

## Women and Management Education: Has Anything Changed?

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the experiences of women undertaking management related postgraduate programmes with a particular focus on whether and how these programmes accommodate their learning preferences and needs. It is intended that the findings will help to provide recommendations for improving curriculum design and pedagogy. As a number of issues have been raised previously with regard to women and management education, this study also set out to consider whether anything has changed since previous studies were published. Data was drawn from focus groups conducted in a NSW based graduate school of business and was analysed using a relational framework. Findings highlight the need for awareness raising with regard to gender equity amongst the mainly male academics employed in business schools, as well as the effectiveness of group learning for female students from a teaching, learning and management development perspective.*

**Keywords:** management education, MBA, management effectiveness, business schools, female students.

### How do Women Experience Management Education Programs?

Over twenty years ago, the Australian government issued a report regarding gender inequity in Universities (DEET, 1990). The report was aimed at increasing the number of female academics and students in fields of study with less than 40 per cent of female students. Postgraduate Business Administration was listed among the target requiring a greater gender balance. However, in 2011 researchers continue to question whether appropriate changes have been made in business schools to reflect the increasing diversity of the student body. Although the numbers of women pursuing business degrees has increased, female students remain a minority in many business classes and they are likely to encounter far fewer female than male business professors (Jordan, Pate, & Clark, 2006).

As a result, female students' experiences of management programmes are said to differ from their male counterparts, as are the practices that maximise their learning (Clifton et al 2008). Thus far, the literature addressing gender and management education and pedagogy has placed a great deal of attention on the MBA with the MBA being considered the premier educational programme deemed to equip women with advantages in terms of pay and career opportunities in management careers (Baruch and Leeming 2001; Simpson et al 2005). However, female MBA students state that they experience the MBA differently than their male counterparts (Sinclair 1995; Simpson 2000; Simpson et al 2005). Furthermore, research suggests that women learn differently to men (see for example Allio, 2005 and Wajcman 1998). These statements suggest that management education needs to engage with gendered learning differences in order to challenge the masculinist norms and assumptions of the MBA (Sinclair 1995), and we would argue, management masters programmes more generally. The number of men enrolled in MBA programs continues to outnumber women (Simpson et al, 2004), while there has been a trend for women tend to opt for other postgraduate

programmes. Hence, this study investigates the experiences of women undertaking MBA and other management related postgraduate programmes with a particular focus on whether and how these programmes accommodate their learning preferences and needs. It is expected that the findings will help to provide recommendations for improving curriculum design and pedagogy. With respect to the literature, a number of issues have been raised previously with regard to women and management education. Therefore, this study also sets out to consider whether anything has changed since some of the previous studies cited were published.

Gender inequities are pertinent to students' learning experiences, career trajectories and choices. Moreover, there are broader issues to consider than individual satisfaction and the delivery of appropriate management education at the level of the university. Research indicates that a gender gap exists post MBA whereby women graduates are "failing to reach equivalent positions to men in terms of both seniority and pay" (Simpson et al, 2004, 461). Specifically, if women are required to take up senior roles in management, then it follows that universities should be providing them with an education that equips them with the profiles and skills to be successful in business. If management education does not account for the particularities of women's learning then this important social and economic function will not and cannot be met.

Reportedly, female students do not learn best in the traditional competitive, fact-oriented classroom (Rosser, 1990) tending to select subjects that suit their learning styles and develop particular ways of working both with each other and their male class mates. Some women have reported feeling marginalized by their male colleagues in the classroom forcing them to abandon their study, remain silent and/or find other strategies for personal and educational success. Further, there are cross cultural differences between women students themselves – all issues that warrant further investigation.

In this paper, we ask the question "how do women experience postgraduate management programmes and what are their approaches to learning?". The intention is that the findings will help to improve curriculum design and pedagogy. The aim of the research was firstly, to determine female management students' learning practices and experiences in a business school's masters programmes and secondly to identify strategies for improving female students' participation and learning in these programmes to ascertain areas where best practice approaches can either be a) newly introduced or b) strengthened where they already exist. The sample comprises female postgraduate business students studying at a large graduate school of business in New South Wales, Australia. Findings were drawn from four focus groups and twenty individual interviews. This paper draws primarily on focus group data. A relational framework is utilised to analyse the data. The paper is organised as follows. Firstly, some key issues associated with women and management education are considered with

regard to learning and the workplace. Next, the relational framework in practice is outlined before the method, findings, conclusions and implications are discussed.

