to fare better. Dropouts 1 year after leaving school had a 63% rate of employment in skilled positions as compared to that of 30% of the graduates. Three years after graduation both groups dropped in rate of employment. Dropouts’ employment rate in skilled positions fell to a 47% rate while graduates employment rate of 29% was approximately the same. Frank et al. (1997) reported skilled full- and part-time employment of two graduated classes of individuals with EBD 1 year after leaving school. The 1985 class 1 year after school were employed full-time in skilled positions at a 36% rate of employment compared to 42% for the 1993 class. The rate of full-time unskilled employment for the 1985 class was 64% while the class of 1993 had a rate of 58%. Part-time skilled employment for the 1985 class was compared to the 1993 class. The 1985 class rate of employment was 14% and the 1993 class rate of 43%. Part-time unskilled employment rate for the class of 1985 was 85% compared to 57% rate of the 1993 class. Individuals with EBD were more likely to be employed at low skilled employment.

Research suggests that individuals with EBD demonstrate a pervasive and sustained pattern of behaviors that compromise social interaction and relationships. Males are more likely to be identified as EBD. The behavioral patterns displayed are likely to have been demonstrated for a sustained part of the individual’s life. The chronic nature of EBD may negatively affect academic success and compromise the individual’s prospects beyond the classroom. The combination of unproductive interpersonal
competencies, ineffective self-regulation, and prospective marginal academic skills seems to result in a maladaptive adulthood.

Achieving competitive employment may be one indicator of effective participation in the workplace as an adult. However, for individuals with EBD competitive employment is often problematic. Despite early work experiences in secondary school, individuals with EBD demonstrate higher rates of unemployment than nondisabled peers. Individuals with EBD are more likely to be employed part-time than full-time. Their employment is likely to be low skilled (e.g. laborers or service) rather than skilled. Dropouts with EBD were more likely than graduates with EBD to have skilled employment (e.g. craftsmen, technician, or manager). This higher level of employment may be attributed to the longer time frame that dropouts had to be employed, when compared to same-age graduates who were still attending school. While dropouts were more likely to earn higher wages they were less likely to receive better benefits.

As a group, individuals with EBD appear to have difficulty gaining competitive employment compared to nondisabled peers. Poor academic performance of individuals with EBD contributes to lower achievement. This compromises their preparation to be competitive based on knowledge gained from schooling with nondisabled peers. Relational deficits further compromise individuals with EBD ability to interact in a positive and productive manner with peers and authority figures. It is possible that behavioral difficulties these individuals displayed in school may be negatively affecting their adult adjustment. Research literature is lacking that describes individuals with EBD adjustment efforts demonstrated in the workplace.
Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1989, 1993) is the theoretical framework upon which the design and procedures of this investigation are based. The concept of self-regulation, as presented in social cognitive theory, is evidenced by an individual’s style of task engagement within his/her environment. The array of skills an individual is able to select enables him/her to establish goals, strategize to reach these goals with minimal unwanted costs, and monitor the overall progress of the task engagement. An individual demonstrating self-regulation seems to be aware of what he/she knows and what he/she believes. This individual appears to know what motivates him/her and seem aware of his/her cognitive abilities. The individual’s actions are based upon this motivation (Ormrod, 1995).

Bandura’s theory of social cognition (Bandura, 1986) is considered to be the founding force of this explanation of human behavior. He theorized that individuals are not solely driven by inner forces nor are they merely acted upon only by external contingency factors. Bandura’s conception of learning introduced conceptualization of vicarious learning, self-reinforcement, and self-regulation. These cognitive processes result in the individuals not only being affected by their environment but also affecting their environment (Bandura). The behavioral model and the role of cognition were integrated within the context of social interaction and the personal agency of the individuals. In this social cognitive framework learning often occurs without being behaviorally visible (Ormrod, 1995).

Four basic assumptions are inherent in Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive approach. First, the individual is an active processor of information. To process
information the individual must first pay attention to the stimuli. The stimuli should create a sensory arousal in the observer that holds attention. Second, responses to stimuli are interpreted based upon the individual's prior knowledge of similar experiences. The individual utilizes cognitive coding processes to categorize the stimuli for memory. At a later time these associations can be recalled and symbolically rehearsed. Third, the individual is capable of performing the behaviors that have been modeled. Initial performances may be awkward or inaccurate but through practice the performance can be refined. Finally, the individual is intrinsically motivated to perform the modeled behavior. The decision to self-reinforce stimulates the individual to either continue to perform the behavior or stop. These four points indicate that behavior is then a product of decisions (Ormrod, 1995). Bandura’s (1986) principle of triadic reciprocality noted the interaction of (a) personal factors such as cognition, affect, and biological events, (b) overt behavior, and (c) environmental influences. The individual operates within the effects of this system and yet is able to affect the system, thus being both product and producer.

In Bandura's schema (1986), the subject’s internal associative standards of comparison enable the self to be distinguished from what is observed outside of the self. Bandura referred to this mechanism as self-efficacy. It is at the very core of the individual’s ability to initiate behavior as a result of self-reinforcement (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy expectations are associated with outcomes expectations. The more certain an individual is that a desired outcome is going to occur the higher the efficacy expectation in the individual. It is Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy that distinguished learning from performance (Wulfert, 1993).
Bandura’s social cognitive approach recognizes that competency is gained through a mastery of skills, but the desire to first perform them requires self-efficacy. Individuals continue to develop understanding about their behavior in regards to appropriate responses for the purposes of self-regulation (Bandura, 1986). Individuals exhibit behavior when there is sufficient reason to act and that sufficient reason is resolved in self-efficacy. As individuals achieve and progress towards more challenging self-chosen goals, their self-efficacy is enhanced and they are further motivated to seek more challenges (Bandura, 1989, 1993).

Social Cognitive Career Theory

The principles of Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (1986) have been applied to vocational rehabilitation and career development (e.g., Krumboltz, Mitchell, & Jones, 1976; Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1984; Osipow, 1983). Within the context of vocational rehabilitation, Bandura’s construct of self-efficacy was refined and termed career self-efficacy (Lent & Hackett, 1987). Career self-efficacy describes the range of beliefs an individual has about their ability to make career choices and adjustments in their career. Lent et al. (1987) noted that early research concerned differential career decisions made by women and men in the workforce. At issue was the underemployment and underrepresentation of competent women in careers dominated by men. The researchers described the impact of socialization differences and effect on perceived range of career options available to women and men. Brown and Lent (1996) indicated that the term Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was developed to describe this research (e.g., see Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1999). SCCT attempts to describe the processes by which
individuals develop interests, make choices, and achieve degrees of success in career pursuits (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000). According to Lent et al.,

SCCT focuses on several cognitive-person variables (e.g., self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals), and on how these variables interact with other aspects of the person and his or her environment (e.g., gender, ethnicity, social supports, and barriers) to help shape the course of career development. (2000, p. 36)

There are three interactive components in SCCT (Albert & Luzzo, 1999). The first component (see Figure 1) consists of individual variables (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity, economic status, disability, etc.) that impact an individual’s interaction and choice in pursuit of a career. Behavior of individuals with EBD is characterized by limited and ineffective interpersonal interactions, an inability to develop and maintain relationships, and interferences in learning ability (PL 105-17, 1997).

Figure 1. Barriers to career choice. Adapted from Lent, Brown and Hackett (2000).

The second component of SCCT, outcome expectations, is another contributing factor to person variability regarding self-perceptions. Outcome expectations are an individual’s perceived beliefs about the probable outcome and imagined consequences of
performing that behavior. Individuals who have experienced success in tasks requiring behaviors that can be generalized to employment (e.g., display positive interaction with others, able to adapt to new expectations) are likely to expect past successes to contribute to future successes. However, individuals with EBD are likely to have experienced failure within the classroom, inability to pass minimum competency tests, retained more than any other disability category, and earn the lowest grade point average of all disability groups (Hardman et al., 1996). Individuals with EBD may generalize their academic and interpersonal difficulties in school to similar experiences they may encounter during employment (e.g., successfully participate in employee training, positively interact with authority and peers).

The third component of SCCT, goal setting behavior, is defined as judgment(s) to engage in a particular behavior to create a specific outcome. Goal setting behavior is important in the self-regulation of the individual. Goals enable an individual to sustain behavioral performance even in the absence of overt reinforcement. If graduation is an indication of an achieved goal, individuals with EBD demonstrate a dropout rate of 50% that exceeds all disability groups (U. S. Dept. of Education, 2002). The U. S. Department of Education (2002) reports 40% of individuals with EBD received diplomas in 1999-2000. Individuals with EBD are likely to demonstrate personal cognitive and behavioral characteristics that may make entry and sustained employment in the contemporary workplace problematic.

Students with EBD may perceive school as not contributing to their life and may even view school as an obstruction. A difficulty in projecting long-term outcomes (i.e., being eligible for higher skilled, better paying levels of employment) because they were
prepared by their school experiences (e.g., learning rudimentary academic skills, participating in career training) would appear to elude them. A pattern of poorly developed and maintained interpersonal skills demonstrated throughout their schooling would indicate present and future adjustment difficulties. One of the environments in which adjustment difficulties are likely to be exhibited will be during employment.

Of interest in this research is the discussion of barriers as they apply to individuals with EBD. SCCT also posits an external factor, barriers, as effecting an individual’s career decisions and development. Perceived barriers in SCCT refer to negative environmental influences though related to the individual are yet distinct from the individual (Lent, Hackett, & Brown, 2000). The workplace’s requirement for a strong base of interpersonal skills (North & Worth, 1996; O’Neil et al., 1997; Richens, 1999) and ability to interact effectively (Carnevale et al., 1990; Carr, 1991; O’Neil, 1997) from prospective employees may present a challenge for this disability group.

SCCT presents a conceptual framework for the examination of the vocational experiences and outcomes of former students with EBD. The first research question asks what patterns of social interactions former individuals with EBD demonstrated during employment. In the workplace an individual with EBD is expected to engage others effectively in order to remain employable. Individuals can anticipate that workplaces will have expectations regarding employee’s abilities to manage themselves.

The second research question explores how former individuals with EBD managed workplace-related social interactions. The socialization expectations of the workplace require the individual with EBD to exhibit dexterity in social interaction.
The third research question asks if there is a relationship between the graduation status and social interactions demonstrated in the workplace by former students with EBD. At issue are the factors in interpersonal skills exhibited that may contribute to the disparity in employment status and earnings level of nongraduated compared to graduated individuals with EBD. The participants’ responses may reflect the benefits associated with staying in school and graduating as opposed to exiting school early.

In conclusion, the literature portrays individuals with EBD as demonstrating enduring behavioral and interpersonal characteristics which make life adjustment a challenge. Individuals with EBD have lower rates employment when compared to nondisabled peers. When comparing levels of employment, nongraduates had higher skill level employment than did graduates. Current research contributed little information regarding the interpersonal behaviors demonstrated by individuals with EBD in the workplace. SCCT proposes that an individual’s self-efficacy is expressed in career expectations and outcome expectations. The first research question asks participants to describe their current employment and the behaviors they exhibit.

Effective decision making is required to be an employable and productive member of the workforce. SCCT maintains that decision making is manifested in the interests, goals, and actions involved in career-related behavior. However, there are factors which can either support or be a barrier to the goal-setting and action process. The second research question probes the decision making of the participants regarding their employment.

The final research question seeks to reveal differences exhibited by graduates versus nongraduates regarding employment. Past decisions made by participants, to
graduate versus exiting early, were probed to determine if they supported or were barriers to employment.

Summary

This literature review focused on the social interactions of former students with EBD. The review was organized around the study’s research questions. In general, the research showed that students with EBD fare worse in the workplace because they often do not know how to socially engage with others, and as the research suggests, they do not resolve conflicts well. Still lacking in the literature are research studies that specifically look at the social behaviors of the EBD population as they are self-reported by young adults with EBD. This study attempts through the use of qualitative methods to explore participants’ perceptions of their social interactions during employment. The next chapter discusses the methodology used in this study.
CHAPTER III

METHOD

Introduction

This study utilized a phenomenological approach best described as an inductive analytical method because its goal was to discover the experience of a concept from a particular participants’ perspective (Patton, 1990). More specifically, this study explored the impact of the social interactions demonstrated by individuals formerly identified as having an emotional and behavioral disorder. Two achieve data collection, two types of qualitative interview methods were utilized because of the complexity of the data and the absence of guiding literature. The first of these was individual guided interviews. The second was a focus group interview. Individual guided interviews are discussed first.

Patton (1990) indicates that four decisions must be made by researchers when developing an interview. First, researchers must determine the type of interview to use. The interview used in this study was partially structured with preformulated questions and modified when appropriate as defined by Gay and Airasian (1996). Furthermore, questions were open-ended and encouraged elaboration from the participants (Patton, 1990). An example is: “What aspects or parts of your job do you find particularly challenging.” The second consideration was the location of the interview. The interviews were conducted in neutral locations with as much privacy as possible (e.g., car, apartment). The third consideration is the length of the interview. The length of the interviews was planned such that the participants could complete the questions in 30-45 minutes. The fourth consideration focuses on the type of information being collected in the study. Patton indicates six kinds of information can be extracted from participants.
These information types are (a) behavior/experience, (b) opinion/value, (c) feeling, (d) knowledge, (e) sensory, and (f) demographic/background.

In this study the plan was for the “day in the life” question to elicit feelings, sensory, and background information. Two guided interview questions evoked responses relative to behavior and experiences. Three questions involved opinion and value judgments from the participants. One question required the participants to provide knowledge about their strategies used in the workplace.

The second qualitative interview technique was a focus group one. This technique enabled the probing of emerging themes generated during the individual interviews. Furthermore, the opportunity for more than one participant to offer information encouraged greater interaction among the participants. Patton (1990) states “The object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others” (p. 335).

Stebbins (2001) indicates that exploratory research is “...the preferred methodological approach when a group, process, activity, or situation has received little or no systematic empirical scrutiny” (p. 9). He states that narratives and case studies are the research methods often used in personality-centered research that is of an exploratory nature. Stebbins maintains, “The main goal of exploratory research is the production of inductively derived generalizations about the group, process, activity, or situations under study” (p. 6). He notes research that is personality-centered is appropriate when the sample of participants is small and the research focus is narrow. The exploratory narrative method used in this study addresses some of the issues such as small sample
size, multiple variables, and prior theoretical considerations required in this study examining the social interactions of former individuals with EBD in the workplace.

The nature of the social interactions in the workplace by individuals with EBD required a qualitative research method. Evidenced by the absence of objective social interactions research in the workplace, qualitative research approaches were better suited for these types of data. The qualitative approach differs most distinctly from quantitative research in its collection and analysis of nonnumerical data (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Data in qualitative studies are often acquired via interviews, observations, historical documents, artifacts, and other discursive sources.

Creswell (1998) recommended the use of a minimum of two procedures to ensure the verification of data gathering and methods utilized in a qualitative study. Multiple sources of data were gathered by interviewing two informants and the participant in addition to the interviews and focus group with the 8 volunteers in this study. Another source of data production was the administration of a paper and pencil inventory completed by the participants. The second means of verification was peer review. Colleagues questioned this researcher regarding methods and procedures. They also reviewed the progress and extraction of content meaning from the data gathered from participants. A statement regarding the presence of bias by the researcher provided another means of verification. This researcher served as the participants’ teacher during some point in their high school education. The role of educator is one of authority in the lives of the participants where judgments are made about levels of achieved success for the participant. At times an educator assumes a role of advocacy for students. This was a tendency that had to be subjugated to the role of researcher. Finally, an educator had
access and received information about a participant that may be of a second or third
person nature. It may be information that a typical researcher may not ever have access
to. This researcher had to remain as objective as possible and rely on the current data to
speak for the participant.

Confirmability refers to the idea that data is free from researcher bias and that
there is a level of generalizability of those results (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Such
biases often make replication difficult if not impossible. There are five potential problems
regarding the confirmability of qualitative data as suggested by LeCompte and Preissle
(1993): (a) the extent to that the role of the researcher influences the outcomes and
generalizeability; (b) considerations that have been made regarding the participants and
the reasons for choosing them; (c) the care that was taken to establish physical, social,
and interpersonal contexts when gathering data; (d) the clarity of the constructs,
definitions, and units of analyses for future replication; and, (e) the clarity of the data
collection methods and analysis.

In the context of the present research, each of these potential sources of bias were
addressed by the following. First, general overview and instructions relevant to the
information gathering process (see Appendix D) were provided to each participant. After
this orientation, a paper and pencil inventory protocol was provided to participants and
informants. Once the administration of the paper and pencil inventory was completed the
researcher conducted a four-question guided interview.

Second, a rationale was delineated for choosing the participants. The following
criteria enabled this researcher access to the largest number of participants. A
preestablished set of six criteria determined the eligibility of each participant in this
research: (a) each participant was a former student in EBD program where this researcher was employed; (b) each participant demonstrated a willingness to participate; (c) each participant was male; (d) each participant attended the same secondary school; (e) each participant was out of secondary school at least 3 years; and (f) each participant was gainfully employed.

Third, the participants selected a convenient location and a time for data collection. The social and interpersonal contexts of the research environment were designed to minimize conversation except during the interview process.

A fourth issue required the guided interview to be utilized in such a fashion as to provide the same questions for each participant. The interview was designed to probe elements of employment that require utilization of interpersonal skills by the employee. The inventory generated a personality profile that could then be compared to normative data.

