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**Communication Readiness: Do High School Studentsâ€™[™]
Communication Apprehension, Writing Ability, And Speaking
Ability Correlate With Their Perceptions Of Professional
Appearance?**

Hamlet Nicole Autman
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University

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Communication Readiness:

Do High School Students' Communication Apprehension, Writing Ability, and
Speaking Ability Correlate with their Perceptions of Professional Appearance?

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North Carolina A&T State University

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING

Department: Business Education

Major Professor: Dr. Stephanie Kelly

Greensboro, North Carolina

2014

The Graduate School
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University

This is to certify that the Master's Thesis of

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Greensboro, North Carolina
2014

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Biographical Sketch

Hamlet Nicole Autman has spent the last 21 years of her career as a change agent; developing and implementing effective strategies in complex environments, improving the performance of organizations, and facilitating organizational design and development initiatives. Dedicated to achieving excellence, Hamlet is viewed as a skilled Instructor, with expertise in organizational behavior, management consulting, Human Resource (HR) management, training and facilitation, leadership development, succession planning, performance management, and employee relations.

In addition to her current role as a Marketing and Entrepreneurship Instructor at Interactive College of Technology in Chamblee, Georgia, Hamlet is a Vice President within Employee Relations at Bank of America. Prior to these roles, Hamlet partnered with the CEO of Northwestern Benefit Corporation of Georgia (NBCG) to create an HR Consulting practice for their benefits brokerage firm. While working at NBCG, Hamlet developed the firm's HR marketing strategy, assessed external client organizational needs, developed 27 professional development courses, and implemented cost-saving solutions for many clients.

Hamlet has served as a knowledgeable consultant to non-profit organizations and *Fortune* 500 companies, including; Turner Broadcasting Systems, Inc., Accenture (formerly Andersen Consulting), and State Farm Insurance. Within these organizations, Hamlet worked with employees at all levels to help maximize their individual potential, as well as the company's growth.

Hamlet's vast experience of facilitating performance improvement initiatives within multiple industries fostered her passion for partnering with learners to identify their career goals, and assisting them in reaching their full potential. Hamlet plans to pursue her PhD in

Organizational Behavior upon completion of her master's degree, to further the research of communication effectiveness among students entering the workforce. Her career aspiration is to teach business education courses at the university level; where she plans to coach, train, motivate, and encourage students towards achieving their goals. Hamlet would also like to write and publish behavior-related scholarly articles and books.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Ms. Mercie D. Autman. Mommy, thank you for always being supportive of my dreams. You mean the world to me! Thank you for the many sacrifices you made throughout my life to ensure that I had everything I needed to succeed. Your belief in me made accomplishing this challenge possible.

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Abstract

This thesis purports to illustrate how communication apprehension (CA) and communication performance expectations inform professional physical appearance perspectives of high school students. The study includes a traditional and non-traditional high school, and focuses on three main variables: 1) *communication apprehension*, 2) *communication performance*, and 3) *professional physical appearance*. Three measurements were used during this study to assess students: 1) McCroskey's (1982) communication apprehension test *Personal Report of Communication Apprehension* (PRCA-24), 2) Daly and Miller's (1975) *Writing Apprehension Test*, 3) and an original perceived professionalism test. Teachers used an original oral and written communication measurement to assess their students' communication ability.

There were five hypotheses tested, and none of the hypotheses were statistically significant at either school. This was likely due to limited statistical power in the sample. However, when the communication submeasures were examined individually there was a statistically significant correlation between oral communication performance and group CA. Additionally, for perceived professionalism of physical appearance there was bimodality in the sample between schools. Students at the traditional school judged the images more harshly, while the non-traditional students judged the images less harshly, meaning the traditional students more accurately assessed professionalism. The results of the study were consistent with expectations that students experiencing different educational conditions would have different communication abilities, anxieties, and expectations of professional physical appearance.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Communication is critical to the human experience; enabling us to function from basic to extraordinary levels. According to Wood (2010), we communicate to establish and build relationships, resolve problems, develop identities, coordinate efforts with others, make an impact on issues that matter, and create possibilities. Creating possibilities at an extraordinary level requires that our basic needs (e.g., food and air) are met before we pursue more advanced needs (Maslow, 1968). As we develop, we will continue to rely on communication to survive and thrive, and our effectiveness in communicating will affect what jobs we will acquire and how much we will make to pay for more advanced needs (Wood, 2010). Wood goes on to suggest that interpersonal communication is central to our effectiveness and our everyday lives; thus making it the “lifeblood” of meaningful relationships in personal, social, and professional contexts.

Wood suggests eight basic principles for communication effectiveness that are briefly described below:

- **Principle 1: *We Cannot Not Communicate (p. 27).*** Whenever we are in the presence of another person we’re communicating, regardless of whether words are being exchanged. Depending upon the situation, silence can also be a form of communication that is interpreted differently based on a person’s cultural backgrounds.
- **Principle 2: *Interpersonal Communications Is Irreversible (p. 27).*** What we say and do matters and cannot be taken back. Even if a person apologizes for what they said, the message still becomes part of their relationship with the receiver. The receiver may choose to forgive the person, but the words cannot reverse back to non-existence. We must all be

careful in how we choose to communicate - or not communicate.

- **Principle 3: *Interpersonal Communication Involves Ethical Choices (p. 27).***

Communication with another person should demonstrate that we are authentic and empathetic individuals (Johannesen, 1996), because once again communication is irreversible.

- **Principle 4: *People Construct Meanings in Interpersonal Communication (p. 28).*** Human beings communicate using “symbols” such as words or gestures, which are then interpreted by the receiver. Each receiver may interpret the same symbol differently, depending upon the context in which it is given and the receiver’s cultural background.

- **Principle 5: *Metacommunication Affects Meanings (p. 29).*** Metacommunication is communication about communication, which can be verbal or nonverbal. For example, a person may frown while saying that they dislike a type of food. The nonverbal frown communicates a message about the verbal expression of dislike.

- **Principle 6: *Interpersonal Communication Develops and Sustains Relationships (p. 30).*** Interpersonal communication is the key to how individuals build relationships, resolve conflicts, and construct historical contexts. Communication meanings are not absolute; they can change depending upon a person’s mood.

- **Principle 7: *Interpersonal Communication is Not a Panacea (p. 31).*** Communication is not a “cure-all” and can’t fix problems in a vacuum. It can’t cure diseases, or many of our societal challenges (e.g., racism). Also, cultural norms dictate whether it is appropriate to even talk about relationships or feelings.

- **Principle 8: *Interpersonal Communication Effectiveness Can Be Learned (p. 31).*** Wood contends that although some people are naturally talented communicators, communication

can be learned; therefore, everyone can become competent communicators.

The necessity for effective interpersonal communication is especially critical for students who will be graduating from high schools and colleges, and entering the workforce. Research conducted by the Arkansas Department of Education (2006) to assess the preparedness of high school and college graduates entering the workforce in America has illustrated that an astonishing number of students lack the writing, speaking, and nonverbal skills needed to meet communication performance expectations on the job. That construct, *communication readiness*, is derived from the words *communication* (imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs [Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d., pp. 1]) and *readiness* (a developmental stage at which a child has the capacity to receive instruction at a given level of difficulty or to engage in a particular activity [Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d., pp.1]). For the purpose of this study, *communication readiness* refers to a developmental stage at which a person has the capacity to interchange thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs. The challenges with communication readiness are not unique to a particular industry or business sector; in fact, both public and private entities have indicated that students' communication deficits cost them a significant amount of money in remediation training of soft skills (Dana, Hancock, & Phillips, 2011). Scholars continue to investigate ways to bridge the gap between the communication skills that are taught in high school and college, and the communication performance expectations of employers. To further inform this research, it is critical to investigate the linkage between communication apprehension (CA), communication performance, and nonverbal physical appearance expectations of students to better develop strategies for effectively bridging the gap.

An extensive amount of research exists on the individual components of CA, “an

individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78); including writing, speaking, and professional presence. However, very little data exists that explores the correlation between communication apprehension and nonverbal behavior. *Nonverbal communication* is defined as "aspects of communication, such as gestures and facial expressions, that do not involve verbal communication but which may include nonverbal aspects of speech" (Collins English Dictionary, 2009, pp. 1). For the purpose of this study, body modifications and dress codes are also considered nonverbal communication characteristics. Remland (1993) stated that the only universal effect of CA is a feeling of discomfort. That suggestion implies that a plausible remedy for CA may be internally driven, which indicates that solutions may be more complex. It also implies that solutions may vary depending upon the individual characteristics of the participants in the research. Thus, for this study, it will be critical that research includes students' perspectives of CA in relation to performance expectations.

Specifically, this thesis will illustrate research on how CA and communication performance expectations inform professional physical appearance perspectives of high school students. To that end, the literature review is divided into three main sections: 1) *communication apprehension*, 2) *communication performance*, and 3) *professional physical appearance*. *Performance* is "the execution or accomplishment of work, acts, feats, etc." (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d., pp. 1). For the purpose of this study, *communication performance* is defined as the execution of an interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs. *Physical appearance* is a form of nonverbal communication include professional presence, clothing, and body modifications such as piercings or tattooing.

The interrelationship between communication apprehension, communication

performance, and physical appearance may not be obvious; specifically, of the three variables, physical appearance may appear to be disjointed. However, research shows that physical appearance choices are directly related to CA levels (Spicer, 1981). For example, individuals with high CA are less likely to arouse others by wearing “comment provoking” T-shirts. Doing so would illicit conversations that people with high CA are prone to avoid. Any clothing item or body modification can have underlying nonverbal dimensions that may impact communication performance. This study will seek to explore students’ CA and how it relates to expectations of communication performance and physical appearance.

Statement of the Problem

The Arkansas Department of Education (2006) conducted two focus groups on preparedness of high school seniors entering the workforce in America, which indicated that 55.5% of respondents rated public high school graduates with no formal education or formal training as either “not too well prepared” or “not well prepared at all” to enter the workforce. The primary deficiencies were related to writing skills. “Seventy-three percent of the respondents stated that less than half of the recent high school graduates who apply for jobs in their company have quality writing skills” (p. 4). Respondents also indicated that students also lacked oral communication skills, as well as professional presence. Of the three communication categories, many employers indicated that writing skills are the most critical skills needed upon entering the workforce; citing that remediation writing training for new employees cost approximately \$3.1 billion annually (Quible & Griffin, 2007).

Writing abilities of students entering the workforce have declined according to Dana et al. (2011) because far more students are entering college; with only 25% of seniors possessing the writing ability to produce written work that meets expectations. They added that another

reason for the steady numbers is that SAT scores were recalibrated in the 1990's, which increased scores by 80 points (2011). Those two factors contributed to the influx of more students being admitted into colleges with deficient reading and writing skills. In addition to those factors, it was reported in *The Nation's Report Card: Writing Assessments* (2007) that 12th grade reading scores hadn't changed since 1992; despite the fact that GPAs had increased one-third of a point nationally. This information implied that teachers were giving students higher grades than they earned; thus contributing to their writing deficiencies.

While research has shown that many variables impact communication anxiety and performance (e.g., culture, internal drivers) more work is needed to determine whether students perceive that their communication deficiencies will impact their communication performance. Specifically, this study examines whether high school students think that their writing skills, speaking skills, and professional presence correlate with their communication performance. Understanding students' perspectives may aid scholars in developing solutions to bridge the communication gap that not only satisfies educational demands, but also motivates students to improve their communication abilities. It is seemingly more challenging to fix a problem if students don't recognize that a problem exists or understand how they may benefit from making changes.

This proposed study will aim to take an exploratory approach to research, including a wide variety of literature available on communication performance and communication anxiety. There is no comprehensive model or intervention to address the personal appearance concerns, while addressing the anxiety factors amongst students; thus this proposed study maintains the potential to develop communication performance data that may be useful in assisting students in reducing some of the apprehension they may face as it relates to communication performance.

At the conclusion of this thesis, it is expected that the data will suggest that students with lower communication competence in terms of writing and speaking will exhibit higher anxiety and lower expectations for professional appearance. Conversely, it is expected that students with higher oral and written communication competence will exhibit lower anxiety; thus anticipate higher expectations for professional appearance.

Potential Limitations of the Study

Endeavoring a primary research study of this magnitude poses one specific known difficulty related to gathering the research data and in eliciting a quantitative study targeted at high school students. Achieving a diverse level of respondent participants will likely require that the study be conducted at two different high schools for gathering students' opinions on communication readiness and overall communication anxiety, as it relates to communication performance. Furthermore, receiving parental approvals for the distribution of the research instruments will require active consultation with various administrators and teachers to ensure minimal classroom disruptions. Accordingly, known limitations to this study lie in the researcher's ability to garner an adequate response ratio to the study. There are also concerns of individual anonymity inferred by this proposed study to avoid emotional risks and ensure that the targeted sample group is comfortable providing responses that may cast a negative light on themselves, their peers, and potentially their administrators and teachers. For this reason, all respondents targeting for this study will be assured strict anonymity in the presentation of research data results.

In summary, relatively little research has focused on inputs of the communication competencies proposed for study here, especially among high school students. Thus, to further the research regarding CA, it will be useful to explore factors that contribute to lower

expectations of oral communication, written communication and professional presence. This proposed thesis intends to encapsulate the aforementioned communication components that will aid in fostering effective communication performance in students entering the workforce.

Following the literature review, the quantitative methodology used to conduct the research will be discussed. References and appendices will follow the methodology section.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Research has shown that during an average 30-minute meeting, approximately 800 different nonverbal messages are exchanged (Hargrave, 2008). During his body language studies at UCLA, Mehrabian (1972) discovered that 55% of the emotional meaning of a message comes through our body language, while only 7 percent is composed of the actual words we use, and 38% is communicated through our tone of voice and inflection. This information solidifies the importance of displaying appropriate nonverbal communication skills because people are prone to believe the physical impression that we present to them before they believe the actual content of the words we use (du Plessis & du Plessis, 2008).

The physical impression begins with a person's posture, which is an integral part of professional presence (Bass, 2010). Posture encompasses the way a person walks, shakes hands, sits during conversations, and displays facial expressions. Hargrave (2008) further defined posture as including five major nonverbal communication channels "body angle, face, arms, hands, and legs" (p.18). Simply put, posture is a component of a person's overall body language, and must be presented effectively.

There is a common saying, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." This is especially true in the business environment. Unless a candidate has a personal reference within the organization that they wish to join, an interview will likely be their first and only chance to illustrate their professional presence. In addition to posture, for the purpose of this thesis, profession presence will also include physical attributes such as; clothing, and body modifications.

There is a large body of research which has measured students' levels of CA. However,

there has been little attention paid to exploring the phenomenon of CA through the lived experiences of students themselves (Byrne, Flood, & Shanahan, 2012). This thesis will explore high school students' perceptions of CA as it relates to communication performance and the expectations of personal physical appearance.

