



# **A COMPARATIVE CLINICAL CASE STUDY OF A TRADITIONAL AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL PSYCHOMETRIC FEEDBACK**

by

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*"And if I stand tall amongst you today... it is because I stand on the shoulders of giants..."*

The journey to the completion of this project has been a long and winding one. I would like to take the time to thank the many special people in my life that through love, patience, support and care saw me through this fanatical time...

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## DECLARATION

I, Safia Mohamed (21070637), hereby declare that all the resources that were consulted during the completion of this dissertation are included in the reference list and that this study is my original work.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a yellow background, reading "Safia Mohamed".

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Ms. S. Mohamed  
2010

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## SUMMARY /ABSTRACT

### A COMPARATIVE CLINICAL CASE STUDY OF A TRADITIONAL AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL PSYCHOMETRIC FEEDBACK

by

**Safia Mohamed**

**Supervisor** : Prof. L. Ebersöhn  
**Institution** : Department of Educational Psychology  
**Degree** : MEd (Educational Psychology)

The purpose of this clinical case study was to compare clients' and an Educational Psychologist's experiences of a psychometric feedback from a traditional perspective with feedback from the perspective of positive psychology. The study consulted relevant literature and integrated readings to design frameworks to guide the two modes of feedback. A mixed-method research approach was applied, with a dominant focus on the qualitative aspects of this study (Qualquan), guided by an interpretivist epistemology.

Four adolescent girls and an Educational Psychologist were conveniently selected to participate, with two girls participating in the pilot phase and two in the data collection phase. After the pilot the interview frameworks were adapted. Psychometric profiles were used to generate quantitative data, while audio-visual recordings of the feedback interviews, interview transcripts, field notes , the researcher's and Educational Psychologist's reflections, and participants' pre- and post-feedback narratives contributed to the qualitative data for the study.

Following thematic analysis it emerged that the *clients' experienced four similarities between the two modes of feedback interviews*. Both feedback interviews were experienced as satisfactory and positive experiences; both modes provided self- and career knowledge to the participants; both were experienced as comprehensive

feedbacks and the Educational Psychologist highlighted both strengths and weaknesses of the client in each mode. However, the participant who experienced the positive psychological feedback interview received an ***additional strength-building opportunity***.

The lack of significant differentiation between the two modes of feedback interviews may be indicative of the value of the therapeutic alliance between therapists and client. This study's main contribution to Educational Psychology theory and practice is a framework for a positive psychological feedback interview, which may create opportunities for strength-building discussions.

**LIST OF KEY WORDS:**

Traditional psychology	Clients' experiences
Positive psychology	Educational Psychologist's experiences
Feedback of psychometric results	Researcher's observations
Traditional psychology feedback	Client-Therapist relationship
Positive psychology feedback	Therapeutic alliance

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## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

The *purpose of this study* was to compare a client's experiences of a psychometric feedback from a traditional perspective with one from the perspective of positive psychology. Over the past few years the concept of positive psychology has notably begun to direct the framing of psychological issues and processes, taking a dominant stand in the understanding of, as well as the approach to intervention within the caring professions (Seligman, 2002). Seligman (2002) describes positive psychology as bringing strength building to the fore, as the most potent weapon in the process of therapy. He adds that it has been found that human strengths tend to act as buffers against psychological stress and illness and goes on to remind us that the basis of psychology is not only the study of disease and weakness; rather, it is also about "building what is right", with the focus on human strength and virtue (Seligman, 2002). These statements summarise the essence of positive psychology adequately.

The concept of positive psychology poses as an alternative to the traditional approach (the deficit, disease or needs model as it is commonly referred to) to psychological issues and processes, as it has a strong focus on problems, deficiencies and needs (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). Positive psychology places great emphasis on *intrinsic* strengths, assets, resources and positive-constructive intrapsychic domains. This is opposed to the underlying premise of the needs-based approach – i.e. "if you can establish everything that is needed or deficient, you can map a plan of intervention from there" (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006:17). Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) thus conclude that while the needs-based approach focuses on solutions and challenges that are situated *extrinsically*, a focus on assets tends to mandate *intrinsic* power.

My views on this issue are strongly aligned with those of Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006). I draw on the words of Maddux (2002) who regards diagnostic labels and categories not as facts about people, but rather as *social* constructs, developed by members of society over time and which have eventually come to represent a shared view of the world. This view is a reasonable representation of the essence of my personal views and thus my keenness to contemplate the principles of positive psychology in the domain of psychometry, and in particular, to the process of relaying psychometric assessment results.

Throughout this study my focus was on one specific psychological process of conveying psychometric assessment results to the young girls', i.e. the feedback process, but from the unique perspective of employing this psychological process from alternate perspectives, namely the traditional method and that of applying the principles of positive psychology as part of the method of completion of this process. My specific aim in this study was to assess in what way (if any) positive psychology may, or not, influence this psychological process of feedback, in order to compare this positive psychological feedback with feedback done from the more commonly used and traditional form.

Having completed a learnership in psychometry in 2006, I was awarded a unique opportunity to work with a diverse group of learners. My work during this learnership also highlighted a significant trend in learners, to which I attribute my interest in this specific study. During my feedback interviews with learners, I employed the basic principles of positive psychology (albeit in an unsystematic and informal manner), highlighting learners' strengths and illustrating to them how these strengths can be used in everyday life experiences to make efforts more effective. My informal observations of these learners has shown that this form of feedback interview *seemingly* left learners highly motivated, as well as eager to learn and improve on their efforts. This led me to wonder what the differences and similarities between a psychometric feedback based on the principles and concepts of positive psychology and a traditional psychometric feedback would be. Furthermore, from the initial literature survey completed, it seemed that the nature of such possible

impact (as compared with those of traditional feedbacks) is unknown and/or unexplored. As I believe in the ideology of positive psychology, I felt that such a study could generate knowledge that could prove beneficial to practitioners both nationally and internationally. Moreover, the results of this study could have clinical value, as these results possess the potential to inform psychometric or psychological feedback processes.

Upon my further review of available literature, in specific terms of feedback-related studies, it became obvious that although a confined body of knowledge does exist (Koka & Hein, 2003; Kaplan & Sadock, 1998), none of the studied literature relates to the specific experiences of clients of a *positive psychological* feedback experience as this study aims to investigate. Moreover, within a broader context, my attempts to identify literature that focuses on clients' experiences of *psychological intervention* or the specific psychological process of *feedback* in general, proved futile.

The unavailability of literature in the above-described respect of clients' experiences of feedback interviews in the domain of psychological intervention or feedback processes highlighted that the empirical evidence to support my proposed study is limited. Therefore, while this fact may have highlighted one challenge to be overcome during the completion of the study, it (at the same time) highlighted an area of possible theoretical contribution. This implied that this study had the potential to make a theoretical contribution to the existing body of knowledge regarding the elements investigated through this study.

## **1.2 INTENT AND AIMS**

The primary purpose throughout the completion of this study was to *compare* positive psychological psychometric feedback and a traditional feedback interview, as the use of positive psychology in psychometric processes is still mainly a new phenomenon. The secondary purposes of this study were to *explore and describe* this above-described comparison between a positive psychological psychometric feedback and traditional feedback interview. In this regard I conclude that this study

has a combination of comparative, exploratory and descriptive purposes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2003; Durrheim & Terre Blanche, 2002; Miller & Crabtree, 2005; Stake, 2005), which I will explore in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Moreover, this study aimed to answer the following as the primary *research question*:

*“How can a comparison between experiences of a traditional and a positive psychological psychometric feedback inform Educational Psychological theory and practice?”*

To fully explore and address the aforementioned research question, I explored the following *sub-questions*:

1. What are positive psychology and traditional feedback interviews?
2. What are clients’ experiences of a feedback interview done from (a) the traditional perspective (b) the perspective of positive psychology?
3. What is the Educational Psychologist’s experience of a feedback interview done from (a) the traditional perspective and (b) the perspective of positive psychology?
4. What are the differences and similarities between experiences of a traditional and a positive psychological feedback interview?

### **1.3 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES**

In terms of my epistemological position as researcher, my viewpoint coincides with that of Radnor (2002), where he states that people assign personal meaning through the use of the ideas, beliefs, thoughts and experiences that they obtain from their social and cultural environment. This process of creating meaning reflects the *interpretivist paradigm*. Denscombe (2002) defines interpretivism as a study of social phenomena, based on the viewpoint that social reality is a “*social creation, constructed in the minds of people and reinforced through their interactions with each other.*”

Likewise the experiences of the young girls in response to both the traditional and the positive psychological psychometric feedbacks, were an integral part of the process of “creating meaning”, which, in terms of this study, eventually lead me to the findings of the nature of the comparison between the two alternate forms of psychometric feedbacks. Consequently, this research project was conducted by essentially applying the qualitative approach, anchored in *interpretivism*. Interpretivism is a vast paradigm, with its characteristic principles, ideologies, advantages, as well as, disadvantages. I will discuss this choice at greater length in Chapter 3.

#### **1.4 CONCEPTUALISATION**

To explicate this study further, it is essential that the basic operational terms and concepts that I applied be defined. This will facilitate greater understanding of the aims of the study:

##### **1.4.1 Positive psychology**

The movement of positive psychology is an effort to move away from the “disease-patient framework of repairing damage: damaged habits, damaged drive, damaged childhood and damaged brains” (Seligman, 2002). Instead of fixing what is wrong (or perceived to be wrong), positive psychology asserts the view that treatment is just as much about building what is right, since it has been found that certain human strengths tend to act as buffers against mental illness. Keyes and Haidt (2003) reiterate this view by noting that the aim of positive psychology is to assist people to flourish in their daily lives, rather than to merely exist.

Snyder and Lopez (2002) aptly define positive psychology as the pursuit of optimal human functioning for the enablement of the building of a field focusing on human strengths and virtue. The fundamental aim of positive psychology is thus to understand and facilitate happiness and subjective well-being (Carr, 2004). To

achieve this though, it becomes necessary to identify what is *right* and *positive* in the individual first (Seligman, 2002).

Seligman, Sheen, Park and Peterson (2005) divide happiness into three subareas, which they believe contribute to a greater sense of meaning in life and more fulfilling social and emotional experiences. Ultimately these experiences lead to a *greater quality of life*. These subareas of happiness are:

1. Positive emotion and pleasure (the pleasant life)
2. Engagement (the engaged life) and
3. Meaning (the meaningful life)

The intent of positive psychology to have a clearer understanding of the human experience, the highs, the lows and everything in-between leads to a greater, more unified goal of identifying *what makes life most worth living?* (Seligman *et al.*, 2005). The overall goal of the movement of positive psychology is to create and enhance the practice of positive human functioning and effective interventions that will contribute to the building of thriving individuals, families and communities.

#### **1.4.2 Positive psychological feedback interview**

The process of feedback entails the communication of findings of the assessment process, where the assessment process and consequent results can be clarified, goals can be identified and intervention methods can be discussed (Carr, 2006). The proposed form of feedback interview will be conducted by *incorporating the ideologies of the emerging science of positive psychology* (consult the above subsection for a basic conceptualization on positive psychology, which I will expand upon in Chapter 2). Seligman (2002) describes positive intervention as that which identifies a set of buffers for the client: i.e. the positive human traits. He emphasizes that prevention of dis-ease in the client's life requires not only the process of identifying, but moreover, *amplifying* the strengths that are in the young girls. In terms of doing a feedback interview from the perspective of positive psychology, I used Seligman's ideology (2002:4) that *"treatment is not just fixing what is wrong; it*



*is also about building what is right*” as an underlying objective during feedback sessions. He (Seligman, 2002:5) also accentuates the importance of incorporating the concept of “learned optimism”, wherein the practitioner helps the client to firstly identify his/her negative and self-impeding thinking, and to skilfully dispute it. Moreover, once clients have learned this skill of identifying their strengths, negative thinking patterns and the ability to correct them, the *positive* in them should be further reinforced. In terms of doing therapy from the perspective of positive psychology, Seligman (2002) identifies two strategies that practitioners can make use of, which prove particularly effective, namely: (i) *tactics* and (ii) *deep strategies*.

The goals of a positive psychological feedback are thus to *build strengths*, which could in turn possibly act as buffers against the development of mental illnesses. Such strengths include courage, future-mindedness, finding purpose, interpersonal skills, rationality, insight, optimism, honesty, perseverance, realism, capacity for pleasure and putting troubles into perspective (Seligman, 2002). To effectively build such strengths and foster positive development, I used the *tactics* and *deep strategies* highlighted above (and discussed comprehensively in Chapter 2) during positive psychological feedback sessions.

Aside from the above factors that relate to the positive psychological aspects of a ‘positive psychological’ psychometric feedback, other factors that relate to the process of conveying psychometric results per se are still central to this proposed form of positive psychological feedback. These factors are outlined by Grieve in Foxcroft and Roodt (2001), as discussed in the following section.

### **1.4.3 Traditional feedback interview**

Grieve in Foxcroft and Roodt (2001) discuss at length the approach and method of *conveying psychometric assessment results*. They state expressly that psychological assessment results should be conveyed in the context of an interpersonal situation/relationship. These results should also be conveyed in the way that best *serves the original purpose* of each individual test (as well as the collective

assessment battery of tests). In the context of this study, assessment results from the traditional perspective will thus be shared from the perspective of a subject choice assessment, as that was the original format of the assessments.

Results should also be shared in general terms, explaining to the client *what the purpose of the test use was*, and what the results imply about the client based on the context in which it was used. The use of descriptive forms instead of numeric forms, especially scores which can be misunderstood, or lead to the stigmatization/labelling of individuals should be avoided. This would mostly concern the results of assessment measures such as intelligence test, where results are indicated only in a passive context and only when the situation warrants (Grieve, 2001).

Specific mention is made of the fact that it is not only the content of the assessment results that has an impact on the client's life, but moreover, *the manner in which these results are conveyed that has a greater impact on the client's life*. The process of conveying results plays such an integral role that it should be considered as a form of intervention (Grieve, 2001).

Practitioners are strongly advised to steer clear of any form of labelling or stereotyping during the process of conveying assessment results. To ensure that this is maintained during the feedback process, the use of *language* becomes a very important factor in the process. It is essential that the language used throughout the feedback process should be at a level that is understandable to the client. Furthermore, all information should be phrased from a positive stance<sup>1</sup> to ensure that the process of conveying the results does not let the client see him/herself in a negative light. In addition, voicing of problems, concerns or potential problems should be phrased to make them sound like a separate issue that the client needs to

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<sup>1</sup> A distinction must be noted in the difference between the positive stance that I refer to here and the general concept of Positive Psychology. Positive stance refers to an optimistic outlook relating to the manner, vocabulary and general demeanour that is adopted by the practitioner. Further discussion will follow in Chapter 2 regarding the distinction between a general optimistic stance and the realisation of Positive Psychology by a practitioner in psychological processes and professional practice.

address or be aware of, and *not* made to sound like it is part of the client's personality or a permanent impeding factor in his/her life (Human-Vogel, 2005).

Practitioners/individuals who are in the position of conveying results should always be supportive of the *test-taker's emotional reaction* to the assessment results. It also proves helpful to ask the test-taker for his/her knowledge or feelings about the aspect that was assessed, and use that as a starting point for further discussion and elaboration. Overall results should be conveyed within the context of the interpersonal situation or relationship between the practitioner and client (Grieve, 2001).

#### **1.4.4 Clients' or participants' experiences**

Understanding clients' or participants' experiences in a psychological process offers a possibility for deeper understanding of the process. According to the relational perspective human experience exists within an experiential world which is formed in a psychological field, and framed by interacting worlds of experience (Richardson, 2002). These interacting worlds are individual systems that are further embedded in and framed by other systems within which the client exists. Each system comprises various configurations of interacting worlds of experience and thus the interaction of these systems allows for a focus on relational understanding of the emergence of new experiences within the framework of the broader social and cultural systems in which all relationships are embedded (Richardson, 2002).

Traditionally the practitioner's point of view has informed the understanding of these processes, resulting in the process and consequently the outcome being determined by the practitioner (Paulson, Truscott and Stuart, 1999). Increasingly the value of the client's view is being recognized, as their views differ from those of the practitioner. According to Rosenfeld and Sykes (1998) it is through learning about the experiences, perceptions and understandings of clients that therapists can learn about what clients' needs are and how they can best be helped. In studies of clients'

perceptions of counselling experiences (Paulson *et al.*, 1999; Elliot & James, 1989), the clients described the positive experiences in counselling as multifaceted.

Five domains of client's experience that have been identified in the existing empirical literature in terms of clients' experiences of their own psychological processes during therapy, are namely *intentions, feelings, style of self-relatedness, style of relating to therapist* and *central concerns*. Clients identified three main interpersonal aspects of therapy such as 1) facilitative therapist characteristics and intentions, 2) the extent of clients' self-expression that is permitted and 3) the experience of a supportive relationship between client and practitioner. The latter includes task-related aspects such as (a) self-understanding/insight and (b) therapists encouraging extra-therapy practice (Paulson *et al.*, 1999).

The role of the practitioner's interpersonal style and the therapeutic relationship are key elements that impact on the clients' experiences in psychological processes. Clients' change processes and the practitioner's ability to detect and process these changes are also important factors in predicting effective and positive client's experiences in psychological processes (Paulson *et al.*, 1999).

## **1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.5.1 Research design**

Considering the nature of this study and its relative components and facets, the design selected is a *clinical case study*, with comparative purposes (Durrheim & Terre Blanche, 2002, Miller & Crabtree, 2005). To understand the details and relevance of a *clinical case study* design in this study, it is important to note and understand that the "*case*" or the central feature/element in this enquiry is the unique form of *psychometric feedback* being proposed, i.e. to conduct feedback by employing the basic principles and constructs of positive psychology. I deduced from Durrheim and Terre Blanche's work (2002) that the clinical case study design refers to a case study

researched *within a professional environment*. The aspect of research design, with its advantages and disadvantages, is further explored in Chapter 3.

#### **1.5.2.1 Selection of participants**

I used *convenience sampling* to select participants to work with (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). The reason for this is that since I had a family member at the required age and developmental phase of participants, I was easily able to access other participants who were in the same age group and who met the only criteria for selection, i.e. age and developmental appropriateness for the subject choice assessments. I attained informed consent and assent from the participants and their parents directly. The reason for the choice of this sampling technique is that the aim of this research study is to investigate the differences and/or similarities between two modes of feedback interviews. The purpose of this study is not to generalize the findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Patton, 2002) but I will explore this in more detail in Chapter 3.

#### **1.5.2.2 Data collection**

Throughout the completion of this study I made use of a combination of data collection methods, namely psychometric data, observations of the young girls, audio-visual recordings (documented as verbatim transcripts), the young girls' written narratives reflecting their expectations and experience of the feedback interview conducted, and a narrative from the Educational Psychologist who administered the feedback interviews based on her experiences of the two modes of feedback. In Table 1.1 I outline the multiple data collection and documentation strategies that I made use of in the completion of this study. These multiple methods added depth and richness to the study, in what Janesick (2000) refers to as *crystallization*. This implies that by means of increased and contrasting methods of data collection with the same object/participant, I highlighted distinct nuances in the data gathered (Knight, 2002; Janesick, 2000). This process will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

No.	PHASE IN RESEARCH PROCESS	DATA COLLECTION METHOD USED TO COMPLETE THIS PHASE	DATA DOCUMENTATION METHOD USED TO FACILITATE THE COMPLETION OF THIS PHASE	PURPOSE OF THE DATA COLLECTION / DOCUMENTATION METHOD IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS	RESEARCH PHASE COMPLETED / FACILITATED BY
1.	Intervention phase begins: psychometric assessment completed using psychometric tests	Psychometric test battery administered included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Differential Aptitude Test- form L (DAT-L)</li> <li>Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ)</li> <li>South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII)</li> </ul>	Psychometric profiles	To provide content basis for the two modes of feedback interviews in the form of a subject choice assessment	Researcher as Psychometrist
2.	Develop two modes of feedback interviews	Theoretical indicators		To develop a framework for the two modes of feedback interviews	Researcher
3.	Train Educational Psychologist based on framework designed through the literature review	Unstructured face-to-face interview with Educational Psychologist			Researcher trains Educational Psychologist
<b>PILOT PHASE</b>					
4.	Pilot interviews	Feedback interviews (one done in the traditional mode and one done using positive psychology)	Audio-visual recordings of feedback interviews and transcripts of these	To record learners' actions during the two modes of feedback interviews	Educational Psychologist as interviewer
5.	Evaluate pilot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educational Psychologist's experience of being interviewer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educational Psychologist's field notes</li> <li>Audio-visual</li> </ul>	To evaluate the pilot feedback interviews in terms of their satisfaction in relation to the	Researcher

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations by researcher of pilot feedback interviews</li> <li>• Unstructured face-to-face interview with Educational Psychologist.</li> </ul>	recordings of pilot feedback interviews and transcripts of these	framework devised for the feedback interviews (based on my literature review)	
6.	Adapt pilot				
<b>INTERVENTION PHASE (FEEDBACK INTERVIEWS)</b>					
7.	Practice two modes of feedback interviews with Educational Psychologist				
8.	Pre-feedback narratives regarding <i>expectations</i> of the feedback process	Narratives written by learners' in the form of a self-report technique, regarding their expectations of (prior to) the feedback interviews	Narratives written in the form of a self-report technique, completed by individual participants	To record learners' expectations of (prior to) the two modes of feedback interviews, in order to compare the experiences of these feedbacks	Researcher as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: (facilitating the writing of narratives) &amp;</li> <li>• Researcher (observing participants in order to record observations in a research diary)</li> </ul>
9.	Traditional and positive psychological feedbacks	As per theoretical indicators identified previously			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational Psychologist as interviewer</li> <li>• Researcher as observer</li> </ul>
10.	Post-feedback narratives regarding <i>experiences</i> of feedback process	Narratives written by learners' in the form of a self-report technique,	Narratives written in the form of a self-report technique, completed by	To record learners experiences of (after) the 2 modes of feedback	Researcher as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: (facilitating the</li> </ul>

		regarding their experiences of (after) the feedback interviews	individual participants	interviews, in order to compare the experiences of the 2 modes of feedback interviews	writing of narratives) & • Researcher (observing participants in order to record observations in a research diary)
<b>DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION PHASE</b>					
11.	Data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations of learners</li> <li>• Administering Educational Psychologist's field notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researchers research diary</li> <li>• Audio-visual recording and transcripts of feedback interviews</li> </ul>	To record learners' experiences during the two modes of feedback interviews	Completed by researcher
12.	Participant validation interviews.	Interview with participants	Audio-visual recordings of interviews and transcripts of these	To determine the young girls' views of my analyses of their experiences of the two modes of feedback interviews	Researcher
13.	Recording of results and literature control				Completed by researcher
14.	Concluding of finding and recommendations				Completed by researcher
15.	Answering of research questions				Completed by researcher

**Table 1.1 Outline of the various data collection and documentation strategies**



## 1.6 ETHICAL STRATEGIES

Due to the social and personal nature of the study, when undertaking research I did not only have a responsibility to my profession, but also towards the participants involved in the study (Strydom, 1998; Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Being a Psychometrist, it was essential that I firstly adhered to the ethical code of the Health Professions Council of South Africa when working with participants. In conducting the research I aimed to preserve the dignity of participants as human beings. Within the context of this study, I further adhered to certain ethical principles, in order to ensure that the participants were not deceived, knew what was going on during the research process and did not experience any form of harm or distress (physically or otherwise). These principles took effect in an interactive and robust manner, in order to ensure effective research (Miller & Brewer, 2003).

These three principles are outlined here and an extended discussion of them will follow in Chapter 3. Firstly, the principle of *informed consent*. This refers to informing parents and guardians about the facts of the study before obtaining their consent to participate in the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Cohen *et al.*, 2003). The second essential principle in this regard is that of *privacy, confidentiality and anonymity*. This refers to the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants that were protected at all times (Strydom, 1998; Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Sternberg, 2001). Lastly, the principle of protection *from harm*, which refers to recognizing and communicating possible and probable risk to the participants, such as psychological, physical or social harm (Strydom, 1998; Sternberg, 2001).

## 1.7 QUALITY CRITERIA

Babbie and Mouton (2001) describe the principle of trustworthiness as relating to how researchers can convince their audiences that their research findings are worth paying attention to or worth talking about. When conducting any study, the trustworthiness of

that study is of core relevance and importance as it links directly to issues of validity and reliability of the study (Seale, 2000).

Five main criteria can be linked to trustworthiness, namely 1) Credibility, which aims to provide a true picture of the phenomenon being investigated (Patton, 2002). 2) Transferability, which refers to the extent to which a study can be applied to other respondents or in other contexts. (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). 3) Dependability, which refers to the indication of whether or not the study would yield the same, or similar, results if replicated in the same, or similar context or with the same participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). 4) Confirmability (Seale, 2000), and 5) Authenticity (Seale, 2000). The above highlighted areas relative to the process of ensuring quality criteria and trustworthiness in this study merely provide an outline for the aspects that were taken into consideration during the completion of the study. In Chapter 3 I present strategies I employed to ensure rigour in this enquiry.

## **1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

### **Chapter 1: Overview and Rationale**

Chapter 1 serves as an overview chapter, commencing with an introductory orientation to the study. The purpose, rationale, paradigmatic perspective and conceptualization of the study will be presented here, as well as a brief outline of the research design and methodology. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the underlying assumptions of how I approached the study.

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Chapter 2 outlines the conceptual framework of the study through consultation of the relevant and authoritative literature on the basic concepts of the study, i.e. self-concept; positive psychology; 'traditional' feedback interviews; and positive psychological feedback interviews.

### **Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology**

Chapter 3 is a discussion of the research design and methodology that will be observed throughout the investigation of the stated research question. Specific attention will be given to the proposed methods of data collection, data analysis and interpretation, which will be outlined and justified.

### **Chapter 4: Results of the Study, Interpretations and Literature Control**

Chapter 4 includes the presentation and discussion of data collected and analyzed, followed by a detailed discussion of the findings and interpretations of results. The findings of the study will be related to the existing literature, as discussed in Chapter 2.

### **Chapter 5: Final Conclusions and Recommendations**

The last chapter includes the final conclusions of the study. There the findings will be linked to the research question as initially posed in Chapter 1. The contribution to the study, as well as its challenges, will be presented. Recommendations for further research, practice and training will be suggested.

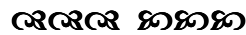
## **1.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter was intended to serve as an introduction and orientation to this study and the subsequent chapters. I briefly outlined the rationale of the study, my aims, epistemological position, conceptual parameters, research design and methodology, ethical considerations and quality criteria. These outlines are intended to serve as an induction to the more in-depth exploration in Chapter 3.

In this chapter I highlighted the framework of my study, specifically in terms of the rationale underpinning my study, the purpose and conceptual parameters of my study, as well as the basic epistemological and methodological assumptions that this study was based on. I then went on to highlight the research design and methodology framework that underpinned this study. I concluded the chapter with a brief introduction of the

ethical considerations concerning myself as researcher, as well as those associated with the research process per se. Lastly, I introduced the quality criteria that contributed to the trustworthiness of my study.

In Chapter 2 I will present an in-depth conceptual framework and literature review, exploring relevant, available and the most updated literature on positive psychology traditional feedback interviews and the concept of the proposed positive psychological feedback interview. This provided a sound basis for the study, from its planning to completion.



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

**“Recognize and amplify strengths rather than repair weaknesses”**

(Snyder and Lopez, 2002)

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I aim to take a closer look at the theoretical concepts that underpin and inform this study, namely the concept of a feedback in terms of psychometric assessment and the concept of positive psychology in general. As I argued in Chapter 1, my review of available literature has to date provided me with no substantial literature that links directly to the concept of integrating the elements, principles and methodologies of positive psychology, to the act or process of relaying psychometric assessment results (and psychological results in general). My aim throughout this chapter is to illustrate this fact through the analysis and discussion of the available literature on the process of relaying assessment / psychological results and the concept of positive psychology. Furthermore, through my review of literature, I aim to provide a framework from which to develop a positive psychological feedback.

### 2.2 WHAT DOES THE PROCESS OF PROVIDING PSYCHOMETRIC FEEDBACK ENTAIL?

Before understanding and analysing alternate modes of relaying feedback of psychometric results as the basis of this study, I had to ascertain a thorough understanding of what a feedback interview is. Psychometric feedbacks follow the process of psychometric assessment. Psychometric assessment entails the purposeful collection of information on individuals, groups and processes, with the intention of drawing conclusions and/or making decisions regarding such individuals or groups (Bergh, 2007). In my study these conclusions and/or decisions refer to career facilitation and in particular to the process of subject choices for Grade 10 learners (Lichtenberger, Mather, Kaufman and Kaufman, 2004).

The value of psychometric assessment lies in the interpretation and communication of the results to the client, as it is not the assessment itself that is the objective but rather the *reporting* of the data that it provides (Bergh, 2007). Carr (2006) refers to the feedback process as the *formulation process* as this process includes the clarification of the presenting problem, the identification of goals and the discussion of treatment or intervention. These aspects of the feedback process are dependent on the client's specific needs and the nature of the assessment results. Feedback interviews usually take place after an assessment has been completed and a report has been compiled (Lichtenberger *et al.*, 2004).

According to Bergh (2007) providing feedback of results enhances professionalism, integrity and trust between client and practitioner, while at the same time building on the theoretical and practical knowledge of the discipline. Lichtenberger *et al.*, (2004) share a similar view which they refer to as the formulation or feedback process as the development of 'mini-theory'. In this study it is the *communication and reporting* of the assessment results that we refer to as *feedback*. Feedback is the end product of the assessment procedure and provides closure for the client. The process of providing feedback is aligned with the policy of transparency as feedback informs clients of factors that may be of relevance to the client (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). (Transparency in this study will be further discussed in Chapter 3).

The communicating and reporting of assessment data are the result of interpretation and integration of such data. Interpreting and integrating data incorporate the process of assigning meaning to the assessment findings, bearing in mind a) the purpose of the assessment; b) the target groups involved; c) the rationale and the contents of the methods used; d) the client's circumstances and e) the context of the assessment (i.e. the time, situations involved, the agreement about how the assessment results will be handled) (Bergh, 2007).

The therapist or assessor that is providing feedback to the client should tailor the feedback interview to an appropriate level of the individual or individuals who will be present during the feedback session (Lichtenberger et al., 2004). Individuals present in the feedback interview could include a variety of role-players such as the client himself, the parents, a teacher, a spouse or at times could even include a combination of these role-players as participants during a feedback interview.

Thus, to appropriately convey the assessment results to participants in this study during the feedback interview, the Educational Psychologist facilitating the two modes of feedback interviews has to take into consideration the manner and sensitivity in which the assessment results are conveyed (Lichtenberger et al., 2004). Conveying assessment results in a sensitive manner refers to the consideration of the participant's age and developmental level during the discussion of the feedback results. Consequently, age appropriate terminology was used to explain to the participants what the results of their assessments mean and how these findings were useful to them (Lichtenberger et al., 2004).

Bergh (2007: 20) describes a feedback interview as a verbal discussion between the practitioner and client regarding the "meaning and implications of assessment data for the client". These results must be conveyed with sensitivity and skill to be able to protect the client's dignity and self-worth and thus fulfilling an ethical responsibility as psychological professionals (HPCSA, 2007). Linked to such ethical responsibility are the interpersonal skills that Bergh (2007) outlines as essential during personal feedbacks. These interpersonal skills include a) delivering feedback that is fair and honest; b) feedback must be relevant, specific and applicable to the context in which the assessment measures were administered; c) feedback must be given as soon as possible in order to support the initial purpose of the assessment; and lastly d) feedback must be given in a positive manner and in a positive atmosphere. Even if the assessment results do not indicate optimal performance on the part of the client, the feedback must be

given in such a manner that the client understands the validity of the findings in terms of the aspects of functioning that were assessed and the areas that need improvement. Additional generic principles regarding the provision of feedback during an interview include the following (Bergh, 2007):

- ◆ The feedback should start out with the practitioner conveying the *objectives or aims of the feedback*. The client should also understand the extent of the applicability of the assessment results and the context in which the assessment measures were administered in (in the case of this study, the context in which assessment measures were administered is that of a subject choice assessment).
- ◆ Assessment results should be conveyed in a *format that has already been interpreted* and not in the exact scores that they achieved as this limits the possibility of misinterpretation. Scores should be explained in categories such as “average”.
- ◆ *Technical jargon* should be avoided in order to make the interview more understandable to the client, as any psychological constructs and concepts should be avoided. Assessment results should be conveyed in a manner that is clear and concise as this will help the clients to grasp the extent of the implications of their assessment results. By limiting the use of jargon the communication process between client and the assessor is not hindered (Carr, 2009).
- ◆ Practitioners should be careful *not to oversimplify or generalise findings* and can instead use real-life examples to enhance the meaning of the results.
- ◆ *Integrate all individual test results* so that results conveyed in the interview are a valid reflection of the client. Results should be conveyed in a *simple and logical manner*.
- ◆ Encourage *clients to participate and share* opinions during the feedback relating to the results being conveyed.



- ◆ Emphasis must be placed on a *client's positive points and their potential*, along with any weaknesses that may have been identified. Any negative aspects identified should be discussed in a constructive manner.
- ◆ Clients should be informed about any *ethical and legal aspects* of the assessment.

In addition to the above guidelines, it should be borne in mind that oral or verbal feedback is one of the most effective methods of communicating assessment findings to a client (Bergh, 2007). Thus, when completing interviews verbally, it is important to convey the feedback in the context of the original reason for referral. In this study, conveying feedback in the context of the referring reason for the study would mean that the feedback should be aligned to the context of a subject choice assessment. As verbal feedback is largely dependent on the communication skills of the assessor, the assessor has to be able to communicate effectively during all stages of the process (Egan, 2007). The manner in which information is communicated and shared with clients is a key factor in shaping the helping relationship, which in turn defines the nature of the relationship that will follow during the intervention process (Becvar & Becvar, 2006).

Culturally appropriate language and behaviour should also be considered during feedback interviews and throughout the helping process of engagement with the client in general. Another technique that can improve the effectiveness of a verbal feedback process is non-verbal communication in terms of maintaining an open posture to indicate involvement with the client. To be able to display effective professional engagement the assessor providing feedback should respond adequately and appropriately to a client's thoughts and behaviours and be able to reflect on the context of the assessment results and not only be able to read out the results. Assessors should be attentive to the clients' questions and have an understanding of the significance of their responses in the context of the feedback interview in progress (Egan, 2007).

According to Lichtenberger, *et al.*, (2004, p. 188) the following are essential do's and don'ts in delivering feedback:

<b><i>Do:</i></b>	<b><i>Don't:</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipate questions and be prepared for possibilities of difficult questions.</li> <li>• <i>Areas of competence and strengths should be discussed. (This technique is also common to positive psychological feedback).</i></li> <li>• Even if information is difficult to convey, always be honest.</li> <li>• Encourage the asking of questions.</li> <li>• Extract ideas from others about the assessment results.</li> <li>• Allow application of visual aid.</li> <li>• Practise your part in giving feedback.</li> <li>• Adequate time should be scheduled for the feedback session.</li> <li>• <i>The use of a positive tone is essential during feedback. (This technique is also common to positive psychological feedback).</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cover up important findings.</li> <li>• Discourage questions.</li> <li>• Be caught off guard by angry or upset clients.</li> <li>• Make unsupported long-term predictions (“Jane will always struggle with reading...”)</li> <li>• Expect all feedback sessions to flow easily without obstacles.</li> <li>• Take on professional tasks beyond your scope of practise. Refer if necessary.</li> </ul>

**Table 2.1 Do's and don'ts during feedback interviews (Lichtenberger et al., 2004, p. 188)**

The feedback interview is an important form of professional engagement with the client, and in the helping relationship. Assessors should therefore be well aware of and well trained in the use of therapeutic skills to be able to facilitate the feedback process (Egan, 2007). This will be true for both the traditional and the positive psychological feedback interviews. The communication in the feedback interview goes beyond mere verbal

communication of findings and it is essential to possess the skills necessary to be able to tune in to the communication process (Egan, 2007).

