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Marriage and participation in postgraduate study: Exploring the motivations and experiences of married female Psychology Masters students

Claire Hart

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Community-Based Counselling Psychology)

ABSTRACT

The profession of Psychology in post-apartheid South Africa has been dominated by women, despite attempts to address issues of equity, access and redress in recruitment and training. Certain obstacles to entering the profession, that may be specifically relevant to men, included the longevity and cost of training; the notion that Psychology is a 'woman's profession'; and the appeal of more lucrative job opportunities. Women, on the other hand, were often encouraged to enter female-dominated professions such as Psychology and financial support either from one's family or an economically-independent partner facilitates the pursuit of this career trajectory. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of married females who were embarking on postgraduate study. Using semi-structured interviews, eight married female participants currently enrolled in Professional Masters programmes provided in-depth information on why they took on the dual adjustment of marriage and postgraduate study and what were the challenges and benefits associated with this process. Thematic content analysis was used to interpret these accounts which revealed that the dating phase of relationships often concluded as postgraduate study commenced due to the longevity of the study trajectory. To address the accompanying relationship insecurity, marriage was idealised as offering enhanced security and stability. Despite the notion that Masters and marriage would complement each other in order to overcome the difficulties of marriage and postgraduate study, a blurring of boundaries was experienced between the perceived challenges and benefits as the idealised complementarity was not actualised. Using feminist theory, the study added value to debates on the perpetuating influence of chauvinistic notions regarding marriage and career development for women inherent in the family life cycle theory, as well as explored the implications of the "feminisation" of the profession of Psychology on recruitment, training and future practice of female Psychologists.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report entitled “Marriage and participation in postgraduate study: Exploring the motivations and experiences of married female Psychology Masters students” is my own, unaided work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated by means of complete references. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (Community-Based Counselling Psychology) at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signed this ____ day of _____ 2012

_____

Claire Hart

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT i

DECLARATION ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

1.1. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY 1

1.2. RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS 4

1.3. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT 4

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 6

2.1. THEORETICAL ORIENTATION 6

2.2. THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE STAGE MODEL IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT 8

2.3. MOTIVATIONS TO GET MARRIED AND PURSUE POSTGRADUATE STUDY 9

2.4. THE DUAL CHALLENGES OF MARRIAGE AND POSTGRADUATE STUDY 16

2.5. THE BENEFITS OF MARRIAGE FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDY 21

2.6. CONCLUSION 22

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY 24

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN 24

3.2. PARTICIPANTS 25

3.3. INSTRUMENTS 25

3.4. PROCEDURE 26

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS 27

3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS 29

3.7. REFLEXIVITY 30

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS 33

4.1. WHY MARRY? A DEFENSIVE IDEALISATION 33

4.2. “I DON’T HAVE TIME TO DO EVERYTHING” SO “I CAN’T DO THIS RIGHT NOW” 38

4.3. MASTERING THE DEFENCE 48

4.4. CONCLUSION 55

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION 56

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 63

6.1. CONCLUSIONS 63

6.2. LIMITATIONS 64

6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS 65

REFERENCE LIST 67
Figure 1 77
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE 78
APPENDIX B: BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE 79
APPENDIX C: LETTER TO HEADS OF DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY 80
APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET 82
APPENDIX E: ETHICS APPROVAL 85
APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM 86
APPENDIX G: CONSENT TO RECORD AND TRANSCRIBE INTERVIEW 87
APPENDIX H: CONSENT TO USE DIRECT QUOTES 88

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As many female students decided to get married once they had been selected into Professional Masters programmes in Psychology (see Figure 1), it was considered valuable to explore their motivations for embarking on this dual adjustment, as well as examine the experiential parameters of being married during Masters. Women's perspectives were privileged as their voices have been overlooked in previous research on marriage and postgraduate study (Willig, 2001); especially in studies that have considered preparing for a chosen career path and selecting a partner for marriage as crucial family life cycle tasks (Osmond & Throne, 1994). Furthermore, the profession of Psychology has been predominately comprised of women in post-apartheid South Africa. Thus, exploring women's experiences may be useful in understanding the current trends in the Psychology profession.

1.1. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Early adulthood has been characterised by various developmental tasks relating to the self, interpersonal relationships, work and leisure activities, and the community (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 2005). Preparing for a chosen career path and selecting a partner for marriage have been generally considered as crucial transitional tasks during this period, which can proceed smoothly or be associated with difficult changes. The current marriage trends have suggested that young, urban South Africans generally follow a pathway of development whereby marriage was postponed until one has settled into their career and has found a suitable partner to marry (Hosegood, McGrath & Moultrie, 2009). Consequently, the decision to marry while participating in postgraduate study seemed to differ from these patterns in which individuals marry at a later age, after they have completed their education and have launched into their careers. However, the heterogeneity of South African society and various contextual factors problematized the assumption of normative patterns due to the diversity of family structures, lifestyle choices, and gender, ethnic and cultural variations. Although these various contextual factors may impact on the nature of the transition from unattached young adult to family formation through marriage, limited research studies have explored the diversity of experiences of career preparation and marriage (Gladding, 2007; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2000). Thus, this study emphasised the value of subjective experiences in

order to contribute to more nuanced understandings of early adulthood transitions in the South African context.

Earlier research on marriage and postgraduate study advantaged the male perspective (Ford Sori, Wetchler, Ray, & Nieder, 1996; McRoy & Fisher, 1982; Scheinkman, 1988) as most researchers used easy-to-access university students who were predominately male (Willig, 2001). Furthermore, during the 1960s to 1980s when the majority of these studies were conducted, the percentage of male university students who were married were approximately three times greater than the percentage of female university students who were married (McRoy & Fisher, 1982). Research on the subject has also become out-dated; yet this study aimed to address this gap in the literature through the exploration of contemporary experiences of these dual challenges as some students became married during their postgraduate studies. Furthermore, the body of research on the topic in the past was biased towards men and did not address gender differences, despite the fact that the domain of work and career development was patriarchal in organisation. Consequently, this study privileged female perspectives guided by the awareness that the embedded nature of women's lives in a family context was informed by gender and personal experiences (Lopata, 1987).

Whereas in the past, marriage was regarded the most appropriate channel for women's social mobility aspirations (Etejere, 2008), feminism in action has ensured improvements in access to education for women and female labour force participation (Kiguwa, 2004). It is argued that women may no longer be marginalised from career expectations as women who pursue postgraduate study yield the greatest benefits in terms of career development and opportunities (Branson, Liebbrandt & Zuzu, 2009). Contemporary women have a variety of choices regarding their education and careers, as well as marriage and children, and feminist debates have contributed to new ways of producing knowledge which privilege women's voices in order to understand their choices and experiences (Willig, 2001). Thus, it was valuable to re-examine marriage and postgraduate study from the perspective of women and take into account the various factors that may influence women to consider marriage before or while embarking on postgraduate study.

This study was interested in women's perspectives of marriage and postgraduate study whilst pursuing a female-dominated career path. Despite feminist advancements, women continue to be encouraged to enter certain professions suited to their supposed, gender-assigned caretaking qualities (McPhail, 2004) and to pursue professions that will allow them to prioritise family over career (Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rodgers and Wentworth, 2007). Psychology has often been perceived as an appropriate career path for women to pursue, contributing to women forming the majority in the profession of Psychology and the majority of students in Masters Programmes in Psychology being female (Langa & Graham, 2011; Mayekiso, Strydom, Jithoo, & Katz, 2004; Pillay & Kramers, 2003; Richter & Griesel, 1999). This "feminisation" of the profession of Psychology in the South African context has negative implications for the demographic breakdown of the profession and service delivery (Mayekiso et al., 2004). Additionally, the increase of women in a profession has contributed to the devaluation and lowered status of that profession (Rosenzweig, 1994), perpetuating the notions of a patriarchal society. Thus, the focus on female perspectives within a female-dominated profession, such as Psychology, allowed for an examination of how gender may subtly influence women in their choices regarding marriage and postgraduate study.

Although the profession of Psychology has been concerned with issues of transformation, equity and redress, this seemed to remain a key challenge in the recruitment and training of Psychologists (Ahmed & Pillay, 2003). As more women and fewer men have been attracted to the profession, selection procedures may be forced to favour females, perpetuating the myth of Psychology as a 'woman's profession' and leading to the associated declines in status and income potential (Mayekiso et al., 2004). Furthermore, if the women who enter the profession desire to operate in privatised, home-based and part-time manner in order to balance family and work commitments (Richter & Griesel, 1999), it is unlikely that they will work in the context of diversity and disadvantage. Thus, the exploration of women's perspectives in the profession would have implications for the recruitment and training of Psychologists in order to meet the diverse demands of South Africans in the post-apartheid period.

Existing psychological studies on adjustment have predominately focused on the quantitative measurement and prediction of adjustment-related factors over time (Dryden, 1999). Consequently, qualitative studies, such as this study, were required in order to explore the dynamics of adjustment to marriage and postgraduate study, specifically by focusing on the

subjective accounts of experiences (Sandfield & Percy, 2003). Thus, a qualitative and exploratory study was deemed most appropriate to enable the exploration of a diversity of female motivations and experiences of marriage and postgraduate study within the context of Masters professional training in Psychology. Since the voices of married female Psychology Masters students has not been sufficiently explored in current research, the engagement with subjective experiences contributed to a richer understanding of female perspectives within the Psychology profession. Consequently, this study added value to debates on the perpetuating influence of gender on marriage and career development for women, as well as explored the ways in which "feminisation" influences the recruitment, training and future practice of female Psychologists.

1.2. RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

This study was concerned with the motivations of women to marry whilst pursuing postgraduate study after the completion of an undergraduate and Honours degree in Psychology, as well as the specific challenges and benefits they faced during their Masters training as married women. Therefore, the study aimed to investigate how married females experienced their postgraduate studies. The following research questions were identified:

- What motivates females to get married prior to or during their postgraduate studies in Psychology?
- What are the challenges of being married and participating in a Masters course-work programme in Psychology?
- What are the benefits of being married and participating in a Masters course-work programme in Psychology?

1.3. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The research report consisted of six chapters. The present chapter offered an introduction to the study, presented the rationale for the research, and provided the research aim and questions. Chapter 2 provided the theoretical framework of the family life cycle stage model, as well as a comprehensive overview of the relevant literature relating to marriage and postgraduate study from an international and South African perspective. The literature review adopted a specific focus on the role of gender in the profession of Psychology;

motivations to get married and enter the profession of Psychology; and the dual challenges and benefits of marriage and postgraduate study. Chapter 3 presented an elucidation of the methodology employed in this study. Details were provided about the research design, participants, the procedure followed, and the method of analysis used, namely Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic context analysis. Additionally, a consideration of issues of reflexivity related to the study and ethical considerations were provided. Chapter 4 described the pertinent and prominent themes that emerged from the thematic content analysis, organised according to the three research questions. The results showed that marriage was idealised as a union that offered enhanced security and stability once the dating phase concluded and postgraduate study commenced, thereby serving a defensive function against the anxiety and uncertainty associated with the early phases of marriage and Masters training. The transitions of marriage and postgraduate study were difficult to negotiate simultaneously. Consequently, a blurring of boundaries between the two major adjustments and the associated challenges and benefits occurred. Chapter 5 aimed to integrate and interpret the results in relation to relevant theoretical perspectives and relevant literature. A specific focus was given to understanding the results in relation to chauvinistic notions of marriage and career development for women, as well as contextualising the results in relation to recruitment, training and future practice of female Psychologists. Chapter 6 concluded the report with discussing the implications of the research findings, exploring limitations, and providing recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was conceptualised from the theoretical orientation of the family life cycle stage model. Previous research on married females' experiences of postgraduate study has been limited, as the experiential parameters of marriage and postgraduate study were generally examined independently in existing literature. This may be because the decision to marry while participating in postgraduate study differed from normative patterns of life cycle transitions, as well as demographic trends, and hence has not been widely investigated, especially from women's perspectives. As the research study has specifically focused on married women in the Psychology profession, literature was consulted that emphasised the role of gender in the profession of Psychology and the impact on individual motivations to marry while pursuing this career trajectory. Additionally, relevant studies related to the challenges and benefits of marriage and Masters postgraduate study in Psychology was explored.

2.1. THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

The family life cycle model has been shown to be a valuable theoretical framework in non-demographic studies which use qualitative research methods to explore the meanings of developmental and family experiences (Bengtson & Allen, 1993). The family life cycle, rooted in family developmental theory, described developmental trends within the family system over time, including individual and family life cycle transitions (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999). This model proposed that individuals and families progress through established developmental stages that require organisational and adaptational changes (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2000). As this study was concerned with the developmental tasks of preparing for a career and selecting a partner for marriage, the family life cycle stage model was appropriate as it offered a framework for understanding the normative developmental stages and the manner in which transitions in these stages were negotiated.

Although Duvall (1977) has been credited as the first theorist who proposed the family life cycle stage model, Carter and McGoldrick's (1999) six-stage model was considered the most relevant for conceptualising family life in this study as it incorporated the tensions between the individual and the family system. The first stage of Carter and McGoldrick's

(1999) family life cycle model was termed the unattached young adult. The transitional changes outlined in this stage include the differentiation of self in relation to family of origin; the development of intimate peer relationships; and the establishment of self in work (Berg-Cross, 2000). Potential challenges of this stage were related to these transitional changes, such as difficulties individuating from family of origin; learning to take care of oneself; claiming financial independence; developing secure feelings of self; and affirming feelings of competency (Gladding, 2007; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2000).

Once the individual had negotiated the transitions and challenges of the unattached young adult stage, the individual moved into the second stage of Carter and McGoldrick's (1999) family life cycle model, termed family formation through marriage. The transitional changes outlined in this stage include the formation of stable marital system and the realignment of relationships with external families and friends to include spouse (Berg-Cross, 2000), while potential challenges include finding a potential partner; establishing commitment; forming an economic partnership; managing domestic cooperation; asserting compatibility of interests; balancing needs and expectations of self and partner; and shifting allegiances from family of origin to new family (Gladding, 2007; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2000). The other four stages included the family with young children; the family with adolescents; launching children and moving on; and the family in later life (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999); however, these were not relevant to this study and hence were not discussed.

Normative patterns of life cycle transitions have suggested that individuals must successfully negotiate the unattached young adult stage through adjustment and adaptation before proceeding to forming a new family through marriage (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999). However, normative stages across the life course have been widely criticised (Bengtson & Allen, 1993; Kapinus & Johnson, 2003), suggesting that although the developmental stages and transitions may be useful conceptually, they have not been empirically justified. The linear, stagnant stages employed in the family life cycle stage model have practical limitations as individuals often do not deterministically progress through these invariant stages in a sequential and structured manner (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2000). Consequently, this study adopted the family life cycle stage model with a critical stance. Instead of rigidly and simplistically conceptualising family life stages as espoused by traditional stage models, this study embraced a more idiosyncratic view of the family life course, guided by the assumption that individuals and families were inter-connected entities situated in varying environments that constantly required adaptation and adjustment. Thus, individual and family development

was proposed to involve multiple transitions as individual family members undergo “differing degrees of interlocking life changes… in on-going, interactive processes with one another” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2000, p. 31).

2.2. THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE STAGE MODEL IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) family life cycle stages have been shown to be biased towards the middle-class, nuclear family, guided by Western and so-called “First World” notions of family. The acceptance of this model would imply that “First World” knowledge was generalizable, universal and can be applied in prescriptive ways in South African settings (Hook, 2004). Thus, the application of this model in the South African context was problematic as other family structures, lifestyle choices, and gender, ethnic and cultural variations of families operating in the South African context were not accounted for (Greeff, 2011). Without studies examining how this model could be relevant or altered in the South African context, caution must be given to how this model was utilised in this research. As a result, the model was used as a broad conceptual framework to understand transitions in early adulthood in their unique contexts.

