WALDEN UNIVERSITY
A higher degree. A higher purpose.

Walden University
ScholarWorks

Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies

Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection

2015

Strategies for Developing Interpersonal Communication Skills for Business Students

Sharon A. Pope
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations

Part of the Adult and Continuing Education Administration Commons, Adult and Continuing Education and Teaching Commons, Communication Commons, Higher Education Administration Commons, and the Higher Education and Teaching Commons

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Sharon Pope

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Ieda Santos, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Mario Castro, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Andrea Wilson, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2015

Abstract

Strategies for Developing Interpersonal Communication Skills for Business Students

by

Sharon A. Pope

M.B.A., Cleveland State University, 1995

M.S.H.P/A., University of Cincinnati, 1983

B.Ed., University of Toledo, 1981

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

December, 2015

Abstract

Research has shown that interpersonal communication skills (ICS) are important for employment success, particularly if they are learned by students during college. A private university in Ohio identified the need to enhance students' ICS; however, the university's faculty lacked strategies to teach those required skills. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate perceptions of key administrative staff (KAS), faculty, and alumni about the implementation of ICS instruction to foster students' work-ready skills. Guided by the social skill component of Goleman's emotional intelligence theory and related research, this study examined key applications of ICS including communication, collaboration, conflict management, and cross cultural awareness. Three KAS with extensive knowledge of university practices were purposefully sampled to take part in a focus group addressing current and recommended ICS instructional strategies. Network sampling, informed by the KAS, identified 23 faculty members who completed an open-ended online questionnaire and 4 alumni who participated in semi-structured interviews targeting their perceptions of ICS in the classroom. In addition to these sources of data, the researcher's reflective journal was analyzed to examine implementation and perceptions of current and alternate ICS instructional strategies. Data were transcribed, reviewed, then coded inductively without a prior list of codes resulting themes of presenting, self-branding, group/team work, networking, global awareness, and diversity. These findings were used to create a faculty professional development series on effective ICS instruction that can be used to promote positive social change for the university, students, and community by preparing graduates ready for success in the workforce.

Strategies for Developing Interpersonal Communication Skills for Business Students

by

Sharon A. Pope

M.B.A., Cleveland State University, 1995

M.S.H.P/A., University of Cincinnati, 1983

B.Ed., University of Toledo, 1981

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

December, 2015

Dedication

First and foremost, I dedicate this to my husband, John. When I cried, you hugged me. When I complained, you consoled me. When I was about to quit, you made me see the light. When I was happy, you were with me to rejoice. How can I ever be so fortunate to have you in my life? My loving husband, my philosopher, my comfort; thank you, and I love you truly.

Nancy, I met you on November 4, 1986 in my dark, lonely, and silent state. You provided me the courage and support to get through a frustrating time in my life. When we laugh together, which is often, it makes everything seem possible. Your belief, hope, support, faith, and an ever smiling face makes a bond thicker than friendship. How can I ever thank you?

Because of God, You give me strength to do all things. Because of God, I recovered from a stroke that took my voice and my movement. Because of God, I became a mom. Because of God, I went back to school and earned a MBA. Because of God, I run marathons and qualified for Boston. Because of God, I wrote this study in the pursuit of my doctorate. Psalm 18:2, “The Lord is my rock; and my fortress; and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust.”

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my committee members Dr. Ieda M. Santos, Dr. Mario Castro, and Dr. Andrea M. Wilson. Dr. Santos, chair, and Dr. Castro, second member, were there to guide me and improve my skills to be where I am now. Dr. Wilson, my University Research Reviewer had a kind way of providing a finishing touch on my study. I thank you for I never could get through this process without you.

I would like to thank my family especially John, my beloved sons Shaun and Ryan, and my parents for giving me the strength and support to get through this long process. I know I was MIA for several years throughout this process, thank you to my friends who kept track of me, made me laugh, and are still my friends! To my very special cohorts at the university and Walden, you understood the difficulty that I was facing and you always encouraged me, thank you. I want to thank my study participants for their time, collaboration, and great ideas for this study would not exist without your input. And last, but far not least, my former and current students who kept me going and made me realize I did this for me because of you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Table of Contents

List of Tables v

Section 1: The Problem 1

Introduction 1

Definition of the Problem 2

Rationale 4

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level 4

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature 6

Definitions 8

Significance 10

Guiding Questions 11

Review of the Literature 13

Conceptual Framework Literature Review 13

Current Literature Review 19

Implications 31

Summary 31

Section 2: The Methodology 33

Introduction 33

Research Approach and Design 34

Participants 39

Criteria and Sample 39

Justification for Number of Participants 42

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants 44
Methods of Establishing a Researcher Participant Relationship 45
Ethics 46
Data Collection 49
Methods of Data Collection 49
Access to Participants 55
Role of the Researcher 56
Research Journal 58
Data Collection Process 59
Evidence of Quality 62
Data Analysis 64
Data Compilation and Coding 64
Results 71
Final Analysis and Outcomes 96
Discrepant Cases 106
Summary 108
Conclusion 110
Section 3: The Project 112
Introduction 112
Rationale 113
Review of the Literature 115
Professional Development and Student Workshops Series 116

Emphasized Strategies in Professional Development and Student Workshops 119
Project Description 129
Potential Barriers and Timetable 129
Roles and Responsibilities 131
Project Evaluation Plan 131
Project Implications 133
Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions 136
Introduction 136
Project Strengths and Limitations 136
Recommendations for Alternate Approaches 137
Scholarship 138
Project Development 139
Leadership and Change 140
Reflections on the Importance of the Work 141
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research 141
Conclusion 143
References 145
Appendix A: Project 172
Appendix B: Evaluation Form Workshop 181
Appendix C: Evaluation Form Event 183
Appendix D: Cover Letter to Key Administrative Staff Members. 185

Appendix E: Cover Letter to Faculty Members.....186

Appendix F: Cover Letter, Alumni.....187

Appendix G: Script Before Focus Group.....188

Appendix H: Script Before Alumni Interviews.....189

Appendix I: Focus Group Questions.....190

Appendix J: Open-Ended Questionnaire Questions.....192

Appendix K: Individual Alumni Member Interview Questions.....194

Appendix L: Reminder for Survey Completion.....196

Appendix M: Sample of Written Coding.....197

Appendix N: Final Themes.....201

List of Tables

Table 1. Summary of Key Definitions of Interpersonal Communication Skills..... 15

Table 2. Communication Strategies..... 77

Table 3. Collaboration Strategies..... 78

Table 4. Cross-Cultural Strategies..... 79

Table 5. Comparison of Original Framework to New Framework..... 98

Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

In November 2012 the career services director at a for-profit commuter campus located in the northeastern part of the United States presented a Work Ready Plan, an internal unpublished document, to the faculty members during a faculty development meeting (Private University administrator, personal communication, October 12, 2012). As part of the strategic plan for the local university, the career services director included in the Work Ready Plan discrete skills identified by the local business and management advisory board to enhance the employment opportunities of business students. The business and management advisory board suggested that faculty members integrate soft skills into the classroom that included interpersonal communication skills (career services director, personal communication, November 8, 2012). The university recommended that presentation skills be addressed in each business course specifically through an oral presentation (former academic director, personal communication, December 20, 2012). The Work Ready Plan addressed the need to improve interpersonal communication skills, but did not include any specific strategies for integrating these into the classroom to guide the faculty members.

Interpersonal communication skills are critical to the business setting, but DeKay (2012) was concerned about the limitation of teaching these skills to the students. Students deal with many different people across campus, but faculty members are a constant presence and a powerful influence on interpersonal communication skills of their students, asserted Gilardi and Gugliemetti (2011). Waner (1995) observed that if

faculty members are aware of the strategies to implement interpersonal communications skills into the classroom, they could build it into the curriculum and develop outcomes. Further research is needed on the appropriate strategies to enhance interpersonal communication skills in the classroom.

Definition of the Problem

In the Work Ready Plan, the career services director addressed the need to build interpersonal communication skills in the classroom, but the plan did not include strategies for faculty to integrate the skills into the classroom (Private University administrator, personal communication, October 12, 2012). The problem lies in the gap between the interpersonal communication requirements of the employer and the absence of specific strategies that can be used by faculty members to foster interpersonal communication skills. In hiring of a new graduate, potential employers identified interpersonal communication skills as a valuable aspect, and they wanted more emphasis placed on these skills in the business education curriculum (Maes, Weldy, & Icenogle 1997; Tanyel, Mitchell, & McAlum, 1999; Robles, 2012; Stivers & Onifade, 2013; Wardrope, 2002).

Therefore, investigating strategies that may help establish guidelines for faculty members who seek to integrate interpersonal communication skills in their classrooms. These recommended strategies may be suggestions for the faculty members to build into the syllabus or impromptu activities that will complement the courses. Specific strategies will assist in developing interpersonal communication skills that will enhance students'

employment opportunities (Anderson & Anderson, 2010; DeKay, 2012; English, Manton, & Walker, 2010; Wagner, 2008; Waner, 1995).

As a visiting professor at Private University, it was my responsibility to help the students develop and improve their interpersonal communication skills to enhance future employment opportunities. Private University is a commuter campus that has no onsite living accommodations, and the students generally work full time and have families. The national Private University spans over 80 onsite campuses in metropolitan areas and also has an online component. Other campuses and an online component have separate administrative staff and faculty members. Although this study may be of interest to other Private University campuses, this study was completed at the local campus.

According to the university's Academic Annual Report (Private University, 2012), business students are typically over 25 years of age, with a minority of students coming straight from high school. Nontraditional students generally enroll in college to make a career change due to a recent job loss or the need for a degree to get promoted (Kasworm, 2003). To accommodate students' busy work and family schedules, the university uses a blended learning format, a cross between face-to-face and an online component. As noted by Davis (1999) and Glaser and Bingham (2009), nontraditional commuter students are disconnected from other students because they have other responsibilities; Davis (1999) and Glaser and Bingham (2009) suggested that interpersonal communication within the classroom as a way of networking with other students.

Two press releases published by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) noted that employers were looking for interpersonal communication skills in graduates (Koncz & Allen, 2012a; 2012b). Not only were soft skills prioritized over hard skills, interpersonal communication skills were seen to separate potential employees from equally qualified candidates. In addition, the criteria set for accreditation of Private University according to the Higher Learning Commission (2012) indicated that an institution should develop a learning philosophy that would lead to the skills graduates should have. The Work Ready Plan was developed from a meeting with the local business and management advisory board to meet the needs of the business community; it emphasized the enhancement of interpersonal communication skills of graduating students (Private University administrator, personal communication, October 12, 2012).

Goleman (1995) stated that people can learn these interpersonal communication skills throughout their life through emotional intelligence. In Goleman's (1998) book, he critized a high-ranking MBA program's graduates and their lack of interpersonal communication skills. The MBA program's graduates were "too analytical and [lacked] interpersonal, communication, and team skills" (p. 254). The university employed emotional intelligence as a basis of building on these interpersonal communication skills, and after the program was implemented, the graduates showed significant improvement.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

According to a Private University administrator, interpersonal communication skills in the classroom should be emphasized as a result of the Work Ready Plan and

student presentations should be required in all classes (personal communication, October 20, 2012). The reports from NACE (Koncz & Allen, 2012a; 2012b) and from the Higher Learning Commission's (2012) criteria for accreditation also wrote that universities should stress the importance of interpersonal communication skills. This need was addressed by the local business and management advisory board, and a plan was developed and shared with faculty members at the university (Private University administrator, personal communication, October 12, 2012). However, the plan did not include strategies to guide the faculty. At a faculty meeting held on December 20, 2012, the academic director (now former academic director) discussed the development of interpersonal communication skills in the classroom. The former director explained that it was not fair to the student to be taught only hard skills; but it was fair for faculty members to include interpersonal communication skills in their courses so that students could thrive in the workplace (personal communication, December 20, 2012).

This director was not the only one concerned about strategies that would develop interpersonal communication skills in the classroom. In June 2010 the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) of the U.S. Department of Labor advocated that soft skills, specifically interpersonal communication skills, are critical competencies for today's workforce. ODEP (2010) gave some general strategies for teaching these skills through workplace simulations in the classroom setting. Included in the skill set were work ethic, motivation, behavior, dress, and responsibility.

According to a survey of distinguished U.S. business executives completed by National Association of Colleges and Employers (2012), interpersonal communication

skills were rated one of the most critical soft skills in businesses. In a 2008 survey of 276 employers, NACE (2010) research found that the primary characteristics that employers sought were the ability to communicate effectively, interpersonal skills, and teamwork. .

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

The need for specific strategies to enhance interpersonal communication skills is not just a concern at the local level. In a qualitative study of an organization in the Forbes 500 companies conducted by Hynes (2012), interpersonal communication skills were seen as necessary, not only for achieving employees' personal goals, but to collectively contribute to the company's revenue. Hynes (2012) felt that students must learn interpersonal communication skills in the classroom to prepare students for daily workplace interactions which, in turn, would lead to higher job satisfaction. Tanyel et al. (1999) expressed that with globalization, interpersonal communication skills would play a significant part in cross-cultural awareness.

Njumbwa (2008) explained because of limited classroom time, instructors leaned towards the technical skills, not soft skills. Christie (2012) cited the lack of specific strategies to assist instructors in enhancing the interpersonal communication skills of their students. Mastracci, Newman, and Guy (2010) noted that instructors must pay attention to people skills or soft skills, as well as technical skills, and specific strategies must be in place. Concurring with this suggestion, Christie (2012) advised specific strategies to incorporate interpersonal communication skills into the curriculum. Bass (2010), Halfhill and Nielson (2007), Mamidenna (2009), Powell and Lines (2009), and Tuleja and Greenlaugh (2008) developed possible strategies to incorporate interpersonal

communication skills into the classroom with the objective of enhancing the students' performance.

A survey of faculty members completed by Wardrope and Bayless (1994) found that oral communication skills and presentations skills are essential skills for employment: 58% of new employees were expected to give a presentation within the first 6 months of employment. Rolls (1998) cited a statement from *The Book of Lists* that Americans' number one fear is public speaking, even surpassing the fear of death. Both articles provided (a) a list of strategies to integrate in the classroom to overcome a fear of making presentations and (b) tactics to improve presentations for students.

Vik (2001) was concerned about students' collaborative behavior and resistance to work in teams as a barrier to interpersonal communication skills. Educators have to do more than assign teams; they have to work with teams through troubleshooting and conflicts to create an effective team. According to Bolton (1999), 81% of faculty members gave less support than necessary when they set up student teams. Vik (2001) observed that students usually do not know how to work in teams, and training is often required to work effectively in teams.

Finally, in his theory of emotional intelligence, Goleman (1998) advocated that while knowledge of hard skills will open up employment opportunities, it is the soft skills that put a person ahead of the competition and in a good position for promotions. In a study conducted in over 500 organizations, Goleman (1995) found that interpersonal communication skills, the ability to recognize emotions in others, as well as handling relationships, were critical in leadership and the organization's success. Goleman (1998)

upheld that emotional intelligence could be learned by focusing on manageable goals and by encouraging practice. To prepare students for workplace situations and leadership roles, interpersonal communication skills would give students an edge for employment opportunities supplementing the hard skills knowledge component.

The purpose of this study was to find effective strategies to implement interpersonal communication skills in the classroom as a complement to the technical or hard skills learned. The integration of strategies to improve interpersonal communication skills of students should complement or enhance the hard skills components of the course, not take away from the course. Therefore, in this study, I explored participants' perceptions of the current and future strategies to integrate interpersonal communication skills into the classroom.

Definitions

Active listening: Active listening indicates understanding the sender's message by encouraging and empathizing with the speaker, refrain from making interruptions, clarify what is said by asking questions or giving feedback, and making eye contact (Rane, 2011).

Alumni members: Alumni members are students who graduated from the university and value the learning activities in the classroom more than the current students (Stowe, von Freymann, & Schwartz, 2012).

Blended learning: Blended learning is a combination of face to face between students and faculty members in the classroom and online activities in an educational setting (Sorden & Munene, 2013).

Communication apprehension (CA): Communication apprehension is anxiety provoked when communicating with another person or anticipating communicating with another person (McCroskey, 1977).

Cross-functional teams: A team consisting of people from different specialties, such as marketing, finance, and information systems, that build on each person's strengths to provide a synergistic effort (Buttermore, 2011).

Emotional intelligence: The ability to be self-aware, self-motivated, emphatic to others, have effective interpersonal skills, possess leadership skills, and effectively manage emotions (Goleman, 1995).

Forming, norming, storming, and performing: These are the stages that a team progresses through starting with team formation, political team correctness, conflict management and resolution, and performing the task (Schermerhorn, Hunt, Osborn, & Uhl-Bien, 2010).

Hard skills: Hard skills are traditional, technical knowledge assessed by quizzes, exams, and assignments (Zhang & Blakely, 2012)

Interpersonal communication skills: Interpersonal communication skills are defined into the following four categories: first, communication that includes verbal, nonverbal and listening skills; second, conflict resolution and negotiation skills; third, collaboration and teamwork skills; and fourth, cross-cultural skills (Christie, 2012).

Knowledge, skills, abilities (KSA): KSA are the general skills that companies want in a business graduate (Prestwich & Ho-Kim, 2007).

Non-traditional student: Non-traditional students as having the following characteristics: delayed enrollment, part-time students, works full time position, financially independent, single parent, has a GED instead of high school diploma, and has other dependents (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011).

Social loafing: Social loafing is when a group's effort in completing a project is less than the sum of individuals' efforts in the group (Schermerhorn et. al, 2010).

Soft skills: Soft skills are skills that enable employees to interact with other employees in a positive way and can be attitudes and behaviors that allow effective communication (Mamidenna, 2009).

Significance

Investigating strategies to enhance interpersonal communication skills helps establish a professional development series for campus staff, faculty members, and students to enhance students' employment prospects. The Private University students are the primary benefactors of this study. Students attend the university to achieve knowledge for employment opportunities. Developing effective interpersonal communication skills strategies in the classroom will benefit the students hired in the business field and promote the university preparedness training. DeKay (2012), Lovett and Jones (2008), and Robles (2012) have found that employers find interpersonal communication skills critical and discovering strategies to integrate interpersonal communication skills into the classroom valued by businesses.

Faculty members are experts in technical or hard skills components of the subjects they teach. To be credentialed in certain universities and colleges, faculty members have

to hold a masters or doctorate in the field they are teaching. One finding of Wardrope and Bayless (1994) was that few business faculty members held doctorates in interpersonal communication, and some faculty members have never had a course in interpersonal communication. These findings indicate a need for more guidance and strategies to enable business faculty to develop the interpersonal communication skills of the students. Every business faculty member of Private University is currently or was a member of the business community and should realize the importance of interpersonal communication skills in business. A professional development series for the campus staff, faculty members, and students will provide some guidance in the implementation of interpersonal communication skills on campus.

Guiding Questions

The literature indicated that interpersonal communication skills strategies should be integrated into the classroom so the students can transfer knowledge learned in the classroom to the workplace. The students must interpersonally communicate the hard skill knowledge they possess to other people within the organization. Many researchers described the students' effective interpersonal communication skills as essential to meeting the needs of organizations (Anderson & Anderson, 2010; DeKay, 2012; English et al., 2010; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011; Lovett & Jones, 2008; Robles, 2012; Wagner, 2008; Waner, 1995). However, several authors noted that interpersonal communication skills are not well defined and the knowledge of how to integrate these skills into the classroom was limited (DeKay, 2012; Maes et al., 1997; Robles, 2012; Tanyel et al., 1999; Wardrope & Bayless, 1994).

The conceptual framework for this study defined interpersonal communication skills as a measurable, tangible assessment. The literature review offers scholarly articles on the perceptions of employers, faculty members, and alumni members on the importance of implementing interpersonal communication skills into the classroom. Also, the literature review offers some strategies for incorporate these skills into the curriculum. This study examined how Private University's key administrators, faculty members, and a sampling of alumni members perceived the current interpersonal communication skills strategies and how they might establish strategies to implement these skills in the classroom. The following research questions were addressed:

RQ1: How do the current business faculty members incorporate interpersonal communication skills strategies in the classroom as perceived by key administrative staff?

RQ2: How are the current interpersonal communication skills strategies integrated in the classroom perceived by faculty members?

RQ3: What other interpersonal communication skills strategies do the faculty members suggest?

RQ4: How are current interpersonal communication skills strategies integrated in the classroom perceived by alumni members?

RQ5: What other interpersonal communication skills strategies do the alumni members suggest?

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework Literature Review

The Work Ready Plan recommended faculty members integrates written, verbal, presentation, and interpersonal communications skills into the classroom (Private University administrator, personal communication, October 12, 2012). The Private University already requires written communication courses, and the faculty members agreed to include an oral presentation in each course. Using Christie's (2012) definition, verbal communication skills are a component of interpersonal communication skills and will be included in the strategies for interpersonal communication skills.

Various researchers have identified interpersonal communication skills as the most important soft skill for the business environment (Kotter, 1996; Mitchell, Skinner, & White, 2010; NACE 2010, 2012). As pointed out by Tanyel et al. (1999) word usage is varying, and what one may describe as interpersonal communication skills, another describes as success skills. From the 1980s, when researchers realized the importance of interpersonal communication skills to the workplace, various authors tried to define interpersonal communication skills. As seen in Table 1, Glaser (1983), Covey (1989), Wardrope (2002), Goleman (1995, 1998), Waner (1995), Maes et al. (1997), Tanyel et al. (1999), Shrivastava (2012), and Christie (2012) defined interpersonal communication skills or another similar term as intangible immeasurable characteristics, as others describe interpersonal communication skills as tangible, measurable characteristics.

As indicated in Table 1, the earlier authors defined interpersonal communication in broad ambiguous categories or competencies (Glaser, 1983; Wardrope, 2002). For

example, Glaser (1983) defined interpersonal communication skills as describing feelings, initiating and maintaining conversations, giving and receiving compliments, requesting behavior change, responding to criticism, and paraphrasing. In Glaser's (1983) view, interpersonal communication skills were important to integrate into teaching, furthering the benefit of the student in actual workplace situations. In a further study, Wardrope (2002) surveyed faculty members at 252 private and public schools in determining the types of oral communication skills were in the business classroom. Wardrope (2002) found concurrence on Glaser's (1983) article, although different terms were used, plus a nonverbal component, answering questions, team skills, manage conflict, and interacting with different cultures.

In 1995, Goleman introduced the following type of intelligence: emotional intelligence. In Goleman's two books, *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) and *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998), he studied many organizations' executives and what they wanted from a new employee. Among the five categories that define emotional intelligence, social skill corresponds to the previously defined interpersonal communication skills. Social skill includes communication, conflict management, influence, leadership, change catalyst, collaboration, and team capabilities, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Key Definitions of Interpersonal Communication Skills

	Categories			
Author(s)	Communication	Collaboration	Conflict Resolution	Cultural Awareness
Glaser (1983)	Describing feelings, maintaining conversations, paraphrasing	Requesting behavior change, giving and receiving compliments		
Covey (1989)	Verbal and written communication, empathic listening, asking good questions	Understanding and perception of other's feelings		
Wardrope (2002)	Conversing, presentations skills, pronunciation, answering questions, nonverbal behavior	Impression, team skills, giving introductions, motivating others, conducting interviews	Managing conflicting situations	Interact with other cultures, understand other cultures
Goleman (1995, 1998)	Tone of voice, gesturing, facial expressions, nonverbal communication	Non defensive speaking, building bonds, collaboration and teamwork, developing others, understanding others	Change catalyst, Conflict management .	Political awareness in other cultures
Waner (1995)	Listening, eye contact, voice, body language, asking questions			
Maes et al. (1997)	Effective communication, presentations	Meeting skills, teamwork	Handling complaints by customers, conflict management	
Tanyel et al. (1999)	Effective communication	Getting along well with others, team oriented		
Shrivastava (2012)	Written and verbal skills, active listening	Building relationships, rapport and trust building	Solving problems within the workplace	Understanding other cultures
Christie (2012)	Written, verbal, nonverbal and listening skills	Critique peers, teamwork, collaborative skills	Investigate and apply negotiation techniques, conflict management skills	Appreciation and understanding of the culture

According to Goleman (1998), good grades in technical skills enabled a person to qualify for the position, but emotional intelligence was needed to obtain a position and be promoted. Covey (1989) previously concurred with Goleman and stated that understanding other people through interpersonal communication is essential in accomplishing activities. As noted by Covey (1989), effective listening and asking questions are important in the interpersonal communication process.

In the same year as Goleman uncovered emotional intelligence, Waner (1995) completed a study on 220 business professionals and 68 faculty members to compare their importance on interpersonal communication skills. Surprisingly, the survey found a disconnection on what the business professionals wanted in new graduates and what the faculty members had provided to their students. Waner (1995) found that listening effectively, importance in effective usage of telephones, maintaining eye contact, asking appropriate questions, and using tone of voice effectively were ranked the highest by the business professionals as shown in Table 1.

Maes et al. (1997) and Tanyel et al. (1999) are often cited in the recent literature. Maes et al. (1997) completed two quantitative studies that measured the communication competency and the frequent use of these skills in managers in the Greater Gulf Coast area. They found listening skills, conversational skills, giving feedback, communicating with the public, meeting skills, presentation skills, conflict and negotiation skills, and others were ranked highest among managers. The importance of the skills found in this study concurred with the previous studies as shown in Table 1. Similar to Waner (1995), Tanyel et al. (1999) completed a study comparing faculty members to prospective

employers and found that interpersonal skills ranked third in importance in both groups behind responsibility and ethical values.

As seen in Table 1, in a more recent study, Shrivastava (2012) integrates several concepts defining interpersonal communication skills from Covey (1989), Maes et al. (1997), and Tanyel et al. (1999) and gives mention to emotional intelligence in defining interpersonal communication skills. Shrivastava (2012) definition included the following: active listening, building relationship and trust, rapport building, emotional intelligence, and understanding other cultures. Similarly, Christie (2012) defined interpersonal communication skills into the following four categories: first, communication that includes verbal, nonverbal and listening skills; second, conflict resolution and negotiation skills; third, collaboration and teamwork skills; and fourth, cross-cultural skills. Table 1 illustrates that Christie (2012) merged the work of Dreyfus and Dreyfus, Bloom, and Glaser (1983) to create a concrete, measurable assessment of interpersonal communication skills bridging the gap for faculty members between theory and practice.

Based on the various researchers' definitions shown in Table 1, this study adopts Christie's (2012) framework of defining interpersonal communication skills. The reasons for choosing this definition are tangible, measurable, and encompass the categories discussed by other authors in Table 1. The Work Ready Plan (Private University administrator, personal communication, October 12, 2012) suggested that written, verbal, presentation, and interpersonal communication skills should be integrated into the classroom. As Christie's (2012) definition included verbal communication as a component of interpersonal communication skills, this will meet two criteria outlined in

the plan (Private University administrator, personal communication, October 12, 2012). The four points for implementation of interpersonal communication skills will be sought in the following categories:

1. Communication skills. This category includes active listening skills, asking and answering questions, correct pronunciation of terms, clarity, and content of the message, limitation of verbal fillers, and organization of the message, gestures, tone of voice, eye contact, professional appearance and behavior, techniques to engage the receiver, paraphrasing or repeating back to the sender what has been stated and limiting distractions that limit the reception of the message (Christie, 2012; Covey, 1989; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Maes et al., 1997; Shrivastava, 2012; Tanyel et al., 1999; Waner, 1995; Wardrope, 2002).
2. Conflict resolution skills/negotiation strategies. The ability to give and receive feedback, get along well with others, solve problems in the workplace, effectively manage of conflict, and be an effective change catalyst (Christie, 2012; Covey, 1989; Maes et al., 1997; Shrivastava, 2012; Tanyel et al., 1999; Wardrope, 2002).
3. Collaboration/teamwork. Includes meeting skills, get along and work well with others, build relationships and trust, rapport building, team orientation, non-defensive speech, develop job skills in other people, understand other people, ability to give effective instructions (Christie, 2012; Covey, 1989; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Maes et al., 1997; Shrivastava, 2012; Tanyel et al., 1999; Waner, 1995; Wardrope, 2002).

4. Cross cultural awareness. Get along well with people of different cultures, political awareness in other cultures, interaction with other cultures, understand cultural norms (Christie, 2012; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Shrivastava, 2012; Wardrope, 2002).

Current Literature Review

The purpose of this section is to review studies conducted on perceptions of employers, alumni business students, and business faculty on integrating interpersonal communication skills into the classroom. The concerns addressed by the career services director in the Work Ready Plan are substantiated in the larger educational setting in the perceptions of employers as found in the scholarly literature. Perceptions of faculty members and alumni members are examined in this section to provide a more profound understanding of integration of interpersonal skills in the classroom. Also reviewed are studies focusing on strategies to implement interpersonal communication skills according to the conceptual framework adopted for this study.

The databases used were Educational Research Complete, ERIC, Sage, and Business Research Complete. The key words were *interpersonal, interpersonal communication, interpersonal skills, communication skills, soft skills, oral communication skills, business professionals, faculty members, students, strategies, collaboration, teamwork,* and *perceptions.*

Interpersonal communication skills strategies in the classroom as perceived by business deans and academic directors of universities. Interpersonal communication skills need more emphasis in business schools to make graduates

successful in their careers (Covey, 1989; Goleman, 1995; Maes et al., 1997; Tanyel et al.,1999; Wardrope & Bayless, 1994). Using these studies as guidelines, quantitative and qualitative studies were used to show that employers view interpersonal communication skills as highly critical for employees and that they would like business schools to place more emphasis on these skills in the classroom (Anant, 2010; Deepa & Seth, 2013; DeKay, 2012; Robles, 2012; Smith & McKeen, 2010; Sridevi, 2012; Stivers & Onifade, 2013).

To view the perceptions of business deans and directors, Abraham and Karns (2009) found the 23 competencies that made a successful employee from a sample of organizations. These authors then sent a survey to 200 business schools located in Canada and the United States. Although the deans agreed with the businesses of the first ranked importance of interpersonal communication skills, few schools emphasized these skills in the curriculum. Smith and McKeen (2010) and Stivers and Onifade (2013) specified communications information systems and accounting students lacked training needed in interpersonal communication skills and advocated more emphasis on these skills in the curricula.