Communication Apprehension

Communication Apprehension (CA) was formally known as stage fright in the 1940's, and again is defined as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78). There has been a plethora of research on CA; yet all facets of the CA phenomenon are still not fully understood (Byrne, Flood, & Shanahan, 2012). A student may experience a broad spectrum of oral and/or written CA fears which may inhibit their communication performance. These fears may go unresolved if the student is making good grades because many parents believe that receiving good grades is the sole indicator that their child is performing (Frymier, 2005). Frymier's research indicates that students must be effective communicators in order to be effective students. Byrne, Flood, and Shanahan (2012) indicated that CA should be alleviated before attempts are made to improve communication skills. They recommend that educators enhance their understanding of CA and its consequences in order to create sustainable solutions.

CA has been prominently linked to college students' social and academic success (Hunt, Lippert, & Titsworth, 2005). College students with low CA levels are likely to be more social and successful, while their peers with high CA levels have lower grade point averages (GPAs), and are likely to drop out of school (Miller & Nadler, 2009). Students with high levels of CA are also more likely to be impaired or suffer negative consequences in life in general (Miller & Nadler, 2009).

As it relates to writing abilities, the phrase writing apprehension was created by Daly and Miller (1975) during their research in which they discovered that communication apprehension seriously affects a large proportion of the population. Writing apprehension is “a collection of behaviors that include a writer’s tendency to avoid situations that involve writing, to find writing unrewarding, to fear having one’s writing evaluated, and to develop increased anxiety over having one’s writing viewed in a public forum” (Mabrito, 2000, p. 41). Simply stated, writing apprehension is anxiety about writing (Lee & Krashen, 2002) that can affect several areas of a student’s life such as, academics, career choice, and social involvement. Apprehensive writers will often base decisions regarding selecting majors in college, or pursuing an employment field, solely on the amount of perceived writing (Masclé, 2013).

Karakaya and Ulper (2011) developed a writing anxiety scale and concluded that “writing anxiety in affective property in the writing process must not be ignored” (p. 703). They reported that the main reason for anxiety in students is fear of negative evaluation stemming from classrooms, teachers, exams, and personality traits; thus, resulting in poor communication performance. Henley (2006) further pointed out that many students in impoverished communities have been labelled as “class clowns” and opt for simply “getting by” (p. 30) particularly on writing assignments, rather than tackling the daunting task of trying to learn what can be considered a new concept (i.e., effective writing). As a result, many students experience anxiety that is rooted in anger and rebellion against their normal way of communicating, since their jargon and dialect is considered unacceptable in academic realms (Henley, 2006).

Another dimension of CA, Oral Communication Apprehension (OCA), causes performance challenges as well. Individuals with high OCA report fear, tension, and physical symptoms, such as increased heart rate and sweating when confronted with communication

activities (Beatty & Dobos, 1997). Many OCA sufferers think they are alone in their condition because they are unaware of other people with the same challenge. This lack of recognition regarding the condition is referred to as “the hidden communication disorder” by Horwitz (2002, p. 1).

OCA does not only impact high school students; college students who have OCA have reported feeling uncomfortable or unable to ask questions in class according to Byrne, Flood and Shanahan (2012). Many students may skip classes or choose courses that do not require a lot of oral communication; thus, they often achieve less than they are capable of performing (Bowers, 1986). Richard and McCroskey (1998) indicated that some students with high OCA may over-communicate or talk all the time in an attempt to try to conceal their fear of communicating, although this is a rare reaction. It is more common for OCA sufferers to remain quiet.

Some argue that OCA is cultural. Cultural dialects are often misunderstood by educators; thus increasing criticism of minority students, often to the point of silencing them (Alley-Young, 2005). Oftentimes, students who use dialects have to pause to choose their words carefully before speaking, which can cause unnecessary anxiety. The time that students spend mentally fighting the inclination to use dialect can be viewed by other as apprehension and even ignorance. Alley-Young (2005) noted that this is especially prevalent in African-American students; stemming from their use of cultural dialect. This cultural dialect is referred to as *Ebonics*, which is “African American Vernacular English or AAVE” (Collins English Dictionary Online, 2009, pp. 1).

Higher OCA speakers were also categorized as speaking too softly, having an unsteady hand, and providing prolonged pausing (Remland, 1993). Remland also reported that persons with higher levels of OCA may also have lower levels of arousal-seeking tendencies, which

makes them appear to be disinterested in their surroundings. This is especially true of people who interact with strangers; they often display less eye contact and fewer nods (Remland, 1993). The effect of OCA causes many people to choose not to speak in public if given the option (Beatty, 1987). As a result, people with high OCA may have a difficult time verbally communicating in professional work environments.

CA also impacts professional presence of individuals in many settings; specifically, within the work environment. Professional presence (including business etiquette) is defined as an intangible quality which sets an individual apart and instills a sustainable, competitive advantage (Bass, 2010). It is a way of presenting oneself that creates credibility, a sense of competence, and self-assurance in the workplace. Professional presence may also affect how management perceives individuals, as well as their promotability. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers' Job Outlook for the Class of 2005 (Jackson, 2005), business etiquette is rated as one of the top three skills lacking among college graduates. In order to address this deficiency, students will have to understand and possibly alter their desire to dress in a manner to fit in with their peers. The need for social desirability, which represents the tendency of individuals to express themselves in a socially desirable way to avoid social disapproval, has been long established (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964). Understanding these societal variables will hopefully aid in creating solutions to bridge the gap between communication performance and physical appearance expectations.

Communication Performance

To reiterate, communication performance is defined within this thesis as a student's ability to execute an interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by writing, speaking, or professional physical appearance. It can be assessed verbally, nonverbally, and through writing.

Much of the research in communication performance focuses on assessment and enhancement.

Oral communication performance was traditionally assessed through oral examinations, in which students would give spoken responses to questions from test administrators (Huxhama, Campbell, & Westwood, 2012). This practice is somewhat obsolete in secondary and undergraduate settings today. Oral presentations are now the most commonly cited non-written assessment, according to Huxhama et al (2012). A more modern approach for both oral and written performance is through self-assessment rubrics. Rubrics provide specific criteria for scoring (e.g., clearly defines topic, citations adhere to APA format), which gives students critical insight into what the evaluator will be looking for while assessing their performance. Within each criterion, levels are further defined to assess understanding (e.g., on a scale of 1-4); this process is known as the Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes (SOLO) taxonomy (Barney, Khurum, Petersen, Unterkalmsteiner, & Jabangwe, 2012). The main advantage of a rubric is that it can help improve communication about the expectations of the grading process (Rasheed, Aslam, & Sarwar, 2010). A rubric also follows the 21st Century philosophy of student-centered teaching, enabling learners to better understand assessment practices and goals (Muirhead, & Skelton, 2010). Conversely, the impact of rubrics on learning outcomes is inconclusive according to Barney et al., although rubrics do have the potential to improve performance.

Another self-assessment measure for both oral and written communications is verbal feedback, in which students receive feedback on assignments before officially submitting them. For example, a teacher may allow students to submit drafts of written assignments for general feedback prior to the due date; students use the feedback from the evaluator to improve their performance. Research indicates that there is concern about reliability and bias with grading oral and written assignments, even when rubrics are used (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007). The concern is

that the evaluator may be more lenient in the grading process for certain students, and that the grading process is ultimately subjective.

The fact that the validity of the aforementioned oral and written performance assessments are not conclusive suggests that it isn't easy to prove communication effectiveness, and that writing is not mastered in a vacuum (Graff, 2003). Baron (2009) suggested that the challenge of bridging the gap is that educators do not know exactly what is needed to ensure a successful writing transition from high school to college. One way that written communication can be improved is by introducing college-level writing skills into the high school curriculum. In her article, *Inventing the University in High School*, Farris recommended that the curriculum should be *College*, instead of *College Prep* (2009). The overall goal of writing would be more comprehensive if the focus were more on narrative personal reflections of materials, rather than regurgitating concepts from lesson plans. Writing skills can also be improved using "writing prompts" and "expository writings" (Sangirli, 2010, pp.8). Simply put, writing prompts are directives that guide the writing process (Forte & Schurr, 2001; Seto & Meel, 2006). Expository writings focus more on providing information or explaining a topic, issue, subject, or idea (Shield & Galbraith, 1998).

A more comprehensive approach to resolving communication deficiencies might be to create one set of skills or practices that can serve as an anchor for students as they move across subjects (Graff & Berkenstein-Graff, 2009). This practice might eliminate some of the ambiguity that currently exists regarding bridging the gap of writing deficiencies from high school to college. As it stands now, students receive conflicting expectations from grade level to grade level, depending on the experience or motivation of their teachers. Graff and Berkenstein-Graff (2009, p. W412) adopted the phrase "the mixed message curriculum" to illustrate these

disconnections, which occur naturally because college courses are generally isolated from each other and instructors are usually unaware of their colleague's syllabus or lesson plan. As a result, lessons at the collegiate level do not reinforce other content areas, and may even contradict each other. These mixed messages may cause writing anxiety in students by making them think that the college writing expectations are unconquerable. As Graff and Berkenstein-Graff (2009) highlighted, if students understood one basic concept, it would help them to succeed in every aspect of academia and beyond; the art of the argument. Appreciative arguments strengthen reading, speaking, and writing skills because it forces students to research beyond the surface to fully comprehend the issue. Bartholomae (1986) summed it up best in his essay *Inventing the University* by writing that the best student writing "works against a conventional point of view" (1986, p. 607); thus, in essence establishes an argument.

Personal Appearance

Much research has been conducted on written and oral communication deficiencies; however, personal physical appearance as a dimension of nonverbal communication competence has only recently begun to attract scholarly attention (Ruetzler, Taylor, Reynolds, Baker, & Killen 2012). Students are taught physical appearance trends through what Kaiser (1997) described as *appearance management*, which encompasses "...all attention, decisions, and acts related to one's personal appearance...and includes all activities and thought processes leading to the purchase and wearing of clothing items, as well as processes of body modifications" (p. 5). It is implied that these thought processes are derived from levels of CA and performance expectations related to the law and/or schools dress codes.

Professional attire has changed significantly in many industries from the days when business attire was the norm. Business casual is now the dominant dress code for most

businesses; however, interpretation of the term can be broad. As a result, business consultants stress the importance of first impressions in the interview setting; recommending that business attire be worn (Grimaldi, 2010, pp. 7). Some employers have reported that students are showing up for job interviews wearing jeans, shirts with their midriff showing, or wearing flip flops (Arkansas Department of Education, 2006). These trends are generational norms, yet unprofessional in most workplaces. These trends will likely have negative connotations, whereas individuals will be viewed less favorably than their business-dressed counterparts.

In addition to the work environment, communication performance in everyday settings may be impeded by clothing choices (Workman, Arseneau, & Ewell, 2004). For example, Workman et al. (2004) found that in addition to school officials, peers formed more negative opinions of students who wore alcohol-themed t-shirts, compared to peers who wore plain t-shirts. Many schools have enacted dress codes to counter the propensity of violence, which they believe could result from inappropriate dress. One of the biggest drivers was clothing choice; themed t-shirts again (e.g., displaying offensive language) garnered perceptions of violence, while plain t-shirts did not (Arnold & Workman, 2003). Several corporate 500 companies have reinstated business dress attire in an effort to increase productivity and positive perceptions of employees (Wood, 2003). In the article, Wood also stated that Lehman Brothers changed back to business attire in March 2003, and Bear Stears followed shortly afterwards; because business casual attire had become too casual. It is believed that appearance decisions by youths are an indication of their judgment regarding workplace decisions and other aspects of their lives.

While overall attractiveness, neatness, grooming, and conservative attire are highly considered by employers; the impact of visible body modifications on interviewing and subsequent hiring decisions is trending (Ruetzler et al., 2012). Tattoos may be considered by

many people as personal, individualized, artwork that illustrates as person's freedom of expression. As euphoric as this definition may sound; many employers stereotype tattoo owners as people who engage in violence, drug or alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity, or mentally ill (Swami & Furnham, 2007) as a result of their visibility in the workforce. Visible tattoos are now ranging from small characters to hundreds of images on what Michalak (n.d.) referred to as a tattoo sleeve. "Tattoo sleeves are defined as a large tattoo or a bunch of small random designs that when placed together cover most of the arm" (Micklak, n.d., para. 1). Tattoo owners can also be viewed as irresponsible, socially awkward, lazy people. Interestingly enough, the negative perceptions are the same regardless of the type or size of the tattoo (Ruetzler et al., 2012).

Other physical appearance trends are sagging pants, wearing shoes without laces, and long, oversized shorts. These trends are associated with the hip-hop culture which is heavily influenced by prisons (Boyd, 2003). The pants of many prison inmates sag below their waist because inmates are not allowed belts (Baxter & Marina, 2008). Accordingly, sagging pants and the larger baggy pants trend first appeared on the streets of New York City in the early 1990s as a way for individuals to challenge the authority of police and school officials, who are responsible for enforcing dress codes. These trends have found their way into the workplace, and are affecting perceptions of a person's expertise, competence, trustworthiness, personality, and intellectual capability (Barrick, Swider, & Stewart, 2010). Specifically, a candidate's personal appearance may negatively impact an employer's perceptions of their performance, and may contribute to a person not being hired by a particular company, without any regard to their qualifications, knowledge, or experience (Ruetzler et al., 2012).

While ear piercings are generally acceptable for women, more nontraditional piercings are receiving criticism. Long gone are the days when the most common ear piercing was in the

form of a stud on a female's earlobe (Ruetzler et al., 2012). Nowadays, people are inserting piercings in less traditional visible places (e.g., their cheeks, necks, chins). Other non-traditional piercings include; male ear piercings, large holes in earlobes that stretches to fit large (and usually round) earpieces, piercings that expand along the upper ear cartridge, nose and tongue rings (Seiter & Sandry, 2003). The perceptions of piercings on males as it relates to employability were also analyzed by Seiter and Sandry (2003) who found that males' piercings impacted perceptions of their credibility and job abilities. Surprisingly, the piercings did not impact their attractiveness.

Ruetzler et al. (2012) indicated that while tattoos and piercings have existed for centuries, they are becoming more prevalent among graduates who are entering the workplace. Dale et al. (2009) surveyed 581 business people and all of them reported having some negative thoughts about adornments in the workplace and often asked employees to conceal them. Students entering the workforce may have to alter their appearance management decisions based on the norms for the intended work environment.

