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Exploring high-performing male psychology students' narratives of identity : telling tales of men defying hegemony.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A growing trend within the profession of psychology over the past few decades has been the global 'feminisation' of this helping profession (Sanders, Sander & Mercer, 2009; Skinner & Louw, 2009). Although psychology has traditionally been criticised as an andocentric discipline, forwarding male interests in its practice and knowledge production (Shefer, 2004; Tiefer, 1992), current statistics indicate that this is shifting, at least within the professional practice of the discipline. Research by Skinner and Louw (2009) reveals that men presently represent a marginalised population within psychology, representing only 26% of registered post-graduate students and professionals in South Africa. While 42% of male students in the humanities register for some form of undergraduate psychology studies, few excel in the field and pursue post-graduate studies in order to register as professional psychologists with only 22% of all psychology masters degrees in South Africa being awarded to men since 2002 (Sanders, Sander & Mercer, 2009; Skinner & Louw, 2009). While this gender imbalance has been noted in contemporary research, data generated around the reasons for the decreasing engagement of men in psychology has been sparse, particularly concerning those high-performing men who do aspire to professional registration as a psychologist (Harton & Lyons, 2003; Skinner & Louw, 2009). The implication is therefore that the empirical focus on proportions of men and women in professional and academic psychology does not yet appear to be adequately complemented by in-depth explorations of the human motivations, life experiences, thoughts and feelings behind them. Due to the fact that career choices, even the selection of academic fields of study, are widely regarded as decisions influenced not only by professional aspirations, earning potential and academic success but also moulded by personal preferences, ambitions and life experiences (Altschul, Oyserman & Bybee, 2006) it stands to reason that an exploration of an individual's life story, that person's consideration of his or her own identity over time and space, is a valuable means of accessing the broad, multiple and intermingled meanings of a life choice such as career preference (Harper, 2004). Thus, the primary ambit of this research study is to address the abovementioned paucity of research by exploring how high-performing male psychology students construct their narratives of identity in relation to their career choice.

As Meeus (2011) notes, the overwhelming majority of studies focusing on identity formation have been informed by a quantitative methodology. As such, an aim of this study is to serve to qualitatively enrich existing data within the broader focus areas of identity construction, academic performance and career choice as well as serve as a catalyst for future research into this empirically underrepresented population (Bold, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Schwartz, 2005). By providing *an* answer to the primary research question: 'How do high-performing male psychology students construct their identities?', this research study aims not only to provide insights into the happenings in each of the participant's lives that led them to pursue a career in psychology (which may be understood as the 'what' or content of the story) but also explore the ways in which the participants tell their stories and construct their past, present and future

experiences (the ‘how’ or structure of their stories) in terms of their identities as high-performing male psychology students (Harrė, 1998; Wengraf, 2001).

While the empirical and methodological limitations in contemporary research on this subject require attention, so too does the contextual gap accompanying this methodological imbalance. Harton and Lyons (2003) note that while the feminisation of psychology is a global trend, research on gender differences within academic and professional psychology has been produced almost exclusively within the United Kingdom and United States. The dearth of South African research on this topic is made particularly pertinent given Skinner and Louw’s (2009) finding that women are over-represented in psychology both in terms of professional registration and within academia as 78% of all psychology masters graduates are female; a rise of 20% over the past five years. As such, male psychology students have come to represent an ever-shrinking minority within psychological research both as the augurs and subjects of such research and as professionals and academics (Osterdag & McNamara, 1991). Therefore, this study aims to respond to what appears to be a gap in South African psychological research by exploring what is specific about South African men who pursue this now female-dominated career path. Specifically, by providing information on the motivations and professional identities of men in psychology, this study aims to assist in the development of professional selection procedures and academic programmes that garner greater participation of men so as to develop a professional body of psychologists able to provide research and interventions to a wide range of people from different backgrounds and populations (Harton & Lyons, 2003).

While gender and psychology are central elements of the proposed research study, an emphasis on high-performing students is also crucial for two reasons. First, as Sander and Sanders (2007) note, many male psychology students register for psychology modules as supplements to their majors rather than aspire towards a career in psychology. Perhaps partly as a result of the diminished importance of the subject due to its elective status, men tended to perform 15% worse on average than their female counterparts in undergraduate psychology courses at the University of South Wales and were therefore less likely to enter into post-graduate study and professional practice as a psychologist. However, the minority of male psychology students who do enter the field aspiring to enter the profession tend to perform well both in the United Kingdom and South Africa. Sander and Sanders (2007) reveal that those men who reportedly intend on entering the field of psychology perform up to 15% better than their male peers who are studying psychology as an elective course. As such, high-performing male psychology students reflect the population of interest in the proposed study as they represent a statistically non-normative sub-group both within their gender group and academic field to whom no exclusive qualitative research attention has been directed (Sander & Sanders, 2006; Skinner & Louw, 2009).

Moreover, while the study of high-performing male students is of importance to the field of psychology, it is also of relevance to broader socio-economic trends (McKinney & Soudien, 2010).

As South Africa moves into the post-industrial age the emphasis on educational success as a criterion for economic participation is growing rapidly (Gergen, 2001). As Gergen (2001) notes, the speedy expansion of the specialised service economic sector, paired with global deindustrialisation, has relocated the highest earning-power in the service sector which requires expertise and advanced academic qualifications for success. Therefore, by focusing on the overlooked population of high-performing male psychology students, this study aims to provide empirical data useful for the purposes of curriculum development and student selection in order to enhance South African policies of social transformation by gaining an understanding of the unique qualities and life experiences of this population.

In as much as the empirical value of this research is the primary motivation for undertaking this study, in keeping with the qualitative underpinnings of this research endeavour, the researcher's own personal reflexive motivations for conducting this study must also be acknowledged (Currie, 2011; Willig, 2008). The researcher's own experience as a high-performing male psychology student in terms of the construction and reconstruction of a masculine and professional identity within a female-dominated field has served to motivate the proposed study. Thus, this research has evolved not only from empirical interest but also a motive of personal enrichment through sensitive and conscientious exploration of the lives and identities of those whose experiential trajectories have led them to the similar contexts as those of the researcher. Moreover, this study aims to generate much needed insights into the identity constructions of a population of particular relevance to the global post-industrial context during the life period in which their self-referential attempts at constructing their identities are their primary psychological concern (Erikson, 1977; Marcia, 1980; McAdams, 1999).

This project aims to address the methodological and contextual gaps within contemporary research, while exploring a personally relevant topic area. In order to achieve the overarching aim of the proposed study, a series of subsidiary research questions will be explored including: How do high-performing male psychology students engage in the process of constructing their identities in terms of their academic studies in the discipline of psychology? How do these students construct their professional identities and conceptualise the field of psychology? How do these students construct their masculine identities in a female-dominated field? How do these students construct their identities in terms of their high levels of academic achievement? What elements of their social contexts are important in the construction of their identities?

The development of several component questions allows for a deeper and more nuanced approach to exploring the gendered, academic, professional and idiosyncratic aspects of both the content and structure of each participant's life story by highlighting these elements of identity as both vital and interrelated (Wengraf, 2001; Willig, 2008). Second, by employing several secondary research questions, a series of objectives could be developed to allow for a systematic mode of enquiry that, while open-ended, ensures that the data of interest required to provide an informed

and valid response to the central research question is possible (Proctor & Capaldi, 2005; Wengraf, 2001).

In order to explore the dynamic, evolving and unique life stories of these students, conceptual clarity about the core constructs is a difficult but essential step in the research process. While the methodological commitments of the researcher proscribe predefining the primary concept under investigation in order to allow for the participants to define it in term of their own subjective experiences (Bold, 2011; Kohler-Reissman, 2008), an operational definition of identity is necessary in order to delineate the data of interest without predefining the specific content of high-performing male psychology students' identities. Although the concept of identity will receive a more intensive treatment in subsequent sections, the operational definition of identity employed for the purposes of this study, which adopts a broadly narrative approach, denotes identity as the self-referential and dynamic collection of memories, values, affects and cognitions that are temporally ordered and related by an individual into a coherent life story that is used to represent him or herself both privately and publicly within his or her socio-historical context (Hall, 2010; McAdams, 2001; Ricouer, 1992).

Similarly, the associated concepts included in the primary research question posed also require operationalisation for purposes of systematisation and clarity. To begin with, the typical definition of high-performance might ordinarily denote an individual as achieving first (75%) and second-class results (60-74%) and is generally applicable to those students who are selected for post-graduate courses at honours, masters and even PhD levels. However, within the South African context, chief amongst the notions in need of more contextually nuanced operationalisation is the concept of 'high-performance' as the notion of achievement or academic performance must be problematised in South African research (Bradbury & Miller, 2011; Miller, 2010). While high-performance has traditionally been defined as achieving admission into post-graduate study, therefore simply targeting the top students in undergraduate studies as well as honours and masters students as high-performers, McKinney and Soudien (2010), suggest that South Africa's history of racial discrimination and socio-economic imbalance limits the validity of such a global definition. According to Bradbury and Miller (2011), 'underpreparedness' of learners from disadvantaged educational backgrounds, students who attend schools with inadequate educational materials and human resources, is an enduring obstacle impeding the success of otherwise capable South African students. Rachelle Miller (2010) builds upon this contention by asserting that achievement or performance, far from representing an objective and standardised measure of student competence, reflects continued socio-economic and educational disparities between learners from different race groups and socio-economic classes. The implication of Rachelle Miller's (2010), as well as Bradbury and Miller's (2011), assertions is that the academic performance of disadvantaged students is not necessarily representative of their capabilities due to the deleterious effects of the socio-economic milieus in which they develop. This, in turn, suggests that

achievement cannot be objectively defined and that the notion of academic achievement should incorporate ideas such as contextual advantages and limitations experienced by learners into its conceptualisation. Therefore, due to the fact that no African students were registered for post-graduate courses in psychology, for the purposes of this study two African students from underprivileged backgrounds and currently in their third year of psychology studies, have deliberately been included within the definition of 'high-performing' students so as to ensure that the contextual idiosyncrasies of South Africa's tertiary educational milieu are considered in the analysis of the life stories of high-performing students from a range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. To this end, this study aims to provide a contextually sensitive exploration of professional identity, academic achievement, career choice and gendered experiences of a group of students united by their identities as aspiring male psychologists in South Africa who come from various cultural, personal and geographical backgrounds, therefore representing the richness and diversity characteristic of their profession and country.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The concept of identity remains a construct in perpetual debate due to the cornucopia of theoretical perspectives from which it may be viewed as well as the ever-shifting and oftentimes blurred conceptual boundaries afforded to it in current discussions (Hall, 2010; Freeman, 1993; Gergen, 2001). While the construct of identity may be considered to be by its very nature a concept in dynamic flux, a discussion of its multiple uses and conceptualisations is undertaken here in order to provide a considered and encompassing operationalistion of this construct in order to define the conceptual parameters of the study. A debate amongst various perspectives is provided and culminates with a discourse on the suitability of the narrative conceptualisation of identity for this study. Following a discussion of identity and the concomitant process of identity construction, an exploration of contemporary views on masculinity is undertaken in order to provide a conceptual base for the investigation of each individual's gendered identity within an interpretative phenomenological perspective. Building on the contemplations of masculine identity, an interrogation of theoretical and empirical views regarding gendered career preferences is undertaken, examining current literature regarding gendered perceptions of professional psychology. After considering the professional elements of identity construction as they relate to gender and psychology as a professional identity, a review of South African literature regarding the importance of academic performance in professional identity is provided in order to illuminate the role of achievement in one's construction of selfhood.

While separate titles have been employed in the discussion for purposes of clarity and systemisation, the use of these titles may be misleading. Far from representing distinct components of a discussion, these titles may be better understood as redirections of focus within a single, unified review of literature with each section building upon earlier contentions and conclusions as pertinent theoretical views and empirical findings regarding identity construction is undertaken from a broad exploration of the conceptualisation of identity and refocused regarding masculinity, professional identity and academic achievement respectively.

2.2. Identity Construction: An Iterative Project

According to Hall (2010), the concept of identity is presently in crisis as, following the disintegration of the self-sustaining Cartesian cogito, a plethora of discourses have evolved to provide a wide range of fragmented and even disparate accounts of what makes us who we are. Freeman (1993) contends that the dismantling of the immaterial and metaphysically distinct Cartesian ego and accompanying explosion of hypotheses regarding the nature of identity both stem from the paradigmatic shift towards interpretative phenomenology as an epistemological modality. As notions of contextual relativity of thought and action have gained wide-spread acceptance as alternatives to modernist notions of objectivity, so too has identity morphed from a representation of a unitary intellectual being free from the contaminating effects of history, to a fundamentally

historical representation bound by the prescriptions of context (Freeman, 1993; Gergen, 2001). Freeman (1993) proposes that such a shift was precipitated by the realisation that the human subject is historical in two fundamental ways. First, every individual is born into and interacts with a historical context which serves to both facilitate and limit his or her capacity for thought and action. Second, every individual relies on his or her past (*personal* history) as the primary source of his or her identity in the present. On the basis of these contentions, historicism has become a pervasive epistemological perspective and its rejection of the concept of an accessible objective reality has facilitated the precipitation of multiple views on identity and snapping the measuring stick traditionally employed to judge the validity of different theories of identity. As such, Fay (1996) notes that contemporary thought regarding identity is a smorgasbord of antithetical perspectives which may be accepted or rejected solely on the basis of their resonance with the reader's personal views. Bauman (2010) contends that personal resonance is only one criterion employed in contemporary evaluations of validity and that another is the flexibility and amorphous adaptability of theories to accommodate different perspectives. Despite the tumult generated by conflicting perspectives and value systems, Freeman (2000) argues that the one thing that remains consistent is the 'ontic' aspect of human life, our unique and omnipresent desire, even responsibility, for self-reflection through a range of theoretical systems, allowing for a continued interest in identity without a sense of certainty as to its conceptualisation.