The heterogeneity of South African society has contributed to a diversity of actual experiences of family life course transitions; yet, research on the family life stages in the South Africa context has predominately examined demographic trends over time (Branson et al., 2009; Budlender Chobokoane & Simelane, 2004; Department of Basic Education, 2009; de la Ray, 2009; Hosegood et al., 2009; Marston et al., 2009). These demographic trends have shown that young, urban South Africans were generally cautious of marriage and decided to marry only once they have found the right partner, completed their education, started work, and arranged housing. Compared to other African nations, South Africans tended to marry later as evidenced by statistics that show the medium age of first marriage was 32 years for males and 29 years for females (Statistics South Africa, 2008). This suggested that in the South African context, the transitions expected in the unattached young adult stage were generally negotiated before marriage was considered. With approximately 190 000 marriages officially recorded in South Africa each year, including civil unions and customary marriages, as well as the number of registered marriages generally being on the increase over the past ten years (Statistics South Africa, 2008), it would appear

that the transition from unattached young adult to forming a new family through marriage has remained the normative pathway of development for South Africans.

The aforementioned demographic trends were valuable to show general population patterns in the South African context; yet these provide limited insight into the diversity of actual experiences of life course transitions that differed from normative patterns. For example, the family life cycle stage model has failed to acknowledge that the timing of nodal events may differ due to the changing landscape of gender roles and relations, as well as the diversity of lifestyles and living arrangements (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2000). Various factors have impacted on the timing of marriage, evident in the age of first marriage increasing over time (Hosegood, et al., 2009; Marston et al., 2009). These include the high incidence of divorce; changes in the legal structure of marriage; access to contraceptive measures to manage fertility; increases in female labour force participation and declines in gender wage inequalities; changes in household technology; acceptance of premarital sex; cohabitation as a precursor to marriage; and out-of-wedlock childbirth and parenting (Budlender et al., 2004; Marston et al., 2009; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007; Waite & Bachrach, 2000). While studies situated within the family life cycle stage model have not widely-researched the influence of these factors on normative transitions, an exploration of individual experiences of the transition from being an unattached young adult to forming a new family through marriage contributed to a more nuanced understanding of family life cycle transitions from an individual perspective.

2.3. MOTIVATIONS TO GET MARRIED AND PURSUE POSTGRADUATE STUDY

This study was concerned with the motivations of individuals who differed from normative patterns by deciding to get married while embarking on postgraduate study, with a focus on women who were on the Psychology career trajectory. These women were forming a new family through marriage before they had successfully negotiated the unattached young adult transition of establishment of financial independence through work (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999). Motivations to get married and pursue postgraduate study have generally been examined independently, suggesting that the interaction between motivations to get married and the pursuit of postgraduate study have not been extensively studied in existing research.

Motives has been shown to be concerned with the needs, wants, interests and desires that guide individuals in certain directions (Weiten, 2001). Motivations were important to consider as they determined which behaviour was likely to be performed based on the combination of intention and exertion (Fiske, 2004). Current research asserted that individual and social factors interacted in mutual and dynamic ways as the standards and values that motivated an individual were influenced by relationships, social support, opportunities and interactions that were internalised by the individual (Järvelä & Volet, 2004). An exploration of individuals' subjective motivations revealed the complexity of individual and family development, as well as reinforced the influence that individuals have on the course of their life cycle transitions.

In order to understand women's motivations to get married while simultaneously embarking on postgraduate study in Psychology, a contextualisation of the profession of Psychology in the South African context was required. The profession of Psychology fell under the auspices of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and the profession has been regulated according to the Constitution of the Professional Board for Psychology. The HPCSA (2010) has enforced strict regulations on education and training. In order to register as a Psychologist, the HPCSA required the completion of Masters Programme in Psychology at an accredited institution of learning, the completion of a full-time, 12 month internship, and the completion of the National Board Examination. Thus, to become a Psychologist, an individual must complete the academic component, which consisted of a minimum of five years of full-time study, and a practical component, comprised of a one year internship and, in the case of Clinical Psychology, an additional year of community service. Therefore, the Psychology career trajectory has been set by external regulatory factors which enforced the completion of Masters-level postgraduate study in order to qualify and practice as a Psychologist before entering the labour market.

Stringent selection processes have ensured a limited intake of 5 and 15 students per Masters Programme in Psychology, indicating a large proportion of applicants were not selected for Masters Programmes in Psychology annually (Mayekiso et al., 2004). As the discipline of Psychology was historically considered a white, male, middle-class profession, current selection processes has been based on issues of equity, access and redress in order to train, prepare and equip Psychologists with the skills to meet the diverse needs and demands of the nation (Ahmed & Pillay, 2004; Emsley, 2001). Consequently, gender trends have shifted as females currently represent the majority in the profession (Pillay & Kramers, 2003). An examination of the gender distribution of one particular Masters Programme, the

Masters in Community-Based Counselling Psychology Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand, revealed that in 2006, 80% of students were female; in 2007, 90% of students were female; in 2008, 80% of students were female; and in 2009, 100% of students were female (Langa & Graham, 2011). Furthermore, research has consistently shown the decline in male interest and low prevalence of males in Psychology Masters Programmes (Mayekiso et al., 2004; Pillay & Kramers, 2003; Richter & Griesel, 1999).

Various factors must be considered in order to fully comprehend the increasing prevalence of women and decreasing prevalence of men in the profession of Psychology. Psychology has been characterised as a 'woman's profession' due to the myth that women must fulfil the role of the nurturers of society (Mayekiso et al., 2004). Other so-called 'women's professions' include social work, education and nursing in which women's gender-assigned caretaking qualities have been considered ideal for these professions and a 'natural' extension of women's work inside the home (McPhail, 2004). The increase in female Psychologists can also be partly attributed to the dissolution of apartheid and the associated recognition of women's rights and increased opportunities (Richter & Griesel, 1999). Government has played an important role in addressing gender inequalities, such as establishing legal frameworks and enforcing structures for the advancement of gender equality in all sectors of society (de la Ray & Kottler, 1999). According to Statistics South Africa (2001), more women enrolled for studies at universities in order to gain professional qualifications compared to men who were more likely to enrol at technikons in order to obtain skills-based qualifications. University qualifications have been shown to be lengthy and costly, whereas skills-based qualifications are shorter in duration. Once qualified, an individual with a skills-based qualification, such as a plumber, can earn as much as a professional Psychologist (Pillay & Kramers, 2003). Furthermore, research has suggested that women were more likely to complete a tertiary qualification (Branson et al., 2009). Thus, the decline of male interest in the profession of Psychology can be attributed to the length and cost of training and comparisons to other job opportunities and salary levels. On the other hand, the high prevalence of women in the profession, as well as opportunities to pursue tertiary education for women, may have enhanced women's motivations to enter the profession.

The increasing numbers of women in a profession have generally led to devaluation of the profession, lower income potential and decreased status, reinforcing the patriarchal nature of society (Rosenzweig, 1994). A "glass escalator" has been created for men in women-dominated professions, providing men with rapid promotions into positions of authority and

influence (Williams, 1992). Howard (1987) introduced the term “feminisation” to refer to the increasing number of women in Psychology and the associated growing contribution of feminine ideas and attitudes. In the profession of Psychology in South Africa, certain changes have been attributed to the increase of women in the profession, such as the move from scientific research to applied research on women’s issues; lower salaries in the public and private sector; focus on individuals rather than groups, collectives or organisations; and increases in the privatised, home-based and part-time structure of the profession (Richter & Griesel, 1999). Furthermore, distinct differences between men and women in income levels and the structure of their professional activities in Psychology have persisted, with men earning higher salaries and working in the respected areas of industry and research (Richter & Griesel, 1999). Therefore, women may be making advances in the involvement in the profession of Psychology, but the associated gains in status and influence have not been obtained.

Despite the aforementioned dissimilarities between men and women’s experiences in the profession of Psychology, feminist concerns in South Africa have generally been considered to be marginal with limited impact on the discipline or practice of Psychology (de la Ray & Kottler, 1999). A study by Shefer, Potgieter and Strebel (1999) showed that although a gender course taught in one department of Psychology had the potential to challenge dominant ideological constructions of gender, powerful gender discourses continued to be repressive. An example of this is evident in a study by Richter and Griesel (1999) who argued that women’s professional aspirations in Psychology must be balanced with their domestic responsibilities in their families: “women’s need to balance work commitments with undiminished family and domestic responsibilities may be a strong force driving women into the profession [of Psychology] and then structuring their professional lives” (p. 139). This patriarchal viewpoint failed to acknowledge the variety of choices available to women and assumed women were attracted to Psychology due to its flexibility in practice and that many married female psychologists operated in a privatised, part-time manner once qualified in order to fulfil their dual responsibilities of family and career. Thus, the prevailing perspective has been that the Psychology profession was structured in such a way to allow women to combine marriage and family life, perpetuating the notion that it is a “woman’s profession” and reinforcing the “glass escalator” for men in the profession.

Research has suggested that many young, urban women endorse gender equality, assert the validity of careers and emphasise independence for women (Sharpe, 2001). Women

have asserted their independence from parents, gained financial security or started a family without marriage, depending on their social circumstances. Marriage has been found to no longer be a necessity in terms of social mobility or stability, as tertiary education often provided women with increased opportunities (Etejere, 2008). Tertiary education has been perceived as a more successful route into the labour market and increased wage earnings (Branson et al., 2009), and as a result, there has been a high demand for tertiary education as a form of career preparation (de lay Ray, 2009). Additionally, individuals with higher education and the associated economic prospects have been shown to be more likely to get married later in life (Sweeney, 2002). The normative path for urban women in the South African context seemed to follow that which has been found in a study by Smock, Manning and Porter (2005) whereby the completion of tertiary education preceded the decision to marry for the majority of individuals.

Typically, studying in preparation for a career has been shown to be not conducive to marriage (McRoy & Fisher, 1982; Ford Sori et al., 1996; Scheinkman, 1988). As the individual's needs must be balanced with a commitment to one's partner in a marriage, research has shown that an individual must be at a life stage that facilitated the progression of the relationship, as well as believed that marriage and commitment were important (Weeks, 2007). The level of commitment in a relationship has been found to correlate to life course stages, whereby individuals who were at the life stage of studying had been found to be less concerned with commitment and long-lasting relationships (Sutton, Cebella & Middleton, 2003). As a result, individuals normally get married after the completion of undergraduate or postgraduate studies once they have obtained a certain level of commitment to a relationship which was considered conducive to their life stage, as opposed to during postgraduate study. Although the decision to marry during postgraduate study has been shown to be atypical, it formed the emphasis of this study due to the assertion that a variety of life cycle choices continue to be available, including the decision to get married at the same time as pursuing postgraduate study.

As marriage has been shown to no longer be essential to assert one's independence, gain financial security or even have children, marriage was generally perceived as mutual partnership "between equals, resulting from a freely made choice based on love" (Jamieson, 2002, p. 23). Elizabeth (2003) and Sutton et al. (2003) emphasised that although pragmatic factors play a role in the decision to marry, love was the foremost motivation for marrying from husbands' and wives' perspectives and marriage was considered the ideal lifelong

partnership that progresses the relationship to the next stage. Additionally, research conducted by Brown (2004) suggested that marriage was characterised by a greater commitment and stability in the relationship that was expected to enhance relationship quality through companionship.

Individuals' early personal experiences of marriage and family life in one's family of origin have been shown to impact on their decision to marry (Hollway, 2004). Research has suggested that direct and indirect messages regarding fidelity, the sanctity of marriage, and how to manage relationship difficulties can be acquired from one's family of origin through conversations, events, experiences, and observations, reinforcing that families provide the basic framework for marriage (Weigel, Bennett & Ballard-Reisch, 2003). Case studies have shown that negative experiences of parental marital relationships often contributed to suspicion of marriage, either resulting in a delay or avoidance of marriage (Choi & Bird, 2003; Faulkner & Finlay, 2003). In other cases, divorce or family breakdown contributed to a desire to create the stability and certainty that was lacking in one's family of origin (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Marriage also has been shown to serve as a perceived safeguard against fears of being alone, being viewed as deviant, or potential relationship deterioration (Choi & Bird, 2003; Lewis, 2001; Sandfield & Percy, 2003; Smart, 2007). Thus, varying experiences and personality factors have been found to contribute to certain desires, anxieties and defences concerning the decision to get married.

However, marriage cannot only be considered as a private matter, concerned with past experiences, romantic love and commitment; it can also be seen as a social act that served to provide a public seal of approval on relationships. Strong normative expectations have been found to be associated with marriage as it is perceived as a means to attain a desirable adult status, with research suggesting that 95% of young people desire to marry (Brown, 2004). "Society's expectation is that everyone should, and would, want to be coupled and therefore stay married" (Choi & Bird, 2003, p. 449). A significant proportion of heterosexual women have been shown to idealise or aspire to a married status (Sandfield & Percy, 2003) and parental pressure has been found to be a direct contributing factor for marrying (Lewis, 2001). As marriage has been institutionalised and legitimatised, certain privileges have been afforded to those who are married, including legal and financial benefits (Ribar, 2004; Waite & Lehrer, 2003). Furthermore, the intention to have children seemed to influence the decision to get married as research showed that marriage was perceived as the ideal relationship in which to raise children, provide economic security and share the responsibility

of parenting (Brown, 2004; Lewis, 2001), reinforcing heterosexual marriage and family life as the hegemonic ideal.

Marriage often began with a ceremony in the form of a wedding in front of a host of witnesses, revealing how the intimate relationship became expressed in the public domain (Wise & Stanley, 2004). The marriage ceremony has allowed for the couple to openly declare their love and commitment, as well as receive due recognition from family, friends and the authorities (Elizabeth, 2003). The wedding may also have served as a symbolic claim of a specified place in the couple's community "to situate their bonds in a discourse of nature, and to affirm their connections with…[their] culture" (Lewin, 2004, p. 1001). Barlow, Duncan, James and Park (2005) suggested that a wedding was no longer perceived as a rite of passage into adulthood; rather it was considered a rite of passage into the ranks of the socially successful. The marriage has become a signifier of consumption and performance and was available only to those who can afford a "proper" wedding. As a result, the financial expense of the wedding has also influenced the decision to marry. Furthermore, financial security, achieving a set of financial goals before marriage, and the male partner's ability to be the economic provider have also been shown to impact on the decision to marry (Smock et al., 2005). This has reinforced the notion that one must successfully negotiate the unattached young adult transition of financial independence before considering marriage, especially from the male perspective.

In some instances, marriage has continued to be perceived as a patriarchal institution which produced gendered identities and gendered practices, which, in turn, sustained hierarchical relations between women and men (Elizabeth, 2003). An examination of dated research whereby traditional, chauvinistic notions of marriage were more prevalent suggested that daughters were assumed to require more protecting than sons, often meaning their relationships were more strictly scrutinized by parents (Leslie, Huston & Johnson, 1986). Furthermore, some of these traditional parents expected their daughters to fulfil the societally-ascribed roles of caretaking of the immediate and extended family and desired that their daughters selected a partner who would not interfere with the expected caretaker role. Yet, recent studies have revealed that some parents still hold onto this viewpoint as evident in their lack of interest in their daughters' career aspirations or success, where instead marriage was emphasised as the most important aspiration (Beltman & Wosnitza, 2008; Choi & Bird, 2003). Implicit in this was the expectation that the woman will sacrifice her career and personal identity for the sake of the marriage and her worth will become

subsumed within her husbands' (Choi & Bird, 2003; Faulkner & Finlay, 2003). This suggested that traditional, patriarchal notions of marriage continue to be in operation.

Multiple meanings as to what constitutes marriage have been shown to exist and hence one cannot assume that all marriages have been constructed along traditional patriarchal principles. If women wished to create mutual partnerships in their marriages, they "need to strategically deploy a variety of discourses and engage in a variety of different practices to manage the situational contexts that constitute their lives (Elizabeth, 2003, p. 429). Furthermore, Choi and Bird (2003) have argued that the external normative expectations and constraints concerning marriage must also be negotiated. Thus, the decision to get married has been revealed to not solely be the product of interpersonal dynamics, but rather involved the complex interplay between cultural norms, social practices and personal experiences of marriage.