The following giving and receiving styles (Rich, 2003) may be useful to establish a relationship with the client within the context of professional engagement. Employing these strategies may contribute to the effectiveness of such an engagement.

<i>Positive giving style</i>	<i>Positive receiving style</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive: delivered in a way which is not threatening but hopeful.</li> <li>• Direct: the aim of the feedback is obviously stated.</li> <li>• Sensitive: delivered with understanding of the wants of the other person.</li> <li>• Considerate: feedback is not intended to offend or humiliate.</li> <li>• Descriptive: focuses on transformation of action, rather than on the persona.</li> <li>• Specific: feedback is focused on exact action or dealings.</li> <li>• Healthy timing: given as close to the actual, preceding event as possible.</li> <li>• Thoughtful: well thought-out rather than reckless.</li> <li>• Helpful: feedback is intended to be significant to the other person.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open: listens without frequent intrusion or defences.</li> <li>• Responsive: eager to hear what's being said without blaming.</li> <li>• Accepting: accommodates the feedback, without refutation.</li> <li>• Respectful: recognizes the importance of what is being said and considers the insight of the speaker.</li> <li>• Engaged: interacts fittingly with the speaker, asking for explanation when needed.</li> <li>• Active listening: listens cautiously and tries to recognize the significance of the feedback.</li> <li>• Thoughtful: tries to understand the individual action that has proceeded to the feedback.</li> <li>• Interested: is genuinely paying attention in receiving feedback</li> <li>• Sincere: genuinely wants to make individual changes if fitting.</li> </ul>

**Table 2.2 Positive styles of giving and receiving feedback (Rich, 2003)**

### **2.3 HOW CAN (TRADITIONAL) PSYCHOLOGY BE CONCEPTUALISED?**

Since its origin the field of psychology has been defined as the study of the mind, behaviour and the relationship between them. The study of the field of psychology in this manner was established in order to understand how humans think, feel, learn, perceive, act, interact with others and understand themselves (Sternberg, 2001). The literature considered and outlined in Section 2.2 has led me to the view that a feedback interview based on the premises of traditional psychology is not solely the understanding of the relationship between the human mind and behaviour. Instead, a process such as a traditional feedback interview involves the process of establishing and maintaining an effective helping relationship, while responding adequately and appropriately to the client's needs, thoughts and behaviours (Egan, 2007). Establishing an effective helping relationship in this regard is often the result of successful communication and skills on the part of the assessor (Lichtenberger et al., 2004; Rich, 2003; Egan, 2007).

I also connect the field of psychopathology with that of traditional psychology. Barlow and Durand (2002) define the field of psychopathology as the study of psychological disorders. Psychological disorders include a psychological dysfunction or dyscontrol within an individual that may be associated with distress or impairment, or a response that is atypical or unexpected according to cultural norms and expectations. While this can be deemed an accurate description of psychopathology, they (Barlow and Durand, 2002) go on to describe clinical and counselling psychologists, social workers, marriage and family therapists and mental health counsellors as the trained professionals who are responsible for work within this field. By implication then, according to Barlow and Durand (2002) the field of psychopathology includes the scope of a psychologist who is working within the framework of traditional psychology.

From the above discussion I deduce that traditional psychology exists within a clinical domain of functioning. The term 'clinical' in this context refers to problems or disorders

that can be found in a hospital or clinical setting, as well as to the activities connected with the assessment and treatment of such cases (Barlow & Durand, 2002).

Thus, based on the above viewpoint, other contemporary authors characterise a clinical approach to traditional psychology by what has in recent years become known as the *needs-based model*. It is the opinion of these authors (Seligman, 2002; Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001; Gable & Haidt, 2005) that the traditional approach to psychology places an emphasis on *problems, deficiencies and needs*. Such a view is supported by the exploration of the foundations of traditional psychology provided by Sternberg (2001) and Barlow and Durand (2002). Commonly referred to as the deficit-based model, the needs-based approach or medical model thinking, this paradigm of approaches to psychological assessment and/or intervention is based on the premise that establishing a client's needs or deficiencies can provide a basis for intervention (Eloff, 2002).

To further clarify the existence of traditional psychology within a medical or needs-based perspective, I analysed the various domains of psychological practice and tabulated their description within the bounds of traditional psychology in Table 2.3. I emphasised particular job characteristics of psychologists working in specific domains of psychology. By emphasising a psychologists' job characteristics, it becomes evident that traditional psychology does place greater emphasis on addressing deficits, problems and the needs of clients instead of accessing clients' strengths and assets. Through the process of highlighting client's deficits, needs and problems, psychologists foreground clients' problems – that which is 'wrong'.

<b>DOMAIN OF PSYCHOLOGY</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF TRADITIONAL PSYCHOLOGY</b>
<b>CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diagnose and treat patients for psychological <b>problems</b> (own emphasis).</li> <li>• Understanding and treating of <b>abnormal</b> behaviour and psychological <b>problems</b> (own emphasis).</li> <li>• Teaches, trains or conducts research in a <b>hospital, clinic</b> (own emphasis), college or university.</li> </ul>
<b>COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGIST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counsels people on their <b>problems, conflicts</b> or choices (within the context of schools, workplaces, hospitals or clinics (own emphasis).</li> </ul>
<b>EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works in a school setting to test or counsel students.</li> <li>• Identifies perceptual or learning <b>disabilities</b> (own emphasis) and gifted learners.</li> <li>• Uses psychology to diagnose psychologically based <b>problems</b> (own emphasis) of children in school, and to recommend where possible, means of <b>correcting</b> or coping with these <b>problems</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>ACADEMIC PSYCHOLOGIST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works in a tertiary environment. Involved in teaching and conducting research.</li> <li>• Advises students.</li> </ul>
<b>INDUSTRIAL OR ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works in a business or industrial setting to help with hiring or firing, testing, interviewing and placement.</li> <li>• Assists in developing more hospitable and effective workplaces.</li> </ul>

**Table 2.3 Areas of emphasis under the various domains that psychologists practice under (Adapted from Sternberg, 2001: 24-26)**

I concur with Eloff (2002) that one of the consequences of this needs-based approach of traditional psychology is that practitioners are at risk of becoming fixated on problems and deficiencies of clients. This is often evident in the terminology that is used and the making available of resources based on needs while neglecting strengths that may be present. An important factor that may not be part of (or may not be fore-grounded) in such a traditional approach in psychology is a focus on strengths, assets, capacities and

resources that are evident and existent in the client's life, both on an internal and external level (Eloff, 2002). A greater focus on internal and external strengths, assets, capacities and resources during intervention is what has become known as the asset-based approach (Eloff, 2002). The asset-based approach reflects thinking embedded in positive psychology, which is the focus of this study and is discussed in the following section.

## **2.4 THE CONSTRUCT OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY**

### **2.4.1 The history and rationale behind positive psychology**

Positive psychology's main purpose is to catalyse a change in the focus of psychology from a preoccupation with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities in life. Seligman (2002) argues that the exclusive attention that was given to pathology neglected the fulfilled individual and the thriving community, and neglected the possibility of building on existing strengths, which has the potential to be the most important weapon that can be used in therapy (Compton, 2005; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2002).

However, positive psychology as the *study of positive emotions, positive character and positive institutions* is not a new science altogether (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman *et al.*, 2005). Building on the pioneering work of Rogers (1942), Maslow (1970), Jahoda (1958) and Erikson (1963), positive psychologists have studied mental health and wellbeing, albeit from a unique perspective. Positive psychologists have studied these works on mental health from the perspective of enhancing their understanding of how, why and under what conditions positive emotions, positive character and the institutions that allow them to flourish, exist (Seligman *et al.*, 2005). Consequently, positive psychologists do not claim to have invented the idea of pursuing happiness as a scientific study, but instead suggest that they have unified scattered theory and research into a single construct (Peterson & Park, 2003).

Positive psychology is defined by Sheldon and King (2001:216) as “*the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues, which adopts a more open and appreciative perspective regarding human potentials, motives, and capacities*”. Positive psychology uses psychological theory, research and intervention techniques to understand the positive, the adaptive, the creative, and the emotionally fulfilling elements of human behaviour. Therefore positive psychology studies what people do right and how they manage to do this. Positive psychology also helps people develop those qualities that lead to greater fulfilment for themselves and for others. It aims to discover and promote factors that allow individuals, communities, and societies to thrive and flourish (Compton, 2005; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2002). By implication this would mean focusing on *intrinsic* strengths, resources and assets during interventions, rather than solely focusing on pathology. Hence, positive psychology’s greatest distinguishing factor from traditional psychology is its focus on inherent strengths, resources and capacities.

The movement of positive psychology has levelled numerous criticisms against traditional, empirical psychology in order to justify a shift in thinking from traditional psychology to positive psychology. Amongst the greater of these criticisms levelled is that traditional psychology renders individuals passive *victims* of life incidents as traditional psychology does not see people as being able to control their own fate or emotions (Centre for Confidence and Well-being, 2006). Positive psychologists see traditional psychology as ‘lacking’ as traditional psychology has spent a large amount of time researching negative emotions and places an emphasis on trying to *fix* what is wrong with individuals, rather than identifying and fostering the individual’s strengths and capacities. This leads to a negative bias towards the perspective of traditional psychology and implies that traditional psychology is not attentive to the entire range of human experiences (Centre for Confidence and Well-being, 2006).



#### 2.4.2 The founding pillars of positive psychology

According to Seligman (2000) positive psychology can be described in more detail by referring to three pillars: First, at the *subjective level*, positive psychology looks at ***positive subjective states or positive emotions*** such as happiness, joy, satisfaction with life (in the past), relaxation, love, intimacy, hope and optimism for the future), contentment, flow and happiness (in the present). These positive emotions lead to valued subjective states (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive constructive states can also include constructive thoughts such as optimism and hope concerning the self and the future. They can also include feelings of energy, vitality and confidence, or the effect of positive emotions; an example of this is laughter.

Secondly, at the *individual level*, positive psychology focuses on the study of ***positive individual traits***, or the most enduring persistent behaviour patterns seen in people over time. This might include individual traits such as courage, wisdom, talent, persistence or honesty. Moreover, the capacity for love and vocation, interpersonal skill, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future-mindedness and spirituality can be included in this category. Positive psychology includes the study of positive behaviour and traits that are used to define “character strengths” or virtues. It can also include the ability to develop aesthetic sensibility or the ability to tap into creative potentials and the drive to pursue excellence.

Lastly, at the *group or societal level*, positive psychology focuses on ***development, creation, and maintenance of positive situations*** in the context of civic duties and institutions that lead to better citizenship by individuals. In this area positive psychology focuses on addressing issues such as the development of civic virtues, the creation of healthy families, the study of healthy work environments, and positive communities. Specific characteristics accessed in this category are responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance and work ethic (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Positive psychology may also be involved in investigations that look at how institutions can work better to support and nurture all the citizens they impact upon.

Therefore in many ways positive psychology focuses on the scientific study of positive human functioning and flourishing on a number of levels, such as the biological, personal, relational, institutional, cultural and global (Compton, 2005). In terms of this study I understand this to mean that all these levels of functioning are essential to positive growth and wellbeing. Thus when incorporating the principles and constructs of positive psychology during a psychometric feedback, in order to effectively use psychometric results to highlight and/or develop individuals' strengths, a practitioner will consider both internal states and traits, as well as external influences and motivators of behaviour (such as societal influences described above).

#### **2.4.3 The process of flow**

The process / concept of *flow* is the result of studies by Csikszentmihalyi that look at what gives people enjoyment and is a key concept in positive psychology (Kelley, 2004). The process of flow is an intrinsically rewarding and motivating activity and its source is free-flowing thinking that results when the mind is clear (Kelley, 2004). It occurs when individuals become so absorbed in an activity that they lose themselves and their sense of time is altered. When activities are enjoyed to such an extent that one becomes so engrossed in them and often has so little sense of oneself that one does not feel anything – not even happiness. However, after engaging in such an activity we have such a strong sense of *gratification* that we understand the activity as enjoyable and satisfying and as a result such experiences contribute substantially to our feelings of happiness and wellbeing. (Centre for Confidence and Well-being, 2006). Such *flow-inducing activities* can be anything from reading to a social interaction.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) believes that it is a natural human process for the brain to tend to negative thoughts and for individuals to direct such negativity towards themselves. The role of positive emotion is not simply to indicate wellbeing or the absence of negative emotion. Instead, positive emotions have the capacity to encourage and foster wellbeing and flourishing (Fredrickson, 2001). Negative emotions tend to limit individuals' perspectives, leaving them focused on problems and deficits only. Positive emotions on the other hand, lead to greater thoughts, actions and behaviours from people. The experience of positive emotions leads to improved health, relationships and intellectual and psychological functioning (Fredrickson, 2001).

Based on the above understanding of the role of emotions, it can be understood that positive emotions allow individuals to develop as individuals. Flow, as a resulting process (of positive emotions), provides individuals with the opportunity to gain control over their conscious being while experiencing events more optimally and developing into more complex and richer individuals. Flow is value-free and is a purely subjective experience. The only ingredient for flow is that the activity being pursued is meaningful to the individual. The idea of flow relates very strongly to what Seligman (2002) refers to as the concept of an *engaged life*. In Section 2.6.1 I discuss Seligman's (2002) views in this regard more in-depth.

#### **2.4.4 Positive prevention and positive therapy**

As Positive Psychology is primarily based in the domain of helping professions, it places a clear emphasis on *positive prevention* and *positive therapy* in such helping relationships (Snyder & Lopez, 2002). The two modes of feedback interviews which constitute the core of this study fulfilled the role of *intervention* during the process of subject-choice with the Grade 10 participants. As a form of intervention, the feedback interviews concluded the helping process with regard to the subject-choice assessments.

**Positive therapy** consists of instilling hope-related strategies and strength-building strategies and focuses on helping clients to assemble their strengths and resources to help them to use these in their everyday lives (Tan, 2006). **Positive prevention** concentrates on certain human strengths that have been found to act as buffers against mental illness, namely courage, future-mindedness, optimism, interpersonal skill, faith, work ethic, hope, honesty, perseverance and the capacity for flow and insight. The task of prevention is to create a science of human strength whose mission will be to understand and learn how to foster these virtues in young people. Therefore, by identifying, amplifying and concentrating on the strengths in people at risk, positive psychology will act as a form of effective prevention. Practitioners need to recognize and **amplify their clients' strengths rather than repair their weaknesses** and psychologists need to work with families, schools, communities and corporations to develop a climate that fosters these strengths. Practice that relies on the positive psychology worldview may have the direct effect of preventing many of the major emotional disorders. It may also have two side effects, making the lives of our clients physically healthier (given all we are learning about the effect of mental wellbeing on the body) and reorienting psychology to its neglected missions in making normal people stronger and more productive, as well as making high human potential actual (Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

The relevance of these underpinnings is clear in the context of this study as psychometric testing is generally employed to assess individuals' levels of functioning (cognitive, emotional, social, and developmental domains) and their personal traits. Psychometric results of this nature are employed to understand ability, to assess or aid an individual's development and functioning, career facilitation and selection/placement of employees. Consequently, when interacting within a helping context on an individual level, psychometric results of personal traits and behaviours can easily identify areas of concern or potential concern. Preventing or treating such concerns in a positive manner through the mobilisation of strengths could have an

overlapping impact of a positive nature, allowing for more meaningful experiences and greater quality of life (Tan, 2006).

## **2.5 THE NATURE OF A POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL PSYCHOMETRIC FEEDBACK INTERVIEW**

### **2.5.1 Defining the construct of a positive psychological feedback interview**

Positive psychologically based interventions are aimed at understanding people at their best and increasing individual happiness (Tan, 2006). The constructs of positive psychology illustrate that by using positive psychological principles in a therapeutic intervention, strengths and positive human traits and characteristics will be built and measured (these include character strengths and human traits and virtues) which make life worth living as they allow individuals to *flourish* instead of simply surviving. Detecting such strengths in an individual is an important part of good science and practice and thus should be an integral part of the positive psychological feedback interviews (Lopez, Snyder & Rasmussen, 2003).

Examples of such strengths that could potentially be developed in such therapeutic situations are courage, interpersonal skill, rationality, insight, optimism, honesty, perseverance, realism, capacity for pleasure, putting challenges into perspective, future mindedness, optimism, hope, and the ability to find purpose (Tan, 2006). To conduct a positive psychological psychometric feedback interview, it is necessary to be able to identify such strengths and weaknesses and the associations that exist between them. Once these associations have been identified, their *existence* and *relevance/meaning* in a client's life can be communicated to the client, and they can be used as a basis for recommendations for care (Lopez *et al*, 2003).

The aim of a positive psychological feedback interview is to understand people at their best and this entails accessing individuals' strengths. The Centre for Confidence and

Wellbeing (2006) defines *strength* as an individual's capacity to behave, think and feel in a way that allows them to actualise their optimal levels of functioning and performance. Achieving these levels of optimal functioning and performance in the pursuit of positive outcomes that will have value for clients as a result of these strengths lend deeper meaning to clients' lives. Strengths identified in this manner can be linked to intellectual or cognitive strengths, social intelligence, virtues or strengths of character (Centre for Confidence and Well-being, 2006).

Strategies of positive psychology and positive therapy such as *tactics* and *deep strategies* (as mentioned in Chapter 1) can be helpful in facilitating such strength building in a positive psychological feedback interview. These are outlined by Seligman (2002) as non-specific techniques. In terms of *deep strategies*, these are more intense and powerful strategies that are associated with the positive psychological methodology (Seligman, 2002). Seligman (2002:6) describes *deep strategies* as "techniques of positive psychology" that can lead to the creation and use of additional techniques that build upon these positive psychological techniques, such as the instilling of hope and the building of buffering strengths that exist within the client. The eventual goal of positive psychological intervention (such as what I propose in the alternate form of feedbacks) is the inspiration of *happiness* as a long-term factor for improved quality of life (Seligman *et al.*, 2005).

Tan (2006) describes deep strategies as those that build strengths through effective psychotherapy. Deep strategies lead to the development of strengths such as courage, interpersonal skill, insight, optimism, honesty, capacity for pleasure, future-mindedness, perseverance and finding purpose.

Thus positive psychology's deep strategies can be understood as the process of understanding and building on individuals' strengths throughout the course of the therapy process, in order to develop clients' individual strengths. Employing the

technique of deep strategies in the positive psychological feedback interviews illustrates that this mode of feedback interview possesses similar qualities to psychological intervention as it offers therapeutic benefits such as that of increasing hope, optimism, interpersonal skills, insight into one's life and finding purpose as outlined above (Tan, 2006).

In practice deep strategies may appear in the form of techniques that therapists are trained to employ regularly. One such example is the technique of 'narration', when therapists encourage clients to tell their life stories, thus making sense of what would otherwise be meaningless and enabling the clients with knowledge of themselves (Duckworth, Steen and Seligman, 2005). Encouraging clients to 'narrate' their life stories may occur in the form of using non-verbal prompts (such as "Tell me more" or "uh huh") (Egan, 2007). All psychotherapy techniques (such as narration) help to buffer against mental disorder in just the same way as *hope* does (Duckworth *et al.*, 2005).

### **2.5.2 Strength building in a positive psychological feedback interview**

In order to increase happiness through the use of a positive psychological feedback interview, it helps to understand how the term "happiness" is defined within the confines of positive psychology. Seligman (2002) defines happiness in terms of three more distinct routes of happiness. According to Seligman (2002) the most satisfied people are those who orientate their pursuits to all three, with the greatest emphasis placed on engagement and meaning. These three pursuits are:

- ❖ Positive emotion and pleasure (the pleasant life). This refers to having as many positive emotions as one can and learning the skills to amplify them. This form of happiness examines how people optimally experience, forecast and savour the positive feelings and emotions that are part of normal and healthy living (such as relationships, hobbies, interests and entertainment) (Seligman, 2004).

- ❖ Engagement (the engaged life) investigates the beneficial effect of immersion, absorption, and flow that individuals feel when they are optimally engaged in their primary activities. These states are experienced when there is a positive match between a person's strength and the task they are doing, i.e. when they feel confident that they can accomplish the tasks they face. This refers to a state when one feels like time has stopped, when self-consciousness is blocked and when one is completely comfortable with oneself and the activity being pursued (Seligman, 2004).
- ❖ Meaning (the meaningful life or life of affiliation). To achieve this form of happiness, individuals need to explore how they derive a sense of positive wellbeing, belonging, meaning, and purpose from being part of and contributing to something greater, larger and more permanent than the individual themselves (Seligman, 2004). By the term *something greater than the individual* itself, Seligman (2004) refers to being part of a social or religious group, a specific tradition, a nature, an organisation or a belief system). Moreover, aside from merely being part of a greater system or organisation, to attain happiness in the form of *meaning* as described here by Seligman (2004), it is important to know one's greatest strengths and then to utilise such strengths in the service of the greater existence to which the individual assigns meaning. This will lead to deeper life satisfaction, greater pleasure and positive emotion.

The building of strengths which I aim to achieve (in this case) through a positive psychological feedback interview will therefore focus on specific strengths. Specific strengths include talents, skills, knowledge, interests, dreams/hopes/goals, creativity, culture, passion and connections (Saleebey, 1992). The process of strength building should allow the client to be an active participant in the process, using activities in which the client has to brainstorm ideas on how to use signature strengths that have been identified in new ways. Involvement of this nature will foster motivation for



growth (Tan, 2006). Specific strategies that were developed based on this literature review in terms of administering a positive psychological feedback interview will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Such development and strength building in individuals allows for another key positive psychological construct to potentially come into effect, namely that of *flourishing*. Keyes and Haidt (2003) refer to flourishing as that experience when individuals experience high levels of emotional, psychological and social wellbeing due to vigour and vitality, self-determination, continuous self-growth, close relationships and meaningful and purposeful life.

Thus the above reasoning creates a logical argument to affirm that of Duckworth *et al.* (2005), where the authors argue that positive psychological interventions indicate a high positive prognosis to work for two main reasons:

1. Positive interventions by definition build pleasure, engagement and meaning, and can thus be easily justifiable in their own right.
2. Building positive emotion, engagement and meaning may actually counter disorder itself.

Research has indicated that individuals who experience positive emotions are more likely to find meaning in negative events. Such a process of meaning-making in turn leads to greater positive emotions and growth. Such individuals also tend to indicate higher levels of resilience (Duckworth *et al.*, 2005).

However, the development of such positive traits and virtues, accompanied by feelings of wellbeing and optimism are not solely intrinsically motivated processes. Scientific evidence shows that the absence of psychological wellbeing in adolescents is due to certain missing external factors. By external factors Kelley (2004) refers to teaching cognitive techniques, altering negative attributions, engaging meaningful activities,

satisfying lower need states, or the process of changing attitude or perceptual styles that can allow the restructuring of adolescents' goals, and subsequently improve the quality of their personal experience.

Careful analysis of the above statements highlight that a majority of these key external factors are factors that could be addressed during a feedback interview regarding a career facilitation session. The strengths-based approach identifies key strengths as talents, skills, knowledge, interests, dreams/hopes or goals, creativity, culture, passion and connections (Saleebey, 1992). Once again these key strengths are all naturally linked to the process of career facilitation.

### **2.5.3 Addressing and overcoming the challenges posed in the process of administering a positive psychological feedback interview**

During the development of the positive psychology movement there has been much criticism levelled against it, which is relevant to the process of undertaking a positive psychological feedback interview.

*Firstly*, one of the greater criticisms levelled against the movement of positive psychology is that in studying and practising it, practitioners tend to fail to recognise and ignore the existing negative aspects of life such as problems, needs and deficiencies (Eloff, 2006; Gable and Haidt, 2005). However, this criticism is often a result of a grave misunderstanding since positive psychology does in fact deal with the problems, needs and deficiencies of clients, albeit in a different way (Eloff, 2006). Instead of denying clients' needs and problems as positive psychology implies, it rather builds on the work of pathology, distress and dysfunction that characterise traditional psychology by accessing the human resilience, strength and growth. These latter characteristics are the flip side of the coin of negative aspects such as distress, dysfunction and pathology (Gable and Haidt, 2005).

In the positive psychological feedback interviews completed as part of the data collection process for this study, the intention is not simply to identify the participant's strengths, assets and positive characteristics from the psychometric assessment results and highlight these for the participant. Rather, the intention is to identify such positive aspects in the participant and highlight means in which these positive aspects can be used to overcome and be a buffer against weaknesses and challenges that are evident and may be inevitably based on the participants' inherent characteristics that can be identified through the psychometric assessments. Hence, the positive psychological feedback interview that defines this study involves *engaging problems through accessing assets* (Eloff, 2006).

*Secondly*, the complexity assigned to positive constructs varies in contexts as characteristics that may be viewed as strengths in one context but not in another context. Similarly, what is viewed as positive may become a weakness as contexts change and time progresses. Therefore calls for increasing the levels of conceptual understanding in positive psychology have been made (Eloff, 2006).

In response to this criticism, as was the case in the positive psychological feedback interviews conducted for this study, the assigning of meaning in this sense with regard to the value of characteristics that constitute strengths or weaknesses, cannot be predetermined and generalised to entire groups of people (Gable & Haidt, 2005). To determine what constitutes a strength for a specific participant and what does not, a guiding factor is the choices that the participants make for themselves. These choices are indicative of the value that participants assign to specific characteristics and to what has contributed to the individual's processes of constructing meaning. Such decisions regarding what is good, right and positive are often linked to a greater set of values such as culture or religion. These decisions may inform what aspects bring satisfaction to a client and in turn, may inform what aims to pursue in order to bring satisfaction for clients. Therefore it can be deduced that clients are the masters of their own destiny

and practitioners are simply there to facilitate the process of clients' meaning making (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

## 2.6 INTEGRATING READINGS ON FEEDBACK INTERVIEWS

In terms of this study, in which clients' experiences of the two modes of feedback interviews are compared, I analysed the literature to identify potential common areas in the process of providing feedback from the two different modes. Analysis of the literature indicated many aspects of employing a traditional feedback interview that will be similar (or at times even unchanged) during the process of feedback from the perspective of positive psychology. These common aspects between the two modes of feedback include conveying the assessment results and findings in a meaningful manner after integrating the individual test results into an individual profile for each participant, and consideration of the ethical and professional obligations of the assessor or the administering Educational Psychologist in the context of this study. Furthermore the interpersonal skills such as mannerisms of professional engagement, verbal and non-verbal communication skills and the general guidelines (see Table 2.1 and 2.2 above) are all common to both the traditional and the positive psychological feedback interviews.

One major *difference* that can be identified between the traditional and the positive psychological modes of feedback is that the positive psychological feedback interview places emphasis on the process of foregrounding strengths and mobilising environmental support to help enable the client to achieve greater quality of life. In the traditional feedback interviews, according to Bergh (2007) weaknesses are discussed in a ***constructive*** manner.

*Tactics* are basic strategies that are *common to both* the traditional and the positive psychological domains and will thus be used in both modes of feedback interviews. Amongst these *tactics* Seligman (2002) includes methods such as attention, authority figure, rapport, trust, opening up, naming the problem, tricks of the trade (e.g.: "Let's

pause here” instead of “Let’s stop here”). These tactics can be better understood in terms of person-centred interviews of the Rogerian school of thought, where focus lies on the self and an individual’s perception of him/herself. The clients’ construction of reality thus provides the basis for the understanding of the clients’ own reality, and the client creates his own meaning (Sternberg, 2001).

*Tactics* (as described here by Seligman, 2002) can be better understood in terms of the communication skills of the helper dealt with in Section 2.5. As explored in Section 2.5 above, the helper (be it an Educational Psychologist or assessor) must employ effective communication strategies to create a therapeutic environment where the client feels comfortable and at ease (Egan, 2007). Under such circumstances the client will be able to benefit most from the feedback process.

In Table 2.4 below I outline the most prominent characteristics and principles of positive psychology and detail the manner in which these were implemented in the positive psychological mode of feedback interviews by the administering Educational Psychologist.



<b>POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>MANNER IN WHICH INCORPORATED INTO POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL FEEDBACK SESSION</b>
<b>Assigning Meaning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assigning meaning to assessment results by identifying strengths and placing them in the context of the participant's life and daily experiences. In so doing she will obtain an understanding of how her strengths can be mobilised to address change and used effectively in her everyday life.</li> </ul>
<b>Positive Emotions And Positive Subjective States</b>  <b>Positive Individual Traits</b>  <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <b>Development, Creation And Maintenance Of Positive Situations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through the analysis of personality and interest questionnaires, identify positive subjective states; positive individual traits and how to maintain positive situations that the participant may experience. These positive emotional states, traits and situations have the <i>potential to act as buffers</i> against weaknesses (negative events possibly) and are thus <i>strengths</i> that can be mobilised. Strengths can be mobilised by assigning meaning to them as stated above.</li> </ul>
<b>The Process Of Flow</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flow-inducing activities can be identified from the psychometric media administered, particularly the interests, what he/she values and personality questionnaire. Flow-inducing activities relate strongly to positive emotions and lead to the creation of meaning-making processes for the individual. This renders flow-inducing activity strengths which can be mobilised through the knowledge of their existence and knowledge of how to access these strengths. To create this type of awareness of these strengths the feedback process should provide insight into these meaning-</li> </ul>

	making processes.
<b>Positive Preventions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive prevention entails instilling hope-related strategies and developing strength-building strategies to help clients to learn to use strengths on a daily basis. This can be done by following the process described above which will lead to more intense meaning-making processes, and (potentially) greater happiness. Mobilising these potential strengths could act as buffers against negative events and weaknesses for participants in the future.</li> </ul>
<b>Positive Therapy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This entails identifying characteristics and traits (possibly from the personality and interest questionnaires) that have the potential to act as buffers against future negative events or even mental illness. Once these characteristics have been identified they can be mobilised through the attachment of meaning (and thus value) to each of these character strengths and traits, based on the context of the participant's life.</li> </ul>
<b>Deep Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The use of basic counselling techniques to encourage clients to share their stories which eventually could lead to the identification of strengths, assets and capacities. These strengths, assets and capacities could in turn be mobilised to overcome negative life events and mental illness through the process of meaning-making as described above.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulating External Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The identification of external factors that contribute to positive wellbeing, flow and overall happiness can be equated with the identification of internal strengths as they have the same potential to be a buffer against strengths and to foster happiness. Once such external factors have been identified, they can be mobilised through the same</li> </ul>

	<p>meaning-making process that is described above, where the client is encouraged to use the newly identified strengths in new ways to increase their happiness and create buffers against mental stressors.</p>
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**Table 2.4 Framework for developing a positive psychological feedback framework**

In Table 2.5 below I outline the defining characteristics of a traditional psychological feedback interview and describe the manner in which characteristics were implemented in the traditional feedback interviews by the administering Educational Psychologist.

**Table 2.5 Framework for developing a traditional feedback interview**

<b><i>TRADITIONAL PSYCHOLOGY CHARACTERISTIC</i></b>	<b><i>MANNER IN WHICH INCORPORATED INTO TRADITIONAL PSYCHOLOGY FEEDBACK SESSION</i></b>
<p><b><i>Establishing And Maintaining An Effective Helping Relationship To Respond To The Client's Needs, Thoughts And Behaviours.</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering an effective helping relationship in order to enable the therapist to respond to the client's <b><i>needs, thoughts and behaviours</i></b>. Hence an emphasis is placed on the identification of the client's needs, thoughts and behaviours that may require attention in terms of the client's development.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Responding To Distress, Impairment Or A Response That Is Atypical According To Social Norms And Expectations.</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding to clients' needs in terms of dysfunction and dyscontrol, by accessing their needs and providing feedback in terms of clients' needs, barriers and weaknesses.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>This Approach To Psychological Assessment /Intervention Is Based On The Premise That Establishing A Client's Needs Or Deficiencies Can Provide A Basis For Intervention.</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting an assessment in terms of clients' weaknesses, challenges, barriers and needs, in order to ascertain a path for further intervention based on these identified weaknesses and needs.</li> </ul>



### 2.6.1 Defining the procedure of a positive psychological feedback interview

Based on the integrated readings that I discussed in Section 2.6 above, the procedure to complete a feedback interview from the perspective of positive psychology can be described and understood through the steps that I outline below. In Figure 2.1 I provide a visual representation of the process of completing a feedback interview from the perspective of positive psychology.

**Step 1:** This step entailed the process of outlining and explaining the clients' psychometric results based on the subject choice assessment that they completed, as well as the conclusions and the recommendations that the Educational Psychologist derived based on the psychometric results of the clients. This step shares strategies and principles that are common to both the traditional and the positive psychological feedback interview (as discussed in Section 2.2 above).

**Step 2:** From this step onwards, the Educational Psychologist moves beyond the basic process of conveying psychometric results and begins to employ the principles of positive psychology per se. In order to effectively employ the positive psychological principles that I identified in current literature (as outlined in Section 2.5 above), the Educational Psychologist based her discussion with the client on the process of identifying strengths and weaknesses, both on an individual and an environmental level, plotted on a quadrant map (see Figure 2.1 for illustration of the quadrant map). During step 2 of the positive psychological feedback interview the Educational Psychologist facilitates the process of the client's identification of individual and environmental strengths.

**Step 3:** This step centres on the identification of the clients' weaknesses on the individual and environmental level. These weaknesses were also plotted on the Quadrant map (see Figure 2.1 below). Both the clients' strengths (identified with the client in Step 2) and their weaknesses (identified in this step) are established based on the results provided by the assessment.

**Step 4:** The identification of strengths and weaknesses in Steps 2 and 3 constitute the basis of the continued discussion of the positive psychological interview. Step 4 of this process can be described as the core aspect of this mode of interview as it focuses on amplifying clients' strengths in order to enhance their ability to overcome weaknesses, thus enabling them to flourish in their environments. The Educational Psychologist thus illustrated for the client what his/her strengths are (on the individual and the environmental level) and thereafter illustrates how these strengths can be used to overcome the client's weaknesses. For example, if the client's organisational ability is identified as a personal strength, it can be used to overcome an environmental weakness such as having to study in an environment that has limited resources. By mobilising the organisational skills, the client may be able to attain maximum benefit from the sparse resources available in his/her environment.

**Step 5:** In the final step of the positive psychological feedback interview the Educational Psychologist focuses on formulating coping strategies and defining career outcomes, based on the discussion that ensued during Step 2, 3 and 4. In so doing the Educational Psychologist closes the feedback session.

**Step 2**

**DEEP STRATEGIES**

(Embedded in the session)

**POSITIVE PREVENTIONS**

(Embedded in the session)

**Step 3**

**Step 1** Outlining the psychometric results

INDIVIDUAL Strengths

ENVIRONMENTAL Strengths

INDIVIDUAL Weaknesses

ENVIRONMENTAL Weaknesses

**Step 4**

Using strengths to overcome challenges and barriers

**Step 5**

Focus on coping and/or Career choice

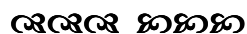
**Figure 2.1** Visual representation of the procedure of a positive psychological feedback interview

## 2.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I aimed to build on the brief literature review that I provided in Chapter 1, with a focus on the defining concepts of this study. I provided a brief overview of the actual process of feedback of results and what it aims to provide for the client in general. I also explored the constructs of the concept of traditional psychology and that of positive psychology more intensely, and then looked at what the process of a traditional feedback entails as well as what the framework for a positive psychological feedback should be, based on the available literature to date.

