

**I AM STILL LEARNING:  
A PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO**

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate my final project to my parents. Thank you for teaching me my “ABCs” and my “1-2-3s.” More importantly, thank you for teaching me to believe in myself, as it is this belief, along with your support, that has propelled me through many of life’s challenges. The opportunity you have given me to pursue an education is invaluable. Although I have learned a lot from my schooling, you were in essence my first and most important teachers, and so I dedicate this to you. I continue to learn from you both every day, and it is your lessons that have shaped who I am, as well as who I will become. Thank you.

## Abstract

Professional portfolios are becoming an increasingly prominent form of performance evaluation. They are an effective way for students to demonstrate competency, to plan for and advance in their chosen careers, and to document change, growth, and development over time. Professional portfolios are also an excellent way for students to get to know themselves in relation to what they have learned and as developing professionals. A discussion and subsequent presentation of the author's own professional portfolio is the focal point of this project. In Chapter 1 the author introduces the professional portfolio as an efficacious form of authentic assessment and lists the fundamental questions that drove the creation of her portfolio. A literature review is provided in Chapter 2, detailing the rationale for assembling a portfolio as a research tool in professional practice. In Chapter 3 the author describes the practical benefits of viewing and developing a portfolio and provides a brief overview of her own portfolio. The author concludes the project in Chapter 4 by reviewing the discovery or growth that resulted from creating a professional portfolio. An example of a professional portfolio that could be used to fulfill the final project requirement of the Master of Education Counselling Psychology program, as well as to demonstrate competency for the purposes of registration as a provisional psychologist in Alberta, is provided in Appendix A. The artifacts and abstracts that correspond with this exemplar are provided in appendices B through F.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

The Canadian Psychological Association (2001) dictates that psychologists and future psychologists have an ethical responsibility to assess both their academic and specialization competencies, as well as their standards of practice and their own professional conduct, in order to ensure that they are providing optimal service to their clients and that their actions adhere to the discipline's code of ethics. Psychologists are to assess these areas continually throughout their careers. Thus it is fair to say that to be a psychologist is to assess and to be assessed. The purpose of assessment, according to Gelfer, Xu, and Perkins (2004), is "to collect information regarding a targeted program or performance" (p. 127). Due to their convenience, efficiency, and ease of use, commonly used methods of assessment include standardized tests, surveys, and questionnaires. However, these measures allow only a mere glimpse into an individual's performance at one point in time, and thus their overall accuracy is questionable (Gelfer et al.; Ruskin-Mayher, 1999).

### *The Rise of Authentic Assessment*

In response to the inadequacies of traditional testing methods, a new form of assessment, termed *authentic assessment*, has been suggested. Authentic assessment fuses theory and practice by capturing a learner's performance in real-life, authentic contexts, over time, which subsequently enables assessors to make more accurate, holistic assessments of the learner (Gelfer et al., 2004; Ruskin-Mayher, 1999; Verkler, 2000). One authentic assessment measure, the professional portfolio, has been taken up as an employment tool and as a rich source of self-reflection and self-exploration.



*The Professional Portfolio as a Form of Authentic Assessment*

Salend (2001) defines a portfolio as “a thoughtful, organized and continuous collection of a variety of authentic products that document a professional’s progress, goals, efforts, attitudes, pedagogical practices, achievements, talents, interests and development over time” (p. 196). Although this particular form of authentic assessment is relatively new, its popularity is increasing rapidly for many reasons (Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002; Willis & Davies, 2002). Numerous researchers suggest that portfolios are an excellent form of both collaborative and self-assessment and are an effective way to demonstrate competency as well as professional growth and development in selected areas (Davies & Willis, 2001; Gelfer et al., 2004; Mosely, 2004; Reese, 2004; Rolheiser & Schwartz; Salend; Verkler, 2000; Willis & Davies; Winsor, 1998). Portfolios have also been found to facilitate decision making, goal setting and career planning and to foster a commitment to lifelong learning (Campbell & Brummett, 2002; Davies & Willis; Fallon & Brown, 2002; Mosely; Reese; Rolheiser & Schwartz; Salend; Willis & Davies).

Students have also reported several benefits of creating a portfolio, some of which include improved and increased communication with peers and supervisors (Davies & Willis, 2001; Reese, 2004; Verkler, 2000), the development of reflective thinking (Davies & Willis; Verkler; Willis & Davies, 2002) and refined writing skills (Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002). Students who had completed a portfolio often expressed an increase in their creativity (Davies & Willis; Verkler), self-confidence (Rolheiser & Schwartz; Willis & Davies), and overall sense of empowerment (Davies & Willis). Thus creating a professional portfolio would seem to have many advantages.

### *Why I Chose to Create a Professional Portfolio*

For the reasons stated above, I selected the creation of a professional portfolio as my exit route within my Master of Education Counselling Psychology program. This type of project would enable me to assess the growth of my skills in relation to counselling and assessment and to create a professional document that captures the competencies required for registration as a provisional psychologist in Alberta. Creating a professional portfolio would also allow me to identify my professional strengths and weaknesses, to make important career-related decisions, and to set accomplishable goals for professional development in my chosen field of work. However, more importantly, the project would give me an opportunity to get to know myself by reflecting on what I have learned and what it means to me personally and professionally.

Gallo (2005) argues that portfolios are a symbol of their creator. Ruskin-Mayher (1999) suggests that portfolios offer students an opportunity to tell their story. In telling my story through the use of a professional portfolio, I will often refer to myself in the first-person. I am aware that this is not usually academically accepted; however, as self-reflection and self-exploration are key components of any portfolio, use of the first person seems suitable and appropriate in order to comment on personal meaning and growth. With that in mind, I invite you to read my portfolio. “This portfolio is mine and tells my story, and I want to share it with you so you will understand it and therefore me” (Ruskin-Mayher, p. 8).

The following key questions drive this project:

- What are the credentials and areas of competency required for registration as a provisional psychologist in the province of Alberta?

- How do my own evolving skills, beliefs, and competencies and credentials gained from the Master of Education Counselling Psychology program align with the competencies required for registration as a provisional psychologist?
- What have I learned about counselling, assessment, becoming a psychologist, and my own fit with this career path?

Additional research and pragmatic examples for evaluating one's competency are warranted on many levels. A literature review is provided in Chapter 2, detailing the rationale for assembling a portfolio as a research tool in professional practice. The practical benefits of viewing and developing a portfolio are outlined in Chapter 3, while Chapter 4 reviews the discovery or growth that resulted from this project. An example of a professional portfolio is provided in Appendix A. The artifacts and abstracts that correspond with this exemplar are provided in appendices B through F.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

### *Introduction*

Although the popularity of the portfolio as a form of authentic assessment is steadily increasing, its actual use is far from widespread. Portfolios are strongly encouraged and heavily used in the field of education, and somewhat utilized in the field of medicine; however, their use in the field of psychology is minimal at best. This is unfortunate, as portfolios are an excellent way to demonstrate and assess individuals' competencies, skills, growth, and development in any professional field. Perhaps as research on portfolios becomes more prevalent, their use will be more common in diverse occupational spheres. For now, a logical place to begin in discussing the current literature on portfolios is to define and explain what a portfolio is.

### *What is a Portfolio?*

A portfolio is essentially a compilation of evidence that exemplifies an individual's accomplishments, skills, and abilities over time (Gelfer et al., 2004; Salend, 2001). However a portfolio is much more than just a collection of documents. Many argue that a portfolio is both a process and a product (Campbell & Brummett, 2002; Mosely, 2004; Salend, 2001).

On a surface level, the portfolio process involves collecting and organizing possible documents for inclusion, selecting and reflecting on key documents that represent fundamental features of the individual, and lastly assembling the actual portfolio (Campbell & Brummett, 2002; Salend, 2001). On a deeper level, building a portfolio entails turning ideas into thoughts, thoughts into symbols, symbols into words and words into concrete representations of work (Ruskin-Mayher, 1999). This

introspective process requires both self-reflection about who an individual is as a person and as a professional, as well as self-evaluation of the individual's strengths and weaknesses (Winsor, 1998). Through the process, students often gain a deeper understanding of their attitudes and beliefs (Ruskin-Mayher) and increase their confidence as professionals (Davies & Willis, 2001).

Portfolios are also the product of the processes discussed above. As a product, they are meant to showcase the growth and development of the creator as a result of what he or she has learned and experienced (Davies & Willis, 2001; Salend, 2001). Consequently, each portfolio is unique and representative of the individual learner (Campbell & Brummett, 2002). However, it should be noted that a portfolio is never considered to be "finished." Students are encouraged to modify their portfolio in accordance with their professional development, and thus portfolios are always a work in progress (Campbell & Brummett; Fallon & Brown, 2002). The dynamic nature of portfolios perpetuates the portfolio process, repeatedly reinforcing the individual's lifelong learning and continued professional development (Davies & Willis; Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002; Willis & Davies, 2002). Despite the benefits of portfolios and the portfolio process, some find their use problematic for a variety of reasons, to be discussed.

#### *Arguments Against the Use of Portfolios*

Although the benefits of portfolios are well documented in the literature, they are seldom used, compared to traditional methods of assessment and evaluation (Hensley, Smith, & Thompson, 2003; Mosely, 2004; Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002). Opponents of

portfolios find them problematic for a number of reasons, some of which are discussed below.

#### *Lack of Validity and Reliability*

Many find a portfolio's lack of both validity and reliability significantly troubling. Little empirical evidence exists in regard to the psychometrics of portfolios, and of the evidence that does exist, the results are often contradictory (McMullan et al., 2002). Further research is clearly required to determine the psychometric value of portfolios. However, some argue that quantitative measures like validity and reliability should not apply to qualitative-based projects such as portfolios, because the constructivist paradigm from which portfolios are derived does not lend itself to quantitative analysis. An alternative way of assessing the true value of portfolios may need to be established.

#### *Ambiguity Surrounding Purpose*

Adversaries also argue that the nature of portfolios is not always clear. In constructing portfolios, students may feel confused about the purpose of their task and the way to go about completing it (Mosely, 2004). Consequently, the use of models, explicit instructions, and a clearly defined structure has been suggested in order to reduce the ambiguity surrounding the purpose of portfolios (McMullan et al., 2002; Mosely; Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002; Willis & Davies, 2002).

#### *Organizational Difficulties*

Selecting and organizing artifacts, or pieces of evidence, has also been found to be somewhat difficult. When assembling their portfolios, students often have troubles deciding what to include and how to organize the chosen pieces (Willis & Davies, 2002). In order to focus the selection process, students are encouraged to think about the purpose

of their portfolio and their intended audiences (Campbell & Brummett, 2002; Reese, 2004; Salend, 2001). It is also suggested that specific outlines and explicit instructions be provided to students to help them organize their portfolio effectively (McMullan et al., 2002; Verkler, 2000).

### *Problems with Reflective Writing*

Reflective writing also poses a problem for many students. Initially, self-reflective statements often resemble simple narratives, because students lack insight and reflective writing skills (Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002; Verkler, 2000). Verkler suggests using “the Three R’s of Reflective Writing” to help students correctly reflect on their portfolio entries. The first “R,” “Reaction,” addresses the affective domain and asks students to examine how they feel about an entry. The second “R,” “Relevance,” addresses the cognitive domain, asking students what they have learned and how the entry is meaningful to them and their profession. The last “R,” “Responsibility,” addresses the psychomotor domain and asks students how they will apply the knowledge they have gained to their future professional career. Using the Three R’s system makes reflection easier for students and helps them add depth and insight to their reflections.

### *Time Restrictions*

Time is also cited as a problematic feature of portfolios. Students and administrative staff state that portfolios are just one more thing to do in an already crowded curriculum and that they just do not have the time for such an extensive project (Mosely, 2004). Therefore, it is recommended that students start their portfolios early and work on them continuously throughout the time allotted (Davies & Willis, 2001; Willis & Davies, 2002).

### *Difficulties Related to Evaluation*

Evaluation has also posed a challenge for those responsible for assessing portfolios. Administrators debate whether portfolios should be marked on a pass/fail basis or on a graded scheme, even though graded schemes have been found to hinder constructivist-based projects such as portfolios (Dangel & Guyton, 2003). In addition, evaluative criteria have not been consistently established, so consistent, reliable scoring is impossible (McMullan et al., 2002; Verkler, 2000). Although little research has been performed on the evaluative difficulties pertaining to portfolios, standardized scoring is beginning to emerge as a result of workshops and seminars geared towards portfolio evaluation (Verkler). It has been suggested that administrators design and utilize a clearly defined scoring rubric to aid in assessing portfolios (Cook, Kase, Middleton, & Monsen, 2003; McMullan et al.).

### *Portfolios and Job Interviews*

Lastly, although portfolios have been cited as effective job search tools, traditional interviewing documentation such as resumes, certifications, transcripts, and letters of recommendation is still used more often than portfolios. Mosely (2004) found that employers did not use portfolios as part of the interview process because they lacked structure, had too much material, and took a lot of time to go through. To counter these complaints, Mosely recommends that students construct a “job search portfolio” that contains only the information pertinent to the specific job they are seeking; creating this type of portfolio should increase the likelihood that it will be used in the interview. Advocates of portfolios argue that concerns such as these can be easily addressed and that the advantages of portfolios far outweigh the disadvantages.



## *Arguments for the Use of Portfolios*

### *Linking Theory and Practice*

Theory and practice are inherently interdependent. Theory provides the framework and premise for professional practice, and the practical application of theoretical knowledge modifies and informs the theory from which the practice was initially derived (McMullan et al., 2002). Through this circular, symbiotic relationship both theory and practice are continually transformed and enhanced. Portfolios serve to reinforce the relationship between theory and practice by enabling students to demonstrate both their academic, theoretical knowledge and the practical application of that knowledge. Through the use of portfolios, students often gain an increased understanding of and appreciation for the connection between theory and practice by essentially creating it for themselves (McMullan et al., 2002).

Advocates of portfolios state that this authentic form of assessment has numerous personal and professional advantages. First, portfolios provide an opportunity for individuals to reflect on what they have learned and to get to know themselves in relation to their knowledge and practical experiences (Ruskin-Mayher, 1999). Students often report experiencing an increase in their creativity, confidence, and sense of self-empowerment as a result of creating a portfolio (Davies & Willis, 2001; Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002; Verkler, 2000; Willis & Davies, 2002). Professionally, portfolios can be used to document knowledge, skills and abilities and to demonstrate competency in specified areas (Cook et al., 2003; Leigh et al., 2007; McMullan et al., 2002; Tillema, 1998). Portfolios can also help individuals plan for and subsequently develop and advance in their chosen careers (Campbell & Brummett, 2002; Davies & Willis; Fallon &

Brown, 2002; Mosely, 2004; Reese, 2004; Rolheiser & Schwartz; Salend, 2001; Verkler; Willis & Davies). The personal and professional advantages of portfolios are outlined below.

*A Tool for Self-Reflection and Self-Exploration*

Turns, Guan, and Yellin (n.d.) conceptualize reflection as the process of “looking back on prior experiences with the intention of extending the learning made possible by those experiences” (¶ 4). Dangel and Guyton (2003) suggest that reflection is vital to learning as it provides the pivotal link between past knowledge and experience and new information. Looked at in this way, reflection is an essential component of experiential learning.

Reflection is the crux of any professional portfolio (Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002). Students are strongly encouraged to reflect on each artifact in their portfolio and to include these reflections as a central component of their portfolio. Through the incorporation of reflective statements students demonstrate to others what they have learned and how they have applied this knowledge in real-life, authentic settings (Salend, 2001). Additionally, researchers suggest that students identify their strengths and weaknesses through reflection (Davies & Willis, 2001; Fallon & Brown, 2002; Gelfer et al., 2004; Reese, 2004; Willis & Davies, 2002), develop metacognition (Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002), experience growth, and gain knowledge about themselves both personally and professionally (Ruskin-Mayher, 1999; Verkler, 2000).

As self-knowledge is often acquired through the creation of a portfolio, portfolios can also be seen as a tool for self-exploration and growth (Ruskin-Mayher, 1999; Verkler, 2000). In building a portfolio, students not only demonstrate what they have

learned scholastically and experientially, they also align what they have learned with their own beliefs, attitudes, and opinions (Mosely, 2004). Consequently, what students often build along with their portfolio is a personal philosophy of self that they can draw from and build on in their professional careers (Ruskin-Mayher).

### *Increased Creativity, Confidence, and Self-Empowerment*

Researchers have found that students often report an increase in their creativity, confidence, and overall sense of self-empowerment as a result of creating a portfolio (Davies & Willis, 2001; Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002; Verkler, 2000; Willis & Davies, 2002). Portfolios are, very much, an artistic expression of self wherein the individual is able, and encouraged to utilize his or her creative capabilities to convey competency, growth and development (Davies & Willis; Verkler). Thus, an increase in students' creativity as a consequence of creating a portfolio is not surprising. The self-empowerment students often experience as a byproduct of building a portfolio can be attributed to the control they have over the creation and subsequent presentation of their portfolios. Allowing students to have complete control over what is in their portfolio, how it is arranged, and ultimately, displayed instills pride and confidence in students and enables them to take ownership of their own learning (Mosely, 2005; Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002; Verkler). Students confidence is also increased as a consequence of creating portfolios not only because portfolios allow them to take ownership over their own learning, but also because portfolios help students identify their career-related strengths and weaknesses (Davies & Willis; Fallon & Brown, 2002; Gelfer et al., 2004; Reese, 2004; Willis & Davies), better prepare them to enter the workforce, and essentially, enable students to see themselves as competent, developing professionals

(Davies & Willis; Willis & Davies). As students continue to develop professionally they can use their portfolios to plan, and subsequently, progress in their careers, as well as, to document and demonstrate competency within their chosen fields.

### *Portfolios in Career Planning and Development*

The benefits of creating and maintaining a portfolio are well documented in the literature. Numerous researchers suggest that portfolios aid in goal setting and decision making and are an effective way to document professional growth and development; demonstrate competency, skills and abilities; improve writing, communication and social skills; as well as boost confidence and creativity in students (Campbell & Brummett, 2002; Davies & Willis, 2001; Fallon & Brown, 2002; Gelfer et al., 2004; Mosely, 2004; Reese, 2004; Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002; Salend, 2001; Verkler, 2000; Willis & Davies, 2002; Winsor, 1998). A specific subsector of the literature is devoted to documenting and describing how portfolios aid in career planning and development.

The use of portfolios as career aids is discussed primarily in the field of education, and minimally also in medical fields. Despite an extensive literature review, research pertaining specifically to the use of portfolios in psychology is sparse to nonexistent. However, the career-related benefits of portfolios discussed below can easily be applied to any professional occupation, including that of a psychologist. Thus the information presented in this section is still relevant and warranted. Perhaps as portfolios become more widespread, research related to their use will branch into other occupational spheres.

Researchers in fields other than psychology have found that professional portfolios aid in career planning and development (Campbell & Brummett, 2002; Davies

& Willis, 2001; Fallon & Brown, 2002; Mosely, 2004; Reese, 2004; Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002; Salend, 2001; Verkler, 2000; Willis & Davies, 2002). In planning for their career, students are encouraged to include a professional development section in their portfolio that is designed to help them determine future career paths through the use of personalized goals and action plans (Gallo, 2005; Salend). As a result, prospective career steps and career-related decisions gain clarity and become more concrete. Creating a portfolio has also been found to help students prepare to enter the workforce by increasing their confidence as professionals and making them more aware of the standards that govern their profession (Davies & Willis; Willis & Davies).

Once students have entered the workforce, portfolios increase their marketability by providing employers with actual, visual evidence of their accomplishments, skills, and abilities (Mosely, 2004; Salend, 2001). Mosely found that employers who incorporated student portfolios into the interview process did so because they provide an opportunity for candidates to efficiently present a great deal of information, allow assessment of a candidate in greater depth, provide information that is not available using other methods, and are a good way of identifying an individual's strengths.

Finally, portfolios can help employees stay with and progress in their chosen careers through the documentation of continued professional growth and development (Campbell & Brummett, 2002; Reese, 2004; Salend, 2001). Hence, portfolios can be vital to both career planning and development. A pivotal part of developing in any career is one's ability to demonstrate competency in his or her chosen field. A portfolio can be used for this purpose as well.

### *A Measure of Professional Competence*

Hensley et al. (2003) state that professional competency in psychology entails “a commitment to the ideals, standards and identity of the profession; active participation in professional organizations, acquisition of [the] appropriate counsellor credentials, striving toward professional growth and [the] continued pursuit of knowledge” (p. 222).

According to the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (Canadian Psychological Association, 2001), practitioners have an ethical obligation to attain and maintain competency in their given fields in order to provide optimal service to their clients. However, the assessment of competency within the discipline itself is fraught with difficulties.

Disagreement exists about how competency is defined and subsequently measured. Specifically, in regards to the assessment of competency, many have argued that traditional measures such as multiple choice exams, short answer questions, and written essays only assess competence at one point in time (Cook et al., 2003; Gelfer et al., 2004; Ruskin-Mayher, 1999), have low fidelity (Leigh et al., 2007), and do not adequately assess the integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to ensure competent practice (Leigh et al.; Lichtenberg et al., 2007). There appears to be a need for new and/or improved methods for assessing the competency levels of professionals in psychology.

Although portfolios can be used to showcase learning and professional growth, they are more often used to evaluate performance and to demonstrate competence. Researchers have found that portfolios are, in fact, related to later job success and that they have higher predictive values than both self and peer assessment (Tillema, 1998).

