Extraverted and introverted assistants: Differences in and the importance of downward feedback

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This thesis studies the differences in and the importance of downward feedback for extraverted and introverted assistants, in an attempt to find out what meaning downward feedback holds for extraverted and introverted assistants, whether there are differences in this, as well as how they prefer to receive downward feedback.

The theoretical framework treats extraversion-introversion and its various definitions and common traits, downward feedback, and the superior-assistant relationship and its characteristics, and briefly the role of an assistant who works in an office environment.

The study was conducted using the qualitative research method, namely through interviewing. There were four interviewees, two of them extraverted assistants and two introverted assistants. The interviews were semi-structured and thematic.

The results were analyzed through coding, pattern finding and comparing and contrasting the responses of the interviewees, and this material was gathered into theme cards.

The main findings of the study were that downward feedback was seen as very important by both extraverted and introverted assistants, for the reason that it allows them to improve their job performance as well as feel that their work is meaningful, and that they were appreciated as employees. Feedback was preferred to be received orally and in person, with a balance of positive and constructive but timely feedback. The main difference was found in the setting: the extraverted assistants preferred to receive constructive feedback in private but did not mind receiving positive feedback when an audience was present, whilst introverted assistants preferred to receive both positive and constructive feedback in private.

Keywords	
Downward communication, feedback, personality	

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1 Introduction

Over the decades, the idea and role of the assistant – be it executive, administrative, or other – has changed from a coffee-making, copy-taking person to a jack of all trades. Effective assistants can contribute enormously to the productivity of an organization at all levels (Duncan, 2011) and are a great asset to managers.

In recent years, there seems to have been an increase in personality research and literature in a business context. There has been much interest shown in personality (often the Big Five Model or Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) and e.g., recruiting in Harvard Business Review's 2017 article A Brief History of Personality Tests. However, lots of literature and research relating to introversion and extraversion has also sprang up, such as Susan Loehken's works The Power of Personality (2016) and Quiet Impact (2015). Forbes even approaches the spectrum by considering which kind of job suits introverts, extraverts and ambiverts (Stahl, 2020).

As assistants and their superiors may work very closely together, it is important that the relationship functions well, no matter what each party's personality is. Being aware of and learning about the other's personality may help in understanding their needs, more specifically in this thesis, the assistant's feedback needs. Aguinis, Gottfredson and Joo (2012) outline that well-formulated performance feedback may improve, in addition to performance, employee engagement, motivation and job satisfaction, and these are excellent reasons to invest in feedback giving practices.

Individual differences, however, may hinder feedback reception, which is why Swift and Peterson (2018, 13) suggest improving feedback by tailoring it to the recipient's personality and his or her role.

1.1 Objectives

This thesis connects the central concepts of extraversion-introversion, assistants and their relationship with their superior to downward feedback practices, with the aim of discovering whether there are differences in how important downward feedback is for and how it should be delivered to extraverted and introverted assistants.

By finding potential differences or similarities between the two when it comes to receiving feedback, there is the hope of spreading awareness and through this, potentially increasing the job satisfaction, motivation and performance of assistants, as well as to serve as a reminder that personality facets should not be overlooked in the work context.

Extraverts and introverts may prefer to receive feedback in different ways and overlooking personality facets may result in information being lost (Steel, Schmidt, Bosco & Uggerslev, 2019, 217).

The research questions in this thesis are: How does the importance of downward feedback differ for extraverted and introverted assistants? How do extraverted assistants and introverted assistants prefer to receive downward feedback?

1.2 Delimitation

This thesis focuses on downward feedback, i.e., feedback given from managers to subordinates and in this case, to assistants. The thesis does not treat feedback types or models further than in person, face-to-face, virtual and positive, constructive and negative feedback, i.e., the interest is on a more general level of downward feedback, and the thesis does not concern itself with more detailed feedback methods.

The assistants for this study were limited to ones working in an office environment in a private business context or the government sector, where assistants' tasks generally have much in common and include administrative tasks, and not i.e., assistants working in the entertainment, medical, or other technical industries. The assistants were not limited to executive or personal assistants, because the thesis is interested in assistants in general, and limiting the interviewees only to the formerly mentioned was felt to be too restricting.

The personality factors considered in this thesis are limited to the extraversion-introversion spectrum, but ambiversion and ambiverts are excluded from this study, i.e., the participants had to either be dominated by extraversion or by introversion as demonstrated by a test taken by the participants.

The superior-assistant relationship refers to the assistant's relationship with her immediate superior, who she has contact with.

1.3 Structure

There are five chapters in this thesis that include this introduction, the theoretical framework, description of the research method and implementation, the results and finally, the fifth chapter which discusses the results and evaluates the thesis process. The theoretical framework treats the three main themes of extraversion-introversion, feedback and the superior-assistant relationship. The third chapter reports and justifies the research method used and its implementation. The fourth chapter lays out the interview responses

thematically and includes excerpts from the interviews. The fifth chapter analyzes the results by applying the theoretical framework to the interview responses, before closing with the assessment of the process, suggestions for future research, ethical aspects and the author's own learning.

2   Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this thesis is concentrated around the concepts of extraversion and introversion, downward feedback, the qualities of a supervisor-assistant relationship and the role of an assistant.

Personality theories and personality research abound and have been studied for a long time. Some of the most well-known personality theories include those of Sigmund Freud, Hans Eysenck, Raymond Cattell and Allport (McLeod, 2017).

There has been some research related to the connection between personality, personality traits and job satisfaction, for example in studies conducted by Ilies and Judge (2002), Steel, Schmidt, Bosco and Uggerslev (2019) and Lounsbury, Moffitt, Gibson, Drost and Stevens (2007). Personality and job engagement have also been researched by Inceoglu and Warr (2012) and Mhlanga, Mjoli and Chamisa (2019). The connection between personality and downward feedback, appears to have been a little less studied, although downward communication itself has been delved into in multiple studies by e.g., McCallister (1983), Said and Said (2 July 2018), and Raina and Britt Roebuck (2016).

There is plenty of literature available for management on how to be a good manager and treat employees well, naturally including the internal communication aspect. In fact, it is an area of knowledge constantly evolving and developing, as evidenced by the perpetual output of books relating to it.

2.1   Temperament and personality

As Richmond, McCroskey and Powell (2013) explain, personality psychology research has investigated the association of personality traits with other traits in order to identify which ones are most significant. This has led to the coining of variables such as "super traits" and "temperament". These super traits have shed light on the ways that personality traits affect human behavior, such as communication behavior. (Richmond & al., 2013, 66-67).

Eysenck and Eysenck (1985, 14) refer to their three main temperament variables as psychoticism (P), extraversion (E) and neuroticism (N), which are based on these observed correlations between traits, and claim that P, E and N are regularly and more or less normally apportioned. In addition to these, other psychobiologists have theorized that branching from psychoticism, there are three more variables: openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness (Richmond & al., 2013, 67).

2.1.1 Extraversion-introversion

One of the major super traits describing the human temperament (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985, 185) and often considered as a continuum, extraversion and at the other end, introversion, has been a very popular area of study in the history of personality psychology. The concepts of extraversion and introversion have also spread to the general public and been incorporated into everyday speech, especially in the workplace. Some of the most well-known definitions of extraversion have been put forth by Carl Jung, Hans Eysenck, Raymond Cattell, and Katharine Cook Briggs with Isabel Briggs Myers.

Carl Jung (1921) labeled the two general types of personality as introverted and extraverted. Jung, as Eysenck and Eysenck explain in Personality and Individual Differences (1985, 13) held the opinion that a minority of people are characterized purely as introverted or extraverted, but that the majority are somewhere in between, balanced between their respective mechanisms. However, it seems to be generally accepted that often people find the mechanisms of one or the other to be dominating in them, being able to identify themselves as more of an extravert than an introvert, and vice versa.