2.4. THE DUAL CHALLENGES OF MARRIAGE AND POSTGRADUATE STUDY

After the decision was made to get married, the transition from being an unattached young adult to forming part of a newly married couple was initiated, necessitating certain adjustments and adaptations (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999). Additionally, the decision to get married while simultaneously embarking on postgraduate study was expected to contribute to various challenges, which may impact on the marital relationship. Subsequently, the marital relationship must adapt or adjust to the challenges of postgraduate study, as well as to the challenges of establishing a marital relationship. Karney and Bradbury (1995) proposed a model in which enduring vulnerabilities, such as stable demographic, historical, personality and experiential factors that spouses brought into marriage, interacted with life events, such as postgraduate study, to trigger adaptive processes, such as marital adjustment. According to Karney (2007), the tensions experienced exclusively by one spouse, for example in postgraduate study, impacted the other spouse which necessitated marital adjustment. Marital adjustment resulted from the complex interaction between demographic, psychological and emotional characteristics of spouses; the couple's interactions and strategies employed in the marital relationship; and the marital environments (Kulik & Havusha-Morgenstern, 2010). Since the dual challenge of postgraduate study and marriage has been considered atypical, restricted current research has been found on marital adjustment in this context.

Although limited up-to-date research on married students was available, graduate marriages were of interest to researchers in the past. Postgraduate study was considered “hazardous to a marriage” (Brooks, 1988, p.1), evident in the high dropout rate for married students, as well as a high divorce rate for student marriages (McRoy & Fisher, 1982). The negotiation and integration of the roles of student and spouse were found to be particularly challenging, as well as various contextual stressors that both the student and spouse must adjust to, such as academic demands; financial burdens; major changes in schedules, recreation, and social life; and insufficient time and energy (Ford Sori et al., 1996). Furthermore, asymmetry developed as the student attended university whilst the spouse generally worked as the primary wage earner. As a result, Scheinkman (1988) suggested that married couples’ lives tended to be organised in dissimilar ways and their needs were catered to unevenly. In particular, gender role expectations were renegotiated, especially for married female postgraduate students, as they gained their independence and challenged traditional views of marriage (Ford Sori et al., 1996). Scheinkman (1988) further argued that married couples moved from an initial sense of adventure and cohesion to dissatisfaction in the marriage and finally to graduation, which often coincided with the breakup of the marriage. Reasons for this marital deterioration included resentment, failure to resolve conflicts, sacrificing personal goals, reduced intimacy and estrangement (Ford Sori et al., 1996; Scheinkman, 1988). Although this research was outdated, these studies showed that both married students and their spouses negotiated the transition associated with embarking on postgraduate study and the various demands were considered to be major sources of stress.

The aforementioned studies have suggested that postgraduate study in general had a negative impact on marriages; however research on the experiences of Masters students in the South African context has identified specific challenges that were faced during postgraduate professional training in Psychology. Masters students in Psychology were generally expected to attend and present seminars, engage in personal psychotherapy, research and community supervision, and perform psychotherapy and community work, contributing to a full day on campus or at community sites from 08:30 to 17:00. As a result, students were often separated from their partners, family and friends, resulting in more time spent with fellow students and lecturers (Guse, 2010; Kottler & Swartz, 2004). Research has revealed that separation from family, friends and partner relationships was considered particularly stressful during postgraduate study (Bitsika, Sharpley & Rubenstein, 2010). Family, friends and partners may have voiced complaints or expressed anxiety regarding the

Masters student's absence in their lives, contributing to additional pressure for the student (Kottler & Swartz, 2004). The time-based separation from family, friend and partner relationships was exacerbated by the mental separation that also occurred during Masters training in Psychology (Kottler & Swartz, 2004). The programme has been shown to be preoccupying as the work was associated with feelings of responsibility and unfamiliarity; however, the confidential nature of the profession meant that many experiences could not be discussed outside of training. Thus, the intimate experiences that occurred during training were divorced from the ordinary intimacies of friendship and family, resulting in an interrogation and renegotiation of social relationships (Kottler & Swartz, 2004).

Studies have shown that the process of training to become a Psychologist was particularly demanding (Halewood & Tribe, 2003; Jordaan, Spangenberg, Watson & Fouchè, 2007; Kottler & Swatrtz, 2004; O'Connor, 2001; Zemirah, 2000). Findings revealed that Masters students were expected to be empathetic, understanding and highly sensitive to people and the environment, while containing pain, conflicts, disappointments and hardships of their clients (O'Connor, 2001). Furthermore, students were expected to examine themselves and negotiate a professional identity that could mindfully contain the pain of others while protecting the self that was "constantly probed and provoked by his or her clients" (Halewood & Tribe, 2003, p. 92). Training and the profession of Psychology was often viewed by students in an idealised manner prior to commencement of postgraduate study; however, the academic, clinical and personal pressures caused students to question themselves and their decision to pursue Psychology as a career (Kottler & Swartz, 2004). Family, friends and partners often did not understand the overwhelming experiences of training as they lacked first-hand experience due to separation from the student. Thus, research findings have shown that students felt that the training exceeded their own capacities, support from family, friends and partners was insufficient, and they often failed to address their own needs due to time constraints. Consequently, Masters students in Psychology considered or decided to withdraw from training, long-standing relationships suffered or ended, and students often experienced periods of stress, burnout, anxiety and depression (Halewood & Tribe, 2003; Jordaan et al., 2007; Kottler & Swartz, 2004; Zemirah, 2000).

Masters programmes often included community practicums, in which students were expected to translate theory and knowledge in a community context to contribute to community change (Pillay, 2006). Community practicums were associated with uncertainty and unfamiliarly as students negotiated complex emotional and political processes (Guse,

2010; Langa & Graham, 2011). Furthermore, community practicums operated in a context that included issues of gender, race and class. Sexism was experienced in the community context, as female students were 'cat-called', offensive statements concerning the role and place of women in the community were expressed, and many community members attempted to subordinate women (Langa & Graham, 2011).

Postgraduate study was expected to enhance the student's future career in the profession of Psychology (Branson et al., 2009). However, the synchronisation of career and marriage has been shown to be a difficult and complex as individuals attempt to launch their careers at the same time as building long-term committed relationships (Arnett, 2004). The coordination of both partners' career paths has been shown to be stressful and anxiety-provoking as the needs and aspirations of two individuals must be considered (Peake & Harris, 2002). Dual-career couples generally considered careers to be a valuable avenue for both individuals to establish a work identity, encourage self-development, find meaning, and simultaneously nurture their relationship (Parker & Arthur, 2004). However, dual-career couples required time, energy and resources in order to sustain their careers and marriages. Thus, even once couples had successfully managed the challenges of postgraduate study, the marital system continued to face transitions that require reorganisation and adjustment.

Despite the aforementioned challenges inherent in postgraduate study, forming a new marriage has also been shown to be associated with various challenges (Berg-Cross, 2000; Gladding, 2007; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2000). Research findings on the initial phases of marriage suggested that married couples experienced high levels of satisfaction in the early period; however, marital conflict and difficulties also emerged (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Kulik & Havusha-Morgenstern, 2010). Research has shown that "husbands and wives a year into marriage were considerably less affectionate, less approving, and less disclosing than they had been as newlyweds" (Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith & George, 2001, p. 123). Additionally, research has shown that the establishment of the marital relationship during the initial phases of marriage was often difficult to negotiate and impacted on future marital outcomes (Huston et al., 2001; Kulik & Havusha-Morgenstern, 2010; Stanley, Amato, Johnson & Markman, 2006). Common areas of conflict in early marriage included balancing work and family commitments, frequency of sexual relations, debt brought into the marriage and other financial concerns (Schramm, Marshall, Harris & Lee, 2009). These common areas of conflict were particularly relevant to married postgraduate females, as postgraduate study was a time-consuming and costly endeavour. The demands of postgraduate study

also inhibited the couple's leisure time and resulted in less energy for cultivating the marital relationship. Research has shown that this adversely affected the development of intimacy, the quality of couple interaction, and experiences of stress levels (Clark, 2001; Major, Klein & Ehrhart, 2002).

The practice of dual-incoming earning and equal participation in the labour force has been found to be commonly accepted in some marriages (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007), possibly contributing to the prevalence of dual-career couples. Economic pressures and financial concerns have affected the marital relationship negatively and, according to Etejere (2008), insufficient funds were problematic for married female postgraduate students in the course of their studies. However, research suggested that often married students anticipated some financial struggles due to their student status, which assisted in financial management (Kerkmann, Lee, Lown & Allgood 2000). Furthermore, one study showed that the recognition of the importance of investing in work in order to establish a career contributed to enhanced marital adjustment when work pressures impacted on the marital relationship (Kulik & Havusha-Morgenstern, 2010). Therefore, married individuals contended that economic challenges faced early in their marriages contributed to marital gains in the long-term.

The tension between work and family demands has been considered a fundamental challenge for newly married couples (Bradbury, Fincham & Beach, 2000; Morris & Carter, 1999; Schramm et al., 2009), as well as a major challenge for married female postgraduate students (Etejere, 2008; Kerkmann et al., 2000). A study by Whitmarsh et al. (2007) has shown how women in female-dominated professions, such as Psychology, manage the tensions between work and family demands. Often women adjusted their career aspirations in order to ensure compatibility with marriage, sometimes even abandoning certain careers that did not easily allow the simultaneous management of career and family responsibilities. Female-dominated careers were perceived to be more facilitative in terms of allowing time for family or successful re-entry into work compared to gender-neutral professions. Furthermore, these women were often encouraged and supported by their partners to purse a female-dominated career as it permitted the prioritisation of family. However, other studies have revealed that women were not always expected to compromise their careers for the family as dual-career couples generally gave precedence to both careers (Parker & Arthur, 2004). Thus, the dual-career couple provided opportunities to challenge traditional gender roles; although men's careers were still generally given priority (Whitmarsh et al., 2007).

2.5. THE BENEFITS OF MARRIAGE FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDY

Although simultaneously engaging in marriage and postgraduate study has been shown to be stressful, both experiences have been described as exciting and characterised as a time of personal growth (Ford Sori et al., 1996). Training in Psychology has often brought up issues related to the student's family of origin or own marriage, providing opportunities to explore new, adaptive ways of functioning in the marital relationship (Ford Sori et al., 1996). As a result, students in Ford Sori et al. (1996) study described that their experiences were more enhancing than stressful, and their spouses also reinforced this finding. The major enhancers included a growing awareness of normal life cycle transitions, an acceptance of mutual causality in conceptualising and addressing marital problems, and greater self-awareness which facilitated personal growth and maturation. Research has also suggested that the challenges of the profession of Psychology can be facilitated through positive emotions and experiences, as well as through social support from colleagues, friends, and partners (Guse, 2010; Jordaan et al., 2007). One study has shown that the familiarity of significant and on-going relationships helped Masters students to feel connected to their sense of self (Kottler & Swartz, 2004). The provisions and benefits of marriage were considered a buffer against the challenges experienced during postgraduate study.

Besides the specific benefits that have been studied in the context of married postgraduate students, marriage has been shown to provide a variety of benefits. A study by Parker and Arthur (2004) has revealed that marriage offers enhanced commitment that facilitates a greater likelihood of compromise in order to support both the husband and the wife's careers. Marriage also had economic benefits due to the pooling of risks, economies of scale, and the division of labour and specialisation (Ribar, 2004; Waite & Lehrer, 2003). Furthermore, a dual-career couple earned more, experienced greater access to health care, as well as has reduced stress caused by financial instability (Waite & Lehrer, 2003). Although simultaneously embarking on postgraduate study while being married has been shown to be atypical, it would appear that certain career and financial benefits were afforded to these couples.

Research has also shown positive relationships between marriage, psychological adjustment and quality of life (Khaleque, 2004). Cutrona (2004) examined the ideal provisions that individuals gained from marriage, including attachment; reassurance of worth; guidance; reliable alliance; social integration; and the opportunity to provide nurturance. The benefits of marriage on physical and mental health outcomes were substantial; including reduced risk for long-term illness or disability, quicker recovery from illness, significantly lower mortality rate, greater overall happiness, increases in satisfaction from family and work, improvements in emotional well-being, reductions in depression, and reductions in alcohol abuse (Frech & Williams, 2007; Ribar, 2004; Waite & Bachrach, 2000; Waite & Lehrer, 2003; Wilson & Oswald, 2005). Rooted in the marriage protection perspective, these studies have suggested that the increased availability of social support in a marriage contributed to improved health benefits, especially for those going through stressful experiences (Slatcher, 2010).

Nevertheless, the benefits of marriage have been found to be highly dependent on individual, interpersonal and structural interactions and cannot be recognised in marriage without a subjective exploration of experiences from the husbands' and wives' perspectives. Research has identified the following strategies for successful marital adjustment: constructive communication and self-disclosure (Anders & Tucker, 2000; Domingue & Mollen, 2009); emotional expressiveness (Feeney, 1999; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2008); conflict resolution (Kulik & Havusha-Morgenstern, 2010; Pietromonaco & Greenwood, 2004); and perceived support from spouse (Clark, Lemay, Graham, Pataki & Finkel, 2010; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002). Furthermore, showing respect, appreciation, commitment and trust, as well as spending time together, participating in shared activities has been shown to be positively related to marital adjustment (Schramm et al., 2009). Therefore, during postgraduate study, married couples may have strived to develop these strategies and interpersonal qualities in order to adjust to the dual challenges of marriage and studying.

2.6. CONCLUSION

The literature has reviewed the reasons why female students differed from normal life course transitions and demographic trends by deciding to get married while simultaneously pursuing postgraduate study in Psychology. Existing research revealed that having to negotiate postgraduate study at the same time as forming a marriage was challenging and contributed to stress, necessitating adjustment and adaption. Nevertheless, both experiences were

characterised as periods of personal and relational growth and provided various benefits to facilitate the adjustment and adaptation required. Despite the heterogeneity of South African society and diversity of experiences, limited research has examined life course transitions that may differ from normative patterns or explored individual experiences of the transition from unattached young adult to forming a new family through marriage. Overall, most studies on marriage focus on quantitative measurement in order to predict marital satisfaction over time, instead of exploring subjective accounts of the dynamics of marriage and this was the gap that this study intended to address.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

As past research has overlooked women's perspectives, as well as tended to focus on quantitative measurement of factors relating to adjustment, this study aimed to explore women's subjective accounts of their experiences of adjusting to being married whilst pursuing postgraduate study. In order to fulfil the study's aims and answer the research questions, a qualitative research design of semi-structured interviews was selected. Eight female participants currently enrolled in Masters provided in-depth, detailed information on their motivations and experiences and thematic content analysis was used to interpret these accounts. The key methodological issues relating to the research procedure, the process of reflexivity and ethical considerations were also discussed.

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The main aim of the study was to explore how married females experience their postgraduate studies in Psychology, with an emphasis on the quality and texture of their experiences. The underlying assumption in this study, guided by the interpretivist paradigm, was that individuals express their experiences subjectively and meaningfully (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006). Consequently, a qualitative, inductive approach was employed to enable married female students to articulate their experiences in their own terms, as well explore whether recurring patterns of experience occurred among married female students. The use of a qualitative research design was suitable as this study was concerned with the exploration of the multiple meanings attributed to experiences by the research participants themselves (Silverman, 2008; Smith, 2008).

As this study was concerned with the subjective quality and texture of participants' experiences, the research method needed to allow open and detailed expression. The qualitative research design of semi-structured interviews was selected as the most appropriate method as it enabled naturalistic conversational exchange which reflected the participant's subjective experiences of marriage when enrolled in postgraduate study in Psychology (Banister, Burman, Parker & Tindall, 2006). This qualitative research design encouraged the exploration of experiences in their natural settings, asserted that the researcher formed part of the exploration, and allowed flexibility in terms of what was being

explored (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Thus, a qualitative approach to the production and conceptualisation of knowledge was considered to be conducive to the exploration of married female students' motivations and experiences during their postgraduate study in Psychology

3.2. PARTICIPANTS

The study employed convenience and non-purposive sampling techniques. The sample comprised of eight female participants currently enrolled in Masters course-work programmes in Psychology at the University of Johannesburg and at the University of the Witwatersrand. All the participants were married and had made the decision to get married either before commencement or in the early phases of embarking on their Masters programme. The participants ranged in age from 24 to 32 years, with the majority of participants being in their twenties. Participants were all in their first marriages and had been married for between eight months and three years. Five of the participants were studying to be Counselling Psychologists, two of the participants were studying to be Clinical Psychologists, and one of the participants was studying to be an Educational Psychologist. The sample was not representative of all South Africans, or representative of all married postgraduate students. Yet, the small sample size was considered appropriate for a qualitative study due to the richness of data that was obtained.