### **Women and Management Education – Why is it Important?**

It may be expected that business schools as the nurturers of managerial talent should lead the way in this respect, although reportedly the lack of female professors contributes to a masculine culture of business schools with an overly aggressive and competitive environment (Kehlan, 2008). Additionally, the increasing managerialist cultures pervading universities is seen to privilege the careers of male academics while reinforcing gender inequity, especially with its emphasis on 'hard' management practices that are often associated with masculinity (Parsons and Priola, 2010; White, Carvalho and Riordan, 2011). The focus of managerialism on measurement and control is itself viewed as masculine (Brooks and McKinnon, 2001) so that its translation into higher education is reflected in academic culture and behaviour (Simpson and Ituma, 2009). Combined with the already masculine and managerialist nature of business schools and the MBA, this creates for the student a circular reinforcement of values prevailing at work, in class and in the university.

A Catalyst (2000) survey of MBA graduates of prestigious U.S. business schools reported that almost one third of female respondents found the business school culture to be overly aggressive and competitive. More than half of the women surveyed reported that they could not relate to characters in case studies and nearly 40% said they did not have adequate opportunities to work with female professors. These comments are similar to those of Bilimoria (1999) who pointed out that management education fails to meet the needs of many women stating "management education is itself mired in the same gendered constructions prevalent in the larger corporate/business environment. In this sense, the institutional and pedagogical structures and practices of management education mirror the prevailing gender biases of our larger society" (1999, p. 120).

Despite the practice of management being essentially relational and political (Cunliffe, 2009), the MBA in particular is criticised for its irrelevance to practice and the resistance of educators to teach and assess skills rather than knowledge (Rubin and Dierdorff, 2009; Martell, 2007; Mintzberg, 2004). Since its inception, management education has been criticised for being too technical; too rational; non-integrated; short-term; non-contextualised; value laden; uncritical (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; 2004; Grey, 2004; Starkey & Tempest, 2005; Augier & March, 2007); ethnocentric (Jain, 2009) and often unethical (Leavitt, 1989; Ghoshal, 2005). In sum, the MBA tends to be masculine in content, delivery and outcome. Explicit attention to the relevant relational skills of management practice is lacking both within the classroom and among peers so that prevailing assumptions and practices continue. The problem with this, as Warhurst (2011) argues, is that learning and the nature of the relationships

contribute to identity formation so that if one group experiences different relationships while learning, then it is likely to remain throughout their career.

Current numbers of women completing MBAs hover around 30 per cent and this male dominance in the classroom creates a macho culture that is exclusive of women's value and interests (Sinclair, 1995). For example, Catalyst (2010) surveyed 9,927 alumni who graduated from 26 leading business schools in Asia, Canada, Europe, and the United States during 2007/8. The aim of the survey was to determine how women with MBAs fared (relative to men) in terms of pay and career trajectory after receiving their degrees. After correcting for years of experience, industry, and global region, Catalyst found that 60% of women compared with 46% of men started their first post-MBA job at a lower level. When comparing men and women who started in entry-level positions and were otherwise identical (that is they received their MBAs in the same year and had the same amount of experience), men still outpaced women in terms of promotions and pay being twice as likely to have reached the CEO/senior executive level. Women senior leaders were also more than three times (19% for women vs. 6% for men) as likely to have lost their jobs due to downsizing or closure. This scenario is not dissimilar for academic women in the sense that the university is reflective of the wider business world and maintains the pattern of gender inequality within business schools because of the conscious or subconscious messages it conveys to staff and students about the roles of men and women in organisations (Shaw and Cassell, 2007).

In Australia, the percentage of companies without women represented on their boards of directors increased from 51% in 2008 to 54% in 2010 (EOWA 2010 Census Report). Women chair five boards and hold 8.4% of Board Directorships in the ASX 200 companies (123 seats from a total of 1467). This is compared with 8.3% (125 seats from a total of 1505) reported in the 2008 Census. Furthermore, Australia has the lowest percentage of women on boards and the lowest percentage of Executive Key Management personnel compared with New Zealand, the UK, Canada, the US and South Africa. The same report indicates that in 2010 women held only 4.1% of line roles (the same as in 2008) and, as line experience is considered essential experience for women wishing to rise to top corporate positions they are missing out on this important trajectory. Still (2006) argues that despite 30 years of considerable legislative, policy and social change in the equity area, women have not attained leadership positions in any significant numbers in Australia, particularly when compared with women in other developed countries. Further, she maintains that there is no one reason as to why this is so, although a lack of line management and profit centre experience are suggested as major drawbacks in addition to other factors, such as Australia's "macho" culture, a lack of acceptance of women as leaders and women's ways of communicating in the workplace.