Fifth, all scripts and documentation are included should future researchers desire to replicate this study. The interviewer participated in peer debriefing with a professional colleague trained in interview procedures, data collection, coding and analysis. This process served to further review and clarify data gathered in this research.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was (a) to generate rich descriptions of the participants’ perceptions of the social interactions they demonstrate during employment and (b) to explore the decision making of the participants while employed. The first research question asked the participants to describe the social interactions they demonstrate while employed. The second question asked the participants to offer explanations regarding
how they managed their social interactions while in the workplace. The third research question sought to determine if there was a relationship between school graduation status of individuals with EBD and their demonstration of social interactions while employed.

Participants

Eight adult males agreed to be the participants for this study. They had been identified as having EBD by the public school system. Four participants remained enrolled in classes for individuals with EBD until their graduation. The remaining four participants exited early from secondary school. Graduation status was determined by access to student records. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the participants.

School and Educational Experience

All of the participants received EBD educational programming at a public high school in a lower-middle class suburban school district. The community where the high school is located is approximately 96% Caucasian and 4% Asian, Hispanic, African American, and American Indian (Bureau of the Census, 2000). The participants of this study did not attend the high school serving their local community. All of the participants were transported to the high school housing the EBD classrooms.

The participants attended a high school program for EBD that was located within a high school in their school system. The high school houses two special classrooms each staffed by a teacher of students with EBD and assisted by a paraprofessional. Many of the students received instruction in the core content areas in the special classrooms. Some students with EBD left the classroom for instruction in elective courses as indicated in the student’s individual education program (IEP). Each instructor incorporated social skills development into the classroom routine through the use of classroom rules of conduct.
Students were encouraged to conduct themselves in a manner that enabled the teacher to present concepts and their fellow students to participate in lessons. Students had an opportunity to participate in a transitional work setting supervised by the transitional work coordinator. These students did not elect this type of supervised employment. They chose instead to find employment that was not connected with the school system.

An initial challenge for researchers who examine this disability population is the difficulty in finding participants. Students with EBD have demonstrated a pattern of reluctance in participating in research studies. Rates of contact with former students with EBD indicate limited access to this population (Sample, 1998). Mithaug et al. (1985) indicated students with EBD who were out of school were unwilling to cooperate in a longitudinal study. Sample (1998) indicated that former students with EBD were more likely to participate in an interview with adult professionals they knew well. Since their graduation or exit from school, a few of the participants have maintained occasional contact with their former teachers. These contacts were initiated by the participants via telephone or by personal visit and occurred once or twice per year. The researcher of this study utilized the strategy described by Sample (1998) to attain data relevant to the research questions. This researcher had served as their former teacher and was able to use this relationship as a means to encourage their participation in this study.

Another difficulty cited by researchers (Kortering et al., 1992; Neel et al., 1988) highlighted the problem obtaining information about individuals with EBD for research purposes due to their reluctance to participate. This was further complicated by the lack of adequate contact information about their place of current residence. In this study, this
A challenge was addressed by asking participants and school personnel for contact information about other potential candidates.

A final challenge was locating a satisfactory number of participants for this research. This difficulty is complicated by the limited number of graduated individuals with EBD. The low graduation rates associated with this disability category limited the number of available participants. This researcher was able to secure the participation of four graduates and then searched for four nongraduates in order to have matching numbers of participants.

In this study, a purposeful sampling strategy was used. Patton (1990) indicates purposeful sampling requires the researcher to select “information-rich cases ...from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 169). For this research, 8 participants were selected who represented graduated and nongraduated individuals with EBD. These participants were employed at the time the interviews were arranged. They were familiar with the researcher and readily accessible for participation. The participants in this sample had six characteristics in common: (a) each participant was a former student in a EBD program in the same school; (b) each participant had demonstrated a willingness to be available; (c) each participant was male; (d) all participants had attended the same secondary school; (e) each participant had been out of secondary school at least one year; and (f) each participant was gainfully employed.

The 8 participants selected ranged in age from 20 to 26 years. They were employed in various areas of the service (e.g., cook, fast food delivery, food demonstrator) and trade industry (e.g., heating, ventilation and air conditioning
installation, tow-motor operator, telecommunications). They were selected because they have maintained contact with this researcher and were willing to offer their contributions for this research.

Each participant was asked to nominate informants for this study. The informants were expected to have personal knowledge of the participant at their place of work. At least one of the informants was expected to have worked with the participant. Each participant was expected to nominate 2 informants for this research. Three graduates did not nominate informants. One graduate nominated his manager and fellow employee as his informants. Another graduate nominated his wife and a fellow participant who worked with him. This same graduate served as the informant for the third graduate. The remaining graduate and all non-graduates resisted suggesting informants. They threatened to withdraw from participating if forced to provide informants.

This limitation severely reduced the availability of data to generate information required for a case study. In order to gain the fullest data sets possible, interviews from informants and the WISI inventory were not used and an inductive analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) of data was utilized. Patton (1990) notes that qualitative research permits design flexibility in order to be more responsive rather than be “locked into rigid designs that limit responsiveness” (p. 41).

The ability to elicit more information and triangulate the data of informants’ responses was limited because 5 of 8 participants’ reluctance to nominate informants. As a result only individual interviews, self-inventories, and focus groups data provided by the participants were utilized for data analysis. These three data sources provided the
greatest amount of data in which the greatest number of participants shared. Table 1 gives a summary of data collected for each participant.

Table 1

Differentiation in Individual Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Personal WISI</th>
<th>Informant WISI</th>
<th>Informant Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (grad)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (grad)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (grad)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (grad)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (n-grad)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (n-grad)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (n-grad)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (n-grad)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instrumentation

Two instruments for data gathering were used in this study (see Table 1). The first instrument was a set of four guided interview scripts created by the author. The first two interview scripts were designed to probe the participants regarding their current employment status, individuals with whom they work, a description of their tasks they perform in their employment, and any school influences that have affected their life and employment. Another interview script asked informants to share their opinions of the participants’ work performance they have observed. The second instrument was a guided interview script used with the focus group. The questions for this script were created...
to explore emerging themes produced by the participants during their individual interviews. The intention was to further explore the participants’ responses relevant to the themes. The second instrument was the Workplace Interpersonal Skills Inventory (WISI) that was developed for this investigation. This paper and pencil survey generated information regarding the participants’ interpersonal behavior in the workplace.

Guided Interview

The first source of data was collected through the use of two guided interviews. This procedure was planned to permit questioning relevant to questions central to this research. Copies of the guided interviews scripts utilized in this study are shown in Appendices E, F, and G.

The first interview of the participant was intended to elicit a description of “A day in his life.” This interview was expected to produce information about each participant’s motivations and social interactions at his workplace (see Appendix E).

The second interview probed any contributions to their employability that may be attributed to school experiences and being in a class for student with EBD. This interview generated information about the participant’s job with a description of the job performed, length of employment, work relationship with fellow employees, and how the participant came to be employed. The reader can find this interview in Appendix F.

The second interview was designed to elicit the informant’s opinion of the participant’s responses to the challenges of employment and strategies they observed the participants use (see Appendix G).

The interview script used for the focus groups was developed after all individual interviews were completed and reviewed by this researcher. Responses by participants to
the focus group interview script were expected to develop and further clarify topics mentioned during the individual interviews. Graduates and nongraduates were interviewed as separate groups for the focus group interviews (see Appendix H).

A portion of the interviews was developed using the principles from the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) of the U. S. Department of Labor. The SCANS (1990) report proposed a broad range of foundational skills and competencies that are necessary in the contemporary workplace. Personal qualities displayed by the individual such as exhibiting responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity are considered foundational in the workplace. These skills are evidenced in effective interpersonal skills. The SCANS (1990) report suggests these skills enable the worker to be able to work on teams, teach others, serve customers, display leadership, negotiate, and work well with people of culturally diverse backgrounds. The interpersonal skills offered by this report served as the guide for the development of questions for the guided interviews and the source for probes during the interviews. The interview questions were designed to gather information about the participants’ reflections regarding employment, contributing factors leading to employment, and social interactions in the workplace.

The guided interview assured that each individual was asked the same set of core or guiding questions. The script ensured that the same information was going to be probed during all interviews. The interview format did not, however, provide a fixed set of responses to each question. Instead, the choice of responses was determined by the individual. The guided interview also permitted the researcher to probe responses. The probes served to further clarify responses and develop descriptions that provided context.
As a result, the guided interview created for this study took the form of four scripts. Three scripts were designed for the participant and were written to generate a first person response (see Appendix E, F, and H). The participants provided information from personal experiences, opinions, and information regarding their knowledge base of employment and social interactions demonstrated in the workplace. For example, participants were asked: “What areas of your job are challenging? What makes these a challenge for you?” (see Appendix E). The third script was written so that the 2 informants could comment or provide information about the participants’ social interactions in the workplace (see Appendix G). The informants described their observations and perceived meaning of social interactions of the participant. For example, the informants were asked: “What areas do you believe (participant) finds challenging at his job? What are your reasons for believing these would be challenging?” (see Appendix G).

Two interviews consisted of four primary questions and related follow-up questions regarding social interactions. The informant is asked to provide responses regarding content similar to that asked of the participant. Questions about relationships with coworkers and superiors, challenges presented by employment, employment satisfaction, and perceived obstacles to employment were themes probed in the questions.

**Workplace Interpersonal Skills Inventory**

The inventory items were statements derived from the following reports: SCANS (1990, 1991), the American Society for Training and Development (Carnevale, Gainer, & Meltzer, 1990), Michigan Employability Skills Task Force (Mehrens, 1987), New York State Board of Education (1990), and National Academy of Sciences (1984). The
statements describe behaviors associated with each of the six areas of interpersonal competencies required in contemporary workplaces as indicated in these reports: (a) work on a team (e.g., contributes to group effort was made into the following statement - I contribute to group effort on the job), (b) teach others new skills (e.g., share work experience was made into the statement - I share my personal work experience with others), (c) serve clients/customers, (d) exercise leadership, (e) negotiate, and (f) work with diversity (see Appendix H and I). The survey demonstrates face validity in that the items are clear statements of important interpersonal skills and behaviors.

The first area relates to one’s desire to work on a team or work group. Individuals were asked to describe their willingness to contribute to a group effort, be attentive to members of the group, participate in the group, share ideas and suggestions with the group, help others, and join in with the group.

The second area assessed an individual’s interest in teaching others new skills at the workplace. The participants and informants were asked to indicate their ability and willingness to teach fellow employees skills in a way they can understand, model effective work behaviors while working, share personal work experiences with others, show peers “tricks of the trade,” provide step-by-step instructions when needed, and learn new skills to be more effective.

The third area of the inventory was an individual’s ability and willingness to provide service to clients and customers. Service was described as the individual’s willingness to listen closely to customer concerns, be courteous and polite to customer and client, attempt to satisfy the customer, attempt to understand customer’s needs,
provide constructive assistance to the customer, and value the use of humor as one interacts with the customer.

The fourth area indicated an individual’s willingness and ability to exercise leadership at the workplace. Statements related to leadership were an individual’s willingness and ability to be accessible to peers for advice and help, motivate others at work, be supportive of fellow employees, tolerate other’s mistakes a lack of understanding, be tactful, challenge nonproductive work procedures, and assist others when problems occur.

The fifth area was an individual’s ability to negotiate conflicts or problems with others in the workplace. The ability to negotiate required the individual to be willing to be a good listener, consider both sides of a problem, first attempt to solve problems, strive for an equitable solution to a problem, use as many resources as possible to problem solve, offer and accept criticism, and tolerate mistakes and lack of understanding of others.

The sixth and final area reflected an individual’s ability to work with diversity in people and situations in the workplace. This demonstration of tolerance was measured by the individual’s ability and willingness to be flexible when change occurs, be respectful of other’s differences, treat others fairly, be sensitive and nonjudgmental, be able to learn, and be able to adjust to a new work team.

The WISI has 38 positively written statements and provides the individual the opportunity to respond to a Likert scale of 5 choices of response. Regarding any of the 38 statements, the individual may choose to (a) strongly disagree, (b) disagree, (c) be neutral, (d) agree, and (e) strongly agree. The WISI statements and response choices are on the same sheet of paper.

Piloting of the WISI was performed with the assistance of the staff of a local clothing retail store. A total of 11 adult females and 1 adult male participated. They
ranged in age from 19 to 45 years of age. These individuals produced 69 inventory assessments, 12 of these were self-reports and 57 were informant inventories. The number of informant reports ranged from 2 to 7 reports per individual. Individuals completing more inventories had a longer record of employment and worked a greater variety of shifts, resulting in more contact with the entire staff. As a result more employees were knowledgeable regarding these individuals and had sufficient information to complete informant inventories. Completion of a self-report and three informant reports took approximately 15 minutes. All participants signed a consent form in compliance with the university’s rules for research.

The respondents stated that the overall process of reading the statements and responding was not tedious. The greatest difficulty encountered was having sufficient knowledge of a peer’s work performance to rate others. Because the workforce was split into shifts, not all of the employees worked frequently with the entire workforce. These limited workplace contacts limited the range of responses for part-time employees.

Inter-rater reliability was investigated by examining the correspondence between 2 informants’ ratings of the same individual limited by the reduced variance. The variability of informants’ in responses assessments of the participants was limited in the pilot study (i.e., the vast majority of ratings in the pilot were 4s and 5s). The participants’ low variability responses necessitated the use of a method referred to as percent adjacent agreement procedure used by other researchers when faced with data exhibiting limited variance (Landrum, Cook, Tankersley, & Fitzgerald, 2002; Zarcone, Rodgers, Iwata, Rourke, & Dorsey, 1991). The percent adjacent agreement method is based on the
proportion of items that are rated within one point of another by 2 different raters. Using this method, the percent of data points exhibiting adjacent agreement was 90.94%.

Focus Group Interviews

The responses of the individual interviews and the WISI were reviewed by the researcher and a peer for trends in ideas expressed by the participants. The ideas offered by the participants were further evaluated using a focus group interview. Patton (1990) suggested that focus group interviews generate “high quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others” (p. 335). Greenbaum (1988) noted that focus groups are useful in sorting “the worst ideas, the most significant strengths and weaknesses of a concept, and the most relevant comments about the concept” (p. 22).

The participants were paired into two groups, one of graduates and the other of nongraduates. Maximum size of each group was four. Patton (1990) recommended that the focus group be reasonably homogenous to aid in reflecting on questions and responding from the individual’s perspective. Smaller focus groups, Greenbaum (1988) asserts, “communicate to the respondents that they have been chosen to be the expert” (p. 39). Each group was asked to meet at different times and at an agreed upon place. Each group was asked to discuss the themes generated as a result of their interviews. The number of questions was restricted to less than ten but structured to be open ended to encourage each participant to develop his perspective. The group was encouraged to reflect and interact with each other regarding opinions shared. The focus group averaged 45-60 minutes to respond. Each session was audio taped for the purposes of transcription. There were two main purposes for conducting the focus group. One purpose was to
validate the interpretations of the participants relevant to the interviews. The other purpose was to provide an interpretation of the implications and emerging themes relevant to the research questions.

Design

Dependability

Dependability, as defined by Miles and Huberman (1994), requires that the “process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods” (p. 278). Furthermore, there must be consistent agreement among multiple observers concerning the data gathered and the methods used to gather the data. In order to address these needs two steps were taken. First, interviews were conducted following the same procedure for each participant and verbatim accounts of the participant and his 2 informants were acquired via audio recordings. This enabled the researcher to assure that all of the participants’ comments were captured. Each interview was transcribed. Peer debriefing was conducted with colleagues during the interview process and before focus group interviews. Colleagues trained in coding analysis evaluated 10% of the participants’ interviews with an inter-rater reliability of 81%.

Credibility

Whether or not the findings of a study have a basis in truth and accurately represent that which it purports to study is referred to as credibility. Among qualitative researchers, there are often reservations about credibility based upon only one observer and/or interviewer in open-ended designs. These reservations have been expressed in three dimensions (see Stebbins, 2001).
The first involves the presence of the researcher where data gathering occurs. Participants may elect to provide information they believe the researcher wants to hear, or they may not disclose all relevant information or lie. For the purposes of this research, the researcher and the participant were located in a neutral setting the participants selected and expressed they were comfortable. The interviews were conducted in a public place where there were no other people able to hear our conversation.

The second issue involves the distortion of data as a result of the participants who do not accurately represent the phenomenon of interest. This is more frequently a problem when there are many participants or the social context is so complex that accurate observation is difficult. This was not the case in this research. The interviews were not conducted at the participant’s place of work. Each participant met with the researcher in a one-on-one format to reduce distractions.

The third dimension involved the researcher’s ability to witness all relevant aspects of the phenomena being examined. The individual’s interview responses and the completion of the WISI were completed under the observation of the researcher.

Transferability

Transferability focuses on the generalizability of results to other populations, persons, or situations. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) suggest that transferability describes the “comparability” and “translatability” of results. A study has comparability when it is scientifically useful. The purpose of this research was to generate information about social interactions of graduated and nongraduated individuals with EBD who are employed. The contributions of this research will help to clarify descriptions of employed individuals with EBD. A study has translatability when “...research methods, analytic
categories, and characteristics of phenomena and groups are identified explicitly that comparison can be conducted confidently and used meaningfully across groups and disciplines” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 47).