In a mixed-methods study using the questionnaire adapted by Tanyel et al. (1999), Shuayto (2012) discovered that employers rated ethical values as highly important attributes, but deans and directors in did not rate ethical values as highly important. These findings came from two areas as Tanyel et al. (1999) obtained results from southeastern region of the United States whereas Shuayto (2012) obtained results from Michigan. In a study by Keith, Perreault, and Chin (2009) on ethical misconduct perceived by students

and employers in Missouri, the researchers found students did not realize the consequences of ethical misconduct. Disciplinary action, or feedback, was rated higher by employers than it was by students. Shuayto (2012) and Keith et al. (2009) studies showed a significant difference in the perception of employers and both deans and students on providing feedback in ethical situations.

Although most business schools' curricula include business writing and presentations, DeKay (2012) claimed that these courses just skim the surface. Business schools should consider etiquette (Bass, 2010; Lovett & Jones, 2008), physical appearance and first impressions (Anant, 2010), customer service (Robles, 2012), having difficult conversations and facilitating meetings (DeKay, 2012), conflict management (Lang, 2009), and intercultural and cross-cultural training (Sharp & Brumberger, 2013; Taylor & Brodowsky, 2012). Strategies were given incorporating these skills into the curriculum. Lin, Grace, Krishnan, and Gilsdorf (2010) suggested campus presentations in business, firm trips and internships, and business professionals' advisory board involvement as strategies that deans and directors could follow.

Business schools are aware that more emphasis should be placed on interpersonal communication skills, Abraham and Karns (2009) affirmed, but there was a trade off with stricter accreditation standards and education requirements. Jackling and De Lange (2009) posited that if standards were made flexible, perhaps more emphasis should be placed on interpersonal communication skills and less on technical skills as technical skills are constantly changing. Basic technical skills are necessary for employment but, as observed by Robles (2012), the candidates who offer effective interpersonal

communication skills have the competitive advantage. Even though Fisher (2011) advocated interpersonal communication skills should become part of the schools' curricula, other studies look to the faculty member to integrate these skills into the classroom (DeKay, 2012; Hartman & McCambridge, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2010; Robles, 2012; Sridevi, 2012; Stivers & Onifade, 2013).

Interpersonal communication skills strategies as perceived by business faculty. Curriculum changes to integrate interpersonal communication skills may be slower than business employers think is necessary, and some employers are looking to business faculty members to incorporate the skills into the classroom. Faculty members have a responsibility to educate students in the hard skills of the subject they are teaching. With blended learning, face to face time has been reduced and supplemented with online activities (Sorden & Munene, 2013). Limited in face-to-face time in class, Macheski, Lowney, Buhrmann, and Bush (2008) observed faculty members focus on the hard skills in furthering students' competencies in lieu of interpersonal communication skills. A study of 550 faculty members in the United States, Russ (2009) found that faculty members emphasized written communication and public speaking but gave little emphasis to nonverbal behaviors, listening skills, giving and receiving feedback, and resolving conflict.

Al-Alawneh (2011) conducted a quantitative study in Jordan to evaluate if educators perceived that the business students were exposed to enough interpersonal skills. Al-Alawneh (2011) found that educators believed that students lacked effective interpersonal communication skills. Alshare, Lane, and Miller's (2011) quantitative study

on the perceptions of both faculty members and students indicated faculty members are aware employers hold interpersonal communication skills as important, but students do not think the skills are important. Agreeing with this finding, Hartman and McCambridge (2011) reported that faculty members perceived millennial students as technologically strong but found a gap in the students' interpersonal communication skills. Suggestions were made to include real life experiences in the classroom (Al-Alaweneh, 2011), having continual interaction with business people (Alshare et al., 2011), and appropriate use of electronics devices (Hartman & Cambridge, 2011).

Built around the guidelines of McCroskey (1977), Wardrope and Bayless (1994), Goleman, (1995), and Maes et al. (1997), studies have been completed showing the perceived apprehension of students through the eyes of faculty members (Macheski et al., 2008; Malachowski & Martin, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2010; Sigmar, Hynes, & Hill, 2012). According to McCroskey (1977), communication apprehension is the anxiety a person feels when communicating with another person or group of people. Communication apprehension can be viewed in students who do not raise their hand, answer or ask questions, sit in the back of the room, and infrequently engage in eye contact, or other nonverbal behaviors as described by Malachowski and Martin (2011). Several studies advise that faculty members should create a supportive environment in the classroom, be caring and responsive to all students, move around the classroom to be in proximity to all students, and having positive nonverbal behaviors will aid students in the reduction of anxiety (Macheski et al., 2008; Malachowski & Martin, 2011). In fact, McCroskey, Richmond, and Bennett (2006) studied faculty perceptions of their communication

behavior during the semester and found a positive correlation between effective communication behavior and end of class student motivation.

Based on the study of the perception of interpersonal communication skills by educators in Alabama, Mitchell et al. (2010) recommended professional development for educators. Some strategies include engaging with students inside and outside of class to make the classroom environment welcoming (Powell & Lines, 2010), active listening to the students (Lear, 2011; Rane, 2011; Sigmar et al., 2012), dialogue between students (Game & Metcalf, 2009), and a self-assessment of the faculty members classroom presentation as an example to the class (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). In order to develop students interpersonal communication skills strategies in class, other strategies were suggested including role playing, roundtable discussion, networking and mock interviewing (Jamison, 2010), portfolio development to provide student review and reflection (Mamideena, 2009), and informational interviews with professionals to assist students in networking (DeCarie, 2010).

Interpersonal communication also includes public speaking. In Luparelli's (2010) case study on business presentations, he revealed that the students lack the capability to make effective presentations. Agreeing with this finding, Stowe, Parent, Schwartz, and Sendall (2012) found the faculty members and employers perceive that business students do not have adequate presentation skills for the business world. Chan (2011) found that students can be intelligent, but "there is no point making a Noble Prize discovery if one cannot communicate its findings, implications and significance!" (p. 72). Luparelli (2010) suggested presentations in a variety of classes to give students practice at public

presentations. Rubrics and faculty member feedback are helpful from the perception of students, observed Stowe et al. (2012). Chan (2011) suggested teaching power point and poster presentations in class to prepare students for the organization, engagement of the audience, and the articulation of simple logical statements.

Another perception of interpersonal skills of business faculty was on collaboration and teamwork. Several studies were completed on perceptions of employers on employees getting along well with others and teamwork capability (Anant, 2010; Deepa & Seth, 2013; DeKay, 2012; Robles, 2012; Smith & McKeen, 2010; Stivers & Onifade, 2013). Lingard (2010) and Fredrick (2008) completed studies on teamwork and collaboration perceptions of faculty members of students. Teamwork is expected of the students, but in many cases it is not explained how to become a team player, stated Lingard (2010). Giving several recommendations on explaining teamwork and assessing how it is received by the students, Lingard (2010) warned that learning teamwork skills is a continual process and not a one-time process.

Fredrick (2008) advised students to assess the other members of the team and receive team feedback. Zhang and Blakely (2012) reported that students preferred faculty member feedback over team feedback. Zhang and Blakely (2012) admitted that the study had weak generalizability because the sample size was small, local, and in a specific field of information technology.

Although interpersonal communication skills include conflict management, there is little recent literature on faculty perceptions on this subject. According to Lang (2009), managers spend 25% of the time dealing with conflict and conflict management should

receive more emphasis in business schools. Baard (2008) used Goleman's (1995; 1998) emotional intelligence as a means to mitigate conflict and offers business schools strategies to address conflict management. Also addressing conflict management, Awang and Roach-Duncan (2010) offered strategies such as role playing for reducing conflicts that arise due to cultural differences.

This leads to a much debated topic on cross-cultural awareness and the perceptions of employers and faculty members on this interpersonal communication skill. Several authors ascertained that employers ranked cross-cultural skills among the lowest ranking of interpersonal communication skills (Tanyel et al., 1999; Wardrope, 2002; Shuayto, 2012). Although in the perceptions of faculty members, intercultural and cross cultural understanding are an important part of interpersonal communication skills (Fall, Kelly, MacDonald, Primm, & Holmes, 2013; Fatima Oliveira, 2013; Fisher, 2011; Freeman, Knight, & Butt, 2011; Kimball, 2011; Okoro, 2012; Taylor & Brodowsky, 2012). Studies by Fall et al. (2013), Fatima Oliveira (2013), and Fisher (2011) found that intercultural familiarity negates unhealthy conflict, provides diversity among students, and produces awareness of other cultural values in a diversified classroom. Strategies included bringing in cross-cultural marketing projects (Freeman et al., 2011; Taylor & Brodowsky, 2012), etiquette training (Okoro, 2012), literature (Kimball, 2011), and film (Cardon, 2010) into the classroom. .

Interpersonal communication skills strategies perceived by alumni members. Faculty members seem willing to integrate interpersonal communication skills into the classroom; but, studies show hesitation by students in realizing why these skills are

important to employment (Alshare et al., 2011; Ameen, Bruns, & Jackson, 2010; Hartman & McCambridge, 2011; Jackling & DeLange, 2009; Lin, Grace, Krishnam, & Gilsdorf, 2010; Robles, 2012; Sridevi, 2012; Stivers & Onifade, 2013; Velasco, 2012). Students perceived that technical skills (Alshare et al., 2011; Ameen et al., 2012; Sridevi, 2012; Stivers & Onifade, 2013) and a high grade point average (Velasco, 2012) are important in the opportunities to seek employment. When alumni members and current students perceptions of interpersonal communication skills are compared, alumni members ranked the importance of interpersonal communication skills significantly higher than current students (Bosshart, Wentz, & Heller, 2009; Carley, Stuart, & Dailey, 2011; Jackling & DeLange, 2009; Stowe et al., 2012). In a study that sought out the perceptions of alumni members, Bosshart et al. (2009) indicated that alumni members could identify strengths and room for improvement in their educational experience.

Following the ideology of Goleman's (1995; 1998) emotional intelligence and McCroskey's (1977) communication apprehension, Blume, Baldwin, and Ryan (2011), Fall et al. (2013), Manring (2012), and Snyder (2010) found in students' perceptions that training in emotional intelligence reduced communication apprehension or concerns. The strategies included faculty member awareness of communication apprehension in students (Blume et al., 2013), faculty members integrating emotional intelligence in the classroom to aid students confronted with cultural diversity (Fall et al., 2013), service learning projects to develop emotional intelligence (Manring, 2012), pre-group emotional intelligence training (Synder, 2010), and linking emotional intelligence training to promote effective team synergy (Amy Yeo Chu & Carter, 2012).

Other strategies were identified through the perceptions of interpersonal communication skills by alumni members. It was suggested by students in English et al.'s (2010) study that listening skills are crucial in the workforce and should be emphasized in the classroom. One technique is to have the students paraphrase what they have heard to avoid miscommunications, explained Weger, Castle, and Emmett (2010). From a quantitative study with 180 students, Weger et al. (2010) found that paraphrasing was an effective listening skill.

In Glaser and Bingham's (2009) study, students in the public speaking classes had better interpersonal communication skills than students in other classes. Students revealed the presentations in class led to a trust between students that provided interpersonal connectedness. Glaser and Bingham (2009) suggested public speaking as a way of promoting interpersonal communication skills.

Another strategy that was discovered by Xu and Yang (2010) was that alumni members would like faculty members to provide guidance in team based activities in the development of positive collaboration. Faculty member should monitor the team's activity to promote effective conflict management and synergistic teamwork (Xu & Yang, 2010). In a strategy defined by Stowe et al.'s (2012) study, alumni members find significant value in internships as far as team building, collaboration, and real life experience for employment opportunities.

Two strategies to promote intercultural and cross-cultural competence were discovered in the findings of Blume et al. (2013) and Carley et al. (2011). Blume et al. (2013) found that students who were high in communication apprehension failed to

interact with other cultures. Having students interact with people from different cultures in a safe environment should assist in intercultural relations. In a study by Carley et al. (2011), short term study abroad did not promote employment opportunities but did increase the desire to travel, according to alumni members. In a longitudinal study over 9 years, alumni members felt that on students' budgetary constraints, a classroom discussion on different cultural norms would be effective in the study of cross-cultural awareness.

The communication, collaboration, conflict management, and cross-cultural competencies all integrate with one another within the enhancement of interpersonal communication skills. Effective interpersonal communication skills are perceived as important in the working environment by deans/directors, faculty members, and alumni members. The current research reveals strategies to integrate these skills into the classroom for enhancing the employment opportunities of students.

Further examination of the literature revealed an even distribution of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method studies. There are studies such as Lang (2009), Al-Awaneh (2011), and Sharp and Brumberger (2013) that use a quantitative design because of a larger sample size. These studies provided a rank order of previously identified variables showing the variable importance in interpersonal communication skills to the participants. These quantitative studies may have missed key factors in the skill set because there is no finite definition of interpersonal communication skills.

The remainder of the literature review was either qualitative or mixed method studies asking participants about what factors were important in considering interpersonal

communication skills. Most of the mixed methods studies were exploratory studies that developed themes through qualitative methods and explored the themes' importance through quantitative methods. For example, Robles (2012) surveyed employers to find the skills that they felt were most important to employees. Robles (2012) then sent the skill set to students to discover how important they felt these qualities were to their employment opportunities. This and other studies showed a richness of information because the authors requested the employers' perceptions before the students and faculty members' quantitative ranking of the importance of these skills.

The same richness of information comes from the qualitative studies, as well. Some used interviews (Ainsworth, 2013; Hynes, 2012; Jackling & DeLange, 2009), open-ended questionnaires (Deepa & Seth, 2013; Freeman et al., 2011), e-mail interviews (DeKay, 2012), or a combination of methods (Alshare et al., 2011; Glaser & Bingham, 2009) to uncover perceptions. Several qualitative research methods were used including grounded theory (Fatima Oliveira, 2013), action research (Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Manring, 2012), and historical analysis (Sharp & Brumberger, 2013; Shuayto, 2012). The majority of qualitative studies used case study analysis. Using case study analysis, Ainsworth (2013) and Glaser and Bingham (2009) provided in depth information from a variety of participants and triangulated to show validity.

Private University wanted to enhance the interpersonal communication skills in the classroom because employers wanted business students with interpersonal communication skills. The literature review evaluated the perceptions of employers, faculty members, and alumni members of other researchers. I also examined strategies in

the literature review that various researchers implemented to enhance the interpersonal communication skills in the classroom. This literature review provided a strong rationale for studying the perceptions of a sample of administrators, faculty members, and alumni members at Private University.

Implications

Based on the study outcomes, one project may be a professional development series for campus staff, faculty members, and students on the importance of interpersonal communication skills. The professional development series would address the local business and management advisory board's request to enhance the interpersonal communication skills of the students. If the results of the data analysis find that the current strategies are not implemented in the classroom, it is possible that a professional development series on interpersonal communication skills would be helpful to the faculty members. If the results of the analysis find that current strategies are implemented in the classroom but are not adequately addressing the advisory board's concern, a possible professional development series on suggested and current strategies will be held for staff members, faculty members, and possibly students.

Summary

In this study, I defined in Section 1 the local problem of integrating more interpersonal communication skills into the classroom at the suggestion of Private University's business and management advisory board. The purpose of this study is to investigate perceptions of key administrative staff, faculty, and alumni members for implementing interpersonal communication skills into the classroom to foster students'

work-ready skills. The conceptual framework literature review comprises interpersonal communication skills that are both definable and measurable within the following four categories: communication, collaboration, conflict management, and cross-cultural awareness. A current literature review was conducted to seek out the perceptions of other universities deans, faculty and alumni members on the implementation of strategies. Five research questions will be examined in this study. The first research question asks key administrative staff members about current strategies and their effectiveness. Two research questions ask the faculty and alumni members their perceptions of the current strategies. Finally, two research questions inquired faculty and alumni members about other strategies that should be considered.

In Section 2, the methodology will be discussed including the research design and approach. Included in this section are criteria for participants, justification of sample size, procedures for gaining access to the participants, and the methods for establishing a participant–researcher relationship. After the discussion of the participants, I will discuss the methods of data collection and data analysis, including ethical responsibilities, evidence of quality, data compilation and coding, research question results, final analysis and outcomes, discrepant cases, limitations, and the conclusion of the study.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to find effective strategies to develop interpersonal communication skills in the classroom as a complement to the technical or hard skills learned. The business and management student advisory board at Private University suggested focusing on interpersonal communication skills in the classroom to enhance employment opportunities for the business students. This suggestion was substantiated in the larger educational setting as interpersonal communication skills are important in the business world. The problem was the gap in practice: What do key administrative staff members, faculty members, and alumni members perceive to be strategies to foster interpersonal communication skills. Investigating strategies to enrich interpersonal communication skills in the classroom will benefit Private University students in the preparation for entering or getting promoted in the workforce.

This study used a qualitative case study analysis because little is known about what strategies in the classroom will enhance interpersonal communication skills (DeKay, 2012). Using a qualitative study I was able to take an interest in how other participants perceived their experiences and how they constructed their world (Merriam, 2009). No single explanation could explain the phenomenon, in this case enhancing interpersonal communication skills, but multiple explanations or perceptions could construct the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). A qualitative approach was used to provide the participants' perceptions of current and suggested future strategies involving interpersonal communication skills strategies.

The views of all participants provided a deeper knowledge on the perceptions of integrating interpersonal communication skills into the classroom and provided strategies to enhance these skills. In the next few subsections, I will further justify the design methodology, discuss the setting and participant sample size, discuss data collection, my role as a researcher, and the data analysis.

Research Approach and Design

For this study, I chose a qualitative approach for three reason. First, quantitative research focuses on what is known and seeks a cause and effect relationship (Creswell, 2012). This is not the case with interpersonal communication skills. The conceptual framework of this study defines interpersonal communication, but the strategies to further develop these skills at this university are unknown. Merriam (2009) stated that qualitative research is appropriate when no single explanation can define a phenomenon.

Second, the research questions answers are unknown to me and careful probing will be performed to acquire depth into the participant's perceptions. Merriam (1988) explained that research questions that ask *how* lead to less control over outcomes and provide an intense description of complex variables. Another type of theme is the unexpected theme that surprises the researcher (Creswell, 2012). This may be a key faculty informant's perception or the alumni member's receptivity of the strategy .Narratives and quotes from the participants were used to tell a rich, informative story and thus any preconceived ideas were curtailed (Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle,2010). Based on Creswell (2012) suggestion, I used tables that are easy to read and understand to organize the qualitative findings.

Third, Merriam (2009) also listed four characteristics of qualitative research. First, understanding how the participants feel about the phenomenon and how it affects their lives. Second, the researcher is the primary source of data collection and analysis. Third, the study is inductive as the researcher builds concepts that explain the phenomenon. Through multiple instruments, pieces of information are gathered together to form themes. Finally, the study intends to provide a rich description of what is learned about the phenomenon.

Following Merriam's (2009) four characteristics, interpersonal communication skills affects the participants in the study in their relationship to others as well as to their employers. Obtaining the participants' perceptions may enable improvement of current strategies or development of new strategies. I collected and analyzed data that will assist me in understanding the nuances of how interpersonal communication skills can affect the workplace. Each participant's voice offered the perception of interpersonal communication skills within the classroom and promoted my understanding of the phenomenon.

Several qualitative approaches were described by Creswell (1998), Merriam (2009), and Yin (2011). In a phenomenological study, the researcher enters the field of the participants seeing how they live and experience a phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). The problem is studied through the lens of the participants who offer a deep description of their experiences, as described by Creswell (1998). The focus of this study was not about investigating the lived experiences of the participants, but their perceptions of interpersonal communication strategies.

Grounded theory is an approach in which the researcher builds theory grounded in data collected, as described by Merriam (2009). According to Creswell (2012), grounded theory generates a theory when one does not exist to guide the researcher in resolving the problem. The researcher constructs a theory based on the data collected (Creswell, 1998). Merriam (2009) noted that rich descriptions are important to grounded theory but not the primary focus. A grounded theory design was not considered for this study because gaining the perceptions of the participants regarding integrating interpersonal communication skills into the classroom was considered more important than developing a theory.

The ethnography approach was developed by anthropologists who lived with their participants and is both a process and the product (Merriam, 2009). Described by Merriam (2009),ethnography is spending time with the group and immersing oneself in the group. The results are a cultural description through interviews, observations, researcher's diaries, artifacts and analysis of documents (Merriam, 2009). Creswell (1998) noted that ethnographers use vivid descriptions and tell stories describing everyday people. This approach was not considered because the ethnographic approach does not lend itself to solving a problem, just describing a possible problem.

The approach selected for this study was a single case study. Merriam (1988) and Yin (2009) described several characteristics for a case study. First the research question asks *how* or *why* that is very characteristic of historical or case studies because the question is explanatory (Yin, 2009). Asking how interpersonal communication skills are perceived by the participants is an explanation of their views. With the focus being

interpersonal communication skills at a single for profit university campus, this was a single case study.

A single case study is first defined by the problem the study addresses, explained Yin (2009). Yin (2009) expressed a single case study is a typical case and the case serves a longitudinal purpose. Strategies to integrating interpersonal communication skills into the classroom are identified in this study. Developing interpersonal communication skills is a portion of the skills set that enhances employment opportunities. Yin (2009) offered that learning from single study cases is informative for the institution.

While this was a single case study because one unit of analysis is studied, it was also an embedded case study. According to Yin (2009), the unit of analysis is often divided into sub-units and different data collection techniques may be used. The sub-units of this study are the key administrative staff members, faculty members, and alumni members. This was to allow the perceptions of strategies to promote interpersonal communication skills from three sub-units to view the similarities and differences of these perceptions.

This leads into the second characteristic, the amount of control the researcher has over outcomes (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2009). As a result of the case study being explanatory in nature, the researcher has little control and cannot manipulate the variables or the participants (Yin, 2009). Merriam (1988) explained that the focus is on the process of data collection, not on the product that results. Merriam (1988) added that the data is descriptive in nature and can show the influence of different personalities or different events on the outcomes. In a case study, Ainsworth (2013) found the different

perceptions toward business communication courses among French students and business students that were quite diverse. By asking participants for their perceptions of interpersonal skills, I had little control over the answers and benefited from the viewpoints given.

Another characteristic that separates case studies from historical studies is case studies focus on more contemporary events (Yin, 2009). Historical events and case studies often use the same methods; but, Yin (2009) explained, case studies have the advantage of direct observation and altering the future interview questions by past replies. This gave me the freedom to alter my interview questions and take a different avenue using what has been previously mentioned in the past interview.

The final characteristic of a case study is a study is a bounded system. A bounded system study is bounded by the population and time frame committed to the study (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2011). This study was bounded by the current business faculty members and first year alumni members at a particular university. Timely results were important due to the circumstances that the Private University wanted to resolve the suggestion brought up by the business and management advisory board.

Case studies collect data through multiple methods referred to as triangulation (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2009). Collecting data from interviews, observations, documents, and open-ended questionnaires provide strength to case study research, expressed Merriam (1988) for it allows the researcher to cross-check data from different resources.

Glesne (2011) added that inconsistencies in data may reveal the complex nature of the phenomenon.

In addition, Merriam (1988) defined special features of case studies including particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive. Particularistic means the case study focuses on an everyday problem and questions how particular groups confront this problem. Case studies use thick description and provide as many variables as possible describing the phenomenon. The case study is heuristically enabling the reader to understand the phenomenon. Finally, a case study is inductive because generalizations or themes emerge from the data. Given the characteristics described above, the case study was the most appropriate option for this study.

Participants

Criteria and Sample

Three subgroups of participants were selected for the study: (a) Key administrative staff members; (b) business faculty including full-time, visiting, and adjunct professors; and, (c) business alumni members of Private University.

Key administrative staff members. Key administrative staff members consisting of the interim campus director, a full-time faculty member, and a new academic director at Private University, were purposely selected to take part in a focus group. As explained by Lodico et al. (2010) purposeful sampling is selecting key informants who can give rich information about the topic being investigated.

The former academic director, who brought the need to integrate interpersonal communication skills to the attention of the faculty members, was transferred to a sister

for-profit university campus in a far western state in January 2014. The new academic director assumed that position in early July 2014. In the 6 month gap between the former and the new academic director, the position responsibilities had been divided between two current members, the campus director and a full-time faculty member. The full-time faculty member was the interim director before the former academic director was hired in November 2011 and observed faculty members in the classroom in 2011. The full-time faculty member observed faculty members and handled concerns in the classroom in the first half of 2014. The campus director was responsible for assigning classes to the faculty members, reviewing the faculty members' student evaluations, and for all campus events and organizations. The new academic director took over those responsibilities in July 2014.

The campus director resigned October 24, 2014 to accept a position out of state. The university placed an interim campus director in late October until a new campus director is hired. The interim campus director is the campus director at a campus two and one half hours west. Prior to being appointed the campus director at the other campus, the interim campus director was the director of career services. The comments from the interim campus director were invaluable because she had direct feedback from businesses on interpersonal communication skills.

These key informants were purposely sampled because of their knowledge of campus events and the needs of local businesses. As suggested by Hancock and Algozzine (2011) the focus group allows participants to share, improve, and innovate strategies. Furthermore, the full time faculty member was a key informant on

interpersonal communication skills both because of the longevity at the campus and the assumption of interim academic director before the academic director was hired. Considering the 6 month gap of time between the previous academic director and the new academic director being hired, some details were not communicated to the new academic director. Having input from the full-time faculty member built a bridge between what happened in the past and what is occurring now because neither the academic director nor the interim campus director were present at this campus 6 months ago.

Faculty members. Private University had 12 faculty members in the business college at the June 21, 2014 graduation and they were included as potential participants. Professors from other colleges often cross over to teach business students. Network sampling by the key administrative staff members selected the appropriate non-business faculty members who teach in the business college as potential participants. Network sampling uses a few key participants to identify other possible participants within the criteria established (Merriam, 2009). Through network sampling, 23 faculty members were selected as potential participants.

Alumni members. Four alumni members from the College of Business were sampled to participate in an individual interview. The key administrative staff members' network sampled alumni members who have graduated from Private University's business college. The management and business college had 63 graduates in 2013 attaining a bachelor's degree, and the participants were selected among those alumni members. This timeframe allows the alumni members to recognize the interpersonal

communication skills that are required by employers and be key informants to Private University.

In order to be part of the study, alumni members must have taken the majority of their classes on site. Alumni online students were not considered because these students were neither on the local campus nor in classes with one of the local business faculty. The study involves only the local campus and the campus's faculty members. The previous campus director indicated about one-half of alumni were online students (personal communication, July 15, 2014). The number of onsite population would be narrowed to around 30 alumni members.

The key administrative staff members selected four alumni members, one from each of the majors in the College of Business they felt would provide effective feedback. The majors included human resource management, accounting and finance, technical management, and business administration.

Justification for Number of Participants

The focus group consisted of three key administrative staff members. The key administrative staff members serve as a focal point in being aware of faculty members' performance, students' evaluations of faculty, the quality of students' presentation skills, and the activities of campus groups. The interim campus director's background in career services provided feedback on what employers wanted from the students in interpersonal communication skills. The full-time faculty member was interim academic director for 6 months observing the faculty members in the classroom. Currently, the new academic director holds the responsibility of observing faculty members in the classroom.

Thus, the key administrative staff members could provide rich information on the integration of interpersonal communication skills in the classroom. The key administrative staff members could provide information of any strategies that are currently in place either in the classroom or campus wide, potential strategies or ideas to improve interpersonal communication skills, the possible boundaries imposed by the accrediting body, and familiarity of the needs of local businesses.

Since the one full-time faculty member was interviewed with the focus group, she was not included in the participants for the faculty member open-ended survey. The other full-time faculty member and the sampled part-time faculty members were included in the study to answer an open-ended questionnaire. The sampled part-time faculty members are either visiting professors, employees of the university, or adjunct professors who contract with the university. A possibility existed that the response rate would be lower for adjuncts than it is for visiting professors because of the relationship with Private University (Withers, Browner, & Aghaloo, 2013). According to Lodico et al. (2010), an open-ended survey response rate will typically be 30–50%. The anticipated number of respondents in the open-ended questionnaire should be 9 to 11 participants.

The perceptions of participating faculty who taught in the business college were considered. Since the business faculty members specialize in various business subjects, the aim was each faculty member would provide a lens into the perceptions of interpersonal communication skills integrated into the classroom. The variety of faculty members' viewpoints should bring rich information to the study. Several studies observed that faculty members have a great impact on the success of their students

(Macheski et al., 2008; Powell & Lines, 2010; Tinto, 1997;). Anderson and Anderson (2010) advocated that interpersonal communication skills examples were the responsibility of the faculty members to develop interpersonal communication skills of students.

The alumni member sample size was four participants. According to Crouch and McKenzie (2006), interviewing a smaller sample size can facilitate a closer association with participants providing the researcher with an in-depth, rich description. Furthermore, Crouch and McKenzie (2006) do not consider these participants a sample of a certain group, but respondents who can provide new insights on their shared experience. The number of business alumni members from Private University in 2013 is 63 graduates. Excluding online alumni, this number reduces even further to a possible participant pool of 30 alumni members. Interviewing alumni members from each of the four business majors could provide different lenses into the alumni members' perceptions.

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

On November 25, 2014, I sent an e-mail cover letter to explain the purpose of my study to the key administrative staff members (Appendix D). I attached the informed consent form to the e-mail. I received an "I consent to be part of the focus group" from each of the three participants by e-mail within 2 days. A meeting location was set on campus at a time convenient to all focus group members.

With the permission of the academic director, an e-mail invitation was sent to all selected faculty members over the Private University e-mail address (Appendix E). The scope of the study and the importance of the perceptions of faculty members as

participants was outlined in the e-mail. A faculty consent form was attached to the e-mail with the Qualtrics link. To retain faculty members' privacy, signatures were not being collected and the completion of the questionnaire indicated implied consent.

As explained above, the alumni members were selected by network sampling by the key administrative staff members. Sampled alumni members were e-mailed an explanation of the purpose of this study (Appendix F) along with an attached consent form. An "I consent to be a participant in this study" was received from four alumni members within a week.