Portfolios also have higher fidelity ratings than traditional measures of competency because of their ability to capture concrete examples of individuals' actual performance (Leigh et al., 2007; Tillema). Because they combine various forms of assessment, they tend to integrate individuals' knowledge, skills, and attitudes to a greater extent than conventional methods (Hensley et al., 2003; McMullan et al., 2002). Lastly, because portfolios are developed over time, they offer numerous different evaluative points, which subsequently allow assessors to form more holistic views of the learner (Cook et al., 2003; Gelfer et al., 2004; Ruskin-Mayher, 1999; Verkler, 2000). According to Cook et al. (2003), "A portfolio can be an effective, accurate and efficient method [of measuring] professional ability against a defined list of competencies" (p. 86). Clearly portfolios have numerous practical purposes that aid students both personally and professionally. Theoretically, the paradigm that supports the practical application of portfolios is constructivism, a perspective that will be explored in more depth.

### *The Pedagogy of Portfolios*

Portfolios are theoretically developed under the constructionist paradigm. Advocates of constructionism argue that individuals construct knowledge through their interactions with others and their environments (Dangel & Guyton, 2003). Portfolios possess many of the key features of constructionism, including an emphasis on responsible learning, reflection, collaboration, active learning, and authentic assessment. Each of these features, and how they relate to portfolios, is discussed below.

#### *Responsible Learning*

Constructionists believe that meaningful learning results when an individual is responsible for and takes ownership of his or her own learning (Dangel & Guyton, 2003).

In a learning-centered approach such as constructionism, students are held accountable for constructing their own knowledge. This is not to say that students are alone in the learning process; students and teachers act collaboratively to assist student learning.

Portfolios promote responsible learning by allowing students to decide what to include and how to organize, interpret, and present the final product (Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002; Verkler, 2000). Davies and Willis (2001) found that creating a portfolio increases students' sense of empowerment by allowing them to express themselves creatively. By shifting the ownership of learning onto the students, portfolios facilitate meaning making and the construction and reconstruction of knowledge (Mosely, 2004; Ruskin-Mayher, 1999).

### *Reflection*

A heavy emphasis on reflection is another key component of the constructivist paradigm (Dangel & Guyton, 2003). According to Salend (2001), reflection "is a means of reliving and recapturing experience in order to make sense of it and develop new understandings and appreciations" (p. 200). Dangel and Guyton suggest that reflective thinking is the glue that binds new information with an individual's past knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs. Hence, constructionists consider reflection an essential catalyst for learning.

Since reflection is the crux of a professional portfolio (Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002; Ruskin-Mayher, 1999; Salend, 2001), it is suggested that students include self-reflective statements as a main component in their portfolio. Researchers have found that through constructing portfolios students develop both reflective thinking and writing skills, as well as a deep appreciation for the importance of reflection (Davies & Willis,



2001; Mosely, 2004; Rolheiser & Schwartz; Willis & Davies, 2002). Not only does reflective thinking help both the reader and the writer make sense of the portfolio (Salend), but it also helps students identify and evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses (Fallon & Brown, 2002; Rolheiser & Schwartz). Reflection helps students develop metacognition and construct a personal philosophy based on their learning and experience (Rolheiser & Schwartz). The importance of reflection as an integral part of the portfolio process cannot be overstated.

### *Collaboration*

Collaborative learning is yet another prominent premise of constructionism. Constructionists argue that the social interaction that takes place in groups not only improves individuals' social skills but contributes to the reconstruction of knowledge by allowing the involved parties to gain a better understanding of others' perspectives (Dangel & Guyton, 2003).

Creating a portfolio often involves collaboration between students, professionals, faculty, and peers (Verkler, 2000). Researchers have found that the collaborative nature of portfolios increases and improves communication and rapport between students and their supervisors (Davies & Willis, 2001; Reese, 2004; Verkler; Willis & Davies, 2002) and fosters a commitment among students to ongoing consultation with peers and colleagues in their professional careers (Davies & Willis). Hence, collaboration is a key constructivist component of professional portfolios.

### *Active Learning and Authentic Assessment*

Portfolios also derive from constructivism a commitment to both active learning and authentic assessment. Constructionists share an underlying theoretical belief that

being actively involved in learning through practicum and field placements fuses theory with practice and ultimately adds dimension and depth to individuals' knowledge (Dangel & Guyton, 2003). Thus, those who adhere to the constructivist paradigm advocate for assessment techniques, such as authentic assessment, that not only assess individuals' theoretical knowledge, but also capture their performance in real-life, authentic settings over time. Assessing both dimensions, theory and practice, constructionists argue, renders a more accurate, holistic view of what has been learned (Dangel & Guyton).

In creating a portfolio, students are strongly encouraged to include documentation of their practicum placements and other forms of field experience together with evidence of their theoretical knowledge, in order to illustrate the interdependent nature of theory and practice and to demonstrate the practical application of their knowledge and skills (Salend, 2001). Consequently, portfolios inherently reinforce the relationship between theory and practice (McMullan et al., 2002; Verkler, 2000). Due to their multi-dimensional nature, evaluations based on portfolios are often much more holistic, well rounded, concrete, and complete, compared to evaluations based on traditional testing methods (Gelfer et al., 2004; McMullan et al.; Ruskin-Mayher, 1999; Verkler).

#### *Summary*

As discussed, portfolios are a collection of documents used to demonstrate individuals' knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as their growth and development over time. In the constructivist paradigm, portfolios are considered a superior form of authentic assessment that emphasizes responsible, active learning, reflective thinking, cooperation, and collaboration. While portfolios may be ambiguous, time consuming, and

difficult to organize and evaluate both individually and psychometrically, they are still excellent learning tools that promote self-reflection and exploration. They can be used to aid in career planning and development as well as to document competency and professional growth. Despite their disadvantages, portfolios have several advantageous applications that benefit students both personally and professionally. The practical considerations for assembling and presenting portfolios are the focus of Chapter 3.

## Chapter 3. Methods

### *Introduction*

A portfolio is a collection of student work that highlights an individual's achievements, knowledge, progress and growth in selected areas over time. How a portfolio is organized and subsequently presented depends on the individual, the purpose of the portfolio, and the intended audience. This chapter includes a description of the three broad types of portfolios, the usual contents and organization of professional portfolios, and the steps I took in creating my own professional portfolio.

### *Portfolio Types*

Numerous types of portfolios are cited in the literature. However, they seem to fall into three broad categories: process, product, and process-product portfolios.

Process portfolios, also known as “learning” or “working” portfolios, represent the first category. These portfolios are cumulative and contain evidence collected over the course of students' education. Their purpose is to showcase what students have learned by illustrating their growth and development over time (Campbell & Brummett, 2002; Mosely, 2005; Salend, 2001).

Product portfolios, also known as “presentation” or “performance” portfolios fall in the second category. Such portfolios are summative and contain only finished products collected at the end of students' education. Their purpose is to showcase students' highest achievements, as well as their strongest skills and abilities (Campbell & Brummett, 2002; Salend, 2001).

The third category is process-product portfolios, which are a combination of both process and product portfolios. These portfolios are both cumulative and summative.

They contain students' preliminary work as well as their finished, polished, final products. Their purpose is to showcase students' learning processes, as well as the products of those processes (Campbell & Brummett, 2002).

### *Portfolio Contents*

Selecting the contents of a portfolio is a commonly reported difficulty. Students are often overwhelmed by the volume of documents that could possibly be included. In their quest to include everything, they may easily omit what is truly important. For this reason, students are often encouraged to remember the purpose of their portfolios and to use model portfolios as guidelines in creating their own. Although no model exists for a portfolio in the discipline of psychology, one could easily be created by adapting portfolio models used in other disciplines, specifically education or nursing. While each portfolio is as unique as its creator, most portfolios strive to make a connection between theory and practice. Certain sections, and documents within those sections, seem to be found in most portfolios.

### *Commonly Found Sections*

The specific sections found in individual portfolios will always vary depending on their purpose. However, most portfolios used by those in education and nursing are divided into somewhat similar sections intended to highlight individuals' learning in some unique way. The description of commonly found sections is derived from discussions in the literature (Cook et al., 2003; Davies & Willis, 2001; Gallo, 2005; Gelfer et al., 2002; Reese, 2004; Salend, 2001; Winsor, 1998).

Most professional portfolios begin with an introductory or background section that introduces the individual and sets up the rest of the portfolio. A theoretical section is

often included that presents individuals' knowledge of the prominent theoretical paradigms in their field. Various skill-based sections that highlight individuals' core competencies make up the largest part of any professional portfolio. These sections are intended to demonstrate individuals' competency in domains deemed necessary by their disciplines. Sections devoted to practical experiences are also included in most professional portfolios, intended to demonstrate how individuals have applied their knowledge and skills in practice. Lastly, most portfolios used in education and nursing include a section on professional development, outlining professional development activities and future career goals. A concluding section in which individuals summarize what they have learned is common in most portfolios.

#### *Commonly Found Documents*

Professional portfolios also tend to include certain types of documents. Winsor (1998) describes four general types of documents that are commonly found in portfolios. The first type is an "artifact," something written in the course of students' formal education. Not written specifically for a portfolio, these include student papers, journal entries, and assignments. The second type of document is a "reproduction," that is, something that captures a work-related activity commonly performed in the professional life of an individual but is not usually captured in written form. Audiotapes and videotapes of an individual's performance belong in this category. The third type is an "attestation," a document about the portfolio's creator that is prepared by someone else. Examples might include letters of recommendation and performance evaluations. Finally, a "production" is a document that is specifically created for a portfolio. Goal statements,

self-reflective statements, and statements of beliefs, for example, all belong in this category.

Most portfolios will include these types of documents. However, in selecting specific pieces of evidence for a portfolio, one should include only those articles that are authentic, meaningful, and representative of one's self (Salend, 2001; Winsor, 1998). As noted earlier, artifacts should suit the purpose of the portfolio as well as the intended audience. According to Ruskin-Mayer (1999), each piece should "demonstrate content knowledge, knowledge of pedagogy, professional interests and contributions, field evaluations and . . . change" (p. 12). Salend recommends that each artifact should have an adjoined caption sheet that includes both a rationale and a self-reflective statement regarding the specific piece. A rationale describes an artifact and the reason for its inclusion, whereas a self-reflective statement explains why the piece is meaningful, what the writer has learned, and how he or she intends to apply that learning in professional practice. Captions and self-reflective statements give meaning to each individual artifact, unify the portfolio, and "offer the reader a context for understanding it better" (Salend, p. 200).

### *Portfolio Organization*

There are many ways to organize a portfolio, depending on the individual, the purpose of the portfolio, and the intended audience. A portfolio may be organized chronologically, for example, in order to illustrate a steady, consistent growth pattern, or it may be organized in terms of specific criteria in order to demonstrate competency and the attainment of specific requirements needed for certification or licensure (Mosely, 2004; Salend, 2001). Alternatively, a portfolio may be organized according to relevant

themes or domains that encompass the actual roles and activities that the creator will be expected to perform in a chosen field (Ruskin-Mayher, 1999; Salend). Verkler (2000) defines a domain as an “area deemed essential to effective [practice]” (p. 116). Ruskin-Mayher suggests that the selected domains in domain-based portfolios should be “general enough to accommodate a variety of different artifacts, but communal enough to reflect the shared values of [one’s professional] community” (p. 12). Organizing a portfolio in terms of practical domains focuses students’ thinking, structures the overall project and provides a framework for readers. Regardless of how a specific portfolio is organized, the documents in most portfolios are arranged in such a way as to demonstrate a clear understanding of the link between theory and practice.

#### *Creating My Professional Portfolio*

I have found assembling a portfolio to be rather difficult. As discussed earlier, students often find the purpose of a portfolio ambiguous. Without clear directions, they often have difficulty deciding what to include and how to arrange it. Consequently, they are often encouraged to follow models of portfolios taken from their specific disciplines in order to focus and structure the creation of their own portfolios. As portfolios are not widely used in psychology, I have had to rely heavily on models derived from the fields of education (Davies & Willis, 2001; Gallo, 2005; Gelfer et al., 2002; Reese, 2004; Salend, 2001; Winsor, 1998) and nursing (Cook et al., 2003). Their general design is easily transferable to counselling and other fields in psychology. By adapting these models to suit my purposes, I have created a portfolio design intended for use by those in the field of psychology. This design takes into account the type of portfolio, what it should contain, and how it should be arranged in order to show competency in the areas



deemed necessary for completion of the M.Ed. Counselling Psychology degree and for registration as a provisional psychologist in Alberta, Canada. My portfolio is included in Appendix A.

### *Portfolio Type*

My portfolio is primarily a product portfolio; most of the artifacts included exemplify my highest standards of work, as well as my strongest skills and abilities. I chose this type of portfolio because it lends itself well to the presentation of my core competencies and easily allows for the alignment of these competencies with those needed for the completion of my degree and for registration as a provisional psychologist. However, to a lesser extent, it is also a process-product portfolio because it also includes work samples derived from areas in which I need to improve. Therefore, it presents evidence of both my learning processes and what I have learned as a result of those processes.

### *Sections and Documents*

The purpose of my portfolio is to demonstrate my competency in the areas required to complete the M.Ed. Counselling Psychology degree, as well as to register as a provisional psychologist in Alberta. With this purpose in mind, I decided to create a domain-based portfolio that highlights my competency, skills, and abilities in academics, counselling, and assessment. The portfolio includes an introduction and is divided into three main core competency domains: academics, counselling, and assessment. The latter two core competencies are further subdivided into two smaller sections, Knowledge and Applications, in order to illustrate in a concrete way my understanding of the inherent connection between theory and practice.

Regarding the portfolio's specific contents, in accordance with the recommendations of Winsor (1998) and Salend (2001), I have included a caption sheet for each artifact. Each caption sheet contains a rationale and a series of self-reflective statements corresponding to the particular artifact. At the beginning of each section of my portfolio, the reader is referred to the appropriate appendix to view an abstract of the actual artifacts described in the corresponding section of the portfolio. Abstracts of the actual documents contained within the portfolio, rather than the documents themselves are provided as a summary for the reader and for organizational purposes. Presenting the artifacts in this way ultimately adds unity, meaning, and depth to the contents of the portfolio and is designed to increase the reader's understanding.

A brief overview of the portfolio is provided here with a description of each section and its corresponding documents. In the Introduction section, I describe the interconnectedness of theory and practice and state both my beliefs about counselling and assessment and my goals for the portfolio. I also provide a table of rationales and a list of self-reflective statements for each document included in the portfolio. Although both a rationale and a self-reflective statement are adjoined to each artifact in a caption sheet, providing both in the form of compiled lists and tables at the beginning of the portfolio frames and structures the entire compilation and serves as a quick reference for the reader.

The second section describes my academic knowledge, awards, and scholarships. This section is intended to demonstrate my academic ability and to express my commitment to continued learning. I first provide an overview of my academic strengths and weaknesses and then describe and reflect on many of the scholastic awards and

scholarships I received over the course of my education, from high school to graduate school. The reader is referred to Appendix B, which contains a compiled list of the scholarships and awards that are described in this section.

The third section, entitled *Counselling Knowledge and Applications*, covers my counselling competencies. I first provide a brief overview of my overall counselling ability in terms of the specific counselling skills in which I excel, and others on which I intend to improve. This section is subdivided into a section on counselling knowledge and one on counselling applications. In the former, I present caption sheets and references to Appendix C, which includes abstracts pertaining to assignments that display my theoretical knowledge, as well as my knowledge of learning processes, gender and cultural issues in counselling, research design and methodology, and ethical decision making. The section on counselling applications includes caption sheets and abstracts for various assignments completed throughout my graduate studies that demonstrate my counselling skills. These include a counselling skills improvement plan, a treatment planning guide for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and a transcription of three concurrent counselling sessions I conducted with a pseudo-client. The reader is once again referred to Appendix C to view abstracts for the artifacts described in the counselling applications section of the portfolio. Together the documents in the counselling section of my portfolio effectively demonstrate my counselling competency.

The fourth section includes a description of my assessment competencies in terms of general assessment knowledge and application. It begins with a brief overview that describes the specific assessment skills at which I excel and those on which I intend to improve. The section is subdivided into a section on assessment knowledge and one on

assessment applications. In the section on assessment knowledge, I include caption sheets and references to Appendix D, which contains abstracts for a number of assignments that display what I know about assessment. These assignments include a critique of a commonly used assessment tool, a position paper on the importance of assessment in psychological practice, and a policy and procedures manual for a pseudo psycho-educational assessment agency. In the section on applications, I once again provide caption sheets and references to appendices D through F, which include abstracts for documents that demonstrate how I have applied my assessment knowledge and skills. Appendix D includes a list and brief description of each of the standardized assessments I have administered, and an abstract of a taped assessment administration. Abstracts pertaining to my practicum placement, which was primarily focused on psycho-educational assessment, make up Appendix E. Abstracts that describe each of the research studies in which I have been responsible for administering and scoring assessments and at times interpreting assessment data comprise Appendix F. An abstract of a letter of recommendation written by one of the lead researchers for both of the research projects of which I was a part concludes this appendix. Together the documents in this section effectively demonstrate my assessment competency.

### *Linking Theory and Practice*

It is commonly acknowledged that theory and practice are inherently interdependent. Theory structures and provides the underlying premise for proficient practice, and in turn, the practical application of theoretical knowledge informs, revises, and thus enhances the original theory from which the application was derived (McMullan et al., 2002). In this way, theory and practice build on one another. In this symbiotic

relationship, they work together to expand what we know and consequently what we are able to do.

The division of my portfolio into three main sections is intended to showcase my abilities and competency in the areas of academics, counselling, and assessment. The use of subsections in the sections on counselling and assessment is intended specifically to demonstrate my understanding of the vital link between theory and practice. While the two subsections on knowledge emphasize my theoretical knowledge in counselling and assessment, the two subsections on application show how I have practically applied that knowledge. Structuring my portfolio in this way is intended to demonstrate my understanding of the important, interdependent link between theory and practice.

#### *Summary*

Creation of a portfolio rests on many considerations. The type of portfolio chosen must suit the predetermined purpose. The artifacts chosen for inclusion must authentically represent the creator of the portfolio and must demonstrate growth, change, and development in accordance with the overall purpose of the portfolio. Lastly, the selected artifacts must be arranged in a way that effectively communicates the author's purpose to the reader and is easy to understand. The professional portfolio I have created takes these considerations into account. It is predominately a domain-based, product portfolio intended to convey my skills, abilities, and competency in the areas of academics, counselling and assessment, for the purposes of completing a Master of Education Counselling Psychology degree and registering as a provisional psychologist in Alberta. I present my professional portfolio in Appendix A.

## Chapter 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, a portfolio is a collection of documents designed to showcase specific skills and abilities, demonstrate competency, document professional growth, and aid in career planning and development (Davies & Willis, 2001; Gelfer, Xu, & Perkins, 2002; Mosely, 2004; Reese, 2004; Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002; Salend, 2001; Verkler, 2000; Willis & Davies, 2002; Winsor, 1998). Although research pertaining to the use of portfolios in the field of psychology is lacking, one can safely assume that portfolios could benefit developing psychologists in a myriad of ways. In addition to allowing them to demonstrate their competency, professional portfolios could aid future psychologists by providing them with a proficient job search tool, making them increasingly aware of the professional standards in their given field, helping them identify their own career-related strengths and weaknesses, and assisting them with goal-setting and decision making (Campbell & Brummett, 2002; Davies & Willis, 2001; Fallon & Brown, 2002; Mosely, 2004; Reese, 2004; Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002; Salend, 2001; Willis & Davies, 2002).

I chose to create a professional portfolio as the final requirement for my graduate degree for all of the reasons outlined above. As discussed earlier, three specific questions drove the creation of my professional portfolio. Each of these questions is addressed below.

### *Credentials and Competencies Required for Registration as a Provisional Psychologist in*

#### *Alberta*

Question 1 addressed the credentials and areas of competency required for registration as a provisional psychologist in the province of Alberta. The College of

Alberta Psychologists (2010) clearly states on its website the requirements for registering as a provisional psychologist. In order to register as a provisional psychologist in the province of Alberta, applicants must have completed the following: (a) a graduate degree with a major in psychology from an approved educational institution; (b) 72 credits of psychology courses, 36 of which must be at the graduate level in a program where a thesis is not required; (c) a graduate level three-credit course in each of the following key areas: Ethics and Standards, Assessment and Evaluation, Research Design and Methodology, Interventions and Consultation; and (d) a graduate or senior undergraduate three-credit course in each of the following areas: Biological Basis of Behavior, Cognitive/Affective Basis of Behavior, Social Basis of Behavior, and Psychology of the Individual. Furthermore, applicants applying for registration as a Provisional Psychologist must be competent in the areas of interpersonal relationships, assessment and evaluation, and intervention.

Throughout my graduate studies, and in the process of creating my professional portfolio, I have become increasingly aware of and knowledgeable about the competencies and credentials listed by the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010), which applicants for registration must first complete in order to gain provisional status. As gaining provisional status is a required component of becoming a registered psychologist, which is my ultimate goal, my credentials and competencies must be comparable to those outlined above. The alignment between my skills, beliefs, credentials, and competencies and those required for registration is the focus of my response to Question 2.

*Alignment of Evolving Credentials, Competencies, Skills, and Beliefs With Requirements  
for Registration as a Provisional Psychologist*

Question 2 addressed the alignment of my own evolving skills, beliefs, competencies, and credentials that I gained from the Master of Education Counselling Psychology program with the competencies and credentials required for registration as a provisional psychologist. I explore the various components of this question in the subsections below.

*Credentials*

My credentials are fairly similar to those required for registration as a provisional psychologist. I will receive a graduate degree in Counselling Psychology upon completion of my professional portfolio, which meets the final project requirement for the degree itself. Furthermore, both my graduate and undergraduate studies have given me the knowledge and subsequent skillsets that will enable me to achieve a provisional status, once I obtain a suitable internship that fulfills the required 1600 hours of supervised practice. I expect to gain provisional status with little to no additional training since I have been aware of the requirements for registration and have been continuously working towards achieving them.