This chapter focuses on exploring the conceptual and theoretical aspects of the traditional and positive psychological modes of feedback as these two modes of feedback are juxtaposed in this study. Nevertheless, it must be clearly emphasised that there does exist a continuum of *alternate modes of conducting feedback*, each relative to particular paradigmatic beliefs. Thus, the two modes of feedback compared in this study are simply two of the numerous options of modes of feedback that may be employed when providing clients' with feedback.

In Chapter 3 I will go on to elaborate on the methodological considerations of this study that I briefly outlined in Chapter 1.



## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

In Chapter 2 I presented a literature review where I explored the available literature relative to the key concepts underlying the study. That is, a (traditional) psychometric feedback interview, the general concept of positive psychology and the concept of employing the principles of positive psychology within the bounds of psychometric feedbacks.

In this chapter I discuss and explore more thoroughly the underlying methodology that formed the groundwork for this study. More specifically, I intend to define, describe and clarify the epistemology, research methodology and data analysis and interpretation procedures which I followed to conclude this study. These methodological choices were presented in Chapter 1, and I explain my research decisions in this chapter.

##### 3.1.1 Comparative purpose of the study

As clearly illustrated by the title of this study, it has a comparative purpose. I will draw comparisons between participants' experiences of a traditional psychometric feedback interview and a positive psychological feedback interview.

The logic underpinning the comparative purpose of this study is that through the process of comparing the experiences of clients of the two modes of feedback interviews in a meaningful manner, they can be better understood (Bryman, 2006). Comparative studies by their very nature imply a systematic search for similarities and differences in the case under study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). By comparing the two modes of intervention (i.e. the feedback interviews) I had the advantage of being able to

understand the fine distinctions of the two modes of intervention and was able to understand each mode and client's experiences thereof in greater detail (Bryman, 2001).

One of the major aims of this study (as discussed in Section 1.1 in Chapter 1) is to present a theoretical contribution to the growing body of literature in the field of Positive Psychology by using positive psychology to inform the process of providing feedback on psychometric results. My ability to gain deep insight into and understanding of clients' experiences of such a feedback interview was based on the comparative nature of this study and ultimately allowed me to fulfil my goal of informing theory and practice regarding feedback interviews based on the findings of this study.

### **3.2 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE**

In the following section I will discuss my selected epistemological and methodological paradigms.

#### **3.2.1 An interpretivist epistemology**

As I outlined in Chapter 1, I undertook this study from an *interpretivist* paradigmatic stance. Through the application of this lens I aimed to understand the personal experiences, meanings, intentions and general subjective worlds of the participants (Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Schurink, 1998). This, in turn, has allowed me to identify unique characteristics of the two modes of feedback interviews completed.

Working from within the interpretivist epistemological perspective implies that knowledge was acquired by means of observations and the interpretation of results. The implementation of this epistemological perspective thus infers that whereas events and situations could be understood and interpreted, it was not possible to predict or control

them in any way (Schurink, 1998). Working from within this epistemological paradigm posed certain distinct advantages as well as disadvantages for the overall study. These advantages and disadvantages will subsequently be discussed in terms of their implications for the study.

Interpretivism advocates the view that its central endeavour is to understand the subjective world of human experience. To retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated, efforts are made to get *inside* the person and understand participants from within (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). This proved a definite advantage for this study, as the aim of this study was to focus on the intrapersonal effects of the positive psychological feedback interview. To do this I used written narratives from the participants themselves (both prior and subsequent to the feedback interview) to gain access to the participants' lifeworlds and understand how they experienced the respective feedback interviews. Accessing participants' internal experiences allowed me to assess whether or not these alternate forms of feedback interviews (i.e. the traditional and the positive psychological feedback processes) produced varied effects or similarities.

Amongst the greatest criticisms levelled against the interpretivist paradigm is that it tends to overemphasise the participants' inside world, neglecting the power of external influences that shape behaviour and thought (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). In terms of this study, such an overemphasis of the internal world could have led me to overlook external factors that might have had an influence on the participants' experience of the respective feedback interviews, thus impacting on the final results of the study. This fact thereby highlights one issue that posed a challenge to me as researcher. I strove to overcome this barrier by my attentiveness to the external factors that surround the participants and myself during the data collection process, specifically during observation-as-context of interaction (Angrosino & Mays De Perez, 2000). In order to realise my goal in this regard and be attentive to external factors in the environment, I maintained a research diary (Patton, 2002) in which I documented (and was thus able to

account for) external factors that I observed during the data collection process (see Appendix A).

### 3.2.2 A mixed-method approach

In order to fully explore, describe and differentiate between a traditional psychometric feedback interview and a positive psychological psychometric interview, I employed both quantitative, as well as qualitative methods of data collection, signalling a mixed-method approach. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003:29) describe mixed-method designs as those that “combine the qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research methodology of a single study.” I chose such a combined design because the end product of the research is ‘usable’ in practice (Brannen, 2004). I concur with Brannen (2004) that at a time when we see the importance of theoretical concerns declining, along with the waning of methodological concerns, such practices facilitate theoretical contribution.

More specifically the mixed-method design that was applied in this study can be defined as the *embedded mixed-method design* (Creswell, 2007; Ivankova, Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007), as represented in Figure 3.1 below. The embedded mixed-method design is utilised when a researcher has to draw secondary data that is related to, but different from the primary data, to answer research questions. To achieve this, the researcher will embed one type of data within another type of data method (Ivankova *et al.*, 2007). In my study it was imperative to identify the psychometric profiles of the young girls (in the context of a subject choice assessment) in order to complete those two modes of feedback interviews (see Section 1.2 in Chapter 1 for related research questions).



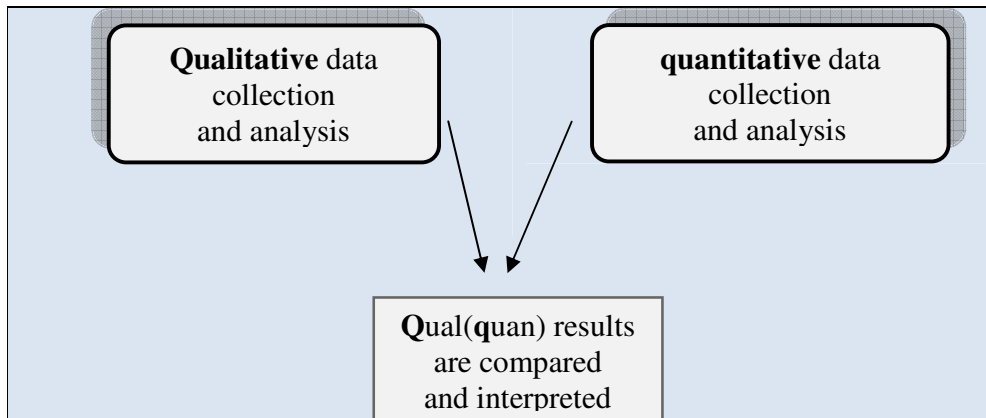


Figure 3.1 Embedded mixed-method design – flow diagram presentation

In the context of this study the use of the embedded design can be identified in the manner in which I used the psychometric profiles as secondary data in order to collect the primary data in the form of the feedback interviews (which formed the intervention). Without the secondary data source of the psychometric profiles, I would have had no data on which to base the context of the feedback interviews, and thus been unable to collect the primary data and therefore could not attain the aims of this study.

I used *qualitative* data collection and analysis techniques in this study as preliminary grounding for the study. I supplemented *qualitative* data with *quantitative* data collection measures, which played a comparatively smaller role in the overall study. Based on this framework for the study, the methodological paradigm could thus be referred to as **QUALquan**, highlighting the dominance of the qualitative components of this study, as compared to its quantitative component (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

In Figure 3.2 below I summarize the range of qualitative and quantitative data strategies that I used in the various phases of this study. Through the outline provided in Figure 3.2 the significance of combining qualitative and quantitative data in order to compare the experiences of a traditional and a positive psychological feedback interview becomes clear.



<b>SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	
<b>INTERVENTION PHASE BEGINS:</b>	
Subject-choice assessments completed by researcher (in the role of Psychometrist)	
<p><b>Quantitative Data:</b></p> <p>Psychometric assessment data, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Differential Aptitude Test - DAT (Form L) (Owen, 2000)</li> <li>• The Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ) (Du Toit, 1996) &amp;</li> <li>• The South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII) (Du Toit, Prinsloo, Gevers &amp; Harillal, 1993)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Qualitative Data:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation as context-of-interaction</li> <li>• Researcher's diary/reflective journal</li> <li>• Researcher's field notes</li> </ul>
<b>FEEDBACK INTERVIEWS – PILOT PHASE:</b>	
Piloted feedback interviews with 1 client (traditional interview) & 1 client (positive psychological interview) Pilot analysed and adapted where necessary	
<b>FEEDBACK INTERVIEWS – FINAL INTERVENTION PHASE</b>	
<p><b>Quantitative Data:</b></p> <p>Scores and interpreted psychometric profiles based on results of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The Differential Aptitude Test - DAT (Form L) (Owen, 2000)</li> <li>◆ The Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ) (Du Toit, 1996) &amp;</li> <li>◆ The South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII) (Du Toit <i>et al.</i>, 1993)</li> </ul>	
Traditional interview (with 1 final client)	Positive psychological interview (with 1 final client)
	<p><b>Qualitative data:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio-visual recordings of interviews</li> <li>• Transcripts of recorded interviews</li> <li>• Researcher's field notes</li> <li>• Researcher's diary</li> <li>• Participants' pre- and post- interview written narratives</li> </ul>
<b>DATA ANALYSIS PHASE – ANALYSIS OF:</b>	
	<p><b>Qualitative data:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio-visual recordings of interviews</li> <li>• Transcripts of recorded interviews</li> <li>• Researcher's field notes</li> <li>• Researchers' diary</li> <li>• Participant's pre- and post- interview written narratives</li> </ul> <p><i>All qualitative data sources analysed using thematic analysis technique (Cohen et al., 2003)</i></p>

**Figure 3.2 Use of quantitative and qualitative data sources in various phases of the mixed-method study**

During the course of this study the qualitative component included a selection of data collection strategies (namely the feedback interviews, the girls' written narratives regarding their expectations and experience of the feedback interviews, and my observations). These combined strategies constituted the greater part of the final research product. The supplementary component of the study (i.e. the quantitative component) consisted of psychometric profiles (see Figure 3.2 above). These psychometric profiles (which I will fully describe in Chapter 4) are based on psychometric assessment data collected by means of subject-choice assessments. These psychometric profiles provided the basis of the feedback interviews (the focus of this study).

Regarding the choice of using quantitative data (psychometric data) within an essentially qualitative study, Arsenault and Anderson (1998) are of the opinion that it is a rather useful (as in the case of this study) and an often unavoidable technique of data collection, as it provides a unique perspective. In the context of this study, quantitative psychometric data were not manipulated. Instead, it was used for its general descriptive properties, adding to the richness of the final research product (Arsenault and Anderson, 1998).

Facilitation and complementation are defining features of this study, meaning that the collection of one data source 'facilitates' the collection of another data source, as the psychometric assessments facilitated the collection of the feedback interviews as another data source, which eventually allowed for the assessment of differences and similarities between the two forms of feedback interview (i.e. the traditional and the positive psychological (Brannen, 2004)). The quantitative psychometric data complemented the understanding of the comparison between the positive psychological feedback and the 'traditional' feedback (Brannen, 2004). These features of the mixed method approach highlight advantages of combining quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study such as this one.

Morse (2003) describes the goal of social science research as that which enables the understanding of the complexity of human behaviour and experience. Increasing and combining the number of research strategies used within a study not only broadens the *dimensions* of the study, but also causes the *scope* of the study to broaden. Increased methods within a study allow for a more complete picture of human behaviour and experience (Morse, 2003). In the context of this study, such capacity for greater understanding of human experience resulted in a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation (i.e. the difference between the alternate forms of feedback interviews and the participants' experiences of these psychometric feedback interviews). Thus we can conclude that such mixed method strategies resulted in the prompt and adept attainment of the stated research goals (Morse, 2003).

To consider the other end of the spectrum, it is important to acknowledge that a mixed-method approach to research may have particular disadvantages as well. In this regard Brannen (2004) points out that different types of data (i.e. quantitative and qualitative data) cannot be combined to constitute a single rounded reality without encountering problems. For my study this meant that I had to overcome the challenge of integrating the quantitative data into the two modes of the qualitative feedback interviews to complete the data collection process effectively.

Another disadvantage caused by the use of a mixed-method design in this study relates to the incorporation of qualitative analysis techniques of the psychometric results (which became necessary to complete the two modes of feedback interviews) (Bryman, 2001). During this process my personal opinion and judgement may easily have become infused in the interpretation of this quantitative psychometric data, creating a somewhat subjective interpretation of the psychometric data (Bryman, 2001).

### 3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 3.3.1 A clinical case study design

I selected a *clinical case study* design with *comparative purposes* (Durrheim and Terre Blanche, 1999, Miller and Crabtree, 2005). This design alludes to three distinct methodological issues, namely 1) the case study per se 2) the *clinical* case study design and 3) the comparative nature of this study. I discussed the latter under Section 3.1.1, in which I highlighted the comparative *purpose* of this study.

With specific reference to the *clinical case study* design which I utilized, Durrheim and Terre Blanche (1999: 256) illustrate that the term “clinical” in this context *does not refer to medical or clinically related studies expressly*. This view is supported by Miller and Crabtree, who include the *educational arena* as a *clinical* context (Miller and Crabtree, 2005). As illustrated in their cited representative study, this form of case study design can be used to analyse responses to an attitude, an experience, a phenomenon, a set of circumstances, an episode or incident, or a reaction to an occurrence or event. I also deduced from Durrheim and Terre Blanche’s work (1999) that the clinical case study design refers to a case study researched *within a professional environment* (such as educational psychology).

The case in my study constituted a *professional environment*, that of educational psychology, (and more specifically the psychometric feedback following the subject-choice assessments). Thus, in line with a clinical case study design, I investigated young girls’ *experiences* (of the two modes of feedback interviews) and a phenomenon (the two modes of feedback interviews) was studied. According to the above criteria identified in the work of Durrheim and Terre Blanche (1999) and Miller and Crabtree (2005), I selected a clinical case study design.

The two modes of psychometric feedbacks administered under this study were based on a subject-choice assessment which falls in the career psychology domain of education psychology. Characteristically subject-choice assessments centre predominantly on the areas of ability, personality and interests. To access strengths and weaknesses from the three psychometric measures that were administered to the participants in this study, I analysed the three areas of ability, interest and personality in terms of strength identification. More specifically, in terms of ability, I analysed the Differential Aptitude Test (DAT-L) that was administered to the participants in order to identify their areas of high functioning ability, rather than trying to identify whether a participant had a low aptitude or a high aptitude (Centre for confidence and Well-being, 2006). The ideology behind analysing psychometric test results in this manner follows on Gardner's model of multiple-intelligence (Gardner and Hatch, 1989). Gardner argued that intelligence is not a single entity that can be measured only by a single IQ test. He also argued that different types of intelligence exist independently of one another and that people can have varying levels of intelligence in the various domains of intelligence (Centre for confidence and Well-being, 2006). Similarly I analysed the participants' aptitude results to identify areas in which they indicate high aptitude or ability.

In terms of personality and interest assessment, personality has been defined as a dynamic system within an individual that helps to determine his/her unique patterns of adjustments within a given environment. This definition combined with the definition of strengths I noted above will allow me to identify character strengths and thus provide feedback on these during the two modes of feedback interviews.

To effectively pursue and achieve such happiness, Seligman (2004) suggests a specific process to be followed. This process is applicable to the positive psychological feedback interviews that I proposed in this study, as it follows a similar process of assessment and the intervention that I will follow when completing the psychometric assessment and then the feedback interviews (as a form of intervention). The proposed process is:

- a) The first step entails the actual measurement of positive emotion and positive traits. This was achieved by using a set of incomplete sentences based on the constructs of positive psychology, adapted to suit the specific age group and developmental level of the participants (See Appendix B).
- b) The second step in this process is to identify positive traits from the assessment measures, and categorise them into themes (as was done during the data analysis process using the technique of thematic analysis).
- c) The third step is intervention that will work to increase positive emotion and strengths. In this study the positive psychological feedback interview will act as the intervention process that is being applied to the client. Seligman (2004) further explains that the practical application of positive psychological intervention has the potential to increase the effects of lasting happiness. In the context of this study, encouraging participants to use signature strengths each day in a new way has the potential to provide them with such lasting effects.

The above points illustrate that any kind of results or feedback process should follow a specific structure which should be based on context-specific principles and practices (Bergh, 2007). In the context of the study in question, the feedback interviews should be orientated in the direction of subject-choice processes. The uniqueness of this study relates to the two different modes of conducting feedback interviews that will be explored through the comparison of a client's experience of a positive psychological feedback interview with one done from the traditional perspective.

My selection of the research design allowed me a unique vantage point with regard to accessing data necessary to answer research questions. The case study design required that I described the case in sufficient detail to provide information for thorough comparison (Stake, 2005). In Section 3.5.1, as well as in Section 4.3 I provide a rich description of the case.

### 3.3.2 Advantages and disadvantages of implementing a clinical case study design

A case study design afforded me advantages such as the opportunity to establish rapport with participants (Mouton, 2001). I spent a significant amount of time with each participant on a one-to-one basis, during the psychometric assessment phase, and during the self-report writing sessions (see Table 1.1 in Chapter 1 for an explanation of my various roles as researcher). A schedule of dates, times and goals for each session with individual participants is provided in Appendix A (included in my research diary).

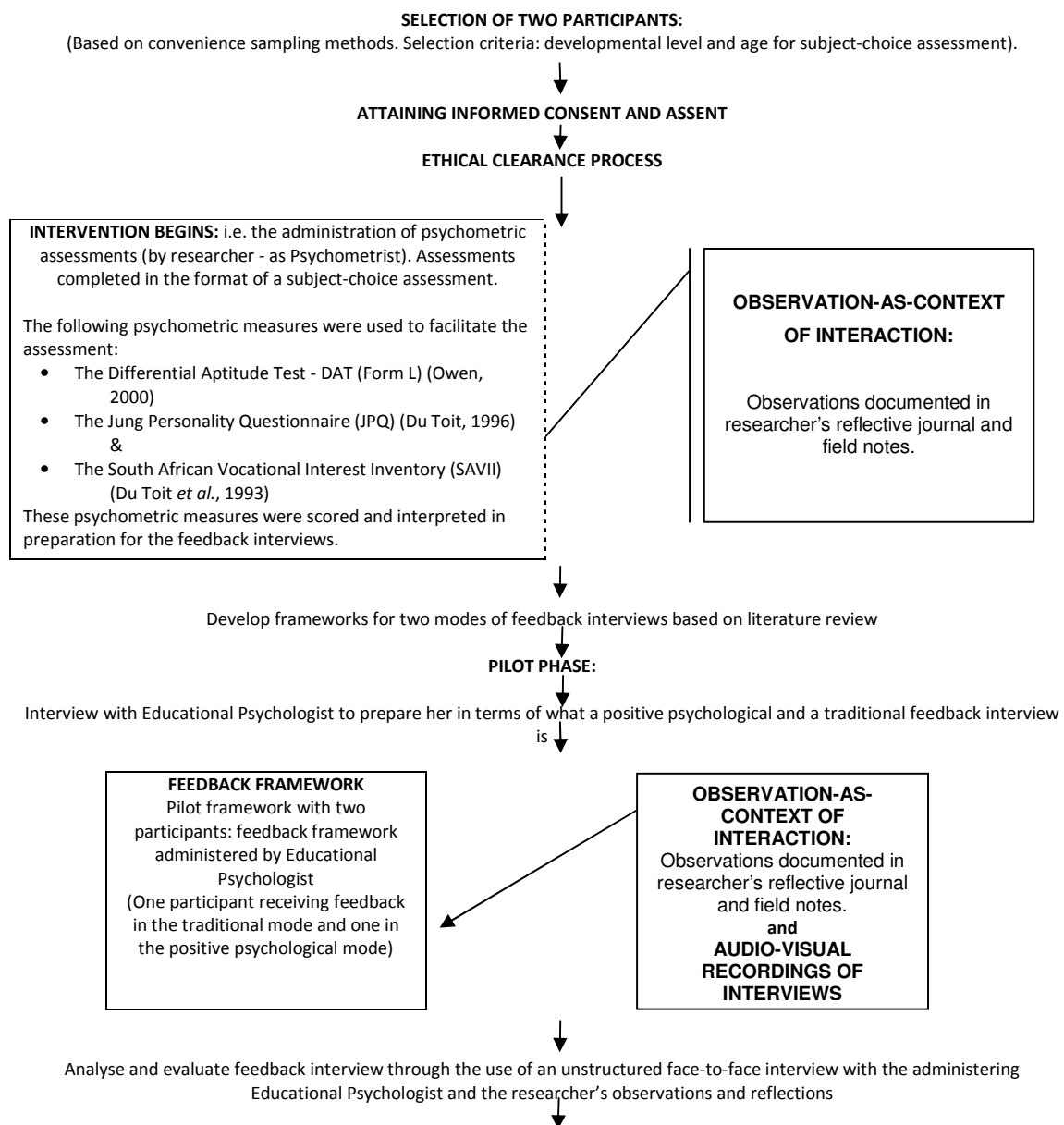
Mouton (2001) highlights another advantage of case study designs, namely *in-depth insights*. In-depth insights were made possible for me (as researcher) through the close interaction between myself and the participants. These in-depth insights also improved the quality of the data I collected, rendering it richer and thus more meaningful. The improved quality of data is reflected in my field notes (see Appendix A for my field notes included in my research diary).

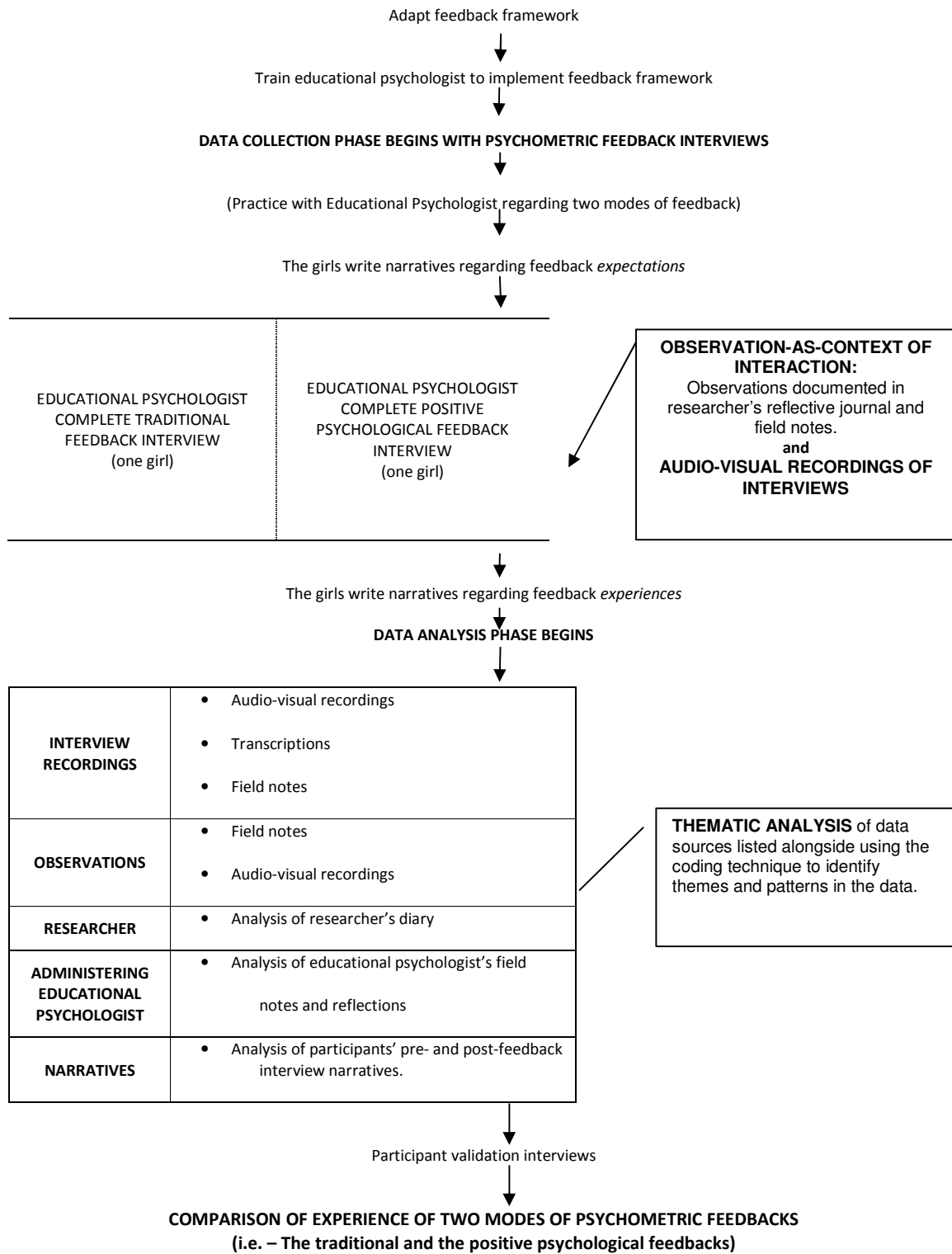
However, the case study design however, also poses certain disadvantages for research studies. Due to the limited size of the sample selected in case study designs (as in this study with two participants), it becomes difficult to generalize to an entire population, as was the case in my study (Miller & Brewer, 2003). With reference to my interpretivist stance, my goal was not to generalise findings (see Section 3.2.1). Instead, my intent was to gain a deeper insight into the phenomenon of the experience of the two modes of feedback interviews. At the same time, I aimed to achieve transferability (see Section 3.7.2). The results of this study can be applied or transferred to similar settings by readers because of the rich descriptions of cases that I provided. As such the use of case studies allow for “generalization to theory” (Miller and Brewer, 2003). This allowed me to hypothesize regarding the effects of a positive psychological psychometric feedback as compared with a traditional one. See Section 5.5 in Chapter 5 for recommendations for future research.



### 3.4 RESEARCH PROCESS

In this section I present a schematic overview of the research process that I employed in my study (see Figure 3.3 below). Initially I gained consent from the participants' parents/guardians and the participants themselves (assent), as well as ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria. (Refer to ethical clearance certificate bound to this dissertation and Appendix D for consent and assent forms that participants' and their parents/guardians were required to complete).





**Figure 3.3 Research process: flow chart representation**

### 3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.5.1 Selection of participants

##### a) The young girls

The young girls who participated in this study needed to be a specific age to be eligible for participation study. In order to be eligible for participation the participants had to be at the stage when they were required to select subjects for the final phase of their schooling careers (Savickas, 2005).

My selection of participants was done according to the *convenience sampling* method (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). The reason for this choice (as mentioned in chapter 1) is that I had a relative at the age and developmental phase required for a subject-choice assessment (i.e. at Grade 10 level) (Savickas, 2005). She was thus able to access other participants in the same age and developmental group who met the criteria for selection, i.e. age and developmental appropriateness. Arsenault and Anderson (1998) point out that when entering an unfamiliar/new field it is often the concern of qualitative researchers to eliminate participant's uncertainty. In this case the uncertainty may have been limited as rapport was built on participant's relation to me via my sibling.

The reason for the choice of this sampling technique is that the aim of this research study was to investigate the differences and/or similarities between the two opposing forms of feedback methods. Furthermore, from a first selected case, further cases were selected based on the snowball selection technique (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001; Cohen *et al.*, 2003) the first participant was associated with other peers who fit the same criteria of selection.

Four girls participated in this study. All the girls were first language English speakers, and school in English. These participants were split in two groups (of two participants each) to receive the traditional and positive-psychological feedback interviews. In Table 3.1

below I outline the participants' demographic details, which indicate that the participants were all selected from the same race group (i.e. Indian), they were all females and first language English speakers and were all within the appropriate age range to receive subject-choice assessments.

One limitation with regard to selecting participants for my study through the convenience sampling method is the inability to generalise my findings (based on a convenience sample) to the general population (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). As all the participants in this study shared similar demographic characteristics, the sample group was representative of itself only and the results cannot be generalised to a wider population (refer to Table 3.1 below for participants' demographic details). The implication for my study is thus that the experiences of participants of the two modes of feedbacks cannot necessarily be generalised as a typical experience that other persons in the greater population may experience.

PARTICIPANT No.	AGE (Years)	GENDER	RACE	LANGUAGE	LOCATION (Residence)	GRADE	REFERRED TO IN THIS STUDY AS	PHASE OF STUDY PARTICIPATED IN	MODE OF FEEDBACK EXPERIENCED
1.	15	Female	Indian	English (1 <sup>st</sup> Language)	Pretoria (Urban)	10	Participant A	Pilot study	Traditional
2.	15	Female	Indian	English (1 <sup>st</sup> Language)	Pretoria (Urban)	10	Participant B	Pilot study	Positive psychological
3.	14	Female	Indian	English (1 <sup>st</sup> Language)	Pretoria (Urban)	10	Participant C	Data collection	Traditional
4.	15	Female	Indian	English (1 <sup>st</sup> Language)	Pretoria (Urban)	10	Participant D	Data collection	Positive psychological

**Table 3.1 Summary of identifying details of participants**

## **b) The Educational Psychologist**

The convenience sampling method was used to select an Educational Psychologist. She completed the two modes of feedback interviews during the data collection process (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). She was thus selected from within my range of networks as she fit the following selection criteria: 1) She had a thorough knowledge of positive psychology on a theoretical and practical level. 2) She was competent in the field of educational psychology. 3) She had already acquired her registration with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) in the category of Educational Psychologist. Her registration with the HPCSA as an Educational Psychologist endorses her skills with regard to the administration of the feedback interviews. In Chapter 2, Section 2.2, I detail the basic skills that the Educational Psychologist had to be proficient in, in order to be able to adequately administer the two modes of feedback interviews for this study.

As in the case of my own familiarity with the group of young girls, the Educational Psychologist was able to easily establish rapport with the young girls. Reflections in both the Educational Psychologist's and my research diary highlight this relationship formed between the role-players of the study during its data collection phase (See Appendix A for my research diary and Appendix E for the Educational Psychologist's reflections).

### **3.5.1.1 Developing a framework for the two modes of feedback interviews**

To effectively administer a feedback interview from the perspective of Positive Psychology, I drafted a theoretical framework on which such a feedback interview could be developed. The feedback interview was based on the framework. Without a framework, the details of an instrument cannot be refined which would create room for errors, reinforcing the necessity of a pilot study (Oppenheim, 2003). Based on the literature review in Chapter 2, I identified the essential elements of each perspective (see Section 2.5 and 2.6). I drew conclusions on what could reasonably be expected in

each mode of feedback in order to fulfil the basic tenets of the traditional and the Positive Psychological domains. Identifying the essential elements of these two domains provided indicators for strategies to facilitate the two modes of feedback interviews.

As apparent in Figure 3.3, once the frameworks were developed I briefed the Educational Psychologist on the process of completing each mode of feedback interview. During the briefing, the administering Educational Psychologist, my research supervisor and I were present. Particular emphasis was placed on briefing the Educational Psychologist in terms of 1) how the participants were assessed in preparation for the two modes of feedback interviews; 2) what distinguished the two modes of feedback interviews, and 3) the theoretical frameworks that grounded the two modes of feedback interviews (refer to Figure 2.1 and Table 2.5 for frameworks on administering traditional and positive psychological feedback interviews).

### **3.5.2 Piloting of the interview frameworks**

To develop frameworks for the two modes of feedback interviews (i.e. in terms of directing them in their specific directions of the traditional and a positive-psychological feedback courses), the first feedback interviews conducted from both perspectives served as pilot studies (see Appendix F for transcripts of pilot study interviews). Pilot studies are essential in the process of ascertaining that the data gathering instrument in question (in this case, the positive psychological feedback) is as effective as it is intended to be, thus improving the reliability and validity of the data gathering instrument (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). Pilot studies allow the researcher the opportunity to create, adapt and then further develop an instrument (the positive psychological feedback interview) to maturity through the process of implementing the measure on a pilot group (Oppenheim, 2003). The use of a pilot study allows for the revision of techniques and/or errors and refining of methods before most data are collected (Arthur and Nazroo, 2003). The use of a pilot study allows researchers the advantage of

improving their practice and producing greater dependability and transferability in their research results (Arthur and Nazroo, 2003).

The administering Educational Psychologist piloted the two modes of feedback interviews with the pilot group (see Section 3.5.1 for discussion on selection of participants and research schedule of pilot sessions included in Appendix (A)). The feedback interviews (completed as part of the pilot phase of the study) were collected through observations (documented as *field notes*, *reflections* and *transcriptions of the interview* with the administering Educational Psychologist). The documented data were discussed by me, the Educational Psychologist and my research supervisor in order to refine the two modes of interviews. The purpose of conducting this interview was to elicit views regarding the methods used in administering the two modes of interviews. Together with my research supervisor and the Educational Psychologist, I analysed the pilot interview process based on both my and the Educational Psychologist's reflections of the pilot interviews. The two modes of the feedback interviews completed in the pilot phase of the study were completed based on a list of criteria which I developed as part of the theoretical frameworks that were formed as part of the literature study (refer to Figure 2.1 and Table 2.5 for frameworks on administering traditional and positive psychological feedback interviews). I adapted the interview frameworks which I discuss in Chapter 4 (see Section 4.2). I documented the process in a research diary, which allowed for transparency and accountability (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). (See Appendix A for research diary).

### **3.5.3 Data collection and documentation**

As stated, I made use of a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection and documentation methods. These multiple methods added depth and richness to the study in what Janesick (2000) refers to as *crystallization*. I therefore used increased and contrasting methods of data collection with participants to highlight distinct nuances in

the data gathered (Knight, 2002; Janesick, 2000). One major advantage of utilizing the process of crystallization is that the strengths of each contrasting approach more than simply cancel out the weaknesses of each other. Instead they create a “net gain” effect (Miller and Brewer, 2003). In addition, the complexity of the view of the phenomena being studied was enhanced, i.e. the comparison of the effects of a traditional and a positive psychological psychometric feedback interview (Janesick, 2000). Refer to Table 3.2 below which outlines the qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies employed during the various phases of the research process. Following Figure 3.2, I discuss the quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies.