Rationale

The current literature identified NCLB as having had positive intentions upon its inception to ensure that all students were adequately taught according to national standards. However, it can be argued that while standardized testing created more writing in high school, it was done so at the expense of effective writing (Fisher & Frey, 2003). This implies that students are now learning how to write for tests (i.e., longhand test-taking); but they are not learning how to write for context or using their own independent perspective to support their findings. Writing communication is not the only variable impeding students from becoming successful communicators. Challenges exist in the realm of written communication, oral communication,

and physical appearance, such that students often exhibit high anxiety and low ability simultaneously in these areas of competence. It is necessary to study all of these communication factors and ascertain whether students correlate the perceptions of their personal appearance with their levels of communication apprehension, and how their personal appearance impacts their communication performance, in order to create tools to assist them in improving their communication skills. Thus, to better understand high school students' preparation for the workforce, their communication performance, CA, and expectations of professional appearance, the following hypotheses will be tested:

1. Communication anxiety will be negatively correlated with communication performance:
 - a. in terms of writing.
 - b. in terms of speaking.
2. CA will be negatively correlated with expectations of professional physical appearance.
3. Written communication ability will be positively related to expectations of professional physical appearance.
4. Writing apprehension will be negatively correlated in expectations of professional physical appearance.
5. There is a positive correlation between oral communication ability and expectations of professional physical appearance.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a methods design that employed quantitative data collection (Gay & Airasian, 2009), which consisted of an experiment and two surveys. For the experiment, a static group comparison was made with non-equivalent groups. This constitutes a quasi-experiment as groups of students were predetermined by the instructor. All groups took the same assessment, but varied by their school and life preparation. The data were analyzed using statistics in an unbiased, objective manner.

Participants

Data collection required self-report from students as well as another report from their teachers. Participants included four business education teachers, and 60 students from 1) a *traditional* high school located in Lithonia, Georgia and 2) a *non-traditional* high school located in Ellenwood, Georgia (both schools are within the Atlanta metropolitan area). The two sample schools are located approximately five miles from each other. The 60 students were distributed among the two schools; 23 from the non-traditional high school, and 37 from the traditional high school. For this study, a *traditional* high school is defined as a *public school* that is maintained at the public's expense for the education of the children of a community or district, which uses a standard educational curriculum (Public School, 2014, pp. 1).

All of the teachers are black females. Teachers at the traditional school have been teaching for an average of 11 years; 7.5 at the sample school. They teach an average of 114 students per semester in classes that average 27.5 students per class. Teachers reported that they spend an average of approximately eight hours per week grading speaking assignments, and

approximately 7.5 hours grading writing assignments. The teacher at the nontraditional school has been teaching for eight years; seven at the sample school. She teaches approximately 60 students per semester in classes that average 15 students per class. Approximately five hours per week is spent by the teacher grading speaking assignments, and five hours are spent grading writing assignments.

Of the traditional students, 180 consent forms were distributed among nine classrooms of students that were asked to participate. Thirty-seven surveys were later distributed among the nine classrooms; females composed 43 percent of the sample and males 57 percent. The class status of students broke down as follows: five percent freshman, 14 percent sophomores, 32 percent juniors, and 49 percent seniors. Participants' ages ranged from 14-18 years old ($M = 16.39$, $SD = 1.02$). There were 1510 students enrolled at the traditional school at the time of the survey. African Americans comprise 95 percent of the school's population; thus all participants were African American. This school has one of the largest population of students in the Atlanta metropolitan area.

For the purpose of this study, the non-traditional high school utilized for sampling is a credit recovery high school; meaning, the majority of the students have left their traditional "home schools" to make up credits in order to graduate. Many of these students were absent from their traditional school for an extended period of time because they were incarcerated, expelled, or on maternity leave. As such, they transferred to this non-traditional credit recovery high school, which offers customized curriculums to help students make-up credits needed to graduate on time. Twenty-three students participated in the survey. Female non-traditional students composed 39% of the sample and males 61%. The class status of students broke down as follows: zero freshman, four percent sophomores, 26% juniors, and 70% seniors. Participants'

ages ranged from 14-20 years old ($M = 17.04$, $SD = 1.22$). Sixty consent forms were distributed among four classrooms of students that were asked to participate. Twenty-three surveys were later distributed among the four classrooms. There were 105 students enrolled at the non-traditional school at the time of the survey. African Americans comprise 99 percent of the school's population; thus all participants were African American. This school has one of the smallest population of students in the Atlanta metropolitan area.

Procedure

Business education students were chosen to participate in the study because they represent the most likely population of future employees in the workplace. As such, business education teachers at relevant schools were selected as well. Four teachers from two schools were solicited to participate in the study. This yielded a response rate of 100%. Each teacher was sent an invitation through email to participate in the study during fall 2014 semester (Appendix A), and a follow-up email (Appendix B) was sent five days later if they had not responded. A condition of their participation was allowing students in their business education classes to be solicited for participation.

After teachers agreed to participate, a visit was made to both schools during the day where students were asked to participate in person (Appendix C) and given information packets (Appendix D), which included parental consent forms for their parent or guardian to complete (Appendix E). Students were advised that their participation was voluntary and that the data collected would be analyzed in aggregate; thus no individual information would be used. Students were given five days to return the completed consent form. Teachers were asked to remind students to return the consent forms each morning upon collection.

Data collection was identical for both schools. For both schools, all of the students within

the 13 business education classrooms were given the opportunity to participate (nine classes in the traditional school and four in the nontraditional school). Students were asked to return the consent forms to their teacher on the next day, but forms were still collected for four additional days with the teacher reminding students who had not returned their forms that they could still have it completed within those four days. Fifty-two parental consent forms were returned. Eight students were 18 or over; thus did not require consent forms. Four teacher consent forms were returned (Appendix F). At this time, teachers were given an assessment of each student's oral and written communication ability to complete (Appendix G). These assessments were collected when the researcher returned to collect data from students; yielding a 20.6% response rate from the traditional school and a 38% response rate from the non-traditional school.

Three days later, a second visit was made to the respective school during the day where the survey was administered manually within the classrooms, which also included an attestation statement (Appendix H). Data from students' surveys were used to assess their communication anxiety, communication performance, and perceptions of professional physical appearance. Students completed a questionnaire consisting of 71 questions, which took approximately 20 minutes for each student to complete. No incentive was offered for completion. Teachers were also asked to complete the questionnaire regarding perceptions of professional physical appearance.

Instrumentation

Three instruments were used to survey students for this research 1) McCroskey's (1982) communication apprehension test *Personal Report of Communication Apprehension* (PRCA-24), 2) Daly and Miller's (1975) *Writing Apprehension Test* (WAT), 3) and an original perceived professionalism test. (See Appendix I for the instrument).

Communication Apprehension. CA was assessed through McCroskey's (1982) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) test. PRCA-24 is composed of twenty-four statements; 12 items with positive polarity and 12 with negative polarity. The Likert-type scale asked students to indicate whether they agree or disagree with statements concerning feelings about communicating with others on a seven-point response scale. The PRCA-24 is the most widely used instrument to measure communication apprehension, having shown strong content and predictive validity (McCroskey, 1982). The reliability score for the measure in the present study was $\alpha = .85$.

Writing Apprehension. For this study, Daly and Miller's (1975) WAT was used to assess students' apprehension about writing. This is a 20-item Likert-type measure that features 10 items with positive polarity and 10 with negative polarity with a seven-point response scale ranging from agree to disagree. Again, the instrument has been shown to have strong with concurrent and predictive validity (Daly & Miller, 1975). The reliability score for the measure in the present study was $\alpha = .81$.

Perceived Professionalism. Perceived professionalism was assessed through a combination visual stimulus and questionnaire. The assessment essentially asked students to do a content analysis of professional physical appearance using their own life training rather than having coding training. Teachers and students were shown a PowerPoint presentation of 19 photos, reflecting physical appearance characteristics (Appendix I). Each slide contained a photograph of a person displaying an image, along with a corresponding number. As each slide was shown, teachers and students were asked to rate their feelings about the professionalism of the image in a workplace, using the assigned number. Scoring was calculated on a seven-point Likert-type scale that asked participants to indicate whether they agree or disagree that the image

is professional. Notably, the higher a student scores on this measure, the less harshly they judge the images, and therefore the more inaccurate their assessments of perceived professionalism. Therefore, for example, if a negative relationship is observed between measure A and the perceived professionalism measure, a negative relationship would exist between measures, but a positive relationship would exist between measure A and a students' ability to assess professionalism accurately.

To test the validity of the photographs, a perceived professionalism pilot study was conducted using a sampling of 30 college students in business courses. Students were shown the same PowerPoint presentation of 19 photos, reflecting professional physical appearance characteristics (Appendix I). As each slide was shown, students were asked to raise their hands if they noticed a difference within the image on each slide. The majority of students indicated that they noticed a difference on each slide. There were no changes made based on the pilot survey. The reliability score for the measure in the present study was $\alpha = .71$.

Oral and Written Communication Ability. Teachers were asked to assess their students' communication ability through two original statements. One statement asked teachers to rate each individual student's oral communication ability and asked them to rate each individual student's written communication ability on a seven-point Likert-type scale indicating if their ability was above or below average. Because both of these measures consisted of only one item, it is impossible to calculate a reliability score.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The results are organized into sections that explain validity tests of measures, moderator checks, and hypothesis testing. Additionally, a section is dedicated to substantive findings, highlighting results that were inconsistent with expectations. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a summary of findings.

Unidimensional Measurement Models

Prior to data analysis, each measurement model was assessed using a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test for content, discriminate, and convergent validity. The AMOS maximum likelihood parameter estimation algorithm was used to test for internal consistency and parallelism. In running the CFAs, weak or problematic items that threaten the validity could be removed. Each time an item was removed from a measurement model, the model was re-specified. This process was repeated for each measurement model until the remaining items demonstrated fit. This validity test was especially important for this study given the originality of the perceived professionalism measure. Although the measure fared well in the pilot test, in that participants were able to identify different unprofessional components of photos, the CFA was necessary to confirm that items retained assessed *professionalism* instead of a related construct. Finalized measures can be found in Appendix J. The fit statistics for each unidimensional measurement model can be found in Table 1. The descriptive statistics can be found in Table 2.

Table 1

Fit Statistics

Measure	Chi-Square	GFI	RMSEA
Professionalism	$\chi^2(20)=22.52, p > .05$	.91	.05
Group CA	$\chi^2(5)=4.31, p > .05$	.97	.00
Meeting CA	$\chi^2(2)=3.14, p > .05$	.93	.19
Interpersonal CA	$\chi^2(5)=4.31, p > .05$	.99	.00
PSA CA	$\chi^2(5)=6.17, p > .05$	.96	.06
Writing CA	$\chi^2(35)=49.98, p < .05$	.87	.09

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

Measure	Mean	S.D.	Min.-Max.	Skew	Kurtosis
Oral Competence	5.37	.86	3.00-7.00	.18	.28
Written Competence	5.05	.72	3.00-6.00	-.63	.77
Professionalism	2.40	.71	1.00-4.56	.65	.60
Group CA	2.82	1.08	1.20-7.00	1.35	2.81
Meeting CA	2.64	1.18	1.00-7.00	1.16	2.10
Interpersonal CA	2.94	1.16	1.00-7.00	.57	.99
PSA CA	3.94	1.26	1.00-7.00	-.07	-.11
Writing CA	3.08	.90	1.15-6.40	.76	2.05
Overall CA	3.47	1.09	1.60-5.80	.82	-1.00

Because the Communication Apprehension (CA) measure is second-order unidimensional, submeasures can be used individually or combined to assess overall CA. As such, each submeasure was treated unidimensionally. Through the CFA process, a small number of items were removed from the individual submeasures as follows:

- one from meeting communication apprehension
- one from group communication apprehension
- two from interpersonal communication apprehension

- one from public speaking anxiety

The Writing Apprehension measure lost 10 items during CFA; however, this is not surprising. A problem with many older measures that used a large number of negatively stated items, which require reverse coding, is that these measures accidentally create a second false factor (Kotowski, Levine, Baker, & Bolt, 2009). This appeared to have been the case with this measure given that seven of the 10 lost items were negatively stated.

The Perceived Professionalism assessment is an original measure that was developed for this study. Ten items were also removed during CFA, which is expected in measurement development, where researchers start with a multitude of items likely to reflect a construct and retain the strongest in the finalized measure. The most likely reason that these items were removed is that the photos induced participants to assess whether they disliked something about the image as opposed to whether they viewed the image to be unprofessional.

Moderator Check

It was anticipated that students at the traditional and non-traditional schools, having different educational conditions, would represent two separate populations with different abilities, anxieties, and expectations of professionalism. Thus, prior to testing hypotheses, a moderator check was necessary for each measure. Independent sample t-tests were run on each measure. Non-significant t-tests are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Moderation Tests

Variable	t-test for Equality of Means
Professionalism	$t(57) = 4.52, p < .05$
Group CA	$t(57) = .45, p < .05$
Meeting CA	$t(57) = .08, p < .05$
Interpersonal CA	$t(57) = .30, p < .05$
PSA CA	$t(57) = -1.40, p < .05$

Table 3

Cont.

Writing CA	$t(57) = .22, p < .05$
Overall CA	$t(57) = 1.57, p < .05$

Professionalism was moderated by the traditional vs. non-traditional schooling system

[$t(57) = 4.52, p < .05$]. Figure 1 shows the bimodality in the sample:

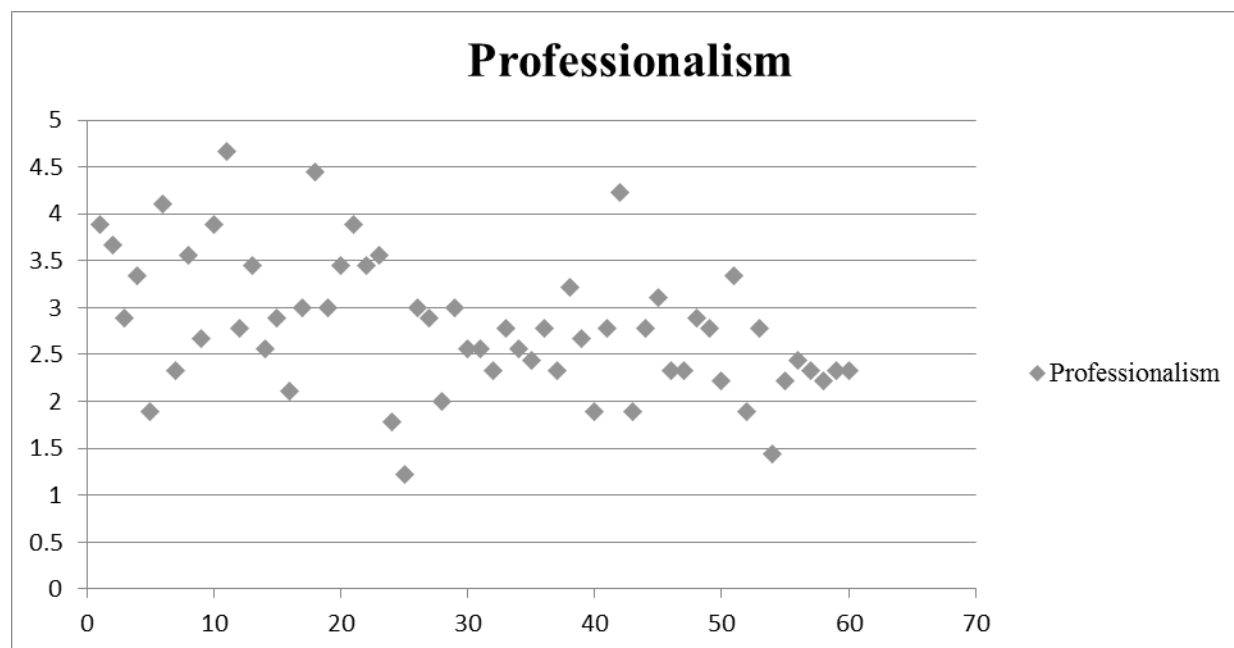


Figure 1 *Professionalism (bimodality in the sample)*

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1a predicted a negative correlation between CA and communication performance in terms of speaking. This hypothesis was tested with Pearson correlations. Overall, the data were inconsistent with the hypothesis in terms of CA and speaking competence ($r = -.20, p > .05$), though this is likely due to limited statistical power in the sample. Notably though, when supplemental analyses were run with the communication apprehension submeasures, there was a statistically significant correlation between oral communication performance and CA in

group settings ($r = -.32, p < .05$). The correlation matrix can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Correlation Matrix

* $p < .05$

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Oral Competence								
2 Written Competence	.76*							
3 Professionalism	-.06	-.07						
4 Group CA	-.32*	-.22	-.08					
5 Meeting CA	-.17	-.11	.01	.61*				
6 Interpersonal CA	.11	.02	.12	.59*	.67*			
7 PSA CA	-.02	.04	-.06	.17	.33*	.41*		
8 Writing CA	-.27*	-.05	.09	.33**	.22	.34**	.18	
9 Overall CA	-.20	-.10	.04	.75*	.86*	.86*	.64*	.35**

Hypothesis 1b predicted a negative relationship between writing performance and CA.