2.1.2 Extraversion

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines extraversion as "the act, state, or habit of being predominantly concerned with and obtaining gratification from what is outside the self." As suggested by Carl Jung (1921), who first presented the concepts of introversion and extraversion, an extraverted person's focus and attention is on external, rather than internal, matters. His or her surroundings, things and other people, influence the actions that he or she takes. A person may be labeled as extraverted only when the attitudes of extraversion dominate in the person – and the same could logically be assumed for introversion. (Jung, 1921).

According to Eysenck (2017, 36-37) the primary traits that comprise our personality phenotype are sociability, impulsivity, optimism and dominance. Extraversion partly refers to the pronounced interest for social interaction and participation. Aligning with Eysenck's (2017) postulation, Keltikangas-Järvinen (2016, 15) posits that the more extraverted a person is, the more open, impulsive, talkative and interested he or she will be in social interaction. Not only is the extraverted personality more interested in these social, interpersonal interactions, but also excels at activities that are characterized by a high social component (Krasman, 2010, 21; Bell & Arthur Jr., 2008).

The extraverted person will be more prone to actively observe their surroundings, perceive things that are pleasant, encouraging and positive, and react to these elements. (Keltikangas-Järvinen, 2016, 18). Eysenck and Eysenck (1985, 49) draw from Jung's accounts, further describing the extravert as someone whose emotions are easily aroused but not very deeply, who wants social approval and so conforms to the expectations of society and likes and is attracted by what is new.

Jung makes an interesting distinction between what he deems an extraverted type versus an extravert. When a person habitually orients themselves to the objective, and the objective relations essentially determine the actions and decisions made by the person, the person is an extraverted type. However, when a person directly behaves, feels and thinks according to objective conditions, they are extraverted. To simplify, the extravert's thinking process is orientated by objective data. (Jung, 1921).

From a more concrete perspective: at work, extraverts tend not to take their time before beginning an assignment, but take up their tasks expeditiously, and along the way they are more likely to take risks, make rash decisions and multitask, all of these something they are comfortable with doing. Group work suits them well, as they naturally are drawn to groups and are more in the habit of thinking out loud. (Knight, 2015). Talking is the natural means of communication for extraverts, and they are able to think quickly on their feet when in conversation (Oulasmaa & Pesonen, 2020, 25). Again, the social component and shared ideas energize them (Knight, 2015). According to research, the extraverted person will choose the more social approach if faced with options of varying social intensity to achieve a goal (Krasman, 2010, 21).

Oulasmaa and Pesonen (2020, 25, 191) describe the extraverted personality generally as confident, convincing, active, energetic, talkative and optimistic; but on the other hand, as having the tendency to act in a grandiose or even aggressive manner, jumping from one idea to another, which in a work context may result in an unclear, unstable organizational strategy. Still, a correlation exists between leadership and extraversion, due to the optimistic nature of the extraverted personality that holds optimistic views about the future (Oulasmaa & Pesonen, 2020, 25, 191).

2.1.3 Introversion

Perhaps easy to infer from the previous subchapter, when the chief value is placed on the subjective, the orientation of thought is introverted, this being the main distinction between the introverted and extraverted. Introverts are governed more by the subjective, their attention more on the internal, which can make them seem reserved, secretive or as

unsympathetic. (Jung, 1921). The main activity of an introvert will occur in the mental and intellectual realm (Eysenck, 1985,49).

The closer you move toward introversion along the spectrum, generally the more reserved, quiet and withdrawn you will be. The introverted person will not hanker for external stimulation but will recharge by spending time alone (or with people close to them). They turn inwards to their inner world and simmering thoughts, processing them in their own time and at their own pace. (Keltikangas-Järvinen, 2016, 143). However, this is not to say that the introverted personality does not perceive or register external surroundings and elements, but ultimately rather chooses to place emphasis on subjective determinants instead (Jung, 1921). From a biological perspective, introverts are more cortically aroused than extraverts: typically, introverts will be more aroused than extraverts and when stimulated, introverts will produce a greater increase in arousal (Eysenck, 1985, 219).

According to Oulasmaa and Pesonen (2020, 25) the introvert's strengths often include foresight, pedantry, writing, the ability to concentrate, diligence and a calm disposition and manner. Of course, these can be found in extraverted people as well, but it may be surmised that the occurrence of such qualities could be more common introverts, who are less aroused by external stimulation and so it is easier for them to e.g. focus on one task. In a study that tested the performance of extraverted and introverted people, introversion predicted better performance when the level of the task was more challenging (Keltikangas-Järvinen, 2016, 17).

Introverts tend to work more deliberately and at a slower place, preferring to concentrate on one undertaking at a time. The introverted personality lacks the need for stimuli of direct social contact, and one way this can manifest itself at work is a preference for email communication (Loehken, 2016b) instead of face-to-face communication. Often, introverts dislike noisy environments and big group settings, and even though they do enjoy social events, typically they tire and retreat quicker. (Knight, 2015).

However, identifying a person as introverted is not necessarily a very straightforward task, as in today's world, where it could be said that extraversion is highly valued (especially in the work context), introverted people have learned to act and often appear extraverted. (Knight, 2015). In fact, research has shown that companies often hire extraverted people over more competent introverted people, specifically when recruiting was based on interviews (Keltikangas-Järvinen, 2016, 19).

As their attentions are directed within, the introverted person might themselves recognize the existence of self-talk. The nature of introverts' self-talk is often critical, due to the fact that many introverts have a harsh attitude towards themselves. (Oulasmaa & Pesonen, 2020, 191).

To summarize, when it comes to both extraverts and introverts, consensus has been reached on certain points: the introvert has a more subjective outlook compared to the extravert's objective outlook. Introverts have higher degree of cerebral activity, extraverts a higher degree of behavioral activity. Introverts are more inhibited, demonstrating a tendency to self-control, while extraverts characteristically tend to lack such control. (Eysenck & Himmelweit, 1947, 58).

2.2   Feedback

For a long time, the importance of feedback of performance appraisal has been regarded as a critical organizational communication activity and has been recognized for its role in increasing motivation and showing the corrective measures that need to be taken. One of the reasons feedback is one of the most important forms of communication is precisely because it allows the recipient themselves to be able to adjust their own behavior and effort to improve their future performance. (O'Reilly and Anderson, 1980, 290).

Narciss (2008, 127) describes the term "feedback" as referring to post-response information that aims to help the recipient determine whether their current states of learning and/or performance are corresponding to the performance aims given in an instructional or organizational context.

Feedback can provide many types of information, depending on whether there are gaps between the current and the desired state of learning or performance. In the case that the current state is aligning with the desired state, feedback can confirm goal achievement or the achieved level of performance. If there are gaps between the current state and the desired state, feedback may provide vaguer and less detailed information, which may be more loosely connected to performance or learning tasks. (Raemdonck and Strijbos, 2013, 25).

The results of a study conducted by O'Reilly and Anderson (1980, 297) suggest that when it comes to feedback, relevance and accuracy are more important than the amount of feedback. The same study also found that the relevance and accuracy of feedback are positively associated with performance and satisfaction.

Raemdonck and Strijbos (2013, 27) also surmise that feedback given by a supervisor to employees might get a better response or be better complied to compared to feedback given by e.g., a colleague.

2.2.1 Downward communication and feedback

Downward communication refers to communication that flows top-down, i.e. from management or supervisors to subordinates, as opposed to upward communication that flows from employees to supervisors. The same principles are applied to downward and upward feedback.