	DATA COLLECTION	DATA DOCUMENTATION	CORRELATING RESEARCH QUESTION
<b>PHASE: SUBJECT-CHOICE ASSESSMENTS</b>			
<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>1. Psychometric assessment data, namely:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Differential Aptitude Test - DAT (Form L) (Owen, 2000)</li> <li>The Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ) (Du Toit, 1996) and</li> <li>The South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII) (Du Toit et al, 1993)</li> </ul>	1. Psychometric profiles	
<b>PHASE: PILOT OF STUDY</b>			
<b>Qualitative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interview with facilitator</li> <li>Observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unstructured face-to-face interview with Educational Psychologist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are positive psychology and traditional feedback interviews?</li> </ul>
<b>PHASE: DATA COLLECTION</b>			
<b>1. INTERVENTION (FEEDBACK INTERVIEWS)</b>			
<b>Qualitative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Researcher’s observations</li> <li>Audio-visual recordings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Field-notes and reflections in research diary</li> <li>Verbatim transcripts of recordings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the differences and similarities between a traditional and a positive psychological feedback interview?</li> </ul>
<b>2. ESTABLISHING CLIENTS’ EXPERIENCES OF THE TWO MODES OF FEEDBACK INTERVIEWS</b>			





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narratives of girls</li> <li>• Educational Psychologist's narrative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written self-report of expectations (prior to) and of feedback experience (after) the interview by participants</li> <li>• Reflection and field notes of educational psychologist regarding her experience of the two modes of feedback interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are clients' experiences of a feedback interview done from (a) the traditional perspective and (b) the perspective of positive psychology?</li> <li>• What is the Educational Psychologist's experience of a feedback interview done from (a) the traditional perspective and (b) the perspective of positive psychology?</li> <li>• What are the researcher's observations of a feedback interview done from (a) the traditional perspective and (b) the perspective of positive psychology?</li> <li>• What are the differences and similarities between the traditional- and the positive psychological- feedback interview?</li> </ul>
<b>PHASE: INTERVENTION (INTERVIEWS)</b>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant Validation interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio-visual recordings and transcripts of these</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are clients' experiences of a feedback interview done from (a) the traditional perspective and (b) the perspective of positive psychology?</li> <li>• What is the Educational Psychologist's experience of a feedback interview done from (a) the traditional perspective and (b) the perspective of positive psychology?</li> <li>• What are the researcher's observations of a feedback interview done from (a) the traditional perspective and (b) the perspective of positive psychology?</li> <li>• What are the differences and similarities between the traditional- and the positive psychological- feedback interview?</li> </ul>

**Table 3.2 Qualitative and quantitative data strategies**

### 3.5.3.1 Quantitative data sources

The psychometric data served as secondary data source in this study. The aim of utilizing these psychometric assessment measures was to provide a basis, and content for both the modes of feedback interviews which formed part of a career assessment. To facilitate this career assessment, I identified three basic psychometric measures relevant to subject choice assessments, namely:

- The Differential Aptitude Test - DAT (Form L) (Owen, 2000) ,
- The Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ) (Du Toit, 1996) , and
- The South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII) (Du Toit *et al.*, 1993).

All of the above psychometric measures are standardized. These questionnaires are also standardized for use with the specific age group in question (for this study) and are basic and easy to answer (Jooste, 2001). The documentation of the girls' psychometric profiles provided the key quantitative documentation source as the intervention process (the two modes of feedback interviews) were conducted based on these psychometric profiles. Without the psychometric profiles, there would have been no content to provide feedback on. The psychometric profiles made the feedback interviews (in the two modes) possible. (See Appendix H for psychometric assessment reports completed in for the young girls).

### 3.5.3.2 Qualitative data sources

#### a) Adapted unstructured face-to-face feedback interview with participants

For the purposes of this study, the feedback interviews were *unstructured face-to-face interviews*. This form of interview is characterized by open-ended and responsive approaches, which focus on individuality, uniqueness and subjective facts (Cohen *et al.*, 2003).

A major advantage of employing the unstructured face-to-face method of interviewing was that the interviewer has only a specific list of topics or issues to be discussed, based on the purpose of the interview and the interviewee's individual circumstances. The Educational Psychologist acting as interviewer in this study only worked from a list of issues to be covered in the interview that served as an interview guide. The sequencing and the outcomes of each individual interview hence differed (Bryman, 2001).

With regard to the documentation of the (unstructured face-to-face) feedback interview as a data source, audio-visual recordings were made. This method is common in qualitative research and in this study provides a visual record of the feedback sessions held with the young girls. This greatly increased the richness and depth of the data, and thus, the results of the study. Much of this data would otherwise be difficult to obtain, as they can easily be missed during the interview itself (Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Creswell, 2003). This leads to greater understanding of the young girls' experiences of the feedback interviews and reduced the possibility of focusing on only the frequently occurring events (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). To further improve the richness of the data, I documented my observations of participants during the feedback interviews through the field notes and reflections that I documented in my research diary.

#### **b) Unstructured face-to-face interview with the Educational Psychologist**

Amongst the interviews that were conducted during this study were two face-to-face interviews with the Educational Psychologist who facilitated the two modes of feedback interviews. The first of these interviews with the Educational Psychologist was completed during the piloting phase of the study in the form of a face-to-face interview (Bryman, 2001). The purpose of this face-to-face interview was to clearly outline what a positive psychological and a traditional feedback interview was. Outlining the frameworks of the two modes of feedback interviews assisted in creating a framework from which the facilitator could understand the two modes and thus administer the feedback interviews accordingly. This part of the data collection was guided by the

research questions of the study (See Appendix I for interview schedule of interview conducted with the Educational Psychologist).

At the end of the research process a second face-to-face interview was conducted with the Educational Psychologist. The purpose of this second interview with her was to validate the findings that I had concluded based on her experiences during the facilitation of the two modes of feedback interviews.

### **c) Observation-as-context of interaction**

Within the context of research studies, numerous distinctive forms of observations exist, each one selected was based on the aims and methods of the research. This case study design characteristically involved extensive use of observations in naturally occurring situations (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). Based on the aims and methodology of this study, I used *observation as a context of interaction* (Angrosino & Mays De Perez, 2000). This form of observation results in observation being used as more than merely a method of recording data from the environment. Instead, it involves active engagement by the researcher within the context of the research with others involved in the collaboration of the research study (Angrosino & Mays De Perez, 2000). This shifted my focus to the manner in which the Educational Psychologist who completed the feedback interviews interacted with the research participants (Angrosino & Mays De Perez, 2000). One of the benefits of using this data collection technique is that my observations obtained from these sessions allowed me to increase the credibility of the study immensely due to the rich descriptions that I was able to provide. Engaging with the participants also allowed me to establish rapport with them and thus led to them being very at ease with me, which in turn made it easier for them to share their thoughts and feelings and expectations during the narrative writing activity.

My observation role during the various stages of the data collection phase of this study varied. During the initial phase of the data collection where the psychometric

assessments were administered and psychometric profiles drawn up, I fulfilled the role of both psychometrist and researcher. During this phase, while fulfilling the dual role of psychometrist and researcher, I utilised observation as context-of-interaction as I interacted intensely with participants. The same situation, in which I played a dual role with the participants, was evident during the pre-feedback and post-feedback narrative writing sessions when I interacted with the participants as a researcher to facilitate the writing of the narratives (but also as a researcher to elicit their experiences of the psychometric components of the intervention phase).

During the actual feedback sessions the role I played was expressly that of researcher as I did not interact personally with participants. Rather, I acted as an observer of the Educational Psychologist's feedback interviews. I observed the feedback interviews from behind a one-way mirror and made notes (see Appendix A for my field notes included in my research diary). Participants were aware that I was observing the feedback interview, as I shared this information with them during the (process) briefing on the first day of the psychometric assessments. During the initial stages of the data collection process participants were also asked to consent to my observations during the feedback interviews.

In terms of the documentation per se of this specific strategy of the data collection process, I maintained a reflective journal throughout the process (Bogdan & Biklen, in Cohen *et al.*, 2003) of my own experiences, perceptions and interpretations of events that had occurred (see Appendix A for observations, reflective journal notes and interview schedule according to research questions). These reflections served as a documentation of the methods I used during the completion of the study, my own reaction and understanding of events that I observed, as well as any difficulties, challenges or ethical issues that could have arose during the research process (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). In Section 3.7.6 I discuss the quality criteria of reflexivity that came into play during the observation-as-context of interaction, as part of the data collection process.

As alluded to earlier, I also kept *field notes* in this regard, to document my observations of participants in terms of their behaviour, the events that occur, the physical settings that surrounded us during data collection process, and the interpersonal exchanges and atmosphere between myself (as researcher) and the participants, as this played a significant role in this research study (Angrosino & Mays De Perez, 2000; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). In addition I documented my observations in terms of the audiovisual recordings which I later transcribed verbally (See Appendix F and G for transcriptions of recordings).

One of the main challenges encountered as a result of using observations in this study as a core data collection method is that the data collection sessions became time-consuming and spanned a long period (as compared to regular time frames for such an assessment, from start to completion - with the feedback) (Mouton, 2001). During the first session when I met participants to complete the psychometric assessments, I briefed them on the research process that I would follow and made them aware of the time frames that I would be working under. Consequently, they were aware of the research process that they were engaged in.

#### **d) Learners' narrative regarding feedback**

As another key qualitative data collection strategy in this research study, the participants were required to write a *personal narrative* of their expectations of and (subsequent to the feedback interview) their experience of the feedback interview (Patton, 2002). These pre- and post-feedback narrative writing sessions are a core element of this study and thus served as the source of primary data (refer to Appendix C for an example of a participant's narrative). Narratives such as these are self-report measures which provide an additional source to create a *multiple perspective* by means of crystallisation (Janesick, 2000).

The intent behind utilizing this specific method (i.e. the use of participants' narratives) was to create an interpretivist opportunity for participants to voice how they experienced the feedback interview since this method highlights patterns through the lens of individual experience. Such narrative data formed an integral part of the qualitative data of this study, as it honoured the girls' experiences as pure data that were worthy of documentation and analysis, and that would provide translucent meaning of their experience (Patton, 2002).

The use of a self-report data collection strategy has advantages and disadvantages associated with it. Some of the strongest criticisms levelled at this data collection instrument are that they may be inaccurate due to the subjective nature of the instrument (Kain, 2004). Other criticisms against self-report measures are that important nuances may at times be forgotten by participants, while at the same time participants' responses can be biased in the direction of pre-existing beliefs and an individual's personal style (Paulson *et al.*, 1999). Kain (2004) is of the opinion that the use of multiple sources of data to generate multiple perspectives is a key method to overcoming singular perspectives. Thus, the crystallisation technique employed in the data collection process proved valuable.

Moreover, Kain (2004) is of the opinion that when administering self-report measures, the researcher should ask specific questions, and probe responses in instances when the participant does not adequately respond to the specified questions. This should be done to position the participant's frame of mind in the correct direction to illicit information that is appropriate to the study. The purpose of providing such direction for the participant is not to guide (or in any way influence) the participant's response, but merely to illuminate the possibility of participants providing information in an irrelevant direction in the context of the specific study. To elicit the *expectations* of participants in the form of the written narratives, I prompted them by asking them to "*describe, in their words, what they would like to get out of this assessment and in what way do they*

*suppose this assessment may be of benefit to them*". To elicit their *experiences* of the feedback interviews subsequent to the interviews, I prompted them by asking them to *"describe their experience of the feedback interview that they had in terms of what they had anticipated (as documented in their first narrative"*). Obtaining narrative data from the girls gave me a unique perspective on their viewpoints that would otherwise be inaccessible. Moreover this data source provides rich insights that can be used comparatively with other data, such as my observations-as-context of interaction. (Angrosino & Mays De Perez, 2000; Cohen *et al.*, 2003).

Therefore, the documentation of these narratives served a similar purpose as my reflective journal. In terms of the latter, I was able to explore my observations of the girls and of the progression of the research process, my thoughts and feelings regarding the research process and also my experiences and meaning-making processes (see Section 3.7.6 on employing reflexivity in order to ensure quality criteria during this study). In the same way as my perspective as researcher was documented in a reflective journal, participants' written narratives provided them with the opportunity to document their meaning-making processes.

#### **e) The Educational Psychologist's narrative regarding feedback**

As in the case of the participants, the Educational Psychologist who administered the two modes of the feedback interviews also completed a written narrative of her experiences of the feedback interview (included in the Educational Psychologist's reflections in Appendix E). The Educational Psychologist's narratives enhance the significance of the participants' narratives as a core data source to access participants' experiences of the two modes of feedback interviews. Being the same data collection technique, the Educational Psychologist's self-report narrative held similar advantages and disadvantages as the participants' narratives did. I prompted her response in this regard using the statement: *"Describe your experience of facilitating the feedback interview."* Refer to Section d) above for a thorough discussion in this regard.



### 3.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis in my study relied on the process of crystallisation as multiple data sources and methods lead to rich findings from various perspectives (Arsenault and Anderson, 1998).

#### a) Data analysis and interpretation of quantitative data

In terms of the data analysis and interpretation of the quantitative data, I scored and interpreted the quantitative data (the psychometric data) psychometrically in terms of standardised procedures stipulated in the relevant test manuals (Owen, 2000; Du Toit, 1996; Du Toit *et al.*, 1993; Elkonin, Foxcroft, Roodt and Astbury, 2001). I then analysed the psychometric interpretation for research purposes using the thematic analysis methods described above. The purpose of the analysis of the psychometric data was to generate psychometric profiles which served as a secondary data source since these profiles provided a basis from which feedback was provided in the two different modes of feedback interviews.

#### b) Data analysis and interpretation of qualitative data

Due to the nature of this mixed-method study, it is impossible to completely separate the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study during the data analysis process. For the purposes of this study, the data sources (participants written pre- and post-feedback narratives, researcher's journal and field notes of observations, administering Educational Psychologist's field notes and reflections, transcripts of audio-visual recordings of feedback sessions) were analysed separately by means of *thematic analysis*, with specific use of the coding technique (Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Johnson and Christensen, 2004). Each data source was analysed separately at first and thus themes were identified from these sources (refer to Appendix J for an example of thematic analysis). Later on, the combined themes were analysed and synthesised, when I combined themes that were related to one another to conclude the finding that I

derived from the data collection process. Thereafter themes from various data sources were integrated and synthesised in order to derive logical conclusions and explanations from the data collected. The process of the data analysis and synthesis was guided by the context of the research questions. The themes that were identified through the thematic analysis process allowed me to interpret the findings in the context of the research questions that I had outlined for this study (Mouton, 1996; Johnson & Christensen, 2004). This process of thematic analysis is well suited to qualitative data sources (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). Thus, as this study is based on a mixed-method approach that has a stronger emphasis on its qualitative components, the use of thematic analysis is well founded.

The process of thematic analysis allowed me to identify and evaluate prominent themes, patterns and meanings from the combined data collected (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). This allowed me to identify whether or not the positive psychological feedbacks are different from the traditional feedbacks in any way. This comparison provided the basis for the answer to the research question of the study. In this regard the transcription of data was a valuable data analysis technique (see Appendix G) (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

The collective Qualquan data analysis process was subsequently supported by literature control in terms of the conceptual framework (as provided in Chapter 2). Throughout the process of interpretation, “segments of data” such as relevant quotes of participants or prominently reoccurring themes were noted and coded, as suggested by Johnson and Christensen (2004).

### 3.7 QUALITY CRITERIA

In Chapter 1 I briefly mentioned the principle of trustworthiness, its relevance to me as researcher and its impact on the research process (Seale, 2000). The main quality criteria that can be linked to trustworthiness in this study are discussed here.

#### 3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility aims to provide a true picture of the phenomenon being investigated (Patton, 2002). The main ways in which credibility can be achieved in a study, as outlined by Seale (2000), are by engaging intensely in the field; persistent observation during data collection; using multiple methods of data collection, referred to as crystallization in Janesick (2000); and allowing the research to be intensely scrutinized by a disinterested peer reviewer.

These credibility measures were realised in my study through the use of *observation-of-context of interaction*, the use of *my research journal to reflect on the process and make field notes* and the use of *multiple methods of data-collection* such as psychometric data, participants pre- and post-feedback narratives, the Educational Psychologist's field notes and reflections and the audio-visual records and transcripts of the interviews. These techniques allow for the development of credibility in a study and were all easily practised in this study.

#### 3.7.2 Transferability

*Transferability* refers to the extent to which a study can be applied to other respondents or in other contexts (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The criterion of transferability was achieved in this study by providing a rich and detailed description of each participant in Section 4.3, Chapter 4. Such detailed descriptions provide information from which the

applicability of the findings can be judged and compared to other known settings (Seale, 2000).

### **3.7.3 Dependability**

*Dependability* refers to the indication of whether or not the study would yield the same or similar results if replicated in the same or similar context or with the same participants (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). According to Seale (2000), dependability in a study can be achieved through a procedure called ‘auditing’, which consists of auditing for adequacy. This consists of researchers documenting their data, methods, decisions and end products (Seale, 2000). I employed the quality criteria of dependability throughout this study, which enhanced my field notes and observations and documents in this writing (see Appendix A for evidence).

### **3.7.4 Confirmability**

To ensure confirmability for the results of this study, the main source of data collection (i.e. the facilitation of the two modes of feedback interviews) was conducted by another method (the Educational Psychologist). By allowing the Educational Psychologist to facilitate the feedback interviews I was able to gain an objective view of the experiences of the participants during the two modes of feedback interviews, which enabled me to derive findings that were unbiased by my opinion, theoretical inclinations and personal values (Bryman, 2001).

### **3.7.5 Authenticity**

The broader impact of this research was monitored by me through the assurance that the research had been conducted *fairly*, as I had used reflexive strategies during the data collection and ensured confirmability of the research results (Bryman, 2001). The feedback interviews that were facilitated with participants allowed for *educational*

*authenticity* (as the results of the subject choice assessments raised an awareness of the perspectives of others in the participants' social settings) and catalytic authenticity (as the feedback on the subject-choice assessments had the potential to impact on the participants' motivation to change their circumstances) (Bryman, 2001).

### **3.7.6 Reflexivity**

To ensure reflexivity in this study I maintained detailed field notes and reflections in my research diary, accounting for aspects of the social setting in which the data collection took place (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). My field notes included descriptions, analyses and criticisms of the social environment within which the data collection was located, thus increasing the authenticity of the research as well (see Appendix A for my field notes and reflection diary) (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). I discuss reflexivity more comprehensively in Section 3.8.

### **3.7.7 Validation**

Validation was also carried out during a subsequent meeting with participants where my understanding of their experiences of the two modes of interviews was verified. Rephrasing and exploring issues that arose facilitated this accomplishment, and eventually led to the attainment of more comprehensive meanings and data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

## **3.8 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

I had dual roles in this study (as various points in the study) which included the roles of Psychometrist initially (where I administered the psychometric media and drew up psychometric profiles) and that of researcher (where I observed the research process and conceptualised my findings). My role as Psychometrist was from the *emic* perspective, while my role as researcher and observer was from the *etic* perspective

(Cohen *et al.*, 2003). Cohen *et al.* (2003:139) describe the *emic* perspective as the concern with “the subjective meanings placed on situations by participants” and the *etic* perspective as the intention to “identify and understand the objective...constructions of a situation”. This implies that as researcher, I considered both the perspective of the participants, as well as the customary perspective of the researcher. I aimed to negotiate these two roles by maintaining a research diary and reflexivity during the study. To achieve trustworthiness in the context of multiple researcher roles and integrity and consistency within each individual data collection and documentation method, I used a research diary (Patton, 2002; Cohen *et al.*, 2003). Reflexivity refers to the notion that all activities occur simultaneously in the social settings in which we exist and the manner in which we account for such settings (Roulston, 2004; Cohen *et al.*, 2003). Thus, to adequately account for the social settings in which this research process took place, I included descriptions, analyses and criticisms of each setting (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). As reflexivity is often a feature that is taken for granted since it is a constant variable in social situations (and thus a part of reality), making use of reflexivity in this study allowed me the advantage of recognising, demonstrating and producing a practical account of the procedures of this study, which eventually informed my findings (Roulston, 2004).

I made participants aware of the dual roles that I played in this study. At the commencement of the data collection phase (i.e. the facilitation of psychometric tests during the subject choice assessments), participants were briefed on the process that they were to complete as participants in this research. As part of the briefing process, I outlined the purpose of the study, their rights as participants as well as the role players in the study. Furthermore, I clearly outlined the phases of the research process that they would be involved in and at what stage in the process they would meet each role player (namely the Educational Psychologist administering the feedback interviews and I).

### 3.9 ETHICAL STRATEGIES

As mentioned in Chapter 1 (Section 1.6) in order to fulfil my ethical responsibilities to my profession – as a Psychometrist, and also to the participants involved in this study, I had to adhere to the ethical code of the Health Professions Council of South Africa when working with participants, while at the same time adhering to general ethical principles of research practice (Strydom, 1998; Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The general ethical principles aligned to research practice that I established when completing this study were conducting research in a manner that preserved the dignity of participants as human beings: I ensured that participants were not deceived and that they knew what was going on during the research process and that they did not experience any form of harm or distress (physically or otherwise) (Miller and Brewer, 2003). These principles will now be discussed further on.

#### 3.9.1 Informed consent

Before the commencement of the study I ensured that written informed consent was obtained from the parents/guardians of the selected girls who participated in the study, as well as informed *assent* from the participating girls themselves, prior to the commencement of the data collection for this study (Johnson and Christensen, 2004). This implies that *no girls were forced to participate*; rather, they had the opportunity to choose whether or not they wanted to participate in the study, after being informed of the facts that would have influenced their decisions (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001; Cohen *et al.*, 2003). An example of such consent and assent forms can be found in Appendix D.

These participants were furthermore given adequate information in order to make an informed decision on whether or not they wanted to participate. This information included the purpose of the study, the specific procedures that would be followed, as well as the possible advantages of the outcome of the study (Sternberg, 2001). As part

of this information that was shared with the participants when I explained the process that the study would follow, I outlined the *roles* that the Educational Psychologist and I would play and *where in the process* each of our roles would fit in, so that they could understand and be aware of what was to be expected in this research process. The participants' right to withdraw at any time from the study was emphasized.

### **3.9.2 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity**

The principle of privacy was applied, implying that the confidentiality and anonymity of participants was protected at all times (Strydom, 1998; Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Sternberg, 2001). The identities of the participants were not disclosed during the study and all information obtained during the research process was dealt with in a confidential manner. Furthermore I made certain that any field notes, audio-visual material, transcripts and other data were preserved in a safe environment and would be destroyed after 15 years (as required by the University of Pretoria).

Preserving data records in a safe environment (as described above) will be necessary in order to assure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants' *voices* in the audio-visual data. Participants' demographic and identifying details were recorded as ambiguously as possible to reduce the possibility of participants being identified (White, Woodfield & Ritchie, 2003).

### **3.9.3 Protection from harm**

During the course of this study I focused on avoiding (or at least recognizing and communicating) possible or probable risk to the participants such as psychological, physical and/or social harm (Strydom, 1998; Sternberg, 2001). An example of such a measure is when I implemented a short bridging session prior to the final interviews in the two modes being completed to allow the Educational Psychologist and the participants to establish a strong relationship (see Section 4.2 in Chapter 4 for a



thorough discussion in this regard). *Caring* and *fairness* were instituted at all times to protect the participants in the study from harm (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I presented a detailed description of the paradigmatic perspective, research design and methodology, as well as the data analysis and interpretation procedures that I followed. Furthermore I discussed the ethical strategies that I considered during the undertaking of this study, and the quality criteria relevant to the research process.

In the subsequent chapter I will present and deliberate on the raw data that I collected in its various forms during the data collection process, present an analysis and interpretation of the data, and thus provide comprehensive and clear findings.

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## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH FINDINGS & RESULTS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4 I discuss the results of the thematic analysis and reveal supporting evidence from the participants' and Educational Psychologist's reflections, interviews and narratives, as well as from my own observations of the feedback interviews. I include extracts of verbatim responses from the transcribed audio-visual recordings and I link themes to current literature in order to expand on identified themes within the context of the research questions and the ultimate findings of the study.

#### 4.2 OUTCOMES OF THE PILOT PHASE OF THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

During the pilot phase one of the prominent themes that became apparent to me was the degree of established rapport between the Educational Psychologist administering the two modes of feedback interviews and the clients receiving feedback of their psychometric assessment for subject choices. In the role of observer during the feedback sessions, I noticed that the degree of rapport between the Educational Psychologist and the participants was limited, which I recorded in my research diary as follows: *"The Educational Psychologist and participant seemed unsure around each other. They came across as two strangers engaging in a conversation"* (Researcher's journal, 19-02-2010, p. 5, lines 17-18). As I know the participants (through my association with them as a result of my relative) I am familiar with their habitual behaviour and based my observation on this knowledge. The clients and the Educational Psychologist had not been through the natural<sup>2</sup> process of establishing a relationship that could have occurred during the assessment phase while administering the

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<sup>2</sup> By the 'natural process' of establishing a relationship I refer to the process that is ordinarily followed, where the role of the Educational Psychologist is fulfilled by one individual. In this study, the role of Educational Psychologist was not filled consistently by a single individual as I completed the assessments and the Educational Psychologist completed the feedback interviews.

psychometric assessment measures. Observing the participants and the Educational Psychologist together, I perceived them as being randomly forced together during the feedback interviews (see transcript of interviews in Appendix G) without the benefit of established rapport. My sentiments were also reflected in the Educational Psychologist's experience of the pilot study: *"I was also anxious as I had not done the initial assessment process with the clients, and was concerned about how they would both feel towards me as we had not gone through the entire process together."* (Educational Psychologist's journal, 19-02-2010, p. 1, lines 6-8).

Therefore, based on the pilot phase post-feedback discussion with the Educational Psychologist regarding the positive psychological feedback interview, we decided to include a brief joint session with participants, the Educational Psychologist and me, prior to the feedback per se. The purpose of the joint session with the participants was to create a space for relationship building with the Educational Psychologist<sup>3</sup> prior to the feedback interview. In this regard I noted in my research diary (see Appendix A): *"They were noticeably more comfortable with (Educational Psychologist) after this session."* (Researcher's journal, 5-03-2010, p. 8, lines 12-13).

The pilot feedback interviews also proved beneficial as they afforded the Educational Psychologist the opportunity to conduct the feedback interviews from a positive psychological perspective prior to data collection. As the positive psychological mode of feedback interviews is yet unexplored and undefined, the Educational Psychologist did not have an existing model or theoretical framework to rely on. She thus felt more confident in administering the positive psychological feedback interviews after having had the opportunity to put into practice the theoretical model posited in Tables 2.4 and 2.5. The Educational Psychologist's ease and confidence in administering the positive psychological feedback in the final feedback interviews (after having had the opportunity to practise this mode of feedback interview during the pilot study) can be

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to Table 1.1 where I outline the various roles of the individuals during the completion of this study.

noted in her reflection after the data collection interview session, when she stated: *“This time around, I was less nervous and I knew what was expected of me during a positive psychology feedback...”* (Educational Psychologist’s journal, 5-03-2010, p. 3, lines 3-4).

During the piloting of the two modes of interviews I also noted that, at times, the Educational Psychologist moved through the information with what I perceived as a degree of haste. *“The Educational Psychologist also moved too fast through the feedback at certain times. Again, not to be repeated in data collection interviews; therefore, I will discuss this with her prior to data collection interviews.”* (Researcher’s journal, 19-02-2010, p. 5, lines 19-21). We discussed the *pace at which she worked with the clients* during our post-feedback discussion in order to improve this area in data collection. During the data collection I did not observe any haste in the Educational Psychologist’s pace, as I documented in my observation notes as follows: *“During this feedback the Educational Psychologist did not move too quickly through the information with the participant, as she did in the pilot study...”* (Researcher’s journal, 5-03-2010, p. 9, lines 29-30).

Lastly, the level of *expressiveness* and *willingness to engage* between the client who had received the traditional feedback and the client who had received the positive psychological feedback interview varied appreciably. The personal characteristics of the participants in terms of their engagement with the Educational Psychologist was significant to me as researcher as I was able to observe their experiences of the feedback experience. I document my observations in this regard as follows: *“The level of engagement and sharing with the Educational Psychologist during the 2 modes of feedback differed considerably between the two participants. The participant who experienced the traditional feedback was receptive to feedback and recommendations that the Educational Psychologist had discussed but she did not enquire or engage*

*further. The participant who experienced the positive psychology feedback participated more in the process.”* (Researcher’s journal, 5-03-2010, p. 10, line 6-11).

In the same way I was also able to observe the manner in which the Educational Psychologist experienced the two modes of feedback interviews as a result of the different level of responses she received from the two participants. Regarding my observations of the participants’ levels of expressiveness and willingness to engage with the Educational psychologist I noted in my research diary that: *“The interactional styles of these two girls are different, therefore, their responses and experiences may differ.”* (Researcher’s journal, 5-03-2010, p. 10, line 5-6).

Having noted these factors during the pilot phase, I attempted to swap the participants that I used for the two modes of feedback, based on my perception of their level of expressiveness and willingness to engage with the Educational Psychologist for the data collection phase. I selected Participant C (who was my relative) for the traditional feedback interview as I perceived her to be more expressive than Participant D. However, analysis of the data collected indicates that there was still a difference in the two participants’ engagement with the Educational Psychologist. In Section 5.4, Chapter 5, I discuss possible limitations of my study in this regard.

### **4.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE “CASE”**

#### **4.3.1 Common characteristics**

In Section 3.5.1 I provided a demographic description of the “case” that I refer to in this study. However, during the data collection phase my observations of the learners allowed for a more detailed description of the case.

In Appendix H I include the psychometric reports of clients’ assessments. In these reports I detail the assessment measures that I administered to the girls, the results

thereof and recommendations for each learner in terms of subject and future career choice decisions of the girls.

Reflecting on the clients that participated in this study, a number of defining characteristics can be identified as common to them all. As I noted in Table 3.1, Chapter 3, all the girls were from the same race group. In addition, all the girls are from the same culture (i.e. Indian) and socio-economic groups (i.e. middle-class), reside in the same residential area in Gauteng, attend the same secondary school and both follow the religion of Islam. Analysis of the girls' academic performance during the integration of the psychometric results (see Appendix H for individual psychometric reports) indicated that all four girls maintain a high academic average and want to further their education on a tertiary level. These similarities in terms of the young girls' defining social and personal characteristics delimit the scope of the study. In Section 3.5.1 (a) and 5.4 I highlight these limitations and their consequences for the results of this study.

#### **4.3.2 Traditional feedback interview case**

The participant who completed the traditional feedback interview comes from a warm and stable family environment where she is the youngest of her six biological siblings. Both her parents, as well as four of her older siblings are in service-orientated or caring professions. One of her sisters is completing her Grade 12 at present. This participant is a relative of mine.

Her psychometric assessment results indicate that she has an above-average academic ability and that her career interests include careers in the scientific, social and artistic fields. These interests correlate positively with her personality profile as identified through the Jung Personality Questionnaire (Du Toit, 1996). Her personality profile indicates that she is inclined to behave in a gentle and sensitive manner towards others to achieve goals. Awareness and use of these characteristics could potentially facilitate

her successful performance in the career fields that she indicates an interest in (i.e. the medical and caring professions). Subject choices such as mathematics, physical science, biology, history, and computer sciences were recommended to allow her to actualise her considerate and caring nature (see recommendations provided in psychometric reports in Appendix H).

#### **4.3.3 Positive psychological feedback interview case**

The girl who participated in the positive psychological feedback interview is the eldest of five biological siblings. Her father manages his own business and her mother is the primary caregiver in the family. All her younger siblings are currently completing school.

This young girl's psychometric assessment results revealed that she has an above-average academic ability and her career interests lie in the artistic, social, scientific and enterprising fields. Her responses to the Jung Personality Questionnaire suggest that she is inclined to behave in an innovative, creative and encouraging manner when interacting with others to achieve her goals. Such characteristics may facilitate her successful performance in the occupational fields of interest to her as they may allow her to actualise her considerate and caring nature.

This young girl has indicated an interest in the medical (and related occupations) and the business fields. Based on her results, subjects such as mathematics, physical science, history, information technology and business economics were recommended for this young girl to allow her to actualise her considerate and caring nature while still nurturing her occupational interests to bring about greater life satisfaction (see recommendations provided in psychometric reports that I include in Appendix H).

#### 4.4 THEMES: POST ANALYSIS

I identified two main themes during thematic analysis of the data sources. These themes are indicative of the comparison between a traditional and positive psychological feedback interview in terms of the participants' and the Educational Psychologist's experiences.

##### 4.4.1 Theme 1<sup>4</sup>: Clients' experiences of the two modes of feedback interviews

###### 4.4.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: Similarities between the clients' experiences of the two modes of feedback interviews

Similarities identified between the two modes of feedback are that both modes of feedback were experienced as satisfactory, comprehensive and met the expectations of the participants; both modes provided self and career knowledge to the participants and the Educational Psychologist highlighted clients' strengths *and* weaknesses in both modes.

Analysis of the pre and post self-report measure of the two participants who experienced the two modes of the feedback interviews, in conjunction with my observations as researcher, indicates that both the participants experienced the feedback interview situation as **positive**. The participant who experienced the traditional mode of feedback described her experience in the following manner: *"This feedback lived up to my expectations"* (Traditional feedback participant's post-feedback narrative, 5-03-2010, p. 1, line 1). The participant who experienced the positive psychological feedback interview described her experience as follows: *"The feedback did meet my expectations. I was pleased with what I got back"* (Positive psychological feedback participant's post-feedback narrative, 5-03-2010, p.1, lines 5-6).

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<sup>4</sup> The exploration of this theme also provides an answer to research Subquestion 2 (as stated in Section 1.2, Chapter 1).



My observations, recorded in my research diary (see Appendix A) during the administration of the two modes of feedback interviews indicate that the Educational Psychologist completed both the feedback interviews in a thorough manner. The following abstract from my research diary illustrates this observation that I made: *“She shared the information in a slow and relaxed manner, very thorough and with a reassuring manner.”* (Researcher’s diary, 5-03-2010, p. 10, lines 12-13). The Educational Psychologist’s thoroughness in this regard may have contributed to the common positive experiences of the two participants, as my observation suggests: *“The participant displayed satisfaction through her facial expressions such as smiling and showing content as the Educational Psychologist progressed through the feedback. The traditional feedback participant displayed similar gestures during her feedback as well.”* (Researcher’s diary, 5-30-2010, p. 11, lines 9-11). Also, *“The manner and tone in which the Educational Psychologist conveys the information to the participant throughout the feedback creates a very authentic feel, and enhances the trust relationship.”* (Researcher’s diary, 5-03-2010, p. 9, lines 26-28).

The Educational Psychologist accomplished a meticulous and comprehensive explanation of the client’s psychometric results. She detailed the purpose of administering each psychometric measure, the client’s results according to each measure and the implications of those results for the client in her everyday life. The following quotation from my research diary emphasises this observation: *“The Educational Psychologist linked the SAVII results to potential careers. She also drew a pattern between the different test results and brought them together into a holistic and easy-to-understand ‘package’. This put the information that was being conveyed into context for the participant and helped her to understand what it all meant for her on a practical level.”* (Researcher’s diary, 5-03-2010, p. 9, lines 21-25).

As the feedback sessions progressed, the Educational Psychologist built a holistic picture of the participants by linking the participants’ results on the various psychometric

measures to create a portrait of the participant, based on the knowledge and information she gained about them as unique individuals. I document this observation through the following quotations:

*“Also, when explaining her personality profile, the Educational Psychologist gave examples to help her understand the concepts, as she had done in the traditional feedback previously as well.”* (Researcher’s diary, 5-03-2010, p. 10, lines 17-18).

*“The Educational Psychologist related the participant’s most recent academic results to the results that she obtained on the DAT (as she had done in the traditional feedback). This helped the participant to understand the meaning of her assessment results on a practical level.”* (Researcher’s diary, 5-03-2010, p. 10, lines 14-16).