2.2.1. Discursive Views: Identity as a Social Product

Amongst the more prolific and influential perspectives that have permeated this vacuum of veridicality is the work of post-structuralist theorist Michel Foucault who draws heavily on Althusser's (1971) notion of ideology as interpellating subjects to develop their identities in its own image (Atkins, 2007; Hall 2010). For Foucault (1970, 1972, 1977, 1990), the identity of the 'self'[1], far from representing a unified self-auguring agent, is better understood as a historically contingent effect of discourse. Discourse, defined by Foucault (1970, 1977) as a dialogical and socio-historical co-construction of meaning, serves as a force which saturates every aspect of personal thought and interpersonal exchange by forming the conceptual basis and boundaries for all intra- and interpersonal activity (Parker, 1994). Discursive notions of race, gender, class, sexuality and religion are thus argued to serve to construct the 'natural' order of life according to which individuals unknowingly regulate their behaviour (Andrews, 2004; Parker, 1994, Tamboukou, 1999). Thus, Foucault (1990) contends that our belief in independent self-articulation is an illusion as all individual thought and action is prescribed by subliminal and shared discursive ideas which permeate our life worlds. Parfit (1984) echoes Foucault's (1972, 1990) contentions that the concept of a self-augured identity is fallacious in his assertion that while memory connectedness serves to

[1] While the distinction between the concepts of identity and the 'self' remains a contentious issue within present epistemological debates these terms are here understood to be inextricably conceptually intertwined. As such, identity is here proposed to represent a subjective articulation of the physical, psychological and social constituents of the self within public and private contexts.

create the illusion of continuity, and therefore agency, the inescapable 'historicity' of human life precludes the possibility of acting in a genuinely independent manner as we are bound by contextual limitations in our thinking and action. Therefore, Parfit's (1984) 'impersonality thesis' clearly resonates with Foucault's (1977, 1980) notion of 'technologies of the self' in that both suggest that identity is a socio-historical construction in which every individual may be conceived of as a 'docile body' whose sense of self is both limited and facilitated by subliminal discursive constructions, ideas that are not consciously recognised, rather than an aspect of independent self-reflection and personal agency.

2.2.2. Judith Butler: Reasserting Agency in Social Identity

While Dufft (2009) concedes that the role of social structures in identity formation certainly cannot be denied, an important criticism directed towards the post-structuralist perspective of identity is that if macroscopic discourses are the sole arbiters of identity, how then can we explain individuality; the vast differences in perspective and lifestyle between people within shared discursive contexts? (Atkins, 2007; Dufft, 2009). A resolution to this paradox stems from the work of the feminist scholar Judith Butler (1990) who suggests that, while contextually contingent notions serve as the horizons of possibility for thought and action for each individual, agency is apparent in the individual's negotiation of which of these notions to ascribe to (Butler 1990). That is, while Foucault (1990) suggests that agency is a myth due to the fact that it would require the individual's transcendence of the discourses on which we are reliant to form our identities, Butler (1993) relocates agency within the discursive realm itself. According to Butler (1993), discursive notions about gender-appropriate behaviour, such as normative heterosexuality, feminine submissiveness and male dominance, serve as resources upon which individuals draw in order to construct their identities and regulate their behaviour. As such, throughout their lives, individuals may actively (and passively) subscribe to some discursive notions at particular times and, in so doing, simultaneously act against alternative discourses (Butler, 1990; Dufft, 2009; Fay, 1996; Hall, 2010). For example, although a woman behaving in a masculine manner is influenced by a non-normative masculine discourse, her tendency to ascribe to that discourse over more conventional feminine discourses reveals a *measure* of agency as she is understood to have negotiated between alternative discursive resources upon which to draw in regulating her behaviour. Billington, Hockey and Strawbridge (1998) add that not only is a partially conscious and intentional selection of discursive roles to which to subscribe, implying a rejection of others, an indication of some level of agency in identity construction but so too is the reassignment of roles as one matures overtime. That is to say, Billington, Hockey and Strawbridge (1998) argue that not only does one selectively ascribe to one discursively mediated role at any one particular time in life but so too do such discursive roles change from childhood to adolescence and adulthood which points towards a liminal movement between social roles and discursively negotiated but individualised identities allowing for some agency in identity construction. As such, through the process of becoming conscious of different discourses and then actively (or even unconsciously) negotiating

which discourses to which one should ascribe at any given time, Butler (1993) contends that individuals come to 'perform' their identities within a discursive 'horizon of possibility'. 'Performativity', as Butler (1993) terms it, is therefore a dynamic and integrative process of identity formation which reconciles Foucault's (1990) discursive view with a measure of individual agency, implying that individuals are contextually contingent self-constructing agents facilitated and limited by the discursive realm rather than 'docile bodies' exclusively produced by it.

2.2.3. Developmental Views: Identity as an Intrapsychic Phenomenon

An opposing view on identity construction to that presented by discursive theorists is forwarded by psychoanalytic developmental theory. Rather than assigning primacy to social structures as the primordial deterministic force in identity, psychoanalysis proposes that internal or intrapsychic unconscious forces determine the developmental path and eventual realisation of an individual's identity. The essentialist commitments of Freud (1933) and Klein (1959) underlie their shared assertion that inaccessible unconscious desires and defences, as well as repressed memories, serve as the primary drives for individual thought and behaviour and consequently form the basis of human identity. Although Freud's (1933) theory gives greater weight to social context then that of Klein (1959), embodied by the internalised and partly conscious superego (intrapsychic moral conscience which represents social norms and values) he nonetheless suggests that the majority of psychic activity and identity formation occurs unconsciously during the early phases of life. The unconscious rationalisations and sublimations of these unconscious impulses and memories in adulthood, far from being the sole basis of identity, are better understood by Freud (1933) as responses to influences of which we have little, if any, awareness or control. Using Freudian psychoanalytic writings as her conceptual anchor, Klein (1959) reinforces and expands upon the role of intrapsychic, unconscious phantasy that permeates one's formative years in developing a psychic matrix of experience that serves as the unique and relatively stable boundary of individual thought, emotion and behaviour that are constitutive of one's identity. The implication of Klein's (1959) object-relations theory is therefore that we cannot construct our own identities solely on our conscious rational thoughts, given that the fundamental elements of 'who we are' are determined by an unconscious repository of primitive drives and traumatic memories (Freud, 1933; Hall, 2010, Hall & Du Gay, 2010; Shotter & Gergen, 1994). Thus, whereas historicism postulates that one's context is the primary contributary to self-referential articulations of identity, psychoanalysis opposes this contention by asserting that one's view of self and others is primarily determined by an internal world of self-object relations based on early infantile experiences in a solipsistic phantasy realm. In each case, individual agency in the construction of one's own sense of self based on life experiences is compromised as the pen is plucked from the individual's hand and the story of 'who one is' is proposed to be written primarily by external historical forces, or in the case of psychoanalysis by phylogenetic unconscious phantasies (Klein, 1959).

Erikson's (1977, 1981) epigenetic model of identity formation builds on the intrapsychic propositions of these theorists by suggesting a specific life period during which identity is formed. According to Erikson (1981), while the psychosocial crisis of identity formation is biologically inherent and unconscious, the state of identity confusion which develops during adolescence requires a conscious and reflective evaluation of different values and roles in order to allow an individual to develop a socio-cultural identity. Erikson (1981) adds that in order for this identity to be developed, an individual must ensure 'ego synthesis' by developing a continuous and integrated image of self throughout one's life to reflect that although situations may change, the individual's consciousness retains continuity. Therefore, as Marcia (1980) argues, Erikson's (1977) model of identity formation not only draws attention to the roles of culture and time in identity formation but reconceptualises the role of the unconscious as playing a structural, as opposed to deterministic, role in identity formation while conscious self-reflections of the individual endow the contents of continuous and provide an evolving representation of the self. Although Erikson (1981) attempts to incorporate both unconscious and conscious influences into his model of identity formation, Marcia (1980) contends that Erikson (1981) fails to recognise that identity formation both precedes and exceeds the developmental phase of adolescence in much the same fashion that his predecessors overlooked contributions to and elaborations on identity extending beyond early childhood. For Marcia (1980) phases of identity moratorium and ego synthesis occur and reoccur throughout one's life and consequently that identity formation, far from being an unconscious crisis resolved before the period of young adulthood as Erikson (1981) suggests, is a lifelong process.

2.2.4. Narrative Theorists: Identity as a Spatio-temporal Process

In response to the disempowering contentions of psychoanalysis and discursive notions, Freeman (2000) argues that it is not the validity of our notions about identity in terms of unconscious contributions that should be the focus of our concerns in attempting to understand how we construct our identities but rather the processes that we consciously employ in order to accomplish this iterative task. That is to say, Freeman (1993) suggests that whether our self-referential thoughts are distortions of and defences against the unconscious or alternatively are clear reflections of who we are is not of concern due to the fact that, by its very definition, the unconscious cannot be systematically investigated. As such, he proposes that we must resign our ideas around identity construction to the realm of the conscious as it is all that can be known. Similarly, Slugoski and Ginsburg (1989) contend that while Erikson's (1981) theory of identity represents a favourable shift away from the self contained intraspychic universe of psychoanalysis by developing a socially involved self, its subscription to the bounded unconscious limits is useful in considering a dynamic and socially immersed sense of selfhood. Sampson (1989) proposes that to overcome such a stultifying notion, one must necessarily redirect focus from the 'unknown within' to the 'known with' by affording analytic attention to the historical and interpersonal context in which one's understanding of self develops. Therefore, identity construction is proposed to involve the active articulation of our subjectivity regardless of inaccessible possibilities beyond our

immediate and conscious conceptual capacities. Thus, Freeman's (1993) perspective of identity neither denies nor affirms the notion of the unconscious but directs focus solely towards the conscious attempts of individuals to construct the story of who they are while Sampson (1989) emphasises the importance of filling the conceptual void left by the unknowable elements of the unconscious with a more fructifying focus on the role of interpersonal and historical context.

McAdams (1999, 2001) expands on Freeman's (2000) contentions in his notion of life stories authored by individuals which directs intellectual focus towards the temporality of life and lived experience. McAdams (1999) contends that we do not proceed through life paying attention only to present experience but rather that at all times we remain mindful of the influences of the past and the prospects of the future as elements which shape our thoughts and behaviours. For McAdams (2001), the continuity of memory is central to maintaining a stable identity over time and, moreover, our knowledge of the past serves not only to contextualise but also colour our every thought and action which, in turn, allows us to project our behaviour into the future and anticipate potential consequences. Importantly, for McAdams (2001), this process of identity construction, while particularly important during adolescence, continues throughout one's life and does not end during young adulthood as Erikson (1977) contends. Slugoski and Ginsburg (1989) voice a similar criticism against Erikson's (1981) view in this respect suggesting that the view of identity as a crisis to be completed and consolidated implies a psychological deficit for those who re-experience moratorium throughout life. For McAdams (2001), revisions of one's conception of self (identity), far from representing a defect or deficit of the individual, is necessary and should be encouraged given that adequate psychological adjustment to changing life circumstances necessitates ongoing self reflection. As such, the past, present and future, McAdams (1999, 2001) argues, are not segmented dimensions of lived experience but rather form the diachronic intertwined temporal fabric of one's identity which is constantly in formation and reformation. Freeman (1993) employs this notion of temporal intertwining in further developing Ricouer's (1992) concept of 'emplotment' according to which the past, present and future are chained as a reciprocal trajectory. More specifically, Freeman (1993, 2000) proposes that not only does one's memory of the past influence one's view of one's present existence but so too does one's experience of present circumstances colour one's memory of the past. Giddens (2007) adds that while one's present situation begets a particular version of one's future, so too does the future serve to redefine the present as the trajectory of the self is fundamentally reciprocal. This emphasis on the temporality of life stories in identity construction essentially comes to represent an elaboration of Ricouer's (1992) assertion that identity, though comprised of both physical and psychological elements, is fundamentally based upon psychological continuity rather than physical sameness. Although physical change is rapid and ongoing, what allows for the recognition that an elderly man has a continuous stream of consciousness with a once young boy is not physical resemblance, asserts Harré (1998), but rather the acknowledgement of authorship of memories and experiences even though they have different meanings at different times. Such memory-connectedness provides a means of self-

identification and ownership of identity over time and, thus, *ipse* identity, first-person psychological continuity and sameness, rather than *idem* identity or physical consistency is considered essential to identity construction from this perspective (Dufft, 2009; Ricouer, 1992). Thus, while psychological continuity forms the temporal fabric of identity, such authors (Freeman, 1993; Harré, 1998; McAdams, 2001; Ricouer, 1992) emphasise that identity is not a project to be completed but rather a journey to be enjoyed as contextual shifts necessitate individual shifts to accommodate a developed and developing sense of selfhood throughout one's life.