Methods of Establishing a Researcher Participant Relationship

As a visiting professor at Private University, both the interim campus director and a new academic director are my supervisors. The former academic director brought the suggestions from the business and management advisory board to the faculty members. Each of the key administrative staff members was aware of the importance of this study to record the perceptions of participants.

A meeting room at the campus was an appropriate place to have the focus group. Hancock and Algozzine (2011) suggested careful site selection for obtaining high quality information from interviews. Being on the campus, the focus group required less time and was convenient to the focus group participants. At the beginning of the focus group, the purpose of the study and informed consent criteria were explained and the group's permission to tape the interview was obtained (Appendix G).

Interviews with business alumni members were proximate to the member's work or living area so that the time dedicated to the interview would be minimal. The

interviews were at a coffee house. The alumni member set the time and the date to be more convenient to the alumnus's schedule. Before each interview began, the purpose of the study and informed consent was explained, and the participant's permission to tape the interview was obtained (Appendix K). Each participant consented to tape record the interview.

Each of the network sampled faculty member implied consent by choosing to participate in the study. In order to retain anonymity and privacy, signatures are not being collected, and completion of the survey will indicate the faculty member's consent. I used an online survey tool suggested by Private University. Qualtrics assured the confidentiality of the participants. .

Ethics

The National Institutes of Health Protecting Human Research Participants web-based training course was completed by me on October 1, 2014, and the certification number is 1580824. A hard copy of the course was printed out for providing guidelines to maintain ethical behavior. I received approval from the Private University's IRB on October 13, 2014, and from Walden University's IRB on November 20, 2014. The Walden University's IRB assigned approval number 11-20-14-0242224.

According to Yin (2011), the IRB's review covered four procedures I addressed. (a) Obtaining voluntary consent form from each participant, (b) Assessing the risk of harm and assuring the research has benefits to the participants, (c) Selecting participants fairly to assure that different groups and voices are included in the study, (d) Maintaining confidentiality of each participant.

Each interview participant viewed the informed consent form found in and replied to my e-mail with the words *I consent*. As described by Burkemper (2004), informed consent is a requirement that the participant understands the risks and benefits associated with the study and has the ability to withdraw for any reason. Verdu (2012) explained informed consent can be defined by everyday events. If an individual took the bus, the individual is aware of the correct bus to get on, the timeframe, and the fare by obtaining the necessary information before embarking (Verdu, 2012).

Before the interview started, each participant was asked if I could audio record the interview, and I received approval from every one of the participants. Once the interview was complete, the recording was transferred to the primary and backup flash drives. The flash drives and recorder were stored in a SentrySafe lockbox between uses.

The online open-ended questionnaire was anonymously completed by business faculty. An anonymous questionnaire protected the participants from harm. Before completing the questionnaire, the faculty members agreed to a consent form explaining the study and the faculty member's rights (Appendix E). Implied consent occurred when the faculty member clicked on the survey's link after reading the informed consent. To help maintain confidentiality an online survey tool, Qualtrics was used. Qualtrics sent out two reminders to all agreeing faculty members to complete the questionnaire within the 2-week timeframe. I was the only one to see individually completed questionnaires, and I did not know who filled out each questionnaire. This maintained the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) and Crouch and McKenzie (2006) explained any questionnaire or interview will act as an intrusion to the participant. Participants' time to complete a questionnaire or interview and sensitive questions may cause ethical concerns (Cohen et al., 2007; Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Several factors I addressed are the participants' informed consent, the right to withdraw at any time, freedom from harm, beneficence, sensitivity of the questions, the avoidance of bias in the questions, and the possible reactions of the participants (Cohen et al., 2007). I logged my thoughts and feelings in the reflective journal to continually review and reflect to maintain my sensitivity to the participants and the informed consent criteria. Gallagher (2013) advocated reviewers are instrumental in safeguarding that "research has been conducted ethically and that findings are sound" (p. 736).

The individual interviews took place off campus in a small coffee house. This is to protect the participants from any unforeseen harm in voicing the perceptions of interpersonal communication skills integrated within the classroom. Creswell (2012) warned the researcher may abuse power or coerce the participants. This was avoided because current business students were not be sampled to participate since the issue of coercion or manipulating the answers would be issues of concern. Juritzen, Grimen, and Heggen (2011) asserted the asymmetry of power where the participants feel subservient to the researcher should be prevented. These researchers stated that ethics committees are an external organ in preventing asymmetry of power from occurring.

To further ensure the confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were used for each interview participant, personal communication used in the study, and the

university's name. Kelly (2009) asserted that anonymity and the use of pseudonyms are to protect the participants and hold the participants from any harm. I used the pseudonyms KAS (key administrative staff) followed by 1--3 and AM (alumni members) followed by 1--4 for each participant. Every questionnaire was assigned a label beginning with Professor A and continued alphabetically for each questionnaire received. As required by Private University, pseudonyms should not be coded by an identifiable name, and instead, number codes or a combination of numbers and alphabets should be used.

All data collected were kept on two flash drives and stored in a SentrySafe lockbox that is accessed only by me. Care must be taken in the digital age of data for the data can be easily copied and viewed by unauthorized people, affirmed Myers, Frieden, Bherwani, and Henning (2008). These researchers suggested password protecting flash drives and physically securing the flash drives in a locked cabinet (Myers et al., 2008). The SentrySafe lockbox was used exclusively for this study. Throughout the analysis of this study and when the analysis is complete, the flash drives, audio recorder, consent forms, reflective journal, and documents are stored in a SentrySafe lockbox for at least 5 years. I am the only one to have access to the key, and the Sentry Lockbox and key are stored in a separate room in my home. After 5 years, the flash drives and the audio recorder will be erased and the documents will be shredded.

Data Collection

Methods of Data Collection

The study adopted multiple methods of data collection consisting of a focus group, open-ended questionnaire, and individual interview. According to Merriam

(1988), multiple methods allow triangulation that give strength to a qualitative study. These tools and the reason for selection are described below.

Focus group. A focus group was conducted with key administrative staff members and covered the following main themes: (a) Interpersonal communication strategies currently in place, (b) Whether these current strategies are suitable for every course taught in the business college, (c) Additional suggestions on interpersonal communication strategies.

I developed a semistructured focus group interview protocol following the guidance of Fortado (1990) and Merriam (2009) (see Appendix I). As noted by Merriam (2009) fewer, broad questions allow the researcher to listen and probe to potentially generate rich descriptions from the participants. In addition, Merriam (2009) specified that predetermined questions allow the beginning researcher guidance to the questions asked. Crouch and McKenzie (2006) expressed that interview questions that are broad and flexible will allow the interview to take on emerging characteristics and may even lead to tangents in the study.

Before the data collection began, the semistructured interview questions and the open-ended survey questions were piloted. Yin (2011) suggested a pilot study to test out and refine the questions. The pilot study participants consisted of four professionals; two professionals in higher education faculty positions and two professionals in business. Typically, the pilot study participants are similar to the actual study's participants, as indicated by Glesne (2011). The pilot study members were asked if the questions on the three tools used to collect data were similar to compare any likeness or differences. The

questions were e-mailed to each member of the pilot study and the responses were received in the same week. Minor wording adaptations were made in order to clarify some of the interview questions. One business professional was uncertain about the term *assessed* on the faculty members' open-ended survey, but the faculty participants were clear on the meaning of the term.

The reason for choosing the focus group with the key administrative staff members is that each participant is part of the administrative team at Private University seeking ideas to enrich the students' education. Addressed by Merriam (2009), focus groups should be comprised of participants who have insight about the subject. Each participant can offer the following: the full-time faculty member was aware of the current strategies to enhance interpersonal communication skills, and a new academic director and the interim campus director became aware of current strategies.

Being stakeholders in the students' education process, the key administrative staff members had the opportunity to talk to each other about interpersonal communication skill strategies in a formal setting. According to Merriam (2009), focus groups are ideal for participants to talk about a subject but they never had the opportunity to discuss the subject together. In a study with a semistructured, focus group, Hinchcliff et al. (2013) found that stakeholders as participants were attuned to the nuances of the industry.

In addition, I had the opportunity to explore other strategies used in the classroom to promote interpersonal communication skills. As Crouch and McKenzie (2006) pointed out, focus groups and individual interviews are an elicit means of gathering information and may not be spoken by the participant until asked by the researcher. This exploration

provided me with in-depth information coming from different voices. By listening to the perspectives given, I have more information on the current strategies to foster the interpersonal communication skills of students.

Open-ended questionnaire. An open-ended questionnaire was created by the researcher and delivered online to business faculty members (Appendix J). Part of the themes and questions of this questionnaire were added after I discovered the interpersonal communication skills strategies that are currently in the classroom from the key administrative staff members of the focus group. The questions were similar to the focus group questions and the alumni members' interview questions. Although the questions were pertaining to the administrative staff members, faculty members, or alumni members, the basics of the questions were analogous to each other. Asking analogous questions allowed me to observe the similarity and differences of the participants' responses.

Cohen et al. (2007) stressed that an open-ended questionnaire allowed for exploration of the unknown in a particular situation. In contrast, a closed-ended questionnaire provides choice answers to the questions and limits the responses to those choices (Cohen et al., 2007). The reason for choosing an open-ended questionnaire was to allow each of the faculty members within the business college to share his/her perceptions of the strategies to promote interpersonal communication skills in the classroom. Radhaswamy and Zia (2011) discovered, as the result of open-ended questions, that findings were broad but there was a recurrent outline of the important

data. Each faculty member is a key informant on the perceptions of promoting interpersonal communication skills in the classroom.

According to Deepa and Seth (2013), business faculty members should include development of interpersonal communication skills in their classroom to improve the quality of the graduates for employment. Therefore, the faculty members' responses are an important part of the study. As most of the Private University's professors are visiting or adjuncts that have other positions away from the University, the faculty members may realize the importance of interpersonal communication skills integrated into the classrooms.

There are two main reasons why the open-ended questionnaire was used instead of interviews with the faculty members. Juritzen et al. (2011) stated that perceived assertion of power where the participant feels subservient to the researcher should be avoided. As I am a faculty member of Private University, this could be portrayed as a power play to other faculty members. Anonymity was maintained by use of the survey tool to minimize this concern.

Second, an open-ended questionnaire instead of interviewing faculty members was chosen is to keep the faculty members' perceptions anonymous. In the last five years there has been high turnover in the upper administrative positions, specifically the campus director and academic director. Faculty members may have been hesitant to voice their perceptions if their identity was known. Wang and Hsieh (2013) explained that winning employee's trust takes time because the leader's beliefs and actions must coincide. If the employee believes the leader is authentic, the employee is likely to make

suggestions (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Janssen (2005) indicated that employees make suggestions to further their development only if they have the support of management. With the interim campus director and the academic director being in their positions for such a short time, the faculty members may be limited on entrusting these supervisors with their perceptions of interpersonal communication skills. Therefore keeping the open-ended questionnaire anonymous may have minimized the faculty members' possible skepticism.

Individual alumni member interviews. Individual interviews were conducted with a sample of business alumni members which provided another voice on the perception of enhancing interpersonal communication skills in the classroom. The interview questions were supplemented with the current interpersonal communication strategies communicated by the focus group analysis with the key administrative staff members.

The four interviews with business alumni members provided four different voices on the perceptions of enhancing interpersonal skills in the classroom. The interviews were conducted individually and permission was granted to audio tape each one. Individual interviews of alumni members were chosen over open-ended questionnaires because the response rate of alumni members to questionnaires tends to be low as indicated by Ameen et al. (2010) and Jackling and DeLange (2009).

An editorial (1964) in *Public Opinion Quarterly* described how people were willing to be interviewed to give answers to the researcher's questions. The participants often had nothing to gain from the interview, but participated so the organization had

feedback (Editorial, 1964). Noted by Bosshart et al. (2009), recent alumni members were willing to assist the university's improvements by the alumni members' own experiences. I was pleasantly surprised at the willingness and the time the alumni members granted me to take part in the study.

Access to Participants

The interim campus director and new academic director are my supervisors and were supportive of this study. A full-time faculty member is my cohort and was supportive of this study. Potential biases were controlled by member checks and my reflective journal because of the role and familiarity to the key administrative staff members. Lodico et al. (2010) recommended using member checks to view if the perspective was accurately portrayed by the researcher. Each of the participants in the focus group did receive a summary of the interview for their agreement on the validity. A reflective journal was also recommended by Lodico et al. (2010) for the researcher monitoring her own biases and perspectives.

The academic director had a list of the faculty members' e-mail addresses for me to use when contacting faculty members. I e-mailed the identified business faculty with the cover letter (Appendix E) and a consent form. The alumni members were identified by the key administrative staff members. I contacted the alumni members by e-mail to explain the purpose of my study (Appendix F) and attached a consent form. Potential biases were controlled by member checks and my reflective journal because of the role and familiarity to the faculty and alumni members.

Role of the Researcher

I did have a direct role in the collection of data since this study was a qualitative, single case study. As a visiting professor at Private University, I have a vested interest in satisfying the future employers of the graduates and enhancing the students' interpersonal communication skills. I have 19 years of experience teaching adults in a college setting. Kennedy-Lewis (2012) stated practitioner scholars have a deep understanding of the intricacies of education and are more apt to solve problems within the local setting. Ryan (2013) discussed the value of pre-understanding by experiences in the field for researchers. With the advent of more technology, I have seen less interpersonal communication skills exhibited in the classroom replaced by communicating with the use of technological devices.

My current courses are business management, health service management, economics, critical thinking, several foundation courses, and a senior project. The senior project is a capstone course where selected students work as consultants to an outside client. This course aids in building a bridge between the knowledge learned in the classroom and the workplace. In my experience, interpersonal communication skills may require improvement to assist the students in making this transition from classroom to the workplace.

This experience with my students is one of my potential biases in this study that I was aware of as a researcher. I avoided giving my own perceptions when interviewing. As one of the professors who teach the senior project, I was careful not to speak about my own strategic methods to enhance interpersonal communication skills. Active listening to

what other participants stated was important in my research. To avoid interpreting the data differently than the data were meant, member checks were used.

As expressed earlier in the participants section, I did not have control over their grade or their position at the Private University, and everything must be held in confidence. Advocated by Juritzen et al. (2011), asymmetry of power should be prevented by the researcher, and all participants should volunteer to take part in the study. The participants were informed of the nature of the study and the study's risk and benefits to the participants (Juritzen et al., 2011).

While the key administrative staff members were either my supervisors or cohorts, and the faculty member questionnaire was anonymous, control for bias was important on a former professor interviewing alumni member. The alumni members' perceptions are valuable to me because the perceptions may assist in resolving the problem. Therefore, the alumnus member was an expert in this study and I was seeking the alumnus' perceptions as a learner.

According to Assante, Huffman, and Harp (2007), the university's external customers are students and employers. This study did explore the gap that exists between potential employers' needs and the offerings of Private University. While satisfying the needs of the employers, Assante et al. (2007) noted, "one customer pays the university to transform them into a product" for the employer (p. 54). Assante et al. (2007) compared a university to a restaurant, stating that if customers are not happy with the selection they will go elsewhere. The willingness of alumni members who partook in this study should be of benefit to Private University.

I did also observe the nonverbal gestures of the interviewees. The nonverbal gestures may tell the feelings and emotions of the participant more than what is verbally communicated. The facial expressions, gestures, body language, and intonation may express more about the message than what is actually stated, observed Goleman (1998), Bass (2010), Lear (2011), and Selvalakshmi (2012). During the interview, notes were taken on the nonverbal gestures coinciding with what had been verbally communicated, and it was recorded in my research journal as well as on the transcripts.

Research Journal

I kept a handwritten reflective journal to keep track of data collection and the research process to allow me to look at the whole picture. As stated before, this study was descriptive and emerging data are necessary to uncover the complex facets of interpersonal communication skills. Keeping this journal allowed me to reflect on the entire study to date, not just the last interview or open-ended questionnaire.

In their study of reflective journaling, Dayaram and Issa (2011) cited the views of Gardner, Goleman, and Schön on the benefits of reflective journaling. Dayaram and Issa (2011) found that a reflective process of analyzing experiences and evaluation of the experiences led to deeper awareness and understanding, active listening to the views of others, and congruence of values among diverse populations. A reflective journal was important for me to keep avoiding possible bias and be aware of emerging data.

A reflective journal was also kept to capture my feelings and thoughts through the time of the data collection. The reflective journal both kept my thoughts as they occurred and it helped me to compare and contrast my beliefs to other participants. The reflective

journal's assistance in comparing and contrasting my feelings to the other participant helped me control any evident bias I possessed. The reflective journal is part of the data collection and analysis.

Maltby and Abrams (2009) studied nursing students through reflective journals while in Bangladesh and came up with the following four consistent themes: beginning to see, thinking about what was seen, wanting to change what was seen, and being transformed by the past events. Allowing myself to be immersed in the study and keeping a reflective journal did assist me in being open to other participants' views and putting aside my own egocentrism. A reflective journal allowed me to go back and review the way I felt after each interview and survey. The reflective journal was the thread connecting the interviews and the surveys together.

Data Collection Process

Focus group. The focus group met on December 2, 2014 for 43 minutes in a meeting room on campus. I read the script before the interview explaining the purpose of the study and the informed consent rights. I was allowed to audio record the meeting and took notes on gestures, posture, and items of emphasis. As expressed by Yin (2009), a good researcher will note participants' interaction in the group setting. The KAS1 was informing the group about the current strategies that had taken place in the development of interpersonal communication skills while the KAS2 asked questions and the KAS3 listened. KAS3 listened intently but did not speak until the participant was asked a direct question by me. Not only was the focus group a method of data collection for my study, the focus group was a communication and learning opportunity for the participants.

Although advised by Hancock and Algozzine (2011) that a researcher's time was spent better listening to the interview, questions were asked by KAS2 and KAS3 that KAS1 and I answered. I tried to limit my answering the questions and ask the questions. I noticed one KAS participant looking up at the clock and indicated to me that another meeting was scheduled soon that required the participant's presence. As the focus group came to a close, I asked each member if they would be willing to read a summary of the focus group's findings and clarify if this was accurate. Each focus group participant agreed and I received some verbal feedback on the summary from one participant.

The current interpersonal communication strategies mentioned by the focus group was put in the alumni members' interview questions and faculty members' open-ended questionnaire. Due to the timeframe around the holidays and with finals week approaching, I waited until January, 2015 to send the survey out to maximize participants in the faculty members' open-ended questionnaire.

Individual interviews with alumni members. Three alumni members consented to participate in my study before the holidays and one alumni member participated after the holidays. I have the alumni members' consent on an e-mail responding to the informed consent form. Each interview was held at a coffee house and a script was read explaining the study and the informed consent (Appendix H). All the alumni members let me audio record their interview.

As stated before, each alumnus was eager to answer questions to give feedback to Private University. The alumni members ranged in age from mid-twenties to late 40s. Each represented one of the business majors of the university and the ratio of females to

males was similar to the university's ratios. The interviews lasted between 36 minutes and 51 minutes. I made certain I kept within the time constraints so as to minimize the interference in the alumni members' daily lives. The interview with AM1 was in the morning and the participant did not have a good night of sleep. The lack of sleep may have hindered the interview, but I found the interview informative and productive.

The alumni members each agreed to member check a summary of the interview. Two alumni members added verbal comments to the summary, and I added those comments. Leaving enough time between the interviews, I transcribed each interview before the next interview. Transcribing, reviewing, and reflecting on the data collected allowed the study to be emerging. Merriam (2009) described emerging as responding to change. The minor changes allowed me to question on the points brought up in the previous interviews and adapt the questions to key areas. I reached saturation when alumni members were stating similar items as other interviewees and nothing new arose from their comments.

Faculty member open-ended questionnaire. The open-ended questionnaire was created in Qualtrics on January 5, 2015. Creating the questionnaire earlier than sending it out allowed me to view the questionnaire and have page breaks between the questions about current interpersonal communication skills and future interpersonal communication skills. The online survey tool, Qualtrics allowed me to e-mail to the faculty member sampling anonymously. The e-mail addresses were provided by the academic director and had no names attached to the addresses.

The open-ended questionnaire was released to the faculty members January 9, 2015, and they had until January 23, 2015 to complete the questionnaire. Two reminders to the faculty members were sent out on January 13th and January 18th (Appendix L). The academic director provided me with two additional e-mail addresses on January 18th bringing the total of possible participants to 24 faculty members. Qualtrics provided a tracking system of the sent e-mails, opened e-mails, started the survey, and completed the survey without revealing the identification of the possible participants. According to the tracking device, of those 24 faculty members, six faculty members never opened the e-mail. This may have been an alternate e-mail address for faculty members that was not checked all the time, the faculty member was not teaching that session and the faculty member did not check the Private University mailbox, or the e-mail was sent to spam.

A total of eight open-ended questionnaires were completed. The e-mail contained an explanation of the study and the informed consent form. The responses fell well into Lodico's et al. (2010) range of 30 to 50%, with 44% who opened the e-mail completing the questionnaire. Two faculty members filled out the major area of study and did not answer the other nine questions. These two questionnaires were not included in the study. The faculty members who completed the questionnaire took between 9 and 48 minutes to complete it, for an average of 26 minutes.

Evidence of Quality

To ensure the quality and validity of this study, Merriam (1988) and Yin (2011) suggested triangulating the data. Merriam (1988) described triangulation as a convergence of different groups and different methods of obtaining data. The key

administrative staff members, alumni members from differing business majors, and the business faculty members provided views on interpersonal communication skills in different voices, and different instruments were used to collect data.

Maximum variation is an additional approach for promoting reliability and validity, explained Merriam (2009). This approach seeks out opposing views to the study to gather the widest range of the population in the study (Merriam, 2009). Gathering the perspectives of interpersonal communication skills strategies of the business faculty members and the alumni members each specializing in different majors provided maximum variation to this study.

Another way of displaying evidence of quality is member checking (Merriam, 1988) or respondent validation (Yin, 2011). I asked each interview participant to check the summary of the interview to clarify if my interpretation of the data collected was accurate. The interview coding and thematic analysis process was shared with a peer reviewer to validate my interpretations and help provide alternate views of the data (Lodico et al., 2010). As suggested by Yin (2011) and Bauerlein (2013), the peer reviewer should have field specific knowledge and be objective. Bauerlein (2013) also added that the peer reviewer should have no personal or political biases. The peer reviewer did not have any affiliation with the university. The peer reviewer only had access to unidentifiable data to keep the data anonymous.

The reflective journal was another technique in preserving the quality of evidence. In the role of the researcher, I stated how my past/current roles and relationships may affect data collection and possible biases in analyzing data. By using the reflective

journal, I was able to look at my emotions and feelings at separate times and was able to interpret the data analysis to avoid bias.

Data Analysis

Data Compilation and Coding

Computer assisted data analysis software for qualitative analysis is available, and NVivo 10 has the capability to connect with Qualtrics to manage and analyze the data collected (QSR International, 2013). Merriam (2009) stated that small scale qualitative studies do not require these programs as the cost may be a limitation. Pearce warned that the time learning to use NVivo or any other software program may also be a drawback in the timeframe of the study (personal communication, October 11, 2013). The decision not to use any software data analysis and manually insert the data into Microsoft Office was made.

Compilation and coding of the focus group. The first method of data collection was the focus group with the key administrative staff (KAS) members who provided information on current interpersonal communication skills strategies for the open-ended questionnaire and the individual interviews. The focus group was analyzed using a thematic analysis. Creswell (2012) observed that themes form a major idea in the database and include many codes that have similar characteristics. I decided to adopt a thematic approach because there are many types of themes that can arise from the data. One of the classifications of themes, as described by Creswell (2012), is the ordinary themes that the researcher expects to find. After a review of the literature, the researcher may find themes from the interviews much like the themes from the scholarly research.

Another type of theme is the unexpected theme that surprises the researcher, as observed by Creswell (2012).

I chose to transcribe the data myself to Microsoft Word rather than hire another person to do it for me. Merriam (2009) suggested it was best for the researcher to transcribe rather than another person. I transcribed the data according to Merriam's (2009) transcription method, each line double spaced enabling both comments and my notes to be written in the transcript. I took advantage of the audio recording and listened to the focus group several times. Listening to the focus group aided me in the emphasis that the participants placed on several items.

Analysis of the focus group with the key administrative staff members was guided by Merriam's (2009) procedures. The researcher read the transcripts from the focus group and made notes on the margins about key ideas. I approached the analysis without any prior codes but kept the research questions and conceptual framework as guidance. This approach was followed by reading the notes to create a list of codes. According to Merriam (2009), coding is just shorthand dictation for ideas that are brought forth in the focus group. The list went through the process of refinement after I read the transcripts and the notes again.

A suggestion by Glesne (2011) was to make a codebook assigning each code its own page. Separating the codes into a codebook would show how the various participants perceived a certain code. After I created a list of final codes, I coded the focus group transcripts and assigned data to respective codes. I used several different colors of highlighter and color markers on the focus group document to differentiate between

sentences or paragraphs according to each code and a sample can be seen in Appendix M. By using my codebook, I copied and pasted the information under each code.

Once I coded the information, certain codes were recurring and four themes emerged as can be seen in Appendix N. The first theme, professional presentations was prompted by the codes: getting in front of people, public speaking, eye contact, and body language. Professional self-branding was also a theme with handshakes, appropriate dress, and active listening as some codes. The third theme was group or team work with working along with others well and the conflicts that occur. Finally, cross-cultural awareness was the fourth theme. This included global awareness but also awareness of individual differences in the United States.

Compilation and coding of the faculty member open-ended questionnaire. At the end of the two week timeframe, I downloaded the questionnaire from Qualtrics in two formats. The first one was by participant with all questions the participants answered. The second one was by question with all the participants answering that question. Eight questionnaires were completed, but two participants only answered the first question that asked, "What major area do you teach?" These two questionnaires were taken out of the sample for the missing information.

Each questionnaire was viewed per participant and per question. I viewed the survey per participant because I wanted to see how the various participants responded to the survey and if any major differences occurred. The only differences were in the assessment of the presentation, and one participant wrote, "The staff should come

downstairs to see the students when they come in to set an example of interpersonal skills."

The open-ended questionnaires were coded with highlighters and different colored markers, and the data were put in the code book under the proper code. Although no new themes arose, the faculty members had different ideas on assessing the presentations. The faculty members' themes were professional presentation, professional self-branding, group/team work, networking, and diversity (Appendix N). The faculty members found the professional presentations and group/team work crucial for students' interpersonal communication skills success.

As indicated by faculty members, professional presentations are an essential interpersonal communication skill because the student has to communicate effectively with other people. Some codes were confidence building, critical thinking ability, conceptual skills, and the proper use of English grammar. Group/team work seemed to hold as much importance to the faculty members as professional presentations. Two of the faculty members observed that students did not prefer to work in groups, but it was necessary for developing communication and conflict negotiation skills. Other codes were team development, getting along well with others, and adapting to different types of co-workers.

Compilation and coding of alumni members individual interviews. The compilation and coding followed similar procedures as completed in the focus group. The focus group informed me of current strategies to integrate interpersonal communication skills into the classroom that I referred to in each alumni member (AM) interview. I

transcribed each interview before the next interview so that the collected data would adapt further data collection. My research journal pulled the focus group and each interview data collection together and assisted me in viewing the data from a comprehensive standpoint as well as individuals' interviews. In findings from my research journal, cross-cultural awareness was divided into these two separate themes: global awareness and diversity. This was similar to the findings from the focus group, although the focus group's primary concern was global awareness. The primary emphasis of the alumni members' interviews were the diversity between people and the possible tensions diversity causes. Another theme that emerged from the category collaboration is networking. Networking in various forms is vital in gaining employment and procuring future opportunities (Appendix N).

Professional presentation theme was a critical portion of the coursework as stated by every alumni member. Various statements were made with a similar vein that the students must present to be ready for the future. Presenting is important for the interview, for interacting with clients at work, and body language while presenting. Also advocated by all alumni members was having an alumni member speak to every class on professional self-branding. Whether it was getting from a student status to a full time worker, tips on how to interview, or how to social network, each alumni member wanted to be involved with the current students.

As mentioned above, networking emerged as a theme from the alumni members' interviews, two of the faculty members' questionnaires, and my research journal. The codes varied between social networking, in class networking, informational interviews,

and outside the campus networking. Group or team work brought about feelings of discernment from negative experiences, but group work was a significant portion of the curriculum according to each alumni member. Getting along well with others, negotiation management, team development, and assistance from the professors are the codes associated with group work.

One alumni member works with co-workers from other countries, and global awareness is essential in her job. The other three alumni members' positions did not require international awareness, but differences between individuals that often led to conflict. Another theme emerged, diversity. One alumni member stated that diversity is everywhere that there are two or more people. Some of the codes were different experiences led to diversity, different cultures, and different environments.

Compilation and coding of my research journal. The research journal was written throughout my data collection. After every interview I wrote a synopsis of my thoughts about the interview, what was said, how the interviewee emphasized the statement, and the nonverbal gestures. I noted several items that changed the four original categories to six themes. Conflict management and negotiation happen when collaboration and/or diversity occur. Conflict management/negotiation became a code under group/team work, global awareness, and diversity.

From my research journal it was evident that the alumni members were eager to be involved with the current students to assist those students with their endeavors. Either succeeding in the classroom, presenting in front of people, or assisting the students in future careers, each alumni member wanted to be involved with this campus. This was an

unforeseen, yet viable, idea that emanated from the alumni members' data collection and analysis. I also discovered in the analysis of my research journal throughout the data collection was the divergence of global awareness and diversity under the original category of cross-cultural awareness. One of the participants in the focus group stated that cross-cultural awareness did not necessarily mean global awareness, but individual differences. Individual differences were mentioned in each of the alumni members' interviews as well as one participant indicating global differences were significant. My peer reviewer agreed that global awareness and diversity be separate themes.

In the research journal various types of networking were mentioned by the focus group, alumni members' interviews, and the faculty members' open-ended questionnaire. With the assistance of my peer reviewer, networking was designated as a separate theme. According to my peer reviewer, networking should be under the category of collaboration because it is a social activity of getting along well with other people.