Another theme that emerged is that both participants’ gained information regarding their personal characteristics and traits, and how these related to career choices and knowledge. The participant who experienced the traditional feedback explained that she gained awareness and understanding of her strengths and areas of self-efficacy. This theme was identified from the following extract from her post-feedback narrative: *“I learnt about how I could express myself and what career choices would suit me other than the few that I had in mind. I also learnt that I have a potential to do better in English, which I didn’t know before.”* (Traditional feedback participants’ post-feedback narrative, 5-03-2010, p. 1, line 1-6). The participant who experienced the positive psychological feedback interview can be quoted in this regard as follows: *“My experience today was informative and also gave me a sense of direction that will influence the choices I will have to make later in life.”* (Positive psychological feedback participant’s post-feedback narrative, 5-03-2010, p. 1, lines 1-3).

As indicated in my discussion of current literature in Chapter 2, the purpose of a feedback interview is to provide the client with a meaningful interpretation and outline the implications of the assessment findings for the client (Bergh, 2007). The feedback interview should be conveyed in a context that fulfils the aims and objectives of

administering the psychometric assessment itself, which in the context of this study refers to providing information relative to subject choices and career choices (Bergh, 2007). From my discussion here it is evident that both modes of feedback fulfil the basic aims of a psychometric feedback.

#### **4.4.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: Experiences of the participants unique to the positive psychological feedback interview<sup>5</sup>**

The positive psychological feedback interview participant expressed appreciation for the focused discussion regarding her strengths and weaknesses and *the process of mobilising her strengths to overcome the challenges/weaknesses that she encounters* in her life. The process of strength-building that the positive psychological feedback participant experienced is the result of Step 4 and 5 of the positive psychological feedback framework which is not included in the traditional feedback process (see Section 2.6.1, Chapter 2 for outline of steps of the positive psychological feedback interview).

The discussion of strength-building in the positive psychological feedback interview opened up a platform for the *participant* to engage in a discussion of her strengths and weaknesses in a more *reflective manner* than the traditional feedback allowed. This can be noted from the participant's words: *"It opened up a platform for me to discuss my strengths as well as my weaknesses"* (Positive psychological feedback participant's post-feedback narrative, 5-03-2010, p.1, lines 8-9).

In this regard the Educational Psychologist can be quoted from her reflection diary as saying: *"She seemed to understand how to use strengths to overcome challenges after we had completed this exercise. This session felt more like a therapy session, but a good session"* (Educational Psychologist's diary, 5-03-2010, p. 4, lines 10-13). Moreover, she

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<sup>5</sup> The exploration of this theme links contributes to the response to the research Sub-question 2 and Sub-question 4 (as stated in section 1.2, Chapter 1). In Section 5.2.2 I discuss Sub-question 4 in greater detail.

reflects that: *“It was more interactive than the traditional feedback”* (Educational Psychologist’s diary, 5-03-2010, p. 4, lines 23-24). In Section 5.3.2, Chapter 5, I discuss the similarities and differences between the two modes of feedback more in-depth.

My observation of the participant’s opportunity to attain confidence in terms of problem-solving is reflected in my observation in my research diary: *“A distinct improvement in the participant’s confidence and self-assurance was observed as she went through the positive psychological steps of the feedback. I refer to the process of plotting her strengths and learning to use them to overcome her weaknesses (those that the psychologist had identified from the assessment results and the feedback discussion) and challenges that she may encounter in her life – with the psychologist”* (Researcher’s diary, 5-30-2010, p. 10, lines 24-29). The Educational Psychologist reflected on her observation of the participant’s self-development during the positive psychological feedback as well: *“She also seemed much more relaxed and **at peace with herself** (own emphasis) by the end of the feedback.”* (Educational Psychologist’s diary, 5-3-2010, p. 4, lines 22-23).

According to Bergh (2007), the experiences of this participant who received the positive psychological feedback interview, can be placed into a context of expected etiquette of a feedback interview in general where the emphasis must be placed on *clients’ positive points and their potential*, along with any weaknesses that have been identified during the assessment phase. The Educational Psychologist is expected to discuss any such weaknesses that may have been identified in a constructive manner that promotes self-development. In the positive psychological feedback interview the Educational Psychologist seems to have accomplished this task as she illustrates from the following reflection in her research diary: *“She mentioned that she always tried to have a positive outlook on life. So this positive individual trait of hers was used during the feedback. I used this asset of hers to show her, how to overcome several challenges in her life”*. (Educational Psychologist’s diary, 5-03-2010, p. 4, lines 6-8).

Hence, by not simply outlining the client's strengths, but moreover progressing to *using* these strengths, the Educational Psychologist employed the principle of *strength building* which is one of the core elements of positive psychology. The building of strengths in the positive psychological feedback interview focused on *specific* strengths (such as talents, skills, knowledge, interests, goals and passions) that were identified in the participant through her psychometric assessment results (Saleebey, 1992). Strength building in this context could potentially lead to the occurrence of the positive psychological construct of *flourishing* (Keyes and Haidt, 2003).

The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) can be used to further explain the strength-building process that I observed in the positive psychological feedback. According to the broaden-and-build theory certain discrete positive emotions share the ability to broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring physical, social and psychological resources (Fredrickson, 2001).

The strength-building process allowed the positive psychological feedback participant to be an active participant in the process. The participant had to actively plot her own strengths and brainstorm ideas with the Educational Psychologist on how to use her signature strengths in new ways to overcome her weaknesses or potential challenges (Tan, 2006). The traditional feedback participant on the other hand seemed to be more of a passive observer *receiving* feedback of psychometric results, as the nature of the traditional feedback did not allow for discussion of problem-solving in the process of career planning (as the positive psychological feedback did). This observation can be substantiated with the following extract from the Educational Psychologist's research diary: *"In this feedback I explained the assessment measures that were administered, the results that she received, the strengths and weaknesses that the results highlighted and the implications of those results in terms of career-related recommendations."* (Educational Psychologist's diary, 5-3-2010, p. 3, lines 27-30).

#### 4.4.2 Theme 2<sup>6</sup>: The educational psychologist's experiences of the two modes of feedback interviews

The main theme that arose in terms of the Educational Psychologist's experience of the two modes of feedback is that she felt that due to the nature of the traditional feedback she was not able to provide as thorough a discussion as she had done in the positive psychological feedback interview. I quote an extract from the Educational Psychologist's research diary in terms of the traditional feedback to substantiate this idea: *"I would have wanted to look at her positive individual traits and assets in her system, so as to possibly give her life skills to assist in overcoming challenge... Again, I felt that she was denied of a positive feedback experience."* (Educational Psychologist's diary, 5-3-2010, p. 3, lines 25-31).

Her reflections in her diary indicate that she observed the positive psychological feedback client engaging in strength-building during the interview, which she felt was denied to the traditional feedback client. She describes her observation of the positive psychological feedback client's self-development as: *"At the beginning of the feedback, she felt that she was not reaching her potential and not working hard enough and yet she is an A student, by the end of the feedback, I could sense that she was realising that at times she was being hard on herself and actually achieving a lot in her life already. I think that this experience made her realise that she was actually realising her potential in life."* (Educational Psychologist's diary, 5-3-2010, p. 4, lines 15-19). The participant's awareness of the extent and level of her potential was something that she did not seem conscious of prior to the feedback interview. Such awareness seems apparent in the process of strength building as related during the positive psychological feedback interview (as I discuss in 4.4.1.2 above).

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<sup>6</sup> Through the exploration of this theme I also provide an answer to research Subquestion 3 (as stated in Section 1.2, Chapter 1).

As a result of the engagement and strength-building process that was evident in the positive psychological feedback, the Educational Psychologist expresses her experience of this feedback session as: *“This session felt more like a therapy session, but a good session.”* (Educational Psychologist’s diary, 5-3-2010, p. 4, lines 12-13). She reflects further on the positive psychological feedback interview that: *“...it was also a reminder to me how the positive psychology and asset-based approaches are so beneficial in my interactions with people... and how it can change your perspective on life.”* (Educational Psychologist’s diary, 5-3-2010, p. 4, lines 26-28).

My observations of the positive psychological feedback support the view of the Educational Psychologist, which is evident in the following abstract from my research journal: *“The interactive examples that the Educational Psychologist used where the participant had to list things about herself or give examples seemed really effective as they made the participant understand how she could reapply these same principles to her life later on, on her own. Thus making it sustainable.”* (Researcher’s diary, 5-03-2010, p. 11, lines 5-8).

In Section 4.4.2 I discuss the Educational Psychologist’s experience of the two modes of feedback interviews in relation to literature on the topic. The discussion of the Educational Psychologist’s experience of the two modes of feedback interviews that I present here indicates that the prominent difference between her experience of the two modes of feedback interviews is that she felt that she was disadvantaging the traditional feedback client by providing her with a less intense discussion. The Educational Psychologist experienced the traditional feedback as lacking in terms of the limited engagement with the participant, the participant’s insight into her strengths and the strength-building process in general.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

From the experiences and observations of the participants, the educational psychologist and myself as researcher, it can be deduced that while the experiences of the two modes of feedback interviews do indicate some differences, many similarities do exist as well. These similarities and differences will be explored in greater detail in Section 5.3.2, Chapter 5.

In Chapter 5 I detail the conclusions of this study and provide answers to the research questions that served as a guide in the completion of this research. Furthermore, I will explore possible contributions, limitations and recommendations of this study.

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## CHAPTER 5

### RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Having addressed the research subquestions of this study in this chapter I will focus on answering the main research question of this study. I will further discuss the contribution that this study has made in general, as well as the limitations of the study. Lastly, I make recommendations for further research, as well as training and the practical application of the positive psychological mode of feedback interviews.

#### 5.2 FINDINGS THROUGH THE LENS OF THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE

The findings of this study (in terms of the similarities and differences between the two modes of feedback interviews) indicate no significant theoretical difference between the two modes of feedback. A lack of differentiation between the two modes of feedback interviews may be understood in terms of the theory of therapeutic alliance (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2003).

The theory of therapeutic alliance is based on Bordin's theory of the working alliance (Johnson and Wright, 2002) and entails the notion that all psychotherapies require an alliance between therapist and client. The theory holds that the effectiveness of a therapy process is to some extent a reflection of the strength of the therapeutic alliance. While the theory recognises that alternate forms of therapeutic approaches make different demands on the therapist and client, it emphasises that the strength of the therapeutic alliance is determined by the compatibility of the characteristics of the client and therapist (Johnson and Wright, 2002). Based on therapeutic alliance principles, I thus argue that in terms of the two modes of psychometric feedback interviews, *the therapeutic alliance between the client and therapist impacts more*

*strongly on the client's experience of the interview rather than the mode that the feedback is delivered in.*

Therapeutic alliance theory has in recent studies proved to be an important variable in the therapeutic relationship. The definition of a therapeutic alliance has accordingly evolved and developed over the years as well. Starting out as a belief that the therapeutic alliance was simply a positive transference from client to therapist, it then evolved into an active collaboration between therapist and client. Most recently therapeutic alliance theory is believed to include three main features: 1) an agreement of goals (which, in this study was reached in both modes of feedback); 2) the assigning of task/s to the intervention process tasks (see Table 5.1 for summary of tasks assigned to the two modes of feedback) and 3) the development of bonds (which, as discussed in Chapter 4, occurred to varying degrees in both modes of feedback) (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2003).

<b>TASKS ASSIGNED TO THE:</b>	
<b>TRADITIONAL FEEDBACK</b>	<b>POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL FEEDBACK</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Listens to the Educational Psychologist</li> <li>* Advice and information provided to the client by the Educational Psychologist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Engagement from client required (listen, talk, think, transfer and plan)</li> <li>* Advice and information provided to the client by the Educational Psychologist</li> <li>* Strength-building discussion/therapy provided by the Educational Psychologist</li> <li>* Client's confidence observed</li> </ul>

**Table 5.1 Summary of tasks assigned to the two modes of feedback interviews**

Recent studies have found that a psychological assessment process may impact on the patient's experience of assessment feedback and thus aid in the development of a

therapeutic alliance (Ackerman, Hilsenroth, Baity and Blagys, 2000). In this regard, Ackerman *et al.* (2000) illustrate that while clients' experiences of psychological assessment can be measured reliably, the psychological *assessment* phase can strongly influence the clients' experiences of assessment feedback and in so doing, aid the development and maintenance of the therapeutic alliance. Thus the joint session that I refer to in Section 4.3 between the participants of the final data collection interviews and the Educational Psychologist may have impacted the therapeutic alliance between the clients and Educational Psychologist positively in the final data collection phase of the study (as I intended post-pilot). As I note in Section 4.3, I observed the participants to be "noticeably more comfortable" with the Educational Psychologist after the joint introductory session that we had with them, as compared to the participants from the pilot group.

It is only when learning about the experiences, perceptions and understandings of clients in therapeutic situations that researchers and therapists alike can learn what clients like and truly need in therapeutic situations (Ribner and Knei-Paz, 2002). Since the purpose of this study was to provide insight into the experiences of clients and the Educational Psychologist in the two modes of feedback interviews, theory and practice are informed by the similarities and differences between the two modes that I have highlighted in the findings of this study. Similarly, it is also important to understand the perspective of clients concerning the therapeutic experience as they often differ from that of the therapist as the findings of this study highlight (see Section 4.4) (Paulson, Truscott and Stuart, 1999).

Prior research relating to the therapeutic alliance indicates that helpful aspects of the therapeutic experience identified from clients include: 1) facilitative therapist characteristics; 2) clients' self-expression permitted; 3) experiencing a supportive relationship; 4) self-understanding and insight; 5) therapists encouraging extra therapy practice; 6) client resolutions; 7) gaining knowledge; 8) emotional relief and accessibility

(Paulson *et al.*, 1999). Through the various data sources collected and analysed in this study, I found that the following five variables were apparent in the experiences of clients in both modes of the feedback interviews.

1. **Facilitative therapist characteristics:** where the Educational Psychologist's interpersonal characteristics allowed for effective facilitation of both modes of feedback sessions.
2. **Self-understanding and insight:** the Educational Psychologist's facilitative characteristics created a sense of self-awareness and understanding in both participants which plausibly led to increased insight into their own lives and career planning processes.
3. **Therapist encouraging extra therapy practice:** as a result of Step 4 and 5 of the positive psychological feedback interview, the Educational Psychologist was able to create an opportunity for the client to develop problem-solving and strength-building skills.
4. **Client resolutions:** the self-knowledge and career planning information that the participants received from the two modes of feedback assisted them in forming resolutions on their abilities, giving them career options.
5. **Gaining knowledge:** the participants gained knowledge about themselves and their career-planning processes through both modes of feedback interviews.

From the above we can see that experiences of feedback interviews are influenced by sources outside the feedback content itself. The fact that a therapeutic alliance has an impact on the process of feedback per se has direct implications for this study. The direct implications referred to here relate to *therapists' characteristics* that impact on the nature of the therapeutic relationship, a factor which is independent of the mode of feedback being conducted (be it a traditional or a positive psychological feedback). If the overall goal of the positive psychological feedback interviews was to encourage and foster the development of happiness and a positive outlook (Seligman, 2002), then

therapist personal characteristics such as trustworthiness, warmth, confidence, displaying an interest in the client and openness all have the potential to influence the impact and effectiveness of both the traditional and positive psychological feedback interviews. In Table 5.2 the similarities in terms of the experiences of the two modes of feedback interviews highlighted indicate that the therapist characteristics in the two modes of feedback interviews were consistent and this consistency led to a positive experience and similar benefits for *both clients who had experienced the alternate modes* of feedback.

Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2003) explain that studies have consistently proved that in order to achieve therapeutic success it is essential that the therapist instil *confidence* (as I particularly observed in the positive psychological feedback) and *trust* into the therapeutic frame. Effectively instilling confidence and trust into the therapeutic frame is directly linked to a therapist's ability to display attributes such as dependability, benevolence and responsiveness which may lead to the therapist effectively helping the client under distress. Factors such as therapist's training; consistency; effectively utilising non-verbal gestures (such as eye contact and leaning toward the client); verbal behaviours (such as interpretation); display characteristics such as empathy; congruence and positive regard; and the maintenance of the therapeutic frame in general all promote the development of feelings of connectedness between the therapist and client.

Thus, based on the findings outlined by Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2003) above, I deduced that the therapeutic alliance may be responsible for a significant degree of the therapeutic outcomes. In the context of the data collected in this study (i.e. - the two modes of feedback interviews) I conclude that a strong relationship between the Educational Psychologist and the participants leads to a positive and beneficial career-planning experience of the feedback interviews, regardless of the mode of feedback experienced.

### **5.3 CONCLUSIONS IN TERMS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In this section I outline the conclusions that I have come to in terms of research sub-questions that have guided this study, as stated in Section 1.2 in Chapter 1.

#### **5.3.1 What is the nature of a traditional and positive psychological feedback interview?**

The first research subquestion investigates the nature of a traditional and positive psychological feedback interview. This question was answered thoroughly through the literature review that I provided in Chapter 2. Table 2.4 and 2.5 reflect a direct summary of the literature reviewed, in terms of the core elements comprising a traditional and a positive psychological feedback interview respectively. Furthermore in Section 2.2 of Chapter 2 I outline essential elements and characteristics of feedback interviews in general, which are common to both the traditional and the positive psychological feedback interview modes.

The thorough framework for the completion of both modes of feedback interviews as well as a step-by-step procedure to follow when completing a positive psychological feedback interview that this study provides, is therefore one of the defining contributions of this study. These frameworks for completing the two modes of feedback interviews are now available to other practitioners for reference through this study.

#### **5.3.2 What are the differences and similarities between experiences of a traditional and a positive psychological feedback interview?**

The final subquestion of this study aimed to solicit similarities and differences between the two modes of feedback interviews. From the findings of this study analysed above in Section 4.4 in terms of the experiences of the young girls, the Educational Psychologist

and my observations as researcher, similarities and differences were identified between the two modes of feedback interviews, which I discuss in this section. Consequently the availability of this detailed comparison of the similarities and differences between the two modes of feedback is one of the defining contributions of this study. This comparison between the two modes of feedback interviews provides theoretical and practical knowledge and understanding of the application of the two feedback modes. In Table 5.2 below I tabulate the similarities and differences between the two feedback modes that I have identified.

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✳ Both modes of feedback were perceived as satisfactory and positive experiences by participants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✳ The positive psychological feedback interview provided more opportunity for engagement.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✳ Both modes of feedback provided the participants with self- and career knowledge.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✳ Client had strength-building opportunity during positive psychological feedback interview.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✳ Both modes of feedback were experienced as meeting clients' expectations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✳ The Educational Psychologist experienced the traditional feedback interview as tiring and limiting.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✳ The Educational Psychologist highlighted clients' strengths and weaknesses in both modes of feedback interviews.</li> </ul>	

**Table 5.2 Similarities and differences identified between the two modes of feedback interviews**

### 5.3.2.1 Similarities between the two modes of feedback interviews

In terms of the *similarities* between the two modes of feedback interviews, the *first similarity* identified is that the participants of both the traditional and the positive psychological modes of feedback described their feedback experiences in a *positive light*.

*Secondly*, according to the young girls' post-feedback self-report narratives, both the girls stated that the feedback provided them with knowledge about themselves and career knowledge.

*Thirdly*, the participants experienced both the modes of feedback as thorough. The girls reported that both the modes of feedback led to the development of life skills and an increased ability to utilise their potential.

*Lastly*, during *both* the traditional and the positive psychological modes of feedback interviews, the Educational Psychologist highlighted and discussed the young girls' strengths and weaknesses within them. Thus, we can deduce that the traditional mode of feedback is not without asset and strength-building of clients during a feedback interview.

### **5.3.2.2 Differences between the two modes of feedback interviews**

Regarding *differences* identified between the two modes of feedback interviews, the analysis of the data sources indicates that the positive psychological feedback interview provided more opportunity for the *engagement* between the Educational Psychologist and client through the discussion of assessment results. Engagement occurred particularly in terms of understanding and using clients' strengths and weaknesses for problem-solving and career planning. It appeared as if the client demonstrated confidence by discussing positive psychology principles (such as strength building) due to the nature and process of the positive psychological feedback interview. This finding can be explored further in future studies.

The positive psychological feedback participant was thus afforded the opportunity to develop her problem-solving skills (from a strengths-based perspective) under the guidance of the Educational Psychologist. The traditional feedback client did not



experience a strength-building discussion due to the nature of the mode of the traditional feedback interview. In particular, the strength-based problem-solving skill is potentially a benefit that can be attributed to 'Step 4' of the positive psychological feedback interview (see Section 2.6.1 for a step-by-step framework for completing a positive psychological feedback interview). However, participants of both modes of feedback reported that the feedback interviews met their expectations and that it was a positive experience. Their positive experiences may be attributed to factors related to the therapeutic relationship such as facilitative characteristics that the Educational Psychologist employed.

*Secondly*, the Educational Psychologist reported that she had experienced the traditional feedback interview as tiring as a result of the participants' limited engagement during the feedback process. The participants' lack of engaging behaviour is discussed in Section 5.5 where I sum up the limitations of the study. The Educational Psychologist also felt constrained during the traditional feedback as she was not able to engage and discuss the clients' strengths and weaknesses extensively as she had done in the positive psychological feedback interview. However, despite reporting that she did not feel like she was giving the traditional feedback client as thorough a feedback as the positive psychological feedback client had received, the Educational Psychologist did fulfil all the stipulations and requirements of a traditional feedback interview as outlined in Section 2.2 and Table 2.5 of my literature review. Furthermore, the traditional feedback client reported that the feedback that she experienced had met her expectations.

### 5.3.3 How can a comparison between experiences of a traditional and a positive psychological psychometric feedback interview inform educational psychological theory and practice?

The outcomes and results of this study offer a valuable contribution to the field of Educational Psychology theory and practice in terms of this *primary research question* which directed the study. Findings confirm that the therapist's personal characteristics and techniques are central to a successful feedback experience which was evident in both modes of the feedback interviews. The positive psychological feedback did seem to provide an alliance opportunity for the client to on the one hand engage more with the therapist, and on the other hand, participate in strength-building discussions, possibly building confidence for future problem-solving capacity.

Whereas the similarities and differences between the two modes of feedback *did not* prove to be extensive, the limited similarities between the two modes of feedback in question **highlighted the significance that the therapeutic alliance** between client and practitioner plays in process of the client's development and wellbeing, as compared with the mode of feedback being employed. Thus, the findings of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2003; Johnson and Wright, 2002; Ribner and Knei-Paz, 2002; Ackerman *et al.*, 2000; Paulson *et al.*, 1999) surrounding the significance and value of the therapeutic alliance between therapist and client as I discussed in detail in Section 5.2 above. Findings in terms of the significance of the therapeutic alliance constitute one of the core contributions of this study.

Further theoretical contributions of this study to the field of positive psychology are directive in terms of placing a *specific focus on implementing the principles of positive psychology in the domain of psychometry*, particularly during the process of conveying feedback of psychometric results.

The literature review mentioned in Chapter 2 allowed me to formulate a thorough framework for the completion of both modes of feedback interviews and forms the basis of the theoretical contribution of this study to the field of Educational Psychology. In Chapter 2 I provide a summary of the framework for developing and completing a **traditional feedback interview** in Table 2.5. In Section 2.2 of the same chapter I outline **elements and techniques that are common to both modes** of feedback interviews.

In terms of a practical contribution of this study, under Section 2.5 and Section 2.6.1 in Chapter 2, I define the *construct* of a **positive psychological feedback interview** and detail a *step-by-step procedure* for practitioners to follow when completing a positive psychological feedback interview themselves. In the accompanying Figure 2.1 I also provide a visual representation of the procedure of a positive psychological feedback interview.

#### 5.4 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The first limitation encountered in this study relates to the methodology of the study. This study was conducted with a **limited number of participants** (see Section 3.5.1 where I discuss selection of participants). The final data collection feedback interviews were conducted using only one participant per mode of feedback (two participants in all). This followed the pilot study which was also completed using one participant per mode of feedback. Thus, a total number of four girls participated in the piloting and final data collection phases of this study. A mere four participants cannot be considered a representative sample of the South African population of students assessed in the Educational Psychology domain. However, since I employed an interpretivist paradigm (Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Schurink, 1998), my intent was not to be able to generalise the findings of this study (see Section 3.2 in Chapter 3 for discussion on the paradigmatic perspective of this study). Instead, my objective in this study was to provide a detailed description of the *experiences* of the participants, the Educational Psychologist and

myself (as researcher in the role of observer) during the completion of the two modes of feedback interviews.

Secondly, the groups of participants that experienced the two modes of feedback interviews ***did not reflect a diverse population or gender sample*** and were not representative of the variety of individuals, races, cultures and genders existing in the South African population (see Table 3.1 in Chapter 3 for summary of participants' demographic details). The experiences of these participants may thus be case/culture specific and once again cannot be generalised to a greater population.

Thirdly, the differences between the participants' characteristics and personalities in terms of their levels of expressiveness and engagement with the Educational Psychologist during the two modes of feedback interviews may have impacted on the findings of this study through my observations (recorded during my role as observer).

Finally, the last limiting factor during this study relates to the experiences of my family member who participated in the final data collection interviews. As the findings of the study indicate in Section 4.4.1.1, she expressed some apprehension that she had felt as a result of having a relative watching her feedback interview. This may have inhibited her levels of engagement and her willingness to express herself freely during my presence behind the two-way glass. The Educational Psychologist also observed the participant's anxiety in this regard and recorded her observation as follows: *"I could see that she was not comfortable during the feedback"* (Educational Psychologist's diary, 5-03-2010, p. 3, lines 6-7).

## 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

As I stated in Chapter 3 (Section 3.2.1) the purpose of this study was not to be able to generalise findings to a greater population (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001; Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Patton, 2002). Evidently, due to the nature and outcome of this study I was

not able to generalize my findings to the greater population. However, this fact highlights a possible area for *future studies*, emanating from the results of *this* study. Therefore, in order to be able to generalise findings of a study of this nature, I recommend that similar research be completed with a larger sample of participants who represent a wider variety of the cultural/social groups in South Africa, as well as a variety of age groups. Such a study may explore whether factors such as strength-building, engagement and confidence do in fact arise from a larger positive psychological feedback sample. A study of this nature may also explore the experience of a positive psychological feedback if the assessment and feedback were to be completed by one individual (unlike in this study), as well as to investigate the occurrence of strength-building, and increased self-confidence and problem-solving skills in the participants.

## 5.6 CLOSING REMARKS

On a closing note I would like to reiterate the idea that while the traditional and positive psychological modes of feedback were used as a basis for comparison in this study they are not necessarily the only two modes of conducting feedback that exist. Findings of this study allude to the fact that the positive psychological mode of feedback exists *in addition to, rather than in place of the traditional mode* of feedback.

The results of this study yielded proof that the therapeutic alliance between the client and therapist is a greater defining factor in terms of the effectiveness of the therapeutic relationship, than the mode of feedback being employed. I have thus had the opportunity to witness the significance of the therapeutic alliance during the administration of the two modes of feedback interviews and provide a comparison of the two modes through the findings of this study.

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# **RESEARCHER'S RESEARCH DIARY**

**OBSERVATIONS, REFLECTIONS & FIELDNOTES  
BY SAFIA MOHAMED**



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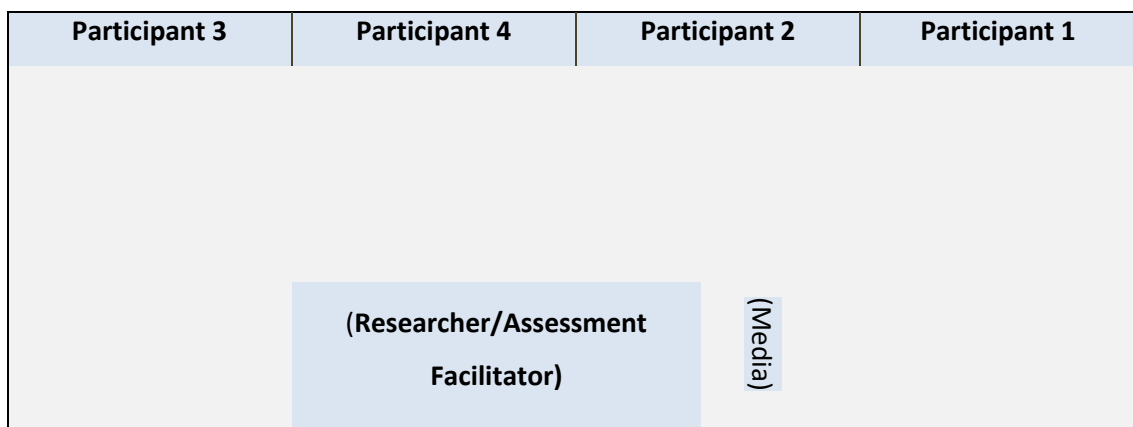
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# RESEARCHERS' DIARY – FIELDNOTES AND REFLECTIONS

## 1. Day 1: Psychometric assessment for subject-choices – 28/8/2009

- Participants arrived at 14h30.
- I introduced myself and began an introductory session where I informed them of the nature and purpose of the study, the role players that they would meet during the data collection process, their rights as participants and the benefits of doing the assessment and participating in the study.
- The process that would be followed during the various data collection phases was explained so as to eliminate any uncertainty and fears.
- I went through a biographical data form that I had prepared and the psychometric assessment consent form.
- At 15h05 I began administering the DAT assessment.
- The venue (the University of Pretoria training clinic) was well lit and ventilated.
- The girls seemed to adjust easily and we established a good level of rapport. This may have been positively influenced by the presence of the participant who is my relative, and was also their friend.
- This relative acted as a link between the participants and me. Since she was very relaxed and comfortable around me they seemed to model her behaviour and they responded in the same manner.
- There also seemed to be an element of excitement amongst the girls. The session ended without any 'hiccups'.

Illustration of participants seating during assessment:



1       **2. Day 2: Psychometric assessment for subject-choices (Cont.) – 29/8/2009**

- 2           • Participants were used to me by this session.
- 3           • Everything went smoothly.
- 4           • The SAVII, JPQ and incomplete sentences were administered.
- 5           • These assessments measures are less intimidating than the DAT (which feels like a test). The
- 6           impact of this was obvious in the participant’s easygoing manner.
- 7           • In general all the participants were very easy to work with. None of the indicated any
- 8           difficulty with understanding or complying with assessment instructions or tasks. They asked
- 9           very few questions and completed the assessment over the two days in an easy-going and
- 10          relaxed manner.

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1      **3. Observations of participants over day 1 and 2 – combined (28-29/8/2009)**

	Phase participated in	Mode of feedback received
Participant A	Pilot	Traditional
Participant B	Pilot	Positive psychological
Participant C	Data collection	Traditional
Participant D	Data collection	Positive psychological

2

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- Participant A

4

- Pleasant and very reserved.
- Moderate work tempo but very thorough.
- Observed as an astute individual!
- Gives the impression of having a high confidence.

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- Participant B

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- Warm and pleasant personality observed.
- Passive learner.
- Slow work tempo, even though her answers are right when she's needs to respond.
- Possibly lagging behind in *this* group simply because the others in the group are just working faster than average.

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- Participant C

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- Independent worker – makes attempts to reason out her tasks on her own and only asks if she really can't figure it out on her own.
- Was relaxed and did not seem stressed or tense at having to complete any of the assessment measures/tasks.

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- Participant D

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- Came across as confident and understood instructions easily.
- Worked quickly and efficiently.

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1       **4. Piloting of study (19/2/2010)**

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3       Data to be collected in this session:

- 4           ▪ Audio-visual recordings
- 5           ▪ Transcripts of audio-visual recordings
- 6           ▪ My field notes and reflections
- 7           ▪ Educational Psychologists reflections
- 8           ▪ Participants pre-feedback narrative (their expectations)
- 9           ▪ Participants post-feedback narratives (their experiences)

10  
11       **4.1 Participant A – traditional feedback pilot**

- 12           ▪ Participant was easily engaging and freely expressing herself and sharing with the
- 13           Educational Psychologist.
- 14           ▪ The Educational Psychologist was reading a at times from the psychometric report that I had
- 15           prepared. This was not ideal and should not be repeated in the final data collection
- 16           interviews. To be discussed with her...
- 17           ▪ The Educational Psychologist and participant seemed unsure around each other. They came
- 18           across as two strangers engaging in a conversation.
- 19           ▪ The Educational Psychologist also moved too fast through the feedback at certain times.
- 20           Again, not to be repeated in data collection interviews, therefore, I will discuss with her prior
- 21           to data collection interviews.
- 22           ▪ The Educational Psychologist explored with the participant her own expectations of herself
- 23           and her career options.
- 24           ▪ The participants non-verbal gestures increasingly hinted towards an open and receptive
- 25           attitude as the session progressed.
- 26           ▪ Body language: both participant and Educational Psychologist leaning in = displaying
- 27           involvement and engagement. Educational Psychologist used her results to motivate her.
- 28           Participant was noticeably happy during the incorporation of her results into the discussion
- 29           of her psychometric outcome.
- 30           ▪ Her positive change was noted in her mood by the time they reached the end of the session.

## 4.2 Participant B – positive psychological feedback pilot

- The personal styles of the 2 participants in the pilot study were different, in terms of their level of engagement with the Educational Psychologist. Thus, their experiences of the feedback may differ, regardless of the mode of feedback being delivered.
- The Educational Psychologist explained all the assessment measures well. As she did in the traditional feedback as well. She also seemed less nervous and more in control during this feedback. She did not show the participant her personal notes nor read from the report as she did in the traditional feedback.
- Because this participant was more expressive and open to discussion (compared to the traditional feedback participant) they tended to explore the assessment results more intensely.
- The Educational Psychologist completed the positive psychology aspect of the feedback very well!! 😊
- She explored the participant's incomplete sentences responses in detail and allowed it to sink in with the participant, so that she could fully understand it.
- The Educational Psychologist paid the same amount of detailed attention to the discussion of the participant's weaknesses.
- In the final study though, from my observations I feel that the Educational Psychologist should pay more attention to, and clarify the distinction between the individual and environmental strengths and weaknesses.
- The Educational Psychologist did the last step in a very concrete manner and based her discussion on the participants own examples and statements that she contributed to the discussion. This proved very effective and was brilliantly done by the Educational Psychologist.
  - Through this technique, she was able to illustrate to the participant how to overcome her weaknesses using her strengths, making use of a very thorough discussion.
  - She also gave the participant the opportunity to try out the process herself and practice doing it on her own. This was a very good opportunity for the participant and it created a sustainable impact on her.
  - I observed the closing-off of the session to be slightly abrupt and I will discuss with the Educational Psychologist the process/technique of employing closing statements that create a sustainable effect.
  - In general, from my observations I felt that in the data collection phase it may be necessary to include a process so as to allow the participants and the Educational

1 Psychologist to establish a solid relationship and build effective rapport. The main  
2 reason for this is that I observed that at times they seemed a bit 'forced together'. They  
3 did not have the opportunity to establish rapport as a client and Educational  
4 Psychologist *normally* would during the psychometric assessment phase. I had  
5 completed the assessment phase and so the participants therefore established that  
6 initial rapport with me and they bonded with me instead of the Educational  
7 Psychologist who was now conveying their results. I felt that it was almost as if they had  
8 to listen to someone tell them about themselves when may not have felt like that  
9 person really knew much about them.