Given the EOWA Census figures for the participation of women at senior levels of business, it is argued that providing a climate in business schools that fosters the development of women as well as men is critical. Fahy (2010:3) points out that no country can afford to leave a large percentage of highly skilled candidates 'sitting on the sidelines' but that Australian business is currently doing this by failing to implement measures to attract, retain and promote equal numbers of women to senior executive roles. A recent survey indicated that organisations are slow to take action with regard to gender equity measures in the workplace (AHRI, 2011). Only a minority of respondents reported that managers at any level are required to satisfy measurable key performance indicators on gender equity (18 per cent of CEOs, 19 per cent of executives, 18 per cent of senior managers, 14 per cent of middle managers, 12 per cent of team leaders and 11 per cent of supervisors) thus indicating a general lack of corporate action within Australia's workplaces.

### **Relational theory/relational practice and management education**

Literatures differ regarding what it means to be relational (Silverstein et al, 2006) although there is general agreement, as the term implies, that it concerns relationships with others. Buttner (2002) claims that Relational Theory evolved based on women's experience and earlier research concerning gender related developmental issues. In women's psychology, 'connection with others' is said to be fundamental to most women's self-concepts (Jordan, Walker, & Hartling; 2004). Moreover, Gilligan (1982) maintains that women's sense of self and morality involves issues of responsibility and care for others. Likewise, Silverstein et al (2006) argue that women organize themselves in the context of important relationships and strive to maintain a sense of connectedness with others. Buttner (2002, 276) states that although it is based on listening to women's experiences, relational theory is not proposed as a theory to explain all women's experience, nor is it applied only to women. Instead it is presented as a model of human growth and development that is an alternative to the masculine bias in mainstream theories of development.

Relational practices in organizations have also gained attention with respect to the skills used by both men and women. For example, Goleman et al (2002) claim that relationship skills account for nearly three times as much impact on organizational performance as analytical skills, with Goleman et al asserting that specific relationship skills can be taught and learned. Rapoport and Bailyn (1996) and Goleman et al (2002) identified relational skills as including the ability to build relationships, having empathy, authenticity, collaboration, the sharing of information and facilitating others growth, mutual empowering, and the ability to create a team as critical for enhancing effectiveness at work.

The increasing use of groups in business classes raises questions of whether men and women experience these assignments in different ways. In many programs the assessment of team contributions through peer review is a component of the overall grade, usually relying on other team

member's perceptions of task performance (Buttner, 2002). However, relationships amongst team members can either facilitate or detract from team learning and task performance, as van Woerkom, M and van Engen (2009) point out, because team members interact with one another, knowledge and skills gathered by one team member can be transferred to other team members by giving feedback, explanations, or advice. Moreover, information exchange between team members can bring sources of knowledge together and manipulate it into new knowledge structures. Thus, team processes can have a strong impact on intergroup relations particularly as they may be of particular concern if the assessments are not appropriate or not supportive of various learning styles.

Buttner (2002) proposes that one of the implications of applying relational practice is a humanizing effect in which women students are more able to bring themselves, their feelings as well as their thoughts, to the classroom. Therefore, the integration of relational practice in management classrooms may help academic staff in business schools to better prepare their students whether they are women or men for current and future high-performing workplaces. The relational practice framework utilised for this study is adapted from Buttner (2002) with key points outlined in table 1 below.

**Table 1 here**

#### **METHOD**

This study explores individual women's experiences in Masters management programmes, the ways in which they learn and the reasons why they chose particular courses. In keeping with research that analyses student learning experiences (Arbaugh 2000), focus groups involving individuals from across Masters of Management and MBA programmes form the basis of this project. These focus groups, as a form of group interview, are used to explore the communication between research participants and the group interaction of members in relation to learning and to generate data (Morgan 1997). This method aids the exploration and clarification of views through group processes and, combined with open-ended questions, allows participants to respond and to change their opinions as the discussion proceeds (Krueger, 1988). Questions were designed in order to determine how women experience Masters management programmes and their approaches to learning.