Although the above-mentioned debates concerning the exigent elements of identity and the processual aspects of its construction persist, the framework of narrative theory has been found to be of immense value in reconciling such stagnating theoretical oppositions due to its flexible and inclusive nature concerning identity construction (Atkins, 2007; Squire, 2008). Clandinin (2007) argues that the narrative perspective of identity construction is particularly useful because it carefully navigates a course between the extreme view of modernist reductionism on the one hand and the post-structuralist dissolution of personal identity on the other. Within the narrative framework, the concept of identity is presented neither as a settled, essentialist core which remains stable and unchanging in spite of the vicissitudes of life and context, nor as an impersonal discursive construction, but rather as a dynamic and positional construction of one's self that emerges and transforms within a spatio-temporal context or life world (Archer, 2000; Fay, 1996; Hall, 2010). Harvey (1985) theorises this sort of iterative identity construction as facilitated by 'globe-trotting' as experiences of varied cultural systems and values have a profound influence on the social modes of behaviour for individuals who participate in a more global village. He argues that exposure to various and varied ways of life often carries the effect of diluting the force of social prescriptions on such individuals given their awareness of alternatives. Yuval-Davis and Stasiulis (1995) build on this contention in their postulation that early geographical movement and exposure to multiple cultural milieus, far from creating confusion and disorganisation in identity construction, often leads individuals to develop a more eclectic and sophisticated self-understanding due to their literally and metaphorically broadened horizons of possibility. These authors suggest that the social consciousness of individuals who experience migration often comes to increase in complexity given the awareness of a need to adjust to alternative modes of being and such awareness of difference that is broader than individual idiosyncrasies and includes customs and values of entire peoples. A narrative view of identity construction accommodates these notions that multiple experiences broadens the 'cultural container' through which experience is filtered (Yuval-Davis & Stasiulis, 1995) by widening the 'horizons of possibility' for each individual's process of identity construction and increasing the range of historical and social norms to which one may ascribe.

Narrative identity is conceived of as an iterative articulation of self which is constantly transmutating through the self-referential activities of the subject in response to not only present contextual features of one's life world but also interactions with others and the temporal horizons of

the reconstructed past and anticipated future (Fay, 1996; McAdams, 1999, 2001, Ricouer, 1992). Simply put, identity is here presented as a narrative construction in which life events are temporally 'emplotted' or chained to form a coherent story within which an individual continuously develops his or her own identity throughout his or her life in relation to other people within a broader socio-historical context (Currie, 2011; Freeman, 1993; Kohler-Reissman, 2008; McAdams, 2001). Underpinning such a perspective is a hermeneutic or interpretative phenomenological framework which endorses the notions that the truth or validity of any knowledge claim can be judged only in relation to its historico-linguistic context as no apodictic or objective truth can be said to exist or, at the very least, be accessible to historically-situated human thought (Clandinin, 2007; Currie, 2011; Gadamer, 1960; Gergen, 2001; Hantrias, 2009; Heidegger, 1962). The basis of this epistemological view is the underlying ontological assumption of interpretative phenomenology that human 'Being' (Heidegger, 1962), referring here to the unique nature of human existence, is at all times inescapably historical in that the formative influences of historically contingent ideas, communicated to each individual through linguistically mediated interactions with others, serve to form the basis of each individual's action and thought within a particular contextually contingent existence (Clandinin, 2007; Currie, 2011; Heidegger, 1962; Gadamer, 1960; Gergen, 2001; Hantrias, 2009). Therefore, the narrative conceptualisation of identity is an iterative spatio-temporal construction of selfhood informed by historically contingent linguistic resources, interactions with others and self-referential activity all emplotted in a coherent life story in which all events and experiences acquire unique and shifting meanings in the articulation of one's self. Ricouer (1981, 1992) refers to this historic-linguistic construction of identity as 'the textuality of lived experience' as one's life story can be understood as an autobiography in which one reconstructs the past in terms of the present and projects ideas into the future in order to derive meaning within one's life. Through a process of viewing one's own story and appropriating or interpreting of the text of one's life Ricouer (1981) proposes we are able to generate meaning in our life stories and identities. This emplotment of events, relationships, values and ideas are postulated by Freeman (1993) to inform the meaning not only of present experiences but also past events. Furthermore, historically contingent contextual influences of culture and interpersonal relationships contribute to the meaning of personal identity and life experiences, essentially serving as a 'horizon of narrative possibility' (Currie, 2011; Du Gay, Evans & Redman, 2007; Gadamer, 1960). As such, narrative theory conceptualises identity as an iterative life story in which meaning is generated in interrelations between temporal continuity, context, interpersonal relationships and life experiences.

2.2.5. Identity: Contemporary Research Findings

Given the turbulent oscillations in the theoretical conceptualisation of identity, Meeus (2011) notes, in his systematic review of longitudinal research on adolescent identity formation over the past decade, that it is not surprising that understanding the self remains a central concern within the social sciences. Meeus (2011) notes that of the 66 studies on identity construction that he

reviewed since 2000, the overwhelming majority, approximately 74%, of these research endeavours have been quantitative in nature. Through the use of closed-ended data collection techniques and hypothetico-deductive models, argues Meeus (2011), the view that identity construction is indeed a life-long process involving oscillations between moratorium and ego synthesis has gained support. Despite the quantitative focus of the studies reviewed, Meeus' (2011) contention provides empirical support for the applicability of the narrative approach to identity formation by pointing to the iterative and processual nature of identity construction. Schwartz (2005) argues that in order to provide a thorough and in-depth exploration of issues in identity construction, open-ended qualitative strategies are necessary so as to investigate what participants think and feel rather than how their responses fit within the existing models and presumptions of researchers.

Aside from the methodological biases within contemporary research in identity construction, Meeus (2011) notes a contextual imbalance in research is also apparent as more than half of all research on identity has emanated from universities in the United States of America and United Kingdom. While this imbalance persists, South African researchers have by no means overlooked the topic entirely as research by Bradbury and Miller (2010) has supported the applicability of a narrative approach to adolescents' identity constructions within the Fast Forward programme at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. Similarly, research by McLean (2005, 2008) reveals identity to be a mutative and dynamic construction that permeates the lives of South African students rather than a crisis resolved in adolescence. Therefore, the shared implication of these exploratory studies is that identity constructions of South African students are amenable to narrative analysis and require further investigation in order to narrow the methodological and contextual gaps within both local and international research on identity.

2.3. Masculinity in Identity: Hegemony and Redefinition

In attempting to conceptualise the intertwined and iterative project of identity construction, Butler (1993) asserts that one of the thickest strands of identity is one's gendered self-understanding. The issue of gender or masculinity is argued by Mkhize (2006) to represent an inescapable social and personal element of identity construction as from the earliest moments of life contextual influences come to present a gendered experience for men that is different, at times opposite and at others complimentary, to that of women which comes to shape one's experiences and one's self-referential efforts throughout one's lifespan. Shefer (2004) contends that gender continues to be presented in terms of binary oppositional logic in that men and women, masculinity and femininity, are presented as mutually exclusive and opposite modes of being in the world. Hare-Mustin and Maracek (1990) suggest that such modernist binaries serve to perpetuate gender dualism in which men and women are presented as fundamentally different psychic beings. This essentialist view of the psychic qualities of men and women on the basis of gender is argued by Burman (1995) to not only conceal long-standing gender inequalities by reframing them as inescapable differences but,

perhaps more importantly, also allows for the perpetuation of the subjugation of men and women to socialised gender roles by limiting possibilities for change or the development of alternatives.

According to Blackbeard and Lindegger (2007), while gender binarism has traditionally been understood to serve to delimit the prospects of women's autonomy by prioritising androcentric interests, contemporary formulations of masculinity reflect an increasing focus on the negative implications of hegemonic masculinity for men's identities. In a study employing a photo-biographical method, in which participants were encouraged to present a photograph of some personal relevance and meaning regarding their masculine identities to the other members of a focus group, Blackbeard and Lindegger (2007) observed a trend in which many adolescent boys felt constrained by dominant gender norms of restricted emotional expression and an unwillingness to be vulnerable due to norms of masculine strength and resilience. The feelings of emotional entrapment due to the irrepressible feelings they experience which run counter to prevailing norms around masculinity is argued by Blackbeard and Lindegger (2007) to force these young men to build emotional walls around themselves due to the perceived lack of acceptance for such ways of being and the unavailability of acceptable alternatives. Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) postulate that masculinity, in its modernist and essentialist form has come to represent a double-bind for South African men by making them impotent to their emotional lives, needs for care and love and willingness to be vulnerable and sensitive to the needs of others, by not only suggesting they disavow these natural inclinations but also by preventing them from meeting such needs due to these same social expectations. This, they argue, leads them to resort to an attempted denial of their experiences and inner-worlds through substance abuse as well as aggressive and anti-social behaviours (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007).

Shefer (2004) concurs that the socially constructed discourses of gender as essentialised oppositions in which men are encouraged to be dominant, aggressive, assertive, unemotional and competitive (referred to by Connell (1995) as hegemonic masculinity) while women are socialised to adopt the opposite qualities, leads to negative effects for both genders through unnecessary and unwanted restrictions about permissible behaviour and life choices. Shabalala and Bekuima (2007) therefore argue that a reconceptualisation of gender in terms of a post-structuralist view is a useful avenue to overcoming gendered oppression for both men and women in order to allow for the development of a more fluid, multiple and contextual view of gender which Fay (1996) notes closely resonates with a narrative conceptualisation of identity. For Shabalala and Bekuima (2007), as well as Shefer (2004), the historical rootedness of human subjectivity suggests that in as much as biological sex is a physiological constant, the theorisation of sex within a particular historical context into what is termed 'gender' is constantly shifting due to contextual influences and is therefore multiple and dynamic rather than apodictic and universal. The growing acceptance of the propositions of post-structuralist queer theory within psychological circles (Richardson, 2006; Tiefer, 1992), which presents gender and the associated construct of sexuality as concepts in flux

both within and between different places and times, has allowed for the endorsement and enactment of challenges against prevailing gender norms (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Richardson, 1996; Shabalala & Bekuima, 2007; Shefer, 2004). Frosch, Phoenix and Pattman (2002, p.10) conducted a study revealing how adolescent boys in the United Kingdom actively recanted the hegemonic masculine norms of their peers and began to define themselves in opposition referring to themselves as “exceptions to the masculine norm”. Shabalala and Bekuima (2007) suggest that such a denouncement of hegemony and active participation by these boys in traditionally more feminine endeavours of drama and dance, in a concerted effort to reshape their masculine identities rather than refuse them, is not so easily marshalled in rural areas of South Africa in which patriarchy is particularly prevalent. Connell’s (1995), framework of multiple masculinities presents the possibility of alternative modes of being a man which do no ascribe to hegemonic norms of physical dominance, heterosexuality and competitiveness but, in so doing, contends that the splintering of masculine ideals inevitably leads to reactionary forms of socialisation by those men who do endorse hegemonic norms. The result, for Connell (1995), is most often the marginalisation of those males who do not exclusively adhere to hegemonic norms leading to discrimination and victimisation of those men who actively defy hegemony.

Lasser and Thoringer (2003) contend that in order to avoid conflicts over what are considered irreconcilable differences concerning masculinity, many men who do not ascribe to hegemonic norms engage in ‘visibility management’ by selectively concealing alternative inclinations, most commonly a homosexual orientation, while actively endorsing some hegemonic norms. Such clandestine efforts are argued by Shabalala and Bekuima (2007) to represent the most effective means of defying hegemony amongst South African men due to the negative and often life-threatening consequences of behaving in what would be considered non-normative ways in terms of one’s masculine identity. In an analysis of focus group discussion conducted with South African adolescent boys and young adult men concerning the meaning of masculinity, Shabalala and Bekuima (2007) report that many young men recalled severe beatings and threats of abandonment from their fathers on occasions when they behaved outside of the parameters of hegemonic masculinity. Blackbeard and Lindegger (2007) contend that such concerns are not restricted to rural populations as their research, which yielded similar results as mentioned earlier, was drawn from participants from rural and urban areas as well as a range of different ethnic, cultural and age groups.

It is due to this shared struggle of rebelling against masculinity that Shefer (2004) contends the concept of masculinity requires modification as opposed to being overthrown. In line with this contention, Shabalala and Bekuima (2007) reveal that rather than attempting to define themselves as opposing hegemonic masculinity, many South African men have attempted to redefine masculinity ‘from within’. Wetherell and Edley (1999) conducted a series of focus groups in which South African men reported a disregard for hegemony and patriarchy due to traumatic memories

and experiences of being victims or witness to damaging physical aggression, extramarital affairs and substance abuse by their fathers during their childhoods. These men suggested that being victims of the negative consequences of hegemonic masculinity has resulted in the conscious decisions to live in accordance with a view of masculinity which emphasises norms of emotional expression, active protection and support as opposed to subordination, egalitarianism and a willingness to be vulnerable as well as a sense of responsibility to others. Wetherell and Edley (1999) contend, a proposition supported by Blackbeard and Lindegger (2007), that such behaviours have served to blur the boundaries of hegemony and alternative forms of masculinity in some respects although not entirely successfully as patriarchal values continue to permeate South African society.