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1       **5. Preparatory/ Handing-over session**

- 2           ▪ This session was conducted jointly with me, the Educational Psychologist and the two  
3           participants of the data collection phase, with the intent of handing over the participants  
4           from my ‘care’ to that of the Educational Psychologists for the feedback process.
- 5           ▪ From my observations I feel that rapport was well established between the participants and  
6           the Educational Psychologist during this short session.
- 7           ▪ I also felt that this short joint session with all of us present gave the overall process more  
8           structure and focus since the Educational Psychologist and we jointly outlined the entire  
9           process for the participants in detail and this seemed to put them at ease.
- 10          ▪ We also used humour to try to relax the participants while explaining to them what they  
11          could expect from us on that day.
- 12          ▪ They were noticeably more comfortable with the Educational Psychologist after this short  
13          session.
- 14          ▪ While explaining to the participants the process that they would experience today, we also  
15          explained that the assessment measures give us information about their personal  
16          characteristics and these characteristics will eventually direct them into a particular career  
17          field. Thus, the Educational Psychologist analysed their results and responses on the various  
18          measures (just as I would have) and as a results she now has a deeper understanding of  
19          them. This knowledge will allow her to complete the feedbacks in a thorough manner.

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1       **6. Participant C – traditional feedback interview – Data collection (20 minutes)**

- 2           ▪ The Educational Psychologist introduced the feedback very well by explaining the value of  
3           the psychometric results.
- 4           ▪ This seemed to make the participant feel like she had a thorough understanding of her built  
5           trust in the participant in the results that the Educational Psychologist was conveying.
- 6           ▪ The Educational Psychologist explored the participant’s most recent academic results,  
7           building the trust relationship between them further.
- 8           ▪ The Educational Psychologist constantly went into detail and reassured the participant with  
9           explanations and examples from her based on her responses. This made the feedback more  
10          concrete and credible.
- 11          ▪ The Educational Psychologist also constantly used non-verbal communication to create a  
12          warm and engaging discussion, by leaning toward the participant and using gestures and  
13          drawing diagrams to explain to the participant what she was saying.
- 14          ▪ The Educational Psychologist also constantly asked the participant for her opinion on the  
15          results to see if she agreed with what was being said and what the assessment measures  
16          indicated.
- 17          ▪ The participant maintained reserved body language which reflected her limited sharing and  
18          engagement in the discussion. This may have been due to nervousness that she experienced  
19          as a result of having me behind the glass, observing the feedback, as this participant was my  
20          relative. This may be a limitation to the study.
- 21          ▪ The Educational Psychologist linked the SAVII results to potential careers. She also drew a  
22          pattern between the different test results and brought them together into a holistic and  
23          easy-to-understand ‘package’. This put the information that was being conveyed into  
24          context for the participant and helped her to understand what it all meant for her on a  
25          practical level.
- 26          ▪ The manner and tone in which the Educational Psychologist conveys the information to the  
27          participant throughout the feedback creates a very authentic feel, and enhances the trust  
28          relationship.
- 29          ▪ During this feedback the Educational Psychologist did not move too quickly through the  
30          information with the participant, as she did in the pilot study...

1 **7. Participant D - positive psychological feedback interview – Data collection (40 minutes)**

- 2       ▪ The Educational Psychologist was very relaxed by the time she got to this feedback and  
3       seemed very confident of herself.
- 4       ▪ She maintained an open body language.
- 5       ▪ The interaction styles of the two girls is different, therefore their responses and experiences  
6       may differ. The level of engagement and sharing with the Educational Psychologist during  
7       the two modes of feedback differed considerably in the two participants. The participant  
8       that experienced the traditional approach was receptive to the discussion and the  
9       information and recommendations given by the Educational Psychologist, but she did not  
10      enquire or engage further. The participant who experienced the positive psychological  
11      feedback participated and engaged more in the feedback process.
- 12     ▪ She shared the information in a slow and relaxed manner, very thorough and with a  
13      reassuring manner.
- 14     ▪ The Educational Psychologist related the participant’s most recent academic results to the  
15      results that she obtained on the DAT (as she did in the traditional feedback). This helped the  
16      participant to understand the meaning of her assessment results on a practical level.
- 17     ▪ Also, when explaining her personality profile, the Educational Psychologist gave examples to  
18      help her understand the concepts, as she did in the traditional feedback previously as well.
- 19     ▪ Initially the participants body language was closed off (her arms were folded across her  
20      chest). However, by the time the Educational Psychologist started doing the positive  
21      psychological steps of the feedback (step 4 & 5) her arms were open and she was more  
22      receptive. I observed the participant helping the Educational Psychologist to plot her  
23      strengths and weaknesses and adding/sharing details as they went through the process.
- 24     ▪ A distinct improvement in the participant’s confidence and self-assurance was observed as  
25      she went through the positive psychological steps of the feedback. I refer to the process of  
26      plotting her strengths and going through the process of learning to use them to overcome  
27      her weaknesses (those that the psychologist had identified from the assessment results and  
28      the feedback discussion) and challenges that she may encounter in her life – with the  
29      psychologist.
- 30     ▪ Once the participant was used to the Educational Psychologist she did not hold back and  
31      even shared personal information about herself.
- 32     ▪ The Educational Psychologist did the positive psychology aspects of the feedback in a  
33      concrete manner which made it more credible and authentic. She used the participants own  
34      statements as examples, (saying: “remember you said...”). This technique seemed to have a

1 positive effect and encouraged the participant to open up during the feedback and share her  
2 own thoughts. This same technique helped to draw all the feedback information into a  
3 “usable” package that seemed to have a positive and enabling effect on the participant. It  
4 may also have made the feedback information have a more sustainable effect.

- 5 ▪ The interactive examples that the Educational Psychologist used where the  
6 participant had to list things about herself or give examples seemed really effective  
7 as they made the participant understand how she could reapply these same  
8 principles to her life later on, on her own. Thus making it sustainable.
- 9 ▪ The participant displayed satisfaction through her facial expressions such as smiling and  
10 showing content as the Educational Psychologist progressed through the feedback. The  
11 traditional feedback participant displayed similar gestures during her feedback as well.
- 12 ▪ The Educational Psychologist closed the session off well with examples on how to approach  
13 university applications...

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1 **8. Interview schedule for feedback interviews conducted in the two modes**

- 2
- 3 1. Discussion of individual psychometric measures administered.
  - 4 2. Exploring the client's results on each psychometric measure.
  - 5 3. The use of the quadrant map to identify participants' strengths on an individual and
  - 6 environmental level.
  - 7 4. The use of the quadrant map to identify participants' weaknesses and challenges
  - 8 experienced on an individual and environmental level.
  - 9 5. Discussion of subject-choices and career-planning based on client's psychometric
  - 10 results.

11

12 **Traditional feedback ends at Step 5 (above). Educational psychologist continues with**

13 **Step 6-8 only in the positive psychological feedback mode:**

- 14 6. Discussion and exploration of possible strategies that can be put into place to allow
  - 15 the client to use the strengths that have been identified to overcome her
  - 16 weaknesses/challenges that have been identified.
  - 17 7. Devising coping strategies for the client.
  - 18 8. Expanding on career-planning discussion, in relation to strengths that have been
  - 19 identified in the client.
- 20
- 21
- 22
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1 9. Research schedule

RESEARCH SCHEDULE FOR PILOTING & DATA COLLECTION PHASES				
DATE	TIME	TASK COMPLETED	PRESENT DURING SESSION	VENUE
25/8/2009	---	Completed consent and accent forms received from all participants	---	---
28/8/2009	14h30	<b>Psychometric assessment</b> – Day 1	Participants A,B,C & D and researcher	UP Ed Psych Training Clinic
29/8/2009	10h00	<b>Psychometric assessment</b> – Day 2	Participants A,B,C & D and researcher	UP Ed Psych Training Clinic
11/2/2010	8h00	Meeting with research supervisor to finalise format of two modes of feedback	Research supervisor (Prof. L. Ebersöhn) and researcher	Supervisors office
15/2/2010	16h00	Meeting with Educational Psychologist to prepare for pilot phase	Researcher and Educational Psychologist	UP
17/2/2010	16h00	Meeting with Educational Psychologist to prepare for pilot phase	Researcher and Educational Psychologist	UP
19/2/2010	17h00 - 18h30	<b>Pilot study</b> of two modes of feedback interviews	Participants A & B, researcher (as observer) and Educational Psychologist.	UP Ed Psych Training Clinic

2/3/2010	8h00	Discussion of pilot study with research supervisor	Researcher, Educational Psychologist and research supervisor.	Supervisors office
3/3/2010	15h00 - 17h00	Meeting with Educational Psychologist to prepare for data collection	Educational Psychologist and researcher	UP
5/3/2010	15h00 - 17h00	<b>Final data collection</b> (two modes of feedback interviews completed)	Participants C & D, researcher (as observer) and Educational Psychologist	UP Ed Psych Training Clinic
23/3/2010	16h00	<b>Validation interviews</b> with participants	Participant C & D and researcher (individually with each participant)	Telephonically
5/3/2010 – 31/8/2010	---	Coding, analysis of data and writing up of study	Researcher (supervised by Prof. L. Ebersöhn)	---



## INCOMPLETE SENTENCES

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**OCCUPATION / GRADE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete the following sentences using complete sentences. Try to complete all the sentences.

1. I am happy when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I cope best when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. I distance myself from people when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. I find enjoyment in \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. I feel hopeless when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. I feel like I am able to do my work well when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. My expectations for myself at school are \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. I'm interested in \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. My values are \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. I feel satisfied at school when \_\_\_\_\_



---

11. The challenges I experience within myself are \_\_\_\_\_

---

12. The one thing I do to make my things easier for myself is \_\_\_\_\_

---

13. When I have a lot of work to finish at one time I \_\_\_\_\_

---

14. I'm preparing for my future by \_\_\_\_\_

---

15. I experience dissatisfaction in my schooling environment when \_\_\_\_\_

---

16. The people who support me are \_\_\_\_\_

---

17. I experience my school work as stressful when \_\_\_\_\_

---

18. My work supports me through \_\_\_\_\_

---

19. When I achieve to my potential at school I feel \_\_\_\_\_

---

20. The things I am not sure about at school are \_\_\_\_\_

---

21. In school we interact by \_\_\_\_\_

---

22. My school is unfair because of \_\_\_\_\_





---

23. My school's values are \_\_\_\_\_

---

24. The realities of my schooling career are \_\_\_\_\_

---

25. The school's resources are \_\_\_\_\_

---

26. My teachers expectations of me at school are \_\_\_\_\_

---

27. I feel engaged in my schoolwork when \_\_\_\_\_

---

### RATIONALE FOR EACH SENTENCE

SENTENCE No.	TRAIT / FACTOR BEING ASSESSED
<b>The following incomplete sentences relate to the client as an individual</b>	
1	Factors that contribute to happiness.
2	The aspect of resilience, i.e. - one's ability to bounce back from challenges. Coping methods/strategies that increase resilience.
3	Dimension of cynicism.
4	Gain knowledge on what activities free time is spent on, to propose as possible relaxation activities as to avoid the dimension of exhaustion.
5	Dimension of inefficacy.
6	Competency, preventative of burnout.
7	Too high expectations lead to burnout.
8	Interests add meaning to an individual's life and thus motivate people. A mismatch between individual's interests and career path could cause burnout.
9	Aspect of values. As a mismatch between an individual's values and a workplace values can lead to burnout.
10	Job engagement and the three dimensions of job engagement (vigour, absorption, dedication).
11	Existing challenges that client needs to work to overcome.
12	Strategies to manage life situations effectively.
13	Strategies to manage life situations effectively.
<b>The following incomplete sentences relate to environmental and social aspects relative to the client</b>	
14	Organisational characteristics that could cause burnout. Find out if they prepare for challenges in the economy.
15	Eliminates the aspect of depression as burnout should just be linked to job situation.
16	Effective support systems reduce chances of burnout.
17	Responsibilities and stress, as too high could cause burnout.
18	Unresolved issues at work could cause burnout.
19	Area of work life, namely reward. If a mismatch occurs between individual and organization based on this organizational characteristic burnout can occur.
20	Does planning for future occur?
21	Area of work life, namely community. If a mismatch occurs between individual and organization based on this organizational characteristic burnout can occur.
22	Area of work life, namely fairness. If a mismatch occurs between individual and organization based on this organizational characteristic burnout can occur.
23	Area of work life, namely values. If a mismatch occurs between individual and organization based on this organizational characteristic burnout can occur.
24	Can be limitations.
25	Resources leads to pleasure, pleasure leads to job engagement.
26	Too high expectations lead to burnout.
27	Absorption and engagement in work leads more to job engagement and its three dimensions.



**PARTICIPANT 01 (T)**

**Describe your experience of the feedback that you just received in terms of what you expected:**

This feedback lived up to my expectations. I learnt about how I could express myself and what career choices would suit me other than the few I had in mind. I also learnt that I have a potential to do better at English which I didn't know before. I expected it to be more intimidating to have Safia sitting behind the glass but once we started I was relaxed and I thoroughly enjoyed it.



PARTICIPANT 02 (P)

Describe your experience of the feedback that you just received in terms of what you expected:

career info

1 My experience today was very informative and also gave me a  
 2 sense of direction that will influence the choices I will have to  
 3 make later in life.  
 4  
 5 The feedback did meet my expectations. I was pleased with what I  
 6 got back.  
 7  
 8 It opened up a platform for me to discuss my strengths as well as  
 9 weaknesses.

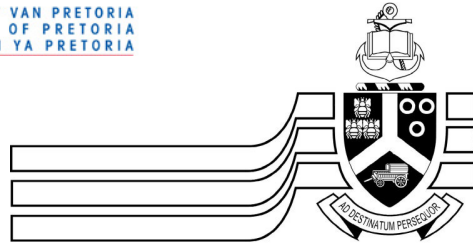
career & self-knowledge

Satisfactory & positive experience.

Strength building opportunity for positive psychological health.



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YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA



University of Pretoria

**Department of Educational Psychology**

Pretoria 0002 Republic of South Africa  
Tel (012) 420 3751; Fax (012) 420 5511  
<http://www.up.ac.za>

**DEAR PARENTS**

Your child is invited to participate in a research study aimed at comparing a psychometric feedback done from the perspective of positive psychology to one done from the traditional perspective.

She will be involved in a research process that will include a thorough psychometric assessment that will be done in the format of a subject-choice assessment, with the aim of assisting your daughter in choosing appropriate subjects and informing then about potential career directions, which may prove helpful to her in the coming years. This process will be duly explained to her in detail.

The psychometric assessment will include assessment measures that will assess aptitude/ability (Differential Aptitude Test), a personality test (Jung Personality Test), an interest questionnaire (South African Vocational Interest Inventory), and Incomplete sentences (to be analysed by an intern Psychologist: Ms. Wendy Carvalho-Malekane). I may also require access to you child's academic results. All assessments will be conducted by trained, registered and competent professionals.

When planning a career, it is essential to have a clear picture of what you want and what is required of you, in order to achieve your career goals. The key to planning a career (or determining your field of study/course) is in finding the right occupation that will *suit your individual talents*, and enable you to use them to your advantage. This will be influenced by your general attitudes and motivation. It is thus important to be aware of what your attitudes towards yourself, learning, work,

people and money are. This refers to the process of gaining *self-knowledge* and will thus allow participants to choose what is good for them.

Having understood that, it must also be understood that it is important that this process of making an *informed* career choice starts early, to ensure that the subjects that are chosen are relevant for the participants chosen/future field of study. This will allow participants to be in a position to choose a career that *matches* her personal characteristics, qualifications (subjects) and circumstances with those required in the chosen/future field.

The above information brings us to the point of the intended research project. There are numerous benefits and advantages of having a psychometric assessment of this nature done. Should you and your child choose to be a part of this research process, it will allow your child the opportunity to get to know herself in the manner described above. The research process, which will include the psychometric assessment described above, will provide a rounded view of the participant that will highlight her needs, talents, potential and possible field of study. At the end of this process, participants will be provided with an in-depth feedback session of the results of your psychometric assessment, as well as a thorough written report of the assessment results. The in-depth feedback session will be completed by an intern Educational Psychologist (Ms. Wendy Carvalho-Malekane) and *this will form the main part of the research process.*

Please take note that there is a distinction between ordinarily receiving psychological services and in this case, as part of a research process. In the case of research, the participant will be expected to take part in other activities as well, such as commenting on their expectations of the feedback process (prior to) and their experiences of (after) the feedback process.

Throughout this process, Ms. Carvalho-Malekane, who is an Educational Psychologist, will closely assist me in the psychometric process. She will take responsibility for administering the psychometric feedbacks that will be done and will be consulted further, during the analysis of assessment results. Parents should be aware of this and not expect otherwise. I have opted not to do the feedbacks myself in order to maintain objectivity throughout the process.

The dates and times of these assessments will be arranged to both yours and your child's convenience, and takes approximately 5 hours to complete. The feedback sessions, which are focus of the study, may be completed during a weekday at the premises of the University of Pretoria (Groenkloof Campus). This will be arranged with you in advance, so that your child does not miss out on vital work or assessments at school.

The reason for completing the feedback interviews at the premises of the University of Pretoria is that these feedback sessions will be videotaped using the University's facilities, which will assist me in capturing valuable non-verbal communication and data, thus increasing the richness of the data collected. These videotapes will be stored at the University, as a standard procedure, for a period of 15 years. This entire data-collection process is expected to span over approximately one month, all arrangements and costs will be taken care of by myself and overseen by my supervisor, Dr. Liesel Ebersöhn, of the University of Pretoria.

An important issue is that of indemnity. While the greatest of care will be taken with your child during her time with me, parents are still expected to formally take responsibility for allowing their child to be in my care for that time. I thus request you to sign the attached consent and indemnity form.

Throughout this process I will strictly adhere to the ethical principle of privacy. This means that confidentiality and anonymity of all participants will be protected at all times. It must be emphasised that yours and your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary and confidential. Any participant may withdraw at any point during this study if she wishes to do so.

I would like to clearly state that parents must bear in mind that while the greatest care will be taken to ensure the accuracy of the psychometric results, the subjects/careers that are suggested are merely recommendations and ***the final choice of subjects (or careers) to be chosen still remains with the participant.***

The results of this study will contribute to the existing literature on positive psychology and specifically, its use in psychometric feedbacks, on both a national and an international level (since this is a relatively new area in psychology). The results of this study will be published in the form of a dissertation, for completion

of a Masters degree in Educational Psychology. It may also be used to publish articles in academic journals or for further research at a later stage. No research records or personal details of participants will be revealed, unless required by law.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to both parents and participants for your participation and assistance. Please feel free to contact me on the following number: 072 224 7086.

Thanking you in advance,



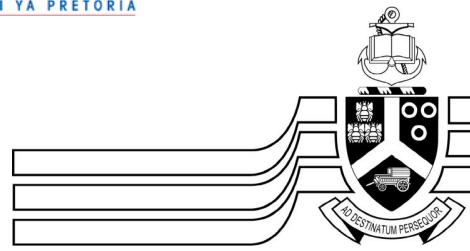
Safia Mohamed

**Psychometrist**





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## **DEAR PARTICIPANTS**

I refer to my intended research project entitled: “A comparative clinical case study of a traditional and a positive psychological psychometric feedback”.

When planning a career, you need to have a clear picture of what you want and what is required of you, in order to achieve that. The key to planning a career (or determining your field of study/course) is in finding the right occupation that will suit your individual talents, and enable you to use them to your advantage. This will be influenced by your general attitudes and motivation. It can therefore be easily understood why it becomes important to be aware of your attitudes towards yourself, learning, work, people and money. Simply put, *self-knowledge* will allow you to understand yourself and thus choose what is good for you.

Having understood that, it must also be understood that it is important that this process of making an *informed* career choice starts as early as Grade 9, to ensure that the subjects that you have chosen are relevant for your chosen/future field of study. This will allow you to be in a position to choose a career that *matches* your personal characteristics, qualifications (subjects) and circumstances with those required in your chosen/future field.

The above information brings us to the point of my intended research project. Should you choose to be a part of his research process, it will allow you the opportunity to get to know yourself in the manner described above. The research process will include a thorough psychometric assessment, whereby your aptitude and ability, personality, interests and aspirations will be assessed, providing you

with a rounded view of yourself that will highlight your needs, talents, potential and where your possible field of study may lie. At the end of this process, you will be provided with an in-depth feedback session of the results of your psychometric assessment, as well as a thorough written report of your assessment results. The in-depth feedback session will be completed by an intern Educational Psychologist (Ms. Wendy Carvalho-Malekane) and *this will form the main part of the research process.*

It must be clearly mentioned that while the greatest care will be taken to ensure the accuracy of the psychometric results, the subjects (and career directions) that are suggested are merely recommendations and the final choice still remains with you, the participant.

I look forward to meeting you and working with you.

Kind regards,



Safia Mohamed  
**(Psychometrist)**

**INFORMED INDEMNITY AND CONSENT: *Parents/Guardians***

I ..... (Parents’/guardian name) hereby give consent for ..... (Participants name: child/ward) to participate in the research project of Safia Mohamed entitled “*A comparative clinical case study of a traditional and a positive psychological psychometric feedback*”. I take full responsibility for my child/ward and will not hold Ms. Mohamed, the University of Pretoria, its personnel nor any other persons/body affiliated with the University of Pretoria, its personnel or students for any events that may occur involving my child/ward. I fully understand mine and my child/wards rights in this study and give full consent to the researcher to complete the psychometric assessments, have access to my child/wards academic results and, when necessary, remove my child/ward from school (with my prior knowledge). I further consent to the storage of video tapes of the proposed feedback sessions at the University of Pretoria.

Parents signature: .....  
Parents Full Name: .....  
Date: .....

---

**INFORMED ACCENT: *Participants***

I ..... (Participants name) hereby declare that I willingly participate in the research process proposed by Safia Mohamed and I understand my rights as a participant, including my right to withdraw at any point during the study. I understand what is expected of me in my participation in this study, and the implications of my participation.

Participants signature: .....  
Participants Full Name: .....  
Date: .....

## 1. PILOT STUDY: REFLECTION: TRADITIONAL /POSITIVE

I was very nervous for the initial feedback as it had been a while that I had done a feedback, specifically related to career and subject choice, but I prepared for it by going through the reports and assessments of the clients.

I was also anxious as I had not done the initial assessment process with the clients, and was concerned about how they would both feel towards me as we had not gone through the entire process together. Therefore, it was important to me to initiate rapport with them and make them feel as comfortable as possible before the feedback was undertaken.

I felt challenged with the traditional feedback, as I work from a positive psychology and asset-based approach/framework, and utilise these theories in all my interactions with my clients as I was trained to work in that manner. I felt that the traditional feedback was very limiting for me, as I always make it a point to discuss individual strengths and assets in the client's system that can be used to support and overcome challenges in their lives. Therefore, at times during the traditional feedback I felt that I had to stop myself into going into a positive feedback scenario with the client. So for me not being able to go through that positive psychology journey with the client during the traditional feedback, was very limiting and I felt guilty as I felt that I was not giving her the whole package that I usually give , during my services.

The positive feedback was well received by the client. She was learning life skills that she could apply to her life and I could see that she was learning a lot about herself during the feedback.

When both sessions were over, I felt that the positive psychology client was more happy and had enjoyed the session and she had felt that she had learnt a lot from the sessions, however, the traditional client was still quiet and reserved..... however, this could also be attributed to the different personality types that I noted in the



1 clients, as the positive psychology client was more energetic and open, whereas the  
2 traditional feedback was quiet and reserved.

3 =====

4

## 1. MAIN STUDY: REFLECTION: TRADITIONAL AND POSITIVE

This time around, I was less nervous and knew what was expected of me during a positive psychology feedback.

The **Traditional feedback** with the client was very tiring as I could see that she was not comfortable during the feedback. I felt that she wanted to engage in the process but was holding herself back (this could be attributed to the fact that her relative was the researcher, and was observing the feedback...). At times, she also seemed to be making statements that she thought would satisfy and make me happy. So I do not think that she was really honest about herself and feelings/emotions during the feedback.

She did not easily express herself and this was tiring as I always make sure that the feedback interview is an interaction or engagement between me and the client, as I do not want to be seen as some who just disseminates information to the client and that's the end of the feedback.

I prefer to engage with the client and encourage discussions around the results of the assessment. So it was tiring, trying to engage with the client during the feedback while she was not engaging. But I also need to accept that not all clients want to engage in the feedback and at times some just want the information from the feedback.

Again, I would have wanted to look more intently at her positive individual traits and assets in her system, so as to possibly give her life skills to assist in overcoming challenges. In this feedback I explained the assessment measures that were administered, the results that she received, the strengths and weaknesses that the results highlighted and the implications of those results in terms of career-related recommendations. Again, I felt that she was denied of a positive feedback experience. However, I did link all the information for her so that she could

1 understand it. In both the traditional and the positive psychology feedback I  
2 highlighted strengths and weaknesses of the client.

3  
4 My **positive psychology feedback** with my client went really well. While I was  
5 analysing the assessments and results, I could already pick up that she used positive  
6 psychology in her own life. She mentioned that she always tried to have a positive  
7 outlook on life. So this positive individual trait of hers was used during the feedback.  
8 I used this asset of hers to show her, how to overcome several challenges in her life. I  
9 could see that she really enjoyed the exercise and could also see that she was  
10 already applying her positive outlook on life to aspects in her life already. She  
11 seemed to understand how to use strengths to overcome challenges after we had  
12 completed this exercise. This session felt more like a therapy session, but a good  
13 session.

14  
15 At the beginning of the feedback, she felt that she was not reaching her potential  
16 and not working hard enough and yet she is an 'A' student. By the end of the  
17 feedback, I could sense that she was realising that at times she was being hard on  
18 herself and actually achieving a lot in her life already. I think that this experience  
19 made her realise that she was actually realising her potential in life. She was more  
20 relaxed and positive by the end of the session.

21  
22 She also seemed much more relaxed and at peace with herself by the end of the  
23 feedback. I felt that this feedback was very beneficial for her. It was more interactive  
24 than the traditional feedback.

25  
26 And it was also a reminder to me how the positive psychology and asset-based  
27 approaches are so beneficial in my interactions with people in general and how it can  
28 change your perspective on life.

## TRANSCRIPTION OF *POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL FEEDBACK INTERVIEW- PILOT* STUDY

**Educational Psychologist:** Okay, so let's look at your results from the assessment that you did with Safia. If there's anything that you don't understand, or you want to ask something or you disagree with something then just say EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST I don't understand. I don't mind at all okay.

**Participant B:** okay... (laughs).

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, the first thing that you did was an aptitude assessment. I think you remember it was the assessment that was very long and it had several little smaller tests in it.

**Participant B:** oh, ja ja...

**Educational Psychologist:** so basically what this aptitude assessment is all about is that it assesses your ability to learn from an educational experience. So it assesses the likelihood of you succeeding in a certain career or in a certain subject.

What we found with regards to your academic skills... this basically relates to your performance at school and it says here that you're average. What average basically entails, I'll draw this little diagram here for you (draws graph). This is a low ability and this is a high ability. And in the middle here is where most of the people, approximately 60% of the population falls in this average category. And what this means is that these are the people that go on to university and they do well at university and they can even start their own businesses.

**Participant B:** alright.

**Educational Psychologist:** but I did look at your report and you're doing well.

Here they talk about your clerical abilities and you have above average skills. It basically means that you have good language and mathematical skills.

**Participant B:** don't do well in English but. Last year I got like a "C"

**Educational Psychologist:** hold up.. (Opens report). Look how well you did here.

**Participant B:** (laughs)

**Educational Psychologist:** so you want to try and do better now?

**Participant B:** ja....

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, the next thing that was assessed was your personality. And basically, a personality assessment looks at your personality, what motivates you, and your strengths. And what we found out of personality is that you are a very enthusiastic and friendly person, and that you like to work in a team, you like to work with others and you....very talkative? (laughs)

**Participant B:** I am (laughs).



**Educational Psychologist:** and you like routine work as well. do you know what that means?

**Participant B:** no...

**Educational Psychologist:** routine work basically means that, like for example I'm like that and I know that at 7 o'clock I'm going to do this and at 8 o'clock I'm going to do that...

**Participant B:** so it's when you like to be organised. ja.. I do like to be organised. I don't like to be in a messy state.

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, that's good. And it also goes on to say that you have good outgoing skills and social skills. And that you warm and generous and that you like to help other people.

**Participant B:** yes that true...I love to meet new people. I can make friends with new people in like two minutes, I'm not shy.

**Educational Psychologist:** so you agree with what I'm saying? (Participant B nods). Okay the next thing that we did was to also look at your interests. And basically what this does is to make sure that you're interests are aligned with your career. Remember, at the end of the day you want to enjoy what you doing. And what we found is that you a very creative individual, you may like music, art, drama and you have a big imagination. And you also scientific and investigative and basically that means that you enjoy investigating physical and biological phenomenon.

**Participant B:** no I don't like science.

**Educational Psychologist:** really?

**Participant B:** I do like it but I do very badly in science. It's my lowest marks in my report. Science is always a stressful subject, but I'm going for tuition now. It's like maths.

**Educational Psychologist:** oh okay.

**Participant B:** and the teacher is a very strict marker.

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, so are you coping?

**Participant B:** ja.

**Educational Psychologist:** okay that good... and then if we continue... you also very conventional. You like routine work, and you're efficient and you like accounting.

And then you also had incomplete sentences with Safia, do you remember that? (Participant B nods yes). Okay and what we found again is that you have very high moral values and you like to interact with other people and you very caring and you have a generous manner.

Is that okay? Do you have any questions so far?

**Participant B:** no... I'm happy with what I'm hearing.

**Educational Psychologist:** alright, that good!! Okay now what we going to do is to list all the strengths that you have and all the challenges that you experiencing. And so far we've heard of a lot of the strengths that you have, you a caring individual....

Alright, so looking through all of this we can see that you have good relations with other people. Do you agree? (Participant B Nods yes). So can we put it as a strength?

**Participant B:** yes. I'm a very sociable person.

**Educational Psychologist:** Okay...then I like what you say here about helping others, like helping your friends with their homework.

**Participant B:** I love helping my friends, especially when they don't understand their maths homework.

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, so that one of your strengths.

And then lets see...if we look here there's a lot of expectations of you here. To be an "A" student. Who's expectations are these?

**Participant B:** mine..

**Educational Psychologist:** so you're very hard on yourself?

**Participant B:** not really, but I have been coming out in the top 10 in class and I don't like to be unclear on anything. There's the top 10 in our grade (not just our class), but they don't tell you what number you are..

**Educational Psychologist:** so you a hard worker!! I'm going to put it as a strength here.

**Participant B:** ja.. you have to do your work all the time. And you have to understand all the time.

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, that good.. And let's see here. You have good values; you want to be a good person, respectful person. I'm going to put that down here as a strength. And at any time if you think of anything you must tell me okay.

**Participant B:** I want to be a good person and I want people to like me and I don't want people to think I'm a horrible person.. I want people to come towards me.

**Educational Psychologist:** alright so you want people to like you. And how would you feel if people didn't like you?

**Participant B:** then I wouldn't care because they just missing out on what I have.

**Educational Psychologist:** hmmm.., I like that. Okay so if we keep looking... let's look at challenges. I noticed sometimes you hate being stresses and worried.

**Participant B:** ja... I think I'm very gullible. Like if my mummy and them shout me then I cry.

**Educational Psychologist:** so you very sensitive? Do you think you worry a lot about what others think of you?

**Participant B:** ja...I want others t have a good impression of me

**Educational Psychologist:** okay that a challenge.. lets write it here.

And if we look here...you say that you write things down when they come to mind. Do you think you have good organisational skills?

**Participant B:** ja.. if I think of something then I have to write it down. I love my school diary. I can't live without it.

**Educational Psychologist:** so you like routine?

**Participant B:** ja...

**Educational Psychologist:** The people that support me are my friends and family.. that a strengths. Who are the people tat support you?

**Participant B:** Participant C is my really good friend, I can tell here anything. But with my family I don't have very good communication skills, but with my friends I know I can tell them anything.

**Educational Psychologist:** okay and then you say that you experience things as stressful when you leave them for last minute. Do you do that a lot?

**Participant B:** yes!

**Educational Psychologist:** okay then we'll list that as a challenge. (Looking through answer sheets) okay then we done here... now, can you think of anything that you like about yourself?

**Participant B:** Ja... I like my sociable skills. And I think I'm very friendly, I think people can come to me for anything and I won't turn anyone down. I like to e there for people when they need me. And people can talk to me about stuff when they want advice. I'm a very open person. I just say what I feel. But then sometimes that's not a good thing, because sometimes you can hurt people. But sometimes I also just say things out without realising...then I'm not very trustworthy.

**Educational Psychologist:** can we put that down here... (Participant B nods). Okay, is there any other challenges that you can think of?

(Reads through what she wrote on list)

**Participant B:** ja that sounds like me..I think worry a lot about when people talk about me!

**Educational Psychologist:** I think you're also very aware of yourself. (Writes on list)

**Participant B:** Ja

**Educational Psychologist:** okay now we've listed you strengths and challenges, I think we can agree that your biggest 1 is that you worry about what other people think about you (Participant B nods in agreement). In life

we all have our own strengths and weaknesses. I have mine and you have your own. In your case I think it's really nice that you so aware of what yours are.

Now what we going to do, is we going to do some examples of how we can use your strengths to overcome your weaknesses.

So her you say for example, leaving things for the last minute. What I've noticed here is that you have very good organisational skills. You said you like writing everything down in your diary right (Participant B nods). So that's something that you could use to overcome this challenge. I know it's difficult because that something that you keep on seeing in your diary (Laughs).

**Participant B:** that's true. Because I just see it but I don't do any of it.

**Educational Psychologist:** what came out is that you also like a routine. So try to get into a routine.

**Participant B:** I like being organised but I just....

**Educational Psychologist:** you struggle with it? (Participant B nods). But now you can see that you have the skills for it right. And you like routine. So maybe this situation is showing you that this is not working out for you, and you can try to use your organisational skills to be more organised now. And the strengths that you have can definitely be used to overcome this challenge that you have.

Okay? What do you think?

**Participant B:** Ja...

**Educational Psychologist:** okay let's do another example. Let's see here... You say that you stress a lot and you worry a lot.

**Participant B:** yes, over petty and silly things.

**Educational Psychologist:** so what can you do in this situation? What do you think?

**Participant B:** uhmmm...

**Educational Psychologist:** you can talk to your friends about it. Remember you said that you have difficulty talking to your family but you can talk to your friends? So you must use them. Just like everyone talks to you and you like it, I'm sure your friends will feel good if you talk to them too.

Alright, so that's another example of how to use a strength to overcome a weakness. But now what I want you to do is to use one of your strengths to overcome one of your weaknesses here. You can choose anyone you like... do you understand my handwriting here?

**Participant B:** Ja. Let's see... uhmm, I can work hard to... to overcome my fear and to make the expectations that I have.

**Educational Psychologist:** so are you choosing this one?

**Participant B:** Ja.

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, so you going to work harder to meet your expectations. Alright... any other one that you want to try?

**Participant B:** yes... I can overcome my... having stress of having to do things last minute by having good organisation. Using my good organisation skills.

**Educational Psychologist:** Is there any other ones that you can see?

**Participant B:** uhmm... I don't know what I can do for this one here. It's a big one of mine.

**Educational Psychologist:** you mean worrying about what other people think about you?

**Participant B:** Ja.

**Educational Psychologist:** do you know what I think? I think you can use your self-awareness to overcome that challenge. So just to be aware that this is one of your challenges, and it's something that you can always work on.