As stated previously, the sample group were drawn from the student body attending a large graduate school of business. Four focus groups were conducted with 15 participants recruited through open invitations on notice boards and through email communication. Focus group demographics are illustrated in table one. Three focus groups had four participants and one had three. The split between MBA and Master of Business participants was fairly evenly distributed with at least one Master of Business student attending each focus group. There was some difficulty in attracting more students to attend the focus groups given most were working (only one student was full time) even though they were held in the early morning and just prior to

lectures at night. The focus group facilitator was an independent person employed in a central office of teaching and learning. Table two outlines the number of focus group participants, their age ranges and degree program.

**Table 2 here**

## FINDINGS

The focus group facilitator began by asking why participants had enrolled in an MBA or Masters in Management. All participants stated that they wanted a job change, promotion, better pay or were bored. Two participants were from overseas and they wanted to know how business operated in Australia as well as gain an Australian qualification.

When the focus group data was considered according to the relational framework provided in table one it was found that examples relating to the four themes arose in each focus group. The frequency within each focus group, in addition to illustrative examples is provided in table 3.

**Table 3 here**

*Preventative connecting:* In brief, this theme relates to ensuring completion of task. Assuming tasks outside job description and putting needs of the project ahead of individual issues. There were eleven instances noted from the focus group data with some examples being:

*I felt that, as a woman I took more responsibility in completing the assignment and cared about it more - the men would just let some woman take care of it.*

*In one group I was in there was one woman who pulled it all together and another woman who did a lot of the interviewing. Whereas the guys tended to be more "oh this concept, that concept".*

*Mutual empowering:* in brief this theme relates to behavior intended to enable others' achievement, empathetic teaching that takes the learner's emotional and intellectual reality into account and fluid power relations. As outlined in table three there were ten examples of this mutual empowerment cited in the focus group data with some examples given below:

*In one group there were 2 females and 4 males. I was given the role of being group leader, and wanted to share it with others. There was one chap in particular that wasn't too happy about it.*

*I've actually quite enjoyed the group work -to actually look at the dynamics of the people and watch how leadership works. Whether you're taking that leadership role or somebody else is. Because inevitably somebody does that. And I've found that really valuable.*



*Creating Team:* in brief this refers to working to create the conditions through which group life can flourish, thus creating the experience of team. There were eight instances of this occurring in the focus group data.

*As a woman I have to approach the males to work in their groups and convince them I have the knowledge to join.*

*... because I generally work with more men, I kind of find that as a bit of a preference. I know how to relate to them so I think being collaborative is important.*

*Achieving:* in brief relates to using relational skills to enhance one's own professional growth and effectiveness. The ability to ask for help is not seen as a sign of weakness. There were 8 examples of this from the focus groups.

*I asked the lecturer a question about what is it that I can do or where can I go to help support my learning, because I wanted to clearly look at addressing the deficit that I had. His response was "well if you fail, that's my problem and I have failed you". I thought actually it's not about you, it's about me, and you still haven't told me what it is that I need to do to get my learning up to speed.*

*There has been one lecturer in particular who got quite agitated, I think because I questioned and wanted to know more. I think that was more to do with the fact that I was female, not because I was asking stupid questions. I really believe it was because I was a woman and 'how dare I ask'?*

**Most and least useful aspects related to learning:** When focus group participants were asked about the most and least useful aspects related to learning while they had been studying some related this to their own growth and development and others related it to the lecturer's teaching style. Examples of personal growth and learning were:

*I think the most thing I've got out of it is growth, my own personal development; not just education-wise, but emotionally, intellectually, all over. I think it has been a total reconstruction of myself. That's the way I feel. I feel very much rewarded through that process. (Achieving)*

*The best thing about it is I've learnt to refine the skills that I've had, and really focus on what the skills are. With my weaknesses, I've really worked on them. I've focused on one or two particular weaknesses per semester, so I've really focused and totally worked on those weaknesses to bring them up to strengths. (Achieving)*

**Examples of the lecturer's style were:**

*This lecturer integrated the class and got their opinions on how to work out this and that. As opposed to this is the answer, he was working through the problems with us and I find I'm learning more that way. (Mutual Empowering)*

*I found when doing the management subjects, some of the tools used to facilitate learning were like playing games or role playing. I found that really useful in understanding the concepts that were being be put across. (Mutual Empowering).*

**Worst aspects related to learning:** As with the best aspects of learning, some of the worst related to lecturer style and some related to group work and assignments. Two examples related to group work and assignments are provided first. Similar comments were made in every focus group.