The data were inconsistent with the hypothesis ($r = -.10, p > .05$). Supplemental analyses revealed that there were not statistically significant relationships between written communication performance and any subdimension of CA.

The second hypothesis predicted that CA would be negatively correlated with expectations of professional physical appearance. This hypothesis was tested with Pearson correlations. Because this hypothesis deals with perceptions of professionalism, which was moderated, samples must be analyzed separately. The relationships were not statistically significant at the non-traditional school ($r = .21, p > .05$), nor the traditional school ($r = -.10, p > .05$). Table 5 displays the professional perceptions correlation matrix broken down by school.

Table 5

*Positive vs. Negative Correlation Matrix** $p < .05$

Non-traditional Measures		1	Traditional Measures		1
1	Oral Competence		1	Oral Competence	
2	Written Competence	.90	2	Written Competence	.68
3	Professionalism	-.19	3	Professionalism	.22
4	Group CA	.33	4	Group CA	-.26
5	Meeting CA	.15	5	Meeting CA	-.13
6	Interpersonal CA	.08	6	Interpersonal CA	.17
7	PSA CA	.13	7	PSA CA	-.07
8	Writing App	.24	8	Writing App	-.10
9	Overall CA	.21	9	Overall CA	-.23

The third hypothesis predicted that written communication ability would be positively related to expectations of professional physical appearance. This hypothesis was tested with two Pearson correlations. Again, because the hypothesis dealt with a moderated variable, samples had to be analyzed separately. This data were not consistent with the hypothesis at the non-traditional school ($r = -.26, p > .05$), nor the traditional school ($r = -.01, p > .05$).

The fourth hypothesis predicted a negative correlation between writing apprehension and expectations of professional physical appearance. This hypothesis was tested with two Pearson correlations. This hypothesis was inconsistent with the data at the non-traditional school ($r = .24, p > .05$) and the traditional school ($r = -.23, p > .05$).

The final hypothesis predicted a positive correlation between oral communication ability and expectations of professional physical appearance. This hypothesis was tested with two Pearson correlations. This hypothesis was inconsistent with the data at the non-traditional school ($r = -.19, p > .05$) and the traditional school ($r = .22, p > .05$).

Substantive Significance

Though few of the findings had statistical significance it is important to note that the observed effects of some hypothesis tests were consistent with what was hypothesized. Data from hypotheses 1a and 1b were consistent with expectations. Negative correlations were observed between CA and communication performance in terms of written and oral ability. Additionally, a statistically significant negative relationship was observed between Group CA and oral communication ability.

Notably, data relevant to other hypotheses were inconsistent with expectations. Data from hypothesis two revealed that CA was positively correlated with expectations of the professional physical appearance measure for the non-traditional school, meaning that the lower a student's CA, the more accurate their perceptions of professional physical appearance. Yet, there was a small negative correlation between CA and perceived professional physical appearance at the traditional school. Likewise, for hypotheses three and four, expectations were met with the non-traditional students, but not with the traditional school students. The final hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between oral communication ability and expectations of professional physical appearance. While this was observed amongst traditional school students, the opposite was observed among non-traditional students.

Summary

None of the hypotheses were supported. Although the null hypothesis could not be rejected in each instance, some findings were consistent with expectations. Other findings were only partially consistent with expectations given that findings differed by school type. Though these differences did not support individual hypotheses, they do support the rationale for this study: professional conditioning of students at the traditional and non-traditional schools would

vary enough that they must be treated as separate samples. Thus, it is important to note that, consistent with expectations, professionalism was moderated by the traditional vs. non-traditional schooling system. Students at the non-traditional school had an overall higher mean perceived professionalism score; they perceived the images to be less professional while students at the traditional school judged them less harshly.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Future Research

The idea for this study spun from existing data indicating the preparedness of high school and college graduates entering the workforce in America is subpar because students lack the writing, speaking, and professional presence abilities needed to meet communication performance expectations on the job (Arkansas Department of Education, 2006). To explore preparedness further, this study investigated students' perceptions of their communication readiness and expectations of professional physical appearance. It was expected that communication performance variables would correlate with expectations of professional physical appearance because the research shows that students' communication performance in everyday settings may be impeded by clothing choices (Workman, Arseneau, & Ewell, 2004).

It was important to study traditional and non-traditional students to assess whether communication performance and expectations were different based on students' educational experience. It was anticipated that there would be differences because students usually attend non-traditional schools due to performance issues or actions that stem from poor judgment. The assumption was that similar poor judgments would be made about expectations of professional physical appearance. Thus, students' judgment and educational experience at the traditional school was expected to be different than the non-traditional school. Knowing whether expectations differ by schools can aid educators in developing policies, processes, and curriculums that are unique to each school types, in hopes that doing so will improve overall communication performance.

Consistent with expectations, students' perceptions of professionalism did vary by school type. Findings for hypotheses two, three, four, and five, which found variance in responses by

school type, may have been the result of chance given the lack of statistical power in the samples. Else, the results could be derived from schools' dress codes. Students at the non-traditional school are required to wear uniforms, while students at the traditional school can wear their "everyday" clothing. Allowing students to wear their own clothing may broaden their perceptions about what constitutes professional physical appearance.

To reiterate findings, the results from the first hypothesis did not indicate a statistically significant relationship between CA and oral or written communication ability; however, the data indicated that within this sample, the more apprehension students experienced, the worse they performed on writing and speaking assignments. This was especially true of students participating in group communication assignments. The results indicated that group CA was statistically significantly related to oral performance at the non-traditional school. These findings were consistent with expectation.

The second hypothesis predicted that CA would be negatively correlated with expectations of professional physical appearance. The effects were consistent with expectations among the non-traditional students, but inconsistent at the traditional school. As such, the data from the traditional school indicated that amongst this sample, the higher the students' apprehension, the more accurate their ability to perceive professionalism. This may be explained by prior research on physical appearance and CA. Spicer (1981) found that individuals with high CA are less likely to arouse others by wearing "provocative" clothing because doing so would illicit conversations that people with high CA are prone to avoid. Therefore, students with high CA may have chosen less flashy styles consistent with their comfort level.

The effects observed in testing hypothesis three, which investigated written communication ability and perceptions of professionalism, were also consistent with

expectations only among the non-traditional students ($r = -.26$). Contrarily, no relationship was observed amongst the traditional students ($r = -.01$). Therefore, among students at the non-traditional school, the higher a student's written ability, the better their accuracy of perceived professionalism.

The results of the fourth hypothesis regarding the relationship between writing apprehension and expectations of professional physical appearance were not statistically significant. Among the non-traditional students, the effects were consistent with expectations; however, the effects were inconsistent at the traditional school. Surprisingly though, the higher traditional students' writing apprehension, the better they assessed professionalism in the images.

The final hypothesis predicted a positive correlation between oral communication ability and expectations of professional physical appearance. The data for this hypothesis also revealed surprising results in that students at the non-traditional school had a positive relationship between oral communication ability and expectations of professional physical appearance, while students at the traditional school had a negative correlation. Meaning, the students at the non-traditional school who exhibited high oral communication ability better assessed professionalism in the images, but students at the traditional school who had higher ability were worse at judging professional appearance.

Implications for the Classroom

As previously mentioned, the more CA students experienced, the worse they performed on writing and speaking assignments. This has huge implications for classrooms, given that the findings from this study (as well as prior research) suggest that CA is often internally driven and somewhat dependent upon students' environments. Business educators will need to incorporate various communication activities into curriculums to strengthen both oral and written

communication performance. An unconventional approach to reduce CA may be for educators to grade students on communication effort in addition to content. This may mean that educators will have to create additional assignments to assess levels of aptitude; however, it would provide numerous opportunities for students to practice communicating in a penalty-free zone.

In relation to expectations of professional physical appearance, the results at the traditional school show that while students are good oral and written communicators, they are not good at judging professional physical appearance. This may be due to teachers giving these students a pass on professional dress or assuming that they know the difference in professional and nonprofessional because they are high achievers. Perhaps teachers can spend more time coaching these students of their professional presence so they will not assume that their academic success exempts them from dressing professionally.

In short, business educators must ensure their students preparation for the workforce. The following are suggested ways of making such preparations:

1. Enhance their understanding of CA and its consequences in order to create sustainable solutions for students.
2. Provide instructional routines that focus on actively engaging all students in a wide variety of experiences and opportunities to speak, tell stories, and practice creative writing in order to gain proficiency in effective communications.
3. Develop interactive activities that provide fun ways for students to think about the impact dress and grooming might have on hiring decisions, and why employers want their employees to look professional.
4. Develop academic standards to holistically assess oral, written, and professional presence skill development, despite assumptions of students' abilities.

Limitations

The measurements used to assess students' oral and written communication ability required teachers to use a single seven-point Likert-type item to indicate whether a student was above or below average in each category. Therefore, it was impossible to test content validity and reliability of these measures. Additionally, all four teachers stated that they were not fully knowledgeable about their students' oral or written communication ability at the time of the survey because the semester began less than a month before the survey was administered. Limited knowledge about their students' ability may have impacted the assessments. As such, this study was limited by the use of the communication ability assessments.

Another limitation to the study is that students were not assessed by the same teacher. Thus, it is possible that each teacher assessed oral and written communication ability using different criteria. The likelihood of finding a teacher who simultaneously instructs both traditional and non-traditional students is unlikely, but finding one such teacher would have increased the internal validity of the study.

The final limitation of the study was the small sample, which prohibited ample power to effectively test predicted relationships, though there was ample power to test for anticipated moderators. Unfortunately, the sample size was unavoidable at the non-traditional school because only 105 students were enrolled at the time of the study. Twenty-three students participated in the study, representing 22 percent of the total population.

Future Research

Future research should focus more on the way in which teachers are trained to assess communication ability. Instructional materials should be developed to assist teachers in developing curriculum to bridge the gap between CA and expectations of professional physical

appearance. Non-traditional schools may also benefit from offering more extracurricular activities to engage students in different aspects of communications. Most traditional schools offer sports, clubs, and other organizations to increase communication ability and professional presence. FBLA is an example of an extracurricular organization that may reduce CA and will be especially useful for students who are taking business education courses.

In terms of measurements, it would be helpful to develop a more robust assessment that combines both oral and written communication items to more accurately assess communication ability. Further, the writing apprehension assessment should also be redeveloped to eliminate the need for reverse coding. To further this study, the revised measurements (once developed) could then be administered later in the school year to allow teachers adequate time to acquire the necessary knowledge to assess students' abilities. A final thought for future research would be to conduct the study at a larger non-traditional school if one exists; this could potentially produce a larger sample size of non-traditional students.

Conclusions

In summary, this study explored hypotheses of CA, communication performance, and perceived expectations of professional physical appearance amongst high school students at different school types. The data indicated similar abilities and anxiety amongst the students, but also indicated moderation amongst perceived professionalism. Business educators should focus on constructing a comprehensive approach to develop students' capacity to interchange thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, and appearance. This will aid in ensuring communication readiness of high school students entering the workplace.

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*Appendix A***First Contact Email**

DATE, 2014

Dear teacher name;

My name is Hamlet Autman; I am a graduate student at North Carolina A&T State University. I am doing research into the interrelationship between students' communication apprehension, communication performance, and expectations of their personal physical appearance. Through my research, I am using instruments to measure teachers and students perceptions. The survey is designed to gather research information to be used to create solutions that will help students improve their overall communication skills, and successfully transition into the workplace.

You have been identified as a business education teacher who has students that would meet the criteria for my research. I would be grateful if you would agree to participate in my study. The survey for teachers and students will be located online at <http://surveymonkey.com>. The data will be downloaded from their server and analyzed by myself. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Please be assured that your responses (and your students) will remain strictly confidential. All data will be reported in aggregate and no individual information will be reported.

If you agree to participate, I would like to visit your classrooms within the next __ weeks to personally invite your students to participate in the study. Students who agree to participate will be given information packets and a parental consent forms to be signed by their parent/guardian.

Please respond to this email before DATE as to 1) if you will participate, and 2) what day would work best for me to visit your classrooms. Feel free to call me at 678-524-7047 if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time!

Hamlet Autman

Appendix B

Follow up email (If necessary, this email will be sent five days after the original to provide a reminder)

DATE, 2014

Dear teacher;

My name is Hamlet Autman; I am a graduate student at North Carolina A&T State University. I recently sent you an email regarding my research into the interrelationship between students' communication apprehension, communication performance, and expectations of their personal physical appearance. Again, I would like to ask for your participation in this study. Through my research, I am using instruments to measure teachers and students' perceptions. The survey is designed to gather research information to be used to create solutions that will help students improve their overall communication skills, and successfully transition into the workplace.

You have been identified as a business education teacher who has students that would meet the criteria for my research. I would be grateful if you would agree to participate in my study. The survey for teachers and students will be located online at <http://surveymonkey.com>. The data will be downloaded from their server and analyzed by myself. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Please be assured that your responses (and your students) will remain strictly confidential. All data will be reported in aggregate and no individual information will be reported.