*Competencies*

I also believe that, over the course of my studies, I have acquired the core competencies required by the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010). In regards to being competent in the area of interpersonal relationships, I am thoroughly knowledgeable about the different types of professional relationships (i.e., interpersonal relationships, power relationships, the therapeutic alliance) and skillful in using effective



communication to establish and maintain rapport, trust, and respect within such relationships. In regards to being competent in the areas of assessment and evaluation, I have in-depth knowledge of numerous assessment methods, and I am skillful in selecting, administering, scoring, and interpreting assessments and assessment data in light of the individual(s) being assessed and in a manner that increases the likelihood of therapeutic success. Lastly, in terms of being competent in the area of intervention, I have extensive knowledge of different types of interventions, and I am skillful in formulating treatment plans in accordance with clients' individual needs, as well as selecting, implementing, and evaluating interventions based on clients' treatment plans and in light of their personal counselling goals.

Thus, creating a professional portfolio has enabled me to identify, highlight, and subsequently align my own competencies and credentials with those required for registration by the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010). Consequently, I believe that I do, in fact, have the competencies and credentials required to gain provisional status. However, becoming a provisional psychologist requires more than simply acquiring the appropriate competencies and credentials. In addition to these crucial components, proficient practitioners must also be able to utilize a variety of skills effectively within their specific areas of competency. A self-evaluation of my skills within each of my core competency areas, counselling and assessment, is the focus of the next section.

### *Counselling and Assessment Skills*

Competence in counselling and assessment encompasses many of the skills mentioned in answering the previous question. However, creating my professional

portfolio allowed me to identify my own skill-based strengths and weaknesses within each of these domains.

In terms of my counselling skills, building rapport with clients and pseudo-clients has always been relatively easy for me. I am very good at relaying a genuine sense of caring and concern for each of my clients, which helps to create the foundational “working alliance” and generally makes clients more open and comfortable in a counselling context. I also excel at reflecting clients’ affect, content, and meaning in a counselling session, which makes them feel they are heard and facilitates further exploration. With practice, I have also become good at exploring and implementing certain strategies and/or interventions that are likely to help my clients in light of their background, personality, level of current functioning (i.e., physical, psychological, emotional, and behavioral) and the nature of their problems. Although I am getting much better at selecting and implementing interventions, at times, appropriate interventions are still somewhat difficult for me to identify and utilize. Therefore, although my intervention skills have improved dramatically, perhaps this is an area that is still in need of further development.

Other areas that are in need of further development in regards to my counselling skills include my ability to focus and direct a counselling session and my ability to know when and how to transition my clients from the exploration phase to the action and implementation phases. First, I find that sometimes my sessions tend to go in circles, thus essentially going nowhere. This is frustrating for both my clients and myself, because counselling does not seem to be progressing. To prevent this from happening, I have to ensure that personalized, achievable goals are clearly stated at the beginning of

counselling. Goal clarification should, in turn, structure the counselling process and give it a foundation to return to and/or build towards in each counselling session.

Second, I am not always sure how or when to transition my clients from the exploration phase to the action/implementation phase. I know that all the phases are, in fact, circular and thus can be returned to at any point, but sometimes my transitional timing is off, which tends to leave my clients frustrated and/or confused. For example, if I transition clients into the action phase too early, they may feel lost or confused as to how I arrived at the conclusions I did; however, if I transition them too late, they may feel that they are repeating themselves and not progressing. The issue of timing is a tricky one for me, and it is one for which I do not have a clear, concise solution. As most things improve with practice, so too, I believe, will my issues with timing.

In regards to my assessment skills, I like and excel at assessment administration. I am able to learn new assessments quickly and thoroughly, and with practice, I can administer learned assessments relatively smoothly, in a way that builds and maintains rapport with the individual undergoing the assessment. Scoring assessments, on the other hand, can be either a straightforward or an ambiguous task for me, depending on the nature of the assessment. If the assessment is objective, meaning that there is a right or wrong answer, then scoring is relatively easy. However, if the assessment is subjective, meaning that there are numerous correct or incorrect responses, then one must use one's personal judgment to decide if a response is, in fact, right or wrong. In such cases, scoring is significantly more difficult.

For me, by far the hardest task in assessment is interpretation, which involves deciphering what the raw assessment data actually mean for the individual undergoing

the assessment in light of the client's background, history, current circumstances, level of functioning, skills, and abilities. Creating an interpretive report often takes me hours, because I must first thoroughly understand the data and then derive from the data interpretations that fit with the individual undergoing the assessment. Every time I write a report, I read it over numerous times and then have my supervisor read it several times as well, in order to make sure that my interpretations and subsequent recommendations are accurate and expressed in a way that my client can understand. I must interpret the assessment data in a way that lends itself to the use of interventions that fit the client and ultimately help him or her build upon the strengths and weaknesses identified by the assessment.

Interpreting assessment data is like assembling a puzzle. In interpreting test data, one is essentially putting pieces of a puzzle together so that they fit for the test-taker. Although I am able to fit the pieces together, sometimes I still place them in the wrong spots. With additional education, training, time, practice, and supervision, I foresee that I will find it easier to put together the "interpretive puzzles" we call assessments.

Within my areas of competency, counselling and assessment, I have both superior skills and skills that need further development. Specifically in regards to my counselling skills, I excel at rapport building and reflecting the affect, content, and meaning of what my clients communicate to me in their counselling sessions. However, I sometimes struggle with incorporating structure and direction into my counselling sessions, as well as transitioning my clients from one phase of the counselling process to the next. In terms of my assessment skills, although I am thoroughly knowledgeable about a variety of different assessments and can administer them relatively smoothly, I sometimes struggle

with subjective scoring, and interpreting assessment data often poses a challenge for me. Building a professional portfolio has allowed me to become keenly aware of and to identify my skill-based strengths and weaknesses in both of my areas of competency. I expect that, with additional time, training, education, and supervision, both my counselling and assessment skills will continue to strengthen and develop, ultimately making me a more competent, confident psychologist. However, proficient practitioners not only evaluate the effectiveness of their skills, they also continually assess their own beliefs regarding the professional processes that they conduct and of which they are a part. I next present my personal beliefs about counselling and assessment.

#### *Beliefs About Counselling and Assessment*

According to the Canadian Psychological Association (2001), psychologists have an ethical duty to evaluate how their own values, attitudes, and beliefs affect them both personally and professionally. Over the course of my graduate studies, and in the process of building my professional portfolio, I have formed specific, foundational beliefs in regards to counselling and assessment and their interdependent nature. These beliefs are the focus of the following subsections.

I believe that counselling is a collaborative effort between a client and a counsellor to identify individual client goals and then to work towards achieving these goals, using strategies and techniques that suit the client, in order to provide him or her with symptom relief and ultimately a happier, healthier lifestyle. Counselling, I believe, is a process; it is a means to a more positive, fulfilling end and not just an end in itself.

I have come to believe that assessment is a crucial part of the counselling process. Although it can be used in a myriad of ways, psychological assessment in a counselling

context can aid in the psychotherapeutic process by (a) identifying client needs; (b) illuminating clients' personal strengths and weaknesses related to their needs; (c) identifying interventions that are likely to be efficacious; (d) serving as an effective tool to monitor client progress; and (e) serving as an effective evaluative tool to gauge the efficacy of treatment techniques (Meyer et. al, 2001). In these ways, assessment can help clients achieve their individual counselling goals, whatever they may be.

As is apparent, I believe strongly in the importance of both counselling and assessment. However, I believe even more strongly that these two processes are interdependent; assessment is used to inform counselling, and counselling then builds on the information rendered by assessment. Thus, it is my belief that counselling and assessment are both important, transformational processes that coexist in a reciprocal relationship that ultimately benefits the client by increasing the likelihood of psychotherapeutic success.

To summarize, I believe in the importance of both counselling and assessment. Counselling is a collaborative process between a client and a counsellor to achieve the client's predetermined counselling goals, using methods and techniques that suit the client in order to provide him or her with symptom relief and/or a happier, healthier, more fulfilling lifestyle. The assessment process, I believe, aids in the counselling process by rendering additional information about the client and/or the counselling process itself, which ultimately increases the likelihood of psychotherapeutic success. Although counselling and assessment can be seen as separate processes, they are actually interdependent, as one process continually informs and builds on the other. I believe strongly that counselling and assessment are important, interdependent processes that,

when used in conjunction with one another, ultimately propel clients towards achieving their goals. Building a professional portfolio has enabled me to gain an in-depth understanding of how I personally view counselling and assessment, and this understanding will ultimately make me a more capable, well-rounded practitioner. My beliefs about counselling, assessment, and their subsequent interdependence are derived from what I have learned in each of these domains. What I have learned about counselling and assessment, as well as about becoming a psychologist and my own fit with this career, is the focus of my response to Question 3.

*What Was Learned About Counselling, Assessment, Becoming a Psychologist, and  
Personal Fit With This Career Path*

Question 3 focused on what was learned about counselling, assessment, becoming a psychologist, and my own fit with this career path. In the following sections I address this question in terms of each of its components.

*Counselling and Assessment*

To sum up all that I have learned about counselling and assessment is truly a difficult task. However, creating a portfolio has helped me to identify and summarize not only what I have learned in regards to counselling and assessment, but perhaps more importantly, what it all means to me personally and professionally. I discuss what I have learned about counselling and assessment in the following subsections.

*Counselling.* In regards to counselling, I have learned about (a) the core counselling skills and how to use them effectively to conduct and move through the counselling process; (b) all of the theoretical psychotherapeutic paradigms and how to use them to build my own personal approach to counselling; (c) learning processes and

how they subsequently influence counselling; (d) gender and cultural issues in counselling; (e) the importance of research and the complexities of research design and methodology; (f) the process and significance of ethical decision making; (g) numerous types of interventions and how to select, utilize and evaluate interventions within the context of treatment planning.

Thus, I have most certainly learned a lot about what counselling is and what it involves. However, I believe that one of the most important things I have learned about counselling is that it is not simply a quick fix for people's problems. Rather, counselling is a process, a collaborative effort between a client and a counsellor to identify individual client goals and then to work towards achieving these goals using strategies and techniques that suit the client, in order to provide him or her with symptom relief and ultimately a happier, healthier lifestyle. With this knowledge, I hope to create a counselling approach that encompasses all I have learned, an approach that I can apply in a manner that is tailored for each of my individual clients in order to help them reach their counselling goals.

*Assessment.* I have learned a lot about assessment as well. Specifically, I have learned about various different types of assessments and how to critically evaluate a selected scale. I have also learned how to administer, score, and interpret a number of prominent intelligence, achievement, behavioral, and cognitive measures. I have a strong grasp on how to relay the data rendered from these assessments in the form of formal, written reports. In addition, I have gained a true appreciation for the inherent connection between counselling and assessment. I have learned how to use counselling and assessment together so that they build on one another and, in doing so, render a more



enhanced, complete conceptualization of the client. However, one of the most important things I feel I have learned about assessment, in addition to those mentioned above, is that assessment is a process and not just a test.

I have learned that the assessment process involves identifying clients' core concerns, selecting and tailoring an assessment battery of both formal and informal measures to address these concerns, administering the chosen assessment battery in a non-threatening, comfortable way that builds and maintains rapport, and subsequently, interpreting and relaying assessment information in light of clients' concerns and in a way that suits and makes sense to the clients. Looking at assessment as a process and understanding all that that process entails will subsequently make me a more competent, confident assessor. Just as I have come to understand that both counselling and assessment are processes, I have also come to understand the process of becoming a psychologist. This process is discussed in the following section.

### *Becoming a Psychologist*

Becoming a psychologist, like counselling and assessment, is also very much a process. According to the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010), in order to become registered psychologists, applicants must (a) obtain a graduate degree in psychology from an approved educational institution; (b) have their academic credentials reviewed and approved by the College of Alberta Psychologists; (c) complete a minimum of 1600 hours of supervised practice; and (d) pass both the EPPP and the oral exam. Engaging in and subsequently completing this process ensures that registered psychologists have the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to provide optimal service to individuals who seek their assistance.

Over the course of my graduate studies, and as a consequence of creating my portfolio, I have come to see the process of becoming a registered psychologist more clearly as a series of concrete steps. In order to become a registered psychologist in accordance with the registration process outlined by the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010), I will (a) receive my graduate degree upon completion of this final project, (b) apply to have my academic credentials reviewed and approved by the College of Alberta Psychologists, (c) establish a suitable internship that will allow me to obtain the required 1600 hours of supervised practice, and (d) pass both the EPPP and the oral exam.

Although I still have a lot of work ahead, becoming aware of and educated about each stage of the process allows me to feel that establishing a career as a psychologist is much more realistic and achievable. Due to both my graduate studies and my professional portfolio, I am now more knowledgeable about the process of becoming a psychologist. Therefore, my fit with this career as well as my career path has also become clearer to me. My future professional development goals, as well as a possible area of specialization are outlined in the section below.

#### *Personal Fit With Career Path*

From a very early age, I knew I wanted a career that would allow me to help others in some way. From a very early point in my studies, I knew I would find a career in psychology a fulfilling and rewarding way to do so. My schooling, especially my graduate training, has paired this underlying desire to help others with a knowledge base and skill set that will enable me to provide competent, professional service to those seeking help through counselling and/or assessment. Building my professional portfolio has helped me identify my core competencies as well as my strengths and weaknesses in

each of these domains, decipher a possible career path, and set the following future professional development goals.

Goal 1: Become a registered psychologist

- Complete my Master's degree
- Complete the required components of the registration process (i.e., approval of academic credentials, supervised internship, EPPP exam, oral exam).

Goal 2: Gain employment with a school division as a Registered School

Psychologist

- Complete any additional professional requirements in the area(s) of assessment and/or education that will allow me to practice in this specific domain
- Seek out employment with schools of interest

Goal 3: Expand my knowledge of child development, psycho-educational assessment, and educational interventions.

- Complete additional courses
- Seek additional training and/or supervision
- Attend relevant workshops, seminars and conferences
- Keep up to date on current research in my area(s) of practice

Goal 4: Establish and expand my network of colleagues and clientele

- Remain involved in relevant research endeavors
- Attend and present at relevant conferences and seminars

- Join, attend, and be involved with related professional boards and associations
- Work in different settings and as a part of multidisciplinary teams

Goal 5: Establish my own private assessment practice

- Establish a network of colleagues and clientele (see goal 4 above)
- Complete additional courses and training in business administration
- Ensure business is licensed and insured according to legal dictates and as outlined by the College of Alberta Psychologists
- Secure enough funding to run business, employ and maintain a qualified staff, buy assessments, and advertise appropriately

As is apparent from these goals, I am interested in pursuing a career in assessment, specifically as a school psychologist. School psychologists have many duties, some of which include assessing students with suspected learning disabilities, developing and implementing interventions and individualized program plans for students with learning disabilities, and consulting with parents, teachers, school administrators, and other vested parties in order to facilitate students' learning and foster their academic growth and development (North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, 2007). With additional education, training and supervision I know I will be able to excel in fulfilling these duties, not only because I have the drive and desire to do so, but also because I have an underlying philosophical belief that knowledge is power and to learn is to grow. Thus, my ultimate goal is to have a career that affords me an ongoing opportunity to facilitate others' learning and subsequent growth while continuing to learn and grow myself.

In addition to helping me distinguish my core competencies, identify my career-related strengths and weaknesses, decipher a career path, and establish achievable future professional development goals, my portfolio will also serve as an excellent job search tool. From a professional standpoint, I now have a compilation of documents that portray my core competencies, skills, and abilities exceedingly well. I will be able to use my portfolio in the future to gain and retain employment. My portfolio portrays me as a competent professional; however, perhaps more importantly, assembling my portfolio has allowed me to realize that I am, in fact, a developing professional rather than merely a student. It is truly transformational to see myself in such a professional light and to really believe what I see.

Portfolios may be not only professionally but also personally transformational. The literature states that creating portfolios increases students' confidence (Davies & Willis, 2001; Verkler, 2000), creativity (Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2002; Willis & Davies, 2002), and overall sense of empowerment (Davies & Willis, 2001). My portfolio has most definitely served all three of these purposes. I consider my portfolio a true artistic expression of myself and, as a result of the portfolio process, my view of myself has changed significantly. It now incorporates both a personal and a professional dimension. Consequently, I feel much more confident and empowered to enter the workforce, knowing I have the knowledge and skills that will subsequently enable me to excel, expand, and grow in my chosen field.

#### *Looking Back, Looking Ahead*

As I flip through the pages of my portfolio, which is now nearing completion, I reflect not only on each individual piece but on the project as a whole and the process I

undertook to construct it. Words cannot express how much time and effort went into selecting each artifact, reflecting on its meaning, and then communicating this meaning to the reader in an organized, unified manner. Documents were often organized, only to be reorganized and rearranged; words were written, only to be edited and then rewritten and rewritten again. Often, my portfolio seemed bigger than me, and I remember frequently being overwhelmed by its sheer complexity. However, with each revision came increased clarity and understanding, and, in the words of Ruskin-Mayer (1999), “harmony [eventually] grew out of chaos” (p. 11). With this now harmonious compilation, I have come to realize that my portfolio is not bigger than me, it *is* me.

My portfolio has aided me in numerous ways, both personally and professionally. Professionally it has enabled me to distinguish my core competencies, identify my career-related strengths and weaknesses, decipher a possible career path, and establish achievable future professional development goals. It will, in the future, serve as an excellent job search tool. Personally, my portfolio has allowed me to express myself creatively and has increased my self-esteem, confidence, and overall sense of empowerment by allowing me to see myself as a developing professional rather than simply a student.

For these reasons, I strongly recommend that students who are transitioning between school and work create a portfolio for themselves. Although portfolios are not widely used in psychology, their advantages can easily be applied to any professional occupation. Portfolios allow psychology students to become aware of and familiar with the ethical guidelines and standards that govern the discipline, to assess and then reflect on their own professional strengths and weaknesses, and to identify and then compare

their competencies with those required for registration. Consequently, the discipline of psychology stands to benefit from the use of professional portfolios as well, as they help to create confident, competent practitioners. More confident, competent practitioners are, in turn, able to provide more effective service to those individuals seeking treatment, which ultimately benefits the community at large. Thus, portfolios can be hugely beneficial to psychology students, practicing psychologists, the discipline of psychology, and the community in general. Consequently, I hope that with additional research portfolios will become more widely used in every discipline, but especially in psychology.

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Appendix A. An Example of a Professional Portfolio

# I Am Still Learning...



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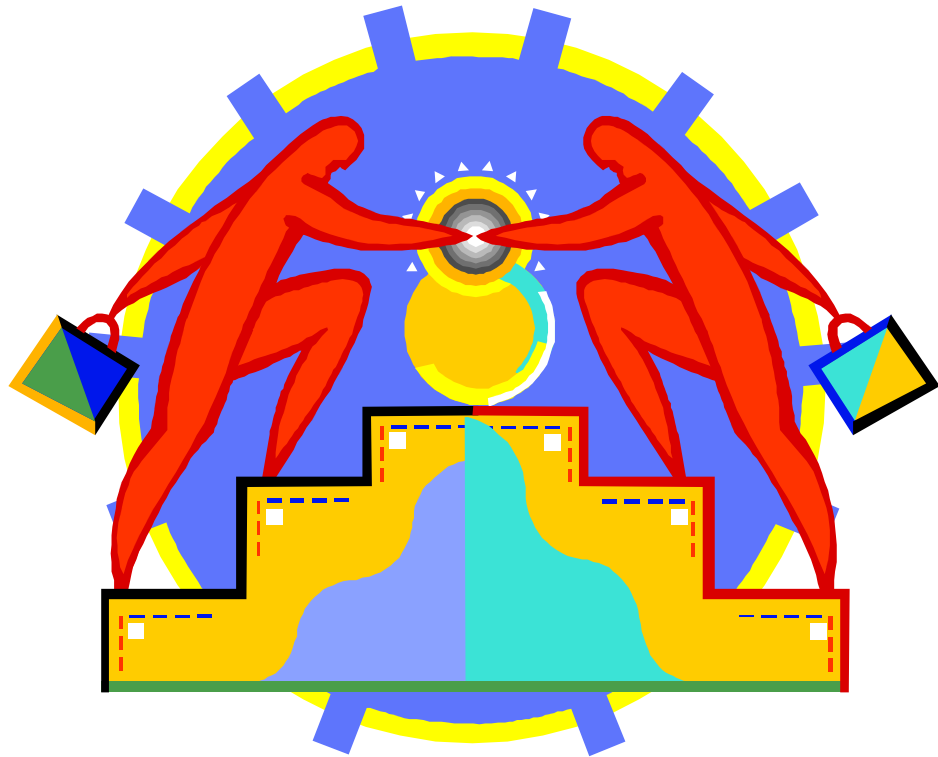
**(403) 394-6068**

### Note to the Reader

The following is an example of a professional portfolio that was created by the author in order to fulfill the final project requirement of the Master of Education Counselling Psychology degree, as well as to demonstrate competency for the purposes of registration as a provisional psychologist in the province of Alberta. The portfolio is meant to be a stand-alone document that could be used by potential employers to review the author's knowledge, skills, and abilities in the areas of academics, counselling, and assessment. Certain sections in the portfolio may seem repetitive, since it is included here as part of the final project.

In addition, abstracts of the documents described in the portfolio, rather than the documents themselves, are provided in subsequent appendices as summaries for the reader and for organizational purposes. The actual documents will be provided when the portfolio is in use. Lastly, as a reference for the reader and for structural purposes, a compiled list of self-reflective statements and a table of rationales are provided at the beginning of the portfolio. Providing all of the self-reflective statements and rationales that are found throughout the portfolio in compiled lists and tables at the beginning is intended to help unify the portfolio and guide the reader through it.