The research journal provided a thread linking the focus group, the alumni members' interviews, and the faculty members' survey together to connect these tools together. It allowed me to view the differences and similarities of perceptions and to consolidate the data analysis into themes.

Final coding and thematic analysis. Coding data were an arduous and tedious task. When my peer reviewer reviewed my initial analysis after the focus group and the alumni members' interviews, she made some suggestions to clarify the codes and the possible thematic analysis. After reviewing the faculty members' survey and viewing my research journal, the peer reviewer and I solidified the final themes.

Out of the four categories defined by me earlier in the study, I discovered from the data there were six themes developing. The following two themes were developed from the category of communication: professional presentations and professional self-branding. Conflict management/negotiation skills were defined earlier as a category of interpersonal communication skills, although it was uncovered in the data that conflict management is a portion of both collaboration and cross cultural awareness. Therefore in developing the themes, conflict management/negotiation skills became part of both collaboration and cross-cultural awareness. The two themes that were developed from the category of collaboration were team work/group work and networking. I discovered the following two themes in the final category cross-cultural awareness: global awareness and diversity. As Creswell (2012) indicated, a researcher may be surprised to uncover a theme, and I was surprised by the data that diversity was a main theme supported by many participants.

Results

The results in this section are organized by research questions. The first research question centered on the focus group, while the second and third questions focused on the faculty members, and the fourth and fifth questions queried alumni members. The final analysis will follow the guiding questions.

Research question 1: *How do the current business faculty members incorporate interpersonal communication skills strategies in the classroom as perceived by key administrative staff?*

In the focus group analysis six themes emerged and are presented below to answer RQ1. Only one of the focus group participants had observed faculty members incorporate interpersonal communication skills into the classroom longer than 5 months. The other two participants in the focus group have been at the campus for less than 5 months, but believed interpersonal communication skills have a significant impact on students at the university. KAS 1 participant asserted,

> It would be a disservice to students if we did not work on interpersonal skills. I feel those are the little things that we can do in the classroom to set our students aside in the workforce. We are the career university, so it starts with us. Respectful, proper communication, no swearing, dress appropriately. When you see a student displaying a kind of professional behavior call them out. It fosters other students to take note and they want to be elevated to that level.

When asked what current strategies were done by faculty members in the past to encourage interpersonal communication skills, KAS1 indicated that the previous academic director mandated presentations and encouraged group work within the classroom.

Professional presentations. KAS1 and KAS2 indicated how presentations were used in the classroom. KAS1 reported,

> The faculty varied in the presentation from formal presentations to very informal just to get the students standing in front of the class. I use very small parameters like eye contact, body language, and not reading your paper. I have my students stand up and present their homework every week. I have a current event

assignment and different students are assigned to present a current event each week. They cannot read the current event, but have to summarize the event. If we do it consistently with students in every class, they will get used to speaking in front of the class.

KAS1 and KAS2 explained that some professors had students teach a concept of the course they were taking. The student had to study the concept and explain it to the rest of the class. This assignment put the student at ease presenting and had the student concerned about getting the class to comprehend the concept. Some professors asked the students to summarize what they learned in class in one minute to promote listening and summarizing skills. This assignment enhanced professional self-branding skills.

When asked if the presentations were assessed, KAS1 indicated that in some courses, presentations were not included in the preset course shell. KAS1 added the presentations to the discussion points and stated she did not know how other professors assessed the presentations. KAS2 was adamant about having each presentation assessed by the same form so the student will know whether progress was made. A discussion ensued about grading or not giving a grade for the presentation because that may raise the fear of presenting.

Professional self-branding. Each of the focus group participants agreed that presentations were not only beneficial to the students presenting, but also developed listening skills and summarization skills for the rest of the class. Also having a presentation in class fosters critical thinking skills for both the presenter and the class. Critical thinking is enhanced by asking and answering questions, explaining the process

of decision making, and seeking new ways to problem solve. The skill set in presentations fosters the skills set in professional self-branding.

Group or team work. KAS1 and KAS2 expressed that working in groups was vital to the development of students getting ready for the workforce. Working in groups was also encouraged by the previous academic director. Team or group projects provided camaraderie and can also provide conflict. Conflict management flows down from working with other people and learning to adapt to different styles. KAS1 explained,

> I let my students decide what their groups are and if I don't like the groups, I reserve the option to change the groups. There has to be one group leader and a chain of command. If the group leader has a problem that they cannot solve, the group leader comes to me and then it filters down from the group leader to the group. It is the same way it happens in the workplace.

Networking. KAS3 brought some different items to think about in developing interpersonal communication skills including networking. According to KAS3,

> Networking should not begin when the students graduate but build a foundation with in class networking. Because we have so many working adults, there may be somebody who works where you want to work. They may say, "Don't hire him because he was always late, or she interrupted the professor," so building your professional brand while you're in the classroom is significant.

KAS1 observed professors asking their students to create business cards to network. In addition some professors had in class networking where the students have to learn the names of the other students and something about that student. Finally,

professors who wanted students to reach out to professionals in the field assigned an informational interview.

Global awareness. KAS2 and KAS3 discussed that companies are going global, and this campus should prepare the students for cross-cultural interactions. KAS2 expressed,

> We have many experiences with a lack of understanding different cultures. I am from South America and had to learn that certain body language like this (thumbs up) means a different thing here than is does in my country. Students need to learn to interact, talk to others, and address sensitive issues that can create a lot of problems.

Diversity. Each participant of the focus group agreed that the world is shrinking and students should be culturally sensitive. In addition, KAS1 described how she was a touchy person, and certain students do not like to be touched. "It does not have to be a student from another country. School is supposed to be a safe place and I have to watch what I do that offends my students." Diversity is dealing with differences in individuals and adapting. Sensitivity is not an issue exclusive to students, but an issue that involves professors and staff members.

To aid the faculty members in enhancing these skills, KAS3 emphasized,

> When an employer comes in and speaks to the class, it is a different voice and the students may take as more credible than the professors. Sometimes when it comes from me it sounds just like the teacher from Charlie Brown. I would love, love, love it if we could get a guest speaker for the faculty members and give training

on interpersonal communication skills. Interpersonal communication skills can be a trickle-down effect from faculty to the students.

At the end of the focus group the new academic director expressed that she would be promoting presentations and group work more among faculty members. The academic director also will be taking a good look to see what is being done to promote interpersonal communication skills. KAS1 member stated that the previous presentation mandate and the encouragement for group work was not communicated to new faculty. KAS2 member suggested that a faculty development session on interpersonal communication skills and student workshops would be beneficial.

New strategies to implement interpersonal communication skills that the focus group mentioned are listed in Tables 2, 3, and 4 with the categories of communication, collaboration, and cross-cultural awareness respectively. Professional self-branding in the classroom are strategies that assist the student in being prepared to enter the workforce and should be emphasized in the classroom and campus activities. In-class networking to networking outside the classroom were encouraged to assist the student in meeting and adjusting to different personalities. Along with networking, the focus group addressed the need for students to understand cultural differences and global awareness.

Table 2

Communication Strategies

	Communication	
Methodology tool	Professional presentations	Professional self-branding
Focus group	Formal presentations. Informal presentations, standing and presenting homework, current event, answering questions Ask students to teach a concept of the course	Listening skills enhanced by 1 minute "What did you learn?" Critical thinking skills enhanced by answering questions, explaining the process of decision making, new ways to solve a problem Call students out when you see positive behavior Set an example for respect, appropriate dress, speech, and actions
Interviews Alumni members	Non-intimidating informal presentations Guest from outside the classroon to let the student present in front of strangers Repetition Impromptu presentations- critica thinking skills Have students do a skit on the coursework Give students a chance to speak in class Information on how to use visual aids Alumni guest speaker on how important presentations are Make the student feel at ease	Alumni guest speakers on professional self-branding YouTube videos on professional self-branding
Faculty members open-ended questionnaire	Knowledge of technology in presentations Strong English grammar	Eye contact Firm and professional handshake Speak clearly Business card

Table 3

Collaboration Strategies

	Collaboration	
Methodology tool	Group/team work	Networking
Focus group	Team work also provides conflict management and negotiation Chain of command flows down from group leader Set an example for the students to develop teams	In class networking Have business cards to present to guest speakers and to bring to networking events Informational interviews
Interviews Alumni members	Have students sign off on a part of the project at the beginning of team work Guide the students in team development More social activities with current students, alumni members, faculty members, and staff Offer incentives to join student organizations	In class networking Information on using social media Alumni member meeting and lecture with current students
Faculty members open-ended questionnaire	Group papers Role playing Know other students	Students undertaking internships or job shadowing Students joining organizations for networking purposes

Table 4

.

Cross-Cultural Strategies

	Cross-cultural	
Methodology tool	Global awareness	Diversity
Focus group	Learn to interact with foreigners Addressing sensitive issues	Important for professor to be aware of diverse student styles Set an example
Interviews Alumni members	International day with the culture's dress, entertainment, and food.	Be willing to talk about sensitive issues to open student's minds YouTube videos on diversity

I received confirmation that the focus group will sample the faculty members and alumni members to hear the faculty and alumni members' perceptions. After the focus groups sampling of faculty members and alumni members, the open-ended questionnaire was completed and pilot studied was done, and the alumni members' interviews were scheduled.

Research question 2: *How are current interpersonal communication skills strategies integrated in the classroom perceived by faculty members?*

Two main themes merged from the open-ended questionnaire analysis, professional presentations and group work on current strategies. As noted by KAS1, the new faculty members and administrative staff may not be informed of the required presentations and the support for students working in groups that was present under the previous academic director. One faculty member who commented on presentations wrote,

I don't know that I can comment on the support by administrative staff members. There has not been interaction regarding these topics in relation to my classroom. In faculty meetings, we have discussed the importance of group work so I do believe there is support for that in the classroom.

Professional presentations. All faculty members felt many skill sets were targeted by presentations. One faculty member wrote "How to give presentations in front of various audiences regarding various subject matter." Others listed public speaking, being comfortable in front of other people, and use of technology. Although the faculty members listed the skill sets under presentation, these skills were considered professional self-branding: problem solving, critical thinking, conceptual skills, ethical behavior, effective communication skills, confidence building, organization, professionalism, and poise.

Group or team work. Group work was noted by all six of the faculty members. Two faculty members expressed "students dislike group work" and "group work can be difficult in the classroom" but they agreed with the rest of the faculty members that group work is a necessary job skill. Prof. A contended that "confronting and solving these problems in the classroom, with guidance from the professor, helps students prepare for the business world." Prof. H added, "Group work is encouraged by administrative staff to foster effective communication skills that can be used personally, as well as professionally."

The given skill sets were narrower for group work as the faculty members each stated "collaboration" as one of the main skill sets. Prof. D declared, "Getting along with

other people! If you cannot get along in the workplace, you may be out of a job!" Other faculty members mentioned team development, team work, conflict management and resolution, and importance of networking with others.

All faculty members but one described presentations and group work as suitable for the courses they teach. Several faculty members advocated that these skills were necessary for the workplace and should be practiced in school to prepare students. Prof. A noted that the professor must moderate and give students feedback on these skills. The one faculty member expressed the presentations and group work were not appropriate for math classes because the math classes are self-paced and the students are in different areas of the course.

While each faculty member believed the student deserves feedback on both presentations and group work, there was disagreement on the way the students' work should be assessed and whether or not to assign grades. Prof. B indicated that each student starts out in a different place on speaking and engaging with others, and it would not be fair to punish those who started out at a lower skill set. Prof. D described that each student must be assessed continuously to show areas to improve and where the student did improve, but not to assign grades. Prof. D added, "Presentations are frightening enough. Do not scare the student by assigning a grade."

Prof. E and Prof. G agreed that the assessment for presentation and group work should be a standard form used in every class. Prof. G went on to state, "This will require considerable judgment on the part of the instructor. Results could vary from class to class. Substantial training and strong guidelines will be needed." The questions

surrounding assessing the students on presentation and group work need further assessment on what needs to be done.

In summary, research question 2 was answered with positive impressions of current strategies, presentations, and group work implemented into the classroom. Several types of presentations were mentioned in the survey from informal to formal presentations. Presentations are the precedent to problem solving, effective communication skills, confidence building, and professionalism among others. Questions were raised on how the presentations should be assessed and the guidelines for assessment.

Group/teamwork was also a precedent to collaboration and conflict management. Students tend to dislike group work but faculty members stated group work has positive attributes for the workplace. Possibly a development session for faculty members on implementing group work into the classroom would be beneficial.

Research question 3: *What other interpersonal communication skills strategies do the faculty members suggest?*

The faculty members responded to this research question with several ideas that fit into five of the following six themes: professional presentations; professional self-branding; group and teamwork; networking; and, diversity. The most frequent strategy given involved some type of team or group work. A summary of the faculty members' recommendations can be found in Tables 2, 3, and 4 on pages 77-79. Table 2 highlights the professional presentation and professional self-branding suggestions, while Table 3 focuses on group work and network, and Table 4 underlines suggestions for diversity.

Professional presentations. Prof. A stated presentations required, "A strong knowledge of public speaking and English grammar are essential." Also, "[Students having} knowledge of technology and its role in presentation."

Professional self-branding. Two of the faculty members wrote how important personal self-branding skills are. One indicated, "Interpersonal or soft skills are what sets apart a successful student versus a student that may get by academically but not stand out from the pack when looking for a job." Another faculty member advocated, "Interpersonal communication skills can help the student's professional career. Lack of these necessary skills can make it increasingly difficult to obtain quality and meaningful employment."

Other faculty members listed personal branding skills that should become habitual to students. Look an individual in the eye. Have a firm and professional handshake. Speak clearly when spoken to. Stay on the subject or task. Have a business card. These last five skills are simple and easy to fit into the curriculum, and the following one is challenging. Prof. E specified conceptual thinking. Prof. E highlighted, "Being able to take an abstract idea and make it tangible either by modeling or otherwise. Thinking beyond what one sees is important."

Group or team work. Each faculty member encouraged more group work. One observed, "Getting along well with others is critical. I cannot imagine the students working with other people the way they are at school. My student experience came from knowing other students and the successes and failures that they shared." Another faculty member emphasized the ability to work with others in various environments. Almost

every faculty member mentioned that conflict management came from group efforts, and the class had to learn to resolve the conflict.

One faculty member noted that role playing is essential. “This can be developed using factual scenarios. I think the university should offer more elective classes in these areas. When possible, place students in interdisciplinary teams to work together.” Another faculty member described, “I incorporate the use of group papers into my classes. Having students work in teams during at least one part of each class is helpful.”

Networking. Under the theme networking, it was mentioned that students should be encouraged to undertake internships or job shadowing. A faculty member observed that the university has many professional student associations and joining the organizations may lead to networking and expose the student to different individuals.

Diversity. Prof. D is concerned about diversity and the students’ adaptation to diversity. Recognizing other styles and adapting to other styles will make the individual successful in the workplace. “Egocentric views are not beneficial or healthy to anyone involved,” noted the faculty member.

The responding faculty members are supportive to implementing interpersonal communication skills and know the benefits associated with the current interpersonal communication skills. The faculty members have ideas for implementing other interpersonal communication skills into the classroom and recommended the ideas that are in Table 2, 3, and 4 on pages 77-79. These strategies cover presentations, self-branding, group/team work, networking, and diversity. Faculty members thought out of the box to both engage the students and teach the students interpersonal communication

skills in an easy to implement style. A distribution of these strategies should be shared among all faculty members to encourage implementation of these strategies and inspire more strategies.

Research question 4: *How are current interpersonal communication skills strategies integrated in the classroom perceived by alumni members?*

When the alumni members were students, the faculty members were supervised by the previous academic director. The existing strategies at that time were mandatory presentations in every class, and the previous academic director encouraged group work. Therefore, two themes emerged, professional presentations and group work, in replying to question 4. The four alumni members interviewed have been in the workforce for over a year and gave their perceptions about presentations and group work in the college classroom.

Professional presentations. With an overwhelming unanimity, each alumni member expressed how much the presentations meant to their future. AM1 advocated,

> You HAVE to present. There is no way around it. You are not going to be able to go through life and be a successful individual and not present. I am a firm believer in presenting. It gives you confidence and it also forces you to learn about your target audience. We have LEAN events at work and some higher ups come in to hear the presentations. If you want to work for my company, you have to present. Just interviewing for a job is presenting.

AM2 illustrated presenting from a before and after standpoint with the following words:

> Would you rather learn to present in school where you only have to worry about a grade rather than in front of a client and lose a $1.2 million contract? Maybe your job because you can't stand up in front of a potential client and brief him on what your product is. I present all the time every time I am with somebody. In my current job I have given 100 to 150 formal presentations with PowerPoints and other visuals. Informal with clients, countless.

AM3 was looking for a new position in her graduate field and could not get beyond the first interview for 6 months, stating,

> I was horrible at presenting in school. The professors used to tell me that presenting was a must, but I refused to believe them. That is why it has taken me over six months to get a new job. The things you should have learned in school I learned the hard way, on my own. I was nervous, babbling, my body was shifting. It is the body language, your head language that tells more about you than talking. If you are not used to talking to people in the audience, you will suffer in the interview. Some people are difficult to interview with and I would have brain freeze. Talking in front of the class gets you ready for the future. I am going to present "me." You have to slow your words, eye to eye contact, and be able to deal with a group of people during the interview process.

When asked what makes students afraid of presentations, the alumni members each said fear of standing in front of the class. One alumni member stated that they feared being judged, while another observed that it was fear of being exposed. AM4 described the fear of presenting as follows:

> They may have low self-esteem or they don't feel they are smart enough. It is hard for older students to go back to school and be afraid because they have been out a long time. It would be different if it were in front of family or friends. They may be afraid to present in front of fellow students because they are afraid to look stupid.

AM1 shared her thoughts about….,

> The professor has to make the students at ease. Think back to your first few presentations. Professors present all the time and forget how terrifying it is. You have to convince the student that this is one means of reaching the student's goals.

When asked if the presentations should be assessed, there was discrepancy. Each alumni member thought that giving continuous feedback on presentations was a must, but assigning a grade to the presentation caused disagreements. One alumni member said that assigning grades to the presentation adds fear to the presentation. Simple feedback after the presentation is complete will add to student's improvement on presentations. In a contrary view, an alumni member implied that assignment of grades was the only way to get the student to improve upon the student's past performance. There was no clear consensus on the best way to assess the presentations.

Group or team work. The group or team work theme was also discussed. All four alumni members believed that conflict management and adapting to others flowed from group work in class. AM1 stated,

> Groups are tricky. This is where you are going to have conflict, diversity, and negotiation management. You also gain a different perspective. Anybody who is

> open-minded will thrive on group behavior. It is getting those people who have such opinionated views to sit back and listen to other people.

In agreement, AM2 added everybody in class should feel it is a safe environment. Each student should get to know other people in class, guided by the professor. With team work for a project, the professor should not walk away as soon as the student team is formed but be around to guide the team in their team development. AM4 contended,

> Working in teams is tough, especially when students do not take responsibility and expect everybody else to pick up the slack. In the workplace if you don't do the job, you get fired. Although the students may not like teams, it is a tool that benefits them in the long run.

A solution to the group slacker was addressed by AM1. "Accountability. Accountability right from the get go. Professors should have each group write up an agenda and then have each member sign off on that section. You will know who is responsible for each section." AM2 stated that the professor and team leader meet on a regular basis and have the team leader report on the team's performance much like it is done in the work environment.

Alumni members discussed they each had conflicting teams and progressive teams. One alumni member acknowledged that the team's character was made up of the individuals in the team. Sometimes the individuals would congeal as a team, sometimes not. The professor can provide the tools the students can use, but it is up to the student to use those tools.

The alumni member interviews were supportive of the current interpersonal communication skills implemented in the classroom when they were students. Each interviewee explained the importance of presentation skills in the classroom as having future significance in the workplace. Getting along with other people and taking responsibility are characteristics to build on in college for future career success.

Alumni members know the importance of presenting and group work in the university setting and firmly emphasized requiring these skills in the classroom. A workshop for students would be helpful with alumni members speaking on the importance of presentations and group work. Alumni members were in the students' place at one time and may relate better to the students on the value of these skills.

Research question 5: *What other interpersonal communication skills strategies do the alumni members suggest?*

When asked if the alumnus could think of other strategies to promote interpersonal communication skills, the response was informative and educational. The strategies covered all six themes. The strategies mentioned were simple strategies that would not require change in the curriculum, just a different interaction with the students. A summary of the recommended interpersonal communication skills are in Tables 2, 3, and 4 on pages 77-79. Table 2 highlights the professional presentation and professional self-branding suggestions, while Table 3 focuses on group work and network, and Table 4 underlines suggestions for global awareness and diversity.

Professional presentation. Three alumni members stated that one of the least favorite assignments was presenting in front of the class. Even though presenting was

not a favored assignment, each expressed how the presentations prepared them for their future.

AM1 stated,

> Repetition, make them do it. Whether or not it is planned or impromptu, and impromptu is much more uncomfortable to do, they will get accustomed to presenting. Impromptu helps in critical thinking. At the beginning of every course you have an ice breaker. Just ask them how comfortable they are standing in front of people. Work from there.

AM2 stated something similar, borrowing a phrase from Nike. “Just do it. Get them comfortable with the people in class and have them tell you something about themselves. Say something unusual about themselves. Nothing intimidating.”

AM3 admitted the need to be effective at impromptu communication:,

> I am not good at impromptu but I needed to get better at it for interviewing. They may ask you unexpected questions in an interview. I was uncomfortable answering the questions, but I had to learn to think on my feet.

AM4 suggested the following activity:

> Have your class give a skit on the coursework. The group is assigned a role each and given a topic. They have to play it out in front of the class. They are trying to figure out this problem so the concentration will be on the problem, not presenting. The group is focused on the problem you have given them and then have the class start asking questions. This is good for critical thinking skills, also.

In addition, AM4 also recommended having more participation between students. Participation engages the class by letting them be involved with the learning. According to AM4,

> You don't know how many professors talk through the whole class and never give the students anytime to speak. Call on people and whether the answering is correct or not, praise them. Encourage by positive feedback so that they will feel more comfortable.

As mentioned before by AM3, presenting in front of strangers was intimidating. AM3 posed a possible solution to this problem: "Start inviting alumni members or staff to come in to see presentations. Someone who students don't have contact with. Get the students used to talking in front of strangers, helpful strangers."

To get the audience eyes off the presenter, AM1 suggested some lectures on how to use visual aids by stating,

> It takes some pressure off of the student when people are looking at the visual aid instead of the presenter. Make sure the student knows how to prepare a PowerPoint. Don't read off a PowerPoint but have a brief abstract of what you are saying on the slides. That way the presenter can avoid notecards. Don't make the PowerPoint busy.

AM1 further told me that some of her co-workers were not aware of how to format a PowerPoint and the slides look like an elementary school student had put it together.

Professional self-branding. Each alumni member conveyed that they would be willing to guest speak to the classes on the importance of interpersonal communication skills, especially preparing the student for the workforce. AM1 offered,

> I could be a guest speaker, someone closer to their ages, and speak to them about the importance of networking or interpersonal communication. I am not saying that they don't have respect for the professors, but they have a higher level of respect for a guest speaker. It confirms the things a professor has been telling them right along and maybe a light bulb will light up in their head.

AM4 concurred with AM1:

> I would love to be involved with the current students! Students have to do their part in getting a job and guest speakers are another way to voice that. Alumni members are the key to success because the student knows that we have been in their shoes and want to know what we did to make it.

AM3 suggested an alumni speaker bureau because of its effect on current students: "Having an alumni member speak would show how important the interpersonal communication skills are." AM3 made further suggestions:

> I think a very good way to promote self-improvement skills is to have YouTube videos. YouTube has different scenarios that a professor may ask "What are the positive, negative, pros, and cons?" If the student sees a negative behavior on a video and the student does this, it is more likely to sink in to the student.

Group or team work. The recommendations surrounding group/team work were with regard to the student organizations around campus. AM2 was encouraging more outside activities for the current students and alumni members. AM2 urged that

> The university should do more social activities with students to have them buy into the university and get to know other students. They have done it in the past but the staff and faculty never showed up so it was a bust. It is a matter of buying in to something that keeps you engaged and it even helps build your resume. Private University has a variety of professional student organizations and a student government organization but low student involvement. AM3 commented: Why not offer food or a little trinket to come to a professional student organization to lure students? In that way you can have them start building their resumes. A lot of employers look for volunteer work because it means you're not lazy and you are doing things for non-payment.

Networking. Networking in class and social media networking were topics of discussion. AM3 stated that the relationships made in class carried on after graduation. She often goes to other events with former students and continues to network at these events. "Broadening your horizons and getting out of your comfort zone through meeting different people has benefited me."

AM3 suggested an alumni meeting every month. This will often build camaraderie between current students and alumni members. AM3 expressed,

> There would be an alumni member guest speaking and the faculty members would have their classes come to the meeting for one hour. It was a chance for

> alumni and current students to mingle and get to know each other. Anything to make the students and alumni members feel they belong to the institution. We all are impacted by Private University and it is a chance to give back.

Social media networking has grown in significance. AM3 recommended a LinkedIn workshop with advice on the proper items to list. AM3 remarked,

> Teach the students how LinkedIn works so that they stay active on it. Networking is the quickest way to get your foot in the door. Beware of Facebook, put things on there that you would not mind an employer seeing. The internet can be our friend or our worst enemy.

Global awareness. One alumni member works in an organization that deals with international business. She is aware of global awareness and described what her organization does to recognize cultural differences. Noted by this alumni member,

> My organization has a lot of Indians and Asians working at least on a temporary basis. One of the things that they did was international food day. It was for the Indian Christmas. The Indians dressed in their holiday clothing and we enjoyed such good food from their country. We enjoyed the Indian's dancing and telling stories about India. You have to understand different cultures and things they believe in, like arranged marriages. They just have a different belief system.

Asked if this international food day made her aware of cultural differences, she replied,

> It started me thinking about it. After that there was another Indian person working with me on a contract and I learned more about the Indian culture because I asked

him a lot of questions. He asked me a lot of questions about our culture. It helped me see where he was coming from on certain items and I think it helped him see my perspective.

Diversity. Although three of the four alumni members did not deal with an organization with international business ties, the topic of diversity was relevant. AM1 stated,

> You have diversity everywhere you put a group of people. There is diversity here in this restaurant. Race, ethnic background, sexual preference, old, young, short, tall, or disabled; all have different experiences so they can view things in a different way. To have a good discussion in a diverse group, everybody has to be open-minded and not prejudice of the differences. I suggest you bring it to the forefront of a class discussion and hear the classes' views of different beliefs. It could be an energizing class or it could be an explosive class, dependent of the students you have in your class. Whether or not it goes over well, at least you are going to open some minds to differences in people.

AM3 had this to say about diversity:

> Diversity is important, especially in my job. Even though you may be dealing with Americans, everybody's experiences are different and we have to adapt to the differences. YouTube has some videos on exaggerated diversity issues that will get your class laughing but inside they will be thinking *Is this me?*

In summary, the alumni members were supportive of the current interpersonal communication strategies and hoped that these strategies would continue. The ideas for

new strategies to develop interpersonal communication skills were across the six themes and complemented courses. Unique strategies for integrating presentations in the classroom were given including impromptu presentations for quick problem solving and critical thinking; skits on coursework to concentrate on the problem, not on the presentation aspect; encouraging the faculty member to call on quiet students and make them a part of the class; teaching technical skills, such as PowerPoint in presenting to take eyes off of the students; inviting some alumni members into classes to allow the class to get used to helpful strangers; and confidence building.

Other strategies were each alumni member stated they would be willing to guest speak to classes to indicate how important interpersonal communication skills are: maintaining an active alumni association to allow students and alumni members to network; teaching how social media can assist in procuring employment; demonstrating YouTube videos on promoting interpersonal communications skills and a class discussion on the videos; encouraging global awareness by discussion in class; holding special events for the campus; and, introducing diversity in the classrooms for students adapting to differences. These strategies should be distributed to faculty members and the campus staff for implementation and development of new ideas.

Final Analysis and Outcomes

Interpersonal communication skills are as important in the future hiring or promotion of Private University's students. Several authors noted the importance of interpersonal communication skills and advised the universities to add more emphasis

regarding these skills (Covey, 1989; Wardrope & Bayless, 1994; Goleman, 1995; Maes et al.,1997; & Tanyel et al.,1999).

As was found in the study of business deans by Abraham and Karns (2009), each member of the focus group upheld that it would be remiss of the university not to emphasize interpersonal communication skills. In the course of this study, strategies were discovered to implement interpersonal communication skills into the classroom to complement the class. The original categories were communication, collaboration, conflict negotiation, and cross-cultural awareness that defined interpersonal communication skills. In the emergence of themes, conflict management became a sub-theme of both collaboration and cross-cultural awareness. Table 5 shows the original categories that interpersonal communication skills were divided into and the expanded categories found in this study.

There were two suggestions made to include as strategies in all of the themes. The first one, guest speakers were mentioned in each category by the focus group and each alumni member. A professional or alumni member in the business field will lend another voice to the student and possibly be more credible to the class than the professors. Each alumni member interviewed wants to come in to speak to current students on interpersonal communication skills and help current students achieve the success that they are now enjoying. One alumni member suggested an alumni meeting where the current students could intermingle with alumnus and an alumni member's speaker bureau.

Table 5

Comparison of the original framework to new framework found in study

	Original compared to new framework	
Category	Original framework	New framework
Communication	Presentations, asking and answering questions, eye contact, gestures, appearance and behavior, paraphrasing	Professional presentations: informal and formal, skits, information on using visual aids, strong English grammar Self-branding: asking and answering questions, paraphrasing, eye contact, gestures, appearance and behavior, respect, speaking to others, actions to others, firm and professional handshake, business card
Collaboration	Meeting skills, get along well with others, build relationships and trust, team orientation, develop job skills, ability to give instructions	Group/team work: faculty members set an example for students developing teams, chain of command, accountability, guide students in team development, role playing, knowing other students, get along well with others, more social activities around campus, conflict management and negotiation flows from group work Networking: in-class networking, business cards ready to network, informational interviews, internships or job shadowing, social media information, joining student organizations on campus, guest speaker
Conflict management	Give and receive feedback, get along well with others, effectively manage conflict	Conflict management is a sub-category of collaboration and cross-cultural awareness
Cross-cultural awareness	Getting along with people from different cultures, political awareness, interaction, understanding cultural norms	Global awareness: interaction and being aware, understanding cultural norms, gestures Diversity: faculty members set an example, talk about sensitive issues, safety and security

The second suggestion was showing video clips in class. One alumni member mentioned showing YouTube videos to explain each interpersonal communication skill topics. As previously suggested by Cardon (2010) and Kimball (2011), using films was a way of portraying communications processes and acceptable or inacceptable behavior to the class and allowed for discussion. The remaining suggestions will be discussed in order on themes; professional presentations, personal self-branding, group/teamwork, networking, global awareness, and diversity.