Amongst the more controversial and enduring issues in conceptualising masculinity according to Blackbeard (2005) is that of homosexuality as a perceived violation of the hegemonic masculine norm of heterosexuality. Tiefer (1992) argues that central to the construction of an individual's gendered identity is the construction of a particular sexual identity. Richardson (1996) builds on this view in his assertion that not only does the interpersonal nature of homosexuality, the sense of belonging to a community with its own unique values and norms, reflect the centrality of sexual orientation to one's gendered identity, but so too does its perceived endorsement of feminine traits by homosexual males. Shefer (2004) argues that due to the persistence of patriarchy in South African society, which is based on modernist binary logic, homosexuality is often conflated with femininity and therefore conceptually opposed to masculinity. In a review of popular media articles concerning homosexuality, Shefer (2004) proposes that the essentialist and patriarchal conceptions of masculinity are portrayed in conceptions of homosexuality as 'deviations, violations or deficiencies' of masculinity and therefore representative of a feminine gender identity which is subordinate within a patriarchal gender hierarchy.

While there is empirical evidence to suggest the perseverance of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity, Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) point towards some shifts towards post-structuralist views in that they argue some South African men are adopting a more ambivalent and flexible attitude towards masculinity in contemporary society. A series of focus group discussions with South African men revealed that homosexuality is presently less often tied exclusively to femininity but now rather viewed as an amalgam of masculine and feminine traits closely in line with Shefer's (2004) concept of androgyny which refers to a blend of male and female traits (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007, Richardson, 1996). The men participating in these discussions often referred to instances in which they discovered that close friends who they consider 'guy's guys' are homosexual and noting that their general behaviour is not all that different from their own these men considered them 'no less a man' than their heterosexual peers (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Richardson, 1996). Anderson (2009), employing both individual in-depth interviews and focus groups, reveals that growing numbers of men who would typically considered to subscribe to

hegemonic masculine norms, such as athletes and fire fighters, report decreased homophobia and suggest that oftentimes emotional expression and sensitivity to the needs of others can be liberating and positive experiences that should not be stigmatised. For these men, sexual orientation is considered irrelevant to masculinity given that masculinity is no longer a rigidly defined construct but rather a fluid concept that is modified by contextual changes such as shifting social norms and interpersonal perspectives (Anderson, 2009; Mkhize, 2006; Tiefer, 1992). For Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1993) such references indicate a blurring of the masculine- feminine dichotomy via sexual orientation in that the coexistence of male and female traits allows for a fluid development of one's gender identity as opposed to a rigid adoption of gendered prescriptions. Furthermore, these authors suggest that sexuality therefore represents in some respects a bridge for the reformation of hegemony by creating a sense of acceptability of traditionally feminine behaviours and preferences by males based on sexual preference (Shefer, 2004; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1993). This concession by hegemonic men and the increasing acceptance of more traditionally feminine modes of being amongst men, particularly emotional expression and willingness to be vulnerable are argued by Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) to reflect a shifting, although not entirely shifted, perspective on masculinity amongst these South African men.

The dynamism and contextual contingency of the construct of masculinity suggested in the theoretical contentions and empirical evidence above bears a resemblance to the narrative conceptualisation of identity presented earlier (Freeman, 1993; McAdams, 1999). In accordance with the interpretative phenomenological perspective adopted within this study, identity and more specifically gendered identity, can be understood as contextually contingent constructs informed not only socio-historical discourse but also by the self-referential agencies of the individual (Butler, 1990; Sampson, 1989). For Connell (1995), it is through not only a participation in a shared discursive space that one's gender identity, one's masculine identity is defined, but also within a personal space of conscious and conscientious self-reflection and personal determination that such self-understanding is reached. Given the discursive elements endemic to the conceptualisation of masculinity, this study considers masculinity to be a dynamic and shifting construct informed by and inferred from a man's personal attributions, social interactions and participation in social discourses in a particular time and place (Butler, 1990; Connell, 1995; Sampson, 1989).

2.4. Men in Psychology: Men Doing Women's Work?

While considerable evidence supports a shifting but not entirely shifted conception of masculinity within contemporary South African society, one area in which gender stereotypes are reported to persist despite such shifts, is within the workplace (Skinner & Louw, 2009; Sander & Sanders, 2007). Richardson (1996) contends that while sexual orientation has long been considered a primary site of gender role reproduction, aspects of career selection and work performance represent powerful forms of gender regulation due to the economic force carried by such life

decisions which carry important implications for the individuals involved. Shefer (2004) supports this contention in her argument that the highest earning power has traditionally been demarcated for male dominated professions such as law, medicine and politics in order to continue the financial disempowerment of women and preserve male social domination. As such, Tiefer (1992) proposes that while women are socialised to enter into professions of subservience and a helping orientation, men are encouraged to select professions geared towards earning power and authority in order to meet hegemonic masculine values of dominance, competitiveness and power.

Watson, Stead and De Jager (1995), however, argue that while gender is suggested to play a central role in career preference, such contentions are not universally applicable within contemporary society as these researchers, after administering the 'Life Role Inventory' and 'Career Development Questionnaire' to 260 first-year South African university students, found that gender did not play a significant role in career selection as both women and men selected similar career options on the majority of occasions. However, in a subsequent study, Stead and Watson (2008) contended that while no significant disparities in career choice were notable, this was due to the overwhelming preference by both genders for traditionally male dominated professions and a consequent devaluation of careers such as teaching and nursing considered to be female-oriented fields. For Shefer (2004) such trends reflect a positioning of male interests and ideals as superior to those of women and Connell (1995) adds that while such hierarchical judgements of career suitability have been examined in terms of preventing women's liberation and equality, a lesser noted side-effect is the restrictions placed on men in terms of career options.

Connell (1995) suggests that while men are socialised to value traditionally higher-earning positions within fields such as law, medicine, professional sports, politics and business, such men are also discouraged from pursuing alternative careers within professions involving more artistic and emotionally invested forms of work due to the unpredictability of their earning potential and endorsement of more feminine gender roles. Despite the power of discursive gender norming, Anderson (2009) draws attention to the fact that often individuals actively move out of socialised gender roles by pursuing careers considered non-normative for their genders. Drawing on Butler's (1993) notion of performativity, Anderson (2009) asserts that while socio-historical constructions of masculinity come to inform individual behaviour, they do not determine it given that the plethora of changing discourses, as well as the role of personal agency in the selection or refusal of such discourses, allows for some level of variability.

For Super (1996), this interaction between personal motives and personality traits with broader environmental influences is a lifelong process of negotiation which results in a developing, shifting and highly idiosyncratic approach to career selection. In much the same vein as narrative theory considers an individual's identity an iterative project, so too does Super's (1996) lifespan developmental approach consider an individual's working or professional identity to be at all times provisional and developing rather than developed. In line with the contentions of Freeman (1993)

and McAdams (2001), Super (1996) proposes that an individual's career, a core component, along with gender, of one's broader project of identity construction, develops throughout one's life span and is therefore influenced primarily by intertwining temporal elements of past experiences, present life circumstances and anticipated future goals. Langa (2012) while conducting in-depth individual interviews and focus groups with a number of South African adolescent boys, found that temporal elements of career and identity played an important role in the self-referential activities of these boys as they often drew upon imagined future careers in order to cope with present difficulties but also to motivate present definitions of themselves as ambitious and capable despite such life challenges. The reliance of these young men on temporal elements of identity construction, particularly regarding career aspirations, supports the applicability of a life span and narrative approach to career construction within the South African context (Langa, 2012; Super, 1996).

Super (1996) proposes that the temporal elements of self-reflection serve an important role in defining one's career path and adds that the life space, the socio-economic and historical context, in which one lives plays an equally important role in shaping career preferences. Stead (2004) contends that prevailing socially constructed gender norms within a particular cultural milieu, although not deterministic discourses, cannot be overlooked as developing the parameters of career preferences for young men. Conceptualising career choice within the life span developmental approach postulated by Super (1996), one is well equipped to understand men's pursuit of female-oriented careers as non-normative possibilities but nonetheless informed by life experiences, cultural influences and a life trajectory of temporally emplotted personal memories (Giddens, 2007; Hall, 2010).

Research by Patton and Creed (2001) regarding career choices of South African students supports the view of interactive influences of personal motives and cultural values in career selection as while male and female participants often selected similar career preferences, they provided different motivations for such choices with female participants typically suggesting a willingness to refute gender stereotypes through professional pursuits while male participants suggested professional aspirations were geared towards meeting gendered career expectations. Brems (2001) contend that professional psychology, due to its professional identity as a helping profession as well as a profession geared towards emotionally oriented work through interpersonal servitude to others in need, is considered a feminine profession due to its values of emotional expression, provision of care and lowered emphasis on earning potential. These elements of the profession are directly contrasted with norms of hegemonic masculinity in South Africa identified by Sander and Sanders (2006) suggesting a lack of male participation in the professional field to be partly a result of the stigma surrounding a man entering a field considered feminine and, according to patriarchal views, inferior. This trend is made clearer by the tendency of those few men who do enter into the professional field of psychology to select research or academic positions rather than

entering the fields of clinical or counselling psychology as Sander and Sanders (2006, 2007) reveal that more than 70% of male psychologists are registered within research categories in South Africa. Skinner and Louw (2009) contend that the scientific respectability of this professional specialisation may play an important role in such trends although little, if any, in-depth data on such trends are available. Day (1995) reports a similar finding in that men who entered into the therapeutic specialisations of psychology reported originally considering entering into research but later feeling compelled to become therapists due to a sense of empathy with others based on their own life experiences. As such, while Skinner and Louw (29009) report that the earning potential and prestige of research positions in psychology may contribute to greater participation of males in research psychology, Day (1995) supports this contention with her 'wounded healer' model according to which only those men who report significant life traumas typically enter professional work as therapists as opposed to researchers.

Building on these concerns, Skinner and Louw (2009) note that male psychology students in particular have been largely omitted from the focus of both local and international psychological research with studies essentially focusing on statistical trends in gender demographics rather than qualitative explorations of male psychology students' identities, thoughts and affects. Sanders, Sander and Mercer (2009), concur with this proposition and assert that while gender differences in academic field and performance in psychology have been quantitatively represented, the texture of experiences on the part of males have largely been neglected in empirical research. Osterdag and McNamara (1991) propose that the historical shift away from men in psychology was precipitated by feminist charges of androcentrism in research and professional practice. In reaction to these claims, Sander and Sanders (2007) note that research on women flourished while men have been studied with trepidation and more often in relation to negative topics such as domestic abuse and suicide. This turn in focus, while beneficial in promoting a more egalitarian focus in psychology, has led, according to Harper (2004), men to be overlooked in psychology; a situation requiring remedy through greater research efforts.

In one of the few qualitative studies exploring male psychology students' thoughts and feelings, Harton and Lyons (2003) reveal that men propose that they prefer other professions over professional psychology due to the greater suitability of the field to traits conventionally defined as 'feminine' such as empathy and interpersonal concern and its lack of resonance with male values of earning-potential and prestige. Such research reveals that hegemonic masculine ideals remain not only motivations for the selection of alternative career paths but also important factors in the decision of men to steer away from psychology as a profession. The participants in Sander, Sanders and Mercer's (2009) focus group discussions forwarded similar propositions by stating that psychology is a 'feminine profession' due to its focus on emotional support and social interaction rather than stable employment and monetary gain. As such, present data on this subject outlines disparities in traditional masculine professional values and the professional

elements of psychology. However, as Sander and Sanders (2007) note, while qualitative data surrounding issues of why men do not enter into the field of psychology is available, no research regarding those men who do aspire towards professional registration as a psychologist has yet been generated (Meeus, 2011; Skinner & Louw, 2009). The cumulative effect of this paucity of research in each of these respective areas is that there exists no qualitative exploration of identity constructions of high-performing male psychology students within international psychological research.

2.5. High-Performance and Identity: Achievement and Selfhood

While the above mentioned studies indicate that identity constructions appear to be contextual products, research by Ramdin (2011) suggests that identity formation is inescapably intertwined with academic performance in particular and that both the stability and favourability of identity are positively correlated with academic success. Thus, for Ramdin (2011), high-performing students represent a distinct group in that their academic success reflects an important element of their sense of self. Academic performance, contends Ramdin (2011), is not only a valued indicator of self-efficacy, an individual's ability to achieve desired goals, but also a central aspect of identity that creates a sense of self-respect, confidence and assertiveness beyond the academic context.

Building on these findings, research by Altschul, Oyserman and Bybee (2006) suggests that not only does academic performance form an important aspect of identity construction amongst South African students but that choice of field of study also reflects elements of an individual's identity. These researchers add, that while choice of academic field and profession reflects aspects of identity, so too does entry into and involvement in that field come to shape identity. Altschul, Oyserman and Bybee (2006) argue that professional identity, a representation of one's self based on one's career aspirations, academic focus and occupational activities, although the basis of career choice, is not fully formed prior to the selection of a career, but rather continuously develops in response to career demands and prospects as well. Therefore, Altshcul, Oyserman and Bybee (2006) propose that professional identity is an iterative construct influenced by an individual's own motivations and values as well as the contextual elements of the career itself. Although these researchers highlight a number of noteworthy correlations, the quantitative focus of their research endeavours provides no further insights into these issues on the part of the participants. As such, how high-performing students integrate and represent their academic success within their identities requires qualitative examination in order to explore the participants' own meaning-making processes in this regard.