Data Collection

Data collection procedure is presented in five sections. The first section describes the initial telephone contact with the participant. The second section describes the initial contact with the informant. The day of the interview and inventory completion are described in the third section. The telephone script to confirm a meeting with the participant is described in the fourth section. The final section describes the day of the interview and inventory completion with the participant.

Telephone Contact with Participant

Initially, the research process began with this researcher contacting the participant by telephone. A script used for this telephone contact is indicated (see Appendix A). I first asked the participant to participate in the research. The participant was asked to provide names and telephone numbers of 2 individuals that knew about his work involvement. One of the informants must work with him. The participant was asked if time was needed to contact acquaintances willing to participate. If extra time was needed this researcher offered to schedule another date and time to contact the participant for relevant information. The participant was asked contact the informants to prepare them for this researcher’s telephone contact. Finally, the participant was asked to suggest two or three mutually acceptable meeting dates, times, and places to participate in the research. The participant was told his interview would be conducted after his informants
had completed the process. This contact procedure was the same for the remaining participants.

**Telephone Contact with Informant**

Following the conversation with the participant, a nominated informant was contacted by telephone. A script for the telephone contact with the informant was used (see Appendix B). In the course of the script, the informant was provided a general explanation of the research. The individual was told that he or she was nominated by the participant because he believed that he/she had expert knowledge about him at his place of employment. The informant was asked to participate in this research. If he/she agreed, then an acceptable meeting date, time, and place were selected. If the informant did not agree, then the participant was asked to nominate another individual. Both informants of each participant completed the research process before the participant.

**Inventory and Interview with Informant**

The next contact the researcher had with the informant was the scheduled meeting date, time, and place. This meeting was attended by the researcher and the informant participating in the research.

**Review Process**

At the initial meeting this researcher introduced himself to the informant (see Appendix C). The informant was asked to suggest a place in the room that was comfortable to conduct the research. The informant was reminded they were nominated by the participant because of their knowledge about the participant in his place of work. The general purpose of this research and the two instruments used to gather data were discussed. The importance of the informant’s contribution to this research was explained.
The informant was told that his/her identity would be kept confidential. The informant was instructed there would be two tasks in this research. First, the informant was asked to complete a paper and pencil inventory. Second, the informant participated in an audio taped interview. The informant was asked if there were any questions regarding the research process. After indicating an understanding, the informant was asked to complete the Human Subject Permission form (see Appendix I). This completed the informant’s preparation before the actual data gathering.

**Administer WISI**

The informant was provided a copy of the peer-report form of the WISI (see Appendix I) and a response sheet. For purposes of confidentiality, an identification number was supplied by this researcher to identify the informant. This identification number was entered on the answer sheet. The informant completed the survey. This researcher monitored the informant’s progress completing the inventory. The informant’s form was monitored for two things: (a) if each item answered, and (b) if the responses had a pattern? Approximately 5 to 10 minutes were required to complete the WISI form.

**Interview**

The informant was encouraged for completing the WISI form. The informant was told the audio taped interview was the last part of the research. A script for the interview was used by this researcher (see Appendix I). The informant was instructed that interviews would be recorded on audiocassette that would be transcribed at a later date. The guided interview process began the first of the four questions (see Appendix F). Each interview ranged in length from 30 to 45 minutes.
Wrap-up

After completing the guided interview the informant was thanked for his or her time, effort, and insight shared on this research. The informant was given a monetary reward for participation. The informant was again thanked for participating. This concluded the data gathering process with the informant. The entire time of an individual’s participation in this research was approximately 45 minutes to one hour. After the participant left the research session the researcher recorded field notes regarding observations and impressions of the session. The procedure described occurred with each informant.

Telephone Confirmation with Participant

After both informants nominated by the participant had completed the interview process the participant were contacted by this researcher. At this time one of the prescheduled meeting dates was agreed upon to complete his interview.

Inventory and Interview with Participant

At the scheduled meeting this researcher introduced himself to the participant (see Appendix H). The participant was asked to suggest a place in the room that is comfortable to conduct the research. The general goal of the research was explained to the participant. The participant was informed the research was designed to produce information about the participant’s career adjustment and experiences following graduation from secondary school. The participant’s social interactions in the performance of their career were evidence of the participant’s adjustment in the workplace. This research was explained as a follow-up study of former students of the
local school system. The participant was told that there was no mention of their former status as an EBD student to the informants.

Review Process

After the explanation of the general purpose of this research the two instruments used to gather data were discussed. The importance of the participant’s contribution to this research was explained. He was informed his identity would be kept confidential. The participant was instructed there are two tasks in this research. First, he was asked to complete a paper and pencil inventory. Second, the participant would participate in an audio taped interview. The participant was asked if there were any questions regarding the research process. After indicating an understanding, he was asked to complete the Human Subject Permission form (see Appendix I). This completes the participant’s preparation before the actual data gathering.

Administer WISI

Once the Human Subject Permission was completed the actual data gathering began. The participant/informant was provided an answer sheet for the WISI (see Appendix H and I). For purposes of confidentiality, an identification number was supplied by this researcher to identify the participant. This identification number was entered on the answer sheet. The participant completed the self-report form of the WISI. The participant was encouraged to start when ready. I monitored the participant’s progress completing the inventory. I unobtrusively monitored participants while they were completing the instrument to assure that each item was answered and that responses did not have a pattern (indicating that the participant is not attending to the prompts). I encouraged the participant/informant to respond to all questions and be as forthright as
possible in responding to each of the 38 statements. Approximately 5 to 10 minutes were required to complete the WISI form.

Interview

The participant was encouraged for completing the WISI. The participant was told the audio taped interview was the last part of the research. A script for the interview was followed by this researcher (see Appendix C). The participant was instructed that interviews would be recorded on audiocassette that would be transcribed at a later date. Each interview ranged in length from 30 to 45 minutes.

Wrap-up

After completing the guided interview each participant was thanked for his time, effort, and insight shared on this research. The participant was given a monetary reward for participation. The participant was again thanked for his contributions that enabled this research. This concluded the data gathering process with the participant. The entire time of an individual’s participation in this research was 45 minutes to 1 hour. After the participant left the research session the researcher recorded field notes regarding observations and impressions of the session. The procedure described occurred with each participant.

Data Analysis

Analysis of each interview of the participants and their informants was guided by the three questions posed in this research. They were (a) what patterns of social interactions did graduated and nongraduated individuals with EBD demonstrate during employment; (b) how did graduated and nongraduated individuals with EBD manage social interactions in the workplace; and (c) were there differences in the patterns of
social interactions demonstrated in employment by the graduated and nongraduated EBD samples. Data relevant to the three research questions was gathered using two instruments: (a) the guided interview scripts and (b) the WISI.

The first instrument, a series of guided interview scripts, was used to generate a narrative from the participants. Four individual scripts were developed for this research. Two interview scripts (see Appendices E and F) for the individual interview with participants were used. A third interview script (see Appendix G) for interviewing the informants was developed. Finally, a fourth script (see Appendix H) was used to guide the focus group interviews. The analysis of the narrative required an orderly process. Creswell (1998) suggested four general steps of data analysis: (a) management of data, (b) reflection on data, (c) organization of data, and (d) meaning of data. These steps guided the data analysis of the narratives generated by the participants.

First, management of data began with transcribing each guided interview. Field notes were written at the end of interview sessions by this researcher and transcribed. Transcribed field notes were placed at the end of the transcribed interview. Although all participants were individually interviewed, not all were willing to involve others in the interview process. Three graduates were the only participants to nominate informants. One graduate and all nongraduates refused to nominate anyone that could provide information about them regarding their workplace interaction. The transcriptions of the participant interview and his two informants’ interviews made up one set of interview data. Each interview was reviewed independently.

Second, the interview data attained was read for content. Initial reflections made by this researcher were handwritten in margins of the text for reference. The reflections
were early observations regarding meaning or context of a participant’s response. This process began the identification of relevant information for this research from raw data of the interview.

Third, was the development of descriptions, categories, and interpretations from the interview data (Creswell, 1998). Interviews were examined for the context in which interview statements were made. The context may have been the work setting in which the participants were employed. The events that occurred in the participant’s workplace may have contributed to the context. The emergence of similar units of interview content was translated into codes (see Appendix K). This coding system had an inter-rater reliability of 81% when used with two colleagues.

The coded statements were examined for identification of patterns. Patterns of responses by the participants observed were noted on index cards for reference. Patterns were compared for similarities or contrasts in content. Patterns of content were produced by the participants (e.g., types of employment, how long they have had their employment, reflections on high school experiences, etc.). Analysis of these patterns led to the development of categories. Creswell (1998) stated “category formation represents the heart of qualitative data analysis” (p. 144). Categories are clusters of data sharing similar information. Development of categories further refined the description of the characteristics of information. Categorizing indicated shared points of information that excluded all others. Information not fitting one category may better fit a new category. In this way multiple categories were generated from the information. The development of categories led to the identification common threads of meaning called themes. Themes sharing similar elements are described as having linkages and underlying relationships
(LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Recognizing relationships that exist between categories then led to developing statements suggesting a general explanation.

Finally, inferences were made based upon general explanations and used to generate hypothesis. At this level relationships were examined to see if they ruled out competing hypotheses.

Narratives from one participant and his two informants were also used to gather additional data. The participant and his two informants were asked to respond to the same questions in the interview process (Bailey, 1982; Patton, 1990). The purpose of this procedure was to gather comparable data across subjects to verify the validity of the participant’s responses. Furthermore, it offered the opportunity for the generation of information that had greater detail. A narrative for the study was developed using the four steps of data analysis suggested by Creswell (1998).

A narrative for the study of the 8 participants was generated in this research. An analysis of the 8 participants’ data was compared to determine common themes, patterns, and meanings. Yin (1994) indicated an analysis process he referred to as multiple-unit analysis. This analysis offers greater ability to generalize findings and enhance understanding and explanation of findings. The individual interviews were analyzed seeking to explore emerging patterns and themes suggested by the individual participants.

The participants were separated into two groups, graduates and nongraduates, for the focus group interviews. The focus group interview responses were utilized to further enhance descriptions made by participants’ during their individual interviews. The focus groups were guided by a script (see Appendix H) to probe emerging themes noted from the participants’ interviews. The focus group interviews helped to develop the
participants’ perspective regarding their employment (e.g., the challenges or barriers that they encountered during their employment, adjustments they have made that may have changed their life, relative outcome of their involvement in an EBD program, etc.).

The WISI was the second source of information gathering used in this research. This inventory was used with participants (see Appendix I) and with informants (see Appendix J) produced descriptive data regarding the participants’ demonstrated social interactions at work. Due to the fact that 5 of 8 participants refused to nominate informants, it limited the ability to quantitatively interpret the data. Thus, the number of responses by informants this data provided only descriptive data. The responses indicated relative agreement in observations between participant and informants regarding the participants’ social interactions in the workplace. Chapter 4 describes the data as analyzed.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the data gathered from participants who as students were identified as having an emotional and behavioral disorder (EBD). The 8 participants in the study were former high school students evaluated as having EBD. Four were graduates and 4 were nongraduates. This investigation included data collected from individual interviews, focus groups, field notes, and the Workplace Interpersonal Skills Inventory (WISI). Five major themes emerged in the process of data analysis: (a) challenges of employment, (b) discrepancies between informant ratings and self-ratings of work performance, (c) influence of EBD placement on school and career success, (d) substance abuse, and (e) pivotal life events. These themes are described in the following paragraphs.

Theme 1: Challenges of Employment and Types of Employment

The first theme that emerged from the data, challenges related to employment, generated the greatest number of responses from the participants. The challenges are organized in the categories of: (a) types of employment (i.e., they desire higher, less-intensive work), (b) discrepancies between current employment and future career plans, (c) job retention, and (d) social interaction in the workplace. These challenges are described in greater detail in the following paragraphs.
Participants worked in semiskilled or unskilled jobs because of their lack of formal trade school training. Because the participants were under-qualified they frequently were underemployed. Tom graduated from high school without vocational training. This participant’s work experiences were limited to evening work in a variety of fast food restaurants while he attended high school during the day. This was the only area of the food service industry in which he was comfortable working. When he was asked if he wanted to be a manager, he said “I am sick of food service.” Ray, a nongraduate, worked on a temporary basis on a home repair crew. He worked for an unscrupulous employer who didn’t pay him for a roofing job. “The dude didn’t pay me for 4 weeks – he owes me 1400 dollars. I don’t want anymore working under the table. That will never happen again.” Ray remained positive about getting employment but not as certain about long term employment, “Jobs ain’t hard to get its just keeping them.” Terry, a nongraduate, indicated another factor that enabled him to be employed in telecommunications installation when he wasn’t qualified:

I also got a break by being hired by somebody who is my [relative]. Cause, I mean straight up, I definitely wouldn’t have this job if I didn’t have a diploma and didn’t stay in school.

Their employment included: fast food service, rental property maintenance, product demonstrator, electric machine repair, heating and ventilation air conditioning (HVAC) laborer, telecommunication wiring installer, tow-motor operator, and factory laborer. Three graduates and 3 nongraduates changed jobs during the course of this 6-month research study but remained employed in unskilled or semiskilled positions. Of the graduates, one joined the armed forces, the second became a laborer in construction, and
the third changed departments but continued to work for the same employer. Of the 3 nongraduates, one changed employment to machine maintenance, the second changed employment to a different warehouse, and the third accepted employment as a fast food delivery person.

Both graduates and nongraduates indicated that their current employment was not where they wanted to be for an extensive amount of time. They voiced desires for less physically demanding labor, shorter work hours per week, opportunities to learn more advanced work skills, and expressed high expectations regarding future advancement.

Hank, for example, noted that he did unskilled labor but would prefer a 40-hour work week in a position that was not as physically demanding:

That’s why I’m doing what I’m doing even though I’m just hurting myself more. And that’s why I’d really like to go back to school and get an office job or something where I can work 40 hours a week and come up with money.

Tom expressed dissatisfaction with food service and was pursuing a career in the armed forces to advance himself. “No. I’m sick of food service. I would like to one day be a master chief chef in the Navy. The U.S. Navy.”

Some graduates and nongraduates considered pursuing advanced training in their current occupations, but their plans were vague and not clearly articulated. Tim, a nongraduate, stated: “I still need a couple more years to figure out, you know stuff, and then I’ll go take my apprenticeship and take my union test.” Some graduates stated they would prefer to get certification or employment to elevate their work status from that of a general laborer to that of a skilled laborer.

Will, a graduate, indicated that he would like to pursue postsecondary schooling for a different type of employment such as a radio personality. While he had been
considering enrolling in a junior college program for radio and television production, a barrier for him has been being able to afford tuition and other costs. He would have to quit work to go to college, and he believed he could not afford to lose those earnings.

Tim, a nongraduate, also perceived further schooling as an avenue to a better job:

I mean, my job’s not the greatest job, but that’s why I plan on going to college later on. I don’t know. Computers. That’s pretty much the only thing I consider right now or something to do with computers.

Two years after dropping out of high school, Terry did pursue a degree. He earned a GED but was dubious about its value. “I have a GED but that doesn’t mean really, just ya know, well whatever I knew.”

Other participants believed the attainment of job certification might mean greater stability in work hours and less flextime at the job site. The unpredictability of the length of the workday was described as inhibiting the after-work social life of one nongraduate. Terry stated that sometimes an 8-9 hour workday would stretch into a 16-17 hour day. This would happen when the job was more involved than originally estimated, or when he ran out of supplies and had to locate more, thus lengthening the hours of work required to finish the task. Terry believed that having trade certification would provide him with the training to work for a major telecommunications company that would be better supplied with materials. He also believed that this certification would lead to employment with a company that would have specific hours regardless of the completion status of the job.

Both graduates and nongraduates alike anticipated less physically demanding expectations on the job site as a result of obtaining certification. Tom, a graduate, indicated that he wanted to join the military so that he could learn a skill and obtain
employment that would provide him with benefits, “My job, I’m just trying to learn everything that they have so when I decide to retire I can still go get a good job and still have all the benefits from the military.” Hank is another graduate who spoke about pursuing more schooling for a new career. He currently is considering training in operating heavy equipment such as backhoes, bulldozers, and high lifts. For Hank the advantage of such training would be:

...you just sit in a chair in a big tractor and push and pull a few levers, and you get the job done and you get paid far more than the person is on the ground with the shovel. You do a lot less work. It’s not really being lazy its just kinda using your head.

Tim, a nongraduate, verbalized that he has considered more schooling in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) so that he can get an apprenticeship with his current employer.

Job Retention

The length of employment was an area of instability for both graduates and nongraduates. Two graduates, Will and Frank, and 1 nongraduate, Tim, sustained employment for over a year in the same setting. The 2 remaining graduates and 3 nongraduates frequently changed jobs in areas of food service and unskilled labor. They provided incomplete details for the reasons of their employment changes. Tom, a graduate, reported he had few work skills related to the food service industry: “I was forced into the serving craft. I was forced into that. I didn’t bring any talents to dealing with that.” It is possible that this inexperience contributed to him being a difficult employee. Tom said he was a “…bad employee at other places. Having bad outbursts and realizing that they were stupid because I ended up getting fired over it.”
A few months later, at the time of the focus group interview, Tom had changed employment to another fast food restaurant and made the following comment: “I found even with my most recent job at [fast food place] you should just pretty much accept any manager the way they are and go about your what your doing.” Hank, a graduate, worked as a leasing agent with his wife, and a painting subcontractor for a rental company at the time of the first interview. He indicated that he was apprehensive about the writing requirements of his position: “I am afraid to write stuff down because it is going to be misspelled and then somebody is going to laugh at me, and I’m going to look like an idiot.”