If you agree to participate, I would like to visit your classrooms within the next ___ weeks to personally invite your students to participate in the study. Students who agree to participate

will be given information packets and a parental consent forms to be signed by their parent/guardian.

Please respond to this email before DATE as to 1) if you will participate, and 2) what day would work best for me to visit your classrooms. Feel free to call me at 678-524-7047 if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time!

Hamlet Autman

*Appendix C***Talking Points (to be used during in-person meeting with students to invite them to participate in the survey)**

- My name is Hamlet Autman; I am a graduate student at North Carolina A&T State University.
- I am doing research into the how students communicate, and perceptions of their physical appearance.
- The survey is designed to gather research information to be used to create solutions that will help students improve their overall communication skills, and successfully transition into the workplace.
- You have been identified as a student that would meet the criteria for my research and I would be grateful if you would agree to participate in my study.
- The survey will be located online at <http://surveymonkey.com> and the data will be downloaded from their server and analyzed by myself.
- The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete, and will be done during your - _____ class.
- Your responses will remain strictly confidential and all data will be reported in aggregate and no individual information will be reported.
- If you agree to participate, I will give you an information packet, containing a consent form that your parent or guardian must sign in order for you to participate.
- The form should be returned to _____ tomorrow.
- Does anyone have any questions?

*Appendix D***Information Packet**

Dear Parent and Student:

My name is Hamlet Autman; I am a graduate student at North Carolina A&T State University. I am doing research into the interrelationship between students' communication apprehension, communication performance, and expectations of their personal physical appearance. Through my research, I am using instruments to measure teachers and students perceptions. The survey is designed to gather research information to be used to create solutions that will help students improve their overall communication skills, and successfully transition into the workplace.

You have been identified as a student that would meet the criteria for my research. I would be grateful if you would agree to participate in my study. The survey will be located online at <http://surveymonkey.com>. The data will be downloaded from their server and analyzed by myself. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete, and will be done during your _____ class. Please be assured that your responses will remain strictly confidential. All data will be reported in aggregate and no individual information will be reported.

If you agree to participate, your parent or guardian must sign the enclosed consent form and return to _____ within three business days. Feel free to call me at 678-524-7047 if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time!

Hamlet Autman

Appendix E

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Communication Readiness: Do High School Students Communication Apprehension, Writing Ability, and Speaking Ability Correlate with their Perceptions of Professional Appearance?

Principle Investigator: Hamlet Nicole Autman

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Stephanie Kelly

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

I am inviting your child to participate in a research study about the interrelationship between students' communication apprehension, communication performance, and expectations of their personal physical appearance. This research project is funded by me. Your child is being asked to participate because he/she takes business education courses. Through your child's participation I hope to gather research information to be used to create solutions that will help students improve their overall communication skills, and successfully transition into the workplace. The survey will take approximately twenty (20) minutes to complete, and contains about 70 questions.

Your child's participation in the research is voluntary, and there is no penalty if he/she does not participate. Your child may stop the survey at any time or skip any questions that he/she does not wish to answer.

Procedures

Your child will be asked to electronically attest to participating in the study. Once students click that they attest, they will be asked to complete the survey. The survey will ask your child to fill in demographic information, and your child's name will be given to the participating teacher in order for her to provide assessment data of your child's oral and written communication ability. Once the teacher has completed her assessment, your child's name will be removed to ensure confidentiality. All data will be reported in aggregate and no individual information will be reported. Data will be kept on a password protected computer in the researchers' office. Data will be destroyed after three years.

Risks

We do not anticipate any risks from your child's participation in this research. Every effort will be made to protect his or her confidentiality.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to student participants in this research. However, researchers hope to learn more about high school students' perceptions of their communication skills with the purpose of enhancing future communication performance, instructional strategies, and workforce professionalism.

Confidentiality

With the exception of the procedure mentioned above, your child's name and other identifying information will be kept in strict confidence. All individual results will be reported as group results. The information obtained in this study may be used as the basis for articles or presentations in the future. I won't use your child's name or information that would identify him/her in publications or presentations.

Participation/Withdrawal

Your child's participation is completely voluntary, and your child may withdraw from the study at any time. If your child chooses to withdraw, there is no penalty; your child's grades and standing with the school will not be affected if he/she chooses to withdraw.

Contact

If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact Hamlet Autman at 678-524-7047 and/or hnautman@aggies.ncat.edu.

If you have any study-related concerns or any questions about your child's rights as a research study participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance and Ethics at North Carolina A&T State University at (336) 285-2961.

Statement of Consent

Your signature certifies that you have decided to allow your child to participate in this study having read and understood the information presented.

Student's Name (Printed): _____

Parent/Guardian's Name (Printed): _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Communication Readiness: Do High School Students Communication Apprehension, Writing Ability, and Speaking Ability Correlate with their Perceptions of Professional Appearance?

Principle Investigator: Hamlet Nicole Autman

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Stephanie Kelly

Dear Teacher,

I am inviting you to participate in a research study about the interrelationship between students' communication apprehension, communication performance, and expectations of their personal physical appearance. This research project is funded by me. You are being asked to participate because you are a business education teacher. Through your participation I hope to gather research information to be used to create solutions that will help students improve their overall communication skills, and successfully transition into the workplace. The survey will take approximately twenty (20) minutes to complete, and contains about 70 questions.

Your participation in the research is voluntary, and there is no penalty if you do not participate. You may stop the survey at any time or skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

Procedures

You are asked to electronically consent to participating in the study. Once you click that you consent, you will be asked to complete the survey. All data will be reported in aggregate and no individual information will be reported. Data will be kept on a password protected computer in the researchers' office. Data will be destroyed after three years.

Risks

We do not anticipate any risks from your participation in this research. Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits for participating in this research. However, researchers hope to learn more about high school students' perceptions of their communication skills with the purpose of enhancing future communication performance, instructional strategies, and workforce professionalism.

Confidentiality

Your name and other identifying information will be kept in strict confidence. All individual results will be reported as group results. The information obtained in this study may be used as the basis for articles or presentations in the future. I won't use your name or information that would identify you in publications or presentations.

Participation/Withdrawal

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw, there is no penalty; your standing with the school will not be affected if you choose to withdraw.

Contact

If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact Hamlet Autman at 678-524-7047 and/or hnautman@aggies.ncat.edu.

If you have any study-related concerns or any questions about your child's rights as a research study participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance and Ethics at North Carolina A&T State University at (336) 285-2961.

Statement of Consent

By completing this survey, you are indicating that you at least 18 years old, have read this document, have had any questions answered, and voluntarily agree to take part in this research study. You may keep this form for your records.

Teacher's Name (Printed): _____

Teacher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix G

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Study Title: Communication Readiness: Do High School Students Communication Apprehension, Writing Ability, and Speaking Ability Correlate with their Perceptions of Professional Appearance?

Principle Investigator: Hamlet Nicole Autman

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Stephanie Kelly

Statement of Consent

By completing this survey, you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, have read this document, have had any questions answered, and voluntarily agree to take part in this research study.

Teacher's Name (Printed): _____

Teacher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Section I. Professionalism Assessment

Directions: Please indicate the degree to which you feel each image is professional for the workplace by marking whether you:

Strongly Disagree = 1 Somewhat Agree = 5	Disagree = 2 Agree = 6	Somewhat Disagree = 3 Strongly Agree = 7	Neutral = 4
____ 1.	____ 7.	____ 13.	____ 19.
____ 2.	____ 8.	____ 14.	
____ 3.	____ 9.	____ 15.	
____ 4.	____ 10.	____ 16.	
____ 5.	____ 11.	____ 17.	
____ 6.	____ 12.	____ 18.	

Section II. Oral and Written Communication Ability Assessment

Directions: Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to the student listed below by marking whether he/she is:

**Very Weak = 1 Weak = 2 Somewhat Weak = 3 Neutral = 4 Somewhat
Strong = 5 Strong = 6 Very Strong = 7**

Student's Name: _____

1. This student's oral communication ability is _____.
2. This student's written communication ability is _____.

Section III. Demographics

Directions: Please answer the following questions.

- _____ 1. What is your gender (Male or Female)?
- _____ 2. What is your race (White, Black or African American, Spanish/Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, two or more races, other)?
- _____ 3. How long have you been teaching?
- _____ 4. How long have you been teaching at this school?
- _____ 5. How many students do you teach per semester?
- _____ 6. How many students do you average in one class?
- _____ 7. How many hours per week do you spend grading writing assignments?
- _____ 8. How many hours per week do you spend grading speaking assignments?

*Appendix H***STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Study Title: Communication Readiness: Do High School Students Communication Apprehension, Writing Ability, and Speaking Ability Correlate with their Perceptions of Professional Appearance?

Principle Investigator: Hamlet Nicole Autman

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Stephanie Kelly

Statement of Attestation

Your signature certifies that you understand and agree to voluntarily participate in this research, and agree that you have permission from your parent/guardian to participate in this research., or that you are at least 18 years of age.

Student's Name (Printed): _____

Student's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Section I. Professionalism Assessment

Directions: Please indicate the degree to which you feel each image is professional for the workplace by marking whether you:

Strongly Disagree = 1
Somewhat Agree = 5

Disagree = 2
Agree = 6

Somewhat Disagree = 3
Strongly Agree = 7

Neutral = 4

____ 1.

____ 7.

____ 13.

____ 19.

____ 2.

____ 8.

____ 14.

____ 3.

____ 9.

____ 15.

____ 4.

____ 10.

____ 16.

____ 5.

____ 11.

____ 17.

____ 6.

____ 12.

____ 18.

Section II. Communication Assessment

Directions: Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you:

Strongly Disagree = 1 **Disagree = 2** **Somewhat Disagree = 3** **Neutral = 4**
Somewhat Agree = 5 **Agree = 6** **Strongly Agree = 7**

- _____ 1. I dislike participating in group discussions.
- _____ 2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.
- _____ 3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
- _____ 4. I like to get involved in group discussions.
- _____ 5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.
- _____ 6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
- _____ 7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
- _____ 8. Usually, I am comfortable when I have to participate in a meeting.
- _____ 9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.
- _____ 10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
- _____ 11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
- _____ 12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
- _____ 13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
- _____ 14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
- _____ 15. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
- _____ 16. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
- _____ 17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
- _____ 18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.
- _____ 19. I have no fear of giving a speech.
- _____ 20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
- _____ 21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
- _____ 22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
- _____ 23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
- _____ 24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

Section III. Writing Assessment

Directions: Please indicate whether or not you believe each statement applies to you by marking whether you:

Strongly Disagree = 1 **Disagree = 2** **Somewhat Disagree = 3** **Neutral = 4**
Somewhat Agree = 5 **Agree = 6** **Strongly Agree = 7**

- _____ 1. I avoid writing.
- _____ 2. I have no fear of my writing being evaluated.
- _____ 3. I look forward to writing down my ideas.
- _____ 4. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on a composition.
- _____ 5. Expressing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time.
- _____ 6. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication.

- _____ 7. I like to write my ideas down.
- _____ 8. I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in writing.
- _____ 9. I like to have my friends read what I have written.
- _____ 10. I am nervous about writing.
- _____ 11. People seem to enjoy what I write.
- _____ 12. I enjoy writing.
- _____ 13. I never seem to be able to clearly write down my ideas.
- _____ 14. Writing is a lot of fun.
- _____ 15. I like seeing my thoughts on paper.
- _____ 16. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience.
- _____ 17. It is easy for me to write good compositions.
- _____ 18. I don't think I write as well as most other people do.
- _____ 19. I don't like my compositions to be evaluated.
- _____ 20. I am no good at writing.

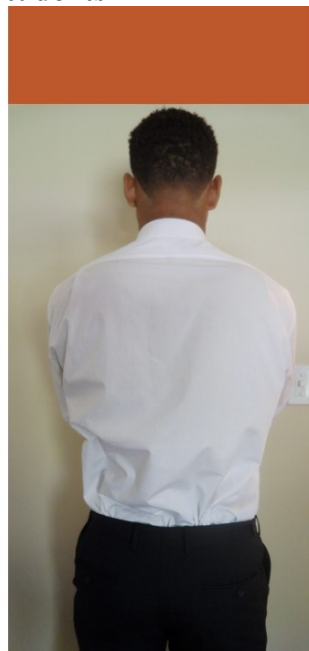
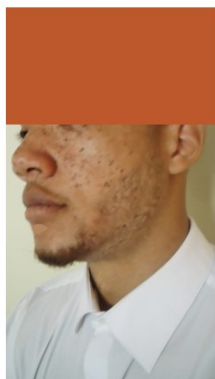
Section IV. Demographics

Directions: Please answer the following questions.

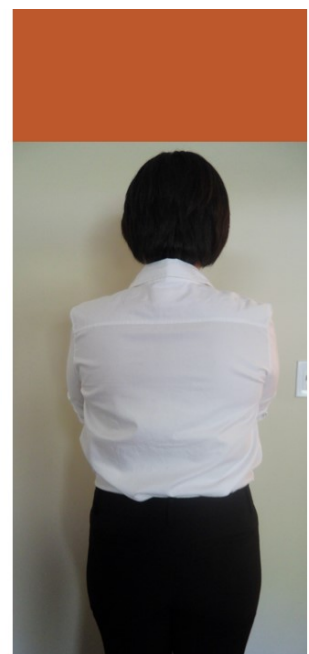
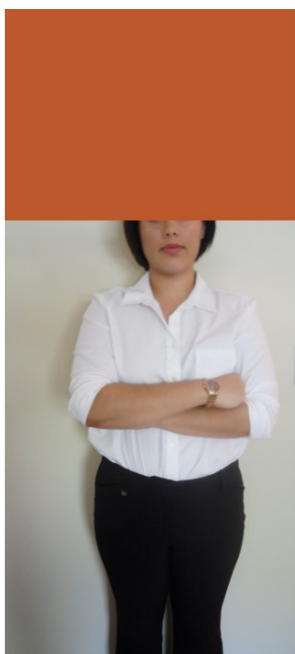
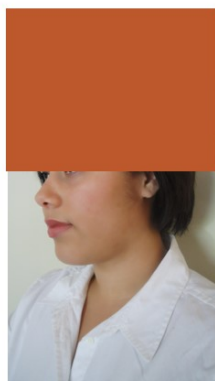
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- _____ 2. What is your gender (Male or Female)?
- _____ 3. What is your race (White, Black or African American, Spanish/Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, two or more races, other)?
- _____ 4. What is your classification (freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior)?
- _____ 5. Do you speak more than one language fluently?
- _____ 6. Do you currently or have you ever had a tattoo?
- _____ 7. Do you currently or have you ever had a nose piercing?
- _____ 8. Do you currently or have you ever had an ear piercing?