KAS 3 would like a guest speaker to discuss the advantages of interpersonal communication skills to the faculty members at a faculty development meeting. Instead of discussing it with every faculty member one by one, KAS3 wanted a faculty meeting devoted to interpersonal communication skills to state the importance of these skills. The notion was recommended earlier in this study by Mitchell et al. (2010) on professional development for educators on interpersonal communication skills. Student workshops were mentioned by a few participants to address the need for interpersonal communication skills.

In addition to the two suggestions that covered the six themes, each theme is discussed below and the suggestions for strategies that can be implemented in the classroom.

Communication--professional presentations and self-branding. Every participant felt each student should public speak to improve their future presentation skills. AM3 stated that presenting yourself was necessary in interviewing. A student must

build confidence to attain a favorable position in the career path and be able to sell yourself, AM3 urged. In section one, several authors concurred that presentations should be performed in the classroom as they are critical to the business world (Chan, 2011; Luparelli, 2010; Stowe et al. 2012)

Each alumni member had reasons for student's fear of speaking in public. AM4 observed that older students were afraid they would look unintelligent because they have been out of the classroom for so long. The feelings AM4 shared were similar to Brookfield's (2005) imposter status. Students feel like an imposter because they are afraid they do not know as much as the other students (Brookfield, 2005). The students who feel like an imposter are afraid to speak because everybody will be aware that the student does not belong in class.

Another alumni member asserted that professors had to make the students feel comfortable in class and give the student positive reinforcement. Referring back to what Malachowski and Martin (2011) advised, the faculty member should create a supportive, caring, and responsive environment for all students.

Two of the alumni members and one faculty member suggested impromptu presentations and skits. One alumni member stated that students are so involved in the task, they tend to forget that there are other students watching their presentation. Impromptu presentations build critical thinking skills, as mentioned by many participants in the study. This was also suggested before by Jamison (2010), along with roundtable discussions and mock interviews.

Two faculty members upheld that effective presentational skills require a strong grasp of the English language and proper grammar. The use of verbal fillers or not clearly speaking will distract from the message transmitted. Anderson and Anderson (2010) indicated that the instructor's example is influential in providing students the proper presentation techniques.

The focus group, faculty members, and alumni members emphasized the importance of self-branding skills. KAS3 mentioned how employers complained to her when they received a wet fish handshake from the student, a potential employee. She expressed that she makes it a point to greet students as they are coming to class with a handshake. If the student has an unprofessional handshake, KAS3 shows the student how to have a professional handshake. This is similar to studies that found etiquette (Bass, 2010) and physical appearance (Anant, 2010) are items that universities should incorporate into the curriculum.

A number of participants in this study discussed listening techniques of the students. One KAS participant indicated that often students did not listen carefully causing her to have to repeat herself. KAS1 used several strategies to have the students focus on their listening skills, such as *One-minute, what did you learn?* Listening skills were emphasized as crucial to the communication process (English et al., 2010; &Weger et al., 2010).

Collaboration--Group/team work and networking. Under the category of collaboration, group or team work was important in the classroom because the students would have to work well with other people in their future positions. Some faculty

members noted that students do not like to work with others and they prefer to work individually. Two alumni members acknowledged they had negative group experiences in school, but they expressed group work was necessary for their jobs. As this was expressed by Stowe et al. (2012) that alumni members found significant value in teamwork in the school setting.

Communication and conflict management would flow from group work, asserted KAS2 and AM2. Group members have to effectively communicate ideas and conflicts will arise. Prof. B wrote that healthy conflict allows brainstorming and produces a better solution.

The development of teams was mentioned by two faculty members. A student may be assigned a marketing project, but the underlying asset is the experience of working as a team and team development, expressed Bedwell, Fiore, and Salas (2014). AM2 felt team development was critical as he improved in getting along with teammates over the years. AM2 observed that instructors that are aware of the team's dynamics and the team's strengths, guide teams into synergizing their efforts. It was earlier stated that faculty members should provide team development and conflict management to promote synergistic teamwork (Xu & Yang, 2010).

The theme networking emerged from the category collaboration. Several participants mentioned networking to provide opportunities to the students. The participants' suggestions of in class networking, guest speakers, and informational interviews of organizational professionals would all provide networking opportunities. One alumni member suggested students networking in local groups to gather contacts for

future opportunities. Mentioned earlier in this paper, Lin et al. (2010) suggested firm trips, internships, and business professionals' advisory boards as means of networking.

Another source of networking is through social media. AM3 found that actively listing professional activities on LinkedIn and carefully posting on Facebook could benefit your career. AM3 suggested that the university have workshops on LinkedIn to give another networking possibility for students.

Cross-cultural awareness--Global awareness and diversity. The original fourth category in the conceptual framework was cross-cultural awareness focusing on the global economy with emphasis on interaction and political awareness of other cultures. While the focus group discussed the need for global awareness, the other discussions and writings on cross-cultural awareness ventured into a new territory. Through the data collection, the cultural awareness category broadened into a diversity category with a sub-category in conflict management. KAS2 member mentioned, "The world is shrinking so that if we arm our students to be culturally sensitive and diverse, they can respect and celebrate all of our differences."

In alignment with KAS2 statement on cultural sensitivity, KAS3 added

Even though we cannot go to every country that the students may visit, we can plant the seed in their mind that there are differences. Those differences should be celebrated and we should be respectful of the differences. Even if the students do not go to other countries, there are people from other countries here that the students have to learn to effectively communicate.

Carley et al. (2011) found in a long-term study that students learning about different cultures in the classroom was more effective than short-term study abroad. In AM4's organization, the supervisors have an international day celebrating a different culture and exposing the employees to the variances of the culture. When asked if the international day caused her to be culturally aware, AM4 stated it made her think about different cultures. She quoted Covey (1989): "Seek first to understand, then to be understood" and described her encounter with an Indian coworker like this:

> I learned a lot from him about the Indian culture because I asked questions. It helped me see where I was coming from on certain items and broadened my thinking. By asking him questions, he felt free to ask me about my own culture. We both enjoyed sharing about our cultures, and I think it brought us closer together working.

AM4 asked questions and improved her understanding of different cultures. Not only did this provide positive relationships with her co-workers, it also provided cohesiveness and productivity. Urged by Mitchell et al. (2010), frequent cross-cultural interactions occur in business and there is a need for intercultural business education.

KAS 2 acknowledged, "We have many experiences with the lack of understanding different cultures. Students need to learn to interact, talk to each other, and address sensitive issues that can create a lot of problems." While the focus group and one alumni member had experiences with interrelation to other foreign cultures, each of the participants had experiences with diversity or differences that led to conflicting issues.

Differences or diverse issues are everywhere, AM1 participant pointed out. AM1 added,

> You get diversity any time you put two or more people together. Vegans, tattooed individuals, and orange colored hair, all are different people and have different views in life. We should not shun from them, but listen to their views.

While the open-ended faculty member questionnaire did not directly ask a question pertaining to cross-cultural awareness, a comment was made by Prof. H. "I have to watch the students and see if what I do offends them. It may be something subdued, but each professor has to be aware of the student's response." Prof. H established that school is a safe place and everybody, students, staff, and faculty members should be respected.

Opening up sensitive subjects or prejudices in class was a suggestion by AM1. AM1 noted this may be a way to have students think about the subject or it may be an explosive class, depending on the students. As stated earlier, Fatima Oliveira (2013) and Fisher (2011) found that cultural familiarity in the classroom reduces unhealthy conflict and provides understanding of other individuals.

One AM participant mentioned, "Even though we are mostly from this country, everybody has a different background and have different experiences. We too have to adapt to those differences." Prof. D wrote, "One assignment is a student networking assignment where each student has to sit down with another student every week and find out a little bit about that student." This assignment supports a strategy recommended by

Lee, Williams, and Kilaberia (2012) that providing the students with a vehicle for peer interaction facilitates trust.

Another strategy to address global awareness and diversity in the classroom is YouTube videos. AM4 observed that YouTube videos were engaging for the class and reality based. Ambrosini, Billsberry, and Collier (2009) argued that films can aid the instructor because the films are multi-dimensional and the retention of information is greater. AM4 stated that students preferred videos to texts and could discuss the pros and cons of the video. She added that a student may review their past behaviors and may change their future behaviors based on the video. Kimball (2011) found that exposure to intercultural films could have a review and reflection impact on students.

Discrepant Cases

The academic director would like presentations and other interpersonal communication skills to be measured to show problem areas and improvements. She would prefer a standard rubric that would be used in every class so the university can track the students' performance. Keyton et al. (2013) testified that interpersonal communication behaviors are evaluated by others either implicitly or explicitly. Although participants agreed that interpersonal communication skills should be assessed, there were varied views on how the actual assessment would be completed and if the assessment should be graded.

When each of the alumni members was asked if interpersonal communication skills should be assessed, all four alumni members agreed to assessment but only one alumni member stated that the assessments should be graded. One alumni member argued

that students were already hesitant to stand in front of the classroom for fear of being judged, and grading the presentation would add more fear. Aimao and Blakely (2012) completed a study on peer assessment of soft skills and found the peers who are assessing another student benefit more than the individual being assessed.

Prof. B wrote that students are at different levels, and it would be remiss if students at a lower level of interpersonal communication skills would receive a low grade. According to Murti (2014), interpersonal communication skills education leads toward self-development and should provide opportunities to experience these in the classroom. Prof. D noted that an informal rubric should be developed and feedback given to the student on the student's improvement but not be graded.

Two faculty members expressed that faculty members should have guidance and training on evaluating interpersonal communication skills. One faculty member noted that strict standards must be set by the university, and the faculty must be trained for consistency. At the present time, Private University has a rubric for the capstone courses and the rubric is complex and may not be appropriate for every class. Keshavarz and Baghdarnia (2013) provided the curriculum design of interpersonal communication skills but did not provide any assessment tools. May, Thompson, and Hebblethwaite (2012) provided a four page assessment tool that also was complex and may not be appropriate for every class.

More research is needed on the appropriate assessment of interpersonal communications skills based on the above findings. A decision needs to be made about a tool to assess interpersonal communication skills, guidance and training for the faculty

members on how to use this tool, and benchmark standards for evaluating performance. When these pieces are in place, interpersonal communication skills can be assessed reliably and consistently to give the students feedback for improvement. Interpersonal communication benchmark standards will enable key administrative staff further feedback on the improvement of these skills and what skills need concentration.

Summary

Based on the findings of this study, the perception of the participants on implementing interpersonal communication skills in the classroom and on campus was positive. Each key administrative staff member emphasized that every university focused on hard skills and that stressing interpersonal communication skills would make our graduates work ready. Both the faculty and alumni members felt presentations and group work were effective in the past and aided the student in these two activities. While keeping with the strategies in the past, faculty and alumni members suggested many strategies that would be simple to implement into the classroom and compliment the hard skills portion of the class. The focus group and alumni members also suggested ways to promote interpersonal communication skills on a campus wide basis.

Therefore several development seminars would be beneficial to highlight the importance of interpersonal communication skills for business students. In the past, various interpersonal communication skills were encouraged in the classroom at a Private University, but with the transitions of administrative staff and new faculty members, these strategies may have lapsed. Presentations were mandated in the classroom under the previous academic director and proved very helpful from the faculty and alumni

members' feedback. Group work was also encouraged under the previous administrative director. A development series on interpersonal communication skills would benefit the staff and faculty members by reminding them on the importance of interpersonal communication skills and the strategies for implementing these skills into the classroom and on a campus wide basis.

Before the former campus director was promoted in July, 2013, he targeted campus activities to engage students and have a community among students, faculty members, and staff. This too suffered when the campus director left. Mentioned among the participants were various strategies that can be implemented in the classroom and campus wide that enhance interpersonal communication skills. Development sessions and workshops would target the importance of interpersonal communication skills for staff, faculty members, and students.

Development sessions and workshops would be divided into the following three portions: one key administrative staff member session, six faculty member development meetings, and six student workshops. Key administrative staff session would be 2 hours and present the importance of interpersonal communication skills and the strategies suggested by the participants of this study. Provided in this session will be suggestions for staff members to consider enhancing interpersonal communication skills for students. In addition, this session will also provide coverage of workshops for students to guide them in the importance of these skills for their future career success and faculty development sessions for implementing these skills into the classroom.

The second portion of development series will be six sessions covered at the faculty development meeting throughout the year. The faculty member training session are divided into six themes that the study analysis uncovered. The sessions will be two hours in length and will be on each of the following themes: (a) professional presentations including informal skits, impromptu presentations, and information on using visual aids; (b) self-branding including eye contact, appearance and behavior, respect to others, firm and professional handshake, and having a business card; (c) group/team work including development of teams, accountability of individuals, and role playing; (d) networking including in-class networking, informational interviews, and social media information; (e) global awareness including understanding and accepting cultural norms; and, (f) diversity including example set by faculty members and dialogue in the classroom.

Lastly, the third portion will include student workshops. Six workshops covering the themes and each will be 2 hours in length. The reason behind each theme will be discussed, and the importance of these skills for future employment will be examined. Discussion of how to work on these skills and practice of these skills would be the predominant portion of the two hours. The final project is found in Appendix A, and the evaluations can be found in Appendices B and C.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to find effective strategies to develop interpersonal communication skills in the classroom as a complement to the technical skills learned. The problem is having strategies for faculty members to integrate interpersonal

communication skills into the classroom. In this qualitative case study, I discovered strategies that participants perceive to foster interpersonal communication skills in the classroom. A qualitative method was chosen because hearing the perceptions of interpersonal communication skills of the participants is an important factor in the way the participants construct their world. A single case study was chosen because this study is a bounded system and themes emerged. I had little control over the outcomes and used multiple techniques for collecting data.

The focus group took place with the key administrative staff members who augmented the current strategies for the open-ended questionnaire and individual interviews. Four business alumni members provided perceptions of strategies to foster interpersonal communication skills within the classroom. Concurrently with the alumni members' interviews, an open-ended questionnaire was sent to each business faculty member on their perceptions of interpersonal communication skills strategies.

By simultaneous data collection and analysis of the open-ended questionnaire and the individual interviews, this study uncovered strategies that the participants perceive to foster interpersonal skills in the classroom. The low response rate of the open-ended questionnaire is a limitation because the faculty members who did not respond may have perceptions that provided more information. Possibly another tool could be used to gather information from the faculty members.

Based on the findings of data analysis, staff and faculty development sessions and student workshops were completed as a project for Private University to implement interpersonal communication skills. These strategies discussed in the development series

and workshops followed the themes found in the study and are compromised of the suggestions of the focus group, faculty members' survey, and alumni members' interviews.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

Private University discovered that local employers were looking for interpersonal communication skills as well as hard skills in future employees. Key administrative staff wanted to introduce more interpersonal communication skills into the classroom but lacked strategies to foster these skills. This study used several qualitative tools to discover new strategies to foster them. Using a focus group with key administrative staff members, an open-ended faculty member survey, and four alumni interviews, six themes were uncovered: professional presentations, self-branding, group/team work, networking, global awareness, and diversity. From the perspective of participants, each theme has new strategies associated with the theme that are complementary to the course work.

Interpersonal communication skills deserve a place in the curriculum to teach students these skills (Covey, 1989; Glaser,1983; Goleman,1995; Maes et al.,1997; Wardrope, 2002; Christie, 2012). Reports from NACE (2012) and the Higher Learning Commission (2012) advised that universities should stress interpersonal communication skills in their curriculum. In the data collection for this study, participants stated that interpersonal communication skills were important to the student seeking employment.

A professional development and student workshop series on enhancing interpersonal communication skills would benefit the staff, faculty members, and the

students in enhancing these skills in college for future student employment. The recent transition of key administrative staff left a void in developing the interpersonal communication skills of students on the local campus. The project to teach interpersonal skills outlines the three development sessions by using the participant's suggested strategies. The goal of this project was to improve students' interpersonal communication skills and thus enhance their work-ready skills.

Rationale

The data gathered from the focus group, from the open-ended faculty member questionnaire, and from the alumni interviews established new strategies for the faculty members to implement in the classroom and in campus-wide activities. As discussed in Section 1, a concern was identified that interpersonal communication skills were necessary to enhance the students' work readiness; however, there was a lack of strategies to support interpersonal communication skills at Private University. A development or workshop plan would inform the campus staff, faculty members, and students about why interpersonal communication skills were important and the participants' suggested strategies on how to enhance these skills.

Professional development provided a positive impact on participants by allowing the participants to focus on one subject matter with other participants, found Zueger, Katz, and Popovich (2014). Zueger et al. (2014) discovered that professional workshops not only reinforced the subject matter, but also allowed for communication, networking, and relationship building among the participants. In a similar study involving the benefits of student workshops, Robertson (2012) found that 92% of students felt more confident

in their ability after the workshop. Robertson (2012) felt that by explaining the task to the students and allowing them to practice, built confidence and aptitude in completing the task in the future. Separate student workshops should have a direct benefit to students wanting to improve their interpersonal communication skills.

Three separate development or workshops will be delivered. The first will be a campus staff members' development curriculum that will include campus wide strategies and the design of the faculty member development and student workshops. The results of the study will be reviewed and the strategies suggested by the participant's will be listed. Campus wide strategies include formation of a speaker's bureau, active alumni association, social activities such as international awareness day, and continued mock interviews for the students. Design of the faculty development and student workshops with the importance of each theme and the suggested strategies will be discussed. The key administrative staff development session will hopefully create an overarching comprehension of the importance of interpersonal communication skills and a promotion of these skills to the faculty members and students.

The second portion will include a series of faculty member development meetings focusing on interpersonal communication skills strategies suggested by the participants. Faculty development meetings are held every 8 weeks for 2 hours each. Each if the six themes will be one development curriculum and the faculty members will be provided with a handout. The importance of interpersonal communication skills to enhance the student's preparation for the workforce and some simple strategies suggested by the participants will be discussed. Group breakdown will allow for dialog and brainstorming

to adapt or develop strategies for the classroom. As advocated by DeKay (2012) and Robles (2012), faculty members should integrate interpersonal communication skills into the classroom for effective student impact. The faculty member's handout contains strategies mentioned by participants that are easy to implement into the classroom.

Lastly, the student workshops will be the third portion in the development series. The workshops will be divided into each of the six themes and will each be 2 hours in duration. Student workshops will be on a continuing basis as there is no time constraints as there are for the faculty meetings through the year. Each of the six themes will be a separate workshop with videos and/or PowerPoints to visualize each of the themes. The importance of each of these themes will be addressed as well as students discussing and practicing these skills. These workshops will be a direct approach to enhancing interpersonal communication skills of students supplemented by the campus wide and faculty member strategies.

The project addressed the six themes uncovered by data collection and analysis that are professional presentations, self-branding, group/team work, networking, global awareness, and diversity. Private University is a career university and these development series are meant to assist students in developing interpersonal communication skills and enhance work readiness. A literature review was completed on the suggested strategies to guide the development of the project.

Review of the Literature

Two databases were used in this literature review: Educational Research Complete and Business Research Complete. The following keywords were used:

professional development, student workshops, interpersonal, interpersonal communication, communication skills, soft skills, oral communication skills, strategies, collaboration, teamwork, presentations, impromptu presentations, guest lecturer, workshops, alumni association, networking, listening, diversity, and *global awareness.*

These scholarly articles are from the timeframe of 2010 to 2015, although there is a couple of articles that date back to 2008 and 2009 because the content is pertinent to the topic discussed. Articles were reviewed for the discussion of workshops and how workshops assisted in dispersed knowledge. Also, articles were reviewed for the best practices on strategies for the development of interpersonal communication skills.

Professional Development and Student Workshops Series

A professional development plan and workshop series was suggested by two members of the focus group. One key administrative staff member would love to have a faculty development seminar to focus on interpersonal communication skills to keep these skills in the forefront of the minds of the faculty members. According to Stanley, Snell, and Edgar (2014), professional development is successful when there is collaboration among the participants. One participant shares ideas with others and this brainstorming builds best practices among teachers (Stanley et al., 2014).

Agreeing with this view, Kuhn (2015) stated that award winning teachers benefitted from interacting with other teachers in a professional development session and exploring ideas before bringing it to the classroom. Kuhn (2015) described teachers tuning into new strategies and having fun with these as a way of self-motivation. Noted

by Angeline (2014), interaction with other teachers often motivates the experienced teacher in professional development.

In a different vein of providing professional development, Elliot, Jeewak, Mallett, Strauss, and Toy (2014) and Shein (2011) advocated online professional development that professionals can complete at any time. Shein (2011) stated that online professional development makes it affordable to the participant. Although online development may be appropriate for other strategies, interpersonal communication skills may be effectively learned by face to face communication. López-Pastor, Monjas, and Manrique (2011) encouraged collaborative professional development sessions to engage and provide future use of the strategies learned by the faculty members. Online professional development may be a useful supplementary reminder after the initial face to face series.

Lustick (2011) asserted that professional development is an effective strategy for assisting teachers in impacting student learning. Although Bayar (2014) and Bibbo and d'Erizans (2014) question the effectiveness of professional development in benefitting students. Bayar (2014) discovered a failure to link what is learned in a professional development seminar to what actively occurs in the classroom. Bibbo and d'Erizans (2014) stated that professional development focus on specific content, active learning, and review and reflection to be effective. In the professional development series, I built in time for discussion and idea sharing to allow participants to interact, review and reflect, and develop strategies.

In a suggestion by KAS1 was to have student workshops on interpersonal communication skills and their benefits. Godwin and Heymann (2015) did a study on the

effectiveness of a student workshop series for public health students. The series consisted of a 20 minute presentation by a student followed by a 50 minute brainstorming activity. They found all of the workshop participants had increased knowledge on the subject, the brainstorming session allowed the students to critically think about the subject, and 80% of the students would use the information gained in daily activities (Godwin & Heymann, 2015).

In a study assessing the outcomes of a professional development seminar series for alumni members, Zueger et al. (2014) discovered the series was effective in improving oral communication skills, critical thinking skills, networking with other participants and guest lecturers, and developing social confidence. Conley, Travers, and Bryant (2013) realized the knowledge achieved in the workshops improved over duration of the workshops. The series of workshops allows a gradual enhancement of interpersonal communication skills into the student's arsenal.

Reported by Tauriac, Kim, Lambe Sariñana, Tawa, and Kahn (2013), a workshop series focused on dialogue for racially and ethnically diverse students provided initiatives for administration and students to improve the campus climate. Also in the study by Tauriac et al., (2013), individuals became aware of their prejudices and stereotypes through review and reflection. Two of the project's focus are on global awareness and diversity and hopefully the results will be the same as the study by Tauriac et al. (2013).

Another study by Evans, Dotchin, and Walker (2013), found workshops allowed students to focus on one subject affording them effective personal and professional benefit. Students asserted that hearing the experiences of others helped them learn as well

as reflect upon their own experiences (Evan et al., 2013). The project allows time for the students to discuss their own experiences, reflect on their experiences and others, and practice new skills.

In designing six workshops for students, my intent is to give these students the tools to develop the above set of skills. Students are attending the workshop series voluntarily and they may want assistance on the interpersonal communication skills offered. The combination of presentations, videos, brainstorming, and practicing these skills may build confidence in students.

Anrig (2015) investigated successful companies that had a collaborative instructional system on improving employee outcomes. Instead of given a dictate to one group, a collaborative effort on all levels of individuals was successful because it was a coherent effort (Anrig, 2015). A combined professional development for faculty members and student workshops may assist the students in enhancing interpersonal communication skills for the future.

Emphasized Strategies in Professional Development and Student Workshops

In the focus group discussion, AM3 was a career services director before her new position as campus director. KAS3 discussed several comments she heard consistently from local employers about handshakes, looking the employer in the eye, listening skills, and appearance. According to KAS3, "We are a career university so it starts with us to implement interpersonal communication skills into the classroom."

In agreement, Bedwell et al. (2014) described that 25 years ago students were graduating without interpersonal communication skills and little has changed in the

following years. Several authors found that this gap between what businesses require and what students possess remains the same or is increasing (Ferguson, 2010; Lazarus, 2013; Mitchell, Pritchett, & Skinner, 2013; Murti, 2014; Singh & Sharma, 2014). According to Gibson and Sodeman (2014), millennials were brought up with technology and fail to recognize their interpersonal communication skills are lacking. It is necessary for educators to equip the students with interpersonal communication skills as well as technological skills (Gibson & Sodeman, 2014). As was stated in Section 1 and 2, the professional development and student workshop series should emphasize practical interpersonal communication skills that not only will transfer over to the business world, but are easily implemented in the classroom. The following literature review is on strategies to emphasize in the professional development and student workshop series.

Interpersonal communication skills should be emphasized at every level of the campus to be a collaborative, coherent effort. One effort of the campus staff could be to get the alumni members involved in campus life. Each alumnus interviewed mentioned that they would like to become guest speakers and have access to current students. Saunders-Smits and deGraaff (2012) identified the importance of alumni involvement to their alma maters in that alumni are role models to the current students. Zorek, Katz, and Popovich (2011) following a professional development series found that 97% of respondents felt the guest speakers enhanced their learning.

One alumni member noted that the alumni association on this campus was inactive. He suggested the campus staff should involve alumni members and reap the rewards the alumni members can offer. The campus staff can offer social events that

include alumni members, alumni member speakers' bureau, and alumni members' monthly meetings with current students to network. Several authors agreed that social networking is a necessary option for job seekers and business employees (Clipson, Wilson, & DuFrene, 2012; Gibson & Sodeman, 2014; Katona & Sarvary, 2014; Kujath, 2011). Newman and Petrosko (2011) found that graduates from the university were more likely to become involved if the university had contact information on the graduates, if the graduates were older, and if the graduates knew other members of the alumni association. Based on Newman and Petrosko's (2011) conclusion, the campus staff may venture into an active alumni association inclusive of a speakers' bureau.

As far as campus events, one alumni member described how her company had an international food day and had Indian co-workers dress in Indian style dress and do Indian dances and suggested the campus performs similar events. The company organized this event because employees come from all parts of the globe, and this promoted global awareness. Such experiences supported cross-cultural knowledge and understanding believed King de Ramirez (2015), Dayramman and Issa (2011), and Cushman et al. (2015). A global awareness event conquers two goals: (a) knowledge of a different culture, and, (b) social event to allow students, faculty members, campus staff, and alumni members the opportunity to interact.

The faculty members' professional development and student workshop are the primary focus of this project. As indicated by Bibbo and d'Erizans (2014), professional development and workshops should focus on a specific topic and involve active learning. I have researched strategies mentioned in the data collection and provided specific topics

into six series for the faculty members' professional development and six series for student workshops. The student should become aware of the interpersonal communication skills discussed in the workshops and these skills will be reinforced by the faculty members in class. The following is a list of strategies that will be presented in the faculty professional development and student workshop series.

AM3 proposed showing videos in class. By showing different interpersonal communication skills in videos, the faculty member can ask the students about the video and discuss the video. The alumni member stated that she was a visual learner, and seeing a video aided her in comprehension. In agreement, Ambrosini et al. (2009) believed showing films was another way of teaching a concept, especially to millennial students. Bedwell et al. (2014) described that video clips have seen growth in business education by portraying a specific skill set. While Ambrosini et al. (2009) were concerned about films copyright issues, Bedwell et al. (2014) pointed to YouTube and other video posting sites to enhance education.

Professional presentations are the interpersonal communication strategy that is performed currently on campus. As was stated by the key administrative staff, faculty members, and alumni members, presentations are one of the students' least preferred activities but are critical to learn for the workforce. The alumni members mentioned several fears that the students have and must overcome, including stage fright. According to Maurer (2007) the way to overcome stage fright is to focus on the partner or audience. In a self-developing skit, the student has to be concerned about thinking what has been said and feeding the lines to the other people. As Maurer (2007) stated, giving an

impromptu presentation makes a person focus on the task and view if the audience comprehends.

In agreement with this, Thompson, Switky, and Gilinsk (2012) explain that not only impromptu presentations promote oral skills, but also critical thinking skills among all the class members. It was reported that one faculty member has students teach a concept in a course. Thompson et al. (2012) established that having students teach a concept benefits the student who is teaching to by becoming an expert on the concept. As an active learning technique, this approach aids in information processing, sustained learning, and dialogue among the classmates (Thompson et al., 2012). All of the alumni members expressed a need to engage each student and that active participation was critical.

Even though the student is responsible for the presentation, the instructor has an important role as a facilitator and a coach discussed Thompson et al. (2012). Three faculty members and each alumni member advised that the instructors cannot walk away after the assignment has been given but guide and coach. More critical to these exercises is the coaching role where the instructor walks around the room and gives guidance, answers questions, or gets clarification (Thompson et al., 2012).

Marques (2012) described appropriate humor in the classroom to reduce anxiety and stress of students and humanize the instructor. Students appreciate funny stories or comments, professional humor, and compared the instructor to a stand-up comedian because of the continuous involvement with their audience stated Marques (2012). In my

experience, humor has to be used wisely so that the instructor can maintain the professional posture that students expect.

Gore (2013a) found success in life is based on the competence with the English language. Mishra (2014) and Mitchell et al. (2013) noted a good communicator expresses oneself clearly, concisely, and uses the appropriate word. In giving a description of interpersonal communication skills, Lazarus (2013) listed language proficiency and defined it as "the ability to speak…standard English in a business-like manner" (p. 41). Faculty members noted that English grammar and speaking clearly were important in the student's communication process and should be addressed by faculty members on a regular basis.