3.3. INSTRUMENTS

A semi-structured interview (Appendix A, p.76) was developed, based on the research questions and informed by relevant literature on marriage and postgraduate study. The interview consisted of questions pertaining to: motivations to get married while participating in postgraduate study; the benefits of marriage and postgraduate study; the challenges of marriage and postgraduate study; and the perceived similarities and differences between the experiences of married and unmarried students from the perspective of female married students. A biographical questionnaire (Appendix B, p.77) was also developed to obtain information about the participant's age, spouse's age, length of marriage, Psychology registration category (Counselling, Clinical or Educational Psychology) and ethnicity. The open-ended, nondirective nature of the questions facilitated meaningful and spontaneous

discussion relating to the participant's unique marital context. The flexibility of the interview method allowed questions to be attuned specifically to the unique contexts of each participant, which provided rich, detailed information. Thus, the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews facilitated the exploration and description of the participants' subjective experiences of marriage and postgraduate study.

3.4. PROCEDURE

The sample was recruited from the University of Johannesburg, the University of Pretoria, and the University of the Witwatersrand through advertisements and by word-of-mouth directed at students who were married and enrolled in the 2010 and 2011 Masters in Counselling Psychology, Masters in Clinical Psychology or Masters in Educational Psychology programmes. The relevant Heads of Department of Psychology at the University of Johannesburg, the University of Pretoria, and the University of the Witwatersrand were sent a letter informing them of the study (Appendix C, p.78). Masters students who met the inclusion criteria for the study, namely married at the time of participation in postgraduate study and had made the decision to get married either before commencement or in the early phases of embarking on their Masters programme, were identified and emailed the 'Participant Information Sheet' (Appendix D, p.81) outlining the purposes of the study and what was required of them if they were willing to participate. The pool of potential participants was restricted due to the inclusion criteria which the majority of Masters students in Psychology did not meet as they were either single or divorced. Additionally, some potential participants who did met the inclusion criteria were reluctant to participate, making the recruitment of participants difficult.

The 'Participant Information Sheet' provided information for potential participants to contact the researcher either telephonically or by e-mail to indicate their willingness to participate. Potential participants who were interested were contacted back to provide further information, answer any questions or concerns, and confirm that they met the inclusion criteria. Thereafter, a meeting was arranged to conduct the interview at the most convenient time and place. All data were collected between July and September of 2011. The majority of the interviews were conducted in venues at the University of the Witwatersrand, with two conducted in the participants' homes and two in the participants' place of work. The semi-structured interviews lasted between forty and sixty minutes each. All interviews were either

video or audio recorded and transcribed verbatim with the consent of the participants to encapsulate the subjective information obtained from the interviews. Thereafter, the data was repeatedly examined in order to form codes and themes as outlined by Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of thematic content analysis.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic content analysis was employed as the method of data analysis in order to identify and describe the motivations and experiences of female married postgraduates. Guided by the interpretivist paradigm, this method of data analysis was concerned with how participants made meaning of their experiences of marriage and postgraduate study, as well as how the larger social context impacted on the meaning-making process (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). Braun and Clark (2006) provide a clear 6-phase guide for creating themes in qualitative analysis: data familiarisation; generation of initial codes; theme searches; review of themes; definition and naming of themes; and report production, which were followed to analyse the data collected from the interviews. This method of data analysis was appropriate for the study as it facilitated the identification and analysis of emerging patterns or themes, yet was not constrained by a specific theoretical framework.

Qualitative data was obtained through recordings and transcripts of the semi-structured, in-depth interviews. After the completion of the interviews, recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher as accurately as possible to the original verbal account. In order to ensure accessibility and the identification of different parts of the transcript, line numbering was included. The interview data was repeatedly examined through the transcription process, frequent viewing of the recorded interviews, as well as making notes on emerging themes in order to become familiar with the content. Thus, transcription was accompanied by data familiarisation, whereby the researcher became immersed in the "depth" and "breadth" of the data set, as well as noted any emerging patterns of interest (Braun & Clark, 2006).

The researcher employed the inductive thematic approach, whereby the themes developed from the qualitative data which reflected the research questions, as well as the participants' experiences. Data coding ensured that the qualitative data was ordered according to certain

themes, patterns or relationships in the data set. Preliminary codes were developed through the reading and re-reading of the transcribed interviews (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). A list of codes was created so that data could be identified and interpreted in a meaningful way. Some examples of initial codes included marriage as the next step; desires to assert independence; feelings of uncertainty; notions of the traditional women; tension and conflict; comparison to non-married peers; perceptions of support; and psychologising marriage. Thereafter, the different codes were used to search for patterns that could be organised into themes. Certain codes that shared patterns or relationships were grouped together to identify potential themes and sub-themes. For example, the codes of marriage as next step; desires to assert independence; feelings of uncertainty; notions of the traditional women were grouped together under the theme "Why marry?"

In order to ensure that the data set was accurately reflected, the degree of fit and coherence between themes, codes and transcripts was reviewed throughout the data analysis. The data set was repeatedly coded and examined in order to ensure that the nuanced experiences of participants were encapsulated thematically. Themes were then clearly defined to ensure the identification of the essence of each theme, as well as refined in order to determine which aspects of the data were captured in each theme (Braun & Clark, 2006). The final themes were organised according to the three research questions, thereby comprising of motivations to marry; challenges of marriage and postgraduate study; and benefits of marriage and postgraduate study. Although sub-themes were initially used to organise the interview, these interfered with the inter-relationships within specific themes and hence were removed to facilitate consistency and flow. As a result, a coherent and inter-connected representation was formed of the participants' experiences, whereby the raw data was sufficiently and significantly captured into relevant themes.

The data analysis progressed from description of themes, where data was organised to show patterns, to interpretation, in which the broader meanings and implications of the patterns was explored (Braun & Clark, 2006). The themes from the qualitative data set were brought together according to the three research questions to provide insight into married female students' experiences, particularly in relation to Masters training in Psychology in the South African context. Thereafter, this research report was produced to elucidate the findings and link these findings to the role of gender in profession of Psychology, as well as to women's career development and marriages.

3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics approval was gained from the Graduate Studies Committee on the 23 May of 2011 (Appendix E, p.84). The 'Participant Information Sheet' provided information on the aims and purposes of this study, as well as informed participants of their rights prior to being interviewed. Participants had the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any questions throughout the interview. No person was advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study, emphasising the voluntary nature of participation in this study. Participants gave their verbal and written consent to participate in the study by completing the 'Participant Consent Form' (Appendix F, p.85), to allow for the recording and transcribing of the interviews by completing the 'Consent to Record and Transcribe Interview Form' (Appendix G, p.86), and to allow the use of direct quotes from the interview for this research report by completing the 'Consent to use Direct Quotes Form' (Appendix H, p.87).

Limited confidentiality was upheld up the researcher, as the interview material was shared with the supervisor. However, identifying information was removed from the interview transcripts and the participants' identities were protected as the researcher used alpha and numerical codes in lieu of names on the transcripts to ensure confidentiality and anonymity in the research report. However, anonymity could not be completely guaranteed as the interview was conducted face-to-face.

The interview material was safeguarded to ensure no unauthorised access and the storage of data respected the original consent of the participants. The interview material was kept electronically under password protection that only the researcher has access to for duration of two years. Hard copies were kept in storage under lock and key for six years. Thereafter, the interview material was deleted and destroyed. The findings of the study were shared with interested participants and Heads of Department in Psychology in the form of an executive summary of findings.

Although no deception or exposure to harm was expected in the study, the personal nature of the study contributed to the possibility of some risks. Participants were informed that the interview could elicit emotional responses and hence information will be provided regarding referral contact details of organisations that offer counselling services (free or otherwise). Nevertheless, participants may not have needed to utilise these counselling referrals as most Masters students in Psychology were mandated to be in their own personal therapy. While the researcher first endeavoured to recruit participants from universities and programmes other than her own, once this potential sample reached saturation, classmates became potential participants. This posed the risk of dual relationships and the associated issues of confidentiality. Thus, the researcher was particularly mindful of the different roles she played and carefully managed these relationships by seeking regular supervision and reflecting on the process.

3.7. REFLEXIVITY

The relationship between the researcher and the research process must be acknowledged in qualitative research through a discussion of reflexivity. The researcher played a fundamental role in the research and cannot be considered an objective observer. Instead, the researcher served as a "self as instrument" in the research process (McCracken, 1988). The researcher's own relativist assumptions about the nature of the world (ontology) implied that a diversity of interpretations could be made about the world (epistemology) using qualitative methodology. Additionally, the researcher has gained certain understandings of marriage during postgraduate study through the literature and personal experiences. These assumptions and experiences, as well as the review of relevant literature, informed how the research was conceptualised, what methodology was selected as appropriate, and how the data set was interpreted and analysed (Parker, 2004).

Gibson and Swartz (2004) have suggested that a range of personal issues influenced how individuals choose their work and the manner in which this work was carried out. As a married woman pursuing postgraduate study in Psychology, the subject matter of the research resonated with the researcher in a personal way. Thus, it is possible that the researcher's own experiences and anxieties concerning her marriage during postgraduate study influenced the research process. Initially, the researcher found it difficult to engage with the literature concerning the dual challenges of marriage and postgraduate study as it

seemed to predict possible, negative experiences. The researcher questioned whether her marriage would be able to manage this transition, evoking anxiety about the permanence of her marriage. These anxieties necessitated the seeking of supervision and personal psychotherapy in order to reflect upon and manage these anxieties. On the other hand, the researcher's experiences of marriage contributed to a first-hand, contextualised understanding of what was found in the literature. Therefore, instead of these experiences and anxieties hindering the research process, the researcher engaged with her experiences of marriage and postgraduate study to ensure the research was not tainted before competing data collection and analysis.

The subjective position of the researcher influenced the process of data collection. The relationship between the researcher and the participants was particularly complex. Whereas detachment and distance was normally adhered to in psychological studies, the face-to-face interview was a personal, human-to-human encounter between the researcher and the participant (Banister et al., 2006). As the researcher and participants were similar in the sense that both were married and currently enrolled in a Masters programme in Psychology, it was possible that the relationship between researcher and participants was experienced as collegial. Although the researcher and participants seemed to occupy equal positions of status and power, the researcher as interviewer had power to direct the interaction by posing certain questions, while the participants had power to disclose and redirect the interaction at their discretion. Additionally, the researcher requested disclosure from the participants, without needing to disclose in return. Interestingly, the majority of the participants asked the researcher about her interest in the topic and the impact on her marriage at the end of the interview. As these questions were posed at the conclusion of the interview, the researcher decided to answer transparently with the awareness that the researcher's disclosure would not influence the results. This was also intended to equal the power differentials between the participants and researcher inherent in many research studies.

The process of data analysis in qualitative research relied on subjective description and interpretation, implying that different findings emerged as a result of different researchers, different theoretical frameworks, or different social contexts (Banister et al., 2006). As a result, the data analysis represented one possible interpretation of the data, guided by the specific position of the researcher. In order to address this subjectivity, the analysis process was subject to close supervision and critical reflexivity. The initial description and interpretation of the participants' experiences was simplistic due to over-identification with

the participants by the researcher, thereby contributing to desires to protect the participants' experiences. However, supervision challenged the researcher to critically engage with her own resistance to interpret the participants' experiences and allowed the researcher to separate her experiences from the participants' experiences so that the findings were not contaminated. Thus, a more critical examination and exploration emerged in order to take advantage of the possible opportunities for insight into married female students' experiences.

The "dangers of familiarity" (McCracken, 1988, p. 12) inherent in the researcher's theoretical and personal assumptions and experiences must be considered and acknowledged throughout the research process in a critical and reflective manner. While the researcher aimed to be reflexive throughout the research process, this willingness did not necessarily lead to the self-awareness and insight required in order to fully acknowledge the impact on the research process. An understanding of the researcher's contribution to the research is never complete due to the "complex unconscious processes interacting with the research work, encouraging some ways of going about things, inhibiting others" (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008, p. 113).

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This research study sought to examine the motivations of female students in Psychology who accepted the dual challenges of marriage and postgraduate study within the same year and the associated benefits and challenges accrued from this dual challenge. Using Braun and Clark's (2006) method of thematic content analysis to interpret the data set, the results suggested that participants in this study idealised the notions of love and marriage, asserting that marriage would serve as a safeguard against the stresses of Masters and relationship insecurity. However, this idealised complementarity of marriage and postgraduate study was not actualised as participants found it difficult to integrate and successfully negotiate these two major transitions simultaneously.

4.1. WHY MARRY? A DEFENSIVE IDEALISATION

The married female postgraduate students in this study struggled to answer this question. Their answers were almost formulaic regarding the decision to make the transition from dating to marriage. Furthermore, the participants' did not clearly anticipate the extent to which Masters training would impact on their marriages. Instead, the participants provided idealised predictions of marriage acting as a buffer against the stresses of the year. Although this was not unexpected as newly married generally provide such responses (Khaleque, 2004), this reflects a lack of introspection concerning these two major adjustment periods.

The most common reason why participants in this study considered marriage while on the Psychology study trajectory was that the relationship had progressed to a stage whereby formalising the relationship through marriage seemed to be the next step. For many of the participants that had been dating for an extended period of time, there was awareness that marriage would be considered as the relationship and commitment grew over time.

> *We'd known each other for a long time. It seemed like the next thing to do… a natural progression of where our relationship had been over years* (Participant 2)

When the participants had been dating a long time, their family often shared these expectations of marriage as the next step in the course of the relationship.

I think because it was such a long dating process, our parents were like thank goodness it is coming (Participant 4)

The dating period appeared to confirm the couple's compatibility before they committed to marriage and this shared past was accompanied by a desire for permanence of the relationship in the future. Participants asserted that the pooling of resources would allow them to achieve specific goals, including the completion of Masters, sharing in domestic responsibilities, and starting a family.

We felt we could be better together than we could be apart and we could accomplish things together that we really wanted to accomplish together (Participant 1)

Therefore, the participants in this study decided to formalise their relationship through marriage as they had established compatibility with their partner during dating, they affirmed that they felt the time was right to transition from an unattached young adult to forming a newly married couple, and they asserted that they could achieve their future goals as a married couple.

The longevity of studying in Psychology seemed to correspond with the culmination of the dating phase as the participants considered marriage whilst considering the pursuit of postgraduate study. As the participants' relationships had reached a stage in which progression towards marriage was expected, they questioned the potential effects of delaying their marriages.

I was still studying so I didn't mind not getting married. But he was past the stage of dating. He knew what he wanted and if I wanted to be with him, marriage was it (Participant 7)

With the prospect that marriage and postgraduate study would be pursued simultaneously, participants contemplated the impact Masters could have on their marriages. In most instances, participants were informed of the challenges of Masters and the negative consequences for relationships.

I didn't want to get married during the year… I thought it might be a very hectic year, because you hear from everyone that it's emotionally draining and that the work load is a lot, so I felt that there won't really be time for marriage (Participant 5)

Previous Masters' students had told me that this is the divorce course. That everyone breaks up (Participant 2)

The participants' parents also expressed concerns about participants getting married during their postgraduate studies.

> *My parents were a bit sceptical about me getting married because I was very young; they really wanted me to finish my studies first* (Participant 7)

> *My husband's dad had to sit us down and say student marriages don't work* (Participant 3)

As a result, the participants predicted the possibility of the current relationship breaking down and the associated costs of ending the relationship during Masters. Many participants expressed concerns regarding how Masters would have impacted the relationship if they were not married. The predominant fantasy was that marriage offered a greater sense of stability and security in the relationship, protecting the relationship from disintegration during Masters.

> *I'm so glad I was married, because I have fantasies around what Masters would do to our relationship if I wasn't* (Participant 2)

> *I don't know if we'd walk away if we weren't married, but I think there's a much higher chance* (Participant 3)

Despite this rationalisation of relationship permanence and protection, participants still expressed doubts about getting married.