# Section 1: Introduction



## 1.2. Portfolio Table of Contents

### Section 1: Introduction

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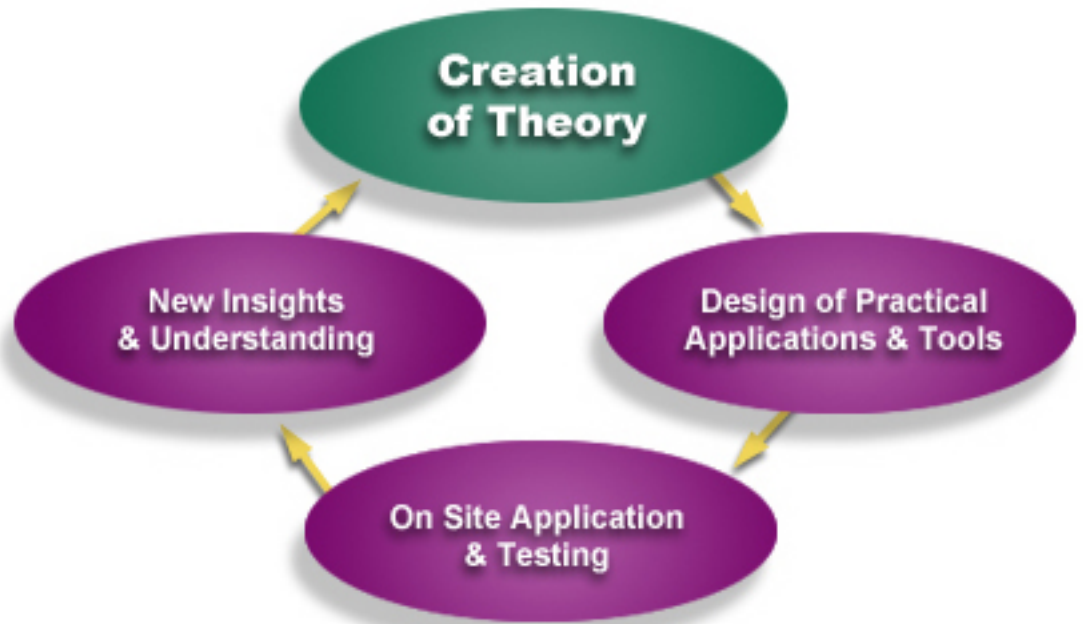
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- 4.4.6. Research: Magnetic Resonance Brain Imaging of Brain Development, Children Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Study: Description, Roles and Responsibilities
- 4.4.7. ABRACADABRA Pan-Canadian Research Project: Description, Roles, and Responsibilities
- 4.4.8. Lead Researcher's Letter of Recommendation

### 1.3. Foreword: The Interconnectedness of Theory and Practice

Theory and practice are inherently interdependent. Theory provides the framework and premise for professional practice, and the practical application of theoretical knowledge modifies and informs the theory from which the practice was initially derived (McMullan et al., 2002). Through this circular, symbiotic relationship both theory and practice are continually transformed and enhanced. Portfolios serve to reinforce the relationship between theory and practice by enabling students to demonstrate both their academic, theoretical knowledge and the practical application of that knowledge. Through the use of portfolios, students often gain an increased understanding of and appreciation for the connection between theory and practice by essentially creating it for themselves (McMullan et al.).

The division of my portfolio into three main sections is intended to showcase my superior abilities and competency in the areas of academics, counselling, and assessment. The use of subsections in the sections on counselling and assessment is intended specifically to demonstrate my understanding of the vital link between theory and practice. While the two subsections on knowledge emphasize my theoretical knowledge in counselling and assessment, the two subsections on applications show how I have practically applied that knowledge. Structuring my portfolio in this way is intended to demonstrate my understanding of the vital, interdependent link between theory and practice.

A Visual Depiction of How Theory and Practice Are Interconnected



*Note.* Diagram taken from *Actionable Knowledge*, by University Outreach and Engagement, Michigan State University, 2010.

#### 1.4. Statement of Beliefs about Counselling and Assessment

According to the Canadian Psychological Association (2001), psychologists have an ethical duty to evaluate how their own values, attitudes and beliefs affect them both personally and professionally. When I first entered graduate studies, I believed that counselling was a “quick fix” to people’s problems; however, over the course of my studies, I have developed the awareness that counselling and assessment are anything but a “quick fix.” I now believe that counselling is a collaborative effort between a client and a counsellor to identify individual client goals and then work towards achieving these goals, using strategies and techniques that suit the client. The purpose of counselling is for counselors to provide clients with symptom relief by helping them develop the knowledge and skills that will enable them to reach their counselling goals and ultimately resolve their presenting problems as independently as possible, using the knowledge and skills developed in counselling. Counselling is a process; it is a means to a more positive, fulfilling end and not just an end in itself.

Assessment, I believe, is a crucial part of the counselling process. Although it can be used in a myriad of ways, psychological assessment in a counselling context can aid in the psychotherapeutic process by (a) identifying client needs, (b) illuminating clients’ personal strengths and weaknesses related to their needs, (c) identifying interventions that are likely to be efficacious, (d) serving as an effective tool to monitor client progress, and (e) serving as an effective evaluative tool to gauge the efficacy of treatment techniques (Meyer et. al, 2001). In these ways, assessment can help clients achieve their individual counselling goals, whatever they may be. My professional goals are outlined in the following section.

### 1.5. Statement of Professional Goals

According to the Canadian Psychological Association (2001), psychologists have an ethical responsibility to continue to develop themselves professionally. Goal setting may help psychologists to monitor and progress their personal and professional development. The underlying goal of this portfolio, as it is a learning portfolio, is to illustrate what I have learned, what my learning-related strengths and weaknesses are, and what I still need to learn on my academic journey towards becoming a registered psychologist. However, a more specific goal of this portfolio is to demonstrate my knowledge, skills, and abilities in three main areas:

1. Academics
2. Counselling
3. Assessment

In each section my relevant theoretical knowledge will be presented first, followed by evidence of how I have practically applied this knowledge. I hope in this way to demonstrate not only what I have learned, but how theory and practice are inherently interconnected.

In the pages that follow, I will present artifacts of my educational career that demonstrate my achievement of the above-stated goals. However, underlying every page in this portfolio is an overwhelming sense of pride in what I have done thus far, in order to fulfill my personal and professional aspirations. I hope you enjoy reading this portfolio as much as I have enjoyed creating it.

## 1.6. Table of Rationales

<b>Document</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Statement of Beliefs about Counselling and Assessment	January 16, 2009	My beliefs about counselling and assessment	Communicates my beliefs about counselling and assessment.
Statement of Professional Goals	January 17, 2009	Description of the current goals of my portfolio	States the explicit goals that guide the portfolio and give it structure and direction.
Academic Curriculum Vitae	Continuously updated	Document that lists and describes my education, academic awards, achievements, skills, and experience	Represents my academic journey thus far.  Shows my past and current progress towards my academic and professional goals.
Academic Awards and Scholarships	High school (1998-2001) College (2001-2005) University Undergrad (2005-2007) Graduate Studies (2007-2009)	Documentation of my academic awards and achievements	Demonstrates my ability to acquire superior academic knowledge at progressively higher educational levels.
Letter of Recommendation	April 18, 2007	Professor's letter of recommendation for Governor General's Academic Gold Medal	Demonstrates one professor's perceptions of my superior academic abilities and positive personal attributes.

<b>Document</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Graduate Admissions Letter	June 7, 2007	Documentation of my admission into the M.Ed. Counselling Psychology 2007 cohort	<p>Reflects how a combination of my academic achievements, personal experiences, and attributes enabled me to continue my academic career at a graduate-studies level.</p> <p>Illustrates my commitment to academic excellence, continued professional development.</p>
Graduate Schedule & Course Descriptions	2007-2009	A brief description of each graduate course	Demonstrates what I have had to accomplish and achieve academically in each course.
Counselling Overview	March 1, 2009	Self-reflective overview of my current counselling skills and abilities	<p>Indicates progress towards my goal of becoming a registered psychologist.</p> <p>Demonstrates self-reflection in regards to my counselling-related strengths, weaknesses.</p> <p>Clarifies my personal development goals pertaining to my counselling skills</p>
My Personal Approach to Counselling	December 3, 2007	An assignment that describes my personal approach to counselling	Demonstrates my knowledge of various counselling theories and my ability to use this theoretical knowledge to create a

Document	Date	Description	Rationale
			<p>personalized counselling approach.</p> <p>Illustrates progress towards my goal of becoming a theoretically knowledgeable and skillful practitioner.</p>
Jessica's Journal of Learning	December 6, 2007	Self-reflective journal entries written in response to each Learning Processes seminar	<p>Demonstrates reflection on and analysis of the information relayed in each Learning Processes seminar.</p> <p>Highlights the increasing knowledge and awareness I have gained into how people learn and how learning processes influence counselling.</p> <p>Learning Plan included demonstrates analysis of personal strengths and weaknesses and goal-setting for future professional development.</p>
Individual Versus Group-Based Exercise: Which Do Women Prefer and Why?	November 28, 2007	Self-created research design that could be used to investigate women's preference for either individual or group-based exercise	Demonstrates knowledge of various research design methods and components (i.e., literature review, method, procedures, etc.) as well as ability to construct, critically analyze, evaluate a viable research design.



Document	Date	Description	Rationale
			<p>Illustrates progress towards becoming knowledgeable and skillful in research design and methodology</p>
Gender and Culture Journal	April 10, 2008	Self-reflective journal entries written in response to each Gender and Culture Seminar	<p>Demonstrates reflection on and analysis of information relayed in Gender and Culture seminars.</p> <p>Illustrates progress towards becoming competent in gender and cultural issues in counselling.</p> <p>Learning Plan included demonstrates analysis of personal strengths and weaknesses, as well as goal setting for future professional development.</p>
Ethical Decision Making Assignment	May 27, 2008	An assignment that involves the application of current ethical principles and standards, as well as an ethical decision making model to a potential real-life scenario	<p>Demonstrates the appropriate use of an ethical decision making model, as well as knowledge and the application of current ethical principles and standards.</p> <p>Illustrates progress towards becoming an ethically competent practitioner.</p>

<b>Document</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Counselling Skills Improvement Plan	July 27, 2007	Introspective planning guide created in order to improve my counselling skills	Demonstrates self-reflection, ability to identify personal areas of weakness and to create, implement and evaluate a program that addresses the identified weaknesses.  Illustrates progress towards becoming a more skillful counsellor.
It's Not My Fault: Finding the Way Through Fetal Alcohol Syndrome	March 11, 2008	Treatment planning guide for the treatment of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)	Demonstrates ability to research and design a viable treatment plan for treatment of FAS.  Illustrates progress towards becoming competent in the area of treatment planning.
Interventions Video Assignment	March 25, 2008	Video depiction and transcription of 3 pseudo-counselling sessions	Demonstrates counselling knowledge as well as the application of counselling skills and interventions.  Illustrates progress towards becoming a more effective, efficient practitioner.
Counselling Applications in Class, Practicum, Research and Work	March 23, 2009	Describes how I have applied my counselling knowledge and skills in a variety of different settings	Demonstrates that I have the knowledge and the ability to apply my counselling skills in innovative ways in several different settings.

Document	Date	Description	Rationale
			Illustrates progress towards becoming a more versatile practitioner.
Assessment Overview	May 10, 2009	Self-reflective overview of my current assessment skills and abilities	<p>Demonstrates self-reflection in regards to assessment-related strengths, weaknesses.</p> <p>Clarifies my personal development goals as they pertain to assessment.</p>
Critique of the Comprehensive Receptive and Expressive Vocabulary Test	October 16, 2007	A critique of the Comprehensive Receptive and Expressive Vocabulary Test	Demonstrates my ability to be critical of and become knowledgeable about a particular test.
Part 1: Position Paper: The Importance of Assessment in Psychological Practice	December 6, 2008	A term paper on the importance of assessment in counselling	Demonstrates my understanding of how counselling and assessment are inherently interconnected and of the importance of assessment in counselling.
Policy and Procedures Assignment: Ethics Orientation Manual for Jumpstart Assessment Agency	June 17, 2008	A policy and procedures manual for a pseudo psycho-educational assessment agency.	<p>Demonstrates knowledge and awareness of both counselling and assessment-related ethical guidelines and standards.</p> <p>Illustrates progress towards becoming a more ethical practitioner.</p>

<b>Document</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
List of Standardized Assessments Administered	December 12, 2009	Lists and briefly describes assessments I have learned and administered during my graduate studies	Documents my ongoing attempt to become increasingly competent in the area of assessment.
Tape Presentation 2: Context Paper, Gabe	December 6, 2008	An Interventions assignment that includes a tape-recorded assessment administration, as well as the corresponding assessment data and formal written report. Self-reflective comments on my performance are also included.	Demonstrates my assessment-related knowledge and skills, specifically my ability to administer, score, and interpret assessment(s) and assessment data.  Illustrates progress towards becoming competent and skillful in psycho-educational assessment.
Practicum Placement: Description, Roles and Responsibilities	May 24, 2009	A description of my practicum placement and the roles and responsibilities it involved.	Represents exchange of knowledge within the discipline.  Demonstrates how both experience and the supervision of an established practitioner have aided in my professional development.
Practicum Placement: Example of a Formal Written Report	January 2, 2009	An example of a formal assessment report that I wrote	Demonstrates my ability to interpret and relay assessment information.
Practicum Placement: Final Evaluation	December 5, 2008	My final performance evaluation for my practicum	Conveys an objective, professional appraisal of my assessment-related skills and abilities.

<b>Document</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
MRI-FASD Research Study	September, 2007-Current	Describes my involvement in a research study pertaining to FASD	Demonstrates my interest and involvement in the formation, implementation and potential application of research.
ABRACADABRA Pan-Canadian Research Study	2007-2009	Describes my participation in a research study pertaining to early childhood literacy	Demonstrates my interest and involvement in research

## 1.7. Self-Reflective Comments on Portfolio Entries

### **Section 1: Introduction**

#### 1.4. Statement of Beliefs about Counselling and Assessment

It amazes me how much my beliefs about counselling and assessment have changed from the time when I first entered graduate school to now, when I am almost finished. At first, I assumed that counselling was a “quick fix” for people’s problems and that our primary role as counsellors was to “fix” our clients. Now I understand that counselling is a process in which the client and the counsellor work together towards client-defined goals, using interventions and techniques that are tailored to the client’s specific needs. Through this process, we as counsellors hope to provide our clients with happier, healthier, more fulfilling lives.

At the beginning of my studies, assessment was simply a “test” that rendered specific information. Now I realize that assessment is either a formal or informal process of building rapport, administering, scoring, interpreting, and explaining assessment information in a client-friendly manner so that it can be used to propel the client towards his or her goals. I understand now that counselling and assessment go hand in hand and build on each other with the underlying objective of helping clients reach their goals. I believe that, if counselling and assessment are done correctly, counsellors are merely general guides along the way; it is the client who “fixes” himself or herself.

#### 1.5. Statement of Professional Goals

Over the years my goals have changed, as they should. As I achieve one goal, another arises, keeping me focused and motivated to become the person I want eventually to be. I look back on past goals and am proud not only to have achieved them, but also

often to have surpassed them. This gives me the drive to pursue future goals with a vigor and exuberance that allow me to face challenges and obstacles head-on. At times my goals have seemed impossible and elusive; however, all I have to do is flip through this portfolio to realize that what I have already accomplished is truly amazing.

## **Section 2: Academic Knowledge**

### 2.3. Academic Curriculum Vitae

When preparing my application for graduate school, I had no idea what an academic curriculum vitae (CV) was, so I did what others do nowadays -- I googled it. Now I am truly amazed at my CV, which is continuously expanding as I gain additional knowledge, skills, and abilities. On these pages I present my academic self. I no longer see myself as a simple student, but rather as a developing professional. I look forward to adding to my CV throughout my professional career.

#### 2.4.1. Alexander Rutherford Scholarship (Brooks Composite High School)

I was truly honored to receive this scholarship. The money it gave me, \$2,500, went to furthering my studies. However, what meant more to me, and what I still carry with me today, is an overwhelming sense of pride in my academic accomplishments in high school. This award is given not just for excellence in one or two academic areas, but rather for excellence in all major subject areas spanning all three of my high school years. That is something of which I am truly proud.

#### 2.4.2. Academic Excellence Award (Medicine Hat College)

Upon entering college, I was unsure if I would be able to maintain the academic standards I had set for myself in high school. Receiving this award eased my worries and gave me the focus I needed to excel in my studies at a college level.

#### 2.4.3. Jason Lang Scholarship (Medicine Hat College/University of Lethbridge)

This is an academic excellence award that is given in remembrance of Jason Lang, a teenager who died after being shot by another student in a Taber high school. Although I did not know Jason Lang or his parents, to receive an award in remembrance of him is truly an honor.

#### 2.4.4. Psychology Book Award (Medicine Hat College)

I am very proud to have received the Psychology Book award. Not only is it a form of academic recognition, but the recipient is nominated by the professors who teach within the major, in this case, the professors who taught me psychology. It was an honor to be taught by them. To have been seen in such a positive light by the professionals whom I had come to admire is an honor that exceeds words.

#### 2.4.5. Dean's Honor List (University of Lethbridge)

I was concerned about how I would make the transition from college to university. Although I noticed a drastic difference between the two educational institutions, my academic achievement did not falter. I was consistently named on the dean's honor list at the University of Lethbridge.

#### 2.4.6. Governor General's Academic Gold Medal Nomination (University of Lethbridge)

When I learned that I was nominated for this prestigious award, I was shocked. To be considered for an academic gold medal, amongst all of my graduating peers at a university level, is an honor that brings tears to my eyes. Although I did not receive the gold medal, being nominated was an honor.



2.4.7. Professor's Letter of Recommendation for Governor General's Academic Gold Medal (University of Lethbridge)

My professors' letters of recommendation, which accompanied my nomination, make me tear up. These letters, one of which is included here, show how other professionals view me as a person, a student, and a developing professional. I am proud of what my professors have seen in me and expressed in their letters. I hope to make them proud in my future professional endeavors.

2.4.8. Letter of Admission, Graduate Studies (University of Lethbridge)

This letter represents an open door to a better education and multiple learning opportunities. I cried tears of joy when I received it. This single piece of paper granted me entrance into graduate school, affording me many different educational and experiential opportunities, which will, in turn, culminate into additional opportunities that I will cherish and carry with me for the rest of my life. This letter represents a continuation of my education and symbolizes my commitment to life-long learning.

2.4.9. Minister of Advanced Education and Technology Graduate Scholarship (University of Lethbridge)

I entered the M.Ed. Counselling Psychology program with trepidation because I was unsure if I was going to be able to keep up with the other students. I felt an immense amount of pressure to do well, now that I had been awarded graduate student status. This scholarship confirms that I have done well, and I am once again very proud of myself.

### **Section 3: Counselling Knowledge and Applications**

#### 3.3. Counselling Knowledge

##### 3.3.1. Graduate Course Descriptions (University of Lethbridge)

I include a brief description of each graduate course in order to illustrate what I have had to accomplish academically during my graduate studies. As I look at what I have had to accomplish in each course, I can't help being very proud of myself.

##### 3.3.2. My Personal Approach to Counselling

I found this paper surprisingly difficult, because not only did I have to understand several different psychological schools of thought, but I also had to decide which ones fit with my personal beliefs surrounding successful psychotherapeutic practice. The latter task was much more difficult than the first and required a lot of time, thought, and self-reflection. However, in the end, I was able to construct a counselling approach that was theoretically based and suited my personal counselling style. Although my counselling approach will change through the years as I gain more knowledge and experience, this paper reflects a solid theoretical foundation upon which I can expand as I continue to develop personally and professionally.

##### 3.3.3. Jessica's Journal of Learning

At first, I was confused about how a class on learning was relevant to counselling. By the end of the semester, I realized how crucial learning is to the counselling process. This class completely changed my view of a counsellor from being a "fixer" to being a "teacher" or "co-developer." I no longer felt responsible for "fixing" clients' problems. Instead, I now felt responsible for developing with my clients new ways for them to look at, think about, and essentially solve their own problems. I learned that, to do so, one

must first be knowledgeable about learning processes, learning styles, and how to solicit learning so that clients understand and then apply the information relayed in counselling. Each journal entry is in response to a Learning Processes seminar; collectively, the entries represent my own learning process, which I have come to see as invaluable.

#### 3.3.4. Individual Versus Group-Based Exercise: Which Do Women Prefer and Why?

Throughout my graduate studies, I have gained a true appreciation for research and researchers. Designing and conducting research are difficult tasks. This was the lowest-graded paper I wrote during my graduate studies. I had a good question and a good general design, but I missed more than a few intricate details that make for solid, sound research, and hence I lost marks. However, I believe that some of the best learning experiences result from efforts that received the lowest marks. This assignment made me genuinely appreciate those who have a knack for designing good quality research; for me, this is an area in need of further development.

#### 3.3.5. Gender and Culture Journal

This assignment was created for one of the most controversial classes I have ever taken. Sparks flew, tempers flared, and out of the information discussed in each seminar grew knowledge and awareness of my own beliefs and biases, and how they affect me personally and professionally. I am by no means bias free about gender and cultural issues; however, the awareness of these biases that I gained as a result of this class will ultimately make me a better psychologist and a better person.

#### 3.3.6. Ethical Decision Making Assignment

I have always thought of myself as an ethical individual; however, this ethics assignment was much more difficult than I initially anticipated. This assignment and the

course on ethics taught me that ethics and the application of ethical principles and standards are anything but black and white. I learned that in the realm of ethical practice there are always various shades of grey, and within these shades of grey the “correct” ethical action is not always apparent. Therefore, as a developing professional, I must be aware of and knowledgeable about not only the ethical guidelines laid out in the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists*, but also various decision making models that I can utilize if and when I find myself making decisions in an ethical grey area.