Whilst the link between academic achievement and identity formation as well as the applicability of a narrative approach to identity construction amongst high-performing students are empirically supported, Meeus (2011) notes few particular studies that provide a qualitative examination of the identity constructions of high-performing men themselves with the focus of the majority of studies on identity formation being directed towards high-risk groups such as adolescents at risk for

academic failure or substance abuse. Osterdag and McNamara (1991) assert that such a slant in focus is related to the feminist proposition that social scientific research has largely focussed on the marginalisation and pathologisation of women and femininity respectively. These authors suggest that an unfortunate result of the feminist movement has been the reactionary refocusing of research on men in terms of the negative aspects of masculinity and male behaviour without retaining a simultaneous focus on the more positive aspects of male identity. In a review of literature, Anderson (2009) notes that South African research on men and masculinity has tended to portray masculinity as a damaging construct which is the primary contribution to social problems including substance abuse, the spread of HIV/AIDS, rape and other forms of sexual violence as well as domestic violence. While Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) as well as Shabalala and Bekuima (2007) concede that there is considerable evidence to support the negative qualities of masculine identity, few studies focus on positive elements of male identity outside of paternal functions and material support.

Furthermore, McLean and Breen (2008) contend that there is a paucity of research on male identity construction outside of an exclusive focus on areas of masculinity and fatherhood, with issues of academics, professional identity and socio-cultural factors relegated to the periphery. Cleaver (2002) contends that such a slant in focus is problematic given that in a focus group conducted with South African adolescents, earning power and material provision through employment was reported to be one of the most central aspects of defining their masculine identities. A notable exception to this trend is research by Harper (2004) which suggests that traditional conceptions of male attributes of competitiveness, autonomy and supremacy are embodied by high-performing men who prioritise professional aspects of their identities over other stereotypical masculine elements embodied in sexual virility and macho athletic performance. Harper's (2004) research reveals that high-performing male students typically conceptualise masculinity and their broader identities in a different manner to other students by focussing on values of altruism, productivity, professional success and collaboration rather than sexual conquests and competitiveness. In contrast to Gilligan's (1993) assertion that men typically disregard academic achievement and professional elements of their identities during university training and only embrace them when they begin their careers in the workplace, Harper (2004) provides insights into a distinct male sub-group of high-performers who do not subscribe to hegemonic masculine discourses in young adulthood and rather favour professional prospects in identity during their university training. Harper (2004) argues, however, that data on men in different academic fields is scanty as few studies focus on men outside of the United States and on fields other than engineering, information technology, architecture and law.

For Sanders, Sander and Mercer (2009) high-performing men in psychology are a population in need of study given that empirical focus has generally been directed towards those men who choose not to pursue psychology and therefore achieve in fields other than psychology. Sander

and Sanders (2007) propose that given the central importance of achievement in South Africa in order to gain entry into post-graduate study, a focus on academic performance is essential when considering the life experiences and self-concepts of male psychology students as an academic struggle for entry into post-graduate study is part and parcel of the journey to professional registration in psychology and consequently to understanding high-performing male psychology students' narratives of identity.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Methodological Framework: A Qualitative Perspective

A qualitative methodological framework was adopted as the basis for exploring identity constructions of high-performing male psychology students. To begin with, for Bryman (2006), the overarching goal of any qualitative research study is to gain an understanding of the 'texture' or quality of a subjective experience or phenomenon. Qualitative research methodology, rather than examining cause-and-effect relationships, is concerned with exploring the unique personal thoughts, emotions and experiences of an individual in a particular situation (Bryman, 2006; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Willig, 2008). According to Hantrias (2009), a closely related goal of any qualitative research endeavour is to employ an idiographic approach by focussing on the particularities of individual experience rather than attempting to uncover generalities within populations. These unique participant-generated meanings are argued by Proctor and Capaldi (2005), to represent an 'insider view' into how individuals live their lives as well as construct the meaning of various life events. Thus, in line with the prescriptions of an interpretative phenomenological epistemological stance, the qualitative methodology to be employed in the proposed study assumes that due to the fact that no veridical reality or truth may be said to exist, no individual experience can be said to be objective or identical (Gadamer, 1960; Heidegger, 1962; Ricouer, 1981; Willig, 2008). As such, the specificities of each experience for an individual, as opposed to general trends amongst aggregations of people, formed the focus of data collection and analysis in this study. The interpretative approach of this research study therefore takes as its point of departure the value of individual subjective experience and aims to neither impose theoretical understandings on the experiences of individuals nor reproduce their experiences uncritically (Kelly, 1999). Such an approach seeks to gather and present an interpreted perspective of the life stories of the high-performing male psychology students by opening an avenue for them to discuss and reflect upon their lives and self-representations as they have changed and developed over time.

3.2. Research Design: Narrative Data Collection and Story Telling

The particular set of procedures adopted for data collection and analysis within this study followed a narrative research design rooted in an interpretative phenomenological framework (Clandinin, 2007). As discussed in Chapter 2, the shift from meaning existing 'out there' as an apodictic and knowable truth to the view that meaning is historical and therefore multiple, varying and ever-changing, requires that researchers no longer accept information as a 'gateway to reality' but rather consider all such information interpretatively (Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Schwandt, 1998). In exploring the stories or narratives of identity of these male psychology students, meaning has been interpreted not only in terms of *what* meaning was made but also *how* it was made (Fay, 1996; Freeman, 2000; Henning, 2004). Thus, within a narrative modality it can be understood that due to historicity and individuality of the meaning for each subjective experience, an individual's self-

reports about his life can be interpreted at three levels of meaning-making (Schwandt, 1998; Kelly, 1999; Willig, 2008). These levels include the meaning of the experiences, thoughts and feelings themselves, the meaning of their presentation within the broader narrative and their meaning in terms of the researcher's own thoughts, feelings and experiences which can never 'bracketed' from the interpretative act (Gadamer, 1960; Gergen, 2001). According to Bold (2011), narrative research involves an in-depth analysis of participant-generated life stories in which the themes and temporal ordering of events and meaning ascribed to events, people and contexts assumes the focus of analytic attention. For Currie (2011), while narrative interviews may serve as the method of information gathering, the interpretative procedures employed thereafter may range from thematic analysis to structural narrative analysis depending on the aim of a particular research project. Due to the circumscribed and exploratory nature of this research project, while a narrative data collection procedure was employed, a thematic analysis of the life stories of these high-performing male psychology students was undertaken in order to explore the overlaps and disparities in the meaning of their unique life trajectories (Willig, 2008).

Andrews (2004) argues that narrative research explores the links and interplay between broader socio-historical contexts and structural processes such as 'race', class, gender and profession, on the one hand, and personal life stories on the other. Fay (1996) adds that the chaining of life events by an individual into a coherent narrative is the source of the meaning ascribed to events but that this meaning is at all times also open to revision by one's self and others. Within this particular study, the story of each participant will necessarily be understood to represent a re-telling of the narrative that emerges between the researcher and participant rather than being uncovered or discovered by them (Bold, 2011; Schwandt, 1998; Willig, 2008). By virtue of our inescapable enmeshment within history, it is here proposed that context and individuality not only influences the participants' 'telling' of their stories but also the researcher's 'listening' to them as our ontological rootedness in history and context is argued to both facilitate and constrain our ability to ascribe meaning to the subjective experiences of the participants (Gadamer, 1960; Henning, 2004). As such, direct access to the subjective meanings of participants' experiences by the researcher is considered impossible given the contextual influences of the researcher's own life story, his position as a senior psychology student and own theoretical commitments in the interpretation of those of the participants (Gadamer, 1960; Willig, 2008). Thus, due to the overlaps between the aim of the proposed study, to explore identity construction, and the analytical tenets of the research design, a contextual and open-ended investigation of participants' life stories, the research design is considered a valid base for data collection and analysis (Currie, 2011).

3.3. Participants: The Characters of the Stories

The participants in this study were recruited through a non-probability, purposive sampling method (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Willig, 2008). More specifically, these individuals were selected for participation in the study on the basis of the researcher's judgement of their suitability for the

research study (purposive selection) and were therefore selected through non-probability means as not all members of the population had an equal probability or chance of inclusion in the sample (Henning, 2004; Willig, 2008).

The requirements that defined the researcher's judgement of an individual's suitability for participation in the study were drawn from the definition of a high-performing male psychology student provided in Chapter 1. Specifically, all potential participants were expected to meet three requirements to merit inclusion in the sample. First, all participants were required to have been admitted into post-graduate academic programmes in psychology. However, due to the fact that there were no African men enrolled for post-graduate courses in psychology, a deliberate decision was made to include two African students who were completing their third-year of undergraduate psychology studies in the sample of participants. This was done in response to the racialised skewing of participation in post-graduate psychology studies so as to ensure that a more nuanced and contextually relevant definition of high-performance was employed within the study (Miller, 2011). A noteworthy element of the sample in this respect is that no students below a third year level have been included in the study. This is due to the fact that such students are suggested by Altschul, Oyserman and Bybee (2006) to generally be less amenable to the selection of a career path in a final and determinate manner due to their high levels of exposure to multiple alternative career paths. This contention is supported by research by Sander and Sanders (2006, 2007) who propose that given the narrowing of academic subjects and concomitant awareness of the completion of one's undergraduate degree in third year, 68% of students report a decision to select a professional career occurring at this stage of their lives. As such, only students who were above a third year level in psychology and therefore capable of applying for post-graduate study were here considered viable participants in the study given the indeterminacy of career paths endemic to earlier levels of study. A second criterion is that all participants should intend to or already be pursuing post-graduate study in psychology in the hope of later entering the professional body of South African psychologists. As such, all participants, in order to be defined as 'psychology students', should consider psychology as their primary academic field and professional aspiration. Such a criterion again defined the level of study for such students as third year and above given that only third year students have the option of applying for post-graduate study presented to them thereby providing a clear marker for indicating which students intend to pursue psychology as a career and those who have other professional aspirations. Third, only men were included in the study. Aside from these requirements, participants were selected irrespective of any other demographic characteristics as a diverse sample within these parameters was sought in order to stretch the interpretative lenses of the study across a group of participants that reflects the racial, cultural and economic diversity of high-performing male psychology students in South Africa (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Sander and Sanders, 2006; Willig, 2008)

On the basis of these requirements, a sample of six participants was recruited from the broad body of psychology students at the University of the Witwatersrand whose demographic information has been presented in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants[2]

Participant	Age	Race[3]	Home Language	Level of Study	Professional Stream	Home Province	Parent/s Occupation/s
Geoffrey	26	White	English	Masters	Neuropsychology	Gauteng	Doctor & Teacher
Abdul	30	Coloured	English	Masters	Counselling	Gauteng	Teacher
Josh	25	White	English	Masters	Counselling	Gauteng	Local Government
Jacob	22	Coloured	English	Honours	Industrial	Kwazulu Natal	Local Government
Simon	21	African	isiZulu	3rd year	N/A	Kwazulu Natal	Domestic Worker
Oscar	21	African	isiZulu	3rd year	N/A	Mpumalanga	Domestic Worker

The rationale behind restricting the sample size to six participants may be found in the fact that qualitative data collection generally ceases after, what Roulston (2010) refers to as, a 'point of saturation' which is characterised by having sufficient data to build and sustain one's analytical claims. This point of saturation has been revealed by Roulston (2010) to typically occur between the sixth and eighth participants interviewed in a sample and ensures that the data collected balances the need for context-specific descriptions with practical limitations of such research. During data collection in this particular study, sufficient data was gathered during the interviews with these six participants to sustain the analytical claims of the researcher as indicated by the fact that no new themes emerged following interviews with the sixth participant while all previously coded themes continued to reoccur and be reinforced (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Roulston, 2010). Furthermore, due to the heterogeneity of the sample and the overlap of interpretative data gathered, a search for additional participants did not appear to add value in terms of extending or reinforcing the analytic claims of the research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Kohler-Reissman, 2008). Additionally, due to the labour-intensive and time-consuming nature of qualitative data analysis, Willig (2008) recommends that samples be kept as small as possible so as to ensure practical demands placed on the researcher are realistic, specifically when gathering and transcribing the in-depth data from semi-structured interviews. Finally, the sample size has been restricted to six participants because the issue of representativeness, defined as the extent to which the sample resembles the target population, is not a meaningful goal in qualitative research

[2] It should be noted that in order to maintain the confidentiality of the participants involved all names presented are pseudonyms. In addition, some demographic information has not been provided or altered in order to avoid identification of the participants on the basis of this information due to the small sample size and interrelatedness of the participants involved (American Psychological Association, 2002; Willig, 2008).

[3] Race categories have here been included as race (as well its implications for socio-economic class in South Africa) emerged as an important area of analytic attention. Therefore, noting each individual's race category aids the reader in exploring how the participant positions himself and how he understands himself as being positioned by others within his socio-historical context.

due to the focus on idiosyncrasies of meaning rather than the identification of general trends which negates the necessity of a larger sample (Hantrias, 2009; Kohler-Reissman, 2008).

These six participants were recruited from two related populations. Four students were drawn from the broad body of postgraduate students enrolled within the discipline of psychology. Specifically, one male psychology honours students and three masters students, from different professional streams of psychology, were recruited for participation in the study as such students fall within the traditional definition of high-performing students as all such students are currently enrolled for advanced psychology courses. In addition to these students, two African third year male psychology students who are from impoverished educational backgrounds yet are achieving second class results in their psychology modules were included in the sample due to their potential for excellence and clearly reported orientation towards pursuing postgraduate studies in psychology. These students have been included in order to represent the contextual aspects of South African education and educational achievement and in order to counteract the racial skewing of participation rates in post-graduate psychology (Bradbury & Miller, 2011; Miller 2010).