Superior-subordinate communication, of course, plays an integral part in the overall success of organizational communication (Schnake, Dumler, Cochran Jr. & Barnett, 1990, 37). Katz and Kahn (1966), as Schnake & al. (1990, 37) outline in their study, list some of the most common types of superior-subordinate communication to be about "(1) job instructions, (2) job rationale, (3) organizational procedures and practices, (4) feedback about employee performance and (5) indoctrination of goals". Jablin (1979, 1202) defines in his study superior-subordinate communication as exchanges of information and influence between members of an organization, in which one member has formal authority to direct and assess the other members.

Penfield (1974, 254) discovered in his study that 55 per cent of managerial positions have a time-consuming focus in the direct supervision of employees, and a lot of the manager's time is spent in face-to-face superior-subordinate communication. However, one of the most common gripes in superior-subordinate communication is the lack of sufficient and relevant feedback from one of the parties (Jablin, 1979, 1212).

Upward and downward feedback are both essential for a successful superior-subordinate relationship due to its corrective and informative nature whilst giving the opportunity for the other party's sentiments about organizational activities to be acknowledged (Jablin, 1979, 1212). As implied in the previous subchapter, performance feedback has the potential to improve individual and team performance as well as improve employee engagement, motivation and job satisfaction (Aguinis & al. 2012, 110). In order for this potential to be realized, it logically follows that downward feedback must be constructed so that the recipient can accurately perceive and respond to it (O'Reilly & Anderson, 1980, 297).

However, evidence exists of the ineffectiveness of superior-subordinate communication (Schnake & al.,1990, 37). Despite knowing the importance of superior-subordinate

communication, members of management are often uncomfortable with providing feedback which can result in improperly given feedback, which may have unintended, undesired results. Not only are they not always comfortable giving feedback, but also management members may not know how to deliver it effectively, leading to e.g. focusing too much on subordinates' weaknesses. (Aguinis & al., 2012, 106). This is problematic, as there is evidence suggesting that competence supportive feedback has a positive effect on job performance as well as employees' well-being in the workplace (Merriman, 2016, 339). What's more to consider, people are a lot more sensitive to negative feedback (Thomas, 2009, 172) and so if feedback is focused more on the negative, the danger is that the recipient will personalize the feedback, and instead of using the feedback to tweak performance it will be experienced as invalidating (Aarnikoivu, 2013, 85).

Another challenge is that the perception of communication practices can be misaligned, superiors often thinking that they are giving sufficient feedback, when in reality subordinates may think they are not getting enough feedback, as found in the study conducted by Schnake & al. (1990, 46).

Despite it being established that feedback is widely used as a method to improve motivation, its effectiveness and reliability can often be hindered by individual differences, which is why the reliability of performance feedback could be improved by tailoring it according to personality and task demands (Swift and Peterson, 2018, 13).

2.2.2 Personality and feedback

As has been established in previous chapters, extraverts tend to seek and excel in situations with a high social component, whilst introverts tend to be more reserved and prefer a calmer setting. This difference can potentially be applied to feedback preferences as well; extraverts may enjoy receiving praise and positive feedback in front of others, but for introverts it may be more embarrassing and they may prefer a private setting, according to Karl Moore's article To Each Their Own: Giving Feedback to Introverts and Extroverts.

An important aspect of giving feedback is knowing which kind of feedback employees respond positively to and conveys the genuine appreciation of the superior. For example, some employees may require or prefer more detailed and tailored feedback instead of something general, like "good job". (Moore).

Krasman (2010, 28) in his study found that an individual's feedback-seeking behavior in part depends on the makeup of their personality. Feedback seeking, as defined by

Krasman (2010, 18) is an interpersonal interaction between a feedback seeker and a source of feedback who exchange feedback requests and responses. This can happen either verbally or observationally, the former taking place with direct and indirect inquiry, and the latter through the use of reflective appraisal. Thus, it could be assumed that extraverts might be more likely to seek feedback in the case of direct and indirect inquiry, as the action of seeking it also involves a social experience. Krasman (2010, 30) suggests using the Big Five (personality traits) as a tool for determining what kind of feedback-seeking behaviors employees might manifest and how to act accordingly. (Krasman, 2010).

Personality can also have an effect on reactions to feedback (Mudgett, 1997). Bell and Arthur Jr. (2008, 698) discovered that extraversion was related to feedback acceptance, putting forth the idea that feedback should be tailored according to the recipient's personality so as to facilitate feedback acceptance. Due to the social nature of giving feedback, extraverts who are adept in social situations may be able utilize the situation more, e.g. by asking more questions to clarify the feedback and thus creating a more positive experience for themselves, increasing feedback acceptance. (Bell & Arthur Jr., 2008). What's more, in the case of negative feedback, in Smither, London and Richmond's (2005, 187, 202) study extraverted leaders were more likely to request additional feedback.

Feedback also has differing effects on performance depending on whether it is positive or negative and on the recipient's personality. In individuals with low levels of extraversion, i.e., who are more on the introverted spectrum, negative feedback may lead to higher performance than positive feedback whilst in all other individuals, positive feedback may contribute to higher performance. (Mudgett, 1997, 72-73).

So, in highly extraverted individuals, positive feedback may lead to higher performance and in more introverted individuals, negative feedback may lead to higher performance. (Mudgett, 1997, 72). This aligns with Swift and Peterson's (2018, 4) conclusion: extraversion has a role in feedback effects to the extent that it is associated with positive emotionality. Contrastingly, Smither & al. (2005, 187) found that extraverted individuals were more likely to perceive negative feedback as valuable. It might be concluded that when providing feedback, it is important to take into account the recipient's personality as well as the nature of feedback (positive or negative) as they most likely have an effect on how feedback is reacted to, received and utilized to improve future performance (Smither & al., 2005).

2.3 Assistant work and the superior-assistant relationship

The assistant could be described as a jack of all trades. As Duncan (2011) says, assistants are "trouble-shooters, translators, help desk attendants, diplomats, human databases, travel consultants, amateur psychologists and ambassadors to the inside and outside world."

Effective assistants can contribute enormously to the productivity of an organization at all levels (Duncan, 2011), especially at the administrative level. Some of the tasks of an assistant commonly include making travel arrangements, filing expense reports, scheduling meetings, drafting emails and correspondence, attending and reporting on meetings, taking the minutes, diary management, managing approvals, processes and information flow, handling prep material, enabling remote decision-making, keeping projects on track, filtering distractions, leading event management and administrative meetings, etc. (Graham, 2018; Duncan, 2011). The assistant is proactive and knows how to anticipate needs (Schmidt & Stefanut, 2016).

Duncan (2011) suggests that there are two crucial factors that determine how well an assistant is utilized by a superior: the willingness of the superior to delegate tasks to the assistant and the willingness of the assistant to step up and embrace the new tasks that are potentially beyond the assistant's comfort zone.

The one-on-one dynamic between an assistant and a superior is very important, not only to both parties personally but also for the organization, and communication is essential in improving and maintaining this relationship (Duncan, 2011; Schmidt & Stefanut, 2016). Face-to-face conversations and one-on-one sessions are a vital routine for this purpose (Schmidt & Stefanut, 2016). When both parties are content and have a stable relationship, motivation and enthusiasm ensue (Graham, 2018). However, Duncan (2011) points out that supervisors who are not transparent in their communication or make their expectations clear often contribute to the deterioration of these boss-assistant relationships. It is important for the assistant to be able to distinguish their tasks and responsibilities from those of their supervisor, and it is up to the supervisor to ensure that the tasks assigned to the assistant do not deviate too much from the assistant's core role (Graham, 2018). Though a variety of tasks can be delegated to an assistant, the supervisor should be mindful of the assistant's workload, making sure that he or she is not overloaded with assignments that could also be completed by others (Graham, 2018).