### 3.4. Counselling Applications

#### 3.4.1. Counselling Skills Improvement Plan

To my satisfaction, this introspective treatment plan worked, although not entirely. Some interventions (i.e., the “practice” intervention) worked better than others, which is to be expected when one is implementing more than one type of intervention. All in all, my first attempt at treatment planning worked out fairly well. This assignment helped make me a better counsellor, and I am genuinely proud of that.

#### 3.4.2. It’s Not My Fault: Finding the Way Through Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Throughout my graduate program, I have been heavily involved with research pertaining to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS); therefore, I feel strongly about this treatment plan. After noticing rather quickly that there is minimal scientific literature on effective interventions for children with FAS, I thought that maybe, one day, this particular document may be considered helpful to both those with and those affected by this disorder. Until then, I feel that it definitely deserves a spot in my portfolio.

### 3.4.3. Interventions Video Assignment

Although I always feel nervous in front of a camera, I'm quite proud of how I conducted these sessions. While they are by no means flawless, they demonstrate my counselling skills, as well as my ability to implement appropriate interventions and conduct the counselling process relatively smoothly. When I watch these sessions, I see my mistakes, but more importantly I see improvement, and that means so much to me.

### 3.4.4. Counselling Applications in Class, Practicum, Research, and Work

After compiling the documents for the Counselling section of my portfolio, I felt that, although I was proud of what I had gathered, the compilation was still somewhat incomplete. As my graduate studies progressed, I slowly began to utilize my counselling knowledge and skills informally in almost every sphere of my life. I used them in class, during my practicum, in my research endeavors, and even at work. This indicates to me that my counselling abilities have developed and become much more flexible. In order to capture this versatility, I created and included a document in my portfolio that attempts to illustrate the diversity of my counselling-related knowledge and skills as applied in the settings and environments stated above.

## **Section 4: Assessment Knowledge and Applications**

### 4.3. Assessment Knowledge

#### 4.3.1. Critique of the Comprehensive Receptive and Expressive Vocabulary Test

I love doing critiques in general, so this assignment was one of my favourites. Learning about something and then identifying its strengths and weaknesses make me feel like a sleuth! Moreover, critical analysis is an important element of every aspect of psychology, especially assessment, because the data rendered from psychological tests

will most likely be used in diagnosis; it will then guide the rest of the counselling process. Therefore, an assessor must thoroughly understand an assessment before deciding to utilize it. This assignment taught me what it means to know an assessment inside and out.

#### 4.3.2. Part 1: Position Paper: The Importance of Assessment in Psychological Practice

Although my Master's degree will be in counselling, throughout my graduate studies I have taken a keen interest in assessment. The curriculum included a course specifically in assessment; however, I feel that the rest of the courses did not put a significant emphasis on the role of assessment in psychological practice. Therefore, I wrote this assignment as a reminder to myself and to others of how important assessment, formal and/or informal, is to the counselling process. In writing this paper, I refreshed my assessment knowledge and reconfirmed, through reviewing the literature, what I already believed, that assessment and counselling are interdependent and that assessment is, in fact, very important to the counselling process.

#### 4.3.3. Policy and Procedures Assignment: Ethics Orientation Manual for Jumpstart Assessment Agency

This was one of the most challenging assignments I have ever done, because it was huge! As a student, I was expected to be comprehensive in my knowledge of the policies that my "agency" supported. I remember often feeling overwhelmed by the scope of this assignment. However, once I started to break it down into accomplishable steps, I found that I was progressing, one step at a time. Not only did I learn a lot about the psychological ethics pertaining to both counselling and assessment, but I also learned about goal setting, efficiency, endurance, perseverance, and the power of believing in

yourself. I did this assignment and I did it well, despite moments of doubt, at times, while writing. This assignment taught me a great deal about psychological ethics; however, it also reminded me to have faith in myself and to literally never give up!

#### 4.4. Assessment Applications

##### 4.4.1. List of Standardized Assessments Learned

As I look over the list of assessments I have learned, I feel proud. Some, especially the ones in the Wechsler family, are prominent psycho-educational assessment tools, and to be able to administer, score, and interpret them is quite an accomplishment. I look forward to adding to this list indefinitely throughout my career.

##### 4.4.2. Tape Presentation 2: Context Paper, Gabe

I love doing psycho-educational assessments with small children, and Gabe was no exception. Bouncy, light, energetic, and animated, Gabe's personality alone made this a memorable assessment experience. Although this assignment gave me additional practice with assessment, what I really learned from completing it is *never* to modify a standardized test! In order to gain additional information and to keep the child engaged in the assessment process, I devised two informal assessment measures, the sticker chart and the mystery box. However, the informal measures often distracted Gabe and impaired his concentration. This assignment was a good lesson for me in standardized testing procedures. From now on, I will keep it simple and, most definitely, keep it standard!

##### 4.4.3. Practicum Placement: Description, Roles, and Responsibilities

To put into words all that I have learned from my practicum is a difficult task. In general, I learned about psycho-educational assessment -- its stages, the roles specific people play, and what must be done at each specific stage and by whom. More

specifically, I learned how to administer, score, and interpret the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), and the Adaptive Behavior Assessment System (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). However, perhaps more importantly, I learned in a real-life manner one of the first things my Assessment professor had said, that assessment is not just a test but a process.

I entered the school division with trepidation, knowing that the results of the assessment process would affect not only the students undergoing assessment but their teachers, families, and friends as well. I felt immense pressure and an obligation to do the best possible job I could. I experienced a lot of fear and frustration, fear that I was not good enough or doing something wrong, and frustration as a result of my fears. In addition, watching students struggle with the assessments and then realizing for myself the extent of their difficulties, as indicated by their scores, was very difficult emotionally for me because, naturally, I wanted to see them excel and do well; however, most often, I witnessed the opposite. Consequently, I began to feel that, because the students were doing poorly on the assessments, I must be doing something wrong.

However, after more than a few tears, and an empathetic talk with my supervisor, I realized that identifying a learning disability was not a failure but a success. Once a problem has been identified, it can be dealt with using techniques and strategies that will foster students' academic growth and development. Hence, my "success" came not from obtaining exceptional or even average test scores, but rather, from taking a student's test scores, whatever they may be, interpreting them in a way that fit with the student, and then taking these interpretations and turning them into recommendations that ultimately made learning somewhat easier and more manageable for the student. Thus, my



practicum taught me once again, that assessment is not about the test or its scores. Rather, it's about taking the information rendered by the assessments and turning it into techniques and strategies that ultimately help the individual undergoing the assessment.

#### 4.4.4. Practicum Placement: Example of a Formal Written Report

This document is not just a report. Rather, it shows my ability to take raw assessment data, derive suitable interpretations from that data that fit the child of interest, and then use those interpretations to make viable recommendations that will hopefully foster that child's cognitive growth and development. Although, over the course of my practicum, I was primarily concerned with facilitating students' learning, this report illustrates my own learning, and I'm very proud of what I have accomplished.

#### 4.4.5. Practicum Placement: Final Evaluation

I was shocked by the exceedingly positive portrayal that this evaluation presents because I remember feeling at times that I was emotionally and psychologically struggling to get through my practicum. I continuously questioned if what I was doing was "right" in terms of assessment administration, scoring, and interpretation. Although I believe that my questioning nature ultimately heightened my overall skill level, it also undermined my confidence. I learned that, with additional experience, supervision, consultation and practice, I have the skills and abilities to excel in psycho-educational assessment. This very positive evaluation, coming from someone as genuine and established as my supervisor, means a lot to me.

#### 4.4.6. Research: Magnetic Resonance Brain Imaging of Brain Development, Children Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Study: Description, Roles and Responsibilities

The purpose of this study was to better understand the connection between the neurological abnormalities caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol, and the subsequent cognitive difficulties that children diagnosed with a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) commonly experience. I was heavily involved in every stage of the research, so I was able to see at first hand how research is developed and implemented. Although the data from the study are still being analyzed, I hope to see how they are ultimately applied as well. However, what I found personally transformational about this study was the participants and their families, who were often more than willing to offer their participation in hopes that our research would someday offer them, and others like them, assistance with their everyday, real-life struggles related to FASD. These were real people, not just numbers or a set of initials, and through them I learned to value the importance of research.

#### 4.4.7. ABRACADABRA Pan-Canadian Research Project: Description, Roles, and Responsibilities

This was a national research project concerned with early childhood literacy. It involved the implementation of a free, on-line reading program created with this primary goal in mind. As this was my first “real-life” exposure to research and psycho-educational assessment, I definitely learned a lot! I learned to administer and score various numeracy and literacy scales that were specifically selected for the purposes of the study, but perhaps more importantly, I also made a developmental shift from knowledge acquisition to the actual application of that knowledge. This shift really

opened my eyes. I became aware that things do not always go as smoothly as a textbook might suggest. Testing environments are not always perfect or even available. Rapport is not always easily established, and sometimes resistance to assessment comes not only from the test-taker but from other vested parties as well, in this case, the schools' administration. However, despite all the unforeseen road bumps, I was able to participate directly in the formation and application of research, an experience I will never forget.

# Section 2: Academic

## Knowledge



## 2.1. Academic Overview

In order to become a registered psychologist, one must first possess a graduate degree with a major in Psychology (College of Alberta Psychologists, 2010). This requirement entails a long scholastic journey through the ranks of the education system. However, by taking this journey, an individual becomes aware of his or her learning-related strengths and weaknesses, as well as who he or she is as a person, a student, and a developing professional.

During my education, I have been exposed to everything from Astronomy, Blackfoot, and Cree, to Women's Studies, Human Development, and Classical Sociological Theory. I have learned a lot, but perhaps the most important thing I have learned from my education is that I love to learn. With an underlying desire to acquire more knowledge, I approached each class with drive, motivation, and the ambition to learn as much as I could to the best of my ability. I believe that I have done that.

Certain learning-related strengths and weaknesses have either helped or hindered my academic progress. In regards to my academic strengths, I have always found writing generally easy, and although I am not by any means a "perfect" writer, I pride myself on my superior writing ability. To me, writing is like putting a puzzle together. I have to find the right word and fit the words together in such a way that they illustrate exactly what I am trying to say. Passion and heart have driven all my writing, and I believe that this is, in part, why I find writing to be one of my strengths.

In addition to writing well, I am also good at taking tests. My ability to study, comprehend, retain, and communicate vast amounts of information in a relatively short

period of time has positively influenced my grades and increased my academic confidence and self-efficacy.

Throughout my academic career, I often struggled with quantitative courses such as statistics, physics, and other numerically oriented studies. Quantitative tasks often have to be broken down into easy-to-understand steps before I can fully understand them, and for me this type of material took much more time and effort to learn, in comparison to other types of studies.

In addition to having difficulties with numbers, I sometimes struggled with ethics and research design. Although I would say I am an ethical person, I have come to realize through my studies and my own personal experience that ethics is anything but black and white. There is always a grey area in ethics, and within that grey area sometimes the “right” thing to do isn’t so clear.

Research design, although I find it very interesting, is also very detailed, and it is the intricate details that I often overlook. Hence, my research designs have a tendency to end up “patchy,” not because I lack a general understanding of the design itself, but rather because I tend to overlook, or simply not recognize, the many details that ultimately make a sound, solid research design.

In the future, I would like to continue to improve upon my writing and test-taking skills, while striving to better my understanding of quantitative concepts, especially in regards to their application in research. An improved understanding of research in general will make quantitative concepts easier for me to utilize. In addition, my research design skills will improve because I will have an increased understanding of how researchers were able to come to the conclusions that they did, using the methods that they chose.

Lastly, ethical theory and practice will always have “grey areas” and be somewhat ambiguous. However, taking additional classes and attending relevant workshops, as well as receiving more experiential opportunities, should make ethical decision making somewhat easier for me.

## 2.2. Outline of Academic Artifacts and Productions

Included within the Academic section of my portfolio are the artifacts and productions listed below. All academic artifacts and productions are included in Appendix B.

### 2.4. Academic Scholarships and Awards

- 2.4.1. Alexander Rutherford Scholarship ( Brooks Composite High School)
- 2.4.2. Academic Excellence Award (Medicine Hat College)
- 2.4.3. Jason Lang Scholarship (Medicine Hat College/University of Lethbridge)
- 2.4.4. Psychology Book Award (Medicine Hat College)
- 2.4.5. Dean's Honor List (University of Lethbridge)
- 2.4.6. Governor General's Academic Gold Medal Nomination (University of Lethbridge)
- 2.4.7. Professor's Letter of Recommendation for Governor General's Academic Gold Medal (University of Lethbridge)
- 2.4.8. Letter of Admission, Graduate Studies (University of Lethbridge)
- 2.4.9. Minister of Advanced Education and Technology Graduate Scholarship (University of Lethbridge)



## 2.3. Academic Curriculum Vitae

## Jessica Purves

BASc. Psychology & Sociology, M.Ed. Graduate Student, Department of Education  
 University of Lethbridge  
 Lethbridge, Alberta  
[Jessie.purves@uleth.ca](mailto:Jessie.purves@uleth.ca)  
 (403) 394 – 6068

### Education

<b>MASTER OF EDUCATION (COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY)</b>	2009
University of Lethbridge, AB	
GPA 3.79/4.0 Graduation Date: June, 2009	
 <b>BACHELOR OF ARTS &amp; SCIENCE, PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY</b>	 2007
University of Lethbridge, AB.	
GPA: 3.90/4.0 Dean's Honor List	
 <b>UNIVERSITY TRANSFER STUDENT -- PSYCHOLOGY</b>	 2005
Medicine Hat College, Medicine Hat, AB	
GPA: 3.87/4.0 College Honor Roll	
 <b>HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA</b>	 2001
Brooks Composite High School, Brooks, AB	
GPA: Top 10% High School Honor Roll	

### Academic Awards

Held Deans List Status	2001-2007
Academic Gold Medal Nominee	2007
University of Lethbridge Academic Scholarship	2006
Jason Lang Memorial Fund Scholarship	2002/2003/2006
Psychology Book Award recognizing Academic Achievement	2002-2003
Academic Excellence Award (Medicine Hat College)	2001/2002/2003
Anthropology Book Award recognizing Academic Achievement	2001-2002
Rutherford Scholarship for Academic Excellence	2001

## Relevant Coursework

Ethics	2008
Interventions	2008
Learning Processes	2007
Assessment	2007
Counselling Theory	2007
Counselling Skills	2007

## Research Projects/Involvement

### **ABRACADABRA Pan-Canadian Research Project**

Graduate Research Assistant 2007-2008

Supervisor: Dr. Noella Piquette-Tomei University of Lethbridge/ Lethbridge, AB.

- Worked collaboratively with students, teachers, school administration, and other graduate students to administer and score all the assessments (literacy/numeracy) involved in the study.

### **MRI of the Brain in Children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder**

Graduate Research Assistant 2007-2009

Supervisor: Dr. Noella Piquette-Tomei, University of Lethbridge, AB

- Worked collaboratively with supervisor, researchers, parents and various community agencies to acquire participants for the study.
- Scheduled/attended MRI appointments with participants.
- Organized, scheduled, administered, scored and interpreted all assessments (cognitive/achievement) used in the study.

## Professional Development Activities

Graduate Possibilities Symposium. National Student Conference

Feb. 27 - March 1, 2009

Fetal Alcohol Parenting Workshops

2007

## Training and Certifications

Assessment Administration Level B (Exposure to Level C Assessments)

2007-current

CPR Certification

2009

Medication Administration Certification

2007

## Professional Experience

### **Graduate Research Assistant**

September 2007- current

University of Lethbridge, AB

- Worked collaboratively with supervisor, schools, community organizations, parents and participants in order to achieve research-related objectives.
- Organized, scheduled, and attended various research-related meetings and appointments with supervisor, community associations and participants
- Documented and stored participant consent/information forms in accordance to ethical guidelines.
- Administered and scored various research-related cognitive, literacy and numeracy assessments.

### **Graduate Practicum Student**

August 2008- January 2009

Lethbridge School District No. 51 / Lethbridge, AB.

- Learned, administered, scored and interpreted intelligence (WISC-IV), achievement (WIAT-II) and adaptive functioning (ABAS-II) assessments for five children who attended two different elementary schools.
- Worked collaboratively with supervisor, parents, school administrators, teachers and students in order to provide proficient psycho-educational assessment services.
- Met weekly with supervisor to receive feedback and discuss allotted student cases.
- Wrote psycho-educational reports pertaining to allotted students.

### **CRWII Rehabilitation Worker**

January-August 2005

REDI Enterprises / Medicine Hat, AB

- Assisted in an interactive group home setting where 4 – 8 individuals resided
- Co-developed, designed and implemented individual action plans that enabled clients to live a more independent lifestyle.
- Participated in various community events in order to help clients create, enhance and maintain social networks.
- Maintained and protected client privacy by remaining discrete and strictly adhering to organizational rules and regulations regarding client confidentiality
- Recorded and documented detailed case notes on all activities and issues encountered during each shift.

### **Personal Caregiver**

May 2003-2005

Nextstep Residential Services Inc. / Medicine Hat, AB

- Provided individual in-home personal care including, administering medication, feeding, changing and bathing, in order to fulfill client's physical and mental needs.
- Participated on various one-on-one activities such as reading, singing, and drawing in order to fulfill client's interpersonal needs.
- Developed a warm positive rapport with family members.

## Volunteer Experience

- Sorted and packaged rosaries that were sent to impoverished areas 2007
- Fundraised and participated in the Relay for Life overnight cancer walk 2007
- Facilitated individual tutorials, writing workshops, and group study sessions  
2007-2009

## Skills and Abilities

### **Communication**

- Researched, structured and wrote numerous graduate level papers that demonstrated a clear concise understanding of the current knowledge in various counselling and counselling-related areas.
- Designed, organized and presented numerous oral presentations to groups of approximately 15 - 30 people on topics such as: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, learning processes, and psycho-educational assessment.
- Excelled at generating a warm non-threatening rapport with people of different social, economic and cultural backgrounds.

### **Interpersonal**

- Established cooperative working alliances with supervisors, staff, students, clients and participants by individually generating a warm rapport and actively participating in group discussions and meetings.
- Recognized by teachers, students and supervisors for an ability to resolve client/participant issues and concerns.
- Demonstrated leadership initiative by organizing and coordinating many university/graduate level group projects.

### **Analytical**

- Critically analyzed and debated many important counselling and counselling-related issues including: counselling interventions and theories, as well as psychological assessment, and research design/methods.
- Wrote critical evaluations of the current research in many different counselling and counselling related fields including: career counselling, research design/methods, psychological theories and psycho-educational assessment.
- Critically analyzed and applied theoretical arguments to various mediated sources such as newspapers, magazines, movies and television shows.
- Analyzed and interpreted data derived from numerous standardized cognitive, behavioral, intellectual, and achievement-oriented assessments.

## Personal

- Open minded, nonjudgmental individual who enjoys music, is physically active, and has strong friendships and familial foundations.
- Self-directed, self-motivated person who seeks new opportunities and experiences and excels at overcoming challenges and obstacles in bright and innovative ways.
- Innately warm individual who welcomes social, economic, and cultural diversity and embraces different perspectives and viewpoints.

## Papers and Projects

It's not my fault: Finding a way through Fetal Alcohol Syndrome	2008
Ethics Orientation Manual for Jumpstart Assessment Agency=	2008
Critiquing the CREV	2007
Counselling in a Multicultural Mosaic	2007
The Learning Potential Inherent in a Question	2007
My Personal Approach to Counselling	2007
Counselling Skills Improvement Plan	2007
What She Says Matters! Hartsock's Call for a Feminine Standpoint	2007
Social Interaction on the Information Super Highway	2006
The Relationship between Job Stress & Strain in the Temping Business	2006
The Evolution of Sex Differences in the Activation of Jealousy: Annotated Bibliography	2006
Was Mozart Einstein's Secret? The Effects of Music on Cognitive Development	2005
Massage Therapy and Weight Gain in Preterm Infants: A Critical Review	2005
Toy Talk! The Effect of Toys on Child Development	2002

## References

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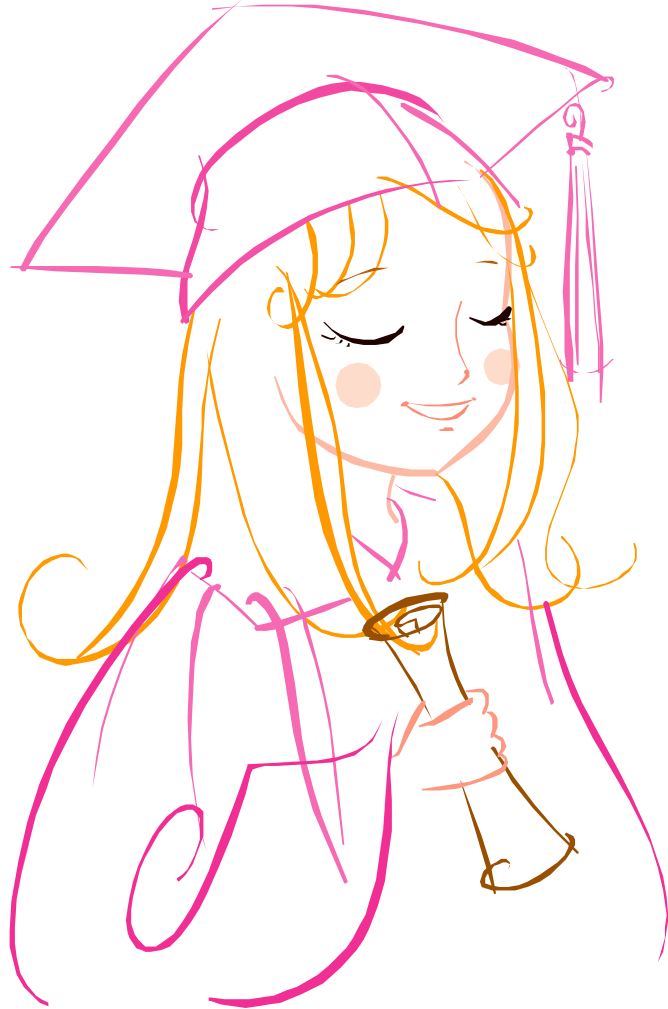
### **Dr. Claudia Malacrida**

Associate Professor, Sociology  
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Lethbridge, Alberta  
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### **Dr. Thomas Perks**

Associate Professor, Sociology  
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## 2.4. Academic Scholarships and Awards



#### 2.4.1. Alexander Rutherford Scholarship (Brooks Composite High School)

##### Rationale

The Alexander Rutherford Scholarship is given to students who have achieved academic excellence throughout high school. When I received this award, I learned that I had the ability to succeed academically at the high school level. This gave me the drive to take my educational success to a higher level in college studies. Receiving this award put me one step closer to graduate school, to completing a Master's degree in Psychology, which would ultimately allow me to become registered in accordance to the requirements of the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010). The purpose of including this document in my portfolio is to illustrate my ability to master the acquisition, retention, and communication of academic knowledge at the high school level.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

I was truly honored to receive this scholarship. The money it gave me, \$2,500, went to furthering my studies. However, what meant more to me, and what I still carry with me today, is an overwhelming sense of pride in my academic accomplishments in high school. This award is given not just for excellence in one or two academic areas, but rather for excellence in all major subject areas spanning all three of my high school years. That is something of which I am truly proud.