While disparities in the experiences and meaning-making processes between these populations were anticipated, such differences are considered to have enriched the data gathered by highlighting contextual elements in their accounts such as class and race (which often intersect within South Africa), amongst others (Bold, 2011; Kohler-Reissman, 2008). Given that the sample is composed of students at different levels of academic study and at different stages in the attainment of their professional aspirations, it was also anticipated that the differences in their experiences will serve to explicate a temporal trajectory of perceptions and experiences that emerge with advancing academic study and life experience. As such, due to the fact that qualitative research does not require a homogeneous sample and allows for tensions and contradictions to emerge in analytic accounts, rather than restricting the sample such tensions have been engaged with in the analysis of data (Henning 2004; Willig, 2008).

3.4. Method of Data Collection: Telling the Story

In order to explore how these high-performing male psychology students articulate their own subjectivities within their life worlds, this study employed both narrative and semi-structured interviews as the primary means of data collection, which were supplemented by biographical and academic data provided by each participant (Bold, 2011; Henwood et al., 2010; Squire, 2008). Fontana and Frey (1998) propose that while methodologies grounded in a quantitatively inflected scientific tradition have rejected any elements of interviews that are not highly structured and systematised, for the purposes of maintaining ‘objectivity’, the ways in which interviews are framed and constrained are shifting due to contestations from interpretative phenomenological branches of the social sciences. Amongst the more profound shifts in this regard has been the reduced emphasis on the role of researcher as an expert with privileged knowledge into the psychological states of the participants (Fontana & Frey, 1998; Potter & Hepburn, 2005; Willig, 2008). Due to the

recognition of the researcher's own active role in the interpretation of participant-generated material Kvale (1996) suggests a shift from the metaphor of a researcher as a miner who excavates and uncovers the truth of an individual's experience to the metaphor of the interviewer as a traveller who explores the experiences and thoughts of the participant in a provisional and interpretative manner as the researcher's own subjectivity prevents an understanding of the participant's subjectivity world in any veridical or objective manner. Gadamer (1960) replaces the notion of objective truth with the idea of interpretive truth or 'understanding' because one (both the researcher and subject) is always located within a hermeneutic circle in which experiences are seen in terms of prior understandings and interpretations rather than objectively. Therefore, past, present and future converge in the understanding of one's own subjectivity as well as those of others at all times (Gadamer, 1960; Kvale, 1998; Squire, 2008). As such, Kvale (1996) proposes that unstructured modes of interviewing, which he refers to as 'Inter-Views', highlight the situated interpretative nature of such interactions between researcher and participant and allow for a more spontaneous unfolding of the participants' subjectivity as opposed to a structured search of a truth inaccessible to both. For Squire (2008), however, such absolute truth is not accessible to the participants themselves either as all experience is accompanied by the act of interpretation in relation to the past experiences, future plans and even the experiences of others.

In light of the theoretical validity of conducting open-ended interviews as a means of accessing the participants' self-augured constructions of their subjectivities, the aim of this research study, during the first round of data collection, individual narrative interviews (Appendix A) were conducted with each of the participants in order to explore their own life stories and the meaning of their experiences (Kvale, 1998; Squire, 2008). These interviews began with a broad open-ended question concerning what Clandinin (2007) refers to as the 'main narration' (Appendix B). This question served as the catalyst for the participants to tell their stories with the researcher asking only clarifying questions and probing topics broached by the participants so as to minimise steering of the interview (Bold, 2011; Squire, 2008, Willig, 2008). Within this interview, probes were focused towards exploring the meaning of life events and the temporal ordering of each event in order to gain a coherent understanding of the trajectory of experiences that the participants viewed as significant in the construction their present identities (Currie, 2011, Henwood et al., 2010). Wengraf (2001) contends that the primary advantage of this non-directive style of narrative interviewing (which he utilises in an even less directive form by suggesting that the researcher say nothing at all during the interview) is that it allows for a relatively self-constructed expression of the participant's life story in relation to the subjective view of the researcher to allow for a narrative that amalgamates the story told by the participant with the story as it is understood by the researcher. It therefore neither privileges the participant nor the researcher but allows the interpretative process to unfold and allow for the emergence of a particular representation of the participant's thoughts and experiences between them. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) add that this style of interview is valuable as it enhances that possibility that the participant's account is only reshaped

through interpretation at the level of listening by removing the interactional dynamic between the participant and interviewer leaving one with a story structured and told, essentially authored, by the participant without being guided by the researcher's focus. In addition to the richness of data and the negotiation of the participants' accounts of their life stories with the interpretive efforts of the researcher, McAdams (2001) contends that potentially the greatest strength of narrative interviews is the additional level of expression afforded by the temporal chaining of life experiences generated within such accounts. Essentially, through the use of a narrative interview method, Bold (2011) proposes that the participant is not only afforded the opportunity to report on meaningful experiences and events as they relate to a specific element of identity or activity but also to consider how they relate to and impact upon one another across space and time.

While the in-depth and multidimensional analysis afforded to the researcher by such a method, and the freedom enjoyed by the participant, represent advantages of this style of interview, Clandinin (2007) asserts that the major disadvantage of employing a narrative style of interview is that often the researcher's interests, the focus of the research, can be lost and interviews, while rich and enjoyable, may be fruitless. Willig (2008) concurs with this contention and argues that often narrative interviews, if completely undirected, can often result in the researcher obtaining a great deal of rich but unhelpful data as elements of the research focus are often lost by participants due to an understandable absorption in expressing their thoughts and feelings about multiple life experiences.

In light of this limitation, one week after these narrative interviews were conducted, the second round of data collection began as semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant in order to further explore the themes and ideas that emerged in the narrative interviews (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, Willig, 2008). Specifically, these semi-structured interviews entailed the use of a set of open-ended questions or items, referred to as an interview agenda (Appendix C), concerning various exigent elements of the identity constructions developed by the participants during the narrative interviews and in terms of the research objectives (Henwood et al., 2010; Potter & Hepburn, 2005). The rationale for including the themes generated by the participants in the first interview, in conjunction with items directed towards achieving the research objectives, as a basis for the semi-structured interviews is to minimise the researcher's bias and avoid the imposition of the researcher's ideas on the participant's own unique life stories (Bold, 2011; Willig, 2008). Due to the fact that the items comprising the agenda for such interviews were primarily developed on the basis of the data gathered in the narrative interviews, a provisional agenda, provided in Appendix C, was modified according to the idiosyncrasies of each participant's life story while retaining the basic parameters of enquiry provided in the agenda items (Henwood et al., 2010; Potter & Hepburn, 2005). Although such items formed the basis of the interview, the researcher was afforded the opportunity to ask follow-up questions where required depending on the participant's responses to each item. This flexibility in terms of the information gained allowed

for the interviewer to not only gain comparable data between participants as a result of the standard interview agenda, but also to clarify terms that the participants used and allow for the detailed exploration of their unique ideas and thoughts (Hewitt, 2007; Willig, 2008). Furthermore, Willig (2008) suggests that the flexibility of the narrative and semi-structured interviews is advantageous as it also allows for the development of an informal atmosphere which aids in establishing rapport, a trusting relationship with participants, which enhances data collection. For the researcher, this flexibility and focus on the idiosyncrasy of meaning are not only in line with the interpretative phenomenological substrates of this study but also well-suited to exploring individual constructions of identity and providing qualitative data on this subject due to the use of open-ended questions (Clandinin, 2007; Henwood et al., 2010; Potter & Hepburn, 2005)

Regarding the interview procedures employed, as a means of minimising any logistical and/or safety complications that could be experienced by the participants, these interviews were conducted in a venue on the University campus. The accessibility and adequate security of the campus providing a safe and convenient site for data collection while the familiarity of the building, housing the Discipline of Psychology, was intended to reduce the anxiety of the participants and facilitate disclosure during the interviews (Henwood, Pidgeon, Parkhill & Simmons, 2010; Hewitt, 2007). At the outset of each interview all participants were reminded of the aims of the study as well as their right to end the interview at any time, after which they were again informed that the interview would take about one and a half hours (for both narrative and semi-structured interviews respectively) and that they could take a break anytime they wish. Following this outline, each participant was asked to provide consent for the interview to be conducted (Appendix D) and to be audio-tape recorded (Appendix E) for the purpose of ensuring accuracy of interpretation through verbatim data transcription (Roulston, 2010; Wengraf, 2001). For Henwood et al. (2010), the use of recording equipment is an effective means for facilitating an in-depth discussion between interviewer and interviewee given that the distraction of furious note-taking on the interviewer's part is removed, allowing for a more authentic interaction. Hewitt (2007) adds that while recording of the interview may be anxiety-provoking for participants, note-taking at strategic points during which they mention potentially sensitive or important information is more damaging to further disclosure and therefore the former option is preferable to the latter. Furthermore, both the exact words of the participants as well as the paralinguistic aspects of their speech were retained through voice recording. Therefore, audio-tape recording provided a useful means of ensuring that as little as possible will be lost in translation during data capturing which, in turn, provided richer data for analysis (Potter & Hepburn, 2005).

3.5. Method of Data Analysis: Hearing and Understanding the Story

Following each recorded interview, full transcripts of the narrative and semi-structured interviews were drafted. Due to the fact that all participants are enrolled in tertiary education institutions in which the medium of instruction is English, all interviews were conducted in this language and no

translation was required during the transcription process. Once the data had been transcribed, the analysis of data, referring to the systematic process of defining the meaning of the data collected, involved a multi-stage analysis of each transcript (Bold, 2011; Currie, 2011). Given the dearth of research into identity construction of high-performing male psychology students in South Africa, the researcher elected to use both inductive and deductive thematic analytic approaches in which themes were generated from participants' accounts rather than predefined by the researcher before the interview although were broadly outlined by the research literature consulted (Currie, 2011; Joffe & Yardley, 2003). More specifically, the analytic procedure employed directed focus towards, on the one hand, the emergent themes within participants' accounts as well as, on the other hand, the similarity and differences of thematic categories between different participants' narratives and the literature pertaining to the study (Bold, 2011; Squire, 2008). Importantly, this analytical structure provides a useful means of tracing the trajectory of experiences which participants consider central to their identity formation and the meaning attributed to them without presupposing what might be found while still providing a sense of direction in the process of interpretation.

Inasmuch as the open-ended and inductive analytic procedures employed within this study are in keeping with the participant-led prescriptions of what Willig (2008) terms 'Big Q' qualitative research, Proctor and Capaldi (2005) contend that this can represent a disadvantage in terms of data analysis in that it may lead to a loss of analytic focus and water-down the purpose of the research. While a lack of precoding carries both a benefit and potential area of concern within this study, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) reassert the value of using both inductive and deductive approaches for such an exploratory study in that while analytic focus may be widened by inductive methods, the analysis remains focussed through the use of semi-structured interview questions generated from literature which shift data within the aforementioned analytic categories. As such, it may be argued that through the use of two rounds of interviews, this study serves to focus analysis by creating a horizon within which discourse may develop while retaining a focus on participants' experience by not predefining what may be found (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Willig 2008). As such, the advantage of such an analysis is that it upholds an interpretative phenomenological privileging on the participants' accounts while it does not render them as uninterpretable vessels of truth nor as vague and irreconcilable accounts of life (Kohler-Reissman, 2008; Kvale, 1996)

The inductive, participant-led features of the analysis does not entirely predefine the themes that may emerge within and between participant accounts as it allows for new themes to emerge and for themes to be redefined by participants while the deductive elements provide a board framework to facilitate rather than predefine thinking about the experiences of these participants. As such, a two stage sequential analytic process was employed in order to generate both shared and unshared meanings in participants' accounts (Bold, 2011; Clandinin, 2007). The first stage of analysis involved the identification of themes within each participant's account. This stage

therefore included noting the different ways in which participants construct their identities, paying attention to both implicit and explicit references to different elements of identity such as masculinity, academic proficiency and professional ambitions (Currie, 2011; Squire, 2008). This initial analytical step essentially served to identify the multiple and varied ways in which identity can be constructed by different individuals and the meaning that they ascribe to life events and experiences (Joffe & Yardley, 2003; Willig, 2008). Such a method of analysis is argued by Joffe & Yardley (2003) to be of immense analytic value in that it utilises participants' accounts of their life experiences as the empirical basis of multiple readings which allows for analytically rich interpretations as both areas of agreement and within and between participants accounts are permitted and explored. This was accomplished by ascribing different colours and numbered codes to each section of each participant's transcript (see *Appendix F*) so as to ensure that every line of data is coded under a specific analytic theme (see *Appendix G*) in order to capture every detail and nuance of the participants' unique life experiences (Willig, 2008).

After exploring and coding the nuances of each participant's life story, the second stage of analysis involved the comparison of each participant's account with those of each other participant in order to explore both interrelations and discrepancies in the ways that the participants construct their identities. In so doing, thematic clusters were developed in order to capture generalities of experience while retaining unique specificities of interpretation within them (Bold, 2011; Willig, 2008). Through this process of thematic clustering, a set of 'master themes' emerged which conversely highlight the idiosyncrasies of each participant's experience allowing for a holistic and systematic view of both the entire sample and each individual member as they relate to one another (Bold, 2011; Currie, 2011; Wengraf, 2001). In completing this stage of analysis, Kohler-Reissman (2008) postulates that the analysis is enriched as each participant's voice is entered into a community voices which may converse with one another to reveal areas of agreement and conflict concerning the meanings of experiences and life paths directed towards becoming a high-performing male psychology student. As such, difference and similarity become areas of analysis as opposed to obstacles to be avoided in analysis which carries the advantage of foregrounding all elements of experience as significant areas of resonance and disjuncture rather than conflicts to be dismissed or interpreted away (Willig, 2008).