Imagine if you weren't aware of it and you were just going with the crown, like you said earlier you're a follower. But at least you aware of it, if it is a challenge right now. And you're working on it. And maybe one day you can be a leader.

So those are your strengths. Do you have any questions about what we just did?

**Participant B:** no.

**Educational Psychologist:** okay so then at the end, Safia just chose some subjects for you based on your responses. Do you do math? And business studies? History? And science?

Well at least you chose some of these. And then if you look at the end here you'll see that Safia has attached certain coping mechanisms that you can use? So it teaches you how to deal with communication, team culture, leadership, changes in your life... alright. And I know you like routine, so this will really apply to you. So you can take this with you and you can read it. And if you still have questions later you can also ask Safia. Do you have any questions at all?

**Participant B:** no...

**Educational Psychologist:** okay then we done!

## TRANSCRIPTION OF *TRADITIONAL* FEEDBACK INTERVIEW – PILOT STUDY

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, remember a while ago you did the assessment with Safia. Today...all I'm going to do is provide you with feedback. At any time, don't be afraid to ask me any questions or anything like that or if there's something that you don't agree with you can say "no Educational Psychologist, I don't agree with this". And please just (exhales deeply) 'ahhh'... just relax! (Laugh together)

Okay... here we have the report that Safia wrote up, we going to go through it.

Alright... so the first assessment that she did, I don't know if you remember it, it was quite a long one. And it had small little ones along the way.

**Participant A:** yes I do...

**Educational Psychologist:** yes, it had small ones along the way. Now that's the first one I'm going to give you feedback on. And basically the feedback that we have is that this for example (pointing at graph) is your aptitude results. Aptitude tells us about your ability to learn something, and your ability to succeed in a certain subject or a certain career later on in life. That's what the test was assessing. What we found is that with regards to your academic skills you fall into the average range. And what that means is that....wait I actually drew something for you here (takes out graph). So some people have high abilities and some have low abilities right, the average range is approximately 60% of the world's population. And what this says is that these are people that usually go on to study further, and they go on to University and they can go into businesses. Okay... so that's what we mean by the average range.

But I saw with your marks, you actually doing above average... you're doing really really well. I was impressed!! Do you study really hard?

**Participant A:** (laughs) yes I do.

**Educational Psychologist:** Okay so that's the academic skills. And then, you also got an average score with regard to your clerical skills. This means that you also have the capacity to do well in your language and mathematical skills.

**Participant A:** mathematical?! (laughs). I don't even like it!

**Educational Psychologist:** (Laughs with Participant A) yes I saw that you don't really like it. But you do have an ability. What don't you like about it?

**Participant A:** I just think that from small I didn't like the subject I don't know why...but I didn't like the subject.

**Educational Psychologist:** really.... Do you struggle to understand the work... or what do you think is the reason?

**Participant A:** yes, I think that it's just the statistics and stuff that I struggle with.

**Educational Psychologist:** Alright.. I see here you said that. But you do have the ability in that area.

Okay, then the next thing we did was the personality questionnaire. What we do basically to assess your personality is to look at your characteristics, what motivates you, what are your strengths... alright. And what we found with regards to your personality is that you like to be a creative individual... with this one again you

must let me know if you agree or not. Also what we found is that you're very warm hearted, you very social, you like being with other people and you like to create relationships. Also, you the type of person that is sympathetic and helpful towards others. So you're more understanding towards other people's needs and problems. And a very responsible person. (Participant A laughs). Alright? And also you are able to simulate positive change in other people's lives. So basically if someone's going through a difficult time you are able to help them through that difficult time.

**Participant A:** that's nice to know...

**Educational Psychologist:** laughs so does that apply to you friends of family?

**Participant A:** yes, say like normally if someone has a problem then they'll come to me and I'll advise them in the right direction.

**Educational Psychologist:** so you're an approachable person... okay, so that's your personality. And then we also did your interests. And basically what this assessment does is that it helps you with your decision making, because obviously at the end of the day you want to end up doing something that you enjoy. Whether it's a career or subjects that you choosing. Otherwise it will be very difficult to enjoy what you doing.

**Participant A:** Ja...

**Educational Psychologist:** so what we found from you... these are the different types of interests (shows diagram) and you are enterprising. So what this means is you are the type of person who is going to enjoy business, you have good leadership qualities and good interpersonal skills, like I said earlier before as well with regards to your personality. I said you have relationship skills. So you're more inclined to do business. And then your other interests include scientific and investigative. Again, you have a curiosity to learn about things around you, alright. And you're very independent. And the next one is social. And again this one ties nicely with your personality that we saw just now. So you're good with people. Again, helping people, cooperating with people and you're very generous. So do you see these positive traits about yourself? They keep popping out.

Alright? And then finally... your informal assessment. And this was based on you sentences. The incomplete sentences that you had to write. And again, the same things kept on coming up. That you're warm and that you have a caring personality. You also enjoy being prepared for stuff, so say for example you have a test on Monday, you'll like to be prepared, you don't like doing things last minute. Alright?

And then what we also notice is that you have a lot of expectations from people around you. And they expect certain things about you. Maybe that at times could be challenging. (Participant A nods constantly in acknowledgement of what the Educational Psychologist is saying.)

So what do you feel people expect from you? I know your dad is a principal...

**Participant A:** Ja... so I'm pressured all the time to be good and to keep to the rules and all of those kinds of things

**Educational Psychologist:** so that must be really tough, how do you deal with it?

**Participant A:** I just kind of behave and follow the rules and stuff. Because I feel that if my dad is setting the rules then I need to follow them otherwise it's a bad example for him. In order to keep him in a high status at the school I need to follow the rules and stuff.

**Educational Psychologist:** sometimes when we with our families we want to make them happy. But what are your expectations of yourself? That's always something that you have to take into consideration.

**Participant A:** I always feel like I need to please my parents. So anything that they feel they want for me I'd like to achieve.

**Educational Psychologist:** and are you happy with this?

**Participant A:** I'm happy with this... (Participant nods and smiles).

**Educational Psychologist:** so at the end of the day we came up with some subjects. I'm not sure what you've chosen for now but Safia chose mathematics, physical science, business economics, history and accounting. Which ones are you currently doing?

**Participant A:** I dropped mathematics at the beginning of this year. I'm doing math literacy, accounting and business studies.

**Educational Psychologist:** so more or less you chose these subjects...at this point in time do you have any questions? Regarding the assessment?

**Participant A:** No... not at this point.

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, then you'll see I have a written report here for you. And you'll see we've attached some coping mechanisms for you for communication, how to deal with change, how to deal with leadership and they all aligned with your personality. So you can take this home and you're more than welcome to read through it. So if you have any questions after this you can still ask...

**Participant A:** okay, thank you....

**Educational Psychologist:** thanks😊



## TRANSCRIPTION OF *POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL FEEDBACK INTERVIEW-* *Participant D*

**Educational Psychologist:** alright, so today like Safia said earlier on I'm just going to give you some feedback. You've already done all the assessment that will help you with your subject-choices and later on with your career choices. So today I'm just going to go through everything that you did and give you feedback. It's very informal and like we said earlier it's your opportunity to find out more about yourself and your life so that you can make informed choices later on in life and to do with your career. And if you don't agree you can just say so. You more than welcome to ask me questions or disagree with what I'm saying

**Participant D:** okay...

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, let begin. We going to look at you as a whole person, we going to look at three main aspects but we going to get a holistic picture. When are going to look at your aptitude, your personality and your interests. I'm going to explain all three just now. And these will help you at the end of the day to make an informed decision. Okay, so let's start with your aptitude, you did the long test. Do you remember?

**Participant D:** Ja...

**Educational Psychologist:** Ja, so with the DAT, it basically gives your ability to learn from a certain educational experience. So it will basically give us information about your potential to succeed in a certain career or subject. So that's what the aptitude test is all about. And it looks at three areas: your academic ability, clerical ability and technical ability. So academic skills it says here 5.3 was your score. So what that means is that academically you can perform at an average level. But actually, when I was looking at your marks I was like Wow!! Your marks are great. You're really performing above average and you're doing great.

Usually about 60% of the population is in the average category, others fall either above average or below average. The average people are usually the ones who can go on to university or college or they'll continue studying later on. So that's the category that you fall in, but from the results that we seeing, you doing really great!!

I don't know how your marks are currently. Maybe you can just share it with me? How are you doing currently?

**Participant D:** uhhh... right now I'm doing well but I don't think I'm performing to my best. I guess I just stress a lot, but I know I can do much better. My marks are like 70's, 75's. but I'm trying to get to 80.

**Educational Psychologist:** so you would like to get 80's...

**Participant D:** Ja.

**Educational Psychologist:** but right now you performing really well so you should really be proud of yourself. Okay...

Then the next one, clerical abilities, your score was 6.25. so there you have an above average ability. And what this basically means is that you have language skills and mathematical skills.

**Participant D:** so that's good!!

**Educational Psychologist:** Yes.. That's good! How are you doing right now with your mathematics and English? How's that going?

**Participant D:** uhhh... good. I'm getting 70's.

**Educational Psychologist:** Great... so you performing at your potential.

And then finally we have technical ability. And here you have... uhhmm, it relates to operating machinery, technical skills and things like engineering.

**Participant D:** no that's not me... not at all!

**Educational Psychologist:** so this will be an area of growth for you. Your score shows that you low average. And if you not interested in it, it's alright.

Then we looked at your personality. The personality assessment what it basically does is that it looks at you personality characteristics, and what your strengths are. And according to this personality test, what we have here is a personality type. And that means that you are extroverted, intuition, and feeling type. And that sounds very big but I'm going to break it down for you okay.

**Participant D:** okay...

**Educational Psychologist:** okay so let me just get this for you.... So, you get extroverts and introverts. For example introverts are people who like to be by themselves, they have a small circle of friends and they're very reflective. Okay, but you the opposite of that. You get energised by being around other people.

**Participant D:** Ja..

**Educational Psychologist:** I see that's true for you?

**Participant D:** Ja.

**Educational Psychologist:** You're active, you're outgoing, you like meeting up with your friends. So you the type of person who likes socialising and going out with your friends. So you interested in other people and you like helping other people. So that's extroverted. The next one is intuition. Intuition is like a gut feeling. You know sometimes when you can feel something is not right, have you ever felt like that?

**Participant D:** Ja...

**Educational Psychologist:** that's your intuition, its your gut feeling. You're the type of person who will go with your intuition. If you in a situation, or a place or even sometimes when you with certain people, you'll get a feeling... that's your intuition.

**Participant D:** true!!

**Educational Psychologist:** is that true? So you've had situations like that?

**Participant D:** Ja... where you just go with what you feel...

**Educational Psychologist:** and then the next one is feeling. And feeling.... Basically this means that when you have to make a decision, you going to make that decision based on how you feel about something. So whether you like something or not, that's how you going to make your decision.

**Participant D:** okay, thank you..

**Educational Psychologist:** and if you look here, Safia has some more information about other nice characteristics of you, lets go through them. So basically you a lively person, with a great imagination and a creative person. You aware of the needs of other people, and you try to see the positive in others as well... and wrote here that you a very creative and innovative, you're a warm hearted individual. And you like to be sociable. Yo understand the needs of others, maybe that's why people come to talk to you.

**Participant D:** Ja...

**Educational Psychologist:** a very responsible person, and you also try to bring about positive change in others.

**Participant D:** fine...

**Educational Psychologist:** do you have any questions?

**Participant D:** you know what... not now...

**Educational Psychologist:** okay that's good. I'm glad you're not nervous.

So we've looked at your aptitude and your personality and now we're going to look at your interests. So basically what the interests assessment did, we wanted to see what your interest is. In life you choose subjects or careers that you interested in, you don't want to become something that you going to be bored with.

**Participant D:** Ja, that's true.

**Educational Psychologist:** so with regards to the assessment, the interest is going to help us to do that. Now what we found with you is that you fell into four categories. Now I'm going to explain each one. So the first one is artistic, that means that you're a creative individual and you probably interested in art, drama, whatever it is. What was really interesting is that I saw that you interested in fashion.

**Participant D:** Ja...

**Educational Psychologist:** so that would be a creative outlet for you? What do you do right now? Do you design anything?

**Participant D:** No, its just mostly like I'll put outfits together for others and show them how to wear what...

**Educational Psychologist:** okay... that's interesting! See again, helping other people is a characteristic that's coming out!

Okay so that's artistic. Possible interests here is that you'll like to express yourself, you'll have an appreciation for art, things like that okay? Possible careers again, composing music, performing, and writing and also fashion would fall into this. So this is just a guide for possible careers relating to artistic people. And potential skills is that you creative, artistic and again the fashion. Values that you would have, duty, originality, and imagination. So imagination is coming out again here. Remember we had it in the personality characteristics as well. Okay...

And then the next one is social, and again, it links with your personality, you like working with other people and helping other people. So for example interests you would have is working with people, working in teams and communities. Possible careers, careers where you caring for other people, counselling other people, teaching other people, and also... helping them to dress! Its part of that okay...

Potential skills you would have... you would have people skills, listening to other people and understanding other people. So that's your personality, do you see how everything is holistic?

And then the next one was scientific investigative, and basically here it means that you like learning new things. And you're curious when it comes to investigating subjects like medicine, biology and things like that. And pharmacy, that was another career that came up. So that would apply to that type of job characteristic. So here again your interests would be in science, medicine, doing research... and possible careers include doing lab work, doing research, investigating problems. And you would have to have mathematical abilities to research things and so on.

And the last one is enterprising and business. This one shows your potential to do well in a business. You have leadership skills and good business skills. So one day if you want to open up your own business or fashion franchise you'll be able to. You'll have the potential to.

Any questions so far?

**Participant D:** No not yet... more or less I'm that.

**Educational Psychologist:** Now, what Safia did with you is the incomplete sentences. We're going to go through it together... I learnt a lot about you through that... like for example you like being around people, I found your interest in fashion again there, helping people, another one of your personality characteristics okay.

From your responses it indicates that you're an optimistic person, a caring person and also a very hard working person. And from speaking to you now I can see you really do want to do well. You are also very dedicated to your educational goals, you have strong moral values, and you have a fun creative approach to life.

Now before we go into the careers that we recommend for you we are going to do something else.

**Participant D:** okay...

**Educational Psychologist:** so we've already discussed a lot relating to your aptitude, personality and interest. So now we are also going to go through your incomplete sentences. But what I want to do is to list your strengths and weaknesses or challenges that you currently facing.

So here we have your individual strengths, all the things that are good about you. Ummm... you're helpful, you're kind, things like that right. And then here we have your challenges. You're trying to reach your potential, for example. And then we're going to find others here. And then we have your environmental strengths and weaknesses here. I'm going to help you along so don't worry about it okay.

**Participant D:** okay...

**Educational Psychologist:** okay now for the strengths what can we write? Let's see for the aptitude, I said you're performing above average.

**Participant D:** Uhhh... Ja.

**Educational Psychologist:** you're getting good marks.

**Participant D:** Ja.

**Educational Psychologist:** so I'm going to write here that you're getting good marks. From your personality, what can you say is your strengths?

**Participant D:** umhh... I'm helpful, and caring and a sociable person.

**Educational Psychologist:** anything else you'd like to add?

**Participant D:** no I think that covers the most of it...

**Educational Psychologist:** "I cope best when I'm relaxed"... "I distance myself when I'm around negative people"

**Participant D:** JA... I don't like when people put down a situation or look at it in a negative light, I like to look at things in a positive light.

**Educational Psychologist:** so basically I'm going to say that you a positive individual with a positive outlook on life. And from this one here... what would you say?

**Participant D:** I think I feel like I'm frustrated when I'm not reaching my potential.

**Educational Psychologist:** so I'm going to put that under your challenges. And from this one here, would you say you're a focused individual?

**Participant D:** Ja, I think I am.

**Educational Psychologist:** so I'm going to put that under your strengths. And if we look at this sentence here again, you enjoy helping other people. You say here by putting clothes together for them.

**Participant D:** Ja...

**Educational Psychologist:** and in this sentence we can see that you have good values, honesty, trustworthiness...

**Participant D:** Hmmm...

**Educational Psychologist:** and I can see here again its coming out that you have high expectations of yourself.

**Participant D:** yes, very...

**Educational Psychologist:** and then here, from what you saying I feel that you lack self confidence. Would you agree? Can we put that down?

**Participant D:** yes.

**Educational Psychologist:** here you talk about staying focused and maintaining a positive outlook... would you agree that that's your strength.

**Participant D:** yes... I try to do that.

**Educational Psychologist:** okay and in this sentence you talk about your family and friends. So this we can add this to your environmental strengths. You relax around your family and friends...

**Participant D:** ja.. I'm very close to my family, not just my immediate family but also my cousins and stuff. It's a very healthy relationship between the whole family and its very positive. I can like speak to them and stuff...

**Educational Psychologist:** that's very nice. You very lucky. So in the next sentence you talk about doing work in a very short time. Do you struggle with time management?

**Participant D:** Ja.. I try to work early but sometimes school can get hectic. Especially when there's tests and tasks and everything at the same time. But I try my best to manage it.

**Educational Psychologist:** but it becomes overwhelming?

**Participant D:** Ja.

**Educational Psychologist:** Okay so we'll put that here.. And we'll deal with it later...



(Reads out sentences). So sometimes do you feel that you don't meet the expectations of others?

**Participant D:** Ja... there's a lot of pressure at school and stuff. With friends and stuff and also with work and to do well... and then it links with my lack of self confidence.

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, so we'll put that down with your challenges. So do you sometimes feel that you not accepted by certain people?

**Participant D:** Ja...

**Educational Psychologist:** But I see here on the next sentence that you show that you have good school values. So we'll put that on your strengths. You mentioned earlier that you also expect yourself to do well. Do you think that contributes to the pressure?

**Participant D:** Ja.. I also expect myself to do well.

**Educational Psychologist:** and then I see that your school has a good library. That's also an environmental strength. So let's put it down here. But I can see from all of this that you a really hard worker.

**Participant D:** Ja.. I am.

**Educational Psychologist:** And you're getting good marks right?

**Participant D:** ja..

**Educational Psychologist:** So you're on the right path. So don't be too hard on yourself okay...

**Participant D:** (Laughs) okay...I'll keep that in mind!

**Educational Psychologist:** Okay, now what I want to show you today is that in life, even ,myself, we all have strengths and weaknesses. We all have assets and we have challenges alright. But what is so nice is that we

can always use our strengths to overcome our weaknesses and challenges. So that's what we going to do now. And what I'm going to do is to first give you two examples of how you can use your strengths to overcome your challenges. And then I'm going to ask you to also try it out. But don't be nervous because I'm going to do it with you first. And I'm going to make sure that you understand it before you have to do it on your own.

So the first thing that I want to do is that I want to ask you... lets see... you say that you like being relaxed, but I want to ask you how do you relax.

**Participant D:** uhmm... I read. And I listen to music.

**Educational Psychologist:** Okay. Anything else?

**Participant D:** I like reading all different sorts of books, you know, sometimes scary ones, or... you know.

**Educational Psychologist:** Which requires a lot of imagination? (laughs)

**Participant D:** laughs

**Educational Psychologist:** Okay so that's one of the examples that I'm going to use here. If your life gets very stressful that's one of the things that you could use. So let's say you studying the whole day. Just taking 30 minutes to listen to your favourite music, jumping in front of the mirror, (laughs), I don't know, whatever makes you feel relaxed! That's what you can do alright. So this is an example of how you can use one of your strengths to overcome your weaknesses or challenges. And what I really like about you is that you know what makes you relax. So if things get really stressful, even if its just 5 or 10 minutes, take a break and then you continue.

Now looking at this, what else do you think you could use to help you to overcome these challenges?

**Participant D:** I think I can take my positive outlook on life and use it to overcome my lack of confidence. You know, juts not worry about what other people think and learn to be myself. And get accepted myself for what I am.

**Educational Psychologist:** That good I like that! I'm also going to talk about that just now. And what I also wanted to tell you, you said that you have a really close relationship with your friends and family. So if you're really stressed that's also someone that you can go and talk to... just to talk to someone and get it out of you okay...

And also remember, another technique that you can use to overcome stress is breathing techniques. Do you know breathing techniques?

**Participant D:** no...

**Educational Psychologist:** Just putting your things aside and breathing in and out... also, other techniques that people use is uhmmm... I know you're from an \*\*\*\*\* school. So are you religious or... how would you?

**Participant D:** uhmmm... I do follow my religion and .... Ja..

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, do you do the five prayers everyday?

**Participant D:** Ja.

**Educational Psychologist:** Okay that's good because what I wanted to say is that sometimes also praying helps you to relax.

**Participant D:** Ja... I've found that before.

**Educational Psychologist:** So to just stop and pick up your Quraan and read a few verses or whatever makes you feel comfortable.

Okay, now that was the first one. And the second one.. I'm going to give you another example. I liked what you just said earlier. Using the positive outlook on life to overcome your lack of self-confidence. What I really really like about you is that you try to do that. Sometimes it's very difficult and then it's difficult to stay positive. So that's something you should really love about yourself. And so the first thing you can do is to start celebrating your successes. I want us to stop now and I want you to think about things that you feel you've been successful in. even if its just two or three things. What do you think you've been successful in?

**Participant D:** Uhmmm... now, say since last year I've gained a lot more self-confidence and I feel really good. You don't have to follow certain cliques or anything. You just have to be who you are and people will like you. And you don't have to be anything more than just what you are.

**Educational Psychologist:** That's really good. That's one of your successes. Is there anything that you really proud of?

**Participant D:** Uhhmm... my science mark has really increased. From about 68%- about 85%.

**Educational Psychologist:** Hey that's really good! So you see what you should really try to do is to focus more on what you achieving and what you doing. And I want to add that I think that all your marks are really good. Let me add that to the list here okay.

The second thing that you can do is also to surround yourself with positive people. You already mentioned that you had positive relations with your family. So that's good.

**Participant D:** Ja... and one or to friends. I have lots of friends but only one or two of them you can speak to.

**Educational Psychologist:** Okay that's good. So you only have positive people around you? And try and replace your negative thoughts with positive ones. And what you can do is to start, whatever you're doing, to mention three things that are positive in your life. And it can be anything that makes you happy.

Now I want o ask you something... do you have best friend? Or a really close friend?

**Participant D:** JA...

**Educational Psychologist:** Now tell me how you treat this friend?

**Participant D:** Uhhmm... I'm truthful and loyal, friendliness, speaking the truth, and I just offer my sympathy and support. Because at the end of the day that's what you need.

**Educational Psychologist:** that's good. So would you say that you a good friend at the end of the day?

**Participant D:** Ja, I guess so.

**Educational Psychologist:** Good. Now that's another point I want to make. You have to be your own best friend. So the way you treat yourself the way you treat you friends okay. You need to become your own bets

friend. I was ready your incomplete sentences and you're working so hard! That's an achievement because a lot of people your age don't even work that hard.

Okay...

*Recording ended here. Did not record beyond this point!*

## TRANSCRIPTION OF *TRADITIONAL FEEDBACK INTERVIEW- Participant C*

**Educational Psychologist:** I'm giving you feedback and we going to talk about many things. Basically what Safia did with you... All those assessment, we going to go through each one and give you feedback on each one that you did. Now the information I'm going to be giving you is about you so if you don't agree with it just say: Wendy I don't agree with this part or Ja, this looks like me.

**Participant C:** okay.

**Educational Psychologist:** if you have questions, ask. Remember this is your experience its all about you, so ask. And it's all about gaining more knowledge about yourself. So feel free to ask and just relax okay...

**Participant C:** okay...

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, the first thing is when we do a career assessment there are three things that we look at because we look at you holistically. We look at your aptitude, which I'm going to explain now. And then we also look at your personality and all your interests alright. And these aspects help us to choose a career path in life or what type of subjects you would prefer.

What is aptitude? You remember you had to do that long test.? So according to this test, it tests your ability to learn form a certain educational situation or experience.

**Participant C:** Okay.

**Educational Psychologist:** So the first thing we found, your academic skills, 5.5. which is average. And this is related to your school performance. So what it means is that you will have an average performance at school.

And what this means in general, you get a high aptitude and a low aptitude and this is the average. 60% of the world's population falls into this category. And if you fall into it, it basically means that you have the potential to go on to university and study further if you want.

So looking at your school marks I can see that you actually performing above average. These are brilliant marks. Have you maintained these marks since?

**Participant C:** uhmmm... my science is gone a little bit down and my maths has improved.

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, that's good. So then the next one is you clerical ability. And that relates to your math skills. And so here you can see that you actually do have the potential to do very well at mathematics and English. How are you doing in English?

**Participant C:** uhmm... I'm struggling a bit.

**Educational Psychologist:** With which areas are you struggling?

**Participant C:** comprehension.

**Educational Psychologist:** you know what you can do to help you, search on the internet, Google, and you can always find some nice stuff to practice your comprehension skills.

**Participant C:** okay..

**Educational Psychologist:** and you clerical skills show us that you have the potential to do really well with your mathematics. And then technical ability, this relates more to people who are interested in maybe operating machinery or stuff like that. So maybe later on in life you would do something like engineering. So you can see from your score here that its an area of growth so you can just practice.

Do you have any questions at this point?

**Participant C:** no...

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, then we going to go on to the next one which is your personality. Alright. So the personality assessment basically helps you to understand your personality better. For example, what motivates you, what you enjoy, etc. and your personality type was introverted, feeling and sensation. And I know it sounds very big but I'm going to explain it all to you okay.

If you look here, there's always two different types here, and you an introvert. Extroverts they get their energy from other people. You know how they are. They talk a lot, always around people, always interested in being around people. But you're an introvert. So that means that sometimes you happy to be alone and you would maybe prefer having a small circle of friends. You more introspective and reflective and you get more energised by your own inner world. So, so far do you agree or not?

**Participant C:** Ja...

**Educational Psychologist:** okay so do you also have a small circle of friends?

**Participant C:** Ja, very...

**Educational Psychologist:** okay... alright then the next one is... you're sensation. That means that you like making decisions based on the senses that you have around you. From what you see and feel and hear. And then the other one also is feeling and you also base your decisions a lot on how you feeling. Okay... do you have any questions so far?

**Participant C:** No...

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, let me give you some more information then. So with the personality that you have, you very quiet, but you also friendly. You like routine work, so that means that you like to know what is expected of you. Also, what might be a challenge for you is that you don't easily express yourself to others. Alright. So let's just stop there and reflect a bit. From what I've told you so far, is that really you?

**Participant C:** Ja...



**Educational Psychologist:** with regard to expressing yourself, who do you feel more comfortable with? Your family... or friends?

**Participant C:** I feel more comfortable with family.

**Educational Psychologist:** so have you been told by your family that you don't express yourself?

**Participant C:** yes!!! (laughs).

**Educational Psychologist:** even if you not comfortable expressing yourself to other people, find other ways to express yourself. Sometimes bottling all your emotions is not a good thing.

And then in your report we see some more things that are related to your personality. A sensitive person, you value harmony and you like to be able to understand other people. You don't like conflict and you a very genuine and open-minded person. And you like to see that other people around you are cared for. Is there any aspects that you agree or disagree with?

**Participant C:** I agree with it.

**Educational Psychologist:** and then next we'll look at your interests. This is what you are interested in. obviously; at the end of the day you want to choose a subject or career that you are interested in. otherwise you'll be bored.

And we found that you fall into three categories, and I'm going to explain all. Firstly, scientific and investigative, which basically means that you're the type of person who likes to learn new things. Here you'll be interested also in investigating biological phenomenon, medical phenomenon, and physical. I saw earlier that you interested in going into the medical field. Alright. So that would fall in this category. So your interests may be science, medicine, mathematics... and your possible careers would be working in a lab, solving problems in a lab. And then values such as independent curiosity. What do you think of that? Is it you?

**Participant C:** Ja..

**Educational Psychologist:** okay... and then the next field that you also fell into is social. And it means that you like working with people. So you the type of person who's going to enjoy teamwork, helping communities, stuff like that. That's going to be you. Careers that are related to this are things like teaching, caring for people, counselling and training others also. And this all links to your personality that we discussed earlier. Do you remember?

**Participant C:** Ja

**Educational Psychologist:** and then the last one was the artistic field. Which means that you like to be creative. And this can be in any way, art, drama, anything... so here your interests would be self-expression, self appreciation, etc. and remember we spoke about expressing yourself earlier? So this could be a way to do that. Whatever works for you?

**Participant C:** okay...

**Educational Psychologist:** you being very quiet...

**Participant C:** (laughs)

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, you must ask if you don't agree with anything. And this process is for you.

Okay, and then you did the informal assessment as well. Do you remember it? Let's look at that now. When I was reading your sentences I saw that school came out a lot... you seem to have a lot of expectations on yourself to do well, to improve your marks... for example here, sometimes you get stressed at school because of school. When you don't know how to do the work properly. I can see you're a hard worker... how do you handle your stress?

**Participant C:** uhmmm... I watch tv... (laughs) or I read.

**Educational Psychologist:** is that your coping mechanism? I also saw here that you ask people that you trust for advice. And that's a really good thing. So when you are going through a tough time you can reach out to people that you trust.

And then here I see you wrote that one of your challenges is speaking to people that you don't know and making new friends. And now that we've been through your personality it makes more sense because you're an introvert, so it will be more challenging for you to make friends.

**Participant C:** Ja...

**Educational Psychologist:** and then here you say that it's difficult for you to function when you don't have structure and a system. Did you notice earlier in your personality that we said that you like structure and routine? So now that you know that it's very important that you create routine. So like for example if there are exams coming up you should really try very hard to set up a routine for yourself. At least I can see that you very self-aware here. That's very good.

Are you okay still?

**Participant C:** Ja...

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, and then at the end, there's a summary here for us on your sentences. It says that you are a gentle natured person, which goes well with your personality and you may be practical and organised. Again, structure is coming out. And you enjoy consistency. And you the type of individual who will goal set. Is there any questions with regard to that?

**Participant C:** no.

**Educational Psychologist:** okay, so we've done all your results now, tell me what do you remember about yourself?

**Participant C:** I'm an introvert and I like structure and routine... and I can express myself in different ways. Ja... (laughs)

**Educational Psychologist:** that's good.. people cant understand you if you don't express yourself, so you have to find a way to express yourself. A way that works for you, okay...

So that summarises all your results, and then we just going to go through the subjects and careers that relate to your results.

Mathematics, science, biology, history and computer sciences. Those subjects would suite you based on your results... And then for careers, medical doctor, dentist, physician, radiologist, pharmacist, radiographer, teaching, speech or occupational therapy...

Have you researched these or gotten any information on them?

**Participant C:** no...

**Educational Psychologist:** you should probably go into the Universities sites and get information on each subject and they'll give you a lot of information on each... is there any of these careers that you don't understand?

**Participant C:** No not right now...

**Educational Psychologist:** and then at the end you'll see some coping mechanisms, which in your case will relate mostly to expressing yourself.. And then, we done! Don't forget to complete that form okay...



# *Safia Mohamed*

## *Intern Psychologist*

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### **PSYCHOMETRIC REPORT<sup>1</sup>** **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**

**NAME:** Participant A

**AGE:** 15 years

**GRADE:** 10

**DATE OF BIRTH:** 01-04-1994

**DATE OF ASSESSMENT:** 29-08-2009

#### **1. REASON FOR ASSESSMENT;**

A psychometric assessment was completed for Participant A in order to facilitate her subject- and future career choices.

#### **2. ASSESSMENT BATTERY<sup>2</sup>:**

The following basic test battery was administered and used in conjunction with Participant A's academic progress results to facilitate her subject-choice options:

1. Differential Aptitude Test – Form L (DAT-L)
2. Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ)
3. South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII)
4. Informal Incomplete sentences

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<sup>1</sup> This report is the exclusive property of the client and may not be used for forensic purposes.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the tests/questionnaires used in this test situation were standardised some time ago or were not designed in South Africa.

### 3. RESULTS:

#### 3.1 APTITUDE:

Aptitude has been defined as the potential a person has which will enable him/her to achieve a certain level of ability, with a given amount of training and/or practice. The DAT-L was administered to Participant A with the following results:

Test No.:	Test Name:	Aptitude: Stanine (score out of 9)
1	Vocabulary	9 (excellent)
2.	Verbal reasoning	7 (very good)
3.	Non-verbal reasoning	2 (below average)
4.	Calculations	4 (average)
5.	Reading comprehension	2 (below average)
6.	Comparisons	5 (average)
7.	Price Controlling	6 (high average)
8.	Spatial Visualisation (3D)	2 (below average)
9.	Mechanical Insight	4 (average)
10.	Memory	3 (low average)

The tests included in this battery compare the abilities of a learner in respect of three broad categories, namely academic, commercial/clerical ability and technical/mechanical ability. In this regard, analysis of Participant A's scores reveals the following stanines:

- Academic skills: = **4.5**  
(General learning ability)
- Clerical ability: = **4.25**  
(Clerical ability, language ability and arithmetical ability)
- Technical ability: **3**  
(Engineering/ technical ability)

#### 3.2 PERSONALITY:

The Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ) was administered to Participant A. The aim of this questionnaire is to provide the testee with a fairly accurate description and understanding of her personality, motivations and strengths. The basic assumption when using the JPQ with Participant A is that one of the most important motivations for career- and thus subject-choice is a desire for work that is intrinsically interesting and satisfying and that will permit the use of preferred functions and attitudes (strengths), with relatively little need for using less-preferred processes.

This test categorises individuals into different personality *types*, relating each type to a different occupation based on suitability. According to her scores, Participant A's personality type can be described as **Extroverted/ Intuition / Feeling / Perceiving (ENFP)**. Her hallmark is: **Imagination**. Lively, charismatic and encouraging, ENFP's work well when they can innovate and be creative,

persuade others to action and stimulate positive change. They generate enthusiasm for start-up activities, are tireless in pursuit of new found interests, and anticipate the needs of people and organisations.

### 3.3 INTERESTS:

The South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII) was administered with the aim of measuring Participant A's occupational interests, in order to use it in the broader frame of subject-choices and ultimately for career planning. Interest is the preference a person shows for certain activities or fields of study. It does not necessarily indicate ability or success within that field, but it does play an important role in the decision making process. This test includes 6 general fields of interest, allowing for Participant A's highest fields of career interest to be identified.

Based on her responses, it is evident that Participant A's highest career interests lie in the **Enterprising and business** field. Her second field of career interest lies in the **Scientific/Investigative** field and her third field of occupational interest can be identified in the **Social** field. Following is a summary of Participant A's potential skills, work interest and values based on the fields of interest that she identified.

Field	Interest	Work Activities	Potential skills	Values
<b>Enterprising</b>	Business, politics, leadership, entrepreneurship	Selling, managing, persuading, marketing	Verbal ability, ability to motivate and direct others	Risk taking, status, competition, influence
<b>Scientific/ Investigative</b>	Science; medicine; mathematics; research	Performing lab work; solving abstract problems; conducting research	Mathematical ability; researching; writing; analysing	Independence; curiosity; learning
<b>Social</b>	People, teamwork, helping, community service	Teaching, caring for people, counselling, training employees	People skills, verbal ability, listening, showing understanding	Cooperation, generosity, service to others

### 3.4 INFORMAL ASSESSMENT:

Participant A's responses on the incomplete sentences indicate a consciousness of socially acceptable norms and behaviour. She indicates high moral standards as well as a warm and caring personality. Through her responses Participant A also indicates that she enjoys being prepared for tasks and may feel sure of herself if she Participant A may benefit from exploring herself and ascertaining what her own expectations of herself are, and should guard against basing her goals and aspirations on others expectations of her.