#### 2.4.2. Academic Excellence Award (Medicine Hat College)

##### Rationale

This award is given to students who have demonstrated academic excellence in college. Receiving this award annually from 2001 to 2003 showed that I had the academic ability to succeed not only in high school but also in college. This document

represents my ability to master relevant academic subject material at a college level, which again puts me one step closer to obtaining a Master's degree in Psychology and becoming a registered psychologist.

#### Self-Reflective Comments

Upon entering college, I was unsure if I would be able to maintain the academic standards I had set for myself in high school. Receiving this award eased my worries and gave me the focus I needed to excel in my studies at a college level.

#### 2.4.3. Jason Lang Scholarship (Medicine Hat College/University of Lethbridge)

##### Rationale

This award is given each year to students who achieve academic excellence in their post-secondary education. Receiving this award in 2002, 2003, and 2006 taught me that I could not only achieve academic excellence over the course of a semester, but I could sustain it for several years. In order to pursue a graduate degree in psychology and subsequently become registered as a psychologist, one must maintain a standard of academic excellence throughout one's education. This document represents my ability to maintain a high academic standing in both college and university.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

This award is given in remembrance of Jason Lang, a teenager who died after being shot by another student in a Taber high school. Although I did not know Jason Lang or his parents, to receive an award in remembrance of him is truly an honor.



#### 2.4.4. Psychology Book Award (Medicine Hat College)

##### Rationale

This award is given annually to a student who excels and shows promise in the discipline of psychology. In receiving this award, I learned not only that psychology was one of my passions, but also that I was very good at mastering the related subject matter. According to the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010), in order to become a registered psychologist, one must first obtain a graduate degree with a major in psychology or an equivalent field. Therefore, the purpose of including this document in my portfolio is to highlight my ability to learn and master subject material relevant to psychology.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

I am very proud to have received the Psychology Book award. Not only is it a form of academic recognition, but the recipient is nominated by the professors who teach within the major, in this case, the professors who taught me psychology. It was an honor to be taught by them. To have been seen in such a positive light by the professionals whom I had come to admire is an honor that exceeds words.

#### 2.4.5. Dean's Honor List (University of Lethbridge)

##### Rationale

This is an award given each semester to university students who have excelled academically. I received this award annually from 2005 to 2007. In receiving this award several times throughout university, I learned that I have the ability to expand upon what I learned in college and to master even more complex, university-level material. Once again, in order to become a registered psychologist, according to the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010), one must possess a graduate degree in psychology. However, in

order to attend graduate school and pursue a Master's degree, one must first excel at the undergraduate level of university studies. Thus, the purpose of including this document in my portfolio is to demonstrate my ability to master the acquisition, retention, and communication of university-level, undergraduate subject material.

#### Self-Reflective Comments

I was concerned about how I would make the transition from college to university. Although I noticed a drastic difference between the two educational institutions, my academic achievement did not falter. I was consistently named on the dean's honor list at the University of Lethbridge.

#### 2.4.6. Governor General's Academic Gold Medal Nomination (University of Lethbridge)

##### Rationale

To be nominated for this award, graduating undergraduate students must have maintained an exceptional academic record in Arts and Science throughout their post-secondary career. Being nominated showed me that I have the ability to create and maintain an academic record that is literally considered a "gold standard." It is likely that this nomination assisted me in gaining entry into graduate school, one step on the road to becoming a registered psychologist. This document highlights the high academic standard that I maintained throughout my post-secondary education.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

When I learned that I was nominated for this prestigious award, I was shocked. To be considered for an academic gold medal, amongst all of my graduating peers at a university level, is such an honor that it brings tears to my eyes. Even though I did not receive the gold medal, being nominated was an honor.

#### 2.4.7. Professor's Letter of Recommendation for Governor General's Academic Gold Medal (University of Lethbridge)

##### Rationale

This is one of three letters of recommendation collected for my nomination for the Academic Gold Medal. According to the Canadian Psychological Association (2001), psychologists and related professionals have an ethical duty to represent their colleagues and their activities accurately. Although I am not yet considered a “colleague” by my professors, reading these letters has given me insight into how other professionals view me as a student, a person, and a developing professional. This letter presents a noted professional's somewhat objective personal and professional appraisal of myself.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

My professors' letters of recommendation, which accompanied my nomination, make me tear up. These letters, one of which is included here, show how other professionals view me as a person, a student, and a developing professional. I am proud of what my professors have seen in me and expressed in their letters. I hope to make them proud in my future professional endeavors.

#### 2.4.8. Letter of Admission, Graduate Studies (University of Lethbridge)

##### Rationale

This letter granted me admission into the Master of Education Counselling Psychology Program in 2007. Gaining admission to this program showed me that I had the ability and the skills to continue my education at the graduate level. In order to become a psychologist, one must first complete a Master's degree in some area of

psychology (College of Alberta Psychologists, 2010). Gaining entrance into this program marked yet another step towards becoming a registered psychologist.

#### Self-Reflective Comments

This letter represents an open door to a better education and multiple learning opportunities. I cried tears of joy when I received it. This single piece of paper granted me entrance into graduate school, affording me many different educational and experiential opportunities, which will, in turn, culminate into additional opportunities that I will cherish and carry with me for the rest of my life. This letter represents a continuation of my education and symbolizes my commitment to life-long learning.

#### 2.4.9. Minister of Advanced Education and Technology Graduate Scholarship (University of Lethbridge)

##### Rationale

This scholarship is awarded to graduate students who have achieved academic excellence in the first year of their Master's degree program. Receiving this award showed me that I have the ability to achieve and maintain academic excellence at the graduate level. Psychologists must obtain a Master's degree in some area of psychology in order to become registered (College of Alberta Psychologists, 2010). I have included this document because it symbolizes my ability to excel in my Master's program and, in doing so, to take one more step towards becoming a registered psychologist.

#### Self-Reflective Comments

I entered the M.Ed. Counselling Psychology program with trepidation because I was unsure if I was going to be able to keep up with the other students. I felt an immense

amount of pressure to do well, now that I had been awarded graduate student status. This scholarship confirms that I have done well, and I am once again very proud of myself.

# Section 3: Counselling

## Knowledge and Applications



### 3.1. Counselling Overview

When I first entered graduate school, I held the naive belief that my job as a counsellor would be to resolve clients' underlying issues for them. However, according to Corey, Corey and Callanan (2007), I made the mistake many new counsellors make, which is to assume too much responsibility for the counselling process. Upon further study, I was relieved to discover that counselling is a joint venture between the client and the counsellor, and thus the responsibility for client change does not rest solely the counsellor's shoulders (Corey et al.). This realization made a career in counselling seem much more manageable.

Luckily, some aspects of counselling seemed to come naturally to me. For example, building rapport with clients and pseudo-clients has always been relatively easy for me. I am very good at relaying a genuine sense of care and concern for each of my clients, which in turn, helps create the foundational "working alliance" and generally makes clients more open and comfortable within a counselling context. I also excel at reflecting clients' affect, content, and meaning in a counselling session, which makes them feel heard and facilitates further exploration. With practice, I also have become good at exploring and implementing certain strategies and/or interventions that are likely to help my clients in light of their background, personality, level of current functioning (i.e. physical, psychological, emotional, and behavioral), and the nature of their problems. However, I should note that possible efficacious interventions are not always apparent, even after various cycles of in-depth exploration. Thus, perhaps this particular skill is still in need of further development.

Other areas of my counselling skills that need further development include my ability to focus and direct a counselling session, as well as my ability to know when and how to transition my clients from the exploration phase to the action/implementation phase. First, I find that sometimes my sessions tend to be going in circles and thus essentially going nowhere. This is frustrating for both my clients and myself, because counselling does not seem to be progressing. To prevent this from happening, I have to ensure that personalized, achievable goals are clearly stated at the beginning of counselling. Goal clarification should structure the counselling process and give it a foundation to return to and/or build towards in each counselling session.

Second, I am not always sure how or when to transition my clients from the exploration phase to the action/implementation phase. I know that all the phases are, in fact, circular and thus can be returned to at any point, but sometimes my transitional timing is off, which tends to leave my clients frustrated and/or confused. For example, if I transition them too early into the action phase, they become lost as to how I got there; on the other hand, if I transition them too late, they may feel that they are repeating themselves and not progressing. I find the issue of timing a tricky one for which I do not have a clear solution. As all things get better with practice, so too, I believe, will my issues with timing.

In the future, I want to continue to strengthen my rapport-building skills and my ability to reflect accurately the content affect and meaning that my clients communicate to me within a counselling context. I also want to continue to develop direction and timing in my counselling sessions. I believe that, with additional information, education, training, supervision and overall experience, I will be able to achieve these goals.



### 3.2. Outline of Counselling Artifacts and Productions

Included in the Counselling section of my portfolio are caption sheets pertaining to the artifacts and productions listed below. Abstracts of these documents can be found in Appendix C.

#### 3.3. Counselling Knowledge

- 3.3.1. Graduate Course Descriptions (University of Lethbridge)
- 3.3.2. My Personal Approach to Counselling (Counselling Theories)
- 3.3.3. Jessica's Journal of Learning (Learning Processes)
- 3.3.4. Individual Versus Group-Based Exercise: Which Do Women Prefer and Why? (The Nature of Educational Research)
- 3.3.5. Gender and Culture Journal (Gender and Culture)
- 3.3.6. Ethical Decision Making Assignment (Ethics)

#### 3.4. Counselling Applications

- 3.4.1. Counselling Skills Improvement Plan (Counselling Skills)
- 3.4.2. It's Not My Fault: Finding the Way Through Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (Interventions)
- 3.4.3. Interventions Video Assignment: Video included (Interventions)
- 3.4.4. Counselling Applications in Class, Practicum, Research, and Work (Production)

### 3.3. Counselling Knowledge



### 3.3.1. Graduate Course Descriptions (University of Lethbridge)

#### Rationale

A brief description of each course in the Master of Education Counselling Psychology program is included to demonstrate what I was expected to accomplish in each course. Working through the curriculum, I learned that I had the ability to complete each course and often to exceed expectations. I learned how much work each course was, how good it felt to complete each one, and how quickly time passes. If time continues to pass this quickly, I should be a registered psychologist in no time!

According to the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010), a candidate for registration must have completed a certain number of specific courses in order to be considered for provisional status. The Master of Education Counselling Psychology program includes most of these courses. After completing them, I should be able to submit my transcripts for accreditation and subsequently receive provisional status. Becoming a provisional psychologist is one step towards my ultimate goal of becoming a registered psychologist. Thus, completing this graduate program is a major stepping stone in my career development.

#### Self-Reflective Comments

I include a brief description of each graduate course in order to illustrate what I have had to accomplish academically during my graduate studies. As I look at what I have had to accomplish in each course, I can't help feeling very proud of myself.

### 3.3.2. My Personal Approach to Counselling

#### Rationale

This is a term paper I completed for my Theories course. In order to become a registered psychologist, according to the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010), applicants must first have completed 72 credits of psychology courses, at least 36 of which have to be at the graduate level. According to the Canadian Psychological Association (2001), theoretical knowledge is but one component of several that allow psychologists to provide the best possible service to their clients. I included this paper within my portfolio because it indicates that I have completed a graduate level course in psychology, and thus earned a portion of the credits required for registration.

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, this assignment highlights not only my knowledge and awareness of several different psychotherapeutic paradigms, but also my ability to combine the ones that I believe are the most effective into a truly personalized approach to counselling. By writing this paper, I learned the predominant psychological perspectives and, perhaps more importantly, I learned mine.

#### Self-Reflective Comments

I found this paper surprisingly difficult, because not only did I have to understand several different psychological schools of thought, but I also had to decide which ones fit with my personal beliefs surrounding successful psychotherapeutic practice. The latter task was much more difficult than the first and required a lot of time, thought, and self-reflection. However, in the end, I was able to construct a counselling approach that was theoretically based and suited my personal counselling style. Although my counselling approach will change through the years as I gain more knowledge and experience, this

paper reflects a solid theoretical foundation upon which I can expand as I continue to develop personally and professionally.

### 3.3.3. Jessica's Journal of Learning

#### Rationale

This is a collection of journal entries written for my Learning Processes class. An entry is written for each individual seminar, and together they represent my reactions, reflections, and thoughts about what was presented and how it has affected and will affect me personally and professionally. Cormier and Nurius (2003) state that learning processes influence and give rise to the human experience and thus must be considered as an important component of effective counselling. Completing this journal taught me just how important learning processes are to counselling. In addition, the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010) requires that, in order to become a registered psychologist, applicants must have first completed 72 credits of psychology courses, at least 36 of which have to be at the graduate level. Therefore, this journal has been included within my portfolio not only to indicate that I have received a portion of the credits required for registration, but more importantly, to highlight the increasing knowledge and awareness I have gained into how people learn and how learning processes subsequently influence counselling.

#### Self-Reflective Comments

At first, I was confused about how a class on learning was relevant to counselling. By the end of the semester, I realized how crucial learning is to the counselling process. This class completely changed my view of a counsellor from being a “fixer” to being a “teacher” or “co-developer.” I no longer felt responsible for “fixing” clients’ problems.

Instead, I now felt responsible for developing with my clients new ways for them to look at, think about, and essentially solve their own problems. I learned that, to do so, one must first be knowledgeable about learning processes, learning styles, and how to solicit learning so that clients understand and then apply the information relayed in counselling. Each journal entry is in response to a Learning Processes seminar; collectively, the entries represent my own learning process, which I have come to see as invaluable.

#### 3.3.4. Individual Versus Group-Based Exercise: Which Do Women Prefer and Why?

##### Rationale

This is a complete research design created for a graduate course in research design and methodology. In order to become a registered psychologist, according to the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010), applicants must first have completed this course. The Canadian Psychological Association (2001) suggests in its code of ethics that psychologists have an ethical responsibility to possess research-related knowledge, awareness, and skill, as these are important components of attaining and maintaining competency in a given field, providing the best possible service to clients, and protecting them from harm. Although I struggled with this assignment, it is included because it highlights my ability to identify a research question and then answer it, using a plausible research design that incorporates appropriate research methods and sound ethical considerations. This document demonstrates my current research-related knowledge, awareness and skill, which will improve as I develop personally and professionally.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

Throughout my graduate studies, I have gained a true appreciation for research and researchers. Designing and conducting research are difficult tasks. This was the

lowest-graded paper I wrote during my graduate studies. I had a good question and a good general design, but I missed more than a few intricate details that make for solid, sound research, and hence I lost marks. However, I believe that some of the best learning experiences result from efforts that received the lowest marks. This assignment made me genuinely appreciate those who have a knack for designing good quality research; for me, this is an area in need of further development.

### 3.3.5. Gender and Culture Journal

#### Rationale

This is a series of journal entries created for each seminar in a graduate course in gender and cultural issues in counselling. Collectively, this journal incorporates my interpretations, reflections, and reactions to the presented material.

Gender and culture are important aspects of the individual and thus must be considered and understood within a counselling context in order for the counselling to be effective (Corey et al., 2007). The Canadian Psychological Association (2001) states in its code of ethics that psychologists must be aware, knowledgeable, and skillful in dealing with both gender and cultural issues in order to provide the best possible service to their clients. To become a registered psychologist in adherence with the requirements of the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010), applicants must first have completed 72 credits of Psychology courses, at least 36 of which have to be at the graduate level.

Completing this assignment significantly increased my knowledge and awareness of how various issues related to clients' gender and culture influence clients, their counsellors, and the counselling process. Therefore, this assignment is included within my portfolio not only to indicate that I have earned a portion of the specified credits

required for registration purposes. In addition, this journal represents my increasing knowledge and awareness of gender and cultural issues in counselling.

#### Self-Reflective Comments

This assignment was created for one of the most controversial classes I have ever taken. Sparks flew, tempers flared, and out of the information discussed in each seminar grew knowledge and awareness of my own beliefs and biases, and how they affect me personally and professionally. I am by no means bias free about gender and cultural issues; however, the awareness of these biases that I gained as a result of this class will ultimately make me a better psychologist and a better person.

#### 3.3.6. Ethical Decision Making Assignment

##### Rationale

This assignment was completed for a class on Psychological Ethics. In order to become a registered psychologist, the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010) requires that applicants for registration must first have completed this course. According to the Canadian Psychological Association's code of ethics (2001), psychologists must be proficient in ethical decision making and adhere to the ethical codes and guidelines that govern the discipline. Completing this assignment familiarized me with the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists*. Although I struggled with this assignment, I included it in my portfolio because it demonstrates my ability to engage in ethical decision making and highlights my knowledge and awareness of the discipline's current ethical code.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

I have always thought of myself as an ethical individual. However, this ethics assignment was much more difficult than I initially anticipated. This assignment and the



course on ethics taught me that ethics and the application of ethical principles and standards are anything but black and white. I learned that in the realm of ethical practice there are always various shades of grey, and within these shades of grey the “correct” ethical action is not always apparent. Therefore, as a developing professional, I must be aware of and knowledgeable about not only the ethical guidelines laid out in the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists*, but also various decision making models that I can utilize if and when I find myself making decisions in an ethical grey area.

### 3.4. Counselling Applications



### 3.4.1. Counselling Skills Improvement Plan

#### Rationale

This assignment was created for a graduate course in counselling skills. Essentially, it is an individualized treatment plan focused on improving my counselling skills. In order to become a registered psychologist, in adherence to the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010), applicants for registration must first have completed 72 credits of Psychology courses, at least 36 of which must be at the graduate level. Also, the Canadian Psychological Association (2001) suggests in its code of ethics that psychologists must be competent in the areas of counselling skills, interventions, and treatment planning in order to provide the best possible service to their clients. Therefore, I included this document within my portfolio not only because it indicates that I have received a portion of the credits required for registration, but mainly because it highlights my ability to identify a personal area of weakness, select suitable interventions intended to strengthen the identified weakness, implement them, and evaluate their efficacy. This assignment taught me how to be a better counsellor, and it demonstrates my attempt to “treat” myself.

#### Self-Reflective Comments

To my satisfaction, this introspective treatment plan enabled me to achieve my primary goal of becoming more comfortable in my role as a counselor. However, some interventions worked better than others. The “written” intervention, for example, involved brainstorming various completions to the sentence “I feel uncomfortable in my position of power as a counselor because...” Implementing this particular intervention allowed me to explore all of the possible reasons that likely underlie my discomfort. The

“practice” intervention afforded me additional opportunities outside the classroom to use my core counselling skills in interactions with family and friends. Implementing this intervention repeatedly reinforced and strengthened my developing counselling skills. Lastly, although the “exposure” intervention that involved increasing the frequency at which I encountered unfamiliar people in unfamiliar places allowed me to make many new acquaintances, it did not help me to feel more comfortable in my position of power as a counsellor. Although some of the interventions were more efficacious than others, this assignment helped make me a better counsellor, and I am genuinely proud of that.

#### 3.4.2. It’s Not My Fault: Finding the Way Through Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

##### Rationale

This is a treatment plan created for my Interventions course. It could potentially be implemented with children and families afflicted with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). In order to become a registered psychologist, the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010) requires that applicants must first have completed 72 credits of Psychology courses, at least 36 of which must be at the graduate level. According to the Canadian Psychological Association’s (2001) code of ethics, psychologists have an ethical responsibility to be knowledgeable about treatment planning and to select interventions that are theoretically based, empirically valid and, of course, likely to work for a given client. Therefore, I included this document within my portfolio not only because it indicates that I have completed a required course for registration, but mainly because it highlights my ability to develop a plausible treatment plan for a disorder for which very few interventions are available. The interventions I have included within this treatment plan have been found to be effective by current research, are relatively easy to implement, evaluative in nature,

and ethically sound. This assignment taught me what treatment planning involves. It demonstrates my ability to develop a plausible treatment plan for a designated disorder.

#### Self-Reflective Comments

Throughout my graduate program, I have been heavily involved with research pertaining to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS); therefore, I feel strongly about this treatment plan. After noticing rather quickly that there is minimal scientific literature on effective interventions for children with FAS, I thought that perhaps, one day, this particular document may be considered helpful to both those with and those affected by FAS. Until then, I feel that this item definitely deserves a spot in my portfolio.