*I'm sick to death of group assignments. I do that at work and get paid for it, and here I have to pay to suffer. It's annoying because of the countless times I have to literally re-write some of my group member's work because I can't put my name to it; I will not put my name to that assignment.*

*I can't see how exams actually allow me to transfer my learning into my work context, which is what I am here for.*

**Worst aspects of classroom teaching** with some examples given below were:

*... By the time you get to the 10<sup>th</sup> unit you've seen so many PowerPoints and models that it just gets a bit much. I've had a couple of really mediocre subjects prior to that where we just sat there doing diagrams and diagrams and diagrams.*

*I remember one memorable I'd had to make three people redundant and I raced to uni. The lecturer was talking about font sizes and Times New Roman nearly all night!*

There were also perceived instances of gender bias reported in every focus group which is discussed next.

**Perceptions of Gender Bias in the classroom:** Reported instances of gender bias referred to lecturer bias to female students, male student bias to female lecturers and male student bias to female students. A number of focus group participants also noted that they had only encountered one female lecturer in the entire duration of their university studies.

Several focus group participants indicated that some male lecturers do not give women an opportunity to participate as much as they would like. Stating for example, *"If you raise your hand up to make a point or you want to participate, they overlook your presence; it just goes to the tall male."* And in another instance:

*It's just very obvious that they don't care about your opinion at all. And even if you do give an opinion, they always say well yes, but that's not what we want. Then some male conquers and gives the same point again, and that becomes right for some reason. It's just very obvious that they don't care what a female student says.*

Others commented on male students challenging female lecturers more than they did males and their behaviour towards other female students when some male students laughed at, rather than with female students who were making a presentation. An action that even other male students felt should have been halted by the male lecturer.

However, the most obvious gender problems arose when it came to group work, where many instances were given of male group members giving orders and expecting female members to write, edit and proof read while they undertook technical work with the following quote being typical of several others:

*I've noticed in group work and group assignments that the male style of learning is very technical and aggressive. They are looking for a technical base because they think everything is engineering based and they can put two and two together. If they can't, the subject is too lame or boring for them, and it's meaningless.*

That said there were some focus group members who reported that they had positive group experiences both in female and male dominated groups. Noticeably, most positive experiences were reported from those people who had worked with groups in more female dominated subjects such as the HRM and social work subjects.

## CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the research was firstly, to determine female management students' learning practices and experiences in a business school's masters programmes and secondly to identify strategies for improving female students' participation and learning in those programmes to ascertain areas where best practice approaches can either be a) newly introduced or b) strengthened where they already exist. A relational framework was utilised in order to analyse the themes emerging from the data.

In summary, the findings indicate that while there were some 'best practice' examples in the business school there is still a great deal of room for improvement where female students undertaking management masters programs are concerned. In addition, the title of this paper asks whether anything has changed with regard to women and management education and the answer appears to be

negative, that is not a lot has changed. However, this study has highlighted some issues that were not raised in the literature cited in this paper contributing some new areas for consideration.

Best practices included instances where students felt challenged, were encouraged to participate, worked through problems and learning was facilitated in order to encourage understanding of various concepts. As identified earlier, this is particularly important for female learners with regard to the relational framework and the themes of mutual empowering referring to facilitating, connecting, collaborating, supporting, and receptiveness (Fletcher, 1998). In fact, Simpson and Ituma (2009) argue that the development of male students would be enhanced through a greater feminisation of the MBA in order to challenge rather than reinforce their values and practice.

Areas for attention relate to awareness raising, with regard to male lecturers encouraging participation from female students, while also ensuring that they do not respond in a derogatory fashion when responses are given in class as cited by some focus group participants. Moreover, there also appears to be a need for classroom protocol setting with regard to male student behaviour towards fellow female students and female lecturers.

Group work is the most obvious way in which to develop teamwork skills and engage in peer learning but it appears to be failing on both counts, especially for women. Several focus group participants wanted it abolished altogether given their negative experiences. A majority of participants reported that they had been left with editing and proof reading tasks whereas male students aimed to take charge and deal with more technical aspects of the assignments. Moreover, some female students reported that male members often wanted to meet at very inconvenient times (i.e. very late at night) which made it difficult for female members with family commitments. One focus group member said this did not seem to affect male students in the same way. One male student was reported to have said to his wife *"forget me for two years, pretend that I am not here"* while he was studying.