At the time of the focus group interview, Hank had moved out of state and was working as a laborer for a contractor, installing water drainage systems in basements. His job was carrying pieces of broken concrete from the basement to a dumpster outside. Terry, a nongraduate, changed employment between the time period of the individual interviews and the focus group interview. Though he liked his position, his employer was a family member and this caused friction:

…he’ll get on you way easier for whatever and the rest of the people that worked well, whatever, it was always like my fault or somehow and I didn’t even do it. So I quit that and moved to here.

Sam, a nongraduate, was working at his second warehouse job in the 6 month time frame of the interviews for this study. He believed his work effort was acceptable to employers, but not his attendance: “I worked hard and I always tried to do my best but my attendance was never good at any jobs. I never really had any problems except attendance.” Sam’s current employer hired him on probation: “I’m on 90 days probation and if I miss one day in those 90 days then I’m fired. So I have been going everyday.”
Participants indicated during their interviews the challenges they experienced in social interaction with three distinct groups of people: (a) customers, (b) members of their work crew, and (c) authority figures. The challenges were different depending upon the particular group with whom the participants were expected to interact.

Interactions with others were a challenge because the participants demonstrated ineffective, rude, and abrasive behaviors while interacting with them. In general, the participants did not prefer to engage clients, customers, or fellow employees. Two exceptions to this preference are noted. Frank, a graduate, described his job situation where he and his older brother provided the entire labor force for the small company for whom they work. He preferred his employment situation because his coworker was a family member. “Because it’s just me and my, you know, my brother that work there. We get along, you know, and the job’s easy.” One nongraduate, Ray, worked in a solitary position in a factory, but voiced a preference for more interaction on the job site, “it could be more interactive with other people.”

When interaction was necessary, one graduate, Tom, preferred to speak with customers via telephone rather than face-to-face. Tom stated:

Yeah, when I didn’t have to interact with customers. When I was cooking I would much rather do that or answer phones when I could just talk to the customers over the phone. I could do that no problem because I could handle complaints better over the phone better than in person. I liked that much better than serving tables even though I made more money serving tables. I just didn’t in, I am a more personal person. I don’t like that much interaction with that many other people. I never wanted to be around people at all cause I had an attitude problem. I didn’t like being around people I didn’t know. I didn’t like talking to people unless I could say whatever I wanted to and get away with it.
He didn’t particularly enjoy working with fellow employees either, but preferred being by himself as he indicated: “I enjoyed working by myself and just doing what I need to do to get done. So, if I was back there by myself, I did everything I didn’t have any problems.” Sam, a nongraduate, indicated how his dislike for customer service affected his job choices:

Right. See I can’t deal with customers. That’s why I always try to find a warehouse or something to work at. I had to deal with customers at [a restaurant] and that wasn’t good. I threw a [food] at somebody. And I just don’t like people, I can’t deal with the public and I can’t deal with authority.

Tim, a nongraduate, did not have to engage customers because of his lack of seniority at his job. He observed that some customers can be a challenge: “the customers you know, really picky and then you can’t do this and you can’t do that. And, oh, it’s like I don’t want that over here. I want that over there.” He noted that it was the responsibility of a senior member of the work crew to interact with customers as part of his work responsibility.

The participants described the challenges of interaction with fellow employees as sufficient to create a nonproductive atmosphere at work. Tim, a nongraduate, stated that some fellow employees can make working difficult:

I mean if there’s like one of the people I’ve worked with, like wanted to be a dickhead, then I mean then everyone else, it affects everybody else and it just gives like a total atmosphere, just a bad atmosphere and it make things like really bad.

Tom, a graduate, preferred minimal interaction with others. He chose to work as a cook because he didn’t like “...that much interaction with that many other people.” One participant, Sam, preferred working in a warehouse in solitary job situations because of his feelings about other people and bosses. “I just don’t like people. I can’t deal with the
public and I can’t deal with authority.” Sam, a nongraduate, described a similar solitary work situation in which he had to assemble a shipping order of supplies that he gathered from a large warehouse.

In some cases, the participants worked on small labor crews of three to five individuals. Tim, a nongraduate, described his work crew as composed of two other people. He said he was frequently paired with one of the two on the job site. Terry described his work crew as slightly smaller where he partnered with another employee to complete job tasks. They worked in tandem as they completed the tasks. Terry liked the job but “couldn’t work with a family member.”

In addition to customers and coworkers, graduates and nongraduates mentioned having difficulties effectively dealing with authority figures (bosses). Tom, a graduate, stated that he had frequent disagreements with bosses:

And originally we had a manager later in the end of my working time at [a restaurant] who was nice to a certain extent but she always tried to do my job and that really irritated me cause I always like to do things myself. I am very self confident and self aware so I don’t like people trying to do my stuff. So with her I pretty much just told her back off and stop doing my stuff. The general manager pretty much saw things my way about her not doing her job trying to do my job. I didn’t deal with that one too well.

Another manager expressed some reservations about Tom’s work habits: “One of my general managers gave me the nickname of “Boy Wonder,” cause he was always walking around saying, “Boy, I wonder when he is going to do some work.” However, Tom mentioned that he did work well with the general manager of the same restaurant because they shared common interests in sports as well as personal character traits, “…we both had a lot of character traits that were similar. My general manager was a great person. He always, pardon my language, but he always busted his ass, he was a very hard worker…”
Tom further stated that this same boss had a long-term effect on his life, “I still think that some of the things I do today are because of experiences I had working with him.” He noted that, as a result of his interactions with this general manager he had developed a more tolerant attitude toward bosses with the possibility that there might be positive outcomes:

I found even with my most recent job at [fast food restaurant], you should just pretty much accept any manager the way they are and go about what you’re doing and if they tell you something it is because they learned it to get where they’re at and so you should listen to what they’re doing and maybe you can one day have their job.

Will, a graduate, was concerned about how his bosses viewed his work performance because he believed that his bosses were depending on him, “you get that done, you feel a lot better cause the boss or the peoples depending on it.” As a result he has adopted an approach at his work site of keeping a positive mindset.

Another graduate, Hank, indicated that his boss had high work expectations of employees, especially the new people on the crew:

One of the main challenges is keeping my cool and just trying to get my job done because the foreman on the job site he’ll literally work you to death. They feel that you’re getting paid a pretty good buck so you’re going to definitely earn your money. And whenever you’re the new guy in the construction place ya know you’re always going to get picked on and you’re always going to get the dirty jobs, and hardest work. And everybody’s going to keep on you and keep harassing ya.

One strategy he used while working was staying focused on the task at hand: “whatever comes your way it’s really not the end of the world, no matter what the situation is and just try to deal with it. Keep your cool about it and do whatever it takes to get you by.”

Hank, also a graduate, had a brief experience as a manager and stated how he believed he should present a positive example for his employees: “you’re supposed to set the example
and if everybody sees that the manager is horsing around, or not doing what he should do, you’re not setting a good example so everything’s going to go down the tubes.”

Frank, another graduate, stated that he was working on improving his job performance so that his bosses could trust him, “Hopefully they feel, you know, or you’re trying to make them feel that they can rely on you,” He cited an example of how he attempted to earn that trust when he and his brother had to complete a workday and close the shop without the supervision of their bosses:

Just trust us. Like, you know. Like. I mean, for instance, like they both had, both our bosses had to leave. So, they both had supper meetings, and they scheduled them on the same day. And they were all crazy. Didn’t think. You know. “Oh, they don’t have…” But, we. I mean. They even made a list for us, you know? What they wanted us to do, and we got everything done. You know what I mean? I was just, hopefully, like, you know, if that again happened that they both had to leave, or they couldn’t be there, that they can, you know, trust and, you know, everything’s gonna be all right, you know, and the alarm’s gonna be set. And we, we, the, outdoors is gonna be locked, you know. The regular daily routine is still gonna be intact.

Nongraduates were more ambivalent toward authority in the workplace. One participant, Sam, stated he had difficulty complying with authority at all:

My only problem is authority. Anywhere. I don’t like being told what to do anyway. That’s why I had planned to own my own business in the near future I’m working on it. But yeah, just authority that’s it. Any of them. Anybody that can tell me something to do I don’t like.

In another instance his noncompliance with authority escalated to physical aggression:

I was fed up with the boss there and he came in one morning and the first thing out of his mouth was cussing at me cause there was a pop can outside. So, I threw my broom down. I choked him, smacked him a couple of time and went to jail, off the job.

However, when he was employed as a supervisor and had the authority to fire employees because of poor work performance, he responded somewhat differently:
...but when I was a supervisor they’d probably say I was an asshole because I was not nice. If somebody was slacking off or not doing what they were supposed to, then I got on ‘em pretty bad till they did it or I’d fire ’em. I was in charge of firing temps. I fired maybe 20 of them.

Sam noted that if the employee even reminded him of himself he would fire him or her:

There was people like me and those were the ones I fired (laughter). Most of the time they were. They came to school hung over...school (and corrects himself)...work hung over, high at the time just let em go. I don’t deal with that.

He went on to further explain that he acted differently in his role as a supervisor because when he acted “cool” the employees would take advantage of his authority, “I realized that the cooler you are, the more they take advantage and want to slack off if you are not going to do anything about it. They’d say he was an asshole.”

Graduates and nongraduates expressed challenges interacting with customers, fellow workers, and authority figures. Seven of 8 participants were employed in positions requiring minimal interactions with customers and fellow workers. Social interactions with fellow employees were minimal in nature and were focused on task completion on the job. Graduates reported more compliant interactions with authority figures on the job in comparison to nongraduates.

**Theme 2: Discrepancies in Ratings of Work Performance**

A second theme involved discrepancies in ratings on the *Workplace Interpersonal Skills Inventory* between graduates and their informants as well as between graduates and nongraduates. Participants and informants who completed the WISI provided work performance ratings. The WISI contains six general categories of interpersonal skills: (a) work on a team, (b) teach others new skills, (c) serve clients/customers, (d) exercise leadership, (e) negotiate, and (f) work with diversity.
Graduates and nongraduates perceived themselves as inclined to attend to customers/clients by providing constructive assistance in a calm, courteous manner. Both groups also indicated a willingness to join in and contribute to fellow employees by listening attentively, actively participating, and sharing ideas to solve problems at work. Graduates and nongraduates believed they demonstrated flexibility with fellow employees. Both groups believed they demonstrated respect and fairness to others by being sensitive, nonjudgmental, and willing to learn from others. Participants were rated highest (both graduates and nongraduates, and by informants) in the categories of serve, tolerate, and cooperate. The order of ranking was not identical, but the three categories selected were the top three categories of graduates, nongraduates, and informants.

On the other hand, graduates and nongraduates rated themselves as less likely to consider both sides of a problem. They indicated being less likely to attempt to solve problems first and secure a fair solution for all. They also indicated being less inclined to seek alternative sources of help, to offer and accept criticism, and tolerate others’ mistakes/lack of understanding. They reported that they were less likely to be sought out by others for help and advice. At work, they were less interested in motivating others, being supportive, and assisting. They were also less likely to challenge ineffective/inefficient work policies.

Graduates and nongraduates, from their perspectives, were least likely to teach fellow employees in a step-by-step manner how to understand tasks at work or show them “tricks of the trade” or other work experiences that they had learned. They demonstrated a resistance to learn new skills or techniques to improve their effectiveness on the job.
Overall, graduates and nongraduates rated themselves higher than informants rated themselves on the WISI. First, informants agreed that graduates were likely to demonstrate attentive, courteous, and polite behavior to customers as they attempted to meet the customer’s needs. Second, informants believed that graduates were somewhat flexible, respectful, fair, and sensitive to others in the workplace. Third, the ability to cooperate in a group at work and ability to share skills graduates have already learned with colleagues was ranked higher than the graduates ranked themselves. Fourth, informants reported that graduates were less likely to negotiate problems by hearing both sides of a problem, offering and accepting criticism, finding other sources of help, and tolerating others’ mistakes. Finally, informants rated graduates least likely to demonstrate leadership by their ability to motivate, to support, to be tactful when problems occur, and to be sought out for help and advice by peers.

The graduates and nongraduates believed that they represented the positive statements of the inventory. Nongraduates rated themselves higher in all six categories than the self-ratings made by graduates. Participants were rated highest (both graduates and nongraduates, and by informants) in the categories of serve, tolerate, and cooperate. The order of ranking was not identical, but the three categories selected were the top three categories of graduates, nongraduates, and informants.

The remaining three categories (negotiate, lead, and teach) were judged by all completing the WISI to be less like the graduates and nongraduates. However, informants rated the graduates as demonstrating teaching/collaborating types of behavior. Both graduates and nongraduates believed that this category least described them. Informants,
on the other hand, indicated that the graduates were least likely to demonstrate leadership in the workplace.

In summary, the order of ranking of the six categories by graduates, informants, and nongraduates were similar. However, the relative strength of the positive ratings differed depending upon the group reporting. Nongraduates rated themselves more positively in all categories than did graduates. However, in all categories, informants rated graduates lower than graduates rated themselves.

Theme 3: Influence of EBD Placement on School and Career Success

The third theme was the influence of EBD placement on school experiences and preparation for successful integration into the workplace. When compared to graduates, nongraduates made fewer positive comments about their school background. When they did make comments, they tended to dismiss any positive influence of their schooling.

Although some graduates and nongraduates indicated that they might consider returning to school to get advanced training for better jobs, none demonstrated any active plans to pursue their options. All participants attended the same high school and shared the same teachers for EBD during their time of attendance. Participants’ involvement in general educational academic programming ranged from full inclusion to spending as much as 60% of the time outside of their classrooms in classrooms for students with EBD.

Nongraduates were not convinced that a high school diploma would have helped them gain employment. In general, nongraduates described high school as not having much influence on their lives. Terry, for example, indicated that: “Uh, I really don’t know
that it affected me that much.” He viewed school as ineffective in preparing him for employment because

There wasn’t anything that you were going to teach me in school that I probably already know or I’ll probably never really use. Wasting my time. I could be out there making money, buying things I need in life, and just accomplishing goals. School was holding me back.

One nongraduate, Sam, stated that being placed in a class for students with EBD actually made him act more disruptive and noncompliant within his school. In fact, he suggested the placement might have contributed to his negative behavior. “It made me feel like I was a bad kid so I just kinda acted out, didn’t really pay attention when I was there goofing off with the other guys.” He stated he was typecast as a “tough guy” and believed he had to live up to that reputation. Ray, another nongraduate, had a different opinion about his EBD class:

I think it helped me out more. It got me through school. More help from the teachers, instead of self-contained work. Ahhh. It’s not as much work as regular classes. Just easier to work with a smaller group than a bigger group.

In general, graduates had more positive comments about EBD placements. They appreciated the better teacher/student ratio, staff efforts to help students be productive, adjustment in academic expectations, and advice from school staff. Tom reported that conversations and certain school employees’ concern for his well-being still provided a measure of guidance for him as an adult:

I remember one in particular, I don’t remember what the girl’s name was that was given the advice, that was receiving the advice, but it was my freshman year. She was a senior. I am pretty sure you know who I am talking about. She wanted to drop out. And you got on her about that and pretty much told her about that all the 12 years she just spent in school having wasted, wasted everybody else’s time, and she was going to leave and you pretty much just told her it was her choice and if she was to leave, just go ahead. It just really triggered in my mind that you guys were doing a lot more for us than most other people think. Everything really is our
choice when we get to that age and I chose to stay. Pretty much due to that. I thought about dropping out a lot but due to something I heard in my freshman year I decided to stay. Thank you.

Tom perceived his placement in an EBD class as helpful because:

I believe if I wasn’t put into the SBH program and I were not around teachers … and Ms. H. who knew how to deal with people with my attention problem, I would probably not have interacted with other people as well as I have. So, I think that the SBH kind of helped me later. It helps me now in life.

Frank had a similar positive experience with staff members from the EBD classroom, “I can still hear your voices in my head you know. Like now, or I can see Mrs. J., just with a big smile on my face... really to this day it’s like, it really calms me down.” Another graduate, Hank, described how his placement in the EBD classroom met some of his behavioral needs:

Well, I was always like very temperamental, kind of hot headed, and I struggled with a lot of my work and being in SBH kind of like in the classrooms, kind of like it was easier because the teachers worked with you more and helped you to understand stuff, which like it helped you maintain good self-control And it helped me to work with others a lot better. I couldn’t. I didn’t really work well with others prior to being in a SBH classroom but because it was a smaller classroom and there is two teachers there that were always willing to help me anytime I needed help. It kinda got me a little more comfortable in working with others, and just, I don’t know just better for me in general.

Will, also a graduate, stated that he too benefited from the smaller class size, “being in the program it was, you know, it kind of like guided me a lot easier. I had like better guidance.”