According to Lazarus (2013), paying attention to your grooming and dress, joining a Toastmaster's group, learning to engage people, offering a professional handshake, and becoming involved in book groups or discussion groups enhances the professional self-branding. Each of these ideas were mentioned by the faculty member's survey and the focus group to encourage students for development of career potential.

Whitsett (2014) suggested that instructors giving a professional handshake to every student coming into class sets an example and takes a minimal amount of time. A key administrative staff member would greet students coming into the university with a handshake. If the handshake was not appropriate, she would tell the student and teach the student how to handshake professionally.

Strategies to improve listening were conveyed by two faculty members. Listening is a critical part of the communication process, asserted Epler (2014). The different levels

of listening were observed by Epler (2014): ignoring; pretend listening; selective listening; attentive listening; and emphatic listening. Striving for emphatic listening, putting yourself into the speaker's frame of reference, leads to effective communication (Epler, 2014).

Rane (2011) gave several strategies for effective listening. Stop talking is repeated in Rane's (2011) suggestions as one cannot talk and listen simultaneously. Other strategies are: put the speaker at ease; show desire to learn; empathize with the speaker; eye contact; and ask questions or give feedback to what is being stated (Rane, 2011). Hanke (2009) encouraged the speaker to take a 5-minute challenge where the speaker listens to the nonverbal behavior of the other person. Making adaptations in your own message to grasp the listener's attention will lead to effective communication.

In the study by Ayon (2013), the following three factors were necessary for effective group work: team dynamics, team relations, and the instructor's support. Support from the instructor was stated repeatedly by each alumni member in assisting productivity by each group member. One alumni member suggested having students sign off on a section of the project so the instructor knows who is responsible for completing that task.

Ayon (2013) also suggested letting the students select their own groups instead of having one assigned to the students. This was mentioned by a key administrative staff member in allowing the students to choose their own group, but the instructor has the option to change the groups around if a concern arose. Ayon (2013) also expressed to encourage students alternate ways to communicate when face-to-face meetings were not

an option. One alumni member stated that Skype, group phone conversations, and e-mailing all members of the group were other ways for group communication.

Mishra (2014) indicated that conflict arises when two or more people have incompatible differences and proper resolution leads to improved job performance. A faculty member suggested to guide the students in conflicting situations through the process and allow the students to resolve the conflict.

Group or team work in the classroom also provides other benefits. Sultan and Hussain (2012) contended that group work assists in building communities in the classroom and reducing the anxiety of students. Singh (2013) offered that group work often encourages creative ideas. Thompson et al. (2012) indicated impromptu presentations demand activity from all the class members and build collaboration. Finally, quoted by Bedwell et al. (2014), President Theodore Roosevelt stated, "the ability to get along with others was the key to success" (p. 171).

Gore (2013a) listed several advantages of networking including: creating occasions of letting students interact with other students; bringing guest speakers into the classroom; and, establishing social connections to the working world. One faculty member indicated that the students would be required to meet another student every week and write a paragraph on the student in a journal. This was to create a community atmosphere and a form of networking. Another member of the faculty advocated that all students must have business cards to network.

Rinde (2012a) testified that for small businesses, this is not only a choice, but a necessity. Local face-to-face networking groups are necessary for the small business

owner's survival. Rinde (2012b) also observed that the group's supportiveness, confidence building in relationships, and innovativeness can affect the business owner's self-esteem. Monthly or bi-monthly student professional organization meetings are held at Private University to allow students to network within their own profession.

According to Gore (2013a), the universities' focus has shifted to global awareness and business etiquette in other countries. The ability to understand people from other countries and maintain interpersonal relations is vital in surviving in a competitive world (Gore, 2013a). In the article about Obama's visit to India, Chauhan (2011) indicated Obama studied Indian culture and perfected his intercultural skills during his visit.

As indicated by Gore (2013b), understanding and adapting to the culture in various countries enhances the communication process. Cultural, emotional, perceptual, and language expectations and perceptions may form barriers in cross-cultural communication explained Gore (2013b). The use of jargons or nonverbal communication may turn a positive statement into a negative one to the recipient (Gore, 2013b). A key administrative staff member mentioned that certain motions could be of insult to certain cultures and the university should make the students aware of these differences.

Gore (2013b) expressed that people have different mindsets and experiences. These differences can make communication difficult when people are ethnocentric. King de Ramirez (2015) concurred finding that culture workshops allowed individuals in developing an awareness of how culture influences an organization. As stated earlier in this section, Tauriac (2013) found that with intergroup dialogues with facilitators, racially and ethnically diverse students promoted ideas to improve the campus climate.

Kennedy, Wheeler, and Bennett (2014) urged that cultural learning activities may be a predecessor to the issues of diversity. Cultural awareness may challenge a person to review ones past diversity experiences and examine one's cultural competency (Kennedy et al., 2014). Two studies by Habib, Densmore-James, and Macfarlane (2013) and ASHE Higher Education Report (2012) acknowledge the need for teachers to recognize the diverse issues that are in class, whether the issues are multilingual, religion, disability, etc., and realize that these issues can cause anxiety in students. Anxiety in students may cause less engagement in class because they perceive themselves to be the "outgroup" (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2012).

There are some instances of subconscious segregation that are not recognized and allowed to continue. Brookfield (2014) realized that he had subconscious tendencies to be racist. Stereotypes are learned through family, friends, conversations, and through media indicated Brookfield (2014). By giving extensions on assignments to people of color and different ethnicities, Brookfield was responsible for propagating the white male supremacy. Brookfield (2014) suggested narrative disclosure to discuss our own racism. Opening up sensitive subjects or prejudices in class was a suggestion by AM1. AM1 noted this may make the class uncomfortable for the faculty member and students but this was one way of opening up topics that needed to be discussed.

Sedivy-Benton, Strohschen, Cavazos, and Boden-McGill (2015) found that differences between people such as national origin, religion, sexual orientation as well as others, may be singled out and bullied. An alumni member suggested that an instructor has the class discussed sensitive issues and moderate the discussion. Another faculty

member accidently offended a student by touching the student on the shoulder. Faculty members should be aware of the way students react to them and adapt accordingly. According to Habib et al. (2013), teachers need to consider the personal space between student and teacher to affect students' classroom participation positively.

Project Description

The strategies suggested by the participants in this study are effective strategies based on the literature review and will be a starting point on the development/workshop series. These strategies are only a suggestion of what can be done by the campus staff, faculty member and students and they can offer new suggestions to enhance interpersonal communication skills.

I will provide all the materials initially needed for the series including PowerPoints, videos, and handouts. After reviewing the evaluation from each series, I will make adjustments on the student workshops and add to the faculty and staff members strategies guide. The evaluation form was adapted by me from the World Health Organization (2008) example of a workshop evaluation form. I will be the presenter at each one of the professional development and student workshop series. Office space is available on campus to accommodate the staff members, faculty members, and the students.

Potential Barriers and Timetable

The development series for the campus staff and faculty members will have to be allowed by the campus director and the academic director. Both know how important enhancing interpersonal communication skills are for the students at Private University.

Even so, there is a potential barrier in getting the faculty members to act on what is discussed in the development series. My power is limited to presenting the development series to the faculty members, not in assuring that faculty members expose students to interpersonal communication skills in the classroom. One possible solution is the academic director adds interpersonal communication skills to the observation of faculty members each session.

There is a potential barrier to have students attend the workshops. A few possible resolutions to this are: (a) have these workshops under career service's department to entice students for future job prospects; (b) have faculty members make this an extra credit project or required project for the class; and (c) offer food or a door prize for attending these workshops. By viewing the evaluation forms gives me the opportunity for improving these workshops.

As the support of the campus staff is necessary for these development/workshops to have an impact, the staff development session will be held first. Once the campus staff give input on who should present and what should be a priority, I will arrange for the development/workshops series to proceed. The faculty development meetings are held six times a year, every eight weeks. I will hold one at the end of the August, 2015 session and continue the series for a year. The student workshops will be held in the evening and starting immediately after the campus staff development. The series of six themes will be held during the next 16-week period, September through December, 2015.

Roles and Responsibilities

I will present the development/workshop series to the campus staff, faculty members, and the students. Often the presentation has more impact on the audience if the presenter is an expert in the field or is perceived as an expert indicated Meretsky and Woods (2013). Therefore I will seek out experts in the themes to assist me in the student workshops.

In presenting the campus staff and faculty members' development series, I will have handouts for each session with strategies listed by the participants in the study for the staff and faculty member perusal. The campus director or academic director may require as policy the implementation of some of these strategies for providing interpersonal communication skills for the students. My responsibilities also include updating the project when new strategies are uncovered or present strategies adapted by the campus staff or faculty members. After each session, a written evaluation will rate the effectiveness of the session and how I can improve the session.

Project Evaluation Plan

The final outcome of this study is to have strategies that enhance the students' interpersonal communication skills for employment opportunities and will use a goal-free evaluation. According to Spaulding (2008), a goal-free evaluation does not use strict benchmark standards and instead views unforeseen outcomes as important to the evaluation. The goal-free evaluation is justified because interpersonal communication skills may not be taught immediately, but exposure over a length of time may have an impact on the students. Some interpersonal communication skills expected by an

organization may be difficult for the student to learn because of the cultural upbringing. Assessing these skills immediately through grades or written assessments may have the reverse effect and may lessen interpersonal communication skills. One faculty member stated that students start at different levels of interpersonal communication skills and grading the students who start at a lower level would be discouraging to the student.

A second justification of the goal-free method that various students differ in the interpersonal communication skills they possess and a single measurement will not be appropriate. Goal-free evaluation will allow learning moments when the learning moments present themselves, according to Lodico et al. (2010). A faculty member may notice the students in the class do not have the listening skill required and practice several listening strategies. Another faculty member has a shy class and emphasizes speaking skills. The outcomes to these separate events may be unforeseen or unplanned (Lodico et al., 2010).

The overall goals of this evaluation will vary based on the student. An appropriate handshake, looking individuals in the eye, getting along with other people, or cultural awareness may not have an immediate impact but students may eventually understand that these skills have an important effect on their careers. As one alumni member acknowledged, “The University can provide the tools for the student but it has to be the student who takes the tools and uses them.”

A participant-oriented evaluation will be used for development/workshops series that was adapted from an evaluation from the World Health Organization (2008). World Health Organization provided an open-access model of an event evaluation and questions

that could be asked of the participants. I have slightly adapted the wording to fit my project as the preexisting instrument is valid and reliable. The evaluation can be found in Appendices B and C. As Lodico et al. (2010) described a participant-oriented evaluation that evaluates the program on the participants served. Students or faculty members will fill out the evaluation to indicate if the event or program gave them tools to improve interpersonal communication skills. If the event did not provide the participants with useful tools, then I can adjust the program to better fit the needs of the participants. In essence, this evaluation will be a combination of a summative/formative evaluation because even if the evaluation is completed at the end of a program, it will indicate the needs for future programs.

The stakeholders of this project primarily will be the students. Improving students' interpersonal communication skills may be the difference in getting a job or a promotion as well as communicating effectively with different people. The secondary stakeholders are the faculty members and the campus staff. Private University is a career university and we should provide the students with career skills, including interpersonal communication skills. Improving interpersonal communication skills will also benefit local businesses that want new employees to be work ready.

Project Implications

The professional development and student workshops should have social change by the preparation of Private University students to graduate with interpersonal communication skills to be work ready candidates. The lack of the necessary interpersonal communication skills among college graduates was revealed by the local

business and management student advisory board and precipitated this study to resolve this matter. A coherent approach between the campus staff, faculty members, and the students should provide social change through professional development and student workshop series.

In preparing the students from Private University for their careers, interpersonal communication skills are important skills necessary to gain employment. The career services department may see students placed promptly into their field because of the focus on interpersonal communication skills. Faculty members may notice a change in the interpersonal communication skills of the students through the development/workshops series. Students who possess interpersonal communication skills will enhance their employment prospects. Businesses that hire work ready graduates will reduce the learning curve in acquiring successful employees. When businesses have successful employees who graduated from Private University, the relationship between the business and Private University career staff will solidify.

The development/workshop series is one step in the enrichment of interpersonal communication skills. The lack of interpersonal communication skills is not within Private University campus exclusively. There are scholarly studies on these skills falling short of the needs of employers since at least 1983 (Glaser, 1983; Covey, 1989; Wardrope, 2002; & Christie, 2012). Other scholarly articles have been written on strategies to assist in implementing interpersonal communication skills into classrooms. This study examined the perceptions of key administrative staff members, faculty members, and alumni members to assess the interpersonal communication skills that are

needed and strategies to implement into the university. This led to a development/workshop series to the campus staff, faculty members, and students to approach this opportunity.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

In this section, I reflect on this project, its limitations and conclusions, and further research suggested by this project. The development of interpersonal communication skills in the classroom has been discussed in scholarly writing for over 30 years. In a recent study by Bedwell et al. (2014) it was found the gap between what businesses would desire in interpersonal communication skills and what universities produce in graduates was as wide as it was 25 years ago. By completing a professional development and student workshop series, my wish is to present these skills to the campus staff, faculty members, and students to augment students' employment opportunities. Faculty members and administrative staff need strategies to integrate interpersonal communication skills along with the hard skills they are teaching the students.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The strength of this professional development and student workshops series is the continued duration of highlighting interpersonal communication skills to the participants. Both the faculty members and the students will have six opportunities to discuss, practice, and develop new strategies for enhancing these skills. Faculty members will discuss different interpersonal communication skills throughout the year at the faculty development meeting. Students will have six opportunities to attend different workshops during the 16-week semester. A continual enhancement of the strategies for interpersonal communication skills and the practice of these skills may have a longer-lasting effect then a one-time seminar (Zueger et al., 2014).

The second strength of this project is the adaptability of each series. Each series of the project is written in an adaptable format and if one topic has more attention than the rest of the topics, the focus is flexible. According to Stanley et al. (2014) and Kuhn (2015), it is important to be flexible in the workshop to meet the needs of the participants. Faculty members' professional development and student workshops constitute a collaborative, active learning method and take the participant's views into account. Collaborative learning that focuses on engagement, guidance, and leadership approach is an effective method of education (Anrig, 2015).

There were also limitations to this project. Private University is a satellite university of a national university and this university has adjunct professors teaching the classes. The adjuncts are not required to attend the faculty development meetings held every session. This limits the reach of the professional development interpersonal communication skills to full-time and visiting professors. Another possible limitation is the lack of attendance by students. Attendance is voluntary. A student attending is aware of the possible benefits this workshop can provide. A different matter is attracting the student who is not interested. An alumni member used the term *buy in*, and if students are not interested in attending this workshops than I may have to give an incentive to attend this program. I have to capture the attention of students to make them aware that this may have career benefits.

Recommendations for Alternate Approaches

An alternate way to reach out to all faculty members is to send the adjunct faculty a PowerPoint of each theme and the handout. The adjunct faculty members will not have

the opportunity to collaborate and brainstorm, but the information is disseminated to them. Sending a PowerPoint does not guarantee that the PowerPoint will be watched and the handout will be read. One of my responsibilities may be to speak with the adjuncts individually and testify how important interpersonal communication skills are to the student's future employment.

Another alternative approach to attending the student series is providing snack items or door prizes. One alumni member mentioned food or an incentive that lures the student to the workshop. Attendance is crucial, and once the students attend the workshop, learning and practicing will possibly bring them back to the next workshop. Burns (2011) noted that attending classes was an effective strategy to improve course grades. Students attend college for the prime reason to get ahead in their career and the career service director can emphasize how beneficial this series is to a future career.

A different, less attractive alternative is to make this mandatory for students. Private University has other mandatory student workshops, such as new student orientation and APA writing. Those two workshops are to benefit the students in their classes. A workshop on interpersonal communication skills would possibly benefit every student, but this workshop is not necessary to pass a class. Making these workshops mandatory may cause resentment among students and a negative attitude towards learning.

Scholarship

Through the doctoral process I became a novice scholar. Business administration, economics, and instructing adults were the previous experiences in my life before

beginning the doctoral paper. A different way of thinking was required and at times, the process was trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. This was the first time I described the problem, possible methodology to figure the underlying cause of the problem, and possible strategies to resolve the problem. In describing the problem, trying to stay focused on a small part of the concern was difficult. Throughout my literature review, I concentrated on a definable and measurable focus to quantify the problem. In reading various textbooks and articles, I learned and implemented many suggestions into my classroom related and unrelated to this study.

In my coursework, implementing a qualitative method seemed simple. As I went through the process of stating why a qualitative method was appropriate and the qualitative method I would use for this study, I learned about techniques, triangulation, ethics, data gathering, coding, and thematic analysis in depth. Assistance from my committee narrowed my wide playing field into a streamlined venture. Although data analysis was a difficult and tedious process, I was grateful for the experience both as a reader of scholarly studies and a future author. My peer reviewer lent an outside voice and the analysis of this study and provided a clearer picture of the analysis.

Project Development

Throughout the interviewing and survey process, I started thinking about the best way to improve interpersonal communication skills with the information I was given. The first thought I had was a policy recommendation. Through discussing a policy recommendation with my committee, we decided on instead the creation of a professional development series. Having a professional development series will give students, faculty

members, and campus staff members an opportunity to discuss interpersonal communication skills and further brainstorm on ways to improve these skills.

My biggest barrier was to take the themes and all the ideas for implementing interpersonal communication skills and formulate an effective method for reaching students, staff members, and faculty members. Instead of a 3 day seminar, I decided to break the time into separate series for the campus staff members, faculty members, and students. The campus staff members' seminar will be a 2 hour, overarching view of the six themes. As the campus staff members have an indirect effect on what happens in the classroom, this seminar will be to inform them of the possible resolutions to this problem.

As the faculty members and students have a direct impact on improving interpersonal communication skills, the series will be separated into 6 sessions for the faculty members and 6 sessions for students. The series are separated into each of the six themes and the concentration of the series will be focused on a single theme. As Bibbo and d'Erizans (2014) stated that emphasizing specific content is an effective method of education. This development series allows specific themes to be repeated as faculty members and students request certain themes.

Leadership and Change

When I was data collecting and analyzing, I began thinking about the project and how it may benefit students, faculty members and administrative staff. The professional development and student workshop series on interpersonal communication skills may go beyond the intended goal of improving employment opportunities. The series may assist in developing effective communication between the faculty members and the students

and form a community in the university. Likewise, this series may assist students in their everyday life by enhancing their interpersonal communication skills. Finally, possible potential social change is enhancing the work readiness of Private University's graduates, benefitting local employers.

Reflections on the Importance of the Work

In this study, the overall impact of the data collection and analysis and the project should narrow the gap between the interpersonal communication skills the employer's desire, and the future graduates of Private University. A student may enhance the employment opportunities presented by shaking hands correctly or appropriately dressing for the situation. The realization of what appropriate interpersonal communication skills are may have a sizeable impact on the student's employment possibilities and possibly everyday life.

On a personal level, what I learned from this study cannot be quantified. I went in circles often, but that only made this study stronger. When I would be off on some tangent, I would find something useful for the study, my classroom, or my own personal life. With patience, my chair and my second member would challenge me to go beyond my current view and extend myself further.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The potential impact of social change of this project is directed at the students, future employers, campus staff members, and faculty members. Current students often do not realize that they lack interpersonal communication skills necessary to progress and be successful. Integrating interpersonal communication skills into the classroom will benefit

the students in their future employment pursuits. The potential impact upon employers are they will find the Private University's graduates "work-ready" to join the organizational team.

A previous campus director spoke about communities and the need for the student to feel a community atmosphere at the university. As the world advances its technology, Gibson and Sodeman (2014) claim that interpersonal communication skills are lacking among the millennials. With teaching interpersonal communication skills as a complement in the classroom, it adds another asset for the students to gain employment and build a community in the university. Students may refer friends or family members to the university because of both the employment opportunity gained and a community atmosphere.

The faculty members may benefit from a feeling of community, also. Instead of the class having students isolated, the class, using interpersonal communication skills, may engage more freely in dialogue on the subject taught. This engagement in the classroom may cut down on absenteeism because of the enjoyment students have in the classroom and may improve subject knowledge. Burns (2011) noted that improvement in a course is highly related to attendance rather than other factors. In my own experience, I prefer open dialogue in the classroom as opposed to hearing myself speak. A community atmosphere would be welcome in the courses I teach.

Integrating interpersonal communication skills is an iterative process. Professional presentations were targeted by Private University and were successful according to the participating faculty and the alumni members. As technology and ways

of communication continue to change, the implementation of necessary interpersonal communication skills into the classroom has to change as well. The recent technological developments in internet technology, texting, tweeting, instant messages, etc. are ways of communicating with one another. With the new ways of communication, there has to be continued research on this topic.

In 5 years, I would suggest this study be completed again on the current faculty members, key administrative staff members, and alumni members. The continual discussion of the importance of topic with campus staff, faculty members, and students will make these skills a primary focus of Private University. The bond between Private University and businesses will be built as the graduates have hard skills and interpersonal communication skills.

Conclusion

Interpersonal communication skills are important in our everyday life. An individual told me that he went for an interview confident that he would get the position as he passed the first two tests. He walked into the interview and saw his interviewers in suits and ties. He was dressed casually. He was not prepared for the questions they asked him and he knew that this interview would not land him the position. If he had these interpersonal communication skills in college, he may have been better prepared for the interview.

Hard skills are important to be qualified for the position. Accounting positions require accounting skills. Information technology positions require various computer skills. All positions require interpersonal communication skills. As one faculty member

wrote in his survey “Hard skills may get you the job, lack of interpersonal communication skills can get you fired.” Teaching these skills is not only important in the classroom, but in everyday life. Sometimes individuals are not sure of the importance of interpersonal communication skills. The example in the previous paragraph was my son. I will assure that he knows the appropriate interpersonal communication skills before he goes on his next interview.

References

Abraham, S. E., & Karns, L. A, (2009). Do business schools value the competencies that business value? *Journal of Education for Business, 84*(6), 350-356. doi: 10.3200/JOEB.84.6.350-356

Aimao, Z., & Blakely, P., (2012). Peer assessment of soft skills and hard skills. *Journal of Information Technology Education, 11*, 155-168.

Ainsworth, J. (2013). Business languages for intercultural and international business communication: A Canadian case study. *Business Communication Quarterly, 76*(1), 28–50. doi:10.1177/1080569912471186

Al-Alawneh, M. K. (2011). Vocational education graduates' generic skills as perceived by educators and employers in Jordan labor market. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, *5*(2), 7-20.

Alshare, K. A., Lane, P. L., & Miller, D. (2011). Business communication skills in information systems (IS) curricula: Perspectives of IS educators and students. *Journal of Education for Business, 86*(3), 186–194. doi:10.1080/08832323.2010.497819

Ambrosini, V., Billsberry, J., & Collier, N., (2009). Teaching soft skills in strategic management with films: Arguments and suggestions. *International Journal of Management Education, 8*(1), 63-72. doi:10.3794/ijme.81.268

Ameen, E., Bruns, S. M., & Jackson, C. (2010). Communication skills and accounting: Do perceptions match reality? *CPA Journal*, *80*(7), 63-65. doi:10.1108/sd.2011.05627bad.004

Amy Yeo Chu, M., & Carter, S. (2012). From "learning" to "employability": Informing successful teamwork through social and emotional competencies. *Economics, Management, & Financial Markets, 7*(3), 11-30.

Anant, H. (2010). Interpersonal perceptions within organizations: An exploratory study. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, *4*(4), 34-47. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.59.1.29

Anderson, R. J., & Anderson, L. E. (2010). Professorial presentations: The link between the lecture and student success in the workplace. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, 14*(1), p. 55–62.

Angeline, V. R. (2014). Motivation, professional development, and the experienced music teacher. *Music Educators Journal, 101*(1), 50-55. doi:10.1177/0027432114534449

Anrig, G., (2015). How we know collaboration works. *Educational Leadership, 72*(5), 30-35. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb15/vol72/num05/How-We-Know-Collaboration-Works**.aspx**

ASHE Higher Education Report, (2012). Practicing a pedagogy that engages diversity. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, *38*(2), 83-101.

Assante, L. M., Huffman, L., & Harp, S. S. (2007). Conceptualization of quality indicators for U.S. based four-year undergraduate hospitality management programs. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism, 7*(2), 51-71. doi:10.l300/J172v07n02_04

Awang, F., & Roach-Duncan, J. (2010). Cultural differences and their effects on conflict resolution in business settings. *Journal for Global Business Education, 10*, 27–36.

Ayon, N. S., (2013). Collaborative learning in English for specific purposes (ESP) courses. Effectiveness and students' attitudes towards it. *International Journal of Business & Economic Development,* 1(3), 95-107.

Baard, P. P. (2008). Mitigating conflict in organizations: An opportunity for strengthening business school preparation. *Proceedings of the Northeast Business & Economics Association*, 119-122.

Bass, A. N. (2010). From business dining, to public speaking: Tips for acquiring professional presence and its role in the business curricula. *American Journal of Business Education, 3*(1), 57–63.

Bauerlein, M. (2013). Peer review and the productivity era. *Academic Questions, 26*(2), 141-147. doi:10.1007/s12129-013-9347-6

Bayar, A. (2014). The components of effective professional development activities in terms of teachers' perspective. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, *6*(2), 319-327. doi:10.15345/iojes.2014.02.006

Bedwell, W. L., Fiore, S. M., & Salas, E. (2014). Developing the future workplace: An approach for integrating interpersonal skills into the MBA classroom. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, 13*(2), 171-186. doi:10.5465/amle.2011.0138

Bibbo, T., & d'Erizans, R. (2014). Is professional development really a benefit to students? *International Educator,* 28(3), 26.

Blume, B. D., Baldwin, T. T., & Ryan, K. C. (2013). Communication apprehension: A barrier to students' leadership, adaptability, and multicultural appreciation. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, 12*(2), 158–172. doi:10.5465/amle.2011.0127

Bolton, M. K. (1999). The role of coaching in student teams: A just-in-time approach to learning. *Journal of Management Education, 23*(3), 233-250. doi:10.1177/10525629902300302

Bosshart, S., Wentz, M., & Heller, T. (2009). Using alumni perspectives for university evaluation and planning. *College Student Journal*, *43*(2), 411-428

Brookfield, S. D. (2005). Overcoming impostorship, cultural suicide, and lost innocence: Implications for critical thinking in the community college. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 130,* 49-57. doi:10.1002/cc.195

Brookfield, S., (2014). Teaching our own racism. *Adult Learning, 25*(3), 89-95. doi:10.1177/1045159514534189

Burkemper, E. M., (2004). Informed consent in social work ethics education: Guiding student education with an informed consent template. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 24*(12), 141-160. doi:10.1300/j067v24n01_09

Burns, D. (2011). How students can improve their performance? An examination of possibly correlates. *Business Education Digest,* (18), 1-10.

Buttermore, J. A. (2011). The team-taught cross-functional core: Insights from a long-term undergraduate program. *Journal of Education for Business*, *86*(4), 240-247. doi:10.1080/08832323.2010.498843

Cardon, P. W. (2010). Using films to learn about the nature of cross-cultural stereotypes in intercultural business communication courses. *Business Communication Quarterly, 73*(2), 150–165. doi:10.1177/1080569910365724

Carley, S., Stuart, R., & Dailey, M. P. (2011). Short-term study abroad: An exploratory view of business student outcomes. *Journal of Management Policy & Practice*, *12*(2), 44-53.

Chan, V. (2011). Teaching oral communication in undergraduate science: Are we doing enough and doing it right? *Journal of Learning Design*, *4*(3), 71-79. doi:10.5204/jld.v4i3.82

Chauhan, G. S., (2011). Soft skills beyond classroom: Taking a leaf out of Obama's India visit. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, *5*(2), 33-38

Christie, N. V. (2012). An interpersonal skills learning taxonomy for program evaluators. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 18*(4), 739–756. Retrieved from: http://www.jstor.org/stable/23272641

Clipson, T. W., Wilson, S. A., & DuFrene, D. D., (2012). The social networking arena: Battle of the sexes. *Business Communication Quarterly, 75*(1), 64-67. doi:10.1177/1080569911423961

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education* (6th ed.). London: Routledge. Retrieved from http://site.ebrary.com/id/10180298

Conley, C. S., Travers, L. V., & Bryant, F. B. (2013). Promoting psychosocial adjustment and stress management in first year college students: The benefits of engagement

in a psychosocial wellness seminar. *Journal of American College Health, 61*(2), 75-86. doi:10.1080/07448481.2012.754757

Covey, S. R. (1989). *The seven habits of highly effective people: Powerful lessons in personal change.* New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (*3rd ed*).* Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Crouch, M. & McKenzie, H. (2006). The logic of small samples in interviewing-based qualitative research. *Social Science Information, 45*(4), 483–499. doi:10.1177/0539018406069584

Cushman, L. F., Delva, M., Franks, C. L., Jimenez-Bautista, A., Moon-Howard, J., Glover, J., & Begg, M. D. (2015). Cultural competency training for public health students: Integrating self, social, and global awareness into a Master of Public Health curriculum. *American Journal of Public Health, Supplement, 105,* s132-s140. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2014.302506

Davis, B. D. (1999). Encouraging commuter student connectivity. *Business Communication Quarterly, 62*(2), 74–78. doi:10.1787/9789264040892-en

Dayaram, K., & Issa, T. (2011). Reflective thinking: Learning to lead. *International Journal on Learning, 18*(6), 83–95. Retrieved from

http://espace.library.curtin.edu.au:80/R/func=dbin-jumo-full&local_base=gen01-era02&object_id=174779

Decarie, C. (2010). Literacy and informational interviews. *Business Communication Quarterly, 73*(3), 306–317. doi:10.1177/1080569910376533

Deepa, S. S., & Seth, M. (2013). Do soft skills matter? – Implications for educators based on recruiters' perspective. *IUP Journal Of Soft Skills*, *7*(1), 7-20.

DeKay, S. H. (2012). Interpersonal communication in the workplace: A largely unexplored region. *Business Communication Quarterly, 75*(4), 449–452. doi:10.1177/1080569912458966

Editorial: Public relations and research interviewing [Editorial]. (1964). *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *28*(1), 118.