These findings raise several issues that require attention when focusing on gender equity in the classroom. They also call into question the effectiveness of group learning from a teaching and learning perspective, for women in particular. Rather than assume that students have the relationship skills needed for group work, it is argued that educators must be explicit in their teaching and assessment of these skills. If group based assignments are more about enhancing teamwork skills than reducing marking loads, then the assessment of such assignments should be based on these skills as much as the content of the assignment. One way of doing this is to individually moderate the assignment mark using peer and self assessment with criteria based on relevant behavioural indicators. Assessing in this way not only encourages more positive relational behaviours but also promotes reflection and peer learning. However, this needs to be supported by stronger guidance

from lecturers, not only with regard to group formation/composition, but also with the explicit teaching of desirable group dynamics and behaviours that support positive learning experiences and awareness raising among group members with regard to potential gender and diversity issues.

Finally, graduate schools of business would be well advised to recruit more female academics given the lack of role models for female master's students and the need for some male students to learn to respect and modify their behaviour when it comes to addressing female academics and students. Together, the interactions that occur between students, teachers and their peers affect learning and identity development (Warhurst, 2010). Kaenzig et al (2007) point out that because students' attitudes and behaviours may be assumed to translate into workplace attitudes and behaviours, gender-based educational experiences are critical. Further, they state that in the typical U.S. workplace, women who defer to men in group interactions in a traditionally male arena are likely to receive lower performance evaluations, leading to fewer opportunities such as promotions and salary increases.

The last words are provided by Gallos (1993) cited by Buttner (2002, p.9) who referred indirectly to relational practice when she wrote of the shift in her role from 'teacher as banker' where she deposits into and manage accounts that grow only because of her interventions and skills through to the midwife role which is an unobtrusive aid to the natural unfolding of life itself. The latter role supports the mutual empowerment theme of the relational framework which is in opposition to the 'teacher as banker' role that some female participants perceived that male students wanted from their lecturers via a directional approach in the classroom.

This project had limitations related to the number of focus group participants and the context of one graduate school of business. That said the findings serve to support findings from larger studies that have investigated similar issues. The utilisation of a relational framework to assist with analysis of data is a novel addition to the literature. Moreover, the data (not discussed here) also indicated a further diversity issue that was related to age and nationality differences in class members that would be important for further research. The addition of male as well as female students and the use of surveys to capture a larger and more diverse respondent group would also be advisable to explore issues raised across a broader spectrum.

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**Table 1: Relational framework in practice**

<b>Relational framework in practice</b>
<b>Preventative connecting:</b> Ensuring completion of task. Assuming tasks outside job description. Communicating with others to ensure collective understanding. Team members should put needs of the project ahead of individual issues (i.e. status/power). Ability to see big picture
<b>Mutual empowering:</b> behavior intended to enable others' achievement, empathetic teaching that takes the learner's emotional and intellectual reality into account. Openness to others' points of view, and fluid power relations where power moves to the individual or group that possesses critical information or resources rather than residing in a particular position. Power is conceived as power with rather than power over others. Terms that describe mutual empowering include trust, facilitating, connecting, collaborating, supporting, and receptiveness.
<b>Creating team:</b> working to create the conditions through which group life can flourish, thus creating the experience of team; fostering collaboration and cooperation, smoothing relationships between people, creating interdependence, and using collaborative rather than confrontational language in working with others in the organization. In creating a sense of team, the leader enables others to feel heard and seen, by acknowledging their thoughts and feelings.
<b>Achieving:</b> using relational skills to enhance one's own professional growth and effectiveness. The ability to ask for help is not seen as a sign of weakness. Achieving includes paying attention to the emotional overlay of a situation and repairing potential or perceived breaks in working relationships. Skills include the ability to stay with contradictory information, to blend thinking and feeling in coming to a decision, and to pay attention to process. Achieving is based on the belief that professional growth is rooted in connection rather than autonomy.

**Table 2: Focus group participants by participant age and degree**

<b>Age range</b>	<b>No of Focus Group Participants</b>
≤24	1
25-44	8
45-54	4
55≥	2
<b>Degree Studying</b>	
MBA	10
Master of Business	5
<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>15</b>



**Table 3: Focus Group Data and the Relational framework themes**

<b>Four themes x focus group (FG) frequency</b>	
<b>Preventative connecting (11/15)</b> FG 1 – 1 FG 2 – 3 FG 3 – 3 FG4 - 4	<b>Creating team (8/15)</b> FG1 – 3 FG2 – 2 FG3 – 2 FG4 - 1
<b>Mutual empowering (10/15)</b> FG1 – 3 FG2 – 2 FG3 – 2 FG4 - 3	<b>Achieving (10/15)</b> FG1 – 3 FG2 – 3 FG3 – 2 FG4 - 2