Not all graduates reported positive impressions of their EBD placements. Frank, for example, believed that a negative “family reputation” from previous brothers who had gone through the school system caused him to be negatively labeled by the educational staff. He felt like a “black sheep” because of his older brothers’ bad behaviors in the
school system. As a result he decided that if they believed that about him, he was going
to act that way:

I basically did stuff, for attention, because I was over there in the first place...my
older brothers had gotten into a lotta trouble, you know, in [local school system], and
when I went to (middle school), that’s where it all started because the teachers had
already known my brothers and they never gave me a third chance anyways. So. It
was like that was my retaliation, basically, to the schools. You know what I mean,
you don’t wanta give me a chance, then to hell with you, and, basically, I’m gonna
raise hell in your school. I didn’t think that was fair.

Others resisted learning, believing that it did not relate to the circumstances of
their lives. They heard the repeated messages that certain academic material, information,
and skills would be needed to be successful in a job, but chose to dismiss those messages.

Hank indicated he came to realize this fact as an adult, “there was always somebody there
to explain to me why I needed to do it and then as the years went on I realized that I am
really only hurting myself.” As an adult, Hank finally reconsidered the importance of
education in obtaining employment:

I’ve noticed it’s really hard to get a job with a high school diploma, I couldn’t
imagine trying to get one without it. Most places you go they want you to have
college educations you know. It’s like I remember 6 years ago when I first starting
applying at places it was for education it was “Elementary,” “Junior High,” “High
School” and then there was “Other”. Now it starts off as “High School,” “College,”
“Technical College,” “Trade School” and then “Other Special Skills,” and its like I
come to that part and I only have one little thing to check in there and it’s kind of
intimidating. You can definitely see that the world is changing.

He elaborated the negative consequences of poor academic preparation, “Stand in
the unemployment line and then you have nothing. So school does kind of prep you. I’ve
realized that a lot actually since I’ve been out of school.” In retrospect, he wished that he
had taken greater advantage of his education, “I wish I would have known that years ago.
I wish I could change everything about my schooling all the way back to a
kindergartener.” Hank further noted how some peers he had intimidated in school were now his bosses:

There the kids walking around with the stacks of books and they’re all nerdie but then about 10 years go by and then you realize that those little nerdie kids you used to push around and make fun of they’re your boss. So. Yeah you’re the little nerdie guy at the bottom of the food chain doing all the bad jobs, the grunt work.

He was keenly aware of his learning deficits that are still with him today and cause him concern. “I am afraid to write stuff down because it is going to be misspelled and then somebody is going to laugh at me, and I’m going to look like an idiot.”

Most graduates when compared to nongraduates reported more positive experiences regarding their EBD placements and school experiences associated with those placements. Graduates indicated that they benefited from the skills of EBD staff who were able to recognize these students’ unique learning and behavioral needs in the classroom. They noted the positive impact of calm and patient behavior modeled by staff even when encountering a crisis. One graduate reported overhearing a conversation an EBD instructor had with a graduate who was considering dropping out of school. He remembered the instructor emphasizing that personal behavior is a choice that comes with consequences that should be fully considered. He said that conversation also indicated that the staff cared about the students. These observations caused him to decide to stay in school and not drop out. Another graduate stated it simply, “a lot of problems that I was having then you know, you guys were there, and to this day I can still hear your voices in my head.”

Theme 4: Substance Abuse

The prevalence of substance abuse among the participants while they were high school students was the fourth theme that emerged in the data analysis. All participants
except one graduate reported an extensive list of substances being used in a recreational manner before, during, and after school.

When questioned about drug usage, Terry, one nongraduate, replied to a focus group of nongraduates, “We’re hard core.” He followed this statement with the self-observation that, “I don’t even smoke weed anymore. To be honest but I don’t.”

One nongraduate’s use of drugs during school caused him to neglect his schoolwork, “Slack off, ah, smoke weed, do drugs.” He offered an explanation for his usage, “It wasn’t difficult. I mean I wasn’t addicted to anything, I mean it was just either be in class or I can be outside with my friends and doing this. You know, which one would be funner.” He described how he used drugs during the school hours:

Yeah or sitting on the hill smoking weed or drinking beer. Or we’d be at [a friend’s] house sitting in his house smoking weed. Then go to school. Retarded. Go to your class and I’d be stoned out of my mind. Or I’d be sniffing Adderal.

On another occasion, this nongraduate was drinking alcohol during school hours. He also used other drugs at school, “[My friend] and me got busted with that acid.”

Another nongraduate noted that he also drank alcohol during school hours, “You [the interviewer] caught me drinking. Busted me, man. I was with that dude outside with a bottle of Baccardi.” He said that his consumption of alcohol affected him in class as well, “Most of the time I actually did work in your class I was usually high.”

One participant described the consequences of trying to work in the classroom while under the influence of marijuana:

...when I smoked weed before I went to school it definitely affected my performance because I did absolutely nothing. I sat in class with my head down cuz I thought that every teacher knew I was stoned out of my mind cuz I knew I looked like I was stoned out of my mind. Cuz everytime I talked to them they looked directly into my eyes. It just bothered me.
Another participant also had friends that he would “party” with outside of school, “I’d get with them and party or whatever and try to mess with people at the malls or what not. I was mostly getting drunk. Some [of his friends] were doing drugs.”

In the school environment, participants admitted to socializing with other “bad influences” or friends who made poor choices such as drug usage. One nongraduate stated, “I seen a lot of those kids like going to parties and like and I’ll tell ya more than half of them are all doing coke. A lot of them doing coke and smoking ‘wet’ [marijuana soaked in formaldehyde].”

In some cases, participants worked just to buy drugs for recreational use. A graduate described frequent drug usage as fun:

Cocaine, acid, mushrooms, hallucinogenic or things that just make you feel out of your body in a state where you’re not in control of what’s going on. I don’t want to sound like a typical stoner but I don’t consider marijuana a drug. I mean it is mind altering but I would say don’t do that either because it wastes your money for a 3-hour high. It’s a waste of money, it’s a waste of time, and I don’t know of any successful people that do any drugs including marijuana. So, drugs are when I was young I thought it was fun, I enjoyed it.

He said that his usage continued after graduation. He applied for a job and was expected to pass drug screening in order to qualify for training in a desired advanced position. He did not pass his initial screening and as a result was only eligible for a lower level position:

But I realized it’s a mistake, and now I might have to select a lower paying job because of it. It can screw you over just as much as what I was talking about not paying attention to certain people. Drugs can have a worse effect.

This participant also mentioned that illegal drug use consumed much of his earnings from part-time jobs, “When I was living on my own I was doing drugs. There were some months I had to get cash advances just to pay my bills.”
Another nongraduate indicated a good amount of money that he earned in part-time jobs was spent on drugs, “I think all of the stuff I could have you know or could have spent it on instead you know instead 15 years old making $350 a week. That’s a lot of money for a 15 year old to have in his pocket.” When he was asked if he regretted his choices regarding how he spent his money, he replied:

No not at all, definitely not. Although you know I do wish like maybe, I mean shit even if I put $10 away from every paycheck you know eventually add it up you know that is what $520 a year which is more than I saved in a year. I didn’t save 52 cents.

He looked back at his behavior and explained it:

I been there and done that. See I don’t know I started early in life as opposed to most people like they’re my age and now they are just starting to go out have it. I already been there that shit is old news to be honest. It’s nothing new. And like go ahead. Have fun. I’ve done it a million times I did it when I was a minor.

One former student noted that he sold drugs to make money, “I been through it all too. I started 7 years old no parents out on the streets... dealing, doing, left school early. Definitely I was a pharmacist. That was good money.” Another implied that he also sold drugs when he was younger and that it was lucrative, “Yeah, I think I made more money when I was younger than I do now.” He further stated that he changed some of his old school behaviors, “Quit doing all those things I used to do in high school. Ah, ah, quit drinking, quit getting in trouble with the law, ah quit using drugs.”

As illustrated in the following quote, some reported that once they got older that they had to “grow up” and change friends:

...first when I was going to school like I’d have a job, then I’d just end up you know like fucking off and I’d end up like losing my job, like I’d go do something like hang out with my friends and then not go you know go to my job and I’d get fired, but uhm, I mean its different now, now that I’m grownup. Like, you can’t do that. It’s not an option.
This participant made the following observation about friends and their impact on personal development:

Who you hang around with is what you are. That’s like be like hang around with a bunch of losers is gonna be a loser. Hang around with a bunch of successful people, you’re gonna be successful.

He decided that he was going to make a change in his circle of friends:

I don’t even have a lot of friends really any more. I probably have like the friends I hang out with, I can probably count like maybe on my actually maybe on my both my hands, like those are like my friends. Like I used to have, like, tons of friends, but, they’re all caught up in too much shit. I just don’t want to be around that stuff.

Another nongraduate, stated that he is also different now, “I got a whole new way of thinking now. I’m grown. I’m a man now. I have responsibilities to take care of. I don’t have time you know, act the way I did then.” A similar perspective is illuminated in the following quote:

You just gotta grow up. Become an adult and realize that that’s little kid stuff. You gotta put that in the past. Put it behind yah. It’s not worth it. Cause in the long run you know you may not have the chance to change.

Graduates and nongraduates reported substance abuse as a widespread activity. According to reports made by both groups, the abuse of substances occurred before, during, and after school. Participants described their drug experiences as “fun” if not expensive. Only one nongraduate described himself as addicted while other nongraduates reported they quit or reduced their usage relatively easily. Graduates tended to report more negative effects of drug usage as adults whereas nongraduates described the drug usage as a part of “growing up.” Graduates could point to a specific time in their lives where they chose to change this substance abuse behavior. Nongraduates described their change of substance abuse behavior as more gradual.
Theme 5: Pivotal Life Events

The fifth and final theme encompasses pivotal life events that occurred in 3 graduates’ and 1 nongraduate’s lives that had a powerful impact on the choices they would later make. Two graduates and 1 nongraduate noted that relational changes caused them to reevaluate their direction in life, one of which was career related. These participants cited the births of children as significant events compelling them to think about what kind of life they wanted for their offspring. In the case of the nongraduate, the birth of his child would require him to be steadily employed and able to support his child. To accomplish this, he would have to reduce his substance abuse that had resulted in chronic and frequent absences from his employment.

The 2 graduates reevaluated the importance of having a father involved in a child’s life. They noted that they either didn’t have fathers present in their lives or their fathers were away at work, or other places, rather than with their children. One graduate wanted his child to have contact with extended family rather than never knowing them as he had experienced during his upbringing.

The pivotal life event for one graduate was a traumatic experience that inspired him to make radical changes in his life. He witnessed a shooting over a drug purchase. This shocked him and resulted in his reduction of drug usage. He also witnessed others who consumed alcohol and lost self-control. He decided that he wasn’t going to engage in this behavior any longer. He did not like the idea of losing control.

Three graduates cited unique pivotal events that generated a reevaluation of lifestyle choices and a marked change in personal behavior. One referred to a personal relational crisis as initiating a time of reflection when the participant considered a change
of behavior. Another married and had a child. This pivotal event in his life caused him to reflect and reevaluate some of his past lifestyle choices:

Kids change your whole world. One minute everything, your whole life’s all about you and the next minute you find out that you’re having a baby and your life is not your life anymore. Your actions don’t just affect you, they affect somebody else and it’s somebody else that has nothing to do with it, ya know?

This young man indicated that growing up and working on his attitude was one of the changes he believed was required. He had obligations “and being hot headed all the time gets you nowhere. It definitely doesn’t help your family life.” He discussed the importance of a father who was present in the family and not frequently absent like his father was. “That’s definitely not what I want for my child. I want everything that I didn’t have for him.” He believed a child should have a childhood:

Living the life of being a kid instead of growing up too fast and your whole childhood’s gone before you know it and your graduated high school and you still want to be a kid and you just can’t anymore and it kinda messes you up a little.

When asked if this occurred in his life, he stated:

I kinda feel like my life went from being a child to toddler and then when I hit about ten I jumped into about a 17 year old mind state, and then by the time I graduated I’m in my 20s and you hear about everybody that was you know like the older guys and stuff talking about they did this and they did that well I went on ahead and jumped into a 30 year old went on ahead and got married and had a kid, and I missed out on a lot of things in life but I don’t regret it because I would rather have my son.

He mentioned the importance of an extended nuclear family, which had uncles, aunts, cousins, and nephews to enhance the sense of belonging.

Another young man reported in his interview that he had a strong desire to visit with his child, but his recent divorce court proceedings have created a pivotal event in his life. He indicated that the relationship with the mother of his child began to unravel. An
unstable relationship, erratic employment, and substance abuse led to the disintegration of the relationship. His wife filed in court for the support of their child and was awarded a monthly compensation:

I got to pay child support and if I don’t pay it then they’ll lock me up. They already took my license away because I owed back child support. So I’d say that in, itself, keeps me going to work every day.

He had to accept the authority of the court’s decision because “If I don’t work, I’ll go to prison. That’s what keeps me going.” In addition, the legal rights he has to see his child are based upon payment of child support as required by the divorce agreement. He noted that he has to change his behavior at work so that he can remain employed and able to make his child support payments so that he can see his child. “Now actually I just think of the things that I have to get done like child support and get a place and things like that so I just keep my mouth shut from now on. Bite my tongue.”

Another young man, while in the presence of a drug purchase, witnessed a friend get shot as the drug deal went bad. This event was a pivotal moment causing him to reevaluate his drug usage:

If I would’ve saw some of the effects I’ve seen now. Some of the effects that actually made me think about it. Like I saw one of my friends get shot, over a bad drug deal. And then ya know I pretty much stopped using drugs after that.

He also considered changing his behavior regarding alcohol:

When it came to alcohol I saw, I just saw people just making total asses out of themselves just cause they were drunk and they didn’t couldn’t handle their liquor. So I started drinking a lot less after that. And then when I saw that I also thought about the affects that this had on my uncle and the other driver of the car that hit his car. He is messed up too but not as bad as my uncle.

In addition, he indicated that had he seen something like the shooting when he was younger, it might have had a large impact on his choices:
If this would have happened to me when I was still in school, if I would’ve seen one of my friends get shot, I’d probably would’ve dropped out of school, ya know and probably would’ve not graduated. But if somebody would have showed me something, showed me some of the effects showed me something with something that’s happened to them or someone they knew like that I would have got out of it. Cause it was just as simple as seeing somebody I knew get shot over it just that quick.

He noted that people told him about the dangers of drugs, but he believed that was not enough:

If someone just telling them someone just like that? But if someone would’ve just come up and just said something to me and just said something to me about their own experience I would’ve probably just told them to piss off. But if they like could’ve just shown me something and shown me someone who was affected by it. It would’ve meant more. Someone just talking to me I didn’t care. So many people just did talk to me and told me things that happen, I didn’t care.

Three graduates and one nongraduate described pivotal life events as altering the course of their lives. For 2 graduates, fatherhood caused them to reflect on past experiences as children and what types of family life they wanted their children to experience. To achieve a quality of fatherhood and family they believed necessary, they chose to change their current behavior and seek gainful employment where advancement was achievable. They believed they could provide for their families’ material needs and be available for their emotional needs as well. Another graduate witnessed the shooting of a friend who was involved in a drug deal that “went bad.” The graduate indicated that the violence caused him to reevaluate his drug usage and whether or not he wanted to continue to make himself vulnerable to such violence. One nongraduate reported that he did not contest a divorce from his ex-wife and did not retain an attorney. His wife received a divorce agreement requiring him to pay custody and limited his rights to see his daughter. If he didn’t comply, he faced incarceration for nonpayment. He was bitter
about the outcome of the court proceeding. He had to sustain employment, a behavior that he had difficulty performing.

Summary of Research Findings

The first theme reported by participants concerned employment. Graduates and nongraduates reported being employed in unskilled or semiskilled jobs. Two participants, 1 graduate and 1 nongraduate, reported receiving specialized training on the job to certify them for a semiskilled job. The remaining participants worked as unskilled laborers. All participants worked on small work crews of 1 to 4 people. Participants did not report their work crews as sources for developing interrelationships, but rather were described as parallel relationships sharing the common tasks of the job. In general, participants did not view their current positions as ones they would desire to remain in for a long period of time.

Additionally, social interaction on the job was problematic. The participants’ limited ability to articulate points of view effectively and without abrasiveness presented a challenge in the workplace. All but one of the participants expressed minimal interest in developing interpersonal relationships with coworkers. They appeared to be satisfied with minimal opportunities (e.g., minimal contact with customers, small work crews, solitary work assignments, etc.) for social interaction. Graduates did suggest a desire to modify social interactions to meet the bosses’ expectations. Nongraduates offered no similar motivation to modify their behavior.

An additional theme was generated by the discrepancies of the participants and informants on the WISI. When the participants rated their social interaction on the job, ratings indicated a positive perspective of themselves in the workplace. Overall,
nongraduates rated themselves more positively than did graduates. However, informants rated graduates lower than graduates rated themselves regarding the six categories of the WISI. In general, the three groups agreed on the rank order of the categories representing the participants.

The influence of EBD placement on school and career success was another theme. Graduates indicated EBD placement as having a greater positive impact on their life and work adjustment than that reported by nongraduates. Graduates offered instances of interactions they viewed as helpful in their classroom (e.g., prompts to refocus and not allow their behavior to escalate, teacher’s modeling of behavior, etc.) that later helped them in their roles as employees. However, nongraduates reported few if any positive contributions gained from their school experience that could be applied to the workplace.

Another important theme detailed the participants’ involvement in substance abuse. Seven of 8 participants indicated usage of a wide variety of substances. As students, they reported usage before the school day started, during the course of the school day, and after school was over. Some graduates noted that they decreased their substance abuse because of negative results such as arrests and threats of drug testing on the job. Nongraduates merely stated that they reduced their substance abuse because they “grew up.”