Elliot, E., Jeewek, J., Mallett,C., Strauss, E. K., & Toy, T. C. (2014). Meetings to go: Convenient professional development. *New Teacher Advocate,* 22(2), 12-13.

English, D., Manton, E., & Walker, J. (2010). Qualities needed in the workplace: Views of college of business undergraduate students. *China-USA Business Review, 9*(11), 74–78.

Epler, D., (2014). The habits of communication. *Strategic Finance, 96(9), 15-16,61.*

Evans, R., Dotchin, C., & Walker, R., (2013). Maximising the value from the elective experience: Post elective workshops. *Clinical Teacher, 10*(6), 362-367. doi:10.1111/tct.12033

Fall, L. T., Kelly, S., MacDonald, P., Primm, C., & Holmes, W. (2013). Intercultural communication apprehension and emotional intelligence in higher education:

Preparing business students for career success. *Business Communication Quarterly, 76*(4), 412–426. doi:10.1177/1080569913501861

Fatima Oliveira, M. (2013). Multicultural environments and their challenges to crisis communication. *Journal of Business Communication*, *50*(3), 253-277. doi:10.1177/0021943613487070

Ferguson, J. (2010). An overview and discussion of research supporting the concept of a generic 'soft' skills framework in tertiary education towards bridging the gap between education and employment. *New Zealand Journal of Applied Business Research, 8*(2), 59-74.

Fisher, D. (2011). Cultural communication: Increasing intercultural understanding to enhance collaboration in educational communities. *International Schools Journal*, *31*(1), 8-15.

Fortado, B. (1990). The responsibilities of a semistructured interviewer. *Employee Responsibilities & Rights Journal, 3*(3), 31-46. doi:10.1007/BF01384762

Fredrick, T. A. (2008). Facilitating better teamwork: Analyzing the challenges and strategies of classroom-based collaboration. *Business Communication Quarterly, 71*(4), 439–455. doi:10.1177/1080569908325860

Freeman, I., Knight, P., & Butt, I. (2011). A tri-country marketing project – Preparing students for the realities of a global marketplace. *Journal of Teaching in International Business*, *22*(4), 277-299. doi:10.1080/08975930.2011.653910

Gallagher, A. (2013). The ethics of reviewing. *Nursing Ethics, 20*(7), 735–736. doi:10.1177/0969733013506646

Game, A., & Metcalfe, A. (2009). Dialogue and team teaching. *Higher Education Research and Development, 28*(1), 45–57. doi:10.1080/07294360802444354

Gibson, L. A., Sodeman, W. A., (2014). Millennials and technology: Addressing the communication gap in education and practice. *Organization Development Journal, 32*(4), 63-75.

Gilardi, S., & Guglielmetti, C. (2011). University life of non-traditional students: Engagement styles and impact on attrition. *Journal of Higher Education, 82*(1), 33 -53. doi:10.1353/jhe.2011.0005

Glaser, S. R. (1983). Interpersonal communication instruction: A behavioral competency approach. *Communication Education, 32*, 221–225. doi:10.1080/03634528309378532

Glaser, H. F., & Bingham, S. (2009). Students' perceptions of their connectedness in the community college basic public speaking course. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 9*(2), 57–69.

Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Godwin, H., & Heymann, S. J. (2015). A call to action: Training public health students to be effective agents for social change. *American Journal of Public Health*, *105,* s34-s37. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2014.302356

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence.* New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with emotional intelligence.* New York, NY: Bantam Books

Gore, V. (2013a). 21st century skills and prospective job challenges. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills, 7*(4), 7-14.

Gore, V. (2013b). The importance of cross-cultural communication. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, *7*(1), 59-65.

Habib, A., Densmore-James, S., & Macfarlane, S. (2013). A culture of care: The role of culture in today's mainstream classrooms. *Preventing School Failure, 57*(3), 171-180. doi:10.1080/1045988X.2013.798777

Halfhill, T. R., & Nielsen, T. M. (2007). Quantifying the "softer side" of management education: An example of using teamwork competencies. *Journal of Management Education, 31*(1), 64 – 80. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/195732844?accountid=14872

Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, B. (2011). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Hanke, S., (2009). Communication styles: What is your impact on others? *Professional Safety, 54*(5), 22-25.

Hartman, J. L., & McCambridge, J. (2011). Optimizing millennials' communication styles. *Business Communication Quarterly, 74*(1), 22–44. doi:10.1177/1080569910395564

Higher Learning Policy, a commission of the North Central Association (2012). *Policy Title: Criteria for Accreditation* (Number: CRRT.B.10.010). Retrieved from http://policy.ncahlc.org/Policies/criteria-for-accreditation.html

Hinchcliff, R., Greenfield, D., Westbrook, J. I., Pawsey, M., Mumford, V., & Braithwaite, J. (2013). Stakeholders perspectives on implementing accreditation programs: A qualitative study of enabling factors. *BMC Health Service Research, 13*(1), 1-18. doi:10.1186/1472-6963-13-437

Hynes, G. E. (2012). Improving employees' interpersonal communication competencies: A qualitative study. *Business Communication Quarterly, 75*(4), 466 – 475. doi:10.1177/1080569912458965

Jackling, B., & De Lange, P. (2009). Do accounting graduates' skills meet the expectations of employers? A matter of convergence or divergence. *Accounting Education*, *18*(4/5), 369-385. doi:10.1080/09639280902719341

Jamison, D. (2010). Leadership and professional development: An integral part of the business curriculum. *Business Education Innovation Journal, 2*(2), 102–111.

Janssen, O. (2005). The joint impact of perceived influence and supervisor supportiveness on employee innovative behaviour. *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, *78*(4), 573-579. doi:10.1348/096317905X25823

Juritzen, T. I., Grimen, H., & Heggen, K. (2011). Protecting vulnerable research participants: A Foucault-inspired analysis of ethics committees. *Nursing Ethics, 18*(5), 640–650. doi:10.1177/0969733011403807

Kasworm, C. E. (2003). Setting the stage: Adults in higher education. *New Directions for Student Services, 102,* 3-10. doi:10.1002/ss.83

Katona, Z., & Sarvary, M. (2014). Maersk Line: B2B Social media--"It's communication, not marketing". *California Management Review*, *56*(3), 142-156. doi:10.1525/cmr.2014.56.3.142

Keith, N. K., Perreault, H. R., & Chin, M. (2009). Business employee ethical misconduct and managerial disciplinary actions: A business student perspective. *Delta Pi Epsilon Journal,* 18, 1–11.

Kelly, A. (2009). In defence of anonymity: rejoining the criticism. *British Educational Research Journal, 35*(3), 431–445. doi:10.1080/01411920802044438

Kennedy, J.A., Wheeler, W.N., & Bennett, S. (2014). An exploratory study of classroom diversity and cultural competency. *Journal of Counselor Preparation & Supervision, 6*(2), 7-20. doi:10.7729/52.1099

Kennedy-Lewis, B. L. (2012). When a teacher becomes a researcher: Using self-narrative to define one's role as participant-observer. *Theory Into Practice, 51*(2), 107–113. doi:10.1080/00405841.2012.662865

Keshavarz, M., & Baghdarnia, M., (2013). Assessment of student professional outcomes for continuous improvement. *Journal of Learning Design, 6*(2), 33-40. doi:10.5204/jld.v6i2.95

Keyton, J., Caputo, J. M., Ford, E. A., Fu, R., Leibowitz, S. A., Liu, T.,… Wu, C. (2013). Investigating verbal workplace communication behaviors. *Journal of Business Communication*, *50*(2), 152-169. doi:10.1177/0021943612474990

Kimball, B. (2011). Creating an awareness and understanding of business and cultural environments through the integration of classic literature and film into traditional course work. *Southern Business Review*, *36*(2), 51-58.

King de Ramirez, C. (2015). Strategy and action: Assessing student-led culture workshops within the professions. *Foreign Language Annals, 48*(1), 56-67. doi:10.1111/flan.12125

Koncz, A., & Allen, C. (2012a, October 4). What employers want to see on a resume. *NACE.* Retrieved from http://www.naceweb.org/printerFriendly.aspx?printpage=/Press/Releases/Employers_Look_for_Communication_Skills,_Ability_to_Work_in_a_Team_in_New_College_Grads.aspx

Koncz, A., & Allen, C. (2012b, November 8). Employers look for communication skills, ability to work in a team in new college grads. *NACE.* Retrieved from http://www.naceweb.org/Press/Releases/Employers_Look_for_Communication_Skills ,_Ability_to_Work_in_a_Team_in_New_College_Grads.aspx

Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading Change.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Kuhn, J. (2015). Meaningful play – Making professional development fun. *TESL-EJ, 18*(4), 1-8.

Kujath, C. L., (2011). Facebook and MySpace: Complement or substitute for face-to-face interaction? *CyberPsychology, Behavior & Social Networking, 14*(1/2), 75-78. doi:10.1089/cyber.2009.0311

Lang, M. (2009). Conflict management: A gap in business education curricula. *Journal of Education for Business, 84*(4), 240–245. doi:10.3200/JOEB.84.4.240-245

Lazarus, A., (2013). Soften up: The importance of soft skills for job success. *Physician Executive, 39*(5), 40-45.

Lear, C. (2011). System administration soft skills. *Communications of the ACM*, *54*(2), 52-58. doi:10.1145/1897816.1897837

Lee, A., Williams, R., & Kilaberia, R. (2012). Engaging diversity in first-year college classrooms. *Innovative Higher Education, 37*(3), 199-213. doi:10.1007/s10755-011-9195-7

Lin, P., Grace, D., Krishnan, S., & Gilsdorf, J. (2010). Failure to communicate. *CPA Journal*, *80*(1), 63-65.

Lingard, R. W. (2010). Improving the teaching of teamwork skills in engineering and computer science. *Journal of Systemics, Cybernetics & Informatics, 8*(6), 20–23.

Lodico, M. G., Spaulding, D. T., & Voegtle, K. H. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice.* San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

López-Pastor, V. C., Monjas, R., & Manrique, J. C., (2011). Fifteen years of action research as professional development: Seeking more collaborative, useful and democratic systems for teachers. *Education Active Research, 19*(2), 153-170. doi:10.1080/09650792.2011.569190

Lovett, M., & Jones, I. (2008). Social/Interpersonal Skills in Business: In Field, Curriculum and Student Perspectives. *Journal of Management & Marketing Research*, *1*75-83. Retrieved from http://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/08063.pdf

Luparelli, G. N. (2010). The case study: An exercise for developing the confidence and skills to author and deliver a business presentation. *Proceedings of the Northeast Business & Economics Association,* 671–674.

Lustick, D. S. (2011). Experienced secondary teachers' perceptions of effective professional development while pursuing National Board certification. *Teacher Development, 15*(2), 219-239. doi:10.1080/13664530.2011.571511

Macheski, G. E., Buhrmann, J., Lowney, K. S., & Bush, M. E. L. (2008). Overcoming student disengagement and anxiety in theory, methods, and statistics courses by building a community of learners. *Teaching Sociology, 36*(1), 42–48. doi:10.1177/0092055x0803600106

Maes, J. D., Weldy, T. G., & Icenogle, M. L. (1997). A managerial perspective: Oral communication competency is most important for business students in the workplace. *Journal of Business Communication, 34*(1), 67–80. doi:10.1177/002194369703400104

Malachowski, C. C., & Martin, M. M. (2011). Instructors' perceptions of teaching behaviors, communication apprehension, and student nonverbal responsiveness in the classroom. *Communication Research Reports, 28*(2), 141–150. doi:10.1080/08824096.2011.565275

Maltby, H. J., & Abrams, S. (2009). Seeing with new eyes: the meaning of immersion experience in Bangladesh for undergraduate nursing students. *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship, 6*(1), 1-15. doi:10.2202/1548-923X.1858

Mamidenna, S. (2009). Use of portfolios in a soft skills course. *ICFAI Journal of Soft Skills, 3*(1), 7 – 17.

Manring, S. L. (2012). Tapping and fostering students' emotional intelligence through service-learning projects. *Journal of Behavioral & Applied Management, 13*(3), 168–185. Retrieved from http://www.ibam.com/pubs/jbam/articles/vol13/no3/manring.pdf

Marques, J., (2012). Enlightened teaching strategies in an enlightened era: Applying humor in business education. *Business Education Innovation Journal, 4*(1), 65-71. Retrieved from http://www.elmstpress.com/images/BEI_jnl_V4N1_June_2012.pdf#page=65

Maurer, R. (2007). How improv can help quality. *Journal for Quality & Participation*. p. 33.

Mastracci, S. H., Newman, M. A., & Guy, M. E. (2010). Emotional labor: Why and how to teach it. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 16*(2), 123–141. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/25676119

May, G. L., Thompson, M. A., & Hebblethwaite, J., (2012). A process for assessing and improving business writing at the MBA level. *Business Communication Quarterly, 75*(3), 252-270. doi:10.1177/1080569912441822

McCroskey, J. C. (1977). Classroom consequences of communication apprehension. *Communication Education, 26*(1), 27–33. doi:10.1080/03634527709369944

McCroskey, J. C., Richmond, V. P., & Bennett, V. E. (2006). The relationship of student end-of-class motivation with teacher communication behaviors and instructional outcomes. *Communication Education, 55*(4), 403–414. doi:10.1080/03634520600702562

Meretsky, V. J., & Woods, T. N. (2013). A novel approach for practitioners in training: A blended-learning seminar combining experts, students and practitioners. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning*, *13*(3), 48-62. Retrieved from http://josotl.indiana.edu/article/view/3123/0

Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mishra, K., (2014). Employability skills that recruiters demand. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills, 8*(3), 50-55.

Mitchell, G. W., Pritchett, C. C., & Skinner, L. B., (2013). The importance of integration of soft skills into the curriculum as identified by MBA students. *Academy of Business Research Journal, 2*(2), 87-103.

Mitchell, G. W., Skinner, L. B., & White, B. J. (2010). Essential soft skills for success in the twenty-first century workforce as perceived by business educators. *Delta Pi Epsilon Journal, 52*(1), 43–53.

Murti, A. B., (2014). Why soft skills matter. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills, 8*(3), 32-36.

Myers, J., Frieden, T. R., Bherwani, K. M., & Henning, K. J. (2008). Ethics in public health research: Privacy and public health at risk: Health confidentiality in the digital age. *American Journal of Public Health, 98*(5), 793–801. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2006.107706

NACE Research (2010). *Job outlook, 2011.* Retrieved from http://career.pages.tcnj.edu/files/2011/07/Job_Outlook_2011_Full_Report_PDF1.pdf

NACE (2012). *Job Outlook, 2013.* National Association of Colleges and Employers. Bethlehem, PA. Retrieved from www.naceweb.org

Newman, M., & Petrosko, J. (2011). Predictors of alumni association membership. *Research in Higher Education, 52*(7), 738-759. doi:10.1007/s11162-011-9213-8

Njumbwa, S. (2008). The undergraduate research experience of adult learners in an accelerated degree completion program. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 56*(3), 49-60. doi:10.1080/07377366.2008.10400161

ODEP. (2010). Teaching soft skills through workplace simulations in classroom settings. *U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy.* Retrieved from http://www.dol.gov/odep/documents/TeachingSoftSkills.pdf, June 2010 April 9, 2013.

Okoro, E. (2012). Cross-cultural etiquette and communication in global business: Toward a strategic framework for managing corporate expansion. *International Journal of Business & Management, 7*(16), 130–138. doi:10.5539/ijbm.v7n16p130

Prestwich, R., & Ho-Kim, T., (2007). Knowledge, skills, and abilities of international business majors: What we teach them versus what companies need them to know. *Journal of Teaching in International Business, 19*(1), 29 – 55. doi:10.1300/J066v19n01-03

Powell, J. D., & Lines, J. I. (2010). Making learning personal: Recommendations for classroom practice. *About Campus 15*(2), 20 -25. doi:10.1002/abc.20018

Private University. (2012). *Academic catalog, 2012 – 2013, Volume XXX, U.S. Ed.*

Private University. (2012). *Academic annual report, 2011 – 2012.* Retrieved from http://www.privateuniversity.edu/assets/pdf/whydevry/academic-annual-report.pdf

Private University. (n.d.). *TEACH, it's more than we do, it's who we are.* Retrieved from http://www.privateuniversityinc.com/

QSR International. (2013, December 13). *Nvivo 10 product*. Retrieved from http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo.aspx

Radhaswamy, P., & Zia, A. (2011). The importance of communication. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills, 5*(4), 52–56.

Rane, D. B., (2010). Effective body language for organizational success. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills, 4*(4), 17-26.

Rane, D. B. (2011). Good listening skills make efficient business sense. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, *5*(4), 43-51.

Rinde, T., (2012a). Virtual face-to-face networking: Choice or necessity. *Managerial Challenges of the Contemporary Society*, (4), 126-130.

Rinde, T., (2012b). Emotional aspects and managerial effectiveness in face-to-face business networking groups. *Managerial Challenges of Contemporary Society,* (4), 121-125.

Robertson, K., (2012). A journal club workshop that teaches undergraduates a systematic method for reading, interpreting, and presenting primary literature. *Journal of College Teaching Science,* 41(6), 25-31. Retrieved from http://crawl.prod.proquest.com.s3.amazonaws.com/fpcache/2ecff15e6275e98cef7c832c5e6ea287.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJF7V7KNV2KKY2NUQ&Expires=1438457563&Signature=YRVPywr%2Fnf%2FkgUjV%2FGr4E4AwAyQ%3D

Robles, M. M. (2012). Executive perceptions of the 10 soft skills needed in today's workplace. *Business Communication Quarterly, 75*(4), 453–465. doi:10.1177/1080569912460400

Rolls, J. A. (1998). Facing the Fears Associated with Professional Speaking. *Business Communication Quarterly*, *61*(2), 103-106. doi:10.1177/108056999806100213

Russ, T. L. (2009). The status of the business communication course at U.S. colleges and universities. *Business Communication Quarterly, 72*(4), 395–413. doi:10.1177/1080569909349524

Ryan, T. G. (2011). The teacher/researcher and the role of pre-understanding: A personal analysis. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work, 8*(2), 220–228. Retrieved from http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Thomas_Ryan2/publication/236935216_The_teacherresearcher_and_the_role_of_pre-understanding_

Saunders-Smits, G. & deGraaff, E., (2012). Assessment of curriculum quality through alumni research. *European Journal of Engineering Education, 37*(3), 133-142. doi:10.1080/03043797.2012.665847

Schermerhorn, J. R., Hunt, J. G., Osborn, R. N., & Uhl-Bien, M. (2010). *Organizational behavior, (11th ed.).* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Sedivy-Benton, A., Strohschen, G., Cavazos, N., & Boden-McGill, C. (2015). Good ol'boys, mean girls, and tyrants. *Adult Learning, 26*(1), 35-41. doi:10.1177/1045159514558411

Selvalakshmi, M. M. (2012). Probing: An effective tool of communication. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, *6*(3), 55-58.

Sharp, M. R., & Brumberger, E. R. (2013). Business communication curricula today: Revisiting the top 50 undergraduate business colleges. *Business Communication Quarterly, 76*(1), 5–27. doi:10.1177/108056991271187

Shein, E., (2011). Professional development anytime, anywhere. *Scholastic Administrator, 11*(3), 36-40.

Shrivastava, S. (2012). Identifying the major components of business communication and their relevance: A conceptual framework. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, *6*(4), 51-66.

Shuayto, N. (2012). The case for soft-skills development in MBA programs. *Global Conference on Business & Finance Proceedings*, *7*(2), 58-67. Retrieved from http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Blanca_Garcia-rivera/publication/265551884_competitividad_y_gestin_de_las_pymes/links/5411dde00cf2bb7347dad9ac.pdf#page=84

Sigmar, L., Hynes, G. E., & Hill, K. L. (2012). Strategies for teaching social and emotional intelligence in business communication. *Business Communication Quarterly*, *75*(3), 301-317. doi:10.1177/1080569912450312

Singh, M. (2013). Achieving sustainability through internal communication and soft skills. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills, 7*(1), 21-26.

Singh, M., & Sharma M. K., (2014). Bridging the skills gap: Strategies and solutions. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills, 8*(1), 27-33.

Smith, H. A., & McKeen, J. D. (2010). Developments in practice XXXVI: How to talk so business will listen…and listen so business will talk. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems, 27*, 207–216. Retrieved from http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.186.8558&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Snyder, L. G. (2010). The use of pre-group instruction to improve student collaboration. *Journal of Applied Research for Business Instruction, 8*(1), 1–6. Retrieved from http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.454.6249&rep=rep1&type=pdf#page=65

Sorden, S. D., & Munene, I. I. (2013). Constructs related to community college student satisfaction in blended learning. *Journal of Information Technology Education*, *12,*251-270. Retrieved from http://jite.org/documents/Vol12/JITEv12ResearchP251-270Sorden1206.pdf

Spaulding, D. T. (2008). *Program evaluation in practice: Core concepts and examples for discussion and analysis.* San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Sridevi, K. B. (2012). Effectiveness of case study in life skill development: An analysis. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, *6*(3), 48-54.

Stanley, A. M., Snell, A., & Edgar, S. (2014). Collaboration as effective music professional development: Success stories from the field. *Journal of Music Teacher Education, 24*(1), 76-88. doi:10.1177/1057083713502731

Stivers, B., & Onifade, E. (2013). Nontechnical skills: Evidence that accounting students value soft skills. *Journal of International Business & Economics*, *13*(2), 11-26.

Stowe, K., Parent, J. D., Schwartz, L. A., & Sendall, P. (2012). Are students prepared to present? An analysis of presentation skills in business schools. *Journal of the Academy of Business Education, 13*, 105-121

Stowe, K., von Freymann, J., & Schwartz, L. (2012). Assessing active learning and skills training through alumni and current student views. *Journal of Case Studies in Accreditation & Assessment*, *2,* 1-13.

Sultan, S. & Hussain, I. (2012). Comparison between individual and collaborative learning: Determining a strategy for promoting social skills and self-esteem among undergraduate students. *Journal of Educational Research, 15*(2), 35-43.

Tanyel, F., & Mitchell, M. A., & McAlum, H. (1999). The skill set for success of new business school graduates: Do prospective employers and university faculty agree?. *Journal of Education for Business*, *75*(1), 33. doi:10.1080/08832329909598987

Tauriac, J. J., Kim, G. S., Lambe Sariñana, S., Tawa, J., & Kahn, V. D., (2013). Utilizing affinity groups to enhance intergroup dialog workshops for racially and ethincally diverse students. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 38*(3), 241-260. doi:10.1080/01933922.2013.800176

Taylor, R., & Brodowsky, G. H. (2012). Integrating cross-cultural marketing research training in international business education programs: It's time, and here's why and how. *Journal of Teaching In International Business*, *23*(2), 145-172. doi:10.1080/08975930.2012.718706

Thompson, K. J., Switky, B., & Gilinsky, A., (2012). Impromptu presentations: Boosting student learning and engagement through spontaneous collaboration. *Journal of Education for Business, 87*(1), 14-21. doi:10.1080/08832323.2010.547232

Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities. *Journal of Higher Education, 68*(6), 599–623. doi:10.2307/2959965

Tuleja, E. A., & Greenhalgh, A. E. (2008). Communicating across the curriculum in an undergraduate business program: Management 100 – Leadership and communication in groups. *Business Communication Quarterly, 71*(1), 27-43. doi:10.1177/1080569907312934

Velasco, M. (2012). More than just good grades: candidates' perceptions about the skills and attributes employers seek in new graduates. *Journal of Business Economics & Management*, *13*(3), 499-517. doi:10.3846/16111699.2011.620150

Verdú, F., (2012). Learning ethics from everyday problems: Informed consent. *Advances in Health Sciences Education, 17*(2), 161-164. doi:10.1007/s10459-009-9213-z

Vik, G. N. (2001). Doing more to teach teamwork than telling students to sink or swim. *Business Communication Quarterly, 64*(4), 112 – 119. doi:10.1177/108056990106400413

Wagner, T. (2008). *The global achievement gap.* New York, N.Y.: Basic Books

Waner, K. W. (1995). Business communication competencies needed by employees as perceived by business faculty and business professionals. *Business Communication Quarterly, 58*(4), 51–56. doi:10.1177/108056999505800410

Wang, D., & Hsieh, C. (2013). The effect of authentic leadership on employee trust and employee engagement. *Social Behavior & Personality, 41*(4), 613-624. doi:10.2224/sbp.2013.41.4.613

Wardrope, W. J. (2002). Department chairs' perceptions of the importance of business communication skills. *Business Communications Quarterly, 65*(4), 60–72. doi:10.1177/108056990206500406

Wardrope, W. J., & Bayless, M. L. (1994). Oral communication skills instruction in business schools. *Journal Of Education For Business*, *69*(3), 132. doi:10.1080/08832323.1994.10117670

Weger Jr., H., Castle, G. R., & Emmett, M. C. (2010). Active listening in peer interviews: The influence of message paraphrasing on perceptions of listening skill. *International Journal of Listening, 2*(1), 34–49. doi:10.1080/10904010903466311

Whitsett, B. M., (2014). The history of the handshake: Its place in the classroom in the digital age. *Journal of Social Studies Research,* 155-163.

Withers, M., Browner, C., & Aghaloo, T. (2013). Promoting volunteerism in global health: Lessons from a medical mission in northern Mexico. *Journal of Community Health, 38*(2), 374-384. doi:10.1007/s10900-012-9627-z

World Health Organization, (2008). *Example of work-shop evaluation.* Retrieved from http://www.who.int/ceh/capacity/appendix2_model_workshop_evaluation_form.doc

Xu, Y., & Yang, Y. (2010). Student learning in business simulation: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Education for Business, 85*(4), 223–228. doi:10.1080/08832320903449469

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Inc.

Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish.* New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Zhang, A., & Blakely, P. (2012). Peer assessment of soft skills and hard skills. *Journal of Information Technology, 11*, 155–168.

Zorek, J. A., Katz, N. L., & Popovich, N. G. (2011). Guest speakers in a professional development seminar series. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 75*(2), 1-6. doi:10.5688/ajpe75228

Zueger, P. M., Katz, N. L., & Popovich, N. G. (2014). Assessing outcomes and perceived benefits of a professional development seminar series. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, *78*(8), 1-6. doi:10.5688/788150

Appendix A: Project

Campus staff development session

Presenter: Sharon Pope
Duration: 2 hours
Participants: Campus director, academic director, career services director, admissions director, and student support coaches.

Objectives:

1. Identify the importance of interpersonal communication skills to the potential employer

2. Learn of potential strategies by study participants

3. Examine potential campus wide strategies

4. Establish faculty member development series and student workshops

Learning outcomes:

1. Knowledge of how important interpersonal communication skills are to future employers.

2. Knowledge of the strategies used to assist in enhancing interpersonal communication skills in students.

3. Reflection what the campus staff should do to emphasize interpersonal communication skills for the students as a coherent activity.

4. Establish a timeframe when the faculty development series and student workshop series will be completed.

Materials/equipment required: Meeting room, tables, and chairs for all participants. Computer, projector, and screen for viewing PowerPoint. Large sheets of paper and markers for group work.

Schedule:

10:00 – 10:30 PowerPoint on the importance of interpersonal communication skills to potential employers

Campus staff development.pptx

- Prepare the student for employment
- Hard skills prepared effectively
- Interpersonal communication skills?
- Technology may be taking over face-to-face skills
- Must prepare the student to be work ready

How important is ICS?

- Local concern, business and management advisory board
- Career service director
- National concern

Strategic Plan 2013

- Past campus director and academic director concerned about ICS.
- Campus activities to socialize
- Required presentations and encouraged group work within the classroom
- Void left by the transition of personnel

10:30 – 11:00 Study on interpersonal communication skills

- Key administrative staff members focus group
- Faculty member survey
- Alumni member interviews

Results

- Presentations and group work are a must in preparing students for work
- 6 themes: professional presentations, personal branding, group/team work, networking, global awareness, and diversity

Ways to implement

- Campus wide strategies
  - Alumni member's speakers bureau
  - Local campus alumni members association
  - Campus activities
  - Mock interviews
  - Faculty member development series
  - Student workshops

11:00 – 11:30 Breakdown into groups to discuss and brainstorm

- Large sheets of paper provided for ideas

11:30 – 11:45 Presentations of brainstorming

11:45 – 12:00 Evaluation

Faculty member development series

Presenter: Sharon Pope
Duration: 2 hours each, 6 sessions on each theme, 12 hours total
Participants: Campus director, academic director, faculty members

Objectives:
1. Identify the importance of the specific theme to the potential employer
2. Learn of potential strategies by study participants
3. Examine faculty member's ideas on interpersonal communication skills

Learning Outcomes:
1. Acknowledging the importance of interpersonal communication skills to the future employer.
2. Knowledge of different strategies suggested by study participants.
3. Collaboration with other faculty members and developing different strategies to enhance interpersonal communication skills in the classroom.

Materials/equipment required: Meeting room, tables, and chairs for all participants. Computer, projector, and screen for viewing PowerPoint. Large sheets of paper and markers for group work. Handouts.

Interpersonal communication skills!

Schedule:

5:00 – 5:15 Skit on the incorrect (professional presentations, personal branding, group work, networking, global awareness, and diversity) theme. Skit on the appropriate theme.