> *I often questioned if this was the right thing to do… I wasn't so sure when I got married* (Participant 6)

> *I did feel at the time that my parents didn't feel that it was a good idea. You do have these doubts. You internalise your parents' values. You turn around and ask why they are so worried about this? The fears in my head, I did give credence to it* (Participant 2)

Nevertheless, the experiences of past Masters students, concerns of parents, as well as the awareness of the difficulties associated with these two adjustments, did not deter the participants from getting married. Therefore, marriage seemed to reduce feelings of anxiety and uncertainty about the stability of the relationship while embarking on a potentially difficult and challenging Masters course-work programme in Psychology.

Participants desired to assert their independence as young adults and marriage may have offered a means of claiming an independent adult status while on the Psychology career trajectory.

> *I suppose for us marriage means complete independence. It really was a final step towards independence* (Participant 5)

> *Not having to consult anybody about what I want to do, that was so freeing to be able to just say I want to do this and I don't have to go ask my mother* (Participant 4)

Even if participants desired to individuate from their family of origin, gain financial independence and establish a work identity before they got married, this was not successfully attained for most of the participants in this study as the longevity of studying Psychology seemed to interfere with these developmental tasks. As a result, participants were unable to fully assert themselves as independent adults while pursuing postgraduate study.

> *I literally came out of school, started studying and didn't stop. So I wasn't able to move out of home* (Participant 4)

> *I went right from high school to university, then I took a year off then started Masters. All the time, I was never financially independent* (Participant 5)

Limited opportunities to claim independence as adults seemed to contribute to anxiety and uncertainty concerning the decision to marry, specifically as marriage implied leaving their family and losing the familiarity of the dependence.

> *I really feared that now I have to grow up and I can't be my mom's little girl. I was worried about feeling left out from my family and now I have to go grow up and do all the things that I have never done before* (Participant 4)

For other participants, the independence-seeking behaviour was rooted in difficult family circumstances that participants sought to escape. In these cases, a reaction formation was evident as family breakdown or divorce in family of origin contributed to a strong desire to marry for participants due to the need to create the stability and certainty that may have been lacking in their own family of origin. Motivations to marry in these instances may have been influenced by defensive personality traits and also revealed features of dependency.

> *Both my parents are divorced and my husband's parents are divorced, so we kind of went into this thing like we really want it to work and if we're not willing to make it*

work then we shouldn't get married in the first place. If we're going to make the commitment let's try and make it work for as long as we both live (Participant 3)

Dependency was also evident in the participants' seeking of confirmation of their decision to marry from family or friends in order to rationalise their decision. The approval and support of friends or family members reinforced the couple's belief in the suitability of their relationship for marriage, possibility as part of a projective identification.

They've seen us apart and they've seen us together, so they know we are good for each other and we make each other really happy (Participant 3)

They said that in this relationship you are more yourself, you seem more alive, more at peace; you just seem to be a better person with him (Participant 6)

This suggested that participants experienced a tension between their desire for independence and dependence. Thus, marriage may have served as one of a few available means to negotiate this tension as it allowed individuation from the participants' family of origin and claiming of an independent adult status, while displacing some of the dependent features onto the marriage.

Idealistic notions of love and marriage were obvious for some participants as evidenced in their belief in love at first sight, finding their perfect partner, and forming an idyllic, long-lasting relationship.

We met and I promise you, we fell in love the night we met and three weeks later we were totally ready to get married, we loved each other so much and it hasn't changed (Participant 3)

Many participants idealised the idea that each other's families were gaining a son-in-law or a daughter-in-law, which brought the families together and, in some cases, the development of love.

My family were happy to get him as a son-in-law, I think – well I hope, that his family was happy with me as a daughter-in-law as well (Participant 5)

My family loves my husband and his family really likes me, I hope they do (Participant 3)

Even in the face of contradictory information about the permanence and stability of marriage, participants held onto their idealised notions of marriage. This romantic interpretation of love

suggested that their love was all-consuming and could overcome all obstacles, including the difficulties of postgraduate study. Overall, participants seemed to romanticise the idea that marriage would offer a formal declaration of their commitment to the relationship, thereby allowing an acceptable individuation from their family of origin, as well as providing a sense of security and stability in their union.

4.2. "I DON'T HAVE TIME TO DO EVERYTHING" SO "I CAN'T DO THIS RIGHT NOW"

The participants' idealisation was challenged in the early stages of their marriages and seemed to become more realistic as the experiences of the two major transitions become more demanding. Participants in this study expressed that their experiences of embarking on a Masters course-work programme in Psychology, as well as establishing a marital relationship, necessitated adjustment and adaptation. Some participants expressed that they were unprepared for the changes associated with the initial phases of marriage.

> *It's our first year of marriage… Even though we thought we were being very responsible and we know each other full proof before we got married, that's just not feasible. It's impossible to do that* (Participant 3)

Participants referred to particular challenges in the early stages of marriage, such as reconciling different family backgrounds; taking on new responsibilities; balancing the relationship and individual needs; making time for each other; and difficulties with family of origin adjusting to the change. This was experienced as challenging as the early phases of marriage were often idealised to be associated with high levels of satisfaction.

> *I think it's hard to reconcile as I think getting married is the pinnacle of the fairy-tale and from that it's not going to get worse* (Participant 3)

Furthermore, participants also experienced feelings of unfamiliarity and unpredictability in their Masters programmes.

> *You don't feel prepared enough. You feel like that most of the year, someone is coming to you with a major serious problem or clinical problem and a lot of the time you feel like you have no clue about what you're doing in the room. It's been really hard for me to consistently be in an experience where I feel I don't know what I'm doing… which can make you feel a little bit inadequate… It's like constantly being in a disaster or a big mess and you can't fix it* (Participant 4)

Thus, participants described how they felt unprepared for both Masters and the early stages of marriage, contributing to the experience of dual challenges. Many of the participants had to alter their expectations in order to adjust to the changes of marriage and postgraduate study.

> *In Masters you can't expect everything to be normal, birthdays, anniversaries, romantic weekends. You can't expect them to be how they normally are. There is too much other stuff so you've got to let it go* (Participant 6)

As a result, participants would compromise the level of engagement in either their studies or their marriage, which interfered with the successful realisation of adjustment and adaptation in both transitions. Instead of fully engaging with the required adjustments, participants tended to split themselves and their experiences into separate categories of Masters and marriage, which could have had implications for their experience of integration during the year.

> *I don't think I thought about Masters in terms of marriage, I thought that you've got the rest of your life to be married, Masters just happens to be this year* (Participant 8)

As the demands of Masters dominated on a daily basis, the adjustment to postgraduate study seemed to be given more emphasis by participants in this study. Professional Masters programmes in Psychology were shown to be particularly demanding, especially in terms of the emotional requirements of training. Participants referred to the training as *"overwhelming"* (Participant 8), *"insane"* (Participant 6), and *"draining"* (Participant 1). This often had a negative impact on the individual's emotional well-being.

> *I would sometimes be laughing and crying at the same time for no reason* (Participant 8)

Some participants had a strong identification with their clients and struggled to contain their clients' pain, conflicts, disappointments and hardships, long after the conclusion of psychotherapy sessions.

> *With some of clients now I'll drive home crying, so upset about what I've heard and so hopeless, asking myself, "What am I going to do about this? This is so heavy." Or I'll sit and worry about a client at night* (Participant 4)

Additionally, husbands seemed to also experience their own negative emotions concerning the programme.

My husband says I hate WITS, I hate Masters (Participant 7)

My husband had gotten very used to me being very busy, going off to study, working, and that he had to do other things… on his computer or on his iPad or watching TV programs or making arrangements to go with his friends for dinner. Obviously there's anger and a bit of bitterness that comes from my husband always having to do his own thing (Participant 8)

In some instances, participants became emotionally unavailable to their spouses which may have contributed to emotional disconnection in the marital relationship.

You don't have time to hold and contain each other, like you know when my husband is stressed, I don't have time to be there for him because I'm busy with my own stress… It could really feel like we are two islands just living in the same house (Participant 3)

The participants' experiences of training in Psychology were often outside of others' frames of reference, making it difficult for husbands to identify with the emotional requirements and challenges of Masters.

I think he didn't realise what the profession was like before this year. He was like, "You guys just sit on a couch and listen to people. How do you get tired from doing that?" (Participant 4)

It's a very emotional draining and very different type of experience. It's a different type of tired and busy than generally people expect. So it's hard in that way for my husband to understand a lot of the time (Participant 1)

Furthermore, the confidential nature of the profession meant that aspects of Masters training were perceived to be difficult to explain to those outside of the profession of Psychology.

You can't always discuss your patients with someone else who's not really in the field. It's sometimes hard to explain to them why a specific patient touched you in a certain way, why you found a session was particularly draining or difficult (Participant 5)

Participants also assumed that their husbands would not fully comprehend or empathise with their experiences and, as a result, were assumed to be unable to provide emotional support.

I think it's hard for him to be emotionally supportive because he doesn't understand and can't really relate so even though that throughout our marriage he has normally

been emotionally supportive, in this kind of situation he is not so much because he doesn't understand how to be (Participant 1)

Besides the emotional requirements of training in Psychology, the programme also consisted of high academic demands which contributed to additional stress for married students. The participants seemed to rely on psychological theory in order to understand their experiences of marriage while participating in postgraduate study. Participants spoke about the *"parentified child"* (Participant 2), *"the paranoid-schizoid position"* (Participant 2), *"adjustment"* (Participant 2), *"what are you projecting"* (Participant 2), *"enmeshed family"* (Participant 2), *"the empty nest"* (Participant 5), and *"projecting this image of perfection"* (Participant 5). Participants acknowledged that they *"psychologise"* (Participant 3) their partners, families, friends, lecturers and classmates due to the all-consuming nature of the programme.

You're a bit screwed up if you're a psychologist because you never see people for the sake of just seeing them. You interpret everything, because it becomes a way of thinking. You are always thinking about what you're reading (Participant 2)

New experiences, whether it was Masters training or the formation of marriage, may have evoked feelings of anxiety and uncertainty for participants in this study.

I'm always thinking Psychology, is this developmentally appropriate? Should we be fighting? Does every married couple fight in the first year? What does it mean that we're fighting all the time? (Participant 3)

Thus, participants may have tended to psychologise their marriages in order to cope with the anxieties evoked by Masters training and establishing a marriage and this helped to make sense of their experiences both in the programme and in their marriages using intellectualisation. Nevertheless, the use of psychological theory could also be viewed as problematic as it could have served as a disengagement from the experiential parameters of marriage and postgraduate study.

The work load and input required for studying and training often contributed to the need to negotiate numerous commitments. When participants compared their experiences to their non-married peers, they described their experiences as more challenging and felt that their non-married counterparts could perform better in the programme due to fewer

responsibilities. Participants seemed to desire to be more like their non-married peers who could be more selfish, have fewer responsibilities and make less sacrifices.

> *I think if you are single, it's easier to only be concerned with yourself… involved with yourself. Whereas opposed to if you are married, you have a responsibility to your husband, and your relationship and it extends beyond Masters* (Participant 5)

> *People who stay with their parents, they have everything done for them. It saves you so much time. If you don't have a partner, there's no worrying about the other, you can just get your work done. I just have so much more responsibilities and have to get all the work done* (Participant 7)

As less time was available for the marital relationship due to the demands of Masters, less time was also available for family and friends. Participants would often have to limit social activities, becoming unavailable to family and friends. In many instances, this would impact on the husbands negatively as either they would socialise without their wives or also limit their social activities.

> *My husband's had to go to family functions alone… It's lonely for him* (Participant 7)

> *A lot of our friendships are mutual friendships with other couples and I think because my friendships with them are suffering, his friendships with them are suffering* (Participant 1)

In order to cope with the academic demands, maintain a marital relationship, and fulfil other responsibilities, participants had to find the balance between spending time with their spouses and fulfilling work commitments. This implied that participants compromised the quality and engagement with their studies due to the sharing of available time.

> *Sometimes I just have to make the choice to do worse on this essay and spend time with my husband. And I feel that that might impact on my Masters negatively* (Participant 1)

> *I was torn between the guilt of I should go with him, I must go with and I need to, but I need to be at home to work. I felt quite anguished being torn, so even if I was at home, I'd feel bad that I'd left him* (Participant 8)

Furthermore, when the marital dyad did set aside time to spend together, this was also experienced as difficult as it was such a substantial change.

> *We're really in such different head places and it's hard to connect* (Participant 3)

> *It's actually been quite funny because the really busy times we manage to keep ship afloat. Yet when we do stop and go for weekends away, instead of it being this wonderful re-group, we both find it quite hard to stop and connect and have an amazing time* (Participant 6)

This suggests that marital adjustment was necessitated when changes occurred and this seemed to be a singular, individualistic process, rather than dyadic. The focus on the individual adjustment to postgraduate study, instead of on dyadic marital adjustment, may have contributed to this tendency towards adjusting individually.

By not giving appropriate energy to the marital transition, participants may not have managed to negotiate and resolve the differences that generally emerge in the early stages of marriage. The suspension of dealing with the transition required in the early stages of marriage seemed to contribute to the accumulation of tension and unresolved issues which ultimately led to conflict.

> *There is tension and frustration built up from things that are a result of Masters, like not spending time together or me being tired or me working late and going to bed at different times from him* (Participant 1)

> *The tension builds up if we haven't spent time together for a while, then it blows up in your face and everything comes out* (Participant 7)

For some participants, an avoidance of conflict ensued and the tension remained unresolved, especially when there were academic or emotional demands related to Masters.

> *At times that it was high pressure; I can't waste time with a fight and tears at this time. I would say that I can't do this right now. Sometimes we would both kind of be pissed off and angry, which is not good. It's not good to have to wait to have an argument, because it just sits with both of you* (Participant 8)

> *When my emotional resources were down, I just couldn't give him the time of day to work those issues through* (Participant 2)

These participants preferred to suspend dealing with the issues in their marriages by claiming they were too tired or emotionally drained and instead directed their attention towards Masters-related tasks.

Our fights were more because I was so emotionally exhausted and he was not. So I would flip out about stupid things (Participant 2)

I'll be really stressed and get really irritated really easily and one of us will say something that's really mean in the moment and it really could deteriorate (Participant 3)

The build-up of tension over time often developed into conflictual arguments and fights. Participants described some of these fights as characterised by *"shouting"* (Participant 2), *"stomping off"* (Participant 2), *"snapping"* (Participant 3), and *"neurotic screaming"* (Participant 5). Participants complained that certain adjustments required in the early stages of marriage were unpleasant to deal with and interfered with work required in postgraduate study.

Sometimes we haven't been able to work when we've needed to, because we have a deadline or something, because we have some issue to resolve (Participant 3)

Thus, postgraduate study often resulted in build-up of tension and reduced resources when dealing with issues, which lead to amplified conflict in the marital relationship. Even if the participants attempted to avoid conflict due to the academic and emotional demands of Masters training or deny the necessity to resolve differences, participants were constantly reminded that marriage was a transition that also required adaptation and adjustment.

The participants with issues from their family of origin seemed to experience more difficulties and anxiety with the transition from an unattached young adult to newly-married married couple. Participants from closely enmeshed families experienced anxiety related to individuating from their family of origin and being emotionally or physically separate from their families. These participants desired to spend as much time as possible with their families of origin, in some instances relying more on family members than their husbands. Furthermore, there was a tension between a desire to return to their family home and a desire to be independent.

So if something wasn't ok or if I was sick, I would phone my mother. Or if I needed something for making dinner, I would go past and get it from my mom instead of going to the shops. And it was really nice to have that support but I realised that my husband was coming second sometimes (Participant 4)

For others, whose motivation to marry included the desire to escape their family of origin or the need to create stability and security through marriage in order to make up for instability in their childhood or adolescence, there was a stronger need to individuate from their family in order to form an identity as a marital couple. These participants expressed a strong desire to completely separate and individuate from their family of origin, demanding space and the cessation of playing previous roles in their families. At the same time, these participants were extremely dependent on their husbands to fulfil needs that may have been previously unsatisfied in their family of origin.