The final theme expressed by several of the participants had to do with pivotal events that altered the direction of their lives. Threats of incarceration, a shooting death of a friend, excessive drinking of alcohol, and loss of visitation rights with their children caused some participants to rethink the direction of their lives. It took these constant
threats to have some of the participants recognize that they needed to alter the path they were following in life.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This chapter is presented in six sections. The first section restates the research questions guiding this study. The limitations encountered during the course of this research are presented in the second section. The third section focuses on the major findings and the research literature regarding individuals with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) and is followed by a discussion of these findings as they relate to Social Cognitive Career Theory. The fourth section presents implications for practitioners providing educational services for individuals with EBD. The fifth section suggests implications that this research might have for future researchers. A conclusion regarding this research completes the chapter.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine how individuals identified as having an emotional disturbance interact within the workplace as adults. Their patterns of negative interpersonal skills suggest difficulty sustaining employment. However, despite limited academic performance and interpersonal difficulties, some individuals with emotional disturbances do sustain employment. Insights regarding their successful employment, especially related to interpersonal interactions were the subject of this research. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What patterns of social interactions do graduated and nongraduated individuals with EBD demonstrate during employment?

2. How do graduated and nongraduated individuals with EBD manage social interactions in the workplace?
3. Are there differences in the patterns of social interactions demonstrated in employment by the graduated and nongraduated EBD samples?

Limitations of the Study

There are four general areas of limitations in this study. They are researcher bias, lack of member checking, limitations to triangulation, and generalizability of the study. It is important to recognize the limitations of this particular study so that researchers wishing to replicate this study will see the areas that need more attention when conducting the study. Since this topic has been an underresearched one, it is important to clarify the factors that can impact the study.

The first limitation was researcher bias. I was a former teacher of the participants while they attended high school. In this role, I was involved in evaluating the participants’ performance as students. These experiences may have influenced the collection and analysis of data provided by participants. I knew some of the students for the entire 4 years of their high school experience. This experience may have contributed unintended bias in the research process. Some of the participants, especially graduates, may have provided responses they believed I wanted to hear. On the other hand, some participants may have had negative associations with me and what they believe I represented. It is possible that this fact inhibited some sharing of information, particularly for nongraduates who held less than positive perceptions regarding their school experience. I tried to limit the effect of this bias by adhering strictly to the interview protocol and limiting “conversation” between researcher and participant in order to establish a formal atmosphere and a feeling of distance between researcher and participant. Additionally, I showed neither positive nor negative reaction to any of the
responses given so that the participants would not be encouraged to embellish any of their responses.

A second limitation is the lack of member checking (Patton, 1990) the participants’ responses. The participants were reluctant to participate and demonstrated little inclination to review their responses. Two focus group interviews were conducted to review emerging themes and encourage the participants to further clarify or dispute the themes noted by me. I consulted with a peer debriefer throughout the course of the study as a means to enhance the quality and credibility of the analysis. The third limitation is limited triangulation of the data. This limited triangulation can be attributed to problems achieving sufficient sources to triangulate some participants’ responses. Individuals with EBD demonstrate low quality social interactions and, as a result, have limited friendships (e.g., Schonert-Reichl, 1993). It is not surprising that limited social interaction may contribute to a limited ability to be verbally expressive and reduce the participants’ willingness to ask others to be study informants. Additionally, since graduates and nongraduates demonstrated varying degrees of candor and willingness to share their experiences when they responded in the interviews, it made it somewhat difficult to elicit information about participants from fellow employees who knew little about the participants as well. Some participants were adamant in their refusal to provide informants for the study. All nongraduates and 1 graduate refused to offer potential informants to complete the interview and the WISI.

The final area of limitation is that qualitative research is not designed to generalize to other populations, persons, or situations but produce data relative to the realities of the participants. Although qualitative research does allow insights into the
lives and issues of participants that other research methodologies do not, it is important to realize that participants’ life experiences may not be comparable to other individuals who were once students with EBD.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings are presented in two sections. The first section provides information relative to the main findings of this research. The second section reviews the findings in light of Social Cognitive Career Theory.

Main Findings

All but 2 participants were employed full-time. One graduate and 1 nongraduate were employed part-time. Four participants, 3 graduates and 1 nongraduate, reported working in unskilled employment (e.g., fast food cook, construction laborer, pizza delivery person). One graduate and three nongraduates indicated that they were employed in semiskilled (e.g., tow-motor operator, electric motor repair person, machine calibrator) employment with limited opportunities for advancement. The participants of this study demonstrated a higher rate of employment than indicated by some researchers because employment was a criterion for participation in the research. Frank et al. (1991) observed that 61% of graduated individuals with EBD were employed full or part-time compared to 41% of nongraduates. The authors reported nearly three fourths of employed graduates, compared to 63% of nongraduates, were employed full or part-time in roles as either laborers or in a service industry. The remaining 25% of graduates were listed in occupations as operators, craftsmen, tech/professional, and other. Nongraduates of this study were employed at a slightly higher rate of approximately 37% in higher skilled levels of employment compared to the 12% rate of graduates. The authors noted that
slightly less than two thirds of graduates were employed full-time while nongraduates had slightly more than 68% rate of full-time employment. In this study 1 graduate and 1 nongraduate were employed part-time. The findings in this study support previous research that has shown that individuals with EBD are more likely to be employed in lower-level jobs (semi and unskilled employment) than other high school graduates (Frank et al.).

Patterns of Social Interactions during Employment

In general, participants indicated that they had limited social interaction with fellow employees and did not indicate developing any friendships as a result of employment. Two graduates and all nongraduates reported experiencing social friction with other employees in the course of employment. They indicated being teased because they were the new employee and the lowest on the social order on the jobsite. One participant reported that his coworkers did not appreciate him because he worked too hard and made them look bad. This participant was trying to complete the assigned job more quickly in order to earn a bonus. His fellow workers did not want to work at that pace and were not motivated by the enticement of a bonus. At times, customers received rude or abrasive responses from some participants in the workplace. A participant reported throwing food at a customer who irritated him.

This attitude of rudeness and noncompliance extended to authority, such as bosses or company policies, for some participants. One participant was fired and in the process of leaving threw an object that broke a large pane of glass in the fast food restaurant, sending pieces of glass into the prepared food. Another participant was denied a promotion because he violated an employment policy by testing positive for an illegal
substance. One participant demonstrated a pattern of irregular work attendance that resulted in frequent terminations from employment. This participant admitted to being an alcoholic, which may have contributed to his difficulty attending work. This same participant physically assaulted his boss after an exchange of words resulting in his termination. Another participant was required by his employer to wear safety glasses whenever he was on the work floor. He did not like complying with this expectation and was sent home early for noncompliance. This same participant believed that his work hours intruded on his social life because he was expected to work longer hours to finish a job that was not completed on time.

In summary, participants demonstrated ineffective social interactions in the workplace. Some participants demonstrated noncompliance with employment expectations (e.g., regular attendance, sobriety, safety compliance) that resulted in problematic relationships with authority figures. These patterns of ineffective social behavior are among the characteristics of EBD (PL 105-17, 1997) and may have contributed to their EBD in school. It appears that these patterns of behavior are enduring and demonstrated during employment.

Management of Social Interactions

Graduates verbalized that they had made efforts to improve their interpersonal skills. Nongraduates either did not indicate this was a problem or attributed the difficulty to others. Participants’ patterns of changing employment likely reduced opportunities to build relationships at work and may have exacerbated their lack of interpersonal connections. Only 2 participants, one graduate and one nongraduate, sustained the same employment for longer than 6 months.
All participants rated their workplace behaviors favorably. Nongraduates rated their workplace interpersonal behaviors more positively when compared to those of graduate self-ratings. However, when compared to graduates’ self-ratings, informants rated graduates less likely to demonstrate positive social interactions at work. A similar pattern of over self-estimation was noted by Carter and Wehby (2003) who reported that individuals with EBD rated themselves more highly regarding their work behaviors than did their supervisors. Given the tendency of individuals with EBD to overestimate their work behaviors, it is likely that the informants’ ratings more accurately described the participants’ work performances. The elevated self-perceptions of graduates and nongraduates may have contributed to the fact that only 2 of the 8 participants, a graduate and a nongraduate, sustained employment longer than one year with the same employer.

Both of these individuals worked with family members. The family members may have provided support that enabled the participants to remain focused and productive as an employee. Both participants gained their employment as a result of the family member even though they weren’t qualified for the position. These circumstances may have contributed to an extra effort in the participants’ work effort. It is also possible that being employed by a family member permitted a greater range of tolerance from employer and fellow worker(s) for the participants’ inappropriate interpersonal interactions on the jobsite.

Some graduates and nongraduates noted that they minimized their contact with customers during their employment by selecting tasks that did not require them to engage customers. One graduate, who had a choice of methods for interacting with customers,
preferred to take phone orders rather than serve them directly in the restaurant. A nongraduate selected working in a warehouse where he had little contact with anyone.

Interaction with authority figures in the workplace required skill and patience on the part of participants. One graduate noted that he had to learn to be quiet and just work. He would remind himself of his responsibilities to his young family in order to remain focused. Other graduates indicated that they wanted to be viewed by their bosses as reliable and productive employees who were working to benefit the company and described themselves as making a greater effort to meet their employer’s expectations.

Graduates and nongraduates reported that they engaged in regular substance abuse behavior during the time they attended school. At least 2 participants indicated that their drug usage extended beyond their days attending school and impacted their adult employment. Three nongraduates and 1 graduate stated that they had reduced their usage and that it was relatively easy. It is possible that the participants’ perception of their reduced substance abuse behavior is another example of overestimation of their performance. It may be that substance abuse is more of an enduring behavior than admitted and affects employment. Participants reported abusing a wide range of controlled substances.

It is perhaps not surprising these individuals started using drugs during their school years. Graham (1996) reported that “self-reported rebellious behavior, low grade point average, and attitudes favoring marijuana use…” (p. 232) were significant predictors of adolescent drug use. Indeed, the participants demonstrated the presence of the predictors noted by Graham. They were evaluated to be EBD and demonstrated noncompliant behaviors in the school setting. School records indicated low grade point
averages for the participants, particularly the nongraduates. All of the nongraduates repeated the ninth grade at least one time before they decided to exit early from school. Nongraduates, in particular, expressed bold claims about the extent of their usage, but also believed that reducing their substance abuse behavior once out of school was a relatively easy process.

Three of 4 nongraduates implied that their substance abuse was more of a developmental phase that they were able to reduce as they grew older. The fourth nongraduate reported having a current addiction to alcohol. Graduates, on the other hand, were less forthcoming regarding the recreational aspects of their substance abuse behavior. Two graduates noted that they had feelings of regret regarding their usage and how it had negatively impacted their lives. Another graduate indicated that his substance abuse restricted employment options in his desired career.

Four graduates verbalized that they were making some fundamental changes in their lives as the result of pivotal life events. These changes impacted their work performances and goals to address new concerns in their lives. Two graduates, who were expectant fathers, found themselves reflecting on the quality of life that they wanted to provide for their children. Both graduates reported that they had little or no involvement with their natural fathers and did not want this experience for their children. Furthermore, they desired establishing a strong family environment that included increased involvement with extended family members. They believed that having skilled employment would offer them a higher wage while affording them more opportunities to be with their prospective families.
Another graduate was at the scene of a near murder, as a result of a drug deal that became violent. He indicated that he was traumatized by the violence he witnessed. As a result, he chose to severely reduce his drug usage rather than face this danger again. Once he had reduced his substance abuse behavior, he decided to enlist in military service to gain training in a new career. One nongraduate was compelled by a divorce court order to work to support his daughter or face incarceration. He was attempting to resist the alcohol dependency that he had experienced for years and its impact on his ability to sustain work attendance.

In summary, the majority of the participants tended to change employment frequently, which reduced opportunities to develop interactions. The participants indicated that they were employed in settings with limited contact with others (e.g., peers, customers, bosses) or worked with family members who might provide familiarity. A component of effective social interaction requires sensitivity to the social environment and expectations that accompany it (Carter & Wehby, 2003). Most participants overestimated the productivity of their social interaction. A pattern of inaccurate perceptions of social interactions in the realm of employment is likely to compromise effective and productive interactions. These participants continued to have social problems after they left school. Even as adults, these participants found it hard to socially interact with others, even though some of them professed a desire to be good parents or good employees.

Compliance with an employer’s rules and regulations are necessary to sustain employment and cope with the challenges in the workplace (Carter & Wehby, 2003; Wehmeyer, 1992). An employer’s practice of random drug testing of its employees may
be problematic for individuals prone to abusing illegal substances. Research (Greenbaum et al., 1996; Malian & Love, 1998) indicates individuals with EBD are more likely than others to abuse illegal substances. Substance abuse patterns of behavior affected 2 participants negatively. At least 2 participants indicated this behavior continued as adults and created barriers to employment.

All participants voiced opinions that they wanted a better level of employment and the benefits (e.g., better wages, improved work hours, less manual labor) associated with it. However, graduates in this study demonstrated a greater willingness to accept personal responsibility in order to improve their employment status (e.g., pursuing additional schooling/training, exerting extra work effort). Nongraduates verbalized awareness that more schooling or training would improve employment but indicated no effort to do so. Some participants chose to comply with bosses and job expectations to stay employed. Some knew they had difficulty interacting with others so chose more solitary task at their workplace rather than engage individuals with whom they may interact negatively. Some participants made decisions to create more positive family environments for their children compared to the environments in which they were raised.

Differences between Graduates and Nongraduates

Two graduates noted in their interviews that they had some difficulties in gaining and sustaining their employment. When there were difficulties encountered in the workplace, it was the graduates who accepted some of the responsibility for their poor choices on the job. If their current level of employment wasn’t lucrative, they were more likely to admit that they weren’t eligible or qualified for a better position. Graduates were more inclined to credit bosses who had positive influences on them as employees.
Graduates may have learned a few more social skills by staying in high school through graduation. It is possible that the relatively sustained and supportive interactions graduates had with some of their teachers may have positively impacted graduates’ abilities to interact appropriately with their bosses.

When the participants discussed the influence of school and their EBD placement as students, all graduates indicated more positive references about their school experiences. They noted that some of the guidance of staff in the EBD classroom was useful to them later as adults in the workforce. However, 3 of the nongraduates reported school was not useful because it failed to inspire connections for future employment. The inability to perceive a correlation between education and gaining employment may contribute to the documented high dropout rates of students with EBD. Indeed, the dropout rate of 51.4% for students with EBD (U. S. Department of Education, 2002) was higher than that for any other disability category. One nongraduate suggested his educational experiences were more of a hindrance because he believed he already knew some of these academic skills. All nongraduates noted with some degree of satisfaction that they developed strategies to circumvent policies and procedures of the school environment.

Differences between graduates and nongraduates were most likely a product of several factors. First, the extra time that graduates stayed in high school may have afforded them an opportunity to build stronger social skills than the nongraduates. Second, it could be that families of graduates invested more interest in having their child stay in school and the graduates were therefore more successful in their academic achievement. Additionally, it is possible that graduates were intrinsically more motivated
to complete school than were nongraduates and therefore graduates may also be more motivated to perform well in their jobs. These factors may have made the difference between what graduates and nongraduates could achieve and how well each group performed in the work place.

_Social Cognitive Career Theory and Main Findings_

The foundational principles of Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory as they apply to Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 2000) are utilized as a framework to interpret the responses of the participants of this study. SCCT (see Figure 1) is a theoretical application of Bandura’s (1977, 1986) Social Cognitive Theory to an individual’s career development. The findings will first be discussed as they relate to self-efficacy; secondly, the findings will be explored in the framework of the participants’ beliefs regarding outcome expectations; and finally, the contextual influences that impacted the participants will be examined.

_Self-Efficacy and Career Self-Efficacy_

Bandura (1986) proposed that an individual’s behavior is affected by internal personal characteristics (e.g., predispositions, gender, disability), external background contexts (e.g., family structure, SES), and those factors both contribute to the development of an individual’s personal self-efficacy beliefs. These self-efficacy beliefs influence an individual’s interaction in their environment such as career interests and pursuits. Participants indicated an active involvement with alcohol/drugs that extended into adulthood that may indicate a predisposition for substance abuse.

In spite of these personal characteristics, the participants expressed confidence in their current work status as indicated by their responses on the WISI. They believed that
they were progressing in a positive direction as far as employment, even though their current employment may not be the career they want for the long term. Thus, it appears that the participants of this study demonstrated a degree of personal self-efficacy that enabled them to pursue employment in spite of the limitations they experienced.

Career self-efficacy expectations are the self-beliefs an individual possesses which enables the individual to organize and execute performance capabilities as they relate to employment and are influenced by the individual’s self-efficacy. The participants of this research noted having work experiences during their high school days. One graduate and 2 nongraduates indicated that they worked with family members. Some participants indicated that they had observed others performing work that they might be interested in pursuing as a career. However, the participants did not suggest a large degree of personal satisfaction in achieving these goals, which was employment in the career they had observed. And so it seems that for participants in this study there was not a substantial amount of self-efficacy associated with their limited employment success. Other motivating factors such as having a child to support or wanting to do better than they presently were doing may have helped them to overcome their relatively low sense of self-efficacy.