#### 3.4.3. Interventions Video Assignment

##### Rationale

This assignment was completed for my Interventions course. It incorporates three consecutive counselling sessions with a pseudo-client. The sessions were videotaped and transcribed; the transcription is limited to statements made by the counsellor. The assignment includes identification and evaluation of all of the counselling skills used in each session. Carkhuff (2000) states that the counselling process involves certain stages: (a) involving the client, (b) exploring the problem(s), (c) understanding the problem(s), (d) acting to resolve/remedy the problem(s), and (e) providing evaluative/corrective feedback on clients' remedial actions. Carkhuff suggests that, although these stages are not necessarily linear, counsellors are required to use their counselling skills (i.e., attending, responding, personalizing, and initiating) throughout the counselling process in order to foster and facilitate client change. This assignment demonstrates my ability to use my core counselling skills and to conduct a complete counselling process from start

to finish. This assignment enabled me to see how I have developed and progressed as a counsellor. It allows the reader to view and read about my current ability to use my skills to conduct the counselling process.

#### Self-Reflective Comments

Although I always feel nervous in front of a camera, I'm quite proud of how I conducted these sessions. While they are by no means flawless, they demonstrate my counselling skills, as well as my ability to implement appropriate interventions and conduct the counselling process relatively smoothly. When I watch these sessions, I see my mistakes, but more importantly I see improvement, and that means so much to me.

#### 3.4.4. Counselling Applications in Class, Practicum, Research, and Work

##### Rationale

Corey et al. (2007) and Cormier and Nurius (2003) suggest that, in a dynamic, multicultural society, counsellors must be able to use their knowledge and skills in versatile ways in order to counsel an array of diverse individuals. As I progressed through my graduate studies, I found that I was able to utilize my counselling knowledge and skills in many innovative ways in a variety of settings. Therefore, I included this document in my portfolio because it conveys to the reader my increasing versatility as a developing counsellor.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

After compiling the documents for the Counselling section of my portfolio, I felt that, although I was proud of what I had gathered, the compilation was still somewhat incomplete. As my graduate studies progressed, I slowly began to utilize my counselling knowledge and skills informally in almost every sphere of my life. I used them in class,

during my practicum, in my research endeavors, and even at work. This indicates to me that my counselling abilities have developed and become much more flexible. In order to capture this versatility, I created and included a document in my portfolio that attempts to illustrate the diversity of my counselling-related knowledge and skills as applied in the settings and environments stated above.

## Section 4: Assessment

### Knowledge and Applications





#### 4.1. Assessment Overview

In general, the term *assessment* denotes the gathering of information to be used as an aid in the counselling process. Meyer et al. (2001) provide a more specific definition:

[Psychological assessment is] concerned with the clinician who takes a variety of test scores, generally obtained from multiple test methods, and considers the data in the context of history, referral information, and observed behavior to understand the person being evaluated, to answer the referral questions, and then to communicate findings to the patient, his or her significant others, and other referral sources. (p. 143)

Thus, assessment plays a very vital role in the counselling process.

Throughout my graduate studies, I have been exposed to a variety of psychological assessments, which were mainly educational in nature. Through this exposure, I discovered that I have certain strengths and weaknesses in regards to assessment-related activities.

As mentioned earlier, test-taking is one of my academic strengths, so it comes as no surprise that I like and excel at assessment administration. I am able to learn new assessments quickly and thoroughly, and with practice, I can administer learned assessments relatively smoothly, in a way that builds and maintains rapport with the individual undergoing the assessment. Scoring assessments, on the other hand, can either be a straightforward or an ambiguous task for me, depending on the nature of the assessment. If the assessment is objective, meaning that there is either a right or wrong answer, then scoring is relatively easy. However, if the nature of the assessment is subjective, meaning that there are numerous correct or incorrect responses, then one must

use one's personal judgment to decide if a response is, in fact, "right" or "wrong." This makes scoring significantly more difficult.

Scoring assessments, on the other hand, can be either a straightforward or an ambiguous task for me, depending on the nature of the assessment. If the assessment is objective, meaning that there is a right or wrong answer, then scoring is relatively easy. However, if the assessment is subjective, meaning that there are numerous correct or incorrect responses, then one must use one's personal judgment to decide if a response is, in fact, right or wrong. In such cases, scoring is significantly more difficult.

For me, by far the hardest task in assessment is interpretation, which involves deciphering what the raw assessment data actually mean for the individual undergoing the assessment in light of the client's background, history, current circumstances, level of functioning, skills, and abilities. Creating an interpretive report often takes me hours, because I must first thoroughly understand the data and then derive from the data interpretations that fit with the individual undergoing the assessment. Every time I write a report, I read it over numerous times and then have my supervisor read it several times as well, in order to make sure that my interpretations and subsequent recommendations are accurate and expressed in a way that my client can understand. I must interpret the assessment data in a way that lends itself to the use of interventions that fit the client and ultimately help him or her build upon the strengths and weaknesses identified by the assessment.

Interpreting assessment data is like assembling a puzzle. In interpreting test data, one is essentially putting pieces of a puzzle together so that they fit for the test-taker. Although I am able to fit the pieces together, sometimes I still place them in the wrong

spots. With additional education, training, time, practice, and supervision, I foresee that I will find it easier to put together the “interpretive puzzles” we call assessments.

## 4.2. Assessment Outline of Artifacts and Productions

Included within the Assessment section of this portfolio are caption sheets that pertain to the documents listed below. Abstracts of these documents can be found in appendices D through F.

### 4.3. Knowledge

- 4.3.1. Critique of the Comprehensive Receptive and Expressive Vocabulary Test
- 4.3.2. Part 1. Position Paper: The Importance of Assessment in Psychological Practice
- 4.3.3. Policy and Procedures Assignment: Ethics Orientation Manual for Jumpstart Assessment Agency

### 4.4. Applications

- 4.4.1. List of Standardized Assessments Learned
- 4.4.2. Tape Presentation 2: Context Paper, Gabe
- 4.4.3. Practicum Placement: Description, Roles, and Responsibilities
- 4.4.4. Practicum Placement: Example of a Formal Written Report
- 4.4.5. Practicum Placement: Final Evaluation
- 4.4.6. Research: Magnetic Resonance Brain Imaging of Brain Development, Children Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Study: Description, Roles, and Responsibilities
- 4.4.7. ABRACADABRA Pan-Canadian Research Project: Description, Roles, and Responsibilities
- 4.4.8. Lead Researcher's Letter of Recommendation

## 4.3. Assessment Knowledge



#### 4.3.1. Critique of the Comprehensive Receptive and Expressive Vocabulary Test

##### Rationale

This assignment, completed for my Assessment course, is a critique of the Comprehensive Receptive and Expressive Vocabulary Test (CREVET). Included within this assignment is a description of the assessment (i.e. what it is, how it is used, who it is used on and when), as well as the assessment's strengths and weaknesses according to current research. In order to become a registered psychologist, according to the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010), applicants for registration must have first completed this course. Also, according to the Canadian Psychological Association's (2001) code of ethics, psychologists must be competent in the services they provide in order to ensure that clients receive the best possible service. Part of being competent in assessment is being knowledgeable about the assessments one chooses to utilize. In completing this assignment, I learned about the CREVET. More importantly, I learned what it means to be thoroughly knowledgeable about a given assessment and how important it is to critically evaluate the measures and techniques I choose to use in counselling and assessment. Therefore, I included this document in my portfolio not only because it indicates that I have completed a course requirement for registration, but mainly because it demonstrates my ability to be critical of and to become knowledgeable about a particular assessment.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

I love doing critiques in general, so this assignment was one of my favourites. Learning about something and then identifying its strengths and weaknesses make me feel like a sleuth! Moreover, critical analysis is an important element of every aspect of

psychology, especially assessment, because the data rendered from psychological tests will most likely be used in diagnosis; it will then guide the rest of the counselling process. Therefore, an assessor must thoroughly understand an assessment before deciding to utilize it. This assignment taught me what it means to know an assessment inside and out.

#### 4.3.2. Part 1. Position Paper: The Importance of Assessment in Psychological Practice

##### Rationale

This is part of an assignment for my Interventions course. It emphasizes the importance of assessment in psychological practice by describing (a) what psychological assessment is, (b) what the assessment process is, (c) how assessment outcomes are measured and what they mean, (d) what roles and relationships are involved in the assessment process, and (e) mediating factors that may influence the assessment process. Since psychologists often use assessments to aid the counselling process, they must be aware, knowledgeable, and skillful in selecting, administering, scoring, interpreting, and relaying assessment information (Meyers et al., 2001). I included this document to demonstrate my awareness of how counselling and assessment are inherently interconnected and how important assessment is to psychological practice.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

Although my Master's degree will be in counselling, throughout my graduate studies I have taken a keen interest in assessment. The curriculum included a course specifically in assessment; however, I feel that the rest of the courses did not put a significant emphasis on the role of assessment in psychological practice. Therefore, I wrote this assignment as a reminder to myself and to others of how important assessment,

formal and/or informal, is to the counselling process. In writing this paper, I refreshed my assessment knowledge and reconfirmed, through reviewing the literature, what I already believed, that assessment and counselling are interdependent and that assessment is, in fact, very important to the counselling process.

#### 4.3.3. Policy and Procedures Assignment: Ethics Orientation Manual for Jumpstart Assessment Agency

##### Rationale

This assignment, completed for a course on Psychological Ethics, is a policy and procedures manual for a pseudo psycho-educational assessment agency. According to the Canadian Psychological Association (2001), psychologists have an ethical responsibility to be knowledgeable about and aware of the policies and procedures that govern their practice. Such policies and procedures are often rooted in codes of ethics, such as the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists*, that serve to guide the discipline. This document is included because it highlights my knowledge and awareness of counselling-related ethical guidelines and standards surrounding confidentiality, informed consent, client safety, record/file keeping, note taking, and dual relationships. It also shows my knowledge and awareness of assessment-related ethical considerations, including test selection, scoring, and interpretation. This assignment familiarized me with the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists*. The knowledge and awareness I gained from completing this assignment will help me become a more ethical practitioner.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

This was one of the most challenging assignments I have ever done, because it was huge! As a student, I was expected to be comprehensive in my knowledge of the



policies that my “agency” supported. I remember often feeling overwhelmed by the scope of this assignment. However, once I started to break it down into accomplishable steps, I found that I was progressing, one step at a time. Not only did I learn a lot about the psychological ethics pertaining to both counselling and assessment, but I also learned about goal setting, efficiency, endurance, perseverance, and the power of believing in myself. I did this assignment and I did it well, something I often thought I couldn’t do. This assignment taught me a great deal about psychological ethics; however, it also reminded me to have faith in myself and literally never to give up!

#### 4.4. Assessment Applications



#### 4.4.1. List of Standardized Assessments Learned

##### Rationale

This is a list with brief descriptions of each assessment I have learned over the course of my graduate studies. Meyers et al. (2001) state that proficient assessors must be knowledgeable about and utilize a variety of assessments in order to gain a complete, in-depth understanding of the individual(s) undergoing assessment. Therefore, I have included a list of the assessments I have learned to this point, in order to illustrate ongoing attempts to increase my competence in the area of assessment.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

As I look over the list of assessments I have learned, I feel proud. Some, especially the ones in the Wechsler family, are prominent psycho-educational assessment tools, and to be able to administer, score, and interpret them is quite an accomplishment. I look forward to adding to this list indefinitely throughout my career.

#### 4.4.2. Tape Presentation 2: Context Paper, Gabe

##### Rationale

I completed this assignment for an Interventions course. It includes the following: (a) documentation of informed consent, (b) a tape-recorded section of an assessment administration, (c) a client context paper, (d) all of the raw data derived from the administration, (e) a formal written report, and (f) my self-reflective comments on my performance. According to Meyers et al. (2001), competent assessors must inform test-takers about the assessment(s) and the assessment process and be able to administer, score, and interpret selected assessments accurately and in a way that is meaningful for

the client. This assignment shows my assessment-related knowledge and skills, specifically my ability to administer, score, and interpret assessments and data.

#### Self-Reflective Comments

I love doing psycho-educational assessments with small children, and Gabe was no exception. Bouncy, light, energetic, and animated, Gabe's personality alone made this a memorable assessment experience. Although this assignment gave me additional practice with assessment, what I really learned from completing it is *never* to modify a standardized test! In order to gain additional information and to keep the child engaged in the assessment process, I devised two informal assessment measures, the sticker chart and the mystery box. However, the informal measures often distracted Gabe and impaired his concentration. This assignment was a good lesson for me in standardized testing procedures. From now on, I will keep it simple and, most definitely, keep it standard!

#### 4.4.3. Practicum Placement: Description, Roles, and Responsibilities

##### Rationale

This is a description of my practicum placement and the roles and responsibilities it involved. The Master's degree program requires that I first complete at least one practicum that incorporates a minimum of 65 direct client contact hours. The Canadian Psychological Association (2001) states in its code of ethics that psychologists have an ethical responsibility to guide the growth and development of those entering the field. This responsibility is often met through practicums and other forms of field placement that require students to be supervised by a superior professional. Conversely, the code dictates that students must clarify their trainee status and seek appropriate supervision when delivering services as trainees. I included this document because it shows I have

completed a required component of my Master's degree. It also represents the exchange of knowledge within the discipline and demonstrates how both experience and the supervision of an established practitioner have aided in my professional development.

#### Self-Reflective Comments

To put into words all that I have learned from my practicum is a difficult task. In general, I learned about psycho-educational assessment -- its stages, the roles specific people play, and what must be done at each specific stage and by whom. More specifically, I learned how to administer, score, and interpret the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), and the Adaptive Behavior Assessment System (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). However, perhaps more importantly, I learned in a real-life manner one of the first things my Assessment professor had said, that assessment is not just a test but a process.

I entered the school division with trepidation, knowing that what would come as a result of the assessment process would affect not only the students undergoing assessment but their teachers, families, and friends as well. I felt immense pressure and an obligation to do the best possible job I could. I experienced a lot of fear and frustration, fear that I was not good enough or doing something wrong, and frustration as a result of my fears. In addition, watching students struggle with the assessments and then realizing for myself the extent of their difficulties, as indicated by their scores, was very difficult emotionally for me because, naturally, I wanted to see them excel and do well; however, most often, I witnessed the opposite. Consequently, I began to feel that, because the students were doing poorly on the assessments, I must be doing something wrong.

However, after a few tears and an empathetic talk with my supervisor, I realized that identifying a learning disability was not a failure but a success. Once a problem has been identified, it can be dealt with using techniques and strategies that will foster students' academic growth and development. Hence, my "success" came not from obtaining exceptional or even average test scores, but rather, from taking a student's test scores, whatever they may be, interpreting them in a way that fit with the student, and then taking these interpretations and turning them into recommendations that ultimately made learning somewhat easier and more manageable for the student. Thus, my practicum taught me once again, that assessment is not about the test or its scores. Rather, it's about taking the information rendered by the assessments and turning it into techniques and strategies that ultimately help the individual undergoing the assessment.

#### 4.4.4. Practicum Placement: Example of a Formal Written Report

##### Rationale

I wrote this formal assessment report in regards to a child whom I assessed while I was a practicum student for Lethbridge School District No. 51 and under the direct supervision of a registered school psychologist. The report includes the following sub-sections: (a) reason for referral and background information, (b) tests administered, (c) behavioral observations during testing, (d) summary of findings, and (e) recommendations. According to the Canadian Psychological Association's (2001) *Code of Ethics for Psychologists*, psychologists have an ethical responsibility to convey assessment data and assessment results in a straightforward, easy-to-understand manner. This document is included in my portfolio because it demonstrates my ability to interpret and report assessment information in accordance with this ethical standard.

### Self-Reflective Comments

This document is not just a report. Rather, it shows my ability to take raw assessment data, derive suitable interpretations from that data that fit the child of interest, and then use those interpretations to make viable recommendations that will hopefully foster that child's cognitive growth and development. Although, over the course of my practicum, I was primarily concerned with facilitating students' learning, this report illustrates my own learning, and I'm very proud of what I have accomplished.

#### 4.4.5. Practicum Placement: Final Evaluation

##### Rationale

This is my final performance evaluation for my practicum, completed by my field supervisor, a registered school psychologist. According to the Canadian Psychological Association (2001), psychologists have an ethical responsibility to relay the skills and abilities of others as accurately and in as straightforward a manner as possible. My supervisor indicates that I exemplified high standards of professional and organizational conduct and that, while my interpretive skills need further development, I was able to learn, administer, and score the assessments in a way that demonstrated a very high level of skill. This evaluation objectively portrays my assessment-related skills and abilities.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

I was shocked by this evaluation. I remember feeling at times that I was emotionally and psychologically struggling to get through my practicum. I continuously questioned if what I was doing was "right" in terms of assessment administration, scoring, and interpretation. Although I believe that my questioning nature ultimately heightened my overall skill level, it also undermined my confidence. I learned that, with

additional experience, supervision, consultation and practice, I have the skills and abilities to excel in psycho-educational assessment. This very positive evaluation, coming from someone as genuine and established as my supervisor, means a lot to me.

#### 4.4.6. Research: Magnetic Resonance Brain Imaging of Brain Development, Children Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Study: Description, Roles, and Responsibilities

##### Rationale

This document describes my involvement in a research study pertaining to the neurological and cognitive development of children with a diagnosed Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). It explains my roles and responsibilities as a participant. As is commonly acknowledged, theory and practice are inherently interconnected. Scientific research is the vital link that connects theory with practice; through research, theoretical hypothesis are derived, tested, and ultimately put into practice.

The Canadian Psychological Association (2001) recognizes the importance of research and mandates that psychologists must be aware of the current research in their given field. It lists several ethical guidelines and standards that dictate how research should be carried out and applied, so that it protects the best interests of all affected individuals, maintains the integrity of the discipline and its members, and fosters the evolution of psychological knowledge. I included this document in my portfolio because it demonstrates my interest and subsequent involvement in the formation, implementation, and potential application of research.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

I was heavily involved in every stage of this research study, so I was able to see at first hand how research is developed and implemented. Although the data from the study



are still being analyzed, I hope to see how they are ultimately applied as well. However, what I found personally transformational about this study was the participants and their families, who were often more than willing to offer their participation in hopes that our research would someday offer them, and others like them, assistance with their everyday, real-life struggles related to FASD. These were real people, not just numbers or a set of initials, and through them I learned to value the importance of research.

#### 4.4.7. ABRACADABRA Pan-Canadian Research Project: Description, Roles, and Responsibilities

##### Rationale

This document describes my involvement with the ABRACADABRA Pan-Canadian Research Project and explains my roles and responsibilities as a participant. I explained earlier the inherent connection between theory and practice. However, before theory can become infused into practice, its premises must first be thoroughly researched and rigorously tested. The Canadian Psychological Association (2001) recognizes the importance of research and mandates that psychologists must be aware of the current research in their given field. It lists several ethical guidelines and standards that dictate how research should be carried out and applied so that it protects the best interests of all affected individuals, maintains the integrity of the discipline and its members, and fosters the evolution of psychological knowledge. I included this document in my portfolio because it demonstrates my interest and involvement in research.

##### Self-Reflective Comments

As this was my first “real-life” exposure to research and psycho-educational assessment, I definitely learned a lot! I learned to administer and score various numeracy

and literacy scales that were specifically selected for the purposes of the study, but perhaps more importantly, I also made a developmental shift from knowledge acquisition to the actual application of that knowledge. This shift really opened my eyes. I became aware that things do not always go as smoothly as a textbook might suggest. Testing environments are not always perfect or even available. Rapport is not always easily established, and sometimes resistance to assessment comes not only from the test-taker but from other vested parties as well, in this case, the schools' administration. However, despite all the unforeseen road bumps, I was able to participate directly in the formation and application of research, an experience I will never forget.

#### 4.4.8. Lead Researcher's Letter of Recommendation

##### Rationale

This is a letter of recommendation written by my graduate supervisor, a registered psychologist, who is also one of the lead researchers for both of the research studies in which I was involved during my graduate curriculum. In this letter, my supervisor comments on my exceptional academic ability, my rigorous involvement in research, and my superior communication skills. According to the Canadian Psychological Association (2001), psychologists have an ethical responsibility to foster the growth and development of those entering the field and to relay the credentials, competencies, skills, and abilities of other professionals in the discipline as accurately and as straightforwardly as possible. Although I am not yet an established professional, I have included this document because it attests to my growth and development as a student and to my promising potential as a professional within the discipline. Furthermore, it was written by an esteemed professional whom I have come to admire very much.

### Self-Reflective Comments

Over the course of my graduate studies, my supervisor and I have grown quite close. She has been my teacher, employer, supervisor, and friend. I admire her motivation and ambition to help others and the compassion she shows in doing so. She has taught me so much in each of the roles she has played. I will carry with me throughout my life all of the knowledge she has shared, as I continue to grow and develop personally and professionally. I cannot overstate my appreciation and admiration for her. To be seen in such a positive light by someone whom I consider my mentor is truly the greatest of honors.

## Appendix B. Academic Knowledge, Awards, and Scholarships

Listed below are the various academic awards and scholarships that I received over the course of my education. These are exemplars that I have described in my portfolio and included as an appendix because together they demonstrate my superior scholastic ability and my continued commitment to lifelong learning. Scanned copies of these documents will be included in my portfolio when it is in use. The documents are listed here for organizational purposes.

- B.1. Alexander Rutherford Scholarship (Brooks Composite High School)
- B.2. Academic Excellence Award (Medicine Hat College)
- B.3. Jason Lang Scholarship (Medicine Hat College/ University of Lethbridge)
- B.4. Psychology Book Award (Medicine Hat College)
- B.5. Dean's Honor List (University of Lethbridge)
- B.6. Governor General's Academic Gold Medal Nomination (University of Lethbridge)
- B.7. Professor's Letter of Recommendation for Governor General's Academic Gold Medal Nomination (University of Lethbridge)
- B.8. Letter of Admission, Graduate Studies (University of Lethbridge)
- B.9. Minister of Advanced Education and Technology Graduate Scholarship (University of Lethbridge)

## Appendix C. Counselling Knowledge and Applications

Listed below are documents that I have described in my portfolio. I include the list here because they are evidence of my counselling competency. More specifically, the artifacts listed in this appendix demonstrate my counselling knowledge and how I have applied it in practice. I have included only the abstracts of the documents here as a summary and for organizational purposes.