A supportive atmosphere helps employees feel like their contributions are valued, which translates into productivity (Levine, 2003, 4). In Levine's article Boss-employee relationship key to job satisfaction (2003, 4), Max Messmer offers five tips for building stronger relationships with employees: establish open communication, empower and stand up for employees, recognize achievements and provide opportunities for advancement.

3   Research method and implementation

Qualitative research methods in general are used when there is a desire to understand a less-known topic better. The research for this thesis was conducted using the qualitative method, because the aim was to acquire more profound knowledge instead of using a quantitative method to obtain numerical data to generalize a phenomenon to a bigger population. In practice, this means that there is a smaller number of participants involved, but more analyzable data and material is generated, in the hopes of gaining a better understanding of the specified sample. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti, 2015, 105).

This thesis attempts to find out whether there are any differences in the importance and meaningfulness of downward feedback depending on whether you are an introverted or extraverted assistant, whilst discovering the types (positive, constructive, face-to-face, etc.) of feedback might be most preferred by these personality types and whether there are differences in these preferences.

The core research problems at the beginning of the process were defined as:
What is and how does the importance of downward feedback differ for extraverted and introverted assistants?
How do extraverted assistants and introverted assistants prefer to receive downward feedback?

3.1   Interviews

Interviewing is one of the most used qualitative research methods and is partly utilized in this thesis because it emphasizes the individual as the research subject, allowing the interviewee to speak as freely as possible at a personal level. (Ojasalo & al., 2015, 106). This supports this thesis in its aim to gain more understanding of the sample. In addition, personality factors, namely extraversion and introversion, are also part of this study, which are harder to measure or study using quantitative methods, as they are quite abstract concepts.

The interviews used in this thesis are thematic and semistructured, meaning that the interview questions have been formulated beforehand, but their order is not set – the interviewer may change the phrasing and order of the questions according to flow of the interview, and may ask additional questions that come up during the interview. (Ojasalo & al., 2015, 107-108).

This method also requires recording and transcribing the interviews, the former enabling the interviewer to focus on listening to the interviewee and making the transcription process easier, and the latter aiding in the analysis phase. (Ojasalo & al., 2015, 107).

3.1.1 Interview questions

The interviews were thematic and semistructured and consisted of eight questions, open-ended and thematic by nature. The questions were formulated in Finnish and were based on the literature presented in the theoretical framework section of this thesis, and the interviews were divided into the following themes: personality (questions pertaining to the interviewee's extraversion or introversion), feedback and the superior-assistant relationship. Open-ended questions enable the researcher to acquire a more in-depth, descriptive answer from the interviewee. The questions asked in the interviews are found down below:

1. Do you identify with your test result?
    a. In what respect do you do, in what respect do you not?
2. How does your introversion/extraversion manifest itself in you at work?
3. How does your extraversion/introversion effect your communication habits?
4. How would you describe the optimal work community and environment?
5. How would you like to ideally receive feedback?
6. How important is feedback to you?
7. How do downward feedback patterns (feedback from supervisor to you) affect the relationship between you and your supervisor(s)?
8. What are the most important qualities in a supervisor-assistant relationship?

These questions have been translated into English from the original interview questions which were formulated in Finnish and can be found in the Appendices (Appendix 2). The interview questions were tried and modified with a few people outside the study before settling on the final questions.

3.1.2 Interviewees

The criteria set for a person to be an interviewee were defined before starting the interviewee recruiting process. The person had to be either extraverted or introverted and working as an assistant in an office for a minimum of half a year. The reason for the latter criterion is that most assistants working at an office have similar tasks and job descriptions compared to e.g., a research assistant in a laboratory, or an assistant in the entertainment industry, etc.

The interviewees were given a short test by Loehken (2016a, 41-43), seen in Appendix 1, to complete before the interview to ascertain or determine whether they were extraverted or introverted. Basic information about the four interviewees can be seen in Table 1 down below.

Table 1. Interviewee data

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Education	Post	Length of current post
Extravert 1	Female	20s	B.Sc.	HR Assistant	1 year
Extravert 2	Female	20s	BBA	Office Assistant	11 months
Introvert 1	Female	20s	BBA	Legal Assistant	6 months
Introvert 2	Female	30s	BBA	Administrative Assistant	6 months

3.1.3 Implementation

After the criteria for interviewees were defined, the author started searching for interviewees in her social circle as well as beyond it. A post was made in a group on LinkedIn and Aito HSO ry (the trade union for MUBBA and ASSI students, Haaga-Helia UAS and Helsinki Secretarial College graduates) were approached through email asking if there were potentially interested participants and of course, inquiries were made in the author's social and academic circle. Extravert 1 is a social acquaintance of the author, as well as Extravert 1 and 2, who are also a part of the author's academic circle. Introvert 2 was contacted through LinkedIn after being introduced by a mutual friend. Extravert 2, Introvert 1 and Introvert 2 have all studied in Haaga-Helia UAS; Extravert 2 and Introvert 1 in the degree program for Multilingual Management Assistant (MUBBA) and Introvert 2 in the Finnish equivalent, Johdon assistentti ja kielet-program (ASSI). This can perhaps be

considered a benefit, as three of the interviewees have been educated for assistant work and have a good knowledge of it.

Due to the pandemic, all interviewees were offered the option to be interviewed virtually through Microsoft Teams, Skype, or Zoom. Two of the interviews were conducted in person in calm environments outside the workplace and two were conducted on Microsoft Teams. The interview dates and times were set according to the availability and preference of each interviewee. The interview questions were also sent beforehand to each interviewee, as well as the short extraversion-introversion test. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, the native language of all interviewees, to get as clear and comprehensive answers as possible, without language skills, embarrassment or fear possibly hindering the interviewees' responses, and to eliminate the language barrier.

At the beginning of each interview session, the interviewer (in this case, the author) and interviewee engaged in some small talk in order to warm up a bit and achieve a relaxed atmosphere. The interviewees were then asked for basic background information about the interviewees to ensure that the criteria were met and if any patterns, commonalities or obstacles emerged. The extraversion-introversion test result was ascertained and discussed. The interviewees were assured that they could remain anonymous in both name and workplace if so desired and were asked for permission to record the interviews for later transcription. The interviews were recorded using the voice memo-function of an iPhone 8. The interview questions were at times asked in a varying order and when necessary, additional questions were also asked of each interviewee according to their responses. The more specific interview data is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Interview data

Interviewee	Date & Time	Duration	Channel
Extravert 1	17 Nov 2020, 11 AM	20 min	In person
Extravert 2	18 Nov 2020, 6 PM	20 min	Microsoft Teams
Introvert 1	1 Dec 2020, 11 AM	17 min	In person
Introvert 2	22 Jan 2020, 1 PM	19 min	Microsoft Teams

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, at the latest the day after each interview took place. Although the research method is more focused on the content rather than the

specific words used, the author also wanted to see if the same words, terms or phrases were used by the interviewees, which is why the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The interview recordings were destroyed afterwards.

The interview transcriptions were then analyzed thematically. The transcriptions were coded by finding three themes scattered throughout the responses: personality (extraversion-introversion), feedback and the subordinate-assistant relationship. The material was read through several times to ensure the sufficiency of the codes and that nothing had escaped the author's attention. The coded material was then used to create theme cards, and the responses of the extraverts and introverts were compared and contrasted with each other, and the author also attempted to find patterns in the responses. In addition, the author picked up some key words from the material to find which words were most used between all interviewees in each specific theme. All the analyzed material was later translated into English.