SCCT proposes that individuals hold beliefs about their career self-efficacy expectations related to the type of employment in which they are engaged. In general, the participants perceived their employment performance as satisfactory, with nongraduates expressing higher self-estimates than graduates. This was a similar finding to that of Carter and Wehby (2003) who interviewed high school students with EBD. They noted
that there were large discrepancies between employers’ value attributed to specific work behaviors when compared to the students’ ratings of their work performance.

Carter and Wehby (2003) suggested that these discrepancies (i.e., supervisors versus employees) may have led students to become frustrated at their lack of promotion or worse led to termination. Similarly, the participants of this research reported experiencing frequent changes of employment within the 6-month time frame of this study. They perceived themselves as being underemployed in positions requiring minimal skills and noted little personal satisfaction in their employment. Because these participants overestimated their abilities they often felt trapped by their jobs or saw their jobs as dead ends.

Therefore, participants were more likely to do things that would interfere in their ability to perform the job (i.e., be rude to customers, be frequently absent, not follow company policy) and hence they often faced being fired from the job.

If the participants had a higher degree of self-efficacy then they might be more successful in the workplace or for that matter might have been more successful in high school in the case of nongraduates. However, for the most part, participants in this study overestimated their abilities. Nongraduates were dismissive of the positive influence and even the necessity for graduation from high school or vocational/career training. 3 of them never made it past 9th grade before they dropped out. However, this overestimation did not mean that their self-efficacy was high. Their overestimation may have occurred because they did lack self-efficacy, and they used words to bolster their own feelings of inadequacy.
*Outcome Expectations*

Outcome expectations are beliefs an individual holds that are derived from outcomes of previous performances. These results serve to encourage or discourage future performance. Outcome expectations suggest imagined consequences of behavior not yet performed. The outcomes anticipated by the participants were reduced hours of work with expectations of less physical demands on the jobsite. Some participants indicated that they had work experiences that they did not want to perform as a lifetime career. In fact, none of the participants indicated being employed and earning a promotion as a result of their work performance. The participant’s reality was often quite different from their expectations.

Typically students prepare for employment during their high school years by engaging in vocational/career training and may also have an opportunity to participate in supervised employment to develop skills in order to enhance their employability. These career training and work experiences acquaint the student with a variety of work experiences and expectations in order to prepare them for the workplace. These experiences provide the individual with an opportunity to develop expectations about employment that best match their skills. Only one of the participants participated in a vocational program, and he never sought employment in that field which may have been the result of his experiences in that program. For him, it may have provided valuable information about which employment he was best for him.

When the participants reflected on the outcome expectations of their school experiences, they indicated limited positive impact on their lives as employees. Some participants mentioned educational personnel who had a positive impact because of
comments that helped them reevaluate their decision to change their behavior and remain in school. Nongraduates, in particular, were clear about the lack of positive influence in their life so much so they ultimately chose to exit school early. Three of the 4 nongraduates dropped out of school after the ninth grade. The high dropout rate indicated by researchers (Blackorby et al., 1996; Carson et al., 1995; Kortering et al., 1992) further underscores a disconnection with the high school experience. None of the participants indicated that they were able to make connections, during the time of their school attendance, regarding school academics and its application to the realm of employment. One graduate did indicate that once he was employed he began to realize that concepts learned in school did have application during employment. Graduates were more inclined to associate their school experience as supportive, but nongraduates indicated that school was more of a barrier to their lives.

Nongraduates did not indicate any positive outcome expectations as a result of attending school. They attributed school problems to the constraints of school policies and critical school personnel. As a group, nongraduates did not indicate that their school difficulties were a consequence of their choices. They concluded that early exit from school would lead to opportunities to work and earn money. Graduates indicated that a diploma was an outcome that enabled them access to employment requiring graduation. For nongraduates there seemed to be an inability to recognize that difficulties they had in work were in many ways tied to the choices they made, like leaving high school early.

The Peacock Hill Working Group (1991) noted that a factor contributing to the perception of disconnection between outcomes and personal choice is the relationship that students with EBD had with teachers they encountered in their educational career.
Hence, the behavior of not recognizing their own responsibility in the outcomes in high school or the workplace causes these nongraduates to continue repeating the same mistakes. For example, teachers viewed students with EBD as being disagreeable and having limited social appeal. The authors noted that nonEBD peers of these students held similar beliefs. The Peacock Hill authors reported findings similar to the beliefs held by the nongraduates. The nongraduates identified the source of their limited social acceptance to be other individuals and not a result of their own behavioral choices. In essence, the problem was others and not themselves. Accordingly, nongraduates often believed that others, not themselves, should change. This attitudes displayed by teachers and non-EBD peers would not encourage engagement in the typical high school social environment (see Schonert-Reichl, 1993) except from like-minded individuals. The potential consequences of these social group associations are discussed next. It can be conjectured that this pattern of behavior is likely to be generalized to the workplace.

*Contextual Influences*

Contextual influences are distinct from the other variables in SCCT in that they are external factors that impact goal setting and actions taken by an individual relevant to employment. Contextual influences may either support or be a barrier in the career process. Examples of supports might be having a mentor assigned to assist as a guide or lowering production standards for a short time while the new employee is learning to develop faster and more accurate levels of performance. Barriers, on the other hand, limit the ability of the individual to perform adequately or at an acceptable level of productivity. Some examples might be limited reading ability, lack of vocational/career training, work inexperience, etc. These influences perceived by the individual, according
to SCCT, can encourage or inhibit establishing personal goals and then acting upon those goals.

Participants described the challenges and barriers that they encountered in employment. They indicated that, although employed, they desired better (e.g., less labor intensive, better hours, higher skilled) and higher paying positions. These desires are consistent with Carson et al.’s (1995) finding that most employed individuals with EBD were underemployed. The barrier to achieving these desired working conditions was their low level or complete lack of training to qualify them for better employment. They might be able to gain training on-the-job but they would have to endure a lower status position until or if the advanced training opportunity was presented.

A number of participants indicated that one barrier in employment was their difficulty interacting with others at their place of employment. The results of their social interaction limitations ranged from employment that required very little interaction with customer or employees to the most drastic result, the loss of employment. Of interest is the fact that the participants, in general, did not view this deficiency as seriously as others around them, as indicated by their self-reports on the WISI. They perceived themselves as demonstrating at least adequate interpersonal skills in areas requiring abilities to assist or teach others how to perform work assignments.

Two nongraduates reported receiving support from relatives in the form of employment in positions for which they really were not qualified. For one of the nongraduates this situation appeared to result in long-term employment. Of the four nongraduates, he had the same employment for the longest time period. The other nongraduate reported that the familiarity of the family member with the participant
ultimately led to the nongraduate quitting because the family member was expecting too much from him.

Substance abuse was another obstacle the participants encountered. All participants reported substance abuse as widespread in the social network in which they were associated. All but one reported personal usage during the time they attended school and later after exiting school. They indicated that they socialized with people who engaged in similar behavior. Windle and Mason (2004) indicated that associating with friends who used drugs contributes to polydrug usage and acts of delinquency. Schonert-Reichl (1993) reported that students with EBD preferred to associate with other students with similar social traits possibly because this reduced the tension of having to assess their own behavior.

For the short term, these associations may enable them to ignore the possible ramifications of their behavior. Two graduates and one nongraduate indicated that their substance abuse had negative impacts upon their employment. One graduate was denied access to a higher level of promotion due to his testing positive for the presence of drugs. He admitted that his drug usage was a barrier to employment. Three nongraduates stated that they viewed their substance abuse behavior as part of their individual development process. SCCT suggests that individual predispositions, disabling conditions being one of them, affect contextual influences. At least some of the participants may have had a dependency on substances that may be a familial trait. They did not directly indicate this in the interview but my experience with some of the background information suggests that addictive behavior patterns existed in the families.
A predisposition to substance abuse is likely to create barriers to sustaining employment, particularly if the employer has a regular drug testing policy. One nongraduate admitted that he had a substance abuse addiction that made it difficult for him to keep employment for very long. Other participants in this study demonstrated similar characteristics. As a group, the participants expressed a tolerance of substance abuse particularly when they were younger. As such, the participants appear to have been at risk for engaging in substance usage as adults. One graduate and one nongraduate indicated that they did in fact engage in substance abuse while they were employed. Both of these individuals reported negative consequences (e.g., demotion, a pattern of attendance problems at work resulting in terminations) as a result of their usage.

The final set of findings of this research is distinctive because they indicate a change from previous behaviors. Some individuals voiced a desire to make drastic changes in their behavior as a result of critical contextual events that occurred in their lives. Three graduates stated a goal of reducing or eliminating their past behaviors that had resulted in poor work performance (e.g., drug usage, associating with negative friends, partying). Two of the graduates were motivated by their interest in their children’s future. They made it a goal to “grow up,” as they described it. The third graduate was shocked by a life experience that caused him to reassess his management of his substance usage. He made it a goal to rid his body of drugs so that he could reach a career goal in the military. One nongraduate verbalized a goal to stay employed to earn sufficient money to pay child support and avoid being incarcerated.

SCCT indicates that career development follows a path of interests followed by goal setting as a result of the interests. Goal-setting can then establish the framework for
action upon the goal(s). The participants were expressing different outcome expectations than they had stated previously. They knew that deciding on their new course of career behaviors would be challenging but they did not focus on the barriers associated with this new course of behavior. As Lindley (2005) noted, males did not appear to perceive the potential barriers associated with outcome expectations. The participants of this research knew that they would have to make changes in their lifestyle choices (i.e., reduce substance abuse, change their circle of friends) and exert effort to gain new training that may require returning to school. These participants were going to have to monitor and regulate their own behavioral choices if they were going to be successful.

Summary of Implications of Social Cognitive Career Theory

The vocational outlook for the participants in light of their interpersonal skills appears bleak. However, from a career self-efficacy perspective, this is not how the participants described the challenges that faced them. In general, they were positive about better types of employment being available to them in the future. Despite the minimal amount of supports and multiple obstacles they reported, the participants indicated that they anticipated sustained employment. It is possible that the participants did not have another option (e.g., stay at home, be unemployed) available to them.

As far as outcome expectations, they pursued employment with the possibility that better employment might become accessible. The participants suggested that achievement of these expectations would result in less physically demanding labor, better work hours, and higher wages. With the exception of a few of the participants, they generally did not indicate a particular vocational preference that they were striving to
attain. As a result, the majority of the participants were making no observable effort (e.g., postsecondary school, trade school) to develop new skills for career advancement.

Implications for Practice

The findings in this study point out several important implications for the education of individuals with EBD. First, as the findings in this study indicated, students with EBD need intense focus on social skills, especially the skill of accepting responsibility for their own actions. The participants in this study often placed the blame on others when things at their job or in their social life went wrong. Schools might consider developing courses that help these students evaluate situations more objectively so that they can feel as though they are in control of their lives, thus building a stronger sense of self-efficacy in these students. Scott and Nelson (1998) note that social skills training occurred with students with EBD but not with nonEBD peers. They note that typically students with EBD are educated separately from nonEBD peers and not socially engaged with more socially competent peers. Scott and Nelson suggest that students with EBD need to engage in this training with individuals who demonstrate more social competence in order to benefit.

Additionally, school systems might consider creation of programs that provide supportive personnel for those students who are at-risk for failure and dropping out. Smith (1995) proposes a “case management” system where partnerships are developed between schools and community-based agencies in order to provide access to a variety of services for families with students at-risk. This model incorporates assessment of student’s difficulties that are incorporated into a service plan with necessary supportive services indicated. The plan is then implemented by a case management team that serves
as advocates for the student and family. The Peacock Hill group indicated that this disability category has a low level of advocacy from parents.

Indications of poor academic performance should initiate educational interventions that are personalized rather than result in impersonal letters of possible failure sent to parents. Scanlon and Mellard (2002) proposed that transition services be better implemented so that students are aware of vocational rehabilitation services and centers for independent living that may assist them once they leave school. That would include a coordination of mental health and social service agencies to provide individuals with EBD comprehensive services (Heward, 2006; Joliette, Stichter, Nelson, Scott, & Liaupsin, 2000). These services could be particularly helpful in establishing a support system for this disability category that has few advocates (see Peacock Hill Working Group, 1991).

In this particular school system students were evaluated once, in the tenth grade, to determine potential careers of interest and possible career/vocational school program selection. Two of the nongraduates did not complete the ninth grade and never had the opportunity to be assessed. Only 2 of the participants did participate in vocational training. None of the remaining 4 participated in vocational training. As adults, they were not employed in situations related to their vocational training. Blackorby and Wagner (1996) noted that only one-third of students with EBD elect to take vocational training in high school. Particularly in classes for students with EBD, there should be more of an effort to evaluate career interests of the students and incorporate those interests into the class curriculum. Students in special education should begin to develop Career Interest Portfolios earlier.
The participants of this research indicated having experience with drugs and alcohol as students and a few noted that this behavior continued as adults. As students, the participants indicated that they were inclined to engage in substance abuse before, during, and after school. They also associated with peers who demonstrated similar abuse behavior. These associations often led them to believe that administrators were targeting them for engaging in negative school behaviors. The fact that they were grouped according to their disability may have encouraged drug abuse, because associating with peers who share similar attitudes regarding substance abuse can increase the likelihood that drug use will continue. It would be wise to consider this student population to be at high-risk for substance abuse and involve them in school-wide intervention programs earlier in their academic career (Greenbaum et al., 1996; Kortering, Braziel, & Tompkins, 2002; Windle & Mason, 2004).

At the high school level, students with EBD in particular should be involved with drug counseling services within the school. This will also provide one more personalized contact for them in the school environment. Students with EBD might benefit from drug counseling that explores their reasons for selecting substance abuse as a possible means of social interaction in lieu of other interpersonal strategies. Additionally, it might be wise to have these students interact with a more successful student group. Perhaps pairing these students with an older peer mentor might encourage students with EBD to model some of the successful social skills of their peer mentor. Burrell, Wood, Pikes, and Holliday (2001) describe mentorship as “a dynamic and reciprocal relationship that can be beneficial for both the protégé and the mentor.” (p. 24) Peer mentoring is a process that encourages the development of social skills sufficient to encourage membership in a
social group. Lunenburg (2000) indicates that mentors can be peers or adults who are willing to serve as role models. Briefly discuss and cite literature on peer mentoring.

Nongraduates made few positive comments about their school experiences, but had a more adversarial perspective regarding their school experience. They discussed instances when they had toyed with the rules of the school and were able to find staff that would “cut them a break.” Nongraduates spoke with favor about these school employees. Nongraduates were willing to verbalize their overt and covert resistance against the governance of the school system in their lives.

Nongraduates did not indicate why they were unable to make connections for support from school personnel. Students with EBD reported that attitudes of school personnel were perceived as negative and nonsupportive (Kortering & Braziel, 1999). It may be that they were responding to what are referred to as “push factors” for dropping out, such as repeating grades, poor academic achievement, and few indications of caring by school staff (Scanlon & Mellard, 2002). If students with EBD do not develop more productive interpersonal skills within school, they are likely to have difficulty interacting in the workplace as demonstrated by the participants of this research. Schools, then, might benefit by attempting to gauge what student with EBD is more likely to be heading toward withdrawing from the education system. The school system should have these students involved in workshops that look at job options available for those who drop out. These students could also be matched with a peer mentor or teacher mentor who might be able to reach that student and help that student find a way to cope with the school environment (see Burrell, Wood, Pikes, & Holliday, 2001; Lunenburg 2000).
Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

This research has expanded upon the existing literature regarding how adults, formerly identified as EBD, socially interact in the workplace. Previous research has emphasized adolescents’ interpersonal functioning while employed (Carter & Wehby, 2003) or has focused on levels of employment (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Carson et al., 1995; Frank & Sitlington, 1997) alphabetize by first author), postsecondary education (Malmgren et al., 1998) and community adjustment (Sample, 1998). Replication of this research with larger numbers of participants, male and female, is recommended. In particular, very little is reported regarding females with EBD and their work interactions and career selection process. The limited incidence of females in this disability category was noted in the Twentieth Annual Report to Congress (1998) that states less than one-fourth of secondary students identified as EBD are female. It is possible that different intervening factors (e.g., response to perceived barriers and outcome expectations) impact males less/more than females, which could alter program approaches exercised by schools (Lindley, 2005). Expanding the number of participants with EBD in research after they leave school will require more efforts by educators to sustain contact with students who have exited school. A liaison person who is a part of wrap around services (e.g., social or mental health agencies) might serve in this position.

Conducting similar research with other disability populations and comparing factors impacting development of personal self-efficacy regarding similarity or differences attributable to each disability group would contribute to the knowledge base. In particular, individuals with specific learning disabilities (SLD) achieve higher levels of employment than do individuals with EBD (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Determining
the factors that contribute to greater employment success of those with SLD would be informative.

It is possible that behavioral factors attributed to their disability (i.e., difficulty building and maintaining interpersonal behavior, limited academic skills) also negatively affect the ability of individuals with EBD to be successfully employed and increase the chance of underemployment (i.e., employed below one’s skill level). Longitudinal research regarding career development and maintenance of employment may identify specific factors that contribute to former individuals with EBD becoming successful employees beyond those identified in this research. Longitudinal research could determine the long-term impact of various interventions on the employment of individuals with EBD.