Appendix I

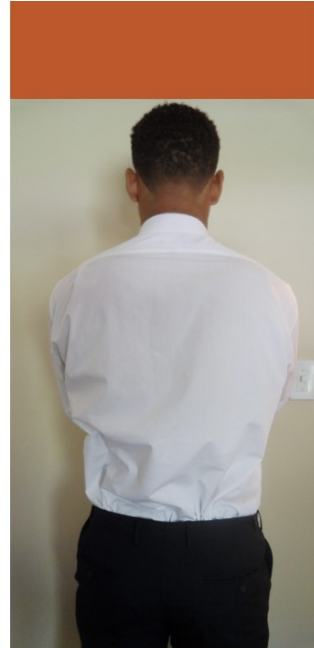
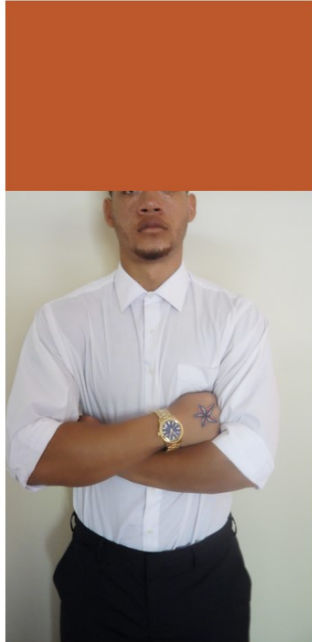
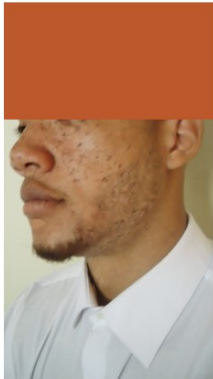
PowerPoint Images for Teachers and Students



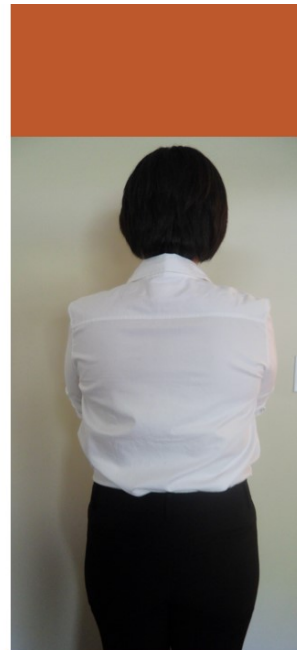
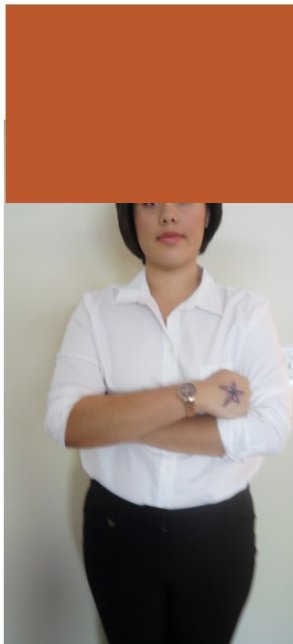
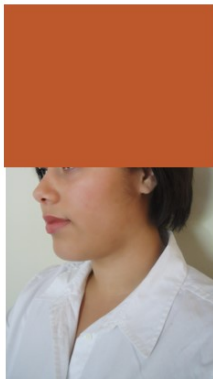
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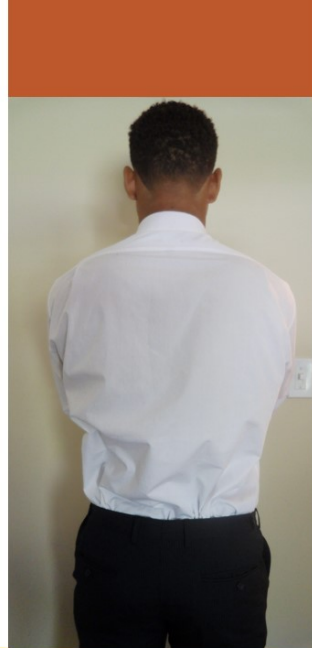
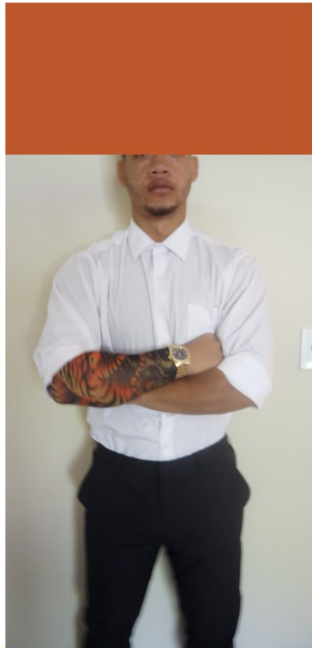
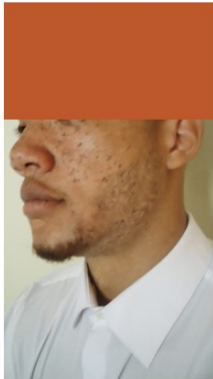
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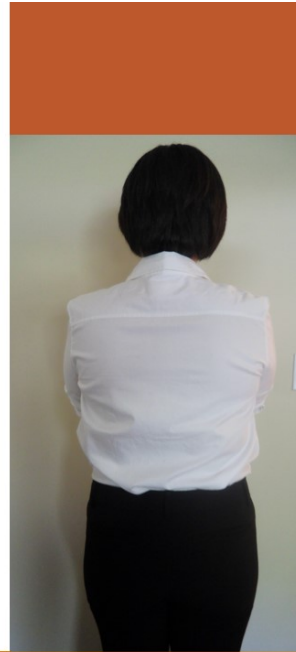
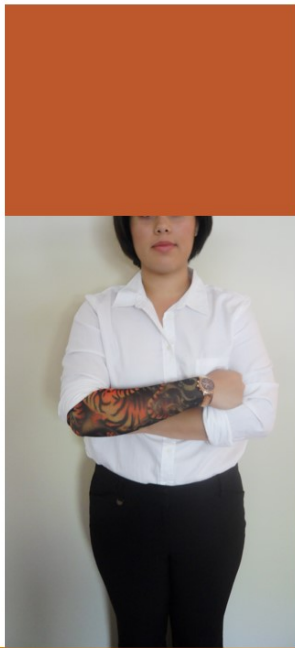
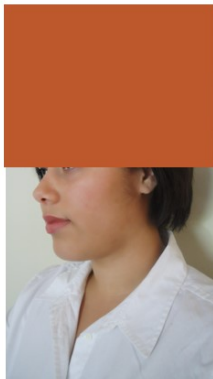
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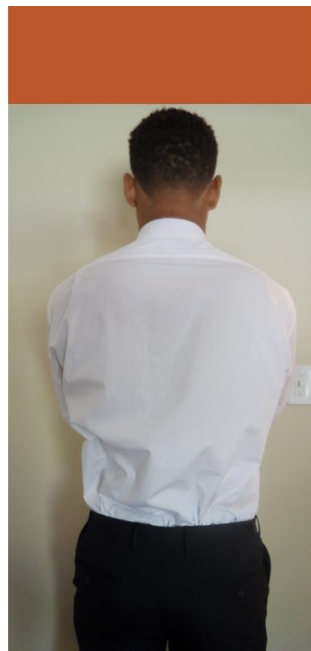
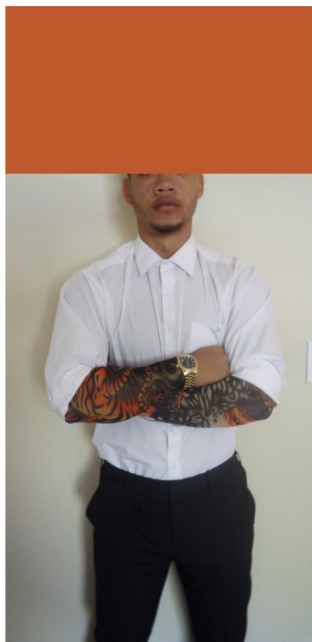
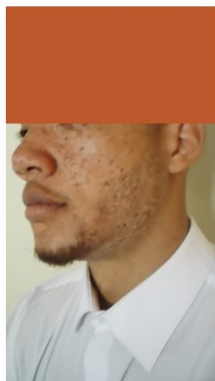
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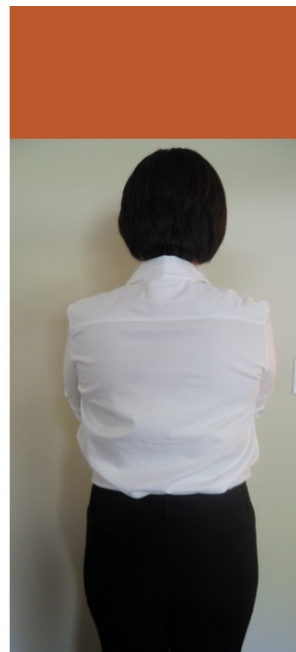
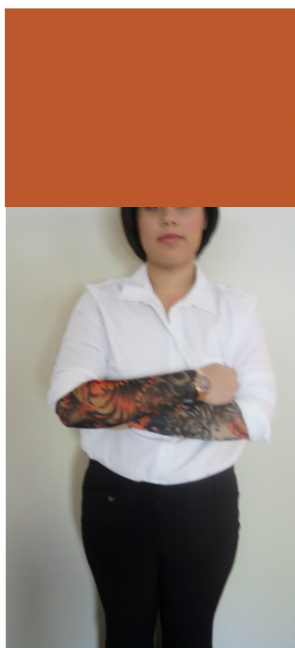
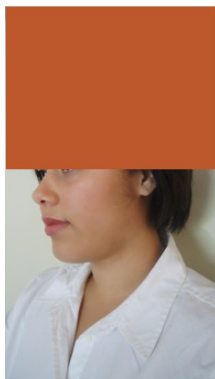
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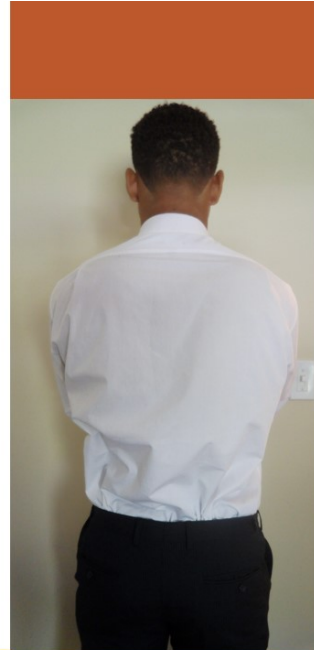
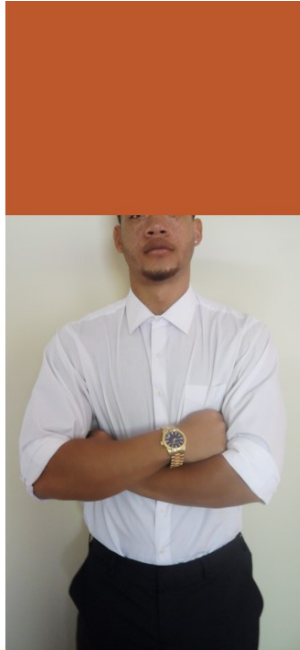
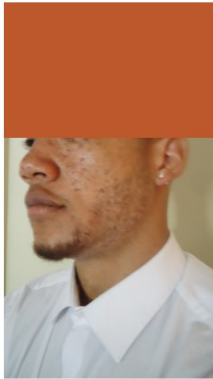
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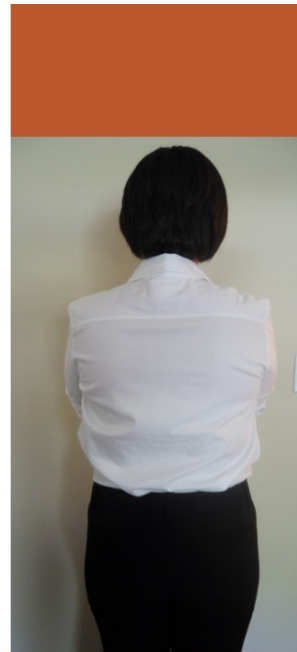
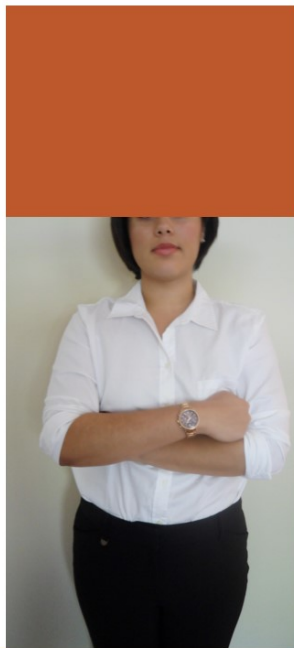
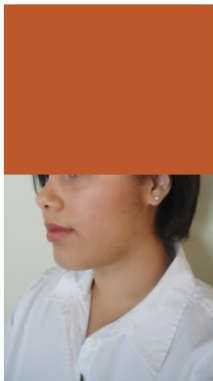
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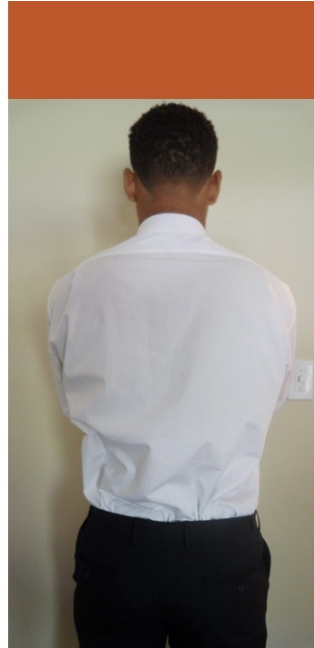
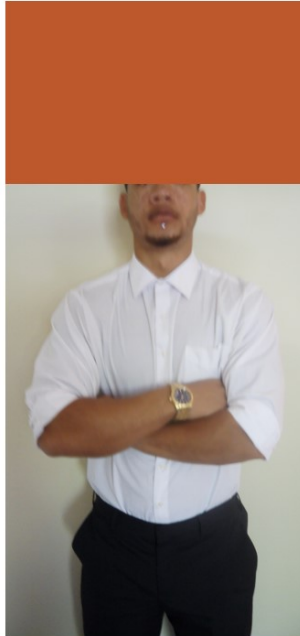
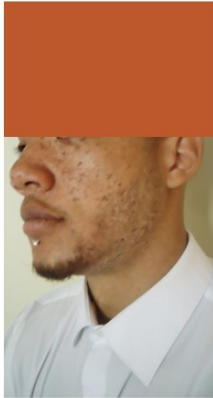
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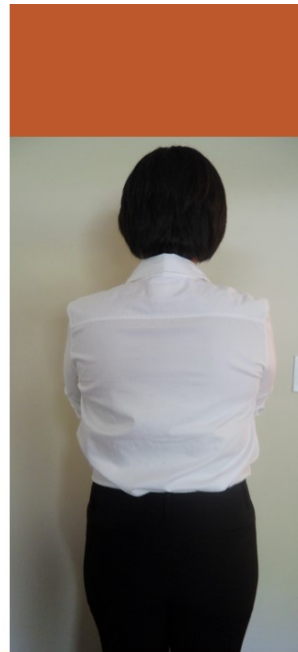
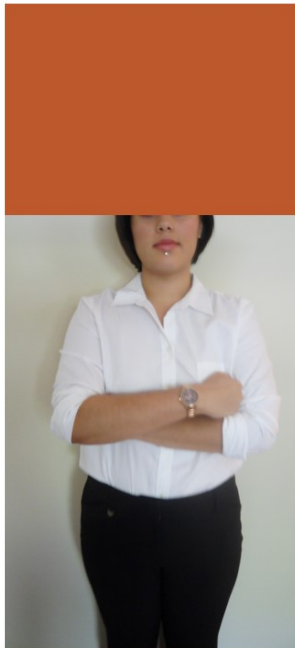
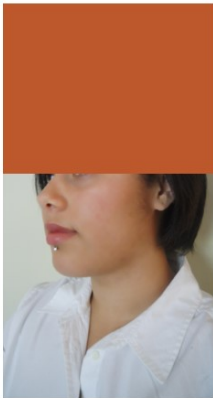
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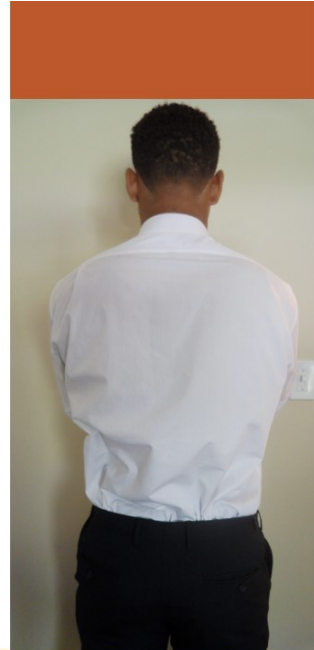
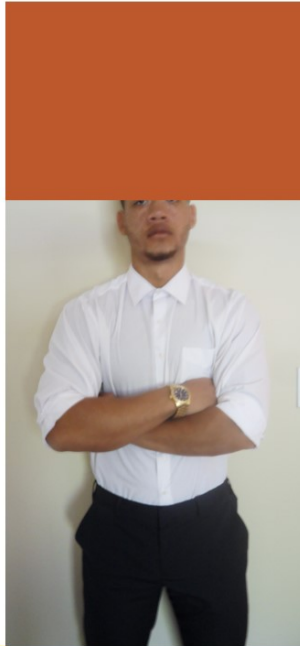
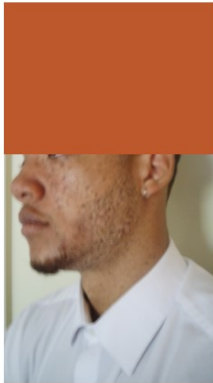
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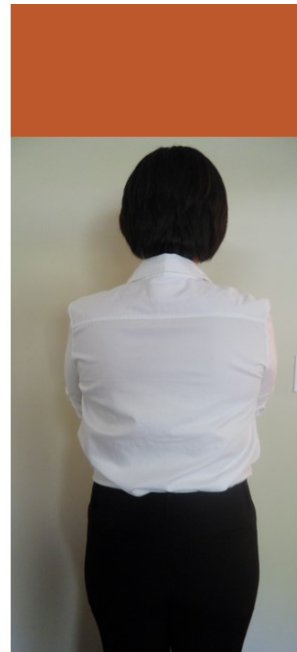
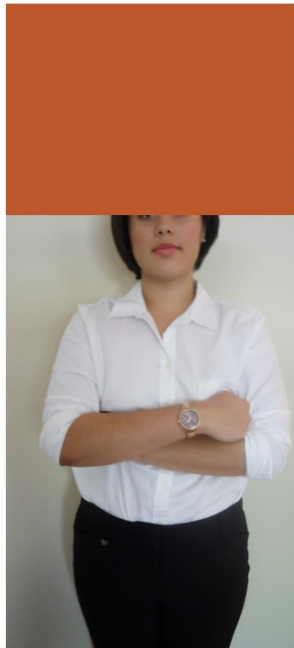
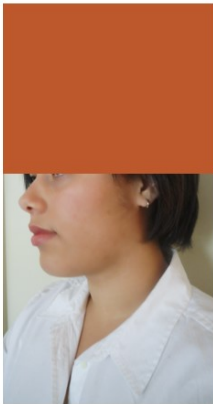
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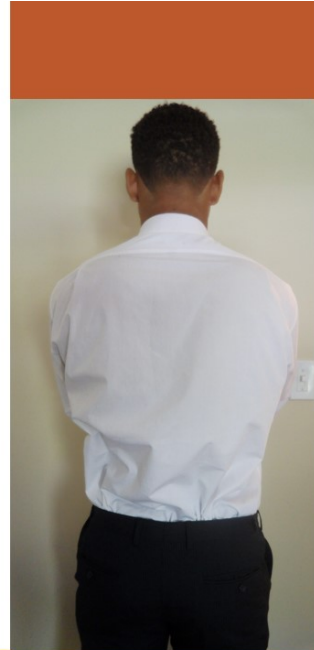
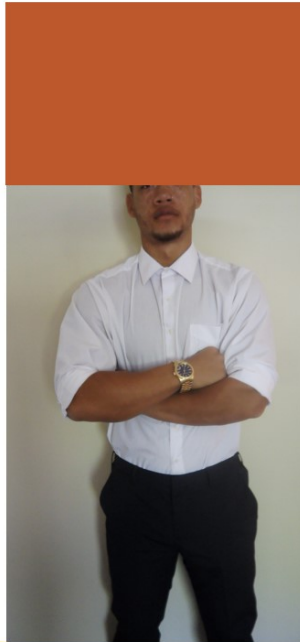
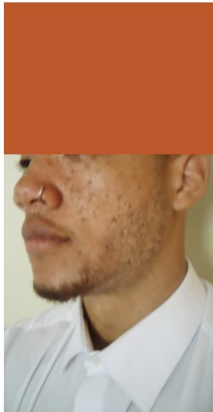
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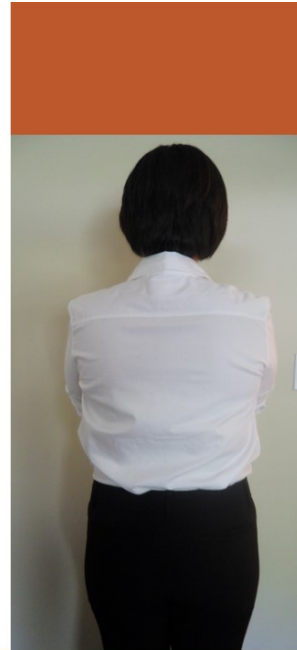
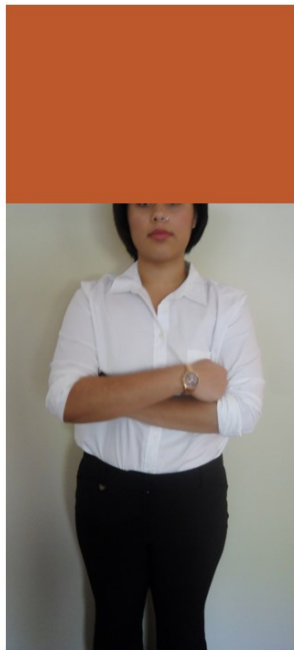
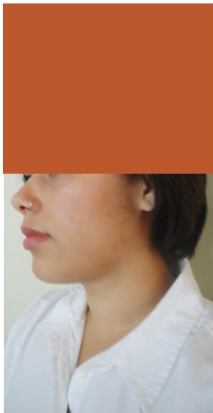
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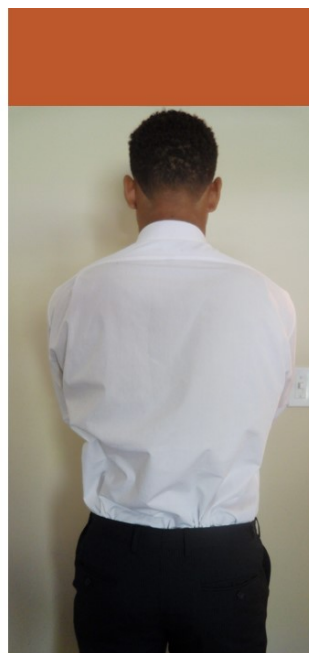
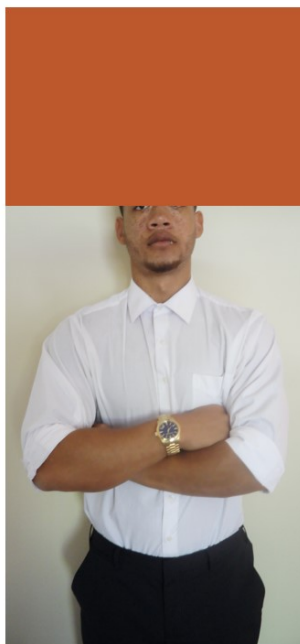
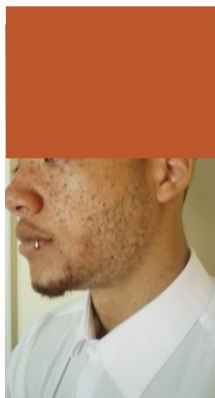
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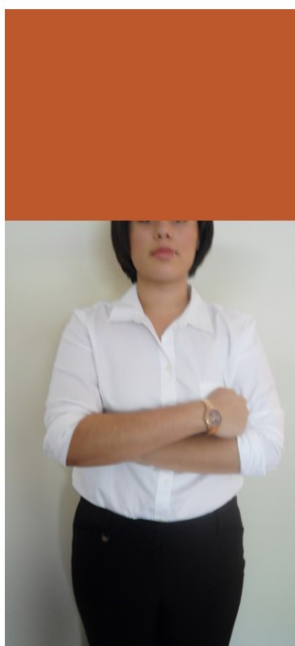
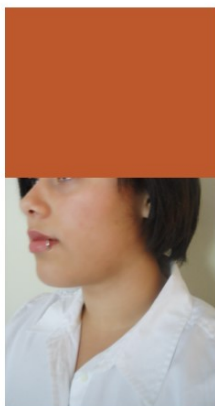
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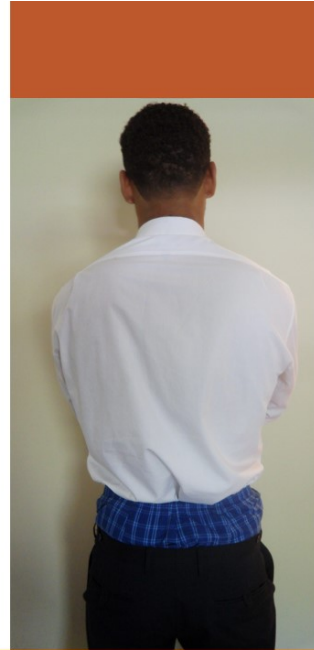
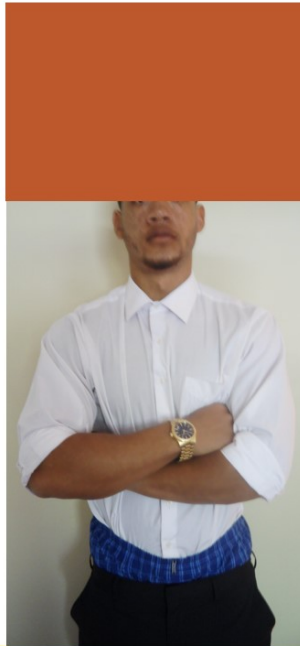
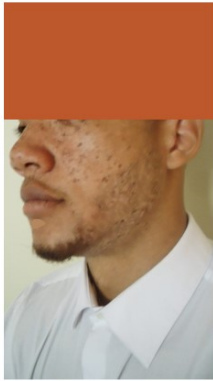
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Slide # 17