The implication of this style of analysis for the findings of the research is therefore that all of the participants' accounts cannot be viewed as unmodified reflections of the 'truth' of their lived lives as the presence of the researcher's own personal and theoretical views necessarily filters these experiences in the inevitable act of interpretation (Gadamer, 1960; Willig, 2008). Thus, in addition to the analysis of the constructive accounts of each participant included in the study, analytic attention to the reactions, thoughts and emotions of the researcher have also formed an integral part of data analysis (Potter & Hepburn, 2005; Willig, 2008). The major implication of the interpretative hermeneutic orientation adopted for the purposes of this study is that there exists no

objective or veridical account of truth or reality in that every knowledge claim is derived from an individual immersed within, and therefore conditioned by, a particular socio-cultural context (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Gergen, 2001). As such, the researcher recognises that the research account produced in this study will inevitably involve the intermingling of the participant-generated constructions of identity with the researcher's own personal, epistemological and ontological presumptions and predispositions during the interpretative process (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Wengraf, 2001).

3.5. Reflexivity Considerations: Whose Story is Told?

In order to enhance the validity of the analytic process, reflexive considerations have been kept in mind throughout data collection and analysis (Putcha & Potter, 2004; Willig, 2008). Reflexivity, according to Willig (2008), may be defined as an active recognition and enduring awareness of the researcher's own standpoint in relation to the phenomenon being studied as well as the potential effects of this standpoint on the processes of data collection and analysis as well as the results obtained. Before and after each interview the researcher recorded reflexive considerations in a diary in order to properly document their occurrence and potential effects on the research process so as to explicate such issues and allow readers to make informed decisions about the validity of the findings and quality of the analysis (Gergen, 2001; Kohler-Reissman, 2008). This includes mention of both the personal reflexive considerations of the researcher, manifest in the personal opinions and reactions of the researcher to the participants and themes, as well as the epistemological reflexive considerations of the researcher which involves systematically exhibiting the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the researcher that have coloured the analysis of data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Gergen, 2001; Willig, 2008). In so doing, the researcher hopes to explicate the analytic lenses employed within the study so as to not only make all interpretations as transparent as possible but also allow room for alternative perspectives from readers and reviewers.

An interpretative phenomenological epistemology rests upon the assumption that interpretation is the basic medium of human understanding (Gadamer, 1960; Heidegger, 1962). An exploration of the researcher's thoughts and feelings during the interviews and in the process of data analysis is of immense importance in providing a transparent and accurate interpretative account of their narratives of identity (Currie, 2011; Gergen, 2001). While I have utilised third-person pronouns such as 'the researcher' as a mode of self-reference in preceding and subsequent sections of this report, the personal nature of this account merits, in my view, a more intimate portrayal of my reflections made possible only through the use of first-person self-references (Bryman, 2003; Roulston, 2010; Willig, 2008). Perhaps the greatest challenge that I experienced while conducting each of the research interviews was to remain a researcher as opposed to a therapist within the room (Hewitt, 2007; Willig, 2008). While I often found myself moved by powerful emotional responses to the participants' accounts of past and, more problematically, present life struggles

and traumas, I was aware of a need to remain therapeutically abstinent in a more literal sense than that implied by psychoanalysts such as Klein (1959) and Freud (1933) as I was forced to listen without an intention to attempt to help. Although I found that I tended to focus my own attention within the interview on the participants' difficult experiences while experiencing my own pull to assist them in some manner, conscious and conscientious reflection on this tendency paired with the structure provided by my research agendas was immensely useful in retaining not only a focus on the research objectives but also on a research as opposed to therapeutic aim (Hewitt, 2007; Kelly, 1999). As such, as a clinical psychology masters student, I found that my therapeutic training was both a help and hindrance to my interviewing skills within the room. While it served to change my focus on occasion, paradoxically it was also my salvation from straying away from the issues of greatest importance for my research (Klein, 1959; Kvale, 1996).

While a conscientious maintenance of focus on being a 'scientist over a practitioner'- regulating a 'desire to help' that we all shared- in this regard was of immense importance during each interview, I noted a plethora of points of resonance in the stories of participants with my own which enhances my confidence in the validity of the findings of this research (Bryman, 2003; Willig, 2008). However, it may be argued that due to the open-ended nature of the narrative interview it is possible that comforting and rapport enhancing points of resonance with my own account may have been explored in greater depth than uncomfortable points of dissonance, whether intentionally or unintentionally, during these interactions due to the generally positive and personally interesting nature of such resonances (Currie, 2011; Kvale, 1996). As Willig (2008) asserts, it may be possible that a desire to find not only a particular answer to the research question posed, but also an answer that is personally validating or which carries personal meaning for the researcher, may lead one to focus on that which is more personally valuable than reflective of the experiences of the participants. Such a temptation, one which is both human and understandable, was acknowledged at the outset of each interview and while an attempt to bracket my own views is not easily accomplished, or perhaps even possible (Gadamer, 1960; Heidegger, 1962), reflection on these views and the assumption of a more neutral observer role in the interviews, to minimise my steering of the interviews and allow the participants to determine both the content and structure of their stories as Wengraf (2001) recommends, was utilised to reduce such biasing effects. In addition, the second round of semi-structured interviews which neither dictated nor diluted the specific content to be discussed but rather provided domains for discourse allowed for an increased focus on participants' accounts as they were presented and understood from my lenses as opposed to stories that were entirely narrowed and reshaped by the limits of my views (Bryman, 2003; Hantrias, 2009; Willig, 2008).

These areas of resonance were found throughout the accounts of every participant and were topics that, in their various and unique forms, played an important role in revealing some of the shared experiences and meanings that have developed our narratives of identity as high-

performing male psychology students. However, while these resonances were powerful and numerous, some areas of dissonance between the accounts of the participants and my own narrative of identity were notable as well (Henning, 2004; Willig, 2008). The most prominent site of such dissonance between participants' narratives of identity and with my own was the issue of poverty and life struggles which took on a racial divide (both between the researcher and participants as well as between the participants themselves) with such accounts being powerfully represented in the stories of the black participants but not in those of the other participants; at least not in the same form. Mkhize (2006) and Langa (2012) note that there is often a conflation of race and class within the South African context due to the economic disenfranchisement of black or non-white people during the apartheid era; a legacy which filters into the social structures of our contemporary society in which the overwhelming majority of black South Africans remain economically disempowered and poverty stricken. As Oscar and Simon recounted their financial hardships and struggles to gain entry into tertiary education, I found it difficult to empathise with them having not experienced anything of the like myself. Inasmuch as our sharing had brought us closer, our inescapable difference maintained some distance that was not present with other participants (Hewitt, 2007; Kelly, 1999).

A final issue which made focus during the interviews difficult and presented challenges to me in terms of remaining neutral were often centred on issues of scope of practice, with occasions in which my objectivity was challenged by counselling or neuropsychologists discussing the relative merits or concerns about working with psychopathology. As Sander and Sanders (2006) as well as Skinner and Louw (2009) contend, there continues to exist some level of competitiveness and possessiveness between different professional streams of psychology, a possessiveness which often encroached upon my neutrality and had to be carefully managed in the room. Such discussions of internships and clinical work often stirred up feelings of concern and invasion on my part although recognition of these feelings, as opposed to attempts to bracket them, alerted me to the dissonance in our views and therefore the importance of letting the participants speak uninterruptedly to ensure that their views are heard over mine in this respect as well as those mentioned earlier (Clandinin, 2007; Willig, 2008).

In summation, I found that with each participant there was material that was either too close to home or occasionally too far from it. While Willig (2008) and Kvale (1996) note that such experiences are to be expected in the process of qualitative research that carries some level of acknowledged personal investment, the influence of my own thoughts and feelings were minimised but by no means eliminated (Clandinin, 2007) as biasing factors within this research through the use of structured and participant-led research tools and allowed for the participants to write their stories as far as possible with the knowledge that I would re-tell them inescapably in my own way (Currie, 2011; Ricouer, 1981). While my own thoughts and affects have shaped my understanding of the narratives of identity presented by each of these men, my identity- even my appearance-

may have played an important role in shaping their articulations of self which were developed not in isolation but in interaction with me. While class and race were areas of difference across the group, the silences that developed around them were seldom addressed and speak to the potential effect of my identity on theirs, my story on theirs, and represent a lingering curiosity for us all in this regard (Currie, 2011; Langa, 2012; Willig, 2008).

3.6. Ethical Considerations: Securing the Story

While issues of scientific quality and validity of results are central to ensuring that this study serves as a valuable contribution to the corpus of social scientific data on identity construction, the scientific demands of any study must also be balanced with ethical considerations of the participants involved (American Psychological Association, 2002; Willig, 2008). As is the case with any research endeavour, this research study was subject to a number of ethical prescriptions which have been satisfied in order to protect the safety, dignity and well-being of the research participants (American Psychological Association, 2002; Willig, 2008). The following is an account of the ethical considerations germane to this particular study and how they have been addressed in the conceptualisation and completion of this research study.

To begin with, in order to ensure that participation in the study was voluntary, all participants were informed at the outset of the study that the decision about whether or not to participate in the study is entirely at their discretion and that their academic training and/or results will in no way be affected by their decision on whether or not to participate (Hewitt, 2007). Specifically, participants were informed that they would neither incur an academic penalty for refusing participation in the study, nor would they receive any academic credits for agreeing to participate. This important countermeasure served to ensure that no participant was coerced into participation in this particular study and that the autonomy of each participant has been respected (American Psychological Association, 2002).

To ensure that all participants were capable of volunteering for participation in the study, all information relating to the aims and procedures of the study were outlined in a participant information sheet (Appendix A) and mentioned an informed consent form (Appendix D) provided to the participants prior to data collection (American Psychological Association, 2002; Willig, 2008). Due to the fact that all participants are fluent in English and fully literate, as exhibited by their academic qualifications, understanding of the information and consent form was ensured (Bold, 2011; Willig, 2008). Due to the fact there was no deception (deliberate misleading of participants), full and accurate disclosure of the research information was possible thereby ensuring an informed decision on whether or not to participate for each participant (Mauthner et al., 2002; Willig, 2008). Importantly, in addition to gaining consent for participation in the study, participants were also provided with a form (Appendix E) in order to provide written consent for the use of recording equipment by the researcher during interviews (Potter & Hepburn, 2005).

Another vital ethical consideration incorporated within the proposed study is that of maintaining the confidentiality of the participants. In order to protect the privacy of each participant throughout the study, confidentiality has been considered at three stages within the research process. First, at the level of recruitment, the academic and personal information of all prospective participants was provided to the researcher only with the consent of each participant so that no personal information was transferred to the researcher without the prospective participants' knowledge and agreement (Hewitt, 2007; Willig, 2008). Second, at the level of data collection, the researcher has ensured that all participant-generated information has been safely stored in a secure environment, to which only the researcher and his supervisor have access (American Psychological Association, 2002; Mauthner et al., 2002). Third, at the level of reporting, all participants have been assigned pseudonyms in order to protect their identities and, due to the small size and interrelatedness of the sample, limited demographic information has been provided in the report so as to minimise the possibility of participants recognising one another should the read the research findings (Hewitt, 2007; Potter & Hepburn, 2005). The latter consideration is regarded as particularly important given that, due to their academic leanings, participants were offered access to all publications of this research.

While the protection of each participant's right to privacy has been of paramount importance in the study, all participants were protected from additional forms of psychological and physical harm as well. In order to ensure the physical safety of all participants was considered, all interviews took place on the premises of the university. The convenience of the location minimised any dangers arising from extensive travel while the security provided for the East campus reduced any risk of harm to the participants (American Psychological Association, 2002; Mauthner et al., 2002).

In terms of potential psychological harm, due to the open-ended nature of the interview process, there was a possibility of participants revealing traumatic material related (or unrelated) to their identity formation which may have caused psychological harm or emotional pain (Hewitt, 2007; Potter & Hepburn, 2005). In light of this risk, convenient, appropriate and affordable psychological services were made available to all participants following the interviews including the student counselling services available at the university. In addition, participants, should they have required it, were provided with additional information regarding the Lifeline telephonic counselling service. In addition to the potentially sensitive content raised within each interview, the interview relationship was also be carefully managed as the informal ambience of the semi-structured interview may have allowed for an abuse of the participant's trust by the researcher who could have utilised the environment to probe deeper than the interviewee may feel comfortable with after the exchange. For this reason, the researcher remained on guard to act in an ethically committed manner by balancing the needs of each participant with his own research aims (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Willig, 2008).

Finally, while every possible measure was taken to ensure the autonomy, physical safety and psychological integrity of all participants, the proposed study is believed to have had a beneficial impact on participants' lives by providing a renewed sense of self-understanding and identity while also providing participants with the knowledge that they have advanced the field in which they hope to one day work in an important way. As such, while the proposed study has adhered to the ethical principle of non-maleficence, the potential benefit to participants exhibits the researcher's commitment to beneficence as well (American Psychological Association, 2002).