4 Results

The results' primary finding was that both extraverts and introverts hold feedback in high regard and think that it is extremely important to them personally. Both extraverts and introverts mentioned improvement and development as an employee as one reason for finding feedback from their superior valuable. When it comes to feedback methods, both introverts and extraverts preferred receiving feedback face-to-face, with a balance of positive and constructive feedback.

The main difference was found to be in the feedback setting or environment. Extraverts 1 and 2 were of the opinion that constructive or negative feedback always has to be given privately, but that it was alright if positive feedback was given publicly, i.e., someone else hearing their positive feedback being given to them. On the other hand, Introverts 1 and 2 preferred feedback to be given privately in both cases, be it positive or constructive/negative. Introvert 2 elaborated on this by saying that it would feel awkward if someone was listening to her feedback, making it harder for her to receive feedback or assimilate it.

The following subchapters expand on the results and are dissected into themes: extraversion-introversion, feedback, and the superior-assistant work relationship. Some excerpts from the interviews are found between paragraphs, with their English translations as well as the original Finnish versions in brackets.

4.1.1 Extraversion-introversion

Both Extraverts 1 and 2 described themselves as talkative and said they like to talk a lot. Extravert 1 especially emphasized that she likes to process information through talking with other people. Both extraverts preferred oral communication over written communication, because oral communication allows for more to be said and decreases the chance for misunderstandings, and written communication was also described as bleak ("kaikista ankeinta"). When asked about ideal work conditions and environment, the extraverted interviewees demonstrated the desire to have the option to choose when to work alone independently (when they need to concentrate) in the literal sense, and when to work in a space with other people.

> *"I like there to be quiet spaces, if I need to concentrate"*
> *("tykkään, että on rauhallisia tiloja, jos tarvitsee keskittyä")*

> *"I want the possibility to choose, when I am alone or with people"*
> *("haluan mahdollisuuden valita, milloin olen yksin tai ihmisten kanssa")*

> *"to have my own space but don't need to be too much alone"*
> *("on omaa rauhaa muttei tarvitse olla kauheasti yksin")*

When asked about an ideal work community, both brought up no hierarchy or low hierarchy.

Introverts 1 and 2 talked about recharging and fatigue related to social contact. Introvert 1 described having to recharge alone specifically after a lot of small-talk or prolonged social contact with strangers and new people. However, she also gains energy from being with her close friends. Introvert 2 spoke long the same lines, bringing up fatigue ("väsymys") after social contact e.g., at work, and knowing that after a workday at the office she will not want to engage in anything social.

> *"I recharge alone… have to charge my batteries"*
> *("kerään energiaa yksin… pitää ladata akkuja")*

> *" with good friends, get a lot of energy from that"*
> *("hyvien ystävien kanssa, siitähän saa sitten paljon energiaa")*

*" a lot of small talk and getting acquainted with new people… need to
recharge"*
*("paljon small-talkia ja uusien ihmisten kanssa tutustumista…
tarvitsee latautua")*

" fatigue… after I have been in contact with people"
("väsymys… kun on ollut ihmiskontaktissa")

"I usually don't want to engage in anything social after the workday"
*("en yleensä halua olla missään sosiaalisissa tekemisissä työpäivän jälkeen
enää")*

Introvert 1 mentioned that she processes information first and foremost on her own and
thinks longer about what she is going to say instead of blurting her thoughts out loud.
However, when it comes to workplace communication, Introvert 1 prefers face-to-face
communication whereas Introvert 2 prefers virtual communication through email or Skype.
Both introverts brought up the negative sides of an open-plan office, namely the noise,
and similarly to the extraverts, have the desire to be able to choose when to work in the
privacy of a room or with others in a room or an open-plan office.

"I do a lot of mental work on my own"
("teen paljon ajatustyötä itsekseni")

*" I think before I say things. Maybe I don't blurt out my thoughts as easily,
but think longer"*
*("mietin asioita ennen kuin sanon ne. Ehken niin helposti pamauta kaikkia
ajatuksia ilmoille, vaan mietin pidempään")*

*" I send emails, I don't walk over to talk to people. Email or Skype is the first
option"*
*("Laitan sähköpostia, en kävele ihmisten luokse puhumaan. Sähköposti tai
Skype on ensimmäinen vaihtoehto")*

*" my own room – that would be ideal. Open plan offices are terrible, you
can't concentrate in them"*
*("oma huone – se olisi ihanteellisin. Avotoimistot ovat aivan hirveitä, niissä ei
voi keskittyä")*

" an open-plan office, which was rough, when there was noise all the time"
("avokonttori, joka oli raskasta, kun kaikkialta kuului koko ajan ääntä")

" all the time with someone else… you need that too, but also your own time,
taking into account that you can also work independently"
("koko ajan olisi toisen ihmisen kanssa… sitäkin tarvitsee, mutta myös omaa
aikaa, että olisi otettu huomioon, että töitä voi tehdä myös itsenäisesti")

" I think a fifty-fifty arrangement would be a good solution"
("fifty-fifty käytäntö olisi mielestäni hyvä ratkaisu")

4.1.2 Feedback

The extraverts preferred to receive feedback face-to-face and did not mind the idea of someone else possibly hearing feedback being given to them in the case of positive feedback. Both extraverts expressed the desire for concrete and specified feedback in order to develop and improve job performance. Extravert 1 pointed out that if and when you are not given explicit feedback, you must be able to, in a sense, read between the lines and pick up on the things your superior says that could be interpreted as feedback. Extravert 2 also adds that you might have to ask for feedback yourself, but the risk in requesting feedback is that it might not be completely truthful, as the superior might be surprised and caught unprepared by a sudden request.

"orally", "face-to-face"
("suullisesti", "kasvokkain")

" positive feedback, it doesn't matter, if someone else hears it"
("positiivista palautetta niin se ei haittaa, jos joku muukin kuulee sen")

" you have to be able to take it from what the other is saying, even if it isn't
explicit feedback"
("sitä pitää osata itse lukea tai ottaa siitä, mitä toinen sanoo, vaikka se ei
olisi eksplisiittisesti palautetta")

" more concrete feedback"," to concretize development points"
("konkreettisempaa palautetta", "konkretisoimaan kehityskohtia")

" more specified to my own doing"
(" spesifioidumpaa omaan tekemiseen")

" important to tell about development areas if there are any"
("tärkeää, jos on kehittämisen kohteita, että niistä sanotaan")

" it could be that you have to ask for it yourself… could be that the feedback isn't as truthful, if the request surprises the superior"
("voi olla, että sitä joutuu itse kysymäänkin… voi olla, että palaute ei ole niin totuudenmukaista, jos pyyntö yllättää esimiehen")

The introverts also preferred to receive one-on-one and/or face-to-face feedback. Introvert 1 specified that she would prefer to receive feedback in a calm, peaceful setting, where it would be easier to internalize feedback without other people hustling and bustling around. Introvert 2 also said that having other people around would make it feel more awkward and thus difficult for her to absorb the feedback. Introvert 2 also mentioned that there might be an element of nervousness if you know beforehand that you are going to be receiving feedback. Both introverts were of the opinion that whether the feedback was positive or negative, it would be preferable to receive feedback without an audience.