> *My parents are quite intrusive people. They used to live through me. I was the person in their lives that kept them together. I think that there was a lot of role negotiation around me being married now and that I don't play that role in their lives anymore* (Participant 2)

> *My experience of the first couple of months of being married is that we needed to have some space from people, to kind of settle in our new life. In this new identity, these new rules and also living together* (Participant 5)

The impact of their marriage on their family of origin was also difficult for participants to manage.

> *We were fulfilling needs in other people's lives and suddenly we weren't doing that any more. People also realise that you are changing and that's not always acceptable. For everyone, it's an adjustment, especially our families* (Participant 5)

> *It felt to my parents that it was the final death of who I was to them and that role that I played* (Participant 2)

Therefore, part of the marital transition was resolving the tension between the participants' desire to return and belong to their family of origin and the need to individuate in order to form an identity as an independent marital couple. These tensions between the participants' family of origin and the new marital relationship were more difficult to negotiate if inter-generational or dependency issues were present.

Associated with a change in identity and roles from one's family of origin, some participants also expressed a desire to escape the traditional view of marriage and the associated gender roles expected of women. Yet, for many of the participants, their parents' marriage seemed to adhere to traditional roles and represented a patriarchal institution.

> *I grew up traditionally, he grew up traditionally. It's kind of difficult, because you wanted to be modern, but you had the example of traditional. Now breaking away from that, which way do you go?* (Participant 5)

Overcoming the traditional view of the woman in the marriage and negotiating specific gender roles was emphasised by the participants in this study, even if they did not have an example of this in their own parents' marriages.

> *I don't want to be the stereotypical woman in the kitchen or have specific gender roles… So we are able to share the roles* (Participant 4)

> *One of the most important things is for me to feel that I was involved in the financial decisions; that was one of my critiques of my parents' marriage* (Participant 5)

> *He's not very domesticated; it's hard for him because of the way he grew up… It's not the norm for the male but he does cook, he does help* (Participant 7)

Nevertheless, relics of traditional gender roles seem to continue in some of the participants' marriages as patterns of behaviour passed down from generations. The participants' own marriages were often characterised by traditional gender roles as female postgraduate students tended to take care of their homes, while their husbands earned a salary, resulting in feelings of dissonance for some participants.

> *I've had to take a step back and say this year he is the breadwinne*r (Participant 4)

> *I have fallen more into the traditional role because I don't "work" during the day, which makes it easier in terms of time to do the cleaning and the cooking* (Participant 5)

Additionally, many of the participants desired to equally participate in financial decisions, as well as form a dual-income partnership in their marriages, which was not realised in the first year of their marriages. For this study's participants, external constraints placed on the marriage due to Masters may have imposed some traditional gender roles as the women could not earn a salary due to the longevity of the study trajectory. As a result, the participants often relied solely on the husband's salary and experienced a tension between their goal to create a mutual partnership in their marriages and their restricted ability to create such a partnership.

> *That was very hard for me, knowing that he has the bank account now, that has the money going into it, so he's going to be doing the finances, so I suppose that*

because his bank account was full at the time, with mine being slightly less, it kind of fell that way where he was doing the finances (Participant 5)

Thus, the participants expressed their resistance to succumbing to traditional gender roles, with the critical awareness that the Masters programme limited their ability to challenge these notions. However, participants argued that completing their postgraduate studies would mean that they would be able to create a marriage characterised by mutual partnership and equality in the long-term.

I was feeling that I've studied all this time to break away from being a traditional woman to being a more modern woman… I've studied all this time and I should bring in an income. I wanted to be a dual income family and also being in the programme, didn't allow that. Having to depend on my husband is not that easy for me (Participant 5)

The balancing of needs and expectations of self and partner was considered an important transition as the couple established themselves as a marital dyad, yet participants in this study found this to be particularly challenging. Before marriage, participants felt they were able to live their lives selfishly; whereas once they were married this had to change.

You realise there are some things you want to do that you can't do due to different constraints and you need to start thinking of each other as a unit. That's sometimes hard because you're used to just thinking of yourself (Participant 4)

So it's this progression: just thinking about yourself in the beginning, now we have to think about each other all the time… It's just becomes more complicated, more people that you have to consider and different needs that you have to prioritise at this stage of your life (Participant 3)

In order to cope with the array of challenges associated with postgraduate study and establishing and maintaining a marital relationship, various sacrifices were made in the marriage.

So I think it's almost like an understanding between the two of us that we kind of have to put things on hold for the year (Participant 1)

The sacrifices were made regarding time, family commitments, social commitments, domestic contributions, economic independence, as well as delaying having children. The shared understanding was that Masters contributed to *"hard and exceptional circumstances"*

(Participant 8) and the participants rationalised that the relationship would adjust to new, improved circumstances over the completion of Masters.

4.3. MASTERING THE DEFENCE

Participants tended to experience some degree of disenchantment and disappointment as their marital relationships evolved and did not live up to their initial, unrealistic expectations. The difficulties faced by married students in Psychology in the early stages of marriage seemed to help participants renegotiate their idealistic assumptions of marriage, while at the same time, re-framing the challenges as preparation for later challenges in marriage. Participants in this study acknowledged that marriage will often have stressful times and postgraduate study served as a prototype to adjusting and adapting to the challenges faced in a marriage.

> *There is always going to be times in our marriage, in our lives when things are difficult… There's never not going to be surprises and what we have proven to ourselves this year is that we are able to navigate them (*Participant 3)

Many participants noted that the challenges faced had reinforced the couple's commitment to each other and re-prioritised their marriages.

> *Even though it's been difficult getting married and doing Masters at the same time, it is so good because it's emphasised our commitment to the relationship* (Participant 3)

> *I have to give the input to my husband and to the relationship. To nurture that and take care of it is still in its infancy, it's still so new and fresh… I made a commitment at my wedding where I've said that I will always put the relationship first* (Participant 5)

Thus, the dual challenges of marriage and postgraduate studies contributed to a focus on each other as participants emphasised the importance of the relationship during difficult times. Participants rationalised that their marriages were strengthened through the challenges and provided the couple with opportunities to learn new ways of dealing with difficulties.

For many of the participants, being married was associated with relationship stability and security, especially in comparison to non-married colleagues in the Masters programme.

> *I have not had to worry about relationship stress. How are we doing? Is this going anywhere? A lot of the other people have had to work with that, questioning their relationships. But mine has been solid* (Participant 6)

Although participants referred to fears of relationship breakdown before they got married, marriage seemed to protect the relationship form potential dissolution during Masters, often informally termed *"the divorce course"* (Participant 2). It is possible that the sense of relationship security and stability offered by marriage was magnified in order to lessen participants' anxieties and uncertainties, as participants often denied the possibility that their marriages would not survive. It appeared that participants in this study felt that their vows *"in sickness and in health"* (Participant 8) and the *"serious"* (Participant 5) nature of marriage protected them from relationship breakdown. One participant argued that *"it's a real schlep to get divorced"* during Masters and *"everyone is too volatile"* (Participant 2) to make the decision to end the marriage. Therefore, marriage was rationalised to be a more secure relationship choice, contributing to reduced concerns of relationship breakdown for the participants and supported the perception of relationship stability during postgraduate study in Psychology.

The participants' individual experiences of the two major transitions of Masters and marriage was characterised as a time of many unexpected changes. Besides the rearrangements that were made within the marital system, participants experienced their own individual, emotional process of change. The unfamiliarity of the experiences made participants question their typical responses to their world as their old ways of seeing, knowing, and performing were no longer adaptive.

> *It can sometimes feel demotivating to a person like me who likes to learn something and master it. What I'm learning more and more is that Psychology is so far from that because you're never going to master something. Someone like me, I've always wanted things to be black and white and I'm realising it's competing the wrong profession to think black and white in because there is never going to be the six steps to dealing with this or whatever* (Participant 4)

> *I don't know why, but marriage brings up so much stuff about our individual stuff from our families of origin, stuff about dependence, and every individual issue you've ever had* (Participant 3)

This necessitated *"changing and growing"* (Participant 3) as married female postgraduate students were expected to explore new dimensions of themselves. In many cases, these changes were fundamental shifts in ways of thinking about the world, dealing with past unresolved issues, and resituating themselves in their intimate relationships and in their world.

> *I'm much more relaxed. And my husband's seen a different side to me because I'm more adventurous, I make jokes more often, and I'm more happy-go-lucky. I don't think people would recognise the way that I am or the way that I live now* (Participant 2)

> *I've also learnt to be more gentle and not as selfish I suppose. We've treated each other with a lot of respect, we've treated each other with grace* (Participant 6)

Married female postgraduate students in this study were uncertain whether it was the experiences of Masters or marriage that facilitated their exploration of new dimensions of themselves. Either way, participants in this study expressed that they were able to grow and enhance their skills as emerging Psychologists as previously held assumptions and ways of being in the world were challenged. Participants often argued that they could *"learn stuff here we can use at home"* (Participant 5) and also applied their understandings and insights to their relationships.

> *I run a DBT group at my internship site. We run something about integrating emotion and reason to create a wise mind, which is like a pause button. I use my wise mind to think about things so that I'm not so irrational in my marriage* (Participant 2)

> *For me, I suppose, in my marriage; I don't really know if it was as a consequence of my doing Masters, or as a consequence of being married, but for me, perhaps it's a combination of both, I am becoming more reflective. In a marriage, you learn so much about yourself, because you are constantly interacting with this person a lot of the time. For me, a lot of reflection has taken place on maybe what I try to do in our relationship and how that can potentially impact on my therapy session in how I come across to people* (Participant 5)

Thus, the participants' own individual, emotional processes of change in the two transitions of marriage and postgraduate study included a redefinition of themselves, as well an

extension of this transformation into all aspects of their lives, including their relationships and professional development.

The experiences of marriage for students seemed to provide an alternative perspective and helped keep the participants grounded during the challenges of training in Psychology. Participants described how before they were married, they highly emphasised and valued academic performance to the exclusion of other activities. For many of the participants, academic performance was accentuated as it contributed to feelings of competency and a secure sense of self.

> *If you think of the self as being brittle, building the self up from external things, marks are quite important to me so that I used to make sure that I did well* (Participant 2)

> *In my first, second, third year at university, my whole life was just university and focusing on doing well and doing whatever I can to make sure I can be a good therapist. I had to make space for life* (Participant 5)

Participants argued that being married allowed to them to be less focused on academic achievement and provided opportunities to assert their value, feelings of competency and sense of self in other ways besides academic success. Instead, married female postgraduate students asserted that they take a more *"balanced"* (Participant 7), *"healthy"* (Participant 1) and *"holistic*" (Participant 5) approach to the Masters programme.

> *I feel like my marriage grounds me, I think it helps me to let go a little bit of Masters. Because I think if I all I had was Masters it would be all I see myself as and I think how I'd perform this year would be a lot more anxiety-provoking for me… I think I'd feel like however I come out of Masters like that's the full measure of me because all that I was this year was Masters. Whereas, at the end of the year, I'm going to come out of this year and see it as not only as a measure of how I performed in Masters, but a measure of the amount of time I gave to my family and the effort I put into my friends* (Participant 1)

The experience of the dual challenges provided participants with the opportunity to learn alternative ways of dealing with issues through the marital transition.

It's been a good learning experience this year as what we've learnt is how we manage, we've been able to manage this particular transition and then next year will have to learn how to manage that transition and so on and so on (Participant 3)

Initially, many participants lacked the initiative and time to resolve differences, participate in shared activities, or constructively communicate. Yet, the accumulation of tension and conflict became difficult to manage, often compelling participants to take a more active approach to resolving differences. Thus, participants seemed to develop adequate and constructive conflict resolution strategies, using emotional expressiveness.

If it gets too much, we take a break and come back and retry to address it… Usually both of us are feeling a bit more motivated to change because we both realise the things we have said and what we really mean (Participant 5)

We have set up conflict coffees where we try to meet once a week outside of work and the home. If there is anything we need to discuss, that's the place. It's not eleven o'clock at night. It's in a safe, controlled environment where you are both thinking quite clearly (Participant 6)

Communication benefits were specifically highlighted.

We are trying to communicate in a way that's not ignoring each other, or having tantrums, or behaving like little kids, but we're trying to sit down and hear each other and reflect (Participant 3)

I expect if something is wrong for you not be just keep quiet or say nothing is wrong, I expect you to tell me. When things are wrong, and naturally things crop up, to say things aren't ok and I need you to know about it. That's opened up the airway for it be ok if there's a problem (Participant 4)

In order to manage their dual responsibilities to Masters and marriage, structure and routine were often employed by many of the participants. The participants' use of structure was employed a coping strategy and in many instances this also positively impacted on time management and meeting of deadlines.

I needed to be super organised in Masters and maybe if I could organise my marriage, it would be fine (Participant 2)

Being married means there is someone else I've had to be aware of, so I can't leave everything to the last minute and cram it in. I've had to manage my time because he

doesn't want me coming to bed at one in the morning. So that's been a real pro as I've had to manage my time for us (Participant 6)

Another coping strategy was setting aside set times for the marital relationship to provide opportunities for shared activities and emotional connection. This included sharing meals, weekly date nights, weekends away, or pursuing common goals.

It's been a huge thing this year to continue enjoying doing stuff together. One of the things we do is we run together and this year we decided we'd run Comrades. The common goal kept us focused and connected. We were both petrified so we supporting each other through it. And the time on the road, running, we wouldn't often talk but it was just our time together. That time in silence and to re-group was good (Participant 6)

For some married female postgraduate students, their faith contributed to coping with the dual challenges of postgraduate study and marriage. Faith may have tied the marital couple together, either through shared involvement at a place of worship or by practicing their faith through prayer or fasting.

In my faith, I don't believe I would have gotten into Masters if I wasn't meant to have gotten in. That's been planned. Going along those lines, I wouldn't have got in if I couldn't have coped or marriage couldn't have coped (Participant 6)

It's always been helpful thing for me… the reason I did not study or work on a Saturday was because it was Shabbat. I didn't have to work. I spent time with my family and it was really good to have that space in the week (Participant 8)

When I'm having a tough day, to go and pray, to get that strength and hope that it would get better (Participant 7)

The marital dyad additionally had to negotiate learning new roles in the marriage. Specifically, sharing of domestic responsibilities was emphasised and often husbands took on cooking and cleaning roles as their partners did not have time due to Masters. For the participants who desired to break away from traditional gender roles, the sharing of roles reinforced their ability to challenge traditional ideas and practices and form a mutual partnership in their marriages.

> *My husband didn't know anything before and he's had to learn. So he does the washing and the cooking and all the things that he hasn't done before he's taken on* (Participant 1)

Furthermore, the reliance on the husband's salary was often a necessity during postgraduate study.

> *My husband is earning a salary which is huge, as well as paying the bills* (Participant 1)

The participants acknowledged the additional stress money placed on their relationship due to their studies, yet this also contributed to enhanced financial management, such as budgeting and reducing expenditure.

> *It's helped us realise what's important. I think we realise now how little you really need to survive and to actually be happy… Even though it's been hard financially, it's been a really good lesson* (Participant 4)

The husbands seemed to accept taking responsibility for being the sole breadwinner; yet there was often an awareness that this would change at the end of Masters. Participants perceived this financial stress as a necessary sacrifice in order to invest in the female postgraduate students' career in the profession of Psychology, which would, in turn, would benefit the marriage in the future.

Participants in this study seemed to be future-focused in their experiences of marriage and postgraduate study. The participants' focus on the future seemed to help re-frame the sacrifices and challenges as marital investments. As postgraduate study enhanced career opportunities for the female student, participants described exploring career decisions, while also considering the marriage and the possibility of having children.

> *To think about our careers, what do we want to do? Where do we want to go? Do we want to move country? Do we want to stay here? If we stay here, am I going work, is my husband going to work?* (Participant 3)

> *What a future it is setting up for us! To be able to run your own business, manage your own time and be self-employed in this economy… Freeing yourself from working in a proper corporate environment. It will give us time for family, friends and children one day* (Participant 6)

Furthermore, the marital dyad appeared to explore their goals and dreams for the marriage.