Researchers may also want to explore the extent of substance abuse behavior among students with EBD and its impact upon their interpersonal and academic performance. If substance abuse should continue into adulthood it could negatively impact job performance, social interactions with peers and authority, and ultimately retention of employment. It would be fruitful to determine if substance abuse among individuals identified as EBD constitutes a personal strategy to reduce internalized stress (physiological state) that these students may experience in the school environment. Alternatively, the abuse of drugs may be associated with a need to self-medicate for other possible neurological (e.g., attention deficit hyperactive disorder) and psychological (e.g., bipolar disorder) conditions.
Conclusion

This research examined the social interactions demonstrated during employment by individuals formerly diagnosed with EBD. Eight adults, 4 graduates and 4 nongraduates, participated in a series of interviews and the completion of an inventory regarding their employment. The purpose of the research was to determine what social interactions of these participants were demonstrated in the course of their employment; how they managed their social interaction to sustain employment; and whether or not there was a difference between graduates and nongraduates in the management of their social interaction.

In general, both graduates and nongraduates reported interpersonal behaviors that hindered their work performance in a variety of ways (e.g., poor work attendance, rude behavior to customers, and drug use during work hours). They indicated that they had difficulty effectively interacting with customers, fellow employees, and authority figures at work. However, graduates demonstrated a slight inclination to recognize these deficiencies and in some cases change their behavior in order to be more successful. Nongraduates were more inclined to attribute their interpersonal problems to others and not admit personal accountability for their problematic behavior. Both graduates and nongraduates verbalized discontent with their current level of employment and a few verbalized that they might pursue training to earn better employment. Three of 4 graduates made attempts to accomplish their stated goal by participating in new training.

Overall, graduates demonstrated more reflective thought regarding their employment status and its relationship to their general level of personal satisfaction with their lives. They contributed twice the amount of interview responses when compared to
the nongraduates. They spoke more frequently of future goals (e.g., seeking advanced schooling, promotions, better working conditions) and events (e.g., owning a home, having a family) that they viewed as possibly happening. To some extent the graduates indicated that they had supportive individuals (e.g., military, wife, brother) assisting them in their daily life. One nongraduate indicated that he had a limited support system (i.e., an uncle who employed him though the nongraduate wasn’t qualified) to assist him. The remaining nongraduates did not indicate any family or friends who supported them in the pursuit of employment. Rather they indicated a more solitary existence and taking day-to-day approach to their personal lives. They implied a “live for the moment” perspective with little forethought about future aspirations.

A primary limitation of this study was the difficulty establishing and sustaining contact with individuals with EBD who had exited school and entered the community. The research is further limited by a difficulty eliciting rich responses from many participants. Their reticence to discuss or provide detailed information relevant to certain areas of their life will be a challenge for researchers who seek information about this disability population (Lunenburg, 2000).

It has been recommended that efforts be made by school systems to create a support person (see Lunenburg, 2000; Smith, 1995; Thurlow, Sinclair, & Johnson, 2002) who maintains contact with individuals with EBD while they are enrolled in school. This support person could sustain contact beyond the time when these students elect to exit school. Implementing this practice might enable more individuals with EBD to better integrate into society in general and the workplace in particular.
Contact Script for Participant

(*maintain pleasant conversational tone*)

Hello ____________ (participant). My name is Lawrence Franz. I am currently involved in a research study for Kent State University. This research is a part of my doctoral degree in the field of Special Education for students who are Seriously Emotionally Disturbed.

I would like you to participate in this study because you have graduated and have maintained employment since your graduation. Sharing your employment experiences in this study may provide valuable information to school systems in the area of career preparation in Special Education programs.

There are two types of information you would provide for this study. The first part of the study is a self-evaluation questionnaire that you would fill out. The second part involves your participation in an interview where you would share information about your work experiences. The questionnaire and interview will be completed in one session lasting one and a half to two hours.

I want to assure you that your participation will be kept confidential. Your name, school, and your employer will be described by a pseudonym. A fictitious name will be provided to maintain your confidentiality. Your status as a former SED student will be kept confidential. You will be described only as a graduate of the (local school system).

I would like to ask your help in one more way for this research study. I would like you to suggest two individuals who would also participate in this study. These individuals must know about your work performance. At least one of these individuals must work with you. These individuals would fill out a similar questionnaire about you. They would participate in an interview as well. I can call you back if you need to speak with your friends and get phone numbers. When would be a good time to call you back? ___________ and at what phone number ___________________.

Again I want to assure you that at no time will you be identified as a former SED student. The two people you recommend will be told that they are participating in a follow-up study of graduates of (local school system).

Finally, as an expression of my appreciation, I would like to compensate you for your time and effort in this research project. I would like to offer you fifty dollars for your contributions. I would also like to compensate the individuals that you recommend for participation with 25 dollars for each person.

Do you have any questions for me?
APPENDIX B: CONTACT SCRIPT FOR INFORMANT
Contact Script for Informant

(maintain a pleasant conversational tone)

Hello ____________ (informant). My name is Lawrence Franz. I am currently involved in a research study for Kent State University. This research is a part of my doctoral degree in education. I am doing follow-up study of graduates of (local school) and their work experiences.

You have been referred to me by __________________ (participant). He said that you have expert knowledge about him and his work performance. Sharing your knowledge of ______________ (participant’s) work experiences in this study may provide valuable information to school systems in the area of career preparation.

There are two types of information you would provide for this study. The first part of the study is a questionnaire that you would fill out about ____________ (participant). The second part involves your participation in an audiotaped interview where you would share information about your knowledge of ______________ (participant’s) work experiences. The questionnaire and interview will be completed in one session. It should take between 1 1/2-2 hours to complete this entire process.

I want to assure you that your participation will be kept confidential. Your name and employer will be described by a pseudonym. A fictitious name will be provided to maintain your confidentiality.

Finally, as an expression of my appreciation, I would like to compensate you for your time and effort in this research project with 25 dollars.

Do you have any questions for me?

Could you tell me what would be a convenient time for us to meet?

_____________________

Where would you like to meet so that you would feel comfortable and we would be undisturbed? __________________________

Can I reach you at this number so that I can give you a reminder call before we meet? ______________________
APPENDIX C: TEST DAY SCRIPT
Hello _________________________, my name is Lawrence Franz. Today you will complete a paper and pencil inventory and then participate in an interview. I anticipate that it will take approximately 60 to 75 minutes to complete both of these tasks.

Completion of Kent State Subject Review permission form:

Before we begin I would like to ask you to review this form which explains the procedure. Would you please review the form and indicate with a signature your permission to complete this research?

Thank you for your willingness to participate

Preparation of Participant for inventory:

The first part of this interview involves the completion of a pencil and paper inventory. The inventory is called the Workplace Interaction Skills Inventory. It provides information about social interactions among employees. It is not an intelligence test or intended to diagnose mental health adjustment. It provides a general idea about an individual’s unique ways of interacting with others at work.

A coded number is used to identify you and is entered where your name would be written. The date is completed for you as well. Please read the directions and complete the inventory. Please ask me for help if you have any questions.

Now that you have finished the written portion of the interview we can begin the oral part of the interview. Please be relaxed and take the amount of time that you need to provide a thoughtful and complete answer. At times I may need to ask you to explain a term, a phrase, or situation that I may be unfamiliar with and need your explanation to better understand. This interview will be recorded on audio tape. I am recording so that I don’t miss any of your comments.

For the oral interview I will ask you a question. If the question is not clear or you do not understand what is being asked please feel free to ask me to restate the question. Are there any questions that you may have before we begin the interview?

Let’s begin the interview.

I want to thank you for sharing your valuable time. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this research project.
Please accept this money as a token of my appreciation for sharing your time on this research project.
AUDIOTAPE CONSENT FORM

I agree to audio taping at ________________________________
on ________________________________.

__________________________________________________________________

Signature                                                                       Date

I have been told that I have the right to hear the audio tapes before they are used. I have decided that I:

_____ want to hear the tapes                          _____ do not want to hear the tapes

Sign now below if you do not want to hear the tapes. If you want to hear the tapes, you will be asked to sign after hearing them.

Lawrence Franz and other researchers approved by Kent State University may / may not use the tapes made of me. The original tapes or copies may be used for:

_____ this research project _____ teacher education _____ presentation at professional meetings.

_________________________________  ________    ___________________________

Signature                                            Date                   Address
I don’t know anything about your job. Would you tell me about a day in your life at work? Take me from the time that you get here until the time you go home. If I was to sit and watch you all day, what would I see you do?

(Follow-up prompts: What type of work you do? What are your duties/jobs at work? How long you have been working here? Has your job changed since you’ve been here? If so, how? Tell me how you got employed here. How do you work with fellow employees? What other types of work experience have you had?)
APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW 2 QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANT
Interview 2 Questions for Participant

1. During school, you were in an SBH class. In what ways have the problems you had in school, if any, How did being SBH affect your work and life?

2. What aspects or parts of your job do you find particularly challenging?

3. What ways or strategies do you use to deal with the challenges and pressures of your job?

4. What types of experiences while you were school age helped you become a successful employee? Did anything in school help you also?

5. Do you know that many people don’t get and keep jobs after they leave an SBH class? You’ve obviously done very well in this area of life. How did you do it?

6. What advice would you give to students preparing to leave school from an SBH class to join the workforce?
APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR INFORMANT
Interview Questions for Informant

1. What aspects or parts of the job do you think _________________ finds most challenging?

2. What ways or strategies have you seen _________________ use to deal with the challenges and pressures of work?

3. Based on your experience working with _________________, who is relatively new at this job, what advice do you have for other young adults starting a new job?
APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS
Interview Questions for Focus Groups

1. As a group, you have a wide variety of work experiences. How did you come to be employed at your current place of work?

2. What would you say are the talents and skill you bring to your job?

3. How did you get these talents and skills that have helped you in your job situation?

4. What talents or skills do you want to develop or improve in yourself?

5. In your interviews you mentioned some of the challenges you have had at your job. Some of you mentioned dealing with customers can be difficult. Others mentioned that bosses can be a challenge to deal with as well. In some cases you mentioned the place where you worked had facilities that were less than desirable. What are some of the more significant challenges you face each day at work? What makes these situations a challenge?

6. There is no doubt that each one of you is a survivor in the best meaning of that expression. You have experienced challenges and barriers before in your lives and found a way to be successful. How have you decided to deal with the challenges and barriers you have faced in your work experiences?

7. We all have had those situations at work that we have not been able to deal with as effectively as we would like. How do you deal with those situations when you were not as successful as you think you could have been?

8. If your employer was going to write an evaluation of your performance as an employee what would they be likely to say about you? What would other employees say about you?
9. As we grow up and mature, we each have to make adjustments in our lives in order to survive. There are many forces or pressures causing us to make those changes. They could be our age, health concerns, need to get our own place to live, developing a long term relationship with someone else, etc. What forces or pressures do you believe are affecting you right now? How are you managing these forces or pressures attempting to change your life?

10. Your previous interviews indicated that you have spent some time reflecting on your past days in school. As a group what sorts of advice would you have for younger students in classes like the ones you have been in in high school? What advice do you have for teachers?

11. Imagine that one day you are a shift leader/manager/boss and a new employee you are to supervise is introduced to you. This new hire reminds you a lot of yourself when you were his age. What would be important to focus on to enable this person to be a “good employee?”
Self-Rating

Name: ____________________________________  Date: _______________

Directions: This questionnaire contains 38 statements. You will be rating yourself. Read each statement carefully and circle the answer with which you most agree. SD means strongly disagree; D means disagree; N means neutral; A means agree; and SA means strongly agree. There are no right or wrong answers. You are just asked to provide your opinion as honestly as you can. Please answer every statement. If you should change your mind just mark an X through that choice and circle the correct choice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I contribute to group effort on the job.</td>
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<td>2. I listen attentively to members of group.</td>
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<td>3. I participate in group decisions.</td>
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<td>4. I share ideas and suggestions with group.</td>
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<td>5. I help others in group when problems occur.</td>
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<td>6. I join right in with the work group or group shift.</td>
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<td>7. I teach in a way that my fellow employees are able to understand.</td>
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<td>8. I model effective work behaviors when I am working.</td>
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<td>9. I share my personal work experience with others.</td>
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<td>10. I demonstrate to others “tricks of the trade” I have learned.</td>
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<td>11. I provide step-by-step instructions when necessary.</td>
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<td>12. I am able to learn new skills or techniques to be more effective.</td>
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<td>13. I listen closely to customer/client’s concerns.</td>
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<td>15. I attempt to satisfy customer/client.</td>
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<td>16. I attempt to understand the customer/client’s needs.</td>
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<td>17. I provide constructive assistance to customer/client.</td>
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<td>18. I value use of humor in customer/client interaction.</td>
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<td>19. I am sought out by others for help and advice at work.</td>
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<td>20. I try to motivate others.</td>
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<td>21. I am supportive of fellow employees at work.</td>
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<td>22. I am tolerant when others make mistakes or don’t understand.</td>
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<td>23. I am tactful with others.</td>
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<td>24. I challenge existing non-productive work procedures.</td>
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<td>25. I assist others when problems occur at work.</td>
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<td>26. I am a good listener.</td>
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<td>27. I consider both sides of a problem.</td>
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<td>28. I attempt to solve problems first.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. I try to get a fair solution to a problem for everyone.</td>
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</table>
30. I use other sources of help to solve problems.      SD  D  N  A  SA
31. I am able to offer and accept criticism.          SD  D  N  A  SA
32. I tolerate others’ mistakes or lack of understanding. SD  D  N  A  SA
33. I am flexible when there is change at work.       SD  D  N  A  SA
34. I am respectful of others’ differences.          SD  D  N  A  SA
35. I treat others fairly.                           SD  D  N  A  SA
36. I am sensitive and non-judgmental of others.     SD  D  N  A  SA
37. I am able to learn from other people.            SD  D  N  A  SA
38. I am able to adjust to a new work team.          SD  D  N  A  SA
APPENDIX J: PEER-RATING
Peer-Rating

Name: ____________________________________  Date:_________________

Directions: This questionnaire contains 38 statements. You will be rating a fellow employee. Read each statement carefully and circle the answer with which you most agree. SD means strongly disagree; D means disagree; N means neutral; A means agree; and SA means strongly agree. There are no right or wrong answers. You are just asked to provide your opinion as honestly as you can. Please answer every statement. If you should change your mind just mark an X through that choice and circle the correct choice.

1.  He contributes to group effort on the job.      SD  D  N  A  SA  
2.  He listens attentively to members of group.      SD  D  N  A  SA  
3.  He participates in group decisions.      SD  D  N  A  SA  
4.  He shares ideas and suggestions with group.      SD  D  N  A  SA  
5.  He helps others in group when problems occur.      SD  D  N  A  SA  
6.  He joins right in with the work group or group shift.      SD  D  N  A  SA  
7.  He teaches in a way that his fellow employees are able to understand.      SD  D  N  A  SA  
8.  He models effective work behaviors when he is working.      SD  D  N  A  SA  
9.  He shares his personal work experience with others.      SD  D  N  A  SA  
10.  He demonstrates to others “tricks of the trade” he has learned.  
11.  He provides step-by-step instructions when necessary.  
12.  He is able to learn new skills or techniques to be more effective.  
13.  He listen closely to customer/client’s concerns.  
14.  He is courteous and polite to customer/client.  
15.  He attempts to satisfy customer/client.  
16.  He attempts to understand the customer/client’s needs.  
17.  He provides constructive assistance to customer/client.  
18.  He values use of humor in customer/client interaction.  
19.  He is sought out by others for help and advice at work.  
20.  He tries to motivate others.  
21.  He is supportive of fellow employees at work.  
22.  He is tolerant when others make mistakes or don’t understand.  
23.  He is tactful with others.  
24.  He challenges existing non-productive work procedures.  
25.  He assists others when problems occur at work.  
26.  He is a good listener.  
27.  He considers both sides of a problem.  
28.  He attempts to solve problems first.  

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29. He tries to get a fair solution to a problem for everyone. | SD | D | N | A | SA
30. He uses other sources of help to solve problems. | SD | D | N | A | SA
31. He is able to offer and accept criticism. | SD | D | N | A | SA
32. He tolerates others’ mistakes or lack of understanding. | SD | D | N | A | SA
33. He is flexible when there is change at work. | SD | D | N | A | SA
34. He is respectful of others’ differences. | SD | D | N | A | SA
35. He treats others fairly. | SD | D | N | A | SA
36. He is sensitive and non-judgmental of others. | SD | D | N | A | SA
37. He is able to learn from other people. | SD | D | N | A | SA
38. He is able to adjust to a new work team. | SD | D | N | A | SA
APPENDIX K: CODES FOR INTERVIEWS
Codes for Interviews:

1. JD – job description
2. T – type of work performed
3. D – How long employed
4. EC – how they got employment
5. C – degree of work with peers
6. OWE – other work experiences
7. EBDI – effect of SBH on work/life
8. WC – work challenges
9. WS – work strategies to deal with challenges/pressures
10. SE – school-age experiences which helped you as an employee
11. SS – secrets of your successes
12. GW – sage advice for students in SBH
13. PO – personal observation of others
14. PS – personal strategies
15. PRS – personal reflection on self
16. PRO – personal reflections on others
17. PG – personal goal(s)
18. EOP – effects of other people
19. EOBE – effect of other work experiences
20. TPO – task performed by others
REFERENCES