"In a calm environment"
("rauhallisessa ympäristössä")

" get more out of it, if there aren't a lot of people hustling and bustling around"
(" saa paremmin irti, jos ei ole hirveästi muuta hälinää ympärillä ja muita ihmisiä")

"one-on-one, face-to face"
(" kahden kesken, kasvokkain")

" preferably one-on-one" [about positive feedback]
(" mieluiten kuitenkin kahden kesken")

" if you know that you are going to be getting feedback, there is an element of nervousness"
(" jos tiedät, että on tulossa jotain palautetta, niin siinä on vähän sellainen jännitysmomentti mukana")

> *" it doesn't really matter, whether it is negative or positive, it feels a little bit
> awkward, whichever one it is, if there is an audience listening, it might be a
> little harder to receive then"*
>
> *(" ei ole väliä sinänsä, onko negatiivista vai positiivista palautetta, se tuntuu
> ehkä vähän kiusalliselta, ihan sama kumpaa se on, jos siinä on yleisöä
> kuulemassa, niin sitä on ehkä vähän vaikeampi ottaa vastaan silloin")*

Both the introverts and extraverts in this study expressed a preference for face-to-face, oral feedback and for both positive and constructive as well as timely feedback. They all expressed the desire to improve job performance and felt that feedback is important for this purpose. Email as a feedback channel was deemed to be stiffer and more unnatural compared to in person-feedback, which allows more to be said and with less of a risk for misunderstandings.

Extraverts 1 and 2 and Introvert 2 said they were not getting enough feedback from their superiors, although they received feedback from their colleagues. Extravert 1 elaborated on this: as a relatively new employee she had a desire for more feedback from her superior, saying that feedback from someone who has worked for a long time in the line of business might have more legitimacy and significance. Introvert 1 said she gets enough feedback at regular intervals at her current workplace.

> *" the importance of feedback is emphasized… as a new employee"*
> *("palautteen tärkeys korostuu… uutena työntekijänä")*
>
> *"When the feedback comes from a person, who has worked a long time in
> the line of business, it may have more significance and legitimacy"*
> *("Kun palaute tulee ihmiseltä, joka on työskennellyt pitkään alalla, sillä on
> ehkä enemmän merkitystä ja legitimiteettiä")*

Introvert 2 pointed out that also the current situation with the pandemic and remote work affects the amount of feedback received, and that giving it is more challenging.

Feedback was also said to convey appreciation for the interviewees as assistants and employees. Both extraverts and introverts mentioned meaning and purpose in their responses relating to feedback and its importance to their jobs; getting feedback helps in creating the sense that their roles are meaningful and that their jobs have a purpose.

4.1.3   Superior-assistant relationship

Extravert 1 said that feedback from the superior brings a sense of meaning to the assistant and strengthens the relationship. For Extravert 1 personally, it was important to hear if she had succeeded in helping her superior and that the superior is also dependent on the assistant, and so the superior should recognize how demanding assistant work is. According to her, the relationship should be more like that of a "work pair" and less of a superior-inferior. Extravert 1 also suggested that a superior and an assistant should have a conversation about their communication styles and other characteristics to ensure clear and efficient communication. Extravert 2 echoed Extravert 1's sentiment about recognizing how demanding assistant work is by saying that she felt that superiors do not always realize all the work assistants do. Extravert 2 pointed out that through feedback, she can improve her job performance and therefore her superior would also be more satisfied, affecting the relationship positively.

> *"It's important for me to get feedback from a job well done or if I have managed to help him"*
> *("koen tärkeäksi sen, että saan häneltä palautetta hyvin tehdystä työstä tai siitä, jos olen onnistunut auttamaan häntä")*

> *"The superior is also dependent on the assistant, so recognizing the importance of the assistant's work and help through feedback brings a sense of meaning to the assistant"*
> *("Esimies on riippuvainen myös assistentista, jolloin assistentin työn merkityksen ja avun tiedostaminen palautteen kautta on hyvin tärkeää ja tuo merkitystä assistentille")*

> *"The relationship would be more like that of a work pair, and not one where one is above the other"*
> *("Suhde olisi enemmän kuin työparin, eikä sellainen jossa toinen on ylempänä toista")*

> *" important to understand the other's characteristics… have a conversation about communication styles to avoid misunderstandings"*
> *(" tärkeää ymmärtää toisen erityispiirteet… käydään keskustelu viestintätavoista, jotta vältytään väärinymmärryksiltä")*

" sometimes superiors don't understand all the work the assistant does…
they don't respect or appreciate it enough"
("välillä esimiehet ei ymmärrä sitä kaikkea työtä mitä assistentti tekee… he
eivät tarpeeksi kunnioita tai arvosta sitä")

"If it's positive or constructive feedback, I would do my job better and most
likely my superior would be more satisfied with my work"
("Jos se on hyvää tai rakentavaa palautetta, tekisin paremmin työni ja
todennäköisesti esimies olisi tyytyväisempi tekemääni työhön")

Introvert 1 supposed that the lack of sufficient feedback would lead to her feeling detached from the company and create a feeling of distance between her and her superior. Especially considering her role as a relatively new employee in the company, she felt that her superior was responsible for giving her feedback. Regarding the most important qualities in a superior-assistant relationship, she mentioned openness and building a sense of community, in which giving feedback plays an important part. Introvert 2 spoke on the effect of receiving only negative feedback, saying that she would be more likely to email said superior and perhaps become more timid and avoid him or her. On the other hand, if there is a safe and trustworthy connection between her and a superior, built through good communication and diverse feedback, it would be easier for her to approach and ask the superior for help. Introvert 2 explained that a good superior-assistant relationship includes showing respect for each other starting from work hours i.e., not contacting one another outside office hours or their personal phone number.

"If I didn't get any feedback, I would feel pretty distant from the superior…
could feel pretty detached from the whole company"
("Jos ei tulisi mitään palautetta, olisi aika etäinen fiilis esimieheen… voisi
tuntua aika irralliselta koko yrityksestä")

"Openness. Building a sense of community, e.g, giving feedback has an
important part in that"
("Avoimuus. Yhteisöllisyyden rakentaminen, esim. Palautteen antamisella on
tärkeä osa siinä")

" showing that you are valued as an employee"
(" näytetään, että arvostetaan työntekijänä")

"If you only get negative feedback… then you feel a bit timid, if you had to contact him/her – even less likely that you walk over to him/her, so email it is"
("jos saa pelkkää huonoa palautetta… sitten vähän aristelee, jos häneen täytyisi olla yhteydessä – vielä vähemmän hänen luokseen menee, eli se on sitten se sähköposti")

" if you get diverse feedback… and there is good dialogue, it creates trust with the superior"
("jos tulee monipuolista palautetta… ja on hyvä keskusteluyhteys, niin se synnyttää luottamusta esimiehen kanssa")

"Also asking for help is easier then, if the connection is safe and trustworthy"
("Myös avun pyytäminen on silloin helpompaa, jos yhteys on turvallinen ja luotettava")

" mutual appreciation, already in that you both respect working hours and don't start calling personal phone numbers"
("molemminpuolinen arvostus, jo vaikka siinä, että arvostetaan työaikoja, ja ettei ruveta soittelemaan henkilökohtaiseen numeroon")

It is interesting to note that Extraverts 1 and 2 both mentioned mutual respect (kunnioitus) as one of the most important qualities in a superior-assistant relationship, whereas Introverts 1 and 2 used the word "appreciation" (arvostus), although in this case the words "respect" and "appreciation" are used synonymously. Also, both the extraverts and introverts noted good, open communication as one of the most important qualities in the relationship between superior and assistant.