Slide # 18



*Appendix J***STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Study Title: Communication Readiness: Do High School Students Communication Apprehension, Writing Ability, and Speaking Ability Correlate with their Perceptions of Professional Appearance?

Principle Investigator: Hamlet Nicole Autman

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Stephanie Kelly

Statement of Attestation

Your signature certifies that you understand and agree to voluntarily participate in this research, and agree that you have permission from your parent/guardian to participate in this research., or that you are at least 18 years of age.

Student's Name (Printed): _____

Student's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Section I. Professionalism Assessment

Directions: Please indicate the degree to which you feel each image is professional for the workplace by marking whether you:

Strongly Disagree = 1
Somewhat Agree = 5

Disagree = 2
Agree = 6

Somewhat Disagree = 3
Strongly Agree = 7

Neutral = 4

_____ 3.

_____ 13.

_____ 4.

_____ 16.

_____ 9.

_____ 17.

_____ 11.

_____ 19.

_____ 12.

Section II. Communication Assessment

Directions: Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you:

Strongly Disagree = 1 **Disagree = 2** **Somewhat Disagree = 3** **Neutral = 4**
Somewhat Agree = 5 **Agree = 6** **Strongly Agree = 7**

- _____ 1. I dislike participating in group discussions.
 _____ 2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.
 _____ 3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
 _____ 4. I like to get involved in group discussions.
 _____ 6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
 _____ 7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
 _____ 8. Usually, I am comfortable when I have to participate in a meeting.
 _____ 10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
 _____ 11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
 _____ 12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
 _____ 13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
 _____ 14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
 _____ 16. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
 _____ 17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
 _____ 19. I have no fear of giving a speech.
 _____ 20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
 _____ 21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
 _____ 22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
 _____ 23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.