5:15 – 5:30 PowerPoint on each theme
Theme 1- professional presentations

Faculty Member Development Present

- Why presentations are important
- What may be the fear behind presenting
- Overcoming these fears

Theme 2 – personal self-branding

Faculty member development brandin

- Why self-branding is important in professional and daily life
- Often students do not know how they present themselves
- Tell story of son on interview

Theme 3 – group/team work

Faculty member development group.p

- Why group work is important in the business situation
- Why do students dislike team work
- 5 stages – forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning

Theme 4 – networking

Faculty member development network

- Why networking is important
- Face-to-face networking
- Social media networking

Theme 5 – global awareness

Faculty member development global.p

- Chinese experience, business card

- How important global awareness is as communication venues are opening

Theme 6 – diversity

Faculty member development diversity

- Campus is diverse, everyone has different experiences
- Racial, ethnic, LGBT, disabled, etc.
- Can lead to controversy and conflict
- 5 minute video clip on diversity

5:30 – 6:00 Discussion of participants strategies

Theme 1 – professional presentations

- Active participation
- Stand up in class
- Informal presentations, homework, skits, impromptu
- Formal presentations
- Develop critical thinking, poise, grammar, organization skills

Theme 2 – self branding

- Dress
- Eye contact
- Handshakes
- Speak clearly
- Listening
- Body language
- Respect
- Professional organizations
- Volunteer
- Business card

Theme 3 – group/team work

- Team leader and chain of command
- Assignment plan and sign off on each portion so the faculty member and the student know who is responsible for that portion
- Faculty member guidance

- Reflecting on own behavior by student

Theme 4 – networking
- Business card
- Student networking
- Information interviews
- Guest speakers
- Encourage students to attend professional meetings and networking events
- Social media: benefits and detriments

Theme 5 – global awareness
- Video on incorporating global awareness
- Share our experiences with the students
- Have students share their experiences
- Assign students a country and research to find business etiquette

Theme 6 – diversity
- Faculty member has to set an example
- Respect for everyone
- Discuss sensitive issues
- Some people do not like to be touched
- Language

6:00 – 6:30 Breakdown into groups to discuss and brainstorm
- Large sheets of paper provided for ideas

6:30 – 6:45 Presentations of brainstorming

6:45 – 7:00 Evaluation

Student workshop series

Presenter: Sharon Pope or other expert speaker
Duration: 2 hours each, 6 sessions on each theme, 12 hours total
Participants: Students

Objectives:

1. Identify the importance of the specific theme to the potential employer

2. Examine the skills necessary to enhance the employment opportunities available.

3. Practice skills

Learning outcomes:

1. Knowledge of why interpersonal communication skills are important to the future employer and how they can enhance the student's future career.

2. Knowledge of what are the basics skills in each theme and how this affects your career.

3. Ability to use the skills effectively and continue using these skills in everyday life.

Materials/equipment required: Meeting room, tables, and chairs for all participants. Computer, projector, and screen for viewing PowerPoint and videos.

Schedule:

6:00 – 6:15 Skit on the incorrect (professional presentations, personal branding, group work, networking, global awareness, and diversity) theme. Skit on the appropriate theme.

6:15 – 6:30 Importance of the specific theme to the employer, classmates, faculty members, and others in life.

6:30 – 7:30 PowerPoint. Discuss each skill and practice each skill

Theme 1 – professional presentations

Student workshop presentations.pptx

- Do not fear presentations, embrace presentations
- Why do we fear presentations?

- Overcoming our fear of presentations
- Would you be intimidated if you were talking to a family member or friend?
- Organizational skills
- Professional, poised, and critical thinking skills
- Good grammar
- Using visual aids

Theme 2 – self branding

Student workshop self branding.pptx

- Dress
- Eye contact
- Handshake
- Speak clearly
- Listening
- Body language
- Respect
- Professional organizations
- Volunteer work

Theme 3 – Group and team work

Student workshop group.pptx

- Building community on camaraderie
- Diversity builds a terrific team
- Five stages of team development
- Conflict is not negative, leads to new ideas
- Reflect on your own behavior

Theme 4 – networking

Student workshop networking.pptx

- Why we network with our own cohorts

- Network with the staff and your professors
- Network with outside speakers
- Network with outside individuals
- Professional meetings
- Social media
- How to network on LinkedIn
- How to network on Facebook

Theme 5 – Global awareness

Student workshop global awareness.pptx

- I am not going anywhere, why should I globally network?
- Tell China story
- Listen to other person's country perspectives
- Ask questions about the culture in a sincere way not an insulting way
- Research different cultures. When in Rome do as the Romans do.

Theme 6 – Diversity

Student workshop diversity.pptx

- Everyone has different experiences and we are all diverse in some way
- When we react negatively to diversity it will cause conflicts
- Learn to pro-act not react.
- Some people do not like to be touched. Watch language.
- Everyone deserves respect and we should celebrate differences.
- Learn to discuss sensitive issues to understand the other person.

7:30 – 7:45 What was learned, what we can do to improve?

7:45 – 8:00 Evaluation

Appendix B: Evaluation Form Workshop

Evaluation Form of Workshop/Development Session

1) What is your overall assessment of this workshop? (1 = insufficient - 5 = excellent)

1 2 3 4 5

2) Which topics or aspects of the workshop did you find most interesting or useful?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

3) Did the workshop achieve the program objectives?

Yes No

If no, why?

_____

_____

_____

4) Knowledge and information gained from participation at this workshop?

Met your expectations Yes No Somehow

Will be useful/applicable in my work Definitely Mostly Somehow Not at all

5) How do you think the workshop could have been made more effective?

_____

_____

_____

6) Please comment on the organization of the workshop (from 1 = insufficient to 5= excellent)

1 2 3 4 5

7) Comments and suggestions (including activities you think would be useful for the future)

_____

_____

_____

Further comments or suggestions

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU!

World Health Organization, (2008). *Example of work-shop evaluation.* Retrieved from http://www.who.int/ceh/capacity/appendix2_model_workshop_evaluation_form.doc

Adapted 2015 by S. Pope

Appendix C: Evaluation Form Event

Evaluation Form of an Event

1) What is your overall assessment of this event? (1 = insufficient - 5 = excellent)

1 2 3 4 5

2) Which topics or aspects of the event did you find most interesting or useful?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

3) Did the workshop achieve objectives of the event?

Yes No

If no, why?

_____

_____

_____

4) Knowledge and information gained from participation at this event?

Met your expectations Yes No Somehow

Will be useful/applicable in my work Definitely Mostly Somehow Not at all

5) How do you think the event could have been made more effective?

_____

_____

_____

6) Please comment on the organization of the event (from 1 = insufficient to 5= excellent)

1 2 3 4 5

7) Comments and suggestions (including activities or initiatives you think would be useful, for the future)

_____

_____

_____

Further comments or suggestions

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU!

World Health Organization, (2008). *Example of work-shop evaluation.* Retrieved from http://www.who.int/ceh/capacity/appendix2_model_workshop_evaluation_form.doc

Adapted 2015 by S. Pope

Appendix D: Cover Letter to Key Administrative Staff Members.

Date,

Dear,

I am requesting your participation in a research study titled "Strategies to Develop Interpersonal Communication Skills between Business Students at Private University in the United States". The research is being conducted by Sharon Pope, a doctoral student at Walden University. The purpose of this study is to discover strategies that the focus group perceives to foster interpersonal communication skills in the classroom.

This portion of the study will be a focus group consisting of key administrative staff members to discuss current strategies. If you decide to participate in this study, I will arrange a time and place on campus for the focus group to meet. The focus group timeframe will be approximately 45 minutes – an hour.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate in this study, there will be no penalties or consequences. Before you decide to participate in this study, you should carefully read the attached Consent Form and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Thank you,

Sharon A. Pope
Doctoral student at Walden University
Visiting professor at Private University
sharon.pope@waldenu.edu – Walden e-mail
popexxxx@xxx.com- personal e-mail
Cell phone number xxx-xxx-xxxx

Appendix E: Cover Letter to Faculty Members

Date

Dear Faculty Member,

I am requesting your participation in a research study titled "Strategies to Develop Interpersonal Communication Skills between Business Students at Private University in the United States". The research is being conducted by Sharon Pope, a doctoral student of Walden University. The purpose of this study is to discover strategies that you perceive to foster interpersonal communication skills in the classroom.

In this study, I am seeking out strategies to complement the courses that you teach. In my literature review, interpersonal communication skills are divided into four measurable and definable categories. The four categories include: 1) communication skills including verbal, nonverbal, listening, asking and answering questions, organization of the message, eye contact, and professional appearance; 2) collaboration and teamwork; 3) conflict resolution and negotiation strategies; and 4) cross cultural awareness.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate in this study, there will be no penalties or consequences. Before you decide to participate in this study, you should carefully read the attached Consent Form and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Thank you,

Sharon A. Pope

Walden doctoral student

Cell phone xxx-xxx-xxxx

sharon.pope@waldenu.edu – Walden e-mail

popexxxx@xxx.com- personal e-mail

Appendix F: Cover Letter, Alumni

Date

Dear Alumni Member,

I am requesting your participation in a research study titled "Strategies to Develop Interpersonal Communication Skills between Business Students at Private University in the United States". The research is being conducted by Sharon Pope, a doctoral student at Walden University. The purpose of this study is to discover strategies that you perceive to foster interpersonal communication skills in the classroom. If you agree to be a participant, I will arrange an interview at a local coffee house near your work or home. The interview will last a maximum of one hour.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate in this study, there will be no penalties or consequences. Before you decide to participate in this study, you should carefully read the attached Consent Form and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Thank you,

Sharon A. Pope

Doctoral student at Walden University

sharon.pope@waldenu.edu – Walden e-mail

popexxxx@xxx.com- personal e-mail

Cell phone number xxx-xxx-xxxx

Appendix G: Script Before Focus Group

The research is being conducted by Sharon Pope, a doctoral student of Walden University. This study seeks to discover strategies that the focus group perceives to foster interpersonal communication skills in the classroom. This portion of the study will be a focus group consisting of key administrative staff members to discuss current strategies. The focus group timeframe will be approximately 45 minutes – one hour.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate in this study, there will be no penalties or consequences. You may withdraw at any time for any reason. If a question makes you uncomfortable or is too personal, it is your right not to answer the question. I will use pseudonyms when transcribing this interview so confidentiality will be maintained. Every member will have the opportunity to check the summary of the interview in order to clarify your perception.

Appendix H: Script Before Alumni Interviews

The research is being conducted by Sharon Pope, a doctoral student of Walden University. The purpose of this study is to fill the gap between the interpersonal communication skills that the community employers require and the interpersonal communication skills of our students. This study seeks to discover strategies that you perceive to foster interpersonal communication skills in the classroom.

This portion of the study will be an interview consisting of alumni to discuss current strategies and future strategies. The interview timeframe will be approximately 45 minutes to an hour. You were identified by key administrative staff members for your input on interpersonal communication skills in the classroom and the contact information for you was given to me by the ley administrative staff members. To maintain confidentiality, the administrative staff members identified a pool of participants and only four are being interviewed.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate in this study, there will be no penalties or consequences. If a question makes you uncomfortable or is too personal, it is your right not to answer the question. I will use pseudonyms when transcribing this interview so confidentiality will be maintained. You will have the opportunity to check the summary of the interview in order to clarify your perception.

Appendix I: Focus Group Questions

1) What interpersonal communication skills strategies are currently in place in the classroom at the business college?

   a) What skills are being targeted with presentation?

   b) What skills are being targeted with involvement in student organizations?

   c) What skills are being targeted with (any strategy that the key administrative staff members mention)?

2) Do you think these current strategies are suitable for every course taught in the business college?

   a) Which courses do you feel would be appropriate to focus on these strategies?

   b) Would the administration mandate the strategies in any courses?

   c) Are these strategies assessed by each instructor?

   d) If so, is there a rubric to assess these strategies?

   e) If not, should they be assessed?

3) In my conceptual framework, I found four categories of interpersonal communication skills that are both definable and measureable: communication; collaboration; conflict resolution; and cross-cultural awareness.

- communication – verbal, nonverbal, listening, etiquette
- collaboration – teamwork, networking, guest speakers
- conflict resolution- negotiation, difficult discussions
- cross-cultural awareness - diversity, global awareness, business etiquette

a) What other suggestions on interpersonal communication strategies that use these categories?

b) What other strategies would you recommend?

c) Any other suggestion?

Appendix J: Open-Ended Questionnaire Questions

1) What is your general area of study?

____ Accounting/finance

____ Business administration/management

____ Human resources

____ Liberal arts

____ Technical management

2) What are your perceptions of the current interpersonal communication skills strategies (name the strategies from key administrative staff members' focus group)?

a) What skills are being targeted by presentations?

b) What skills are being targeted by involvement in student organizations?

c) What skills are being targeted by (other strategies named by the focus group)?

d) Are these current strategies suitable for your subject in the business college? Why or why not?

3) Do you think these strategies should be assessed or not? Explain.

4) What interpersonal communication strategies have to be emphasized more or less?

5) In my conceptual framework, I found four categories of interpersonal communication skills that are both definable and measureable: communication; collaboration; conflict resolution; and cross-cultural awareness.

- communication – verbal, nonverbal, listening, etiquette
- collaboration – teamwork, networking, guest speakers
- conflict resolution- negotiation, difficult discussions

- cross-cultural awareness - diversity, global awareness, business etiquette

a) What other skills would you recommend to develop these skills identified in my framework?

b) What other strategies would you recommend?

c) Any other comments?

Appendix K: Individual Alumni Member Interview Questions

1) What was your general area of study?

____ Accounting/finance

____ Business administration/management

____ Human resources

____ Liberal arts

____ Technical management

2) Private University has several current interpersonal communication skills strategies in place (Name the strategies).

   a. What is your perception of the presentation to develop interpersonal communication skills?

   b. What is your perception of involvement in student organizations to develop interpersonal communication skills?

   c. What is your perception of (name the strategies that the focus group mentioned as being current)?

   d. How do you perceive these current strategies fitted into your general area of study?

3) What is your perception of assessing these current strategies?

   a. Should they be assessed?

4) In your job, what interpersonal communication strategies are emphasized?

5) In my conceptual framework, I found four categories of interpersonal communication skills that are both definable and measureable: communication; collaboration; conflict resolution; and cross-cultural awareness.

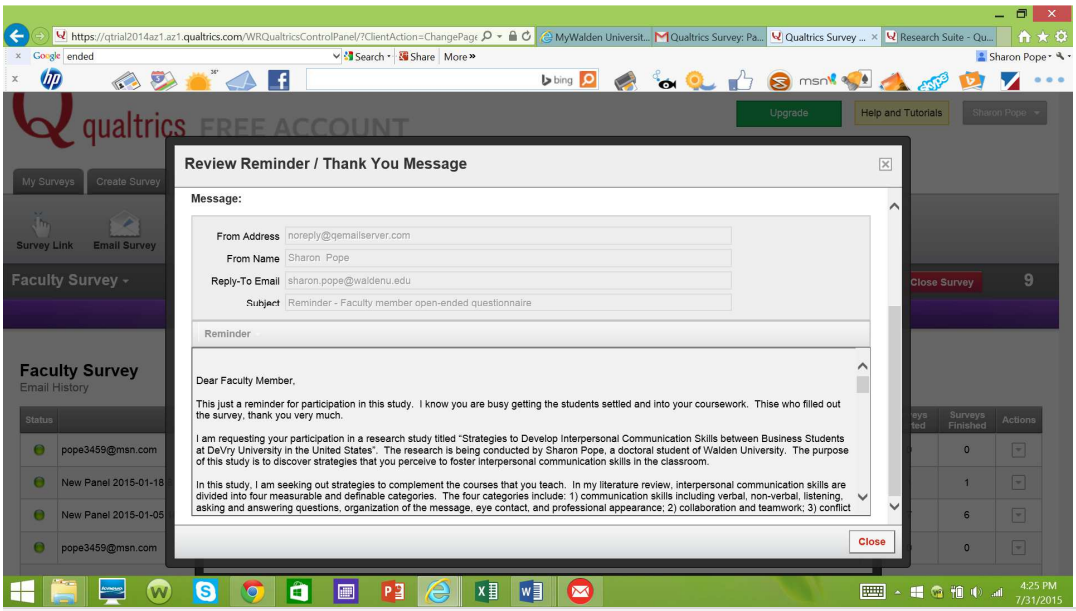
- communication – verbal, nonverbal, listening, etiquette
- collaboration – teamwork, networking, guest speakers
- conflict resolution- negotiation, difficult discussions
- cross-cultural awareness - diversity, global awareness, business etiquette

a. What other strategies would you recommend to develop these skills identified in my framework?

b. What other strategies would you recommend?

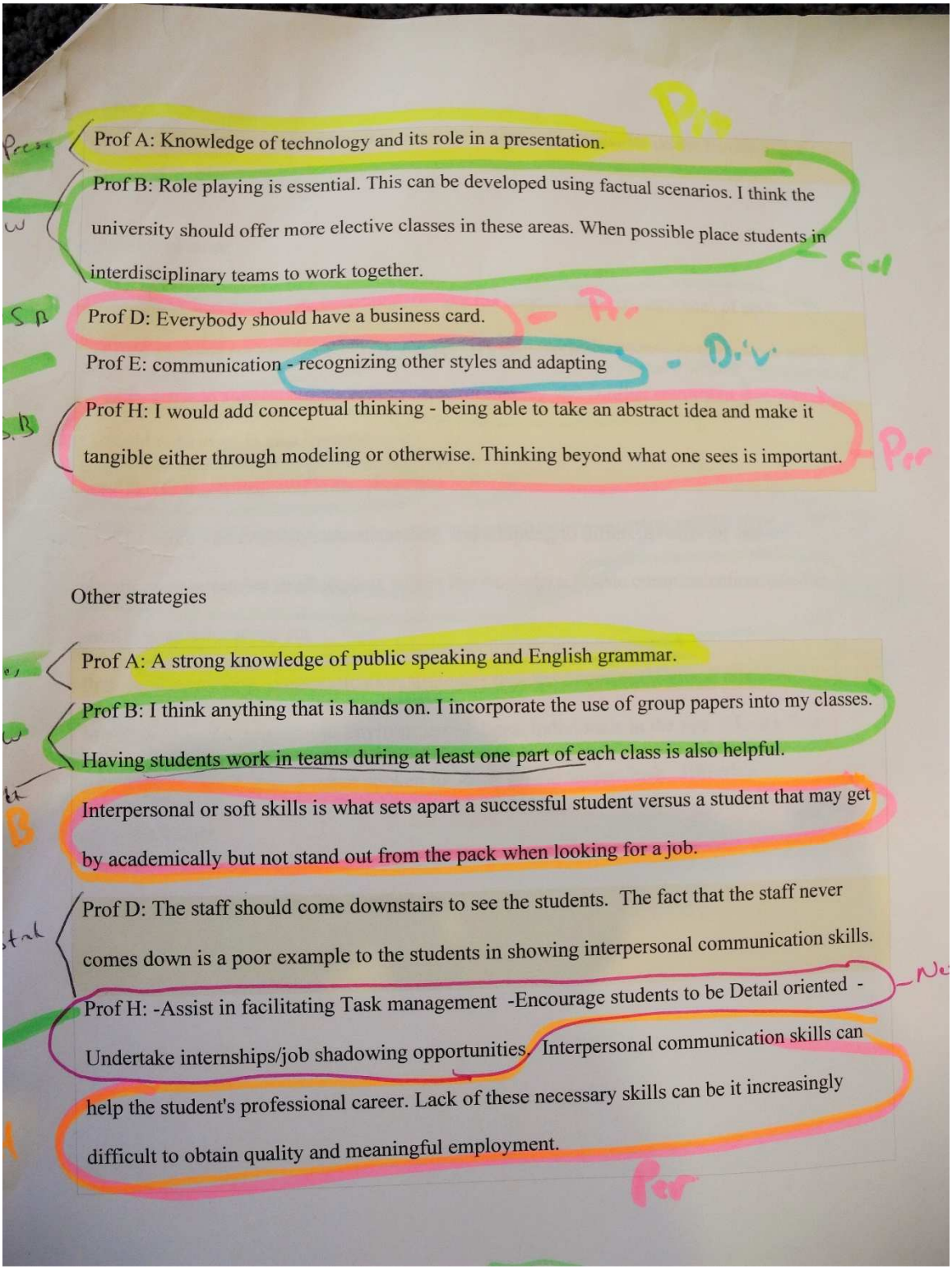
c. Any other comments?

Appendix L: Reminder for Survey Completion



Message Libraries	Email Subject	Invite Emails	Reminder	Thank You	End of Survey	Inactive Survey	Validation	Look and Feel	General
Sharon Pope	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0

Appendix M: Sample of Written Coding



Prof A: Knowledge of technology and its role in a presentation.

Prof B: Role playing is essential. This can be developed using factual scenarios. I think the university should offer more elective classes in these areas. When possible place students in interdisciplinary teams to work together.

Prof D: Everybody should have a business card.

Prof E: communication - recognizing other styles and adapting

Prof H: I would add conceptual thinking - being able to take an abstract idea and make it tangible either through modeling or otherwise. Thinking beyond what one sees is important.

Other strategies

Prof A: A strong knowledge of public speaking and English grammar.

Prof B: I think anything that is hands on. I incorporate the use of group papers into my classes. Having students work in teams during at least one part of each class is also helpful.

Interpersonal or soft skills is what sets apart a successful student versus a student that may get by academically but not stand out from the pack when looking for a job.

Prof D: The staff should come downstairs to see the students. The fact that the staff never comes down is a poor example to the students in showing interpersonal communication skills.

Prof H: -Assist in facilitating Task management -Encourage students to be Detail oriented - Undertake internships/job shadowing opportunities. Interpersonal communication skills can help the student's professional career. Lack of these necessary skills can be it increasingly difficult to obtain quality and meaningful employment.

	Code 1	Code 2
Communication		
KAS1 : "pre-current academic director there was a mandate that all faculty put some presentation into every single course. It did not matter what course it was" "The faculty varied in their presentations, whether it was impromptu, planned, formal, presenting their homework, all to get the student used to public presentation and communication skills" "Never shared with the newer faculty the need for presentations"	Previously mandated presentations, not communicated to newer administration and faculty members.	Encourage presentation in every class
KAS1 "summarize it and present it in front of a class" "small parameters…eye contact, not looking down or the paper in front of your face"	Stand in front of class and small parameters	Tactics for presenting
KAS2 "when students go to register, they ask if is group work or presentations because if there are, they prefer to take it online"	Fear of presenting	Fear of presenting
AM2 (in response) {Sarcastic laughter}, OK…., you would rather learn to present in school where you only have to worry about a grade rather than in front of a client and lose a 1.2 million dollar contract and maybe your job because I can't stand up in front of a potential client a brief. I present all the time, every time I am with somebody. In my current job, I have given 100 to150 formal presentations. Informal, countless."	Importance of presenting	
AM1 (in response to this statement by KAS2) You HAVE to present. There is no way around it. You are not going to be able to go through life and be a successful individual and not present. Why not have an alumni come in and speak to them?	Importance of presenting	Tactic

	FG	AM1	AM2	AM3
Collorbor	Work with other	Group work is	Start with groups and the other 3 will	Volunteer work is imprtant because
Ation	people, show repect for other people	essential, it brings conflict, diversity, different perspective synergy.	flow down, comm., conflict resolution, cross cultural aware.	it shows the person isn't lazy to work non-pay.
	Group work one of the items student go online. Most do not like group work.	Instructor and team leader must coach people on working in a group.	Guidance by the professor, prof and group lead er have to communi.	To get them to social gatherings or to organizations, offer food or prizes.
	Groupwork cuases many hassles for students, profess must be aware of this and make it as easy as possible	Instructor cant assign a group and then walk away thru the process. Must make the group accountable. Sign	Ask each student if they are willing to be leader or no. Some leaders have to be helped.	Alumni or business prof. coming in to class is always good
	Getting to know fellow students names is a start. Working with other one on one is a start.	off on what each person is responsibl for. Each group has an agenda Even tho this alumni isn't traveling to	Social gathering- buy in to students, avoid making it mandatory (neg) Non-trad. Students have a lot on their plate.	
	One suggested let the students pick the groups and the prof has the final	othr countries, there is always diversity in groups, even in the coffee house.	Have an alumni meeting once a session and have	

say. Follow the chain of command. Group leader speaks to the instructor and flows down.

Cultural awareness avoids unhealthy conflicts, learn to celebrate differen

Even if student isn't going to another country, there are many people here who came from country. We have to stop this egocentrism and respect and celebrate different cultures.

Must be willing to be open-minded and listen to other perceptions

maybe make it mandatory to be in an organziation in school, good to put on resume and good practice.

Ask guest speakers or alumni to come in and network with them

it at 6 -7. Ask prof. to let their class go for an hour. It is a chance to have alumni together with current studs and interact.

Appendix N: Final Themes

Focus group
Communication – Two themes

1) Professional presentations
    - Previously mandated by other academic director
    - Fear of presenting
    - Assessment of presentations
    - Importance of presenting
    - Strategies
2) Professional self-branding
    - Body language
        - Handshake, eye contact
        - Nonverbal communication
    - Listening
        - Critical for interviews
        - Critical thinking
        - Strategies
    - Summarizing skills
        - Critical thinking
        - Active listening and feedback
    - Appropriate behavior
        - Dress appropriately

- Respect the college environment
- Respect faculty, students, and staff
- Appropriate communication – no swearing, non-negative behavior

Collaboration

1) Team or group work encouraged

- Planned team work
  - Let students assign their own groups
  - Instructors discretion
  - Chain of command, team leader and team members
  - Confrontation solved by team leader
  - If not, team leader goes to instructor and it flows down from there
  - Active listening
- Group work
  - Get class together in groups
  - Know each other's names
  - Interaction amongst classmates
  - Active listening
- Networking
  - Create a business card
  - Go to networking events
  - Start a networking foundation in college

Cross-cultural awareness

1) Cultural awareness

- Respect and celebrate differences in culture
- Lack of understanding leads to conflicts
- Interaction with other cultures and address sensitive issues

2) Diversity

- Not only cross country, but differences between individuals
- LGTB
- Disabled
- English not as a first language

Alumni Member Interviews
Communication

1) Professional presentation

- Importance of presenting
    - Success depends on presentation skills
    - Rather lose a grade than a 1.2 million dollar contract because I could not present
    - No way to escape presenting.
    - Fail for your future if you do not present
    - Gives you confidence, learn about the target audience
    - Six months to get job because I hesitated on presenting in school, learned the hard way.
    - Interviewing is presenting “me”
- Fear of presenting
    - Fear of being judged
    - Fear of being exposed
    - Low self esteem
    - Imposter syndrome
    - Professor has to realize and make the students feel at ease.
- Assessments of presentations
    - Must be continually assessed to show progress or not
    - Not graded to not frighten students
    - Graded. Incentive to improvement.

- Praise the presenters, give them what they did correctly also.

- Strategies to encourage presentations
  - Have alumni come in and speak to students
  - Have alumni come in and present to somebody different
  - Getting the student to stand in front of the classroom
  - IConnect to practice the presentations
  - Ice breaker at the beginning of class
  - Skits – concentrate more on the task then presenting
  - Impromptu speeches assist in critical thinking
  - Visual aids help keep the attention off of them

2) Professional self-branding
   - Involvement in volunteer student organizations
     - Enticement- food or a little trinket
     - Buy-in
     - Mandatory involvement to build resume
     - Volunteer work is important on resume
   - Active listening
   - Strategies
     - Alumni coming in and speaking to the students about professional branding and interpersonal communication
     - Guest speaker from Human Resources to indicate how important ICS are.

- Classes on LinkedIn and professional social media sites.
- Student must have ownership

Collaboration

- Planned teamwork
  - Leads to conflict management
  - Accountability, responsibility. Students signing off on an agenda
  - Professor cannot walk away but guide the team
- Group work
  - Leads to conflict, diversity and negotiation management
  - Gain a different perspective by listening
- Networking
  - Safe environment to get to know other people in class.
  - Getting out of comfort zone through networking
  - Relationships from class carry on in working life
- Strategies
  - Use alumni association to interact with current students
  - University should have planned social gathering to have the staff, faculty, and students interacting and getting to know one another
  - Role playing to practice negotiation skills
  - YouTube videos on collaboration skills

Cross-cultural awareness

1) Cultural awareness

- Awareness of other culture's values
    - Ask questions about the culture
    - Understand the culture
    - Awareness creates conflict management
- Strategies
    - International food day

2) Diversity
    - Active listening and no pre-judgment
    - Any situation where 2 or more people are together
    - Experiences differ so everybody has differences
    - Important in decision making
    - Strategies
        - YouTube videos on diversity
        - Guest speakers

Open-ended survey
Communication

1) Professional Presentations

- Public speaking
  - Confidence building
  - Conceptual skills
  - Effective communication
  - Problem solving
  - Critical thinking
  - Organization, poise, professionalism
  - English grammar
  - Know audience, every audience is different
  - Knowledge of technology and its role
- Assessment
  - 5/6 said definitely, 1/6 said that in some classes it would difficult to assess students.
  - Substantial training and strong guidelines are needed.
  - Many shells do not include assessment and should
  - Assessed but not graded, do not scare students
  - Consistent feedback helps improve skills
- Strategies
  - Presenting allows students to get their feet wet with feedback from the professor

2) Professional Self Branding

- Active listening skills
- Conceptual thinking, thinking beyond what one sees
- Detail oriented
- Eye contact
- Firm handshake
- Speak clearly
- Effective communication
- Strategies
    - Business cards
    - Undertake shadowing or internships to build your resume
    - Administrative staff should come downstairs to see the students. Poor example of staff interpersonal skills.

Collaboration

Group work

- Encouraged by administrative staff to foster effective communication skills
- Effectively work in a group is necessary in the workplace.
- Group work is difficult in the classroom. Students tend to dislike group work
- Cross-functional teams are important
- Team development

- Use of media for team projects
- Conflict resolution occurs when groups are working together
    - Doing or not doing their part
    - Building consensus
    - Get along well with others
    - Adapting to different behavior in the workplace
    - Ability to work with others in various environments
    - Recognizing other communication styles and adapting
- Strategies
    - Guidance from the professor to assist in the synergy of group work
    - Role playing is essential

Diversity

- Adapting to different communication styles
- Adapting to different lifestyles

Reflective Journal
Communication

- Presentations were important, especially among the alumni members
- Alumni members want to share with current students how important interpersonal communications skills are.
- Focus group branched off into self-branding

Collaboration

- Each group touched on networking as a continued importance.

- Alumni members sometimes did not like groups, but necessary for work.

Conflict management

- Flows down from group work and cultural awareness

Cross cultural awareness

- Mentioned by focus group and one alumni member, but global awareness cannot be ignored for lack of commenting about it. Global awareness is growing in the business environment
- Diversity. All groups mentioned that diverse groups cause growth or conflict. Let's not ignore American cross-cultural awareness