> *What do we want for our lives? What are some of our goals? What are the things we want to do together as our own new family?* (Participant 4)

Thus, despite the stressors and challenges of Masters during the initial stages of marriage, the marital dyad seemed to be able to adjust and focus on future goals for the marriage. The future-directedness ensured that the here-and-now difficulties were viewed in a positive perspective and reinforced the participants' sense of the marital relationships' permanence. Thus, even though the longevity of the study trajectory in Psychology may have contributed to certain challenges, marriage was asserted to be a long-term commitment that would continually require adaptation and adjustments.

4.4. CONCLUSION

Participants in this study idealised love and marriage as a union that would provide security and stability in an uncertain and challenging study trajectory in Psychology. However, participants were often unprepared for the dual challenges of marriage and postgraduate study, which caused difficulties with negotiating the emotional and academic demands of postgraduate study, while simultaneously engaging with the issues arising in the early stages of marriage. Nevertheless, participants rationalised that these difficulties helped to renegotiate idealistic notions of marriage, strengthen the commitment of the union, and provide opportunities to learn new coping strategies that could be implemented in the future. It is important to integrate and contextualise these findings with relevant literature in order to understand chauvinistic notions of marriage and career development for women, as well as provide insight into current trends in the Psychology profession.

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CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

As the profession of Psychology has been dominated by women, it was valuable to explore why many female students, who were selected into Professional Masters programmes in Psychology, decided to marry shortly before or during their studies, and how this may have impacted on their experiences of marriage and postgraduate study. By emphasising women's voices, this study broadened understandings of women not just as daughters, wives and potentially future mothers, but also as students pursuing careers. This contributed to insights into current trends in the Psychology profession, as well as deconstructed existing biases about family life cycle stages.

The idealisation of love and marriage has been shown in numerous other studies (Brown, 2004; Carter, 2010; Cherlin, 2005; Elizabeth, 2003; Jamieson, 2002; Smart, 2007; Smock et al., 2005; Sutton et al., 2003) and female postgraduate students shared the aspiration that marriage was the ideal life-long partnership. Yet, the motivations for entering this partnership were not clearly articulated; rather, romanticised notions of searching for a true love, falling in love, overcoming obstacles, and getting married were evident. This implied that love was afforded "a special legitimacy by placing it on some higher plane inaccessible to reason and explanation" (Jackson, 1993, p. 208). As a result, the motivations for marriage became aligned with fairy-tale, idealistic and romantic notions, and the reasons for marrying were indefinable, mysterious and outside of rationality.

Despite information that contradicted these idealised notions, such as high divorce rates in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2008), cautionary advice from family or friends, and in some instances, personal experience of divorce in their family of origin, female students made the decision to marry while simultaneously embarking on their postgraduate studies. The longevity of the Psychology study trajectory meant that the dating phase of some relationships concluded at the same time as postgraduate study commenced. Other studies (Brown, 2004; Smart, 2007; Sutton et al., 2003) have shown that often individuals question the impact of delaying marriage once the relationship has reached a "make or break stage" (Lewis, 2001, p.143) as expectations of the endurance of a relationship increased the longer a relationship continued (Carter, 2010). The decision to formalise their relationship through marriage was influenced by concerns regarding the postponement of marriage as the relationship had reached a stage in which advancement towards marriage was expected.

Furthermore, fears of relationship breakdown during Masters contributed to a greater desire for stability and security, whereby marriage was perceived as a contingency plan to protect the relationship. Therefore, the idealised, romanticised belief was that marriage would offer enhanced security and stability, as well as overcome the difficulties of the dual challenges of marriage and postgraduate study, served a defensive function as it reduced feelings of anxiety and uncertainty about the relationship during a challenging Masters course-work programme in Psychology.

Although idealisation was predominant before entering marriage, the romanticised notions of marriage and the anticipated high levels of satisfaction were confronted in the early phases of marriage. Research has shown that newly married couples romantically perceived the transition from preparation for marriage to formation of marriage to be the least complicated and the most joyous transition (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999; Khaleque, 2004). A study by McAllister, Mansfield and Dormor (1991) reinforced that the notion of the blissful unity of two individuals was overtaken by the reality of marriage requiring constant negotiations from the couple as two separate systems combined to form a new family system. This idealisation meant that marital expectations of female postgraduates were "often in sharp contrast to the realities of what it takes to create a satisfying marriage" (Morris & Carter, 1999, p.3). As a result, the establishment of the marital relationship in the early stages of marriage was shown to be difficult to negotiate as the marital relationships evolved and did not live up to possible unrealistic expectations (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Dankoski, 2001; Huston et al., 2001; Kulik & Havusha-Morgenstern, 2010).

Yet, for married female postgraduates, their experiences of marital adjustment also involved an exceptionally demanding Professional Masters programme, which was similarly idealised before commencement. Many studies have shown that Masters training in Psychology was emotionally demanding on students (Guse, 2010; 2003; Jordaan et al., 2007; O'Connor, 2001; Zemirah, 2000). In addition, academic requirements have been shown to be highly time-consuming in Masters course-work programmes in Psychology (Kottler & Swartz, 2004). These academic demands often meant that work, leisure and sleep activities were not shared and the absence of participating in shared activities, as well as the lack of spending time together as a newly married couple, has been shown to have a negative impact on marital adjustment (Schramm et al., 2009). The negotiation of the demanding work requirements associated with Masters at the same time as establishing a new marital relationship was considered a characteristic adjustment as new marriages generally had to

learn to balance work and family commitments (Schramm et al., 2009). Thus, married female postgraduates were expected to negotiate two major adjustments, both necessitating a loss of idealisation and expected high levels of satisfaction, coming to terms with the practicalities of marriage and postgraduate study, and learning to manage the dual challenges.

In order to cope with the difficulties of negotiating the dual transitions, female postgraduates tended to split themselves between the two major adjustments. Generally, married female postgraduates would alternatively engage and disengage with either the adjustments of marriage or postgraduate study, thereby compromising the simultaneous engagement with the dual challenges. This was evident as female postgraduates disengaged from academic achievement due to the rationalisation that marriage required input, while, at other times, would disengage from certain marital activities due to interferences with academic deadlines. Furthermore, the use of psychological theory may have served to disengage from the difficulties of the transitions and defend against the stresses of the dual challenges, as found in other studies (Guse, 2010; Kottler & Swartz, 2004). Jordaan et al. (2007) has suggested that disengagement was detrimental as it was a predictor of poor adjustment and increased symptoms of depression and anxiety. Disengagement meant that married students battled to integrate their experiences of marriage and postgraduate study, thus complicating the adjustment in both transitions. Despite efforts to disengage from either marriage or postgraduate, the demands of each reinforced that adjustment was required. The blurring of boundaries between the two transitions of marriage and postgraduate study, as well as the associated challenges and benefits, was evident as female postgraduates battled to distinguish between changes that occurred as a result of Masters from changes that occurred as a result of postgraduate study. Furthermore, individualistic and dyadic adaptations interacted in complementary ways. This suggested that over time, experiences became more integrated, thereby contributing to improved adjustment.

The challenges of the year often resulted in avoidance of conflict; however, the build-up of tension contributed to the eventual development of adequate and constructive conflict resolution strategies using communication and emotional expressiveness, which have been found to enhance marital adjustment in research studies (Domingue & Mollen, 2009; Kulik & Havusha-Morgenstern, 2010; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2008). A study by Jordaan et al. (2007) has also shown that employing active coping strategies were the most beneficial for Masters students in Psychology as they addressed the source of the stress and helped reduce psychological symptoms, such as anxiety and depression. Thereby, the use of active coping

strategies as shown in this study may have contributed to improved mental health outcomes. This confirmed previous research findings that revealed the benefits of marriage on mental health outcomes were substantial, including greater overall happiness, improvements in emotional well-being, reductions in depression, and reductions in alcohol abuse (Frech & Williams, 2007; Ribar, 2004; Waite & Bachrach, 2000; Waite & Lehrer, 2003; Wilson & Oswald, 2005).

The renegotiation of the idealisation of marriage was found to be associated with some degree of disenchantment and disappointment for female postgraduates, as well as for other cohorts (Dankoski, 2001; Huston et al., 2001). However, these idealised notions of marriage also allowed them to endure the difficulties experienced (Gladding, 2007). The focus on the future seemed to help re-frame the sacrifices and challenges as marital investments, which has been found in other studies (Kerkmann et al., 2000; Kulik & Havusha-Morgenstern, 2010). Yet, the here-and-now difficulties challenged the idealistic notions of the marital relationships' permanence. "Old ways of seeing, knowing and performing" (Kottler & Swartz, 2004, p. 68) were brought into question during Masters and the early phases of marriage, which facilitated the exploration of new dimensions of self and contributed to enhanced skills as emerging Psychologists. The familiarity of significant relationships has been shown to help Masters students to feel connected to their sense of self (Kottler & Swartz, 2004) as the challenges were facilitated through positive emotions, experiences and social support (Guse, 2010; Jordaan et al., 2007). While the physical presence of a partner and the provision of support were experienced as invaluable, this support also was augmented by families, close friends, therapists, supervisors and colleagues.

According to Carter and McGoldrick's (1999) stages of the family life cycle, individuals typically establish themselves in a career before getting married. This study revealed that this so-called normative pathway of development in which career establishment precedes marriage was not always relevant for females pursing postgraduate study in the profession of Psychology. Although no clear demographic trends concerning marriage and postgraduate study existed in the South African context, married female postgraduate students seemed to deviate as they married younger than the norm at the same time as embarking on postgraduate study. Compared to current statistics, where the median age for first marriage was 32 years for males and 29 years for females (Statistics South Africa, 2008), the median ages for males and females was found to be five years younger in this study. This suggested that female postgraduates in Psychology were less cautious than their

peers to postpone marriage until a later age, which contradicted previous research that suggests highly-educated women marry later in life (Hosegood et al., 2009; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007). Hence, this study showed that so-called normative patterns have limited impact on the subjective experiences of married females and reinforced the diversity of marital experiences in the South African context.

Carter and McGoldrick's (1999) model has been criticised as individuals generally do not progress through separate stages throughout their life course (Bengtson & Allen, 1993; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2000; Kapinus & Johnson, 2003), which was reinforced in this study as married female postgraduates progressed through unattached young adult transitional changes at the same time as marital transitional changes. It is possible that Western biases inherent in Carter and McGoldrick's (1999) family life cycle model problematized the application of the family life stages to married female postgraduates in the South African context, which rose questions about the supposed universality of family life stages examined in other research (Bengtson & Allen, 1993; Gladding, 2007). Furthermore, the development of this model seemed to represent the male perspective as normative and studies on the application of this model tended to overlook female perspectives (Osmond & Thorne, 1994). As a result, females who differed from these linear stages, such as the married female students in this study, were perceived as deviant and pathological, which perpetuated existing inequalities between men and women in society (Willig, 2001).

The profession of Psychology "arguably remains in the shadow of patriarchy" (Mayekiso et al., 2004, p. 667) due to the existence of a 'glass evaluator' for men and the perpetuation of the myth that it is a 'woman's profession'. Women entering the profession were challenged by chauvinistic notions concerning their marriage and career development. Female postgraduates were not able to assert an adult status such as leaving home, gaining financial independence or establishing a work identity at the same time as studying as the length of the study trajectory in Psychology necessitated extended periods of parental dependence, which has also been found in other studies (Coontz, 2004; Sassler & Goldscheider, 2004). Associated with this parental dependence were concerns that females needed protection during their studies and were encouraged not to leave home until they got married. Studies by Beltman and Wosnitza (2008) and Choi and Bird (2003) showed similar chauvinistic views held by parents. Although research has suggested that women can assert their independence outside of marriage (Etejere, 2008), restrictions placed on female students by their families, expectations in a chauvinistic society and the length of studying in

the Psychology career trajectory seemed to limit opportunities to claim independence as adults. Hence, marriage offered a socially sanctified way to leave one's family of origin and assert adult status.

Many female postgraduates desired to create a marriage that was characterised as a mutual partnership whereby both partners contributed financially. Gross (2005) argued that married individuals were "free agents… from external constraints that would force them to adopt those [traditional] ideas and practices" (p. 306), suggesting that individuals were free to choose how their marriages function. Additionally, studies have shown that egalitarianism and dual-income families have become accepted practice in many marriages (Jamieson, 2002; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007) and access to education and female labour force participation has decreased the economic attractiveness of marriage (Etejere, 2008; Kiguwa, 2004). However, due to the longevity of the study trajectory in Psychology, females who decided to get married remained in a position of dependence on their husbands. Furthermore, their marriages were often characterised by traditional gender roles as female postgraduate students tended to take care of their homes, while their husbands earned a salary, which often reflected their parental example of marriage that they desired to challenge. Thus, there was a tension between the goal to create a mutual partnership in marriages and the external constraints placed on marriages, such as female students not earning a salary in postgraduate study. Even though married females resisted the chauvinistic view of marriage, in some ways embarking on the Masters programme restricted their ability to presently challenge those notions.

Although feminism has contributed to women having opportunities to consider many choices regarding their education and careers, as well as marriage and children, research revealed that contemporary women were still expected to fulfil the role of caretaking of the family and to sacrifice her career for the sake of her family (Beltman & Wosnitza, 2008; Choi & Bird, 2003; Faulkner & Finlay, 2003). Additionally, women have been continually encouraged to pursue female-dominated professions that allowed the prioritisation of family over career (McPhail, 2004; Whitmarsh et al., 2007). This study showed similar viewpoints as female postgraduates' families often encouraged the attainment of marriage and children above the pursuit of postgraduate study. As the profession of Psychology continued to be perceived as a 'woman's profession', it was assumed to facilitate women operating in a privatised, home-based and part-time manner in order to balance their family and work commitments (Richter & Griesel, 1999). Some female postgraduates desired to operate in such a way in their

future in the profession, which had negative implications for equitable service delivery in the profession. If the majority of females entering the profession decided to pursue privatised practice due to family commitments, the profession will not be able to sufficiently provide services to disadvantaged and diverse populations.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivations and experiences of female postgraduates who decided to marry whilst pursuing postgraduate study in the Psychology career trajectory. As women formed the majority in the profession and previous research has overlooked female perspectives of marriage and postgraduate study, female perspectives were privileged. There was limited research that specifically engaged with and integrated the subjective experiences of women adjusting to marriage and postgraduate study. Nevertheless, the existing research was helpful in identifying the role of gender in family life cycle stages and in the profession of Psychology, as well as exploring how this impacted on motivations to marry and experiences of marriage while pursuing this career trajectory.

This study found that the decision to marry whilst pursuing postgraduate study was influenced by the length of studying in the Psychology trajectory. As their relationships had reached a stage in which marriage was expected as the next step, as well as restrictions to assert an adult status due to family dependence, expectations in a chauvinistic society and the length of studying, marriage offered an idealised sense of stability and security. Yet, the demands of both postgraduate study and marriage challenged these idealistic notions as female postgraduates battled to simultaneously negotiate these adjustments. Consequently, they employed defence mechanisms in order to split their adjustments, compromising the simultaneous engagement with the dual challenges. The integration of these adjustments was found to be important over time, thereby contributing to a blurring of boundaries between the two transitions of marriage and postgraduate study, as well as the associated challenges and benefits.

The emphasis on females' perspectives revealed that Carter and McGoldrick's (1999) sequential stages of the family life cycle were not applicable to females pursing postgraduate study in the profession of Psychology. This challenged the supposed universality of the family life cycle, revealing inherent Western and gender biases. Furthermore, despite forming the majority in the profession of Psychology, gender continued to influence women in their choices and experiences regarding marriage and postgraduate study. Chauvinistic

notions, such expectations to fulfil caretaking roles and prioritise marriage over career, were shown to be evident in female postgraduates' family of origin and were resisted in their own marriages. Thus, embarking on Masters programme restricted women's abilities to challenge these chauvinistic notions in the short-term; however the gains of postgraduate study meant that women could create marriages characterised by mutual partnership and equality in the long-term.

Although the current study yielded an in-depth understanding of female postgraduates' subjective experiences of marriage and postgraduate study, all possible aspects could not be explored. As a result, it was necessary to provide the limitations of this study, as well as explore recommendations for further study.