#### 4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS:

Participant A's interests include careers in the enterprising, investigative and social fields. These interests correlate positively with her said personality, as she is inclined to behave in an enterprising and creative manner to meet challenges through interaction with others in a compassionate manner. These characteristics may facilitate her successful performance in occupational fields that allow her to actualise her gentle and persuasive characteristics.

Her average academic ability combined with the understanding of her interests, personality and of the detailed aspects of factors that contribute to her happiness and wellbeing are clear indicators of the recommendations that follow.

Participant A may benefit from a follow-up assessment prior to making her final career choice at the end of Grade 12. Below is a mentorship programme based on her personality profile to help develop her life skills and leadership potential.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS<sup>3</sup>:

As a result of Participant A's test scores in terms of her ability, her extroverted and intuitive personality and her interests, she could probably consider selecting from the following subjects in conjunction with the compulsory learning areas of English, Afrikaans and Life Orientation:

Primary recommendations (subject-choices):

- Mathematics
- Physical Science
- Business economics
- Accounting
- History
- Computer sciences

The following secondary recommendations in terms of career choices<sup>4</sup> can be investigated by Participant A based on the assessment results that she attained:

- Attorney
- Personnel manager
- Psychologist/Counsellor/Psychometrist (in the *Educational, Industrial or Counselling* sub-fields of Psychology)
- Teacher
- Lecturer
- Occupational therapist
- Speech therapist

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to remember that entrance into tertiary institutions and specific courses of study are not automatic, and depend on an individual's performance in Grade 12. Although Participant A appears to have potential, her success will be largely co-determined by her levels of emotional stability, self-discipline, diligence and responsibility, as well as her ability to manage stress adequately.

<sup>4</sup> Fields of study have **not** been arranged in any particular order.





*My sincere wishes for success, prosperity and happiness are with Participant A.*

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**Ms. Safia Mohamed**

INTERN PSYCHOLOGIST

## Appendix A: MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE- AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

### COMUNICATION

<b>ENFP's contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
<p>Responding appreciatively to different viewpoints</p> <p>Articulating values, possibilities and generalities with enthusiasm</p>	<p>Talking too much or randomly interjecting ideas</p> <p>Persuading others to follow a plan without a thorough investigation of facts and specifics</p>	<p>Concentrate on details rather than possibilities</p> <p>Interrupt or criticize others</p>	<p>Speaking less, reflecting more</p> <p>Investigating facts and realities before rallying others to a course of action</p>

### *Team Culture*

<b>ENFP's contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
<p>Striving for diversity and fostering cooperation and fun</p> <p>Providing creativity, energy and warmth</p>	<p>Being too flighty, flitting from course to course</p> <p>Expecting others to be comfortable with a free-flowing, open-ended approach</p>	<p>Restrict options and won't at least consider the impossible</p> <p>Fail to acknowledge the importance of insight and imagination</p>	<p>Determining what is most important to them and sticking to it</p> <p>Recognising the usefulness of structures and guidelines</p>

### Leadership

<b>ENFP's contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
<p>Democratically soliciting everyone's opinions and negotiating differences</p> <p>Acting as spokesperson for new ideas that relate to people</p>	<p>Promising more than is reasonable or possible</p> <p>Neglecting to give specific directions</p>	<p>Do not allow everyone to participate or have a role</p> <p>Place too many constraints on how and when a project should be completed</p>	<p>Prioritizing projects and saying no</p> <p>Offering others a detailed blueprint of what is desired so that the job is done right</p>

### Change

<b>ENFP's contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
<p>Joyfully embracing the novel and untried</p> <p>Supplying energy to initiate a new course of action</p>	<p>Encouraging change for change sake's</p> <p>Failing to appreciate the merits of tradition and past experience</p>	<p>Are overly cautious or resistant to change</p> <p>Cling to established routines when adaptation is required</p>	<p>Understanding that change is not always desirable or necessary</p> <p>Recognising that the past can offer direction for the future</p>

**Problem-Solving/ conflict Resolution**

<b>ENFP's contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
Seeing the need to include people and values in the decision-making process Being imaginative and flexible in their approach to a problem	Wanting to stay open to all the possibilities to the extent that no decision is made Losing track of the details in their enthusiasm for the big picture	Fail to consider the impact of the people As narrow minded or see the problem in black-and –white terms	Recognizing the importance of setting limits on the process so that a decision can be made Understanding that a better solution will arise if it is supported by facts and specifics

**Stress**

<b>ENFP's contribute to reducing team stress by:</b>	<b>Under stress may irritate team members by:</b>	<b>Under stress may be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness when under stress by:</b>
Injecting fun and spontaneity Keeping everyone energized by fostering variety	Being overly optimistic Overextending then shutting down, thereby breaking commitments	Insist on following rules entrenched bureaucracy Expect precision of facts and figures	Carefully examining details and data to come to a more realistic understanding Screening projects rather than trying to do them all

Prepared by Safia Mohamed



# *Safia Mohamed*

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## **PSYCHOMETRIC REPORT<sup>1</sup>**

### **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**

NAME: Participant B

AGE: 16 years

GRADE: 10

DATE OF BIRTH: 09-10-1993

DATE OF ASSESSMENT: 29-08-2009

### **1. REASON FOR ASSESSMENT**

A psychometric assessment was completed for Participant B in order to facilitate her subject- and future career choices.

### **2. ASSESSMENT BATTERY<sup>2</sup>:**

The following basic test battery was administered and used in conjunction with Participant B's academic progress results to facilitate her subject-choice options:

1. Differential Aptitude Test – Form L (DAT-L)
2. Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ)
3. South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII)
4. Informal Incomplete sentences

### **3. RESULTS:**

#### **3.1 APTITUDE**

Aptitude has been defined as the potential a person has which will enable him/her to achieve a certain level of ability, with a given amount of training and/or practice. The DAT-L was administered to Participant B with the following results:

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<sup>1</sup> This report is the exclusive property of the client and may not be used for forensic purposes.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the tests/questionnaires used in this test situation were standardised some time ago or were not designed in South Africa.



Test No.:	Test Name:	Aptitude: Stanine (score out of 9)
1	Vocabulary	9 (excellent)
2.	Verbal reasoning	5 (average)
3.	Non-verbal reasoning	4 (average)
4.	Calculations	3 (low average)
5.	Reading comprehension	3 (low average)
6.	Comparisons	8 (excellent)
7.	Price Controlling	9 (excellent)
8.	Spatial Visualisation (3D)	4 (average)
9.	Mechanical Insight	3 (low average)
10.	Memory	6 (high average)

The tests included in this battery compare the abilities of a learner in respect of three broad categories, namely academic, commercial/clerical ability and technical/mechanical ability. In this regard, analysis of Participant B's scores reveals the following stanines:

- Academic skills: = 5  
(General learning ability)
- Clerical ability: = 5.75  
(Clerical ability, language ability and arithmetical ability)
- Technical ability: 3.5  
(Engineering/ technical ability)

### 3.2 PERSONALITY:

The Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ) was administered to Participant B. The aim of this questionnaire is to provide the testee with a fairly accurate description and understanding of her personality, motivations and strengths. The basic assumption when using the JPQ with Participant B is that one of the most important motivations for career- and thus subject-choice is a desire for work that is intrinsically interesting and satisfying and that will permit the use of preferred functions and attitudes (strengths), with relatively little need for using less-preferred processes.

This test categorises individuals into different personality *types*, relating each type to a different occupation based on suitability. According to her scores, Participant B's personality type can be described as **Extroverted/ Sensation / Feeling / Perceiving (ESFP)**. Her hallmark is: **Enthusiasm**. Friendly, outgoing, and enthusiastic, ESFP's work well when they can use their vitality and humour to make things happen. They make collaborative efforts enjoyable by applying common sense and a flexible and spontaneous approach to meeting challenges; they like to use their warmth and generosity to help people.

### 3.3 INTERESTS:

The South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII) was administered with the aim of measuring Participant B's occupational interests, in order to use it in the broader frame of subject-choices and

ultimately for career planning. Interest is the preference a person shows for certain activities or fields of study. It does not necessarily indicate ability or success within that field, but it does play an important role in the decision making process. This test includes 6 general fields of interest, allowing for Participant B's highest fields of career interest to be identified.

Based on her responses, it is evident that Participant B's highest career interests lie in the **Artistic** field. Her second field of career interest lies in the **Scientific/Investigative** field and her third field of occupational interest can be identified in the **Conventional** field. Following is a summary of Participant B's potential skills, work interest and values based on the fields of interest that she identified.

Field	Interest	Work Activities	Potential skills	Values
<b>Artistic</b>	Self-expression; art appreciation; communication; culture	Composing music; performing; writing; creating visual art	Creativity; musical ability; artistic expression	Beauty; originality; independence; imagination
<b>Scientific/ Investigative</b>	Science; medicine; mathematics; research	Performing lab work; solving abstract problems; conducting research	Mathematical ability; researching; writing; analysing	Independence; curiosity; learning
<b>Conventional</b>	Organisation; accounting; data management; information systems; investing	Setting up procedures and systems; organising; keeping records; developing computer applications	Ability to work with numbers; data analysis; finances; attentions to detail	Accuracy; stability; efficiency

### 3.4 INFORMAL ASSESSMENT

Participant B's responses on the incomplete sentences indicate that she is extrinsically motivated and enjoys experiencing optimal relations with those around her. She indicates high moral values and a caring and generous manner in her interaction with others. Participant B may consider using her self-knowledge to regulate her moods in order to optimise the achievement of her goals.

### 4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Participant B's interests include careers in the artistic, conventional and investigative fields. These interests correlate positively with her said personality, as she is inclined to behave in an enterprising and creative manner to meet challenges through spontaneous, creative and flexible means. These characteristics may facilitate her successful performance in occupational fields that allow her to actualise her warmth and generosity when working with others.

Her average academic ability combined with the understanding of her interests, personality and of the detailed aspects of factors that contribute to her happiness and wellbeing are clear indicators of the recommendations that follow.

Participant B may benefit from a follow-up assessment prior to making her final career choice at the end of Grade 12. Below is a mentorship programme based on her personality profile to help develop her life skills and leadership potential.

### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS<sup>3</sup>:

As a result of Participant B's test scores in terms of her ability, her extroverted personality and her interests, she could probably consider selecting from the following subjects in conjunction with the compulsory learning areas of English, Afrikaans and Life Orientation:

Primary recommendations (subject-choices):

- Mathematics
- Physical Science
- Business economics
- History
- Computer sciences

The following secondary recommendations in terms of career choices<sup>4</sup> can be investigated by Participant B, based on the assessment results that she attained:

- Speech and hearing therapy
- Occupational therapist
- Public relations officer
- Pharmacist
- Graphic designer
- Travel and tourism agent
- Journalism and broadcasting

***My sincere wishes for success, prosperity and happiness are with Participant B.***

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**Ms. Safia Mohamed**  
INTERN PSYCHOLOGIST

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to remember that entrance into tertiary institutions and specific courses of study are not automatic, and depend on an individual's performance in Grade 12. Although Participant B appears to have potential, her success will be largely co-determined by her levels of emotional stability, self-discipline, diligence and responsibility, as well as her ability to manage stress adequately.

<sup>4</sup> Fields of study have **not** been arranged in any particular order.



## Appendix A: MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE- AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

### COMMUNICATION

<b>ESFP'S contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entertaining others, breaching the ice in tense situations.</li> <li>• Enthusiastically encouraging communication and interaction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using too much humour, seeming shallow.</li> <li>• Being too easily distracted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste time by discussing matters in too abstract a manner.</li> <li>• Are rude and discourteous.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realising that others may interpret their banter as flippancy and, as a result, discount their contributions.</li> <li>• Recognising that boredom often signals a need to reengage in an interaction.</li> </ul>

### TEAM CULTURE

<b>ESFP'S contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Injecting the maximum amount of fun into any task.</li> <li>• Encouraging team members to work together and value each other's strengths.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being unprepared and assuming they can always improvise.</li> <li>• Being too focused on what's enjoyable at the expense of task completion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are too serious or contemplative.</li> <li>• Lack interpersonal or social skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remembering that a little bit of preparation can have far-reaching results.</li> <li>• Realising that completing a task in a timely manner may allow more time to play.</li> </ul>

## LEADERSHIP

<b>ESFP'S contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defining roles clearly and being productive.</li> <li>Motivating others through a warm and sympathetic style.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overlooking the logical consequences of an action in order to act expediently.</li> <li>Over interpreting or over personalising events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fail to appreciate others' contributions.</li> <li>Want to take a lot of time analysing a situation before committing to action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weighing the pros and cons before jumping in so that a more sound decision can be made.</li> <li>Making an effort to reappraise events in task-related terms.</li> </ul>

## CHANGE

<b>ESFP'S contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being energetic, spontaneous, adaptable, and able to take advantage of the moment.</li> <li>Joyfully embracing novelty and variety.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appearing fickle.</li> <li>Not respecting agendas and timelines; wanting to "fly by the seat of their pants".</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seem stuck in a settled routine.</li> <li>Push abstract models of the change process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarifying and prioritising what is important in order to make worth-while commitments.</li> <li>Recognising that they can serve other more efficiently in times of change when they develop a plan.</li> </ul>

**PROBLEM-SOLVING/ CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

<b>ESFP'S contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not closing off problem solving until all opinions and suggestions have been voiced.</li> <li>• Focusing on satisfying the immediate needs of people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not wanting to look at an issue in depth or consider long-range implications.</li> <li>• Withdrawing from intellectual arguments and conflict.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow discussion of an issue to go on and on.</li> <li>• Overlook people's feelings in the pursuit of fairness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realising that they may need to explore an issue in greater detail to craft a better solution.</li> <li>• Standing their ground and sharing their unique point of view.</li> </ul>

**STRESS**

<b>ESFP'S contribute to reducing team stress by:</b>	<b>Under stress may irritate team members by:</b>	<b>Under stress may be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness when under stress by:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepting others as they are, encouraging people to be themselves.</li> <li>• Sharing their upbeat, carefree enjoyment of everyday living.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socialising at the expense of getting the task done.</li> <li>• Economising effort to the point of doing just the bare minimum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expect them to work under vague directions or unclear guidelines.</li> <li>• Are too critical, negative, or pessimistic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Striving to achieve a work-play balance.</li> <li>• Taking a break, refreshing themselves, and then attacking the task with renewed vigour.</li> </ul>

Prepared by Safia Mohamed



# *Safia Mohamed*

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### **PSYCHOMETRIC REPORT<sup>1</sup>** **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**

**NAME:** Participant C

**AGE:** 15 years

**GRADE:** 10

**DATE OF BIRTH:** 30-06-1994

**DATE OF ASSESSMENT:** 29-08--2009

#### **1. REASON FOR ASSESSMENT**

A psychometric assessment was completed for Participant C in order to facilitate her subject-choices.

#### **2. ASSESSMENT BATTERY<sup>2</sup>:**

The following basic test battery was administered and used in conjunction with Participant C's academic progress results to facilitate her subject-choice options:

1. Differential Aptitude Test – Form L (DAT-L)
2. Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ)
3. South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII)
4. Informal Incomplete sentences

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<sup>1</sup> This report is the exclusive property of the client and may not be used for forensic purposes.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the tests/questionnaires used in this test situation were standardised some time ago or were not designed in South Africa.

### 3. RESULTS:

#### 3.1 APTITUDE

Aptitude has been defined as the potential a person has which will enable him/her to achieve a certain level of ability, with a given amount of training and/or practice. The DAT-L was administered to Participant C with the following results:

Test No.:	Test Name:	Aptitude: Stanine (score out of 9)
1	Vocabulary	8 (excellent)
2.	Verbal reasoning	7 (very good)
3.	Non-verbal reasoning	3 (low average)
4.	Calculations	4 (average)
5.	Reading comprehension	5 (average)
6.	Comparisons	9 (excellent)
7.	Price Controlling	7 (very good)
8.	Spatial Visualisation (3D)	4 (average)
9.	Mechanical Insight	5 (average)
10.	Memory	6 (high average)

The tests included in this battery compare the abilities of a learner in respect of three broad categories, namely academic, commercial/clerical ability and technical/mechanical ability. In this regard, analysis of Participant C' scores reveals the following stanines:

- Academic skills: = **5.5**  
(General learning ability)
- Clerical ability: = **6.25**  
(Clerical ability, language ability and arithmetical ability)
- Technical ability: **4**  
(Engineering/ technical ability)

#### 3.2 PERSONALITY:

The Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ) was administered to Participant C. The aim of this questionnaire is to provide the testee with a fairly accurate description and understanding of her personality, motivations and strengths. The basic assumption when using the JPQ with Participant C is that one of the most important motivations for career- and thus subject-choice is a desire for work that is intrinsically interesting and satisfying and that will permit the use of preferred functions and attitudes (strengths), with relatively little need for using less-preferred processes.

This test categorises individuals into different personality *types*, relating each type to a different occupation based on suitability. According to her scores, Participant C's personality type can be described as **Introverted/ Sensation / Feeling / Perceiving (ISFP)**. Her hallmark can thus be described as **Sensitivity**. Low-key, flexible, and modest, ISFP's work well when the can meet the

individual needs of people in a direct and personal manner. Valuing harmony and tolerance, they are genuine, sincere, and open minded, they enhance their work environments by ensuring that people are cared for with kindness and artistry.

### 3.3 INTERESTS:

The South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII), was administered with the aim of measuring Participant C's occupational interests, in order to use it in the broader frame of subject-choices and ultimately for career planning. Interest is the preference a person shows for certain activities or fields of study. It does not necessarily indicate ability or success within that field, but it does play an important role in the decision making process. This test includes 6 general fields of interest, allowing for Participant C's highest fields of career interest to be identified.

Based on her responses, it is evident that Participant C's highest career interests lie in the **Scientific/Investigative** field. Her second field of career interest lies in the **Social** field and her third field of occupational interest can be identified in the **Artistic** field. Following is a summary of Participant C's potential skills, work interest and values based on the fields of interest that she identified.

Field	Interest	Work Activities	Potential skills	Values
<b>Scientific/ Investigative</b>	Science; medicine; mathematics; research	Performing lab work; solving abstract problems; conducting research	Mathematical ability; researching; writing; analysing	Independence; curiosity; learning
<b>Social</b>	People, teamwork, helping, community service	Teaching, caring for people, counselling, training employees	People skills, verbal ability, listening, showing understanding	Cooperation, generosity, service to others
<b>Artistic</b>	Self-expression; art appreciation; communication; culture	Composing music; performing; writing; creating visual art	Creativity; musical ability; artistic expression	Beauty; originality; independence; imagination

### 3.4 INFORMAL ASSESSMENT

Participant C's responses on the incomplete sentences indicate a gentle natured individual who may be practical and organised. She displays goal orientated tendencies and may thrive under consistence and familiar circumstances that may enable her to feel more able to cope with challenges through effectively directing her behaviour. Participant C may benefit from approaching her studies in a structured and organised manner and should adopt a habit of goal-setting for herself in order to make her efforts more directive.

#### 4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Participant C's interests include careers in the scientific, social and artistic fields. These interests correlate positively with her said personality, as she is inclined to behave in a gentle and sensitive manner with others to achieve goals. These characteristics may facilitate her successful performance in occupational fields that allow her to actualise her considerate and caring nature.

Her high average academic ability combined with the understanding of her interests, personality and of the detailed aspects of factors that contribute to her happiness and wellbeing are clear indicators of the recommendations that follow.

Participant C may benefit from a follow-up assessment prior to making her final career choice at the end of Grade 12. Below is a mentorship programme based on her personality profile to help develop her life skills and leadership potential.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS<sup>3</sup>:

As a result of Participant C's test scores in terms of her ability, her predominantly introverted and perceptive personality characteristics and her interests, she could probably consider selecting from the following subjects in conjunction with the compulsory learning areas of English, Afrikaans and Life Orientation:

Primary recommendations (subject-choices):

- Mathematics
- Physical Science
- Biology
- History
- Computer sciences

The following secondary recommendations in terms of career choices<sup>4</sup> can be investigated by Participant C, based on the assessment results that she attained:

- Medical doctor
- Dentist
- Physician / Radiologist / Gynaecology
- Pharmacist
- Radiographer
- Speech and Hearing Therapy / Occupational Therapy
- Teacher / Lecturer

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to remember that entrance into tertiary institutions and specific courses of study are not automatic, and depend on an individual's performance in Grade 12. Although Participant C appears to have potential, her success will be largely co-determined by her levels of emotional stability, self-discipline, diligence and responsibility, as well as her ability to manage stress adequately.

<sup>4</sup> Fields of study have **not** been arranged in any particular order.



***My sincere wishes for success, prosperity and happiness are with Participant C.***

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Ms. Safia Mohamed  
INTERN PSYCHOLOGIST



## Appendix A: MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE- AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

### COMMUNICATION

ISFJ'S CONTRIBUTE BY:	MAY IRRITATE TEAM MEMBERS BY:	MAY BE IRRITATED BY TEAM MEMBERS WHO:	CAN MAXIMISE EFFECTIVENESS BY:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening carefully and being considerate of others' needs.</li> <li>• Presenting accurate information and checking accuracy of information given by others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not championing own ideas.</li> <li>• Being too focused on specifics, facts and details.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get off track and don't follow the agenda.</li> <li>• Talk too much and interject random ideas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking up and sharing strongly held convictions with others.</li> <li>• Challenging themselves to examine the larger implications of an issue or idea.</li> </ul>

### TEAM CULTURE

ISFJ'S CONTRIBUTE BY:	MAY IRRITATE TEAM MEMBERS BY:	MAY BE IRRITATED BY TEAM MEMBERS WHO:	CAN MAXIMISE EFFECTIVENESS BY:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showing sympathy, loyalty and kindness.</li> <li>• Lending stability, organisation, and structure in service of team goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placing too high value on traditions, institutions, and hierarchies.</li> <li>• Being too serious or exacting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are disorganised or irresponsible or who lack commitment.</li> <li>• Are loud, aggressive, or confrontational</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basing respect on merit and competence as well as on title and position.</li> <li>• Relaxing, allowing themselves and others to have fun</li> </ul>

## LEADERSHIP

ISFJ'S CONTRIBUTE BY:	MAY IRRITATE TEAM MEMBERS BY:	MAY BE IRRITATED BY TEAM MEMBERS WHO:	CAN MAXIMISE EFFECTIVENESS BY:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quietly assisting the work of others through a nonthreatening, encouraging style.</li> <li>• Honouring commitments and modelling thoroughness and follow-through.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being reluctant to take on leadership roles.</li> <li>• Expecting strict compliance to traditional roles and methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dominate or act without the welfare of others in mind.</li> <li>• Rely on improvisation to meet a goal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realizing that their ability for organizing people lends itself to leadership.</li> <li>• Appreciating that there are many ways to successfully meet goals, not all of which involve standard procedures.</li> </ul>

## CHANGE

ISFJ'S CONTRIBUTE BY:	MAY IRRITATE TEAM MEMBERS BY:	MAY BE IRRITATED BY TEAM MEMBERS WHO:	CAN MAXIMISE EFFECTIVENESS BY:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being sensitive to past traditions in order to smooth transitions.</li> <li>• Supporting change that is of practical value to people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being overly pragmatic and focusing on the here and now.</li> <li>• Wanting change to adhere to current rules or procedures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overlook the realistic concerns of people.</li> <li>• Fail to acknowledge the value of the tried and the true.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering what the current reality suggests about the future.</li> <li>• Realizing that new guidelines may need to be developed to more effectively manage change.</li> </ul>

## PROBLEM SOLVING/CONFLICT RESOLUTION

<b>ISFJ'S CONTRIBUTE BY:</b>	<b>MAY IRRITATE TEAM MEMBERS BY:</b>	<b>MAY BE IRRITATED BY TEAM MEMBERS WHO:</b>	<b>CAN MAXIMISE EFFECTIVENESS BY:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being thorough, organised and task oriented in working toward solutions that benefit people.</li> <li>• Carefully summarizing concrete and factual data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanting the problem-solving process to follow tidy guidelines.</li> <li>• Being too painstaking where details and specifics are concerned.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pressure them to apply impersonal logic to a decision.</li> <li>• Insist on defining a problem in terms of conceptual models or abstract theories.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding that tightly controlling the process may prevent others from airing their feelings.</li> <li>• Recognizing that not all facts are essential and indeed some may be trivial.</li> </ul>

## STRESS

<b>ISFJ'S CONTRIBUTE TO REDUCING TEAM STRESS BY:</b>	<b>UNDER STRESS MAY IRRITATE TEAM MEMBERS BY:</b>	<b>UNDER STRESS MAY BE IRRITATED BY TEAM MEMBERS WHO:</b>	<b>CAN MAXIMISE EFFECTIVENESS WHEN UNDER STRESS BY:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willingly taking on work to benefit the team.</li> <li>• Being thoughtful and showing concern for the comfort and security of others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being too rule bound and conventional.</li> <li>• Focusing on the negative, adopting a "doom and gloom" attitude.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fail to appreciate their diligence and conscientiousness.</li> <li>• Make light of their worries and concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loosening up and trying new things.</li> <li>• Evaluating the facts, understanding that things are usually not as they first appeared.</li> </ul>

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### **PSYCHOMETRIC REPORT<sup>1</sup>** **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**

**NAME:** Participant D

**AGE:** 15 years

**GRADE:** 10

**DATE OF BIRTH:** 22-07-1993

**DATE OF ASSESSMENT:** 29-08-2009

#### **1. REASON FOR ASSESSMENT**

A psychometric assessment was completed for Participant D in order to facilitate her career-choices.

#### **2. ASSESSMENT BATTERY<sup>2</sup>:**

The following basic test battery was administered and used in conjunction with Participant D's academic progress results to facilitate her subject-choice options:

1. Differential Aptitude Test – Form L (DAT-L)
2. Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ)
3. South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII)
4. Informal Incomplete sentences

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<sup>1</sup> This report is the exclusive property of the client and may not be used for forensic purposes.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the tests/questionnaires used in this test situation were standardised some time ago or were not designed in South Africa.

### 3. RESULTS:

#### 3.1 APTITUDE

Aptitude has been defined as the potential a person has which will enable him/her to achieve a certain level of ability, with a given amount of training and/or practice. The DAT-L was administered to Participant D with the following results:

Test No.:	Test Name:	Aptitude: Stanine (score out of 9)
1	Vocabulary	9 (excellent)
2.	Verbal reasoning	6 (high average)
3.	Non-verbal reasoning	2 (below average)
4.	Calculations	6 (high average)
5.	Reading comprehension	6 (high average)
6.	Comparisons	5 (average)
7.	Price Controlling	8 (excellent)
8.	Spatial Visualisation (3D)	4 (average)
9.	Mechanical Insight	4 (average)
10.	Memory	7 (above average)

The tests included in this battery compare the abilities of a learner in respect of three broad categories, namely academic, commercial/clerical ability and technical/mechanical ability. In this regard, analysis of Participant D' scores reveals the following stanines:

- Academic skills: = **5.2**  
(General learning ability)
- Clerical ability: = **6.25**  
(Clerical ability, language ability and arithmetical ability)
- Technical ability: **4**  
(Engineering/ technical ability)

#### 3.2 PERSONALITY:

The Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ) was administered to Participant D. The aim of this questionnaire is to provide the testee with a fairly accurate description and understanding of her personality, motivations and strengths. The basic assumption when using the JPQ with Participant D is that one of the most important motivations for career- and thus subject-choice is a desire for work that is intrinsically interesting and satisfying and that will permit the use of preferred functions and attitudes (strengths), with relatively little need for using less-preferred processes.

This test categorises individuals into different personality *types*, relating each type to a different occupation based on suitability. According to her scores, Participant D's personality type can be described as **Extroverted / Intuition / Feeling / Perceiving (ENFP)**. His hallmark is **Imagination**. Lively, charismatic and encouraging, ENFP's work well when they can innovate and be creative, persuade others to action and stimulate positive change. They generate enthusiasm for start-up

activities, are tireless in pursuit of new found interests, and anticipate the needs of people and organisations.

### 3.3 INTERESTS:

The South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII), was administered with the aim of measuring Participant D's occupational interests, in order to use it in the broader frame of subject-choices and ultimately for career planning. Interest is the preference a person shows for certain activities or fields of study. It does not necessarily indicate ability or success within that field, but it does play an important role in the decision making process. This test includes 6 general fields of interest, allowing for Participant D's highest fields of career interest to be identified.

Based on her responses, it is evident that Participant D's highest career interests lie in the **Artistic** field. Her second field of career interest lies in the **Social** as well as the **Scientific/Investigative** field and her third field of occupational interest can be identified in the **Business/Enterprising** field. Following is a summary of Participant D's potential skills, work interest and values based on the fields of interest that she identified.

Field	Interest	Work Activities	Potential skills	Values
<b>Artistic</b>	Self-expression; art appreciation; communication; culture	Composing music; performing; writing; creating visual art	Creativity; musical ability; artistic expression	Beauty; originality; independence; imagination
<b>Social</b>	People, teamwork, helping, community service	Teaching, caring for people, counselling, training employees	People skills, verbal ability, listening, showing understanding	Cooperation, generosity, service to others
<b>Scientific/ Investigative</b>	Science; medicine; mathematics; research	Performing lab work; solving abstract problems; conducting research	Mathematical ability; researching; writing; analysing	Independence; curiosity; learning
<b>Enterprising/ Business</b>	Business, politics, leadership, entrepreneurship	Selling, managing, persuading, marketing	Verbal ability, ability to motivate and direct others	Risk taking, status, competition, influence

### 3.4 INFORMAL ASSESSMENT

Participant D's responses on the incomplete sentences indicate an optimistic and caring individual. She also indicates diligent and hardworking behaviour, a result of her dedication to her educational goals. She displays strong moral values and a fun, creative approach to life.

#### 4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Participant D's interests include careers in the artistic, social, scientific and enterprising fields. These interests correlate positively with her said personality, as she is inclined to behave in an innovative, creative and encouraging manner when interacting with others to achieve goals. These characteristics may facilitate her successful performance in occupational fields that allow her to actualise her considerate and caring nature.

Her high average academic ability combined with the understanding of her interests, personality and of the detailed aspects of factors that contribute to her happiness and wellbeing are clear indicators of the recommendations that follow.

Participant D may benefit from a follow-up assessment prior to making her final career choice at the end of Grade 12. Below is a mentorship programme based on her personality profile to help develop her life skills and leadership potential.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS<sup>3</sup>:

As a result of Participant D's test scores in terms of her ability, her predominantly extroverted and perceptive personality characteristics and her interests, she could probably consider selecting from the following subjects in conjunction with the compulsory learning areas of English, Afrikaans and Life Orientation:

Primary recommendations (subject-choices):

- Mathematics
- Physical Science
- Business economics
- History
- Information technology

The following secondary recommendations in terms of career choices<sup>4</sup> can be investigated by Participant D, based on the assessment results that she attained:

- Journalism
- Design fields (including graphic design; interior design/decorating; fashion design; industrial design)
- Marketing manager
- Teacher
- Photographer
- Play therapist
- Floristry
- Hotel management
- Production management

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to remember that entrance into tertiary institutions and specific courses of study are not automatic, and depend on an individual's performance in Grade 12. Although Participant D appears to have potential, her success will be largely co-determined by her levels of emotional stability, self-discipline, diligence and responsibility, as well as her ability to manage stress adequately.

<sup>4</sup> Fields of study have **not** been arranged in any particular order.



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***My sincere wishes for success, prosperity and happiness are with Participant D.***

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Ms. Safia Mohamed  
INTERN PSYCHOLOGIST



## **Appendix A: MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE- AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

### **COMUNICATION**

<b>ENFP's contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
<p>Responding appreciatively to different viewpoints</p> <p>Articulating values, possibilities and generalities with enthusiasm</p>	<p>Talking too much or randomly interjecting ideas</p> <p>Persuading others to follow a plan without a thorough investigation of facts and specifics</p>	<p>Concentrate on details rather than possibilities</p> <p>Interrupt or criticize others</p>	<p>Speaking less, reflecting more</p> <p>Investigating facts and realities before rallying others to a course of action</p>

### **TEAM CULTURE**

<b>ENFP's contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
<p>Striving for diversity and fostering cooperation and fun</p> <p>Providing creativity, energy and warmth</p>	<p>Being too flighty, flitting from course to course</p> <p>Expecting others to be comfortable with a free-flowing, open-ended approach</p>	<p>Restrict options and won't at least consider the impossible</p> <p>Fail to acknowledge the importance of insight and imagination</p>	<p>Determining what is most important to them and sticking to it</p> <p>Recognising the usefulness of structures and guidelines</p>

## LEADERSHIP

<b>ENFP's contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
<p>Democratically soliciting everyone's opinions and negotiating differences</p> <p>Acting as spokesperson for new ideas that relate to people</p>	<p>Promising more than is reasonable or possible</p> <p>Neglecting to give specific directions</p>	<p>Do not allow everyone to participate or have a role</p> <p>Place too many constraints on how and when a project should be completed</p>	<p>Prioritizing projects and saying no</p> <p>Offering others a detailed blueprint of what is desired so that the job is done right</p>

## CHANGE

<b>ENFP's contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
<p>Joyfully embracing the novel and untried</p> <p>Supplying energy to initiate a new course of action</p>	<p>Encouraging change for change sake's</p> <p>Failing to appreciate the merits of tradition and past experience</p>	<p>Are overly cautious or resistant to change</p> <p>Cling to established routines when adaptation is required</p>	<p>Understanding that change is not always desirable or necessary</p> <p>Recognising that the past can offer direction for the future</p>

**PROBLEM-SOLVING/ CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

<b>ENFP's contribute by:</b>	<b>May irritate team members by:</b>	<b>May be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness by:</b>
Seeing the need to include people and values in the decision-making process Being imaginative and flexible in their approach to a problem	Wanting to stay open to all the possibilities to the extent that no decision is made Losing track of the details in their enthusiasm for the big picture	Fail to consider the impact of the people As narrow minded or see the problem in black-and –white terms	Recognizing the importance of setting limits on the process so that a decision can be made Understanding that a better solution will arise if it is supported by facts and specifics

**STRESS**

<b>ENFP's contribute to reducing team stress by:</b>	<b>Under stress may irritate team members by:</b>	<b>Under stress may be irritated by team members who:</b>	<b>Can maximize effectiveness when under stress by:</b>
Injecting fun and spontaneity Keeping everyone energized by fostering variety	Being overly optimistic Overextending then shutting down, thereby breaking commitments	Insist on following rules entrenched bureaucracy Expect precision of facts and figures	Carefully examining details and data to come to a more realistic understanding Screening projects rather than trying to do them all

## **Interview schedule for interview conducted with the Educational Psychologist**

1. Outline of the traditional feedback interview.
2. Outline of the positive psychological feedback interview.
3. Discussion of the framework for administering a traditional feedback interview (as outlined in Chapter 2).
4. Discussion of the framework for administering a positive psychological feedback interview (as outlined in Chapter 2).
5. The use of the quadrant map to identify participants' strengths and weaknesses on an individual and environmental level, within the framework of a positive psychological feedback interview.
6. Outlining role of researcher during data collection in terms of exploring participants' and the Educational Psychologist's experiences of the two modes of feedback interviews.
7. Outlining the value and role of the Educational Psychologist's reflection on the feedback.
8. Creating an awareness of possible nuances between the two modes of feedback.
9. Coping mechanisms for participants based on psychometric results.
10. Career planning process with participants.