### *C.1. Counselling Knowledge*

#### C.1.1. Graduate Course Descriptions (University of Lethbridge)

Abstract:

In this document the author lists and briefly describes each of the courses in the Master of Education Counselling Psychology program. Courses discussed include Counselling Skills, Counselling Theory, Learning processes, The Nature of Educational Research, Assessment, Interventions, Gender and Culture, Ethics, Career Counselling, and lastly Practicum I. Together these courses encapsulate the author's counselling knowledge and are presented as evidence of her counselling competency.

#### C.1.2. My Personal Approach to Counselling

Abstract:

This paper describes my personal, theoretical approach to counselling. It includes a discussion of both my philosophical beliefs in regards to the nature of human existence, functional versus dysfunctional behavior, and counselling and the counselling process. Although this approach is primarily based on cognitive theory, it also incorporates aspects of other theoretical paradigms, including humanism and behaviorism, in order to account for the complexities of human beings and positive psychotherapeutic change. As

a result, I have created an eclectic approach to counselling that encapsulates the many facets of human nature, as well as the complexities of counselling.

### C.1.3. Jessica's Journal of Learning

Abstract:

This is a series of journal entries written in response to the information presented in a graduate class on learning processes in counselling. I wrote a journal entry for each seminar, and collectively they represent my reactions, reflections, and thoughts about what was presented and how it has and will affect me personally and professionally. The topics discussed include human development, intelligence, peer interaction and groups, self-efficacy, self-regulation, metacognition, gender, memory, and goal setting. As this was a counselling class on learning, each seminar focused on how learning processes affect counselling and how we as counsellors can facilitate our clients' learning and our own, in light of the topics discussed above. An individualized learning plan, included at the end of this journal, outlines how I intend to use what I have learned from this class to further my own learning and to accomplish my counselling-related professional goals. These goals include raising my self-efficacy and improving my self-concept as a counsellor, setting manageable, achievable goals, being less critical of myself, and lastly, learning as much as I can as well as I can. These journal entries communicate what I have learned about the fundamental importance of learning processes in counselling and how I can apply this knowledge personally and professionally.

#### C.1.4. Individual Versus Group-Based Exercise: Which Do Women Prefer and Why?

Abstract:

This is a complete research design that could potentially be used to investigate women's preference for either individual or group-based exercise. The pseudo-study involves asking women from Lethbridge who are over the age of 18 which form of exercise they prefer and why, via a self-constructed telephone study. The research design is similar to actual research designs in that it includes an introduction, an extensive literature review, a sound rationale for the study, and a thorough description of the study's methodology in terms of the population, procedures, instruments, and materials involved. The author suggests possible ways in which data rendered from the study could be analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative measures, and then critically analyzes the entire research design in order to identify its strengths and weaknesses.

#### C.1.5. Gender and Culture Journal

Abstract:

This is a series of journal entries created for a graduate course in gender and cultural issues in counselling. An individual entry was created for each seminar, and collectively, this journal relays my interpretations of, reflections on, and reactions to the presented material. Each journal entry was written in response to the specific group that was the focus of discussion in a given seminar. Specific groups of discussion included men, women, Aboriginals, immigrants, refugees, lesbians, gays and bisexuals. As this was a counselling course, the relevant counselling implications for each group are a prominent feature of each entry. In the learning plan included at the end of this journal, I identify core course themes and set future professional development goals in light of the

knowledge I gained as a result of this course. These goals are (a) to continue utilizing my strengths (i.e., genuineness, active listening/responding, ability to build rapport, and accounting for difference within a holistic framework) in order to maintain and/or increase their effectiveness; (b) to continue to work through my personal biases and stereotypes; and (c) to gain additional education, experience, and training in counselling diverse clients.

#### C.1.6. Ethical Decision Making Assignment

Abstract:

This assignment was completed for a graduate course in Psychological Ethics. The author applies an ethical decision making model to a pseudo-counselling vignette. The intent of the assignment was to develop students' ethical decision making skills and to familiarize them with the principles and standards set forth in the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists*. The author proceeds through an accepted decision making model step by step, as laid out in the *Companion Manual to the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (2001). She (a) identifies the individuals or groups potentially affected by her decision, (b) identifies the predominate ethical issues surrounding her decision, (c) considers how her personal biases, stresses or self interest may influence her decision, (d) develops alternative courses of action, (e) considers the positive and negative consequences of each alternative, (f) implements a course of action, (g) describes how she would take responsibility for that action and any of its consequences, and (h) evaluates her decision in order to ensure that it was, in fact, ethically sound. The assignment includes description, discussion, and the author's thoughts in regards to each step of the decision making process.



## *C.2. Counselling Applications*

### C.2.1. Counselling Skills Improvement Plan

#### Abstract:

This assignment was completed for a graduate course in Counselling Skills. It is a personalized treatment plan that focuses on improving the author's counselling skills. The author identifies a personal area of weakness, that she is uncomfortable in her position of power as a developing counsellor. She establishes a series of sub-goals that are aimed at exploring and reducing this discomfort. The sub-goals are (a) to explore the possible reasons that underlie her discomfort, (b) to increase her exposure to new people and different settings, and (c) to practice her counselling skills on a daily basis. To achieve the first sub-goal, the author brainstorms and records several sentence completions to the statement "I feel uncomfortable in a position of power because..." She then codes these completions in accordance to the underlying themes that they represent (i.e. technical, cognitive, affectual, and personality). To achieve the second sub-goal, the author deliberately interacts with unfamiliar individuals in new environments and records the intensity of the discomfort she feels each time these interactions occur. To achieve the third sub-goal, the author practices her counselling skills while interacting with her family and friends for at least 30 minutes a day, in addition to the practice she gains in a classroom setting. The author hypothesizes that engaging in these activities will ultimately enable her to become more comfortable in her future position as a counsellor.

The author's progress towards her overall goal is measured using the Subjective Units of Displacement Scale (SUDS), a subjective Likert-type scale that has anchors of 1 and 10, 1 indicating extreme discomfort and 10 indicating a complete absence of

discomfort. Before implementing the treatment program, the author rated her level of discomfort as falling between a 2 and a 3 on the scale. After implementing the program for a period of two weeks, the author rated her level of discomfort as falling between a 4 and a 5, an overall net increase of one full unit. The program was efficacious in allowing the author to feel somewhat more comfortable in her position of power as a counsellor. The author concludes the assignment by evaluating the efficacy of each intervention, as well as the treatment program as a whole.

### C.2.2. It's Not My Fault: Finding the Way Through Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

#### Abstract:

The author created this treatment plan for a graduate class in Interventions. The plan could potentially be implemented with children and families afflicted with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). Children with FAS possess various physical and psychological impairments that result in many cognitive, behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. The treatment plan uses many behavioral, educational, and interpersonal interventions to treat a pseudo-client named Averie, who exemplifies many of the difficulties children with FAS often face. These include behavioral difficulties (i.e., emotional outbursts, yelling, kicking, hitting, etc.), lowered academic performance, and social isolation stemming from an underlying lack of social understanding and subsequent social skills. The goals of the treatment plan are to improve Averie's behavioral functioning, to improve her academic performance, and to facilitate the acquisition of interpersonal skills in order to increase her level of social integration.

In order to improve Averie's behavioral functioning, the author proposes several interventions. These include visually structuring Averie's environments, channeling her

hyperactivity, and informing her parents and teachers about the nature of FAS and how to manage it more effectively. In order to improve Averie's academic performance, the author proposes that an individualized learning plan be created for Averie based on the data rendered from a series of psycho-educational assessments. This plan would take Averie's learning-related strengths and weaknesses into account and foster her overall academic growth and development. Lastly, in order to improve Averie's social skills and increase her level of social integration, the author suggests that Averie undergo Children-Friendship Training (CFT), a series of 12 workshops for parents and their children. The workshops focus on effective interpersonal communication, appropriate social behavior, and conflict resolution.

As part of the treatment planning guide, the author offers both formal and informal methods for evaluating the efficacy of each type of intervention. All types of interventions (i.e. behavioral, educational, and social) are to be evaluated informally through teacher/parent reports. Behavioral interventions are to be formally evaluated by the Revised Behavior Problem Checklist (RBPC), educational interventions are to be evaluated by report cards and scores on academic tests, and the social intervention is to be evaluated by the Test of Social Skills Knowledge (TSSK), as well as both the parent and teacher versions of the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS). It is hypothesized that the suggested interventions will result in improved behavioral functioning, improved academic performance, and increased social integration. Since this treatment plan was created for a fictional client, its actual effectiveness cannot be ascertained. However, the author hopes that some or all of the interventions may be of use to professionals working with such clients.

### C.2.3. Intervention Video Assignment

#### Abstract:

This assignment was completed for a graduate course in Interventions. It consists of three consecutive counselling sessions with a pseudo-client. The sessions are both videotaped and transcribed. In session one, the client's presenting problem is identified and explored. In session two, the author incorporates cognitive interventions into the session in an attempt to correct the client's distorted beliefs and positively reframe her thinking. In session three, the author follows up on the client's use of these interventions in order to gauge their efficacy as well as the client's overall progress. The assignment itself includes a description of the client, as well as the background information, transcription, and evaluation that corresponds with each session. The verbatim transcription is limited to counsellor-said statements, but includes both the identification and evaluation of all the counselling skills used in each session. Thus this assignment demonstrates the author's ability to use her counselling skills and to conduct the counselling process in a relatively fluid, effective manner.

### C.2.4. Counselling Applications in Class, Practicum, Research, and Work

#### Abstract:

This document describes how the author has applied her counselling skills in a number of diverse settings. She repeatedly practiced her counselling skills in many of her graduate courses through various in-class activities, such as role plays, dyads, triads, and numerous mock counselling sessions. Although her practicum was predominantly assessment oriented, the author often used her counselling skills when informally interviewing children and parents, informing teachers, administration, students and

parents on the nature of particular assessments and the assessment process in general, and reflecting and responding to individuals' thoughts, feelings and underlying concerns regarding psycho-educational assessment. The author's research involvement also afforded her many opportunities to practice her counselling skills. These opportunities ranged from providing individuals with information and conducting informal interviews, to reflecting and responding to any concerns that participants and involved parties might have regarding the research itself or anything involved in it. Lastly, the author describes how she has applied her counselling knowledge and skills in her work as a rehabilitation worker. She explains how this work often involves duties that incorporate counselling to some extent. Examples of such duties include implementing interventions, analyzing tasks, and setting goals. Thus this document explains how the author has applied her counselling knowledge and skills in various spheres of her life. It is described in her portfolio and listed as an abstract here because it represents the author's increasing versatility as a developing psychological practitioner.

## Appendix D. Assessment Knowledge and Applications

Listed below are documents that I have described in my portfolio because they are evidence of my overall competency in assessment. More specifically, they demonstrate my assessment knowledge and my practical application of this knowledge. The documents themselves will be provided in my complete portfolio. I have provided only abstracts of the documents here as a summary and for organizational purposes.

### *D.1. Assessment Knowledge*

#### D.1.1. Critique of the Comprehensive Receptive and Expressive Vocabulary Test

Abstract:

This assignment, a critique of the Comprehensive Receptive and Expressive Vocabulary Test, was completed for a graduate course in Assessment. It includes a description of the assessment (i.e., what it is, how it is used, who it is used on and when) and an evaluation of the assessment's strengths and weaknesses. In the concluding section, the author suggests possible future revisions and comments on the assessment's applicability in educational and counselling settings.

#### D.1.2. Part 1. Position Paper: The Importance of Assessment in Psychological Practice

Abstract:

This is part of an assignment that was completed for a graduate course in Interventions. This section emphasizes the importance of assessment in psychological practice by describing (a) what psychological assessment is, (b) the assessment process, (c) how assessment outcomes are measured and what they mean, (d) roles and relationships in the assessment process, and (e) mediating factors that may influence the assessment process. Through discussion of these topics, the author intends to reinforce

the importance of assessment in psychological practice and to highlight the interdependent nature of counselling and assessment.

D.1.3. Policy and Procedures Assignment: Ethics Orientation Manual for Jumpstart Assessment Agency

Abstract:

This assignment, completed for a graduate course in Psychological Ethics, is a policy and procedures manual for a pseudo psycho-educational assessment agency. The policies and procedures created for this agency comply with the ethical standards presented in the Companion Manual to the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (2001). They address the following ethical issues: informed consent, competence, multiculturalism, confidentiality, subpoena, client safety, record keeping, note taking, fees, dual relationships, referrals, termination of services, grievances, and ethical decision making. As Jumpstart is an assessment agency, policies and procedures surrounding ethical test selection, administration, scoring, and interpretation were created as well. All of the relevant forms related to each policy are included in the appendix of the assignment.

*D.2. Assessment Applications*

D.2.1. List of Standardized Assessments Administered

Abstract:

This document lists and briefly describes each of the assessments that I have learned and administered over the course of my graduate studies. In addition to administrative knowledge, I have also learned how to score and interpret the data rendered from each of the following assessments:

- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (WISC-IV)
- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) (WAIS-III)
- Adaptive Behavior Assessment System (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (ABAS-II)
- DIEBLS Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)
- DIEBLS Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)
- Wide Range Achievement Test (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) (WRAT-3): Arithmetic
- Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE): Sight Word Efficiency
- Pre-Reading Inventory of Phonological Awareness (PIPA): Letter-Sound Knowledge
- Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP): Word Blending

#### D.2.2. Tape Presentation 2: Context Paper Gabe

##### Abstract:

This is an assignment completed for a graduate course in Interventions. It includes (a) documentation of informed consent, (b) a tape recorded section of the actual assessment administration, (c) a client context paper, (d) all of the raw data derived from the administration, (e) a formal written report, and (f) a self-evaluation of my performance. The author administered the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), as well as two self-created informal assessment measures the author refers to as the games chart and the mystery box. The test-taker was a 6.5 year-old boy with no known cognitive or developmental impairments. All of the assessment data derived from the administration was interpreted contextually and relayed in an easy-to-understand manner in both the written report and the client context paper. In light of the assessment data, the author makes learning-related recommendations that take the child's learning-related



strengths and weaknesses into account and thus are likely to foster his academic growth and development. Lastly, the author evaluates her own performance in regards to administering and scoring the assessment, as well as interpreting and relaying the resulting assessment information. Self-identified strengths include the author's ability to build and maintain rapport, provide the test-taker ongoing support and encouragement, monitor the test-taker's physical, psychological and emotional state, and manage the test-taker's hyperactive behavior. The author suggests a weakness in her performance, in that the inclusion of the two self-created informal assessment measures listed above strayed away from standardized testing procedures and thus could have invalidated the test results.

## Appendix E. Practicum Placement Documentation

Listed below are the documents that are described in my portfolio. I have included them, in abstract form, because they provide evidence of what I learned and experienced over the course of my practicum with Lethbridge School Division No. 51. The primary focus of this practicum was on strengthening my knowledge and skills in the area of psycho-educational assessment. However, as noted earlier, conducting any type of assessment also often involves informally counselling vested parties in some manner, whether by reflecting their affect, responding to their concerns, providing them with information on the nature of assessment and the assessment process, or relaying assessment data. Thus the experiences and learning opportunities that my practicum afforded me strengthened my knowledge and skills in both counselling and assessment. Consequently I have included them here as an appendix. Abstracts are provided here, rather than the documents themselves, as a summary and for organizational purposes.

### *E.1. Practicum Placement: Description, Roles, and Responsibilities*

Abstract:

This document describes the author's practicum placement and explains the various roles and responsibilities she undertook as a practicum student in this setting. The author describes how, as a student, she learned to effectively administer, score, and interpret a selected set of psycho-educational assessments. These include the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (WISC-IV), the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (WIAT-II), and the Adaptive Behavior Assessment System (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (ABAS-II). The author then explains the numerous responsibilities that her role as a developing assessor entailed: (a) being accountable for the psycho-educational

assessment of five students who attended two different schools within the division, (b) obtaining the informed consent of the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of these students, (c) going through the students' school files in order to better understand their educational background, as well as their learning-related difficulties, (d) tailoring an assessment battery to students' specific learning needs, (e) administering, scoring, and interpreting the assessment batteries in light of the students' background, current levels of functioning, and specific learning needs, and finally, (f) through formal written reports, communicating assessment data in the form of easy-to-understand recommendations of strategies that suit the clients and are aimed at fostering their educational growth. The author concludes by reflecting on what she has learned as a result of her practicum and how she intends to apply what she has learned personally and professionally.

### *E.2. Practicum Placement: Example of a Formal Written Report*

#### Abstract:

This is an example of a formal written report that the author wrote in regards to a child whom she assessed during her practicum with Lethbridge School Division No. 51. The author was under the direct supervision of a registered school psychologist. The child, referred to here as A.D., had a history of various academic, cognitive and behavioral difficulties and was referred for psycho-educational assessment in order to determine her current level of cognitive functioning. A.D. completed specific subtests of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (WISC-IV), the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (WIAT-II), and the Adaptive Behavior Assessment System (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (ABAS-II). Test results identified A.D.'s relative learning-related strengths and weaknesses. On the basis of this information, numerous recommendations

were made that took A.D.'s unique learning needs into account and were designed to foster her academic growth and development. This report shows the author's ability to interpret assessment data and relay this information in a clear, concise, easy-to-understand manner for the use of educational interventions that further the child's academic development.

### *E.3. Practicum Placement: Final Evaluation*

#### Abstract:

This is the author's final performance evaluation, completed by her field supervisor, a registered school psychologist. Performance is rated on a four-point, Likert-type scale with the anchors of 0, indicating very poor performance, and 4, indicating fluent and creative performance. The author was given a rating of 4 in the areas of ethical practice and professional conduct. As this evaluation was originally devised for counselling, as opposed to assessment, many of the other areas of performance did not apply. However, the author's supervisor provided the following general comments:

Jessie has worked very hard to learn the WISC-IV and the WIAT-II. She has displayed good ability to ask questions and use the resources provided for her. Jessie's ability to understand and administer these measures are both very good. As well, she has shown skill in interpreting both measures in written reports. This ability will improve more with practice and experience in the area.

Suggested areas to continue to develop include exposure to different school environments/cultures, applying the various Alberta Education codes to her reports, and developing a string recommendation base for her reports. Again, this will improve with experience, research, consulting with others and practice.

This evaluation demonstrates the author's assessment skills and is provided as evidence of her overall assessment competency.

## Appendix F. Research Involvement

The documents listed here are described in my portfolio and included as an appendix because they are evidence of my active involvement in the formulation and subsequent application of research that is relevant to my field. The documents are described in the Assessment Applications section of my portfolio because my research involvement was predominantly oriented towards assessment and assessment-related activities (i.e., assessment administration, scoring, and interpretation). As noted earlier, conducting any type of assessment, even for research purposes, also often involves informally counselling vested parties in some manner, whether it is reflecting their affect, responding to their concerns, or providing them with information on the nature of assessment, the assessment process, or the research project itself. Thus, the experiences and learning opportunities that my research involvement afforded me strengthened my knowledge and skills in both counselling and assessment. For that reason, I have included them here as an appendix. Abstracts are provided here, rather than the documents themselves, as a summary and for organizational purposes

### *F.1. Research: Magnetic Resonance Brain Imaging of Brain Development, Children*

#### *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Study: Description, Roles, and Responsibilities*

Abstract:

This document describes the author's involvement in a research study pertaining to the neurological and cognitive development of children with a diagnosed Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). The author briefly explains the roles and responsibilities that her participation entailed.

As a student, the author's responsibilities involved (a) meeting with her supervisor regularly to discuss issues pertaining to the study and its implementation, (b) devising and learning a battery of standardized tests intended to measure indices of interest to the study's researchers, and (c) presenting and discussing an abstract of the study at a student conference on early childhood literacy. As the lead research assistant for this study, the author took on many responsibilities: (a) describing and explaining the study with the goal of directly or indirectly recruiting participants, (b) obtaining informed consent from the participants and/or their guardians, (c) scheduling and attending all of the MRI appointments with participants for phase one of the study, and (d) scheduling assessment appointments for phase two of the study. Lastly, as an assessor, the author was responsible for administering, scoring, and interpreting the data obtained from the battery of cognitive tests she devised in her role as a student. Thus, the author's involvement with this research project afforded her the opportunity to take on multiple roles and responsibilities. She comments on how ethical principles and standards were upheld within each role and throughout the study in general and concludes by reflecting on her experiences and how her involvement with the study has affected her personally and professionally.

*F.2. ABRACADABRA Pan Canadian Research Project: Description, Roles, and Responsibilities*

Abstract:

This document explains the author's involvement in a research study pertaining to the development of early childhood literacy. The author describes the study and the roles and responsibilities that her participation entailed.

As a graduate research assistant for the project, the author was responsible for data collection in both the pre-test and post-test phases of the research. Data collection for the study involved testing the literacy and numeracy levels of Kindergarten and Grade 1 students, using a series of pre-selected assessments. The author was responsible for administering and scoring these assessments according to standardized testing procedures and in a manner that upheld the discipline's ethical principles and standards. The author comments on how her behavior was ethically consistent in light of her responsibilities. She concludes by reflecting on how her involvement with this research study has affected her personally and professionally.

### *F.3. Lead Researcher's Letter of Recommendation*

Abstract:

This is a letter of recommendation written by the author's graduate supervisor, a registered psychologist, who was one of the lead researchers in both of the research studies in which the author was involved. In this letter, Dr. Noella Piquette-Tomei comments on the author's exceptional academic ability, her rigorous research involvement, and her superior communication skills. The document itself is included in the portfolio and described in abstract form here, because it is evidence of the author's growth and development as a student, as well as her potential as a professional, in the area of assessment.