5 Discussion and evaluation

The responses to the questions regarding extraversion-introversion align with Jung's suppositions of most people falling somewhere between both ends of the spectrum instead of being purely one or the other, as both the extraverted and introverted interviewees had traits from both sides of the spectrum. Introvert 2 could be considered the only interviewee to be purely one or the other (in her case, an introvert) as shown by her test score and her own reflections. Keltikangas-Järvinen's (2016) findings apply to both Introvert 1 and 2: they recharge alone or by spending time with people close to them and process their thoughts alone at their own pace. Introvert 2 also showed a preference for virtual communication, aligning with Loehken's (2016b) finding that this may be the case with introverts who lack the need for direct social contact. Introverts 1 and 2 also expressed a dislike for noisy office environments, as hypothesized by Knight (2015); however, this was also the case for the extraverts of this study. Perhaps extraverts and introverts both, in a work context, prefer to work in a quieter place when it comes to tasks that require one's full concentration.

Extraverts 1 and 2 both manifested the pronounced interest for social interaction and talkative traits of extraverts, this agreeing with Keltikangas-Järvinen's (2016, 15) postulation. Extravert 1 said she likes to process information and thoughts with other people, whereas Introvert 1 said that she does this on her own first, following Jung's (1921) assessment that introverts have a more subjective outlook and focus on the internal, whereas the extravert's thinking process is orientated by objective data. This could also have been reflected in the responses: Extraverts 1 and 2 spoke at a more external level that focused more on other people (the superior, colleagues) and what form feedback should take, whereas Introverts 1 and 2 spoke in terms more related to the internal, e.g., Introvert 2 describing her possible feeling of nervousness before receiving feedback and feeling awkward with an audience hearing her feedback, and Introvert 1 speaking of feelings of distance and detachment.

The responses also echoed the suggestions made by O'Reilly and Anderson (1980, 295-297); namely, that relevance and accuracy are positively associated with performance and satisfaction, since the interviewees, especially Extraverts 1 and 2, expressed the desire for "concrete" and "specified" feedback that might help them improve future performance by adjusting their own behavior, and for this reason, feedback is one of the most important forms of communication. However, O'Reilly and Anderson (1980, 297) also suggest that relevance and accuracy are more important than the amount of feedback, but Extravert 2 suggested feedback given more frequently might be more accurate and specified to her

role. Introvert 1 also added that feedback should be "current" i.e., giving feedback about how a specific situation was handled, for example, will not be very relevant nor useful six months after it has occurred. It could be said that the amount or frequency of feedback is linked to its relevance and accuracy.

Due to the discomfort or lack of knowledge when it comes to delivering feedback, superiors may focus too much on constructive or negative feedback (Aguinis & al., 2012) and as people are more sensitive to negative feedback (Thomas, 2009, 172) it may discourage the employee (Aarnikoivu, 2013, 85), which Introvert 2 expressed as well. The other interviewees in this study also agreed that there should be, if not more positive, then at least a balance of positive and constructive feedback.

Mudgett (1997, 72) suggests that negative feedback may lead to higher performance in introverted individuals than positive feedback and that extraverts' performance improves mainly as a result of positive feedback. This suggestion is not supported by the interviewees' responses in this study: both the extraverts and the introverts welcomed, and even required, a balance of both positive, constructive and even negative feedback so that they would know how to and what to improve in their performance. Introvert 2 even said that excessive negative feedback is only discouraging and might lead to avoidance of those superiors who give more negative feedback. In addition, Smither & al.'s (2005, 187) suggestion that extraverted individuals were more likely to perceive negative feedback as valuable is supported in the sense that Extraverts 1 and 2 did deem constructive or negative feedback important as well, but not more so than Introverts 1 and 2 who also acknowledged the value of negative feedback. Thus, the key seems to be in the balance between positive and negative feedback.

Moore puts forth in his article that extraverts do not mind and might even enjoy receiving positive feedback in front of others, while introverts may find it more embarrassing and prefer a private setting, and this was mirrored also in the participants of this study.

Introvert 1 said that she gets enough feedback, little by little, which she said was good because she stays on track and up to date on how things are going. Extraverts 1 and 2 reported that they were not getting enough feedback from their superior. Introvert 2 also implied this, although she attributed the lack of comprehensive feedback to the remote work situation during the pandemic, and said that in the current situation, saying "thank you" and "good job" were enough, while Extraverts 1 and 2 wished for more concrete and specified feedback. This nods towards Moore's suggestion that the kind of feedback

resonates with employees is an important aspect, as some prefer more detailed and tailored feedback while others may be content with a "good job".

The extraverts of this study demonstrated more of a readiness to seek feedback themselves, through directly asking their superior or interpreting. The reasons for this are unclear in this specific case, but Krasman (2010) theorizes that this might be because seeking feedback is an action that involves a social experience.

When it comes to the superior-assistant relationship, both the extraverted and introverted assistants were of the opinion that the most important qualities were good, open communication, agreeing with Duncan (2011) and Schmidt and Stefanut (2016) who suggested that it is vital for maintaining and improving the relationship, and mutual respect and appreciation. Feedback from the superior was seen to affect the relationship positively, e.g., through creating trust or a sense of appreciation and respect for the assistant, or the superior being more satisfied due to the assistant's improved performance as a result of feedback, etc. This is in tune with Levine's (2003) position that a supportive atmosphere, in this case between a superior and an assistant, makes employees feel like their contributions are valued. Schmidt & Stefanut (2016) deem face-to-face conversations an essential part of maintaining a superior-assistant relationship, which is why face-to-face feedback sessions are also a good idea and was specified by most participants as the most preferred way of receiving feedback. Superiors who are not open in their communication, as suggested by Duncan (2011), contribute to the worsening of the relationship, which was reflected in the answer of Introvert 1 who described feelings of distance and detachment if not given enough feedback, and Introvert 2 who said that the relationship needs to have trust created by dialogue. Extravert 2 also said that there will be many problems in the relationship without open communication.

To this end, when it comes to the differences in and the importance of downward feedback for extraverted and introverted assistants, feedback from superiors appears to hold great, virtually equal value for both the extraverted and the introverted assistants. Both regard downward feedback as important for improving job performance and development, as well as for conveying appreciation for the assistant and their work. Feedback works as a motivating factor. The extraverts seemed to emphasize the specificity and concreteness of the feedback, whilst the introverts emphasized the main point to be that feedback is provided. Feedback also cultivates a feeling of purpose for assistants and a sense that their work is meaningful, particularly in the case of extraverted assistants. Both the introverted and extraverted assistants in this study preferred feedback to be given orally, face-to-face, with a balance of positive as well as constructive

feedback. There was also a desire for timely feedback. Virtual feedback, e.g., via email was seen as more limited, unnatural and prone to misunderstandings.

The main difference between the feedback preferences of the extraverted and introverted assistants of this study was found to be in the feedback setting. When receiving positive feedback, the extraverted interviewees did not mind if there was an audience or someone who listened to or heard the positive feedback being given to them, whereas the introverted interviewees preferred receiving feedback in private and in a calm setting in the case of both positive and negative feedback, as the audience might cause feelings of awkwardness to rise and/or make it difficult for the recipient to internalize the feedback.

As three out of the four participants said they were not getting enough feedback from their superior, further studies could look into how to remedy this and develop the feedback giving skills of superiors. This would also be beneficial, because often superiors believe they are giving sufficient feedback while their subordinates desire more feedback (Schnake & al., 1990).

Some improvements to this study include using another method in addition to interviews, like observation. A couple of more people could have been interviewed to increase reliability, and there could be more variety in e.g., the participants' gender, work experience and age. The interview questions probably could have been improved upon as well, and more questions asked to increase validity. Also, it would be a benefit to be able to interview everyone in person, to achieve a more relaxed, natural atmosphere and to be able to observe the interviewee better, but due to the pandemic and safety reasons this was not possible in each case.