6.2. LIMITATIONS

Due to the small size and lack of representation of all South Africans in this study's sample, these results cannot be generalised to other experiences of marriage and postgraduate study operating within the South African context. The limited number of married female students in Professional Masters programmes, recruitment from only three universities situated in Gauteng, as well as some reluctance to participate by married students, prevented the possibility of a larger sample. Although generalizable results were not the goal due to the qualitative nature of this study, the sample compromised of predominately white females in heterosexual first marriages, thereby limiting the exploration of diverse family structures, lifestyle choices, and gender, ethnic and cultural variations.

As this study privileged female perspectives, the findings were reflective of the wives' feelings and perceptions of their experiences of marriage and postgraduate study. Kulik and Havusha-Morgenstern (2010) argue that there is a moderate to high correlation between partner's perceptions of family dynamics. This suggested that the wives' perspectives on their experiences of marriage and postgraduate study may reflect husbands' perspectives to some extent. Nevertheless, the absence of both partners' perspectives limited the dynamic understanding of the marital relationship and experiences of adjustment.

6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study revealed rich, subjective accounts of marriage and postgraduate study, contributing to existing academic enquiries into adjustment in unique contexts. However, it was apparent that more research on this subject was needed as extensive gaps in the literature remained. As qualitative analysis was never complete (Willig, 2001), opportunities for expansion and extension were provided by this study in order to guide the direction of future studies.

In order to overcome the biases inherent in this study's sample, it would be valuable to extend the cohort in future studies to include married homosexual women, married heterosexual men, married homosexual men, or married individuals from other racial and cultural groups. This could contribute to different topics and more contextualised, sensitive data, such as notions of family as the hegemonic ideal and different interpretations of the experiences of marriage and postgraduate study. Although contextual factors were somewhat examined in this study, various contextual factors impacting on married South Africans needs to be further researched.

As heterosexual women have been shown to be more idealistic in marriage (Sandfield & Percy, 2003), it would be valuable to explore if married men hold more realistic views of the adjustments required during marriage and postgraduate study. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) argue that "the family and loving relationships continue to be idealised on every level of society" (p. 172). Exploring the different perspectives of men and women regarding love and marriage may provide insight into the complexities of idealisation and the function it serves in contemporary society.

Although married students seem to be atypical in South African universities, understanding their experiences would be valuable in terms of designing supportive services for married students. Specifically in Professional Masters training in Psychology, the inclusion of spouses in certain activities may be helpful to integrate the experiences of the programme with the experiences of marriage. Furthermore, trainers and supervisors could be more sensitive to how the stresses of marital life influence the quality of work and engagement with the programme. Subjective accounts from both husbands and wives who are married to

each other whilst one embarks on a Masters programme in Psychology would provide multifaceted insights into the marital dynamics of adjustment. Even though married female postgraduate students tended to have a positive view of their success in negotiating the two major adjustments, it is important to consider the long-term impact of these experiences on their marriages, as well as in their future in the profession. A follow-up study would be particularly interesting to investigate how married female Psychologists continue to negotiate the dual commitments of family and career.

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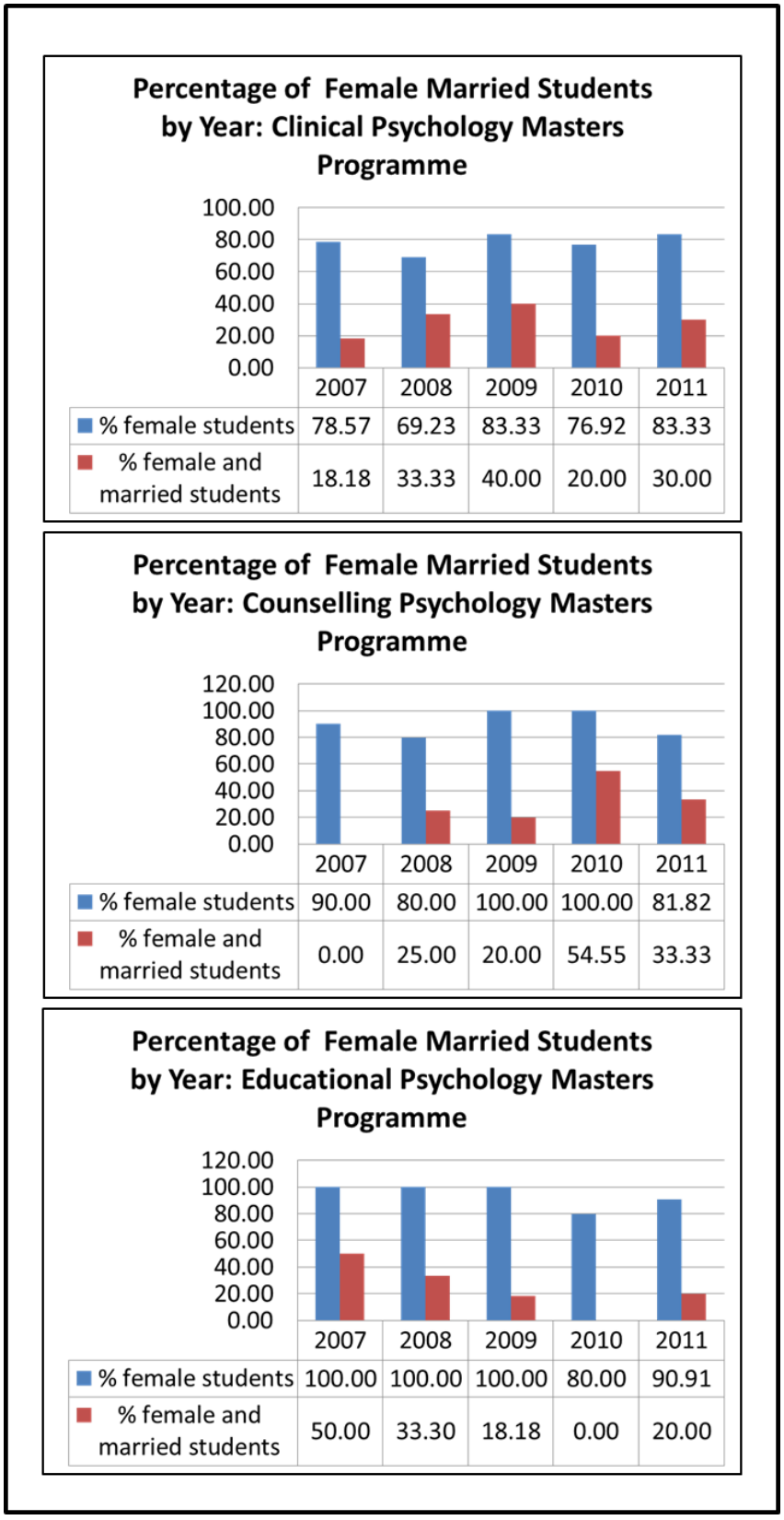
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Figure 1


Percentage of Female Married Students by Year: Clinical Psychology Masters Programme
100.00
80.00
60.00
40.00
20.00
0.00
2007 2008 2009 2010 2011
% female students 78.57 69.23 83.33 76.92 83.33
% female and married students 18.18 33.33 40.00 20.00 30.00
Percentage of Female Married Students by Year: Counselling Psychology Masters Programme
120.00
100.00
80.00
60.00
40.00
20.00
0.00
2007 2008 2009 2010 2011
% female students 90.00 80.00 100.00 100.00 81.82
% female and married students 0.00 25.00 20.00 54.55 33.33
Percentage of Female Married Students by Year: Educational Psychology Masters Programme
120.00
100.00
80.00
60.00
40.00
20.00
0.00
2007 2008 2009 2010 2011
% female students 100.00 100.00 100.00 80.00 90.91
% female and married students 50.00 33.30 18.18 0.00 20.00

Department of Psychology
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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What made you decide to get married at this point in your life?

   Probes: extended time commitments of the career trajectory; economic benefits; societal/ family pressures; confirmation of commitment; emotional support

2. What challenges do you experience during Masters and marriage?

   Probes: separation from support structures; stress; community work; finances; work-family conflict

3. What benefits do you experience during Masters and marriage?

   Probes: attachment; reassurance of worth; guidance; reliable alliance; social support; nurturance; physical and mental health; economic benefits

4. What are the similarities and differences between your experiences and those of your unmarried colleagues in the programme?

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APPENDIX B: BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Age: _____

Husband's age: _____

How long have you been married? _____

Ethnicity: _____

Psychology Registration Category: _____

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Tel: 011 717 4500 Fax: 011 717 4559

APPENDIX C: LETTER TO HEADS OF DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dear [Professor Andrew Thatcher/ Professor Zelda Knight/ Professor Maria Marchetti-Mercer]

My name is Claire Hart and I am a Counselling Psychology Masters student at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am conducting research for the purpose of attaining my degree. My research is concerned with the experiences of married females who are on the Psychology career trajectory. I would like to request your permission to approach potential participants enrolled in the Masters in Psychology programmes (Masters in Counselling Psychology, Masters in Clinical Psychology and Masters in Educational Psychology) at the [University of the Witwatersrand/ University of Johannesburg/ University of Pretoria] through advertisements and by word-of-mouth directed at female students who are married.

Interested participants will be given a comprehensive information pack to enable them to make an informed decision about whether or not to voluntarily participate in the study, as well as make an informed decision regarding whether or not they consent to recording of the interviews and using of direct quotes in the research report. Interested participants will be informed about time required to conduct the interview, the types of questions that will be asked, and the possible emotional implications. There are no direct risks or benefits in participating in this study; however should any of the participants feel upset due to any of the interview content, they will be referred to free counselling if necessary.

Participants in the study will be interviewed about their motivations for entering Masters professional training in Psychology, as well as the experiences of participating in a Masters course-work programme in Psychology. The interview will last approximately one hour and will occur at a time and place that is convenient for the participants. Participants may refuse to answer any questions they would prefer not to, and may choose to withdraw from the study at any point.

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed, with the consent of the participants. I am the only person who will be allowed to process the interview material (tapes and transcripts) and all identifying information will be removed from the transcripts. The interview material will be safeguarded to ensure no unauthorised access. The interview material will be kept electronically under password protection that only the researcher will have access to for duration of two years. Hard copies will be kept in storage under lock and key for six years. Thereafter, they will be deleted and destroyed.

Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants will be ensured as far as possible. Limited confidentiality in this research will be upheld as the interview material will be shared with my supervisor. However, the participant's identity will be protected as I will use a letter and number code in place of their name and remove any identifying information, such as names of people and places. Participants' anonymity will be respected in the research report. The research report may use direct quotes from the interviews, but no identifying information will be included. If you are interested in the findings of the research, you can contact me using the details provided below and I will provide you with an executive summary of findings. The final report may also be published in a journal article.

Should you have any further questions regarding the study, please contact me on 082 677 8312, or at clairehart@vodamail.co.za, or my supervisor Vinitha Jithoo on 011 717 4522, or at Vinitha.Jithoo@wits.ac.za.

Kind Regards,

Claire Hart

Department of Psychology
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: 011 717 4500 Fax: 011 717 4559

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Hello!

My name is Claire Hart. I am a Counselling Psychology Masters student at the University of Witwatersrand and I am conducting research for the purpose of attaining my degree. My research is concerned with the experiences of married females who are on the Psychology career trajectory. I am interested in married females' motivations for entering Masters professional training in Psychology, as well as the experiences of participating in a Masters course-work programme in Psychology. Masters training is often experienced as demanding and challenging, and my research intends to explore how being married during training may be beneficial in some ways and contribute to unique challenges in other ways. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Participation in this research is voluntary, and no person shall be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. Participation will entail you being interviewed by me, at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will last approximately one hour. You will be asked questions about your motivations for entering a Masters course-work programme in Psychology, your experiences of marriage during your Masters, benefits and challenges you may have faced during your Masters, and the perceived similarities and differences between the experiences of married and unmarried students from your perspective. Additionally, you will be asked to

complete a short biographical questionnaire to provide demographic and background information about yourself. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point. There are no direct risks or benefits in participating in this study. I do not expect the interview to harm you in any way; however, the questions may elicit emotional responses. If you are feeling emotional after your interview and would like to talk to someone, I have provided referrals to counselling services below.

With your permission, this interview will be recorded and transcribed. I am the only person who will be allowed to process the interview material (tapes and transcripts). The interview material will be safeguarded to ensure no unauthorised access. The interview material will be kept electronically under password protection that only the researcher will have access to for duration of two years. Hard copies will be kept in storage under lock and key for six years.

Limited confidentiality in this research will be upheld as the interview material will be shared with my supervisor. However, your identity will be protected as I will use a letter and number code in place of your name and remove any identifying information, such as names of people and places. Your anonymity will be respected in the research report. The research report may use quotes from your interview, but no identifying information will be included. If you are interested in the findings of the research, you can contact me using the details provided below and I will provide you with an executive summary of findings. The final report may also be published in a journal article.

If you are willing to participate in the study, please contact me telephonically or by email. We will then arrange a meeting to conduct the interview at a time and place that suits you. If you have any additional questions about the study please feel free to contact me or my research supervisor.

Kind Regards,

Claire Hart

Tel: 082 677 8312

Email: clairehart@vodamail.co.za

Research supervisor: Dr Vinitha Jithoo

Tel: 011 717 4522

Email: Vinitha.Jithoo@wits.ac.za

If you would like to report any problems or complaints that you have concerning participating in this study you may contact the University of the Witwatersrand's Human Research Ethics Committee Chair, Professor Peter Cleaton-Jones, or administrator, Anisa Kesha on 011 717 1234.

I do not expect the interview to harm you in any way, but if you feel you are having problems after you have participated in this study, please seek help from these counselling services:

South African Depression and Anxiety Group: 011 262 6396

Life Line: 012 342 2222

APPENDIX E: ETHICS APPROVAL

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Student Number: 573086

Mrs C Hart
P O Box 21444
Helderkruin
Gauteng
1733

23 May 2011

Dear Mrs Hart

APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNITY-BASED COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

I am pleased to be able to advise you that the readers of the Graduate Studies Committee have approved your proposal entitled *"Marriage and participation in postgraduate study: exploring the motivations and experiences of married female Psychology Masters students"* and you have now been admitted to full candidature. I confirm that Dr V Jithoo has been appointed your supervisor in the Department of Psychology.

The research report is normally submitted to the Faculty Office by 15 February. All students are required to RE-REGISTER at the beginning of each year.

You are required to submit 2 bound copies and one unbound copy plus 1 CD in pdf (Adobe) format of your research report to the Faculty Office. The 2 bound copies go to the examiners and are retained by them and the unbound copy is retained by the Faculty Office as back up.

Please note that should you miss the deadline of 15 February you will be required to submit an application for extension of time and register for the research report extension. Any candidate who misses the deadline of 15 February will be charged fees for the research report extension.

I should be glad if you keep us informed of any changes of address during the year.

Note: All MA and PhD candidates who intend graduating shortly must meet your ETD requirements at least 6 weeks after your supervisor has received the examiners reports.

Yours sincerely

Mpho Ntseare
Postgraduate Division
Faculty of Humanities
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Wits, 2050
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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND
2011 -05- 23
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
JOHANNESBURG

Department of Psychology
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: 011 717 4500 Fax: 011 717 4559

APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, _____, have read the Participant Information Sheet and give my permission to participate in this research study. I understand that:

1. Participation in this interview is voluntary.
2. I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to.
3. I may withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences.
4. My identity will be protected.
5. The interview material will be shared with the researcher's supervisor.
6. There are no direct risks or benefits in participating in this study.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Department of Psychology
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: 011 717 4500 Fax: 011 717 4559

APPENDIX G: CONSENT TO RECORD AND TRANSCRIBE INTERVIEW

I, _____, have read the Participant Information Sheet and give my permission to have my interview recorded and transcribed. I understand that:

1. The interview material (tapes and transcripts) will be kept confidential and my identity will be protected.
2. The interview material will only processed by the researcher and will only be available to the researcher and the supervisor.
3. The interview material will be stored in a safe location by the researcher for six years if no articles are published or for two years if an article is published. Thereafter, they will be destroyed.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Department of Psychology
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: 011 717 4500 Fax: 011 717 4559

APPENDIX H: CONSENT TO USE DIRECT QUOTES

I, _____, have read the Participant Information Sheet and give my permission to use direct quotes from my interview in the final report. I understand that:

1. All identifying personal information will be removed.

Signed: _____

Date: _____