Section III. Writing Assessment

Directions: Please indicate whether or not you believe each statement applies to you by marking whether you:

Strongly Disagree = 1 **Disagree = 2** **Somewhat Disagree = 3** **Neutral = 4**
Somewhat Agree = 5 **Agree = 6** **Strongly Agree = 7**

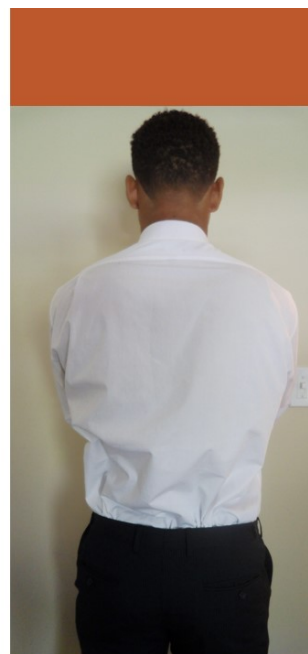
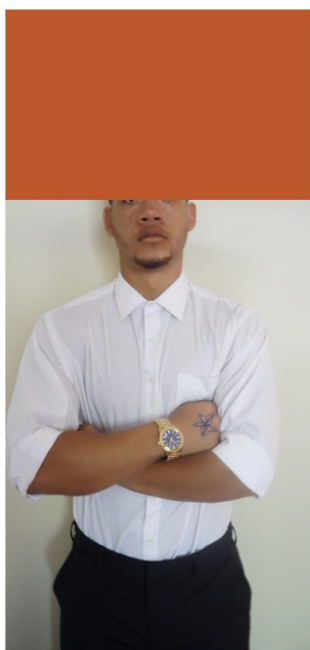
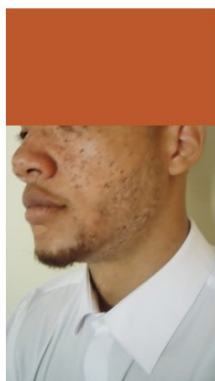
- _____ 3. I look forward to writing down my ideas.
 _____ 6. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication.
 _____ 7. I like to write my ideas down.
 _____ 8. I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in writing.
 _____ 9. I like to have my friends read what I have written.
 _____ 10. I am nervous about writing.
 _____ 11. People seem to enjoy what I write.
 _____ 16. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience.
 _____ 17. It is easy for me to write good compositions.
 _____ 18. I don't think I write as well as most other people do.

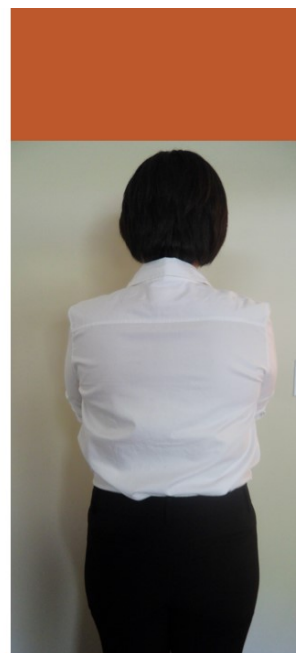
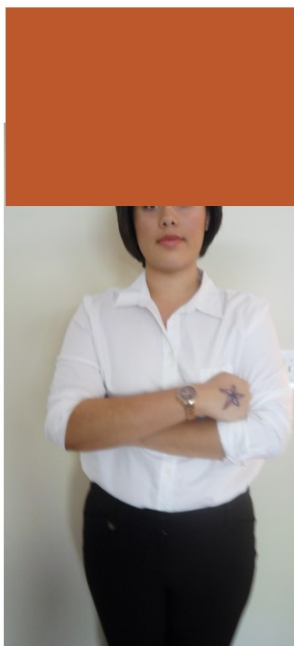
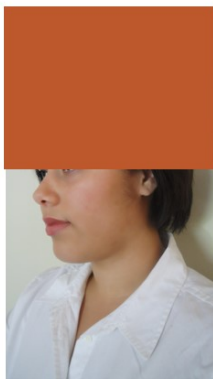
Section IV. Demographics

Directions: Please answer the following questions.

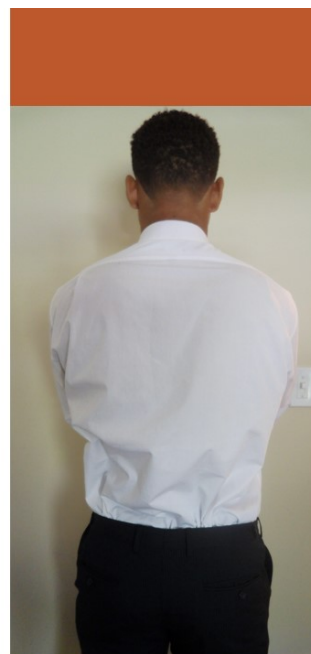
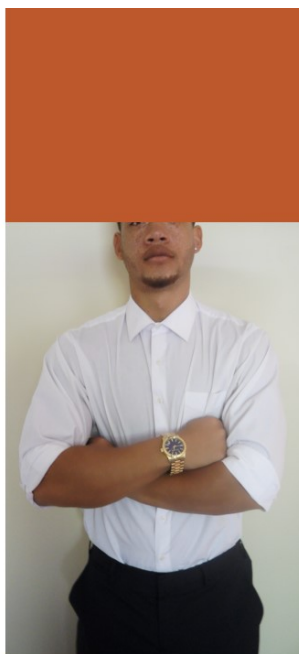
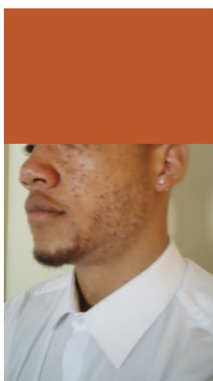
- _____ 1. What is your age?
- _____ 2. What is your gender (Male or Female)?
- _____ 3. What is your race (White, Black or African American, Spanish/Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, two or more races, other)?
- _____ 4. What is your classification (freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior)?
- _____ 5. Do you speak more than one language fluently?
- _____ 6. Do you currently or have you ever had a tattoo?
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PowerPoint Images for Students

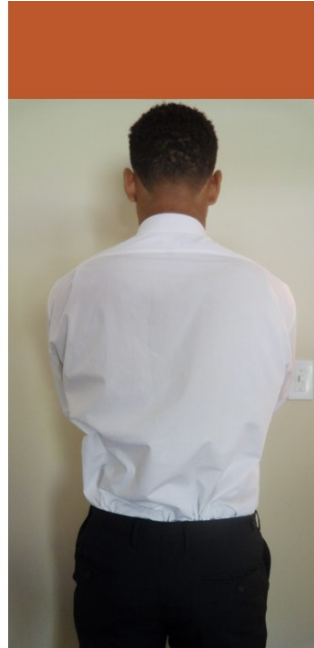
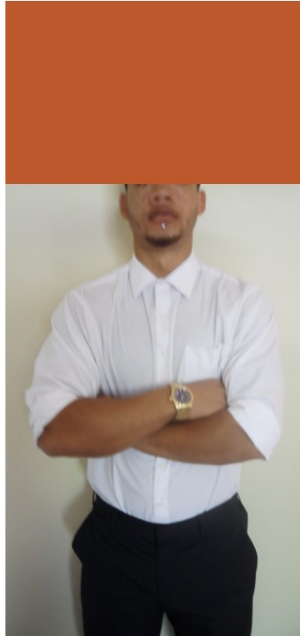
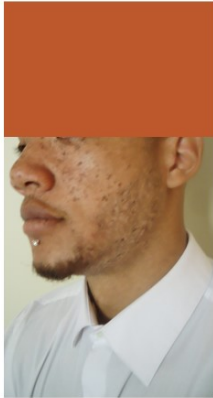




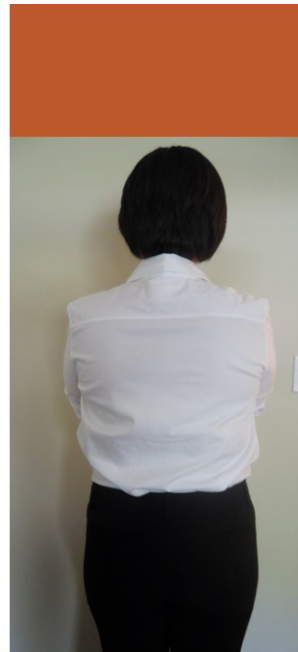
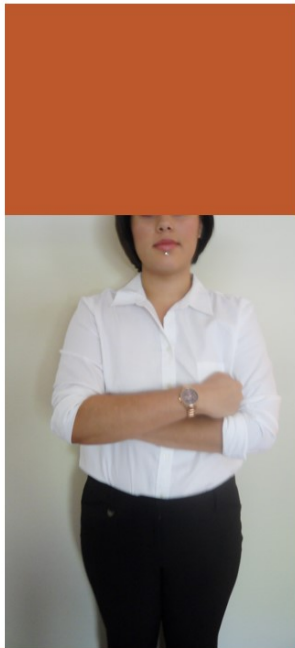
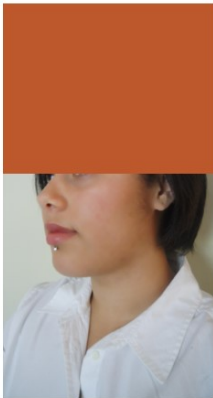
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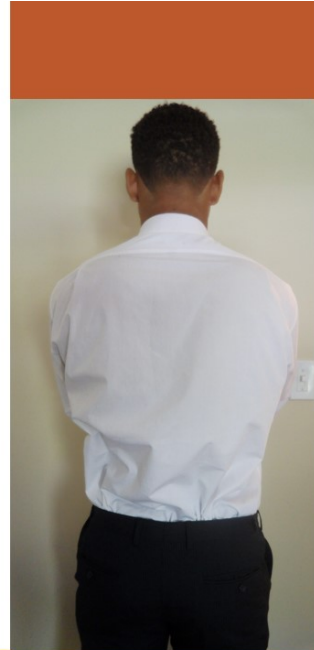
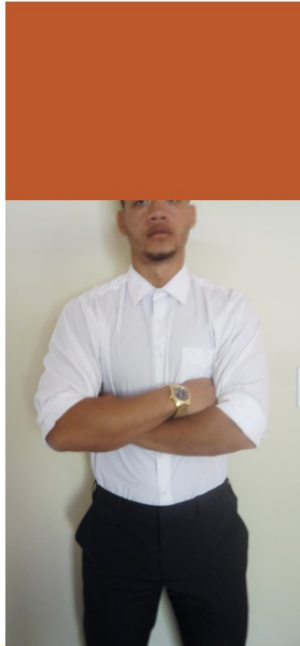
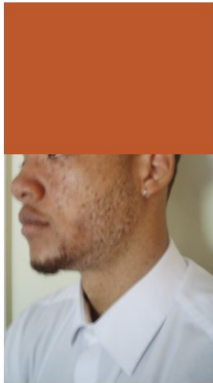
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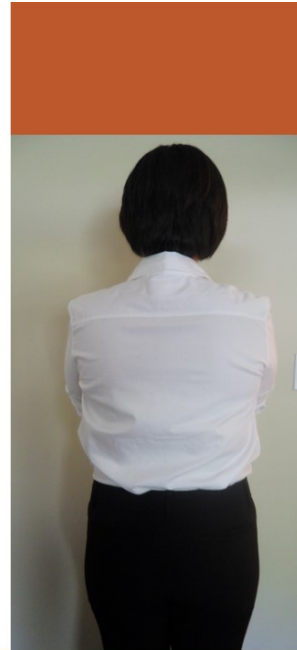
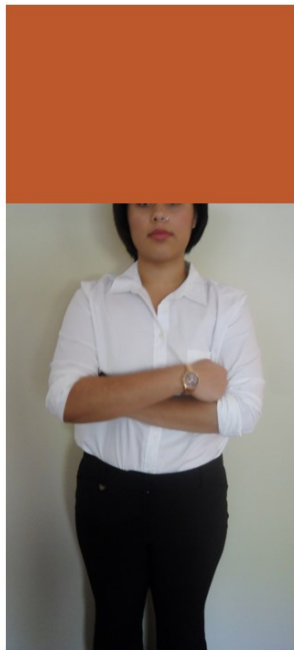
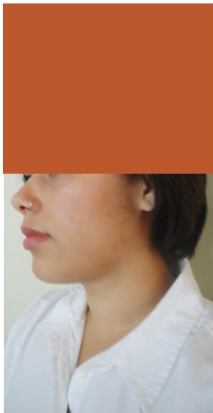
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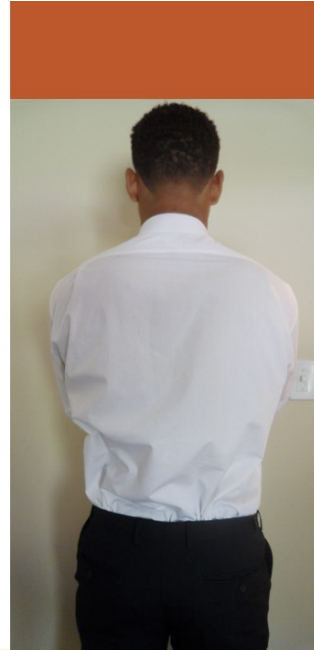
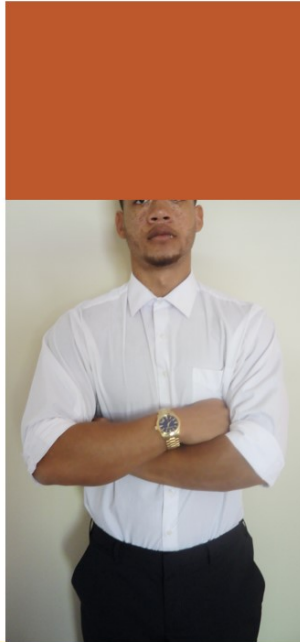
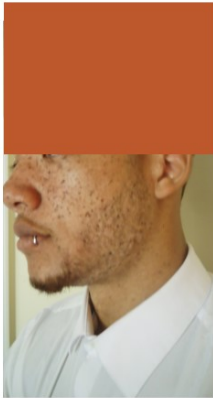
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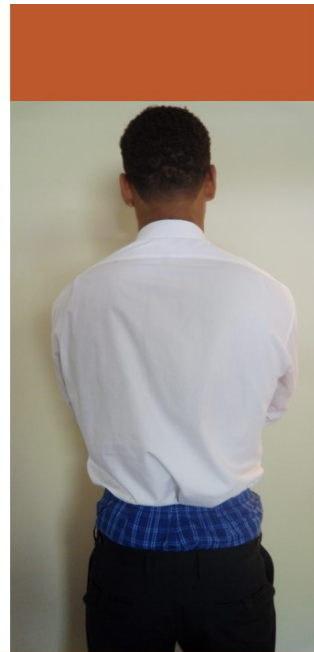
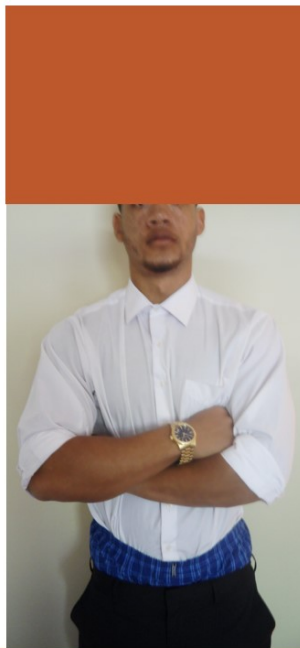
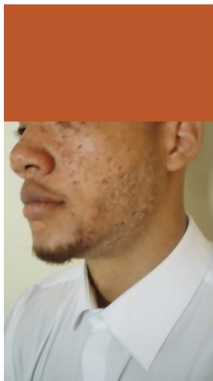
Slide # 13



Slide # 16



Slide # 17



Slide # 19