Although it took longer than planned and expected, overall, the thesis process was relatively smooth, but with some bumps along the way. The most time-consuming part was recruiting and setting up the interviews, as it involves also dealing with other peoples' schedules. An added challenge for recruiting interviewees and conducting the interviews was doing it during the pandemic. After the empirical part was completed, the analysis and writing process went quite smoothly. The objective of this thesis was achieved, although the timeline and thesis plan changed and fluctuated along the way.

Personality is quite an abstract concept and extraversion-introversion dominance is not easy to confirm in a person. A limitation to this study was that only one test was used to confirm whether the interviewee was introverted or extraverted, and perhaps a more comprehensive, in-depth test could have been used. Another one is that some of the

interview questions, despite trial and modification beforehand, were ambiguous in the sense that some interviewees understood or answered them quite differently than others, and the interviewer (author of this thesis) did not want to guide the interviewees' answers, so there was variety in the responses that made interpretation more difficult.

This study was conducted in an ethical manner: respect for anonymity and confidentiality was preserved, each interviewee participated voluntarily and was aware of what they were taking part in. Each interviewee gave permission to record the interviews and the interview data was destroyed.

The overall process was a learning experience especially regarding scheduling and learning about qualitative research analysis methods, and how complex and intricate the analysis process can be. Regarding the findings, it was interesting to learn how similar the extraverted and introverted assistants ultimately were in their feedback preferences and in the business context. The differing preference for the extraverts and the introverts when it comes to the setting and the audience factor was new information as well. The author also realized that assistants do not really get a lot of, or enough, feedback from superiors, and that upper management members do not necessarily even know how to give feedback properly. It is good to know for the future that assistants can, and maybe even should, be proactive and make their preferences known when it comes to receiving feedback.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Personality test, adapted from Loehken (2016a, 41-43)

TESTI

Väittämiin rastitaan joko Kyllä/Ei-laatikko.

VÄITTÄMÄT	KYLLÄ	EI
1. Muutun helposti rauhattomaksi, jos keskustelukumppanini pohtii vastauksiaan kovin pitkään.		
2. Keskustelen mieluummin yhden ihmisen kanssa kerrallaan kuin useampien kanssa yhtä aikaa.		
3. Omat ajatukseni selkenevät itselleni paremmin, kun keskustelen niistä muiden kanssa.		
4. Toivon ympäristöni olevan puhdas ja siisti.		
5. Toimin mieluiten ripeästi ja sormituntumalta kuin ensin pitkään harkiten.		
6. Uupuneena vetäydyn mieluiten omaan rauhaani.		
7. Nopeasti puhuvat ihmiset ovat mielestäni rasittavia.		
8. Minulla on hyvin omalaatuinen ja valikoiva maku.		
9. Välttelen mahdollisuuksien mukaan suuria ihmisjoukkoja.		
10. Pinnallinen jutustelu tuntemattomien kanssa on minusta yleensä helppoa.		
11. Jos olen liian pitkään ihmisten seurassa, väsyn ja saatan muuttua kärttyisäksi.		
12. Kun puhun, muut kuuntelevat yleensä minua tarkkaavaisina.		
13. Jos kotonani on useita päiviä viipyviä vieraita, odotan heidän auttavan arkiaskareissa.		
14. Työstän projekteja mieluummin pienissä paloissa kuin kerralla pitkän aikaa ja suurina kokonaisuuksina.		
15. Olen joskus hyvin uupunut jouduttuani osallistumaan liian moniin perättäisiin tai liian äänekkäisiin keskusteluihin.		
16. En tarvitse monia ystäviä Sen sijaan arvostan aitoja ja luotettavia ystävyyssuhteita.		
17. En pohdi juurikaan, mitä muiden ihmisten mielessä liikkuu.		
18. Riittävä unensaanti on minulle hyvin tärkeää.		
19. Uudet paikkakunnat ja ympäristöt ovat minusta kiehtovia.		

20. Yhtäkkiset häiriöt ja odottamattomat muutokset tuntuvat minusta rasittavilta.		
21. Luulen ihmisten pitävän minua usein liian rauhallisena, tylsänäm etäisenä ja arkana.		
22. Tarkkailen asioita mielelläni, ja minulla on silmää pienille yksityiskohdille.		
23. Puhuminen on minulle mieluisampaa kuin kirjoittaminen.		
24. Otan asioista yleensä tarkasti selvää ennen päätösten tekoa.		
25. Huomaan yleensä vasta hyvin myöhäisessä vaiheessa, jos ympärilläni olevien ihmisten välillä on jännitettä.		
26. Minulla on kehittynyt esteettinen vaisto.		
27. Kieltäydyn joskus tekosyihin vedoten osallistumasta juhliin tai muihin sosiaalisiin tilaisuuksiin.		
28. Alan luottaa ihmisiin melko nopeasti.		
29. Nautin saadessani pohtia ja tutustua asioihin perinpohjaisesti.		
30. Jos vain mahdollista, vältän yleisön edessä puhumista.		
31. Kuunteleminen ei ole suurimpia vahvuuksiani.		
32. Annan muiden ihmisten odotusten joskus painostaa itseäni liikaa.		
33. Kykenen ottamaan henkilökohtaiset hyökkäykset yleensä urheilun kannalta.		
34. Pitkästyn nopeasti.		
35. Jos on jokin erityinen syy juhlia, sen voi mielestäni tehdä suurieleisesti: isot pirskeet tai illallinen suurella joukolla.		

Introversio väittämät: 2, 6, 7, 9, 11, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 24, 27, 29, 30, 32
Ekstroversio väittämät: 1, 3, 5, 10, 12, 14, 17, 19, 23, 25, 28, 31, 33, 34, 35
Kohdat 4, 8, 13, 18 ja 26 eivät kuvasta introversiota tai ekstroversiota, vaan ovat estämässä automaattista vastaamista.

Jos introversiopisteitä on vähintään kolme enemmän kuin ekstroversiopisteitä, vastaaja on introvertti.
Jos eroa ei ole kahta pistettä enempää, on vastaaja ambivertti.
Jos ekstroversiopisteitä on vähintään kolme enemmän kuin introversiopisteitä, vastaaja on ekstrovertti.

Appendix 2. Finnish interview questions

Perustiedot

Nimi:

Ikä:

Sukupuoli:

Koulutustausta:

Työnkuva:

Nykyisen työsuhteen kesto (vuosina):

Haastattelukysymykset

1. Tunnistatko itsesi testituloksestasi? Miltä osin, miltä et?
2. Kuinka ekstroversio/introversio tulee esille sinussa töissä?
3. Kuinka ekstroversio/introversio vaikuttaa omiin viestintätapoihisi?
4. Ekstrovertin/introvertin piirteitäsi ajatellen, miten kuvailisit ihanteellista työympäristöä ja -yhteisöä?
5. Miten mieluiten vastaanottaisit palautetta?
6. Kuinka tärkeää palaute on sinulle?
7. Kuinka palaute esimieheltäsi vaikuttaa esimiehen assistentin väliseen ammatilliseen suhteeseen?
8. Mitkä ovat tärkeimmät piirteet esimies-assistentti -välisessä ammatillisessa suhteessa?

Interview Questions for Thesis

1. Do you identify with your test result?
2. How does your introversion/extraversion manifest itself in you at work?
3. How does your extraversion/introversion effect your communication habits?
4. How would you describe the optimal work community and environment?
5. How would you like to ideally receive feedback?
6. How important is feedback to you?
7. How do downward feedback patterns (feedback from supervisor to you) affect the relationship between you and your supervisor(s)?
8. What are the most important qualities in a supervisor-assistant relationship?