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction: Contextualising the Themes

The first stage of data analysis yielded 30 themes which encompass the full range of meanings and sentiments expressed by participants' regarding their trajectories of life experience during both the narrative and semi-structured interviews (Willig, 2008). For an excerpt from a coded interview transcript, see *Appendix F*. Additionally, the data coding sheets for this stage of analysis have been provided in *Appendix G* in order to explicate the thematic categories generated as well as their frequency of occurrence in the accounts of each individual participant. These data analysis sheets have been included for the dual purposes of enhancing the transparency of the analysis employed so as to restrict potential bias by the researcher and provide the reader with the opportunity to examine these categories and draw his or her own conclusions from the data generated (Elliot, Fischer & Rennie, 1999; Willig, 2008) as well as avoid potential misinterpretations regarding the implications of the high number of thematic categories generated (Kelly, 1999).

Investigation of the data analysis sheets reveals that while the plethora of themes initially generated may be argued to point towards heterogeneity in the responses and therefore life narratives of the participants, it should be noted that a fine tuned analytic procedure was utilised during this first stage of analysis in order to capture even minor nuances in the life stories and meanings of experiences for each participant (Kelly, 1999; Willig, 2008). Therefore, while the first stage of thematic analysis yielded a high number of distinct thematic categories, the number of themes is not an adequate indication of thematic variability as it may be argued that these thematic categories bear greater resemblance to one another than difference and may therefore be understood to reflect variations of more global underlying themes (Joffe & Yardley, 1993; Willig, 2008). To illustrate this point, consider the comparison between '*Code 22: Interest in Humanity'* and '*Code 29: Psychology as a means of understanding everyday life'.* While both thematic codes include a specific inclination towards the study of humanity, the latter indicates a uniquely psychological focus not implied by the former suggesting a more specific field and therefore mode of thinking about humanity than a broad interest in human behaviour. At the same time as such thematic nuances have been incorporated into the first stage of analysis to indicate subtle yet vital differences in the meaning of participants' disclosures, each code is nonetheless semantically linked to other codes not by superficial elements but rather core elements of meaning suggesting a shared basis of meaning while reflecting subtle differences (Bold, 2011; Kelly, 1999).

Moreover, while these multiple thematic categories have been generated in order to make meaningful the varied thoughts, feelings and experiences of the participants' as a group, perusal of the data analysis sheets provided reveals that not all 30 themes were present in the account of every participant. For Bold (2011) the presence of thematic categories that are not inclusive of the experiences of the entire sample reveals areas in which the trajectories of participants' life

experiences fray or splinter and are therefore valuable in revealing 'differences about similarities'. Kohler-Reissman (2008) supports such a contention in her postulation that the variability of human experience necessitates that themes be developed in accordance with the participants life experiences as opposed to being moulded to fit them and that this commitment therefore implies an inevitable development of themes which are inclusive of only some participants experiences and not those of others. For Willig (2008), attempts to integrate or reconcile such differences through refashioning of themes not necessarily reflective of the differences does not serve to enhance thematic analysis but rather detract from it as difference is as valuable as similarity within qualitatively inflected research. In addition, it is noteworthy that of the 30 themes generated in the first stage of analysis, 22 are shared by all of the participants being studied suggesting that even at the most nuanced level of analysis, similarities between their accounts are more pronounced than areas of difference between them. Moreover, while such similarities serve to indicate multiple areas of analytic harmony, areas of dissonance are equally fructifying in that they widen the scope of analysis to include areas of controversy so as to allow the individual voices of the participants equal volume to those of the sample thereby capturing areas of shared experience along with areas of conflict so as to reflect the idiosyncrasies of each participant's meaning-making journey in conversation with those of the other members of the sample (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Kelly, 1999).

While the first stage of data analysis served to capture the shared and varied meanings of each participant's experiences in their entirety, so as to provide a grid of meaning within which to interpret each participant's account of his life story as it relates to his identity as a high-performing male psychology student, the second stage of analysis, which shall form the crux of this discussion, has served to deepen the interpretative character of the readings of their narratives of identity by clustering themes into six hierarchically ordered master themes (Joffe & Yardley, 1993; Kelly, 1999; Willig, 2008). These themes, far from serving a restrictive function, allow for the similarities and differences noted in the first stage of analysis while foregrounding the interpretative elements not included in the earlier stage of analysis. The hierarchy of these was developed on the basis of two pertinent and interrelated considerations adopted from Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) as well as Elliot, Fischer and Rennie (1999), who recommend that thematic clusters be ordered in terms of, first, their relation to the primary research question and, second, how prolific the thematic cluster is found to be throughout the accounts of the entire sample of participants. By ordering the master themes in this manner, the researcher intends to reflect in the analysis the relative importance for each of these categories both in terms of the researcher's interests and in terms of the importance of such themes to the experiences of the participants. Therefore, through hierarchical ordering of analytic categories, the centrality of these master themes to the meaning making efforts of both the participants and researcher is negotiated by directing initial focus to the areas of greatest interest and involvement for both parties allowing for an ethical and coherent

interpretation of participants narratives of identity by balancing the interests of both the researcher and researched in the discussion (Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Willig, 2008).

While the master themes generated for the purposes of this analysis were ordered in terms of their relevance to both the research question and participants' narrative identities, an equally pertinent concern is how the themes generated during the first round of analysis were clustered into the predominating master themes. During the second stage of data analysis, explicit links were made between the thematic codes generated from each participant's account and the relation of these codes to the secondary research questions informing this research study (Wengraf, 2001; Willig, 2008). Adopting a more open-ended strategy proposed by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) in which multiple codes can be clustered to answer multiple questions as opposed to being used in an exclusive and categorical fashion, six master themes were generated in order to provide a structured discussion loosely organised around responses to the secondary research questions developed for the purposes of this study:

- **Hegemonic masculinity: Resisted or Redefined?**
- **Passion and pragmatics: Psychology as freedom to think and feel**
- **Scientist-Practitioner: Psychology as knowing and/or helping**
- **Life struggles as a route to empathy: Helping self and others**
- **Diversity and difference: Fostering an interest in humanity**
- **Dynamic living: In search of the changing self**

As such, the thematic clusters have been developed in order to provide interlinking discussions relating to several exigent elements of these high-performing male psychology students narratives of identity tailored to providing coherent and integrated responses to the questions that form the focus of this study beginning with the central issue of masculinity (Willig, 2008).

4.2. Hegemonic Masculinity: Resisted or Redefined?

As suggested by Butler (1996) and numerous other authors (Shefer, 2007; Tiefer, 1992) considering gendered elements of identity, the most prolific theme presented by the participants, in one particular form or another, was gender or masculinity as it relates to their identities as high-performing male psychology students. This master theme has been titled in a manner that highlights the central debate of whether these men have, as they suggest, resisted or defied hegemonic masculine norms, redefined masculinity or perhaps perpetuated hegemony despite their professed intentions.

To begin with, each of the participants included within the study made numerous references to gender, particularly masculinity and perceived masculine norms, while discussing their identities as high-performing male psychology students. The unanimous sentiment expressed by these participants was that they are overtly opposed to hegemonic masculine norms and have made

concerted and conscientious efforts to shatter the stereotypes to which a large proportion of South African men subscribe:

"None of the guys I work with in psychology are those sorts of 'rah rah' macho types. You know, the overboard testosterone guys. They usually think further than the stereotypes." (Abdul)

"Well, some guys think what it means to be male is all about this macho testosterone filled thing. Like aggression gives you confidence and I've never agreed with that because you don't need bravado to be a man." (Josh)

"I've never been like other guys, you know. I didn't always like the whole 'main man' kind of way of being and felt like guys can be more than just 'jocks' I guess. The whole male culture has been odd to me at times." (Geoffrey)

"I always wondered how guys can be that way. How they can feel like things have to be a certain way. My culture is all about being dominant and being a patriarch but caring about your wife and child can be better I think. Being a man is different to me than what they say." (Oscar)

"For me, I guess I was always like, hey what's the problem? I didn't do so well at fitting into the 'man mould' but didn't feel like I needed to, not because I couldn't, but because I didn't want to." (Jacob)

"I think... I don't think being a man means you have to be certain things. I think being a man is about more than being the head of the house, you can be a provider but also be a caregiver. I think people see that as strange." (Simon)

What is immediately noticeable from these quotes is not only the centrality of masculinity to each participant's identity, but also their explicit rejection of the hegemonic masculine norms of dominance, aggression and competitiveness that continue to permeate contemporary South African culture (Connell, 1995; Mkhize, 2006, Shefer, 2007). Furthermore, these quotes reflect a shift away from the essentialised and binary conceptions of gender which Shefer (2007) portrays as delimiting shackles of human action. In their self-professed identification of these hegemonic norms and resistance to them, these men appear to acknowledge not only the existence of hegemonic masculine norms but also their situatedness and therefore the horizons of possibility which stretch beyond them. Thus, their awareness of the contextual nature of these gender prescriptions and, by implication, the possibility of alternative modes of gendered 'Being' (Heidegger, 1962) reflects a strong awareness of social norms as influencing gender identity and gendered behaviour (Butler, 1993; Shefer, 2007).

While each of these men suggest seeing themselves as 'anormative', to use Butler's (1993) language, it may be argued that their exposure to psychological and sociological theory may have informed their conceptualisations of masculinity and difference in this regard (Harton & Lyons, 2003). However, although these men do indeed suggest that entry into sociological and psychological circles during their academic training has been important in shaping their

understandings of gendered dynamics, they report that their beliefs about gender as a social construct, rather than apodictic essentialised 'truth', and their negative perceptions of masculine norms developed prior to their psychological training and therefore that their views about gender and masculinity were confirmed and expanded upon rather than originated by their academic work in psychology:

"When I got to university and started learning about things like gender and economics in sociology and psych, I thought to myself: 'Wow! This is what I'd thought all along and now it makes more sense'." (Jacob)

"It became pretty clear to me by high-school that what a man is in that environment isn't the same as what he is later on in life so I knew I'd find my time later on. In university, everything I learned just kind of built on it and confirmed it." (Josh)

"I had always wondered about gender, masculinity, sex, sexuality and that stuff before university so it was awesome when we started learning queer theory and those things because I found theories that matched my personal views about being a man or gay and those things." (Abdul)

This social constructionist view of the world shared by the participants reflects an important postulation forwarded by Altschul, Oyserman and Bybee (2006) that oftentimes personal perceptions, informed by life experiences and contextual influences, lead to the selection of fields that appear to incorporate those same views as opposed to contradict them. While this may at first seem fairly commonsensical, it may be argued that the realisation that engagement with psychological theory did not breed these views but rather nurture views that developed prior to entry into the field suggests that an important theme in these men's narratives of identity is a view of the world and themselves as socially constructed or at least malleable. As such, far from viewing gender or masculinity as a 'rule of life', these men appear to have broken free from the shackles of essentialism and begun to roam alternative gendered plains of being (Anderson, 2009; Shefer, 2007). Such a contention is in line with the findings of Harton and Lyons (2003) who found, during their focus group with male psychology students, that many participants suggested viewing the world and their lives as 'expressions of variation' which could be reconstructed in multiple ways. Therefore, these men report a more malleable view of gender and identity which is suggestive of a way of understanding the world as being created by us as opposed to creating us, and it is this exercise of self-creation, or at least self-modification and development for which they seem to assume personal responsibility through their actions (Butler, 1990; 1993).

Inasmuch as the social consciousness reported by these men is in itself a significant finding, returning to the original proposition, their awareness appears to be coupled with an active rejection of such masculine norms as each participant expressed some level of disdain for the "*man mould*" mentioned by Jacob. For these men, as a group, being the "*typical male*" (Josh) is considered an inappropriate and unwanted task as:

"It just doesn't feel right to me, it's not who I am." (Geoffrey)

"More and more I felt I didn't want to be something that didn't make sense to me because it feels like it's like binding, you know?" (Oscar)

"It's just not me, I know what things feel right and wrong to me regardless of what society says and so I don't think feeling and being responsible to other people makes me less of a man." (Josh)

In each of the above quotes, there is an expressed sense of discomfort with the concept of hegemony for these men. Importantly, the concept of being a man, without prompt or enquiry, was immediately assumed by the participants to involve normative behaviours of aggression, lack of emotional expression and competition (Blackbeard, 2005; Connell, 1995) suggesting pervasive and culturally ingrained hegemonic masculinity maintained within contemporary South African culture. The disclosures of the participants imply a shared view of the "*man mould*" (Jacob) as analogous to a cold, concrete cast in which they are encased as Josh's suggestion that compassion and emotionality do not detract from masculinity echoes the sentiments expressed by participants in the focus groups of Blackbeard and Lindeggar (2007) who suggested being forced to build a wall around themselves to protect their masculine identities.

While these participants are united both with one another and the participants of Blackbeard and Lindeggar (2007) in their rejection of hegemonic masculinity viewing it as "*narrow and oppressive, even dangerous*" (Jacob), they are divided in the ways in which they reportedly negotiate their 'atypicality'. While some of these men report adopting a self-definition, a sense of gendered identity that is negatively defined in opposition to hegemonic norms, others suggest attempting to change masculine norms by shifting them as opposed to acting against them. Regarding the former participants, namely Abdul and Simon, there appears to be an active effort to assume a more feminine gendered identity as opposed to attempting to revise masculine norms:

"The thing is that psychology is a more feminine profession because being a therapist requires more feminine traits like empathy, caring, being in touch with your feelings and so on. So I leaned towards this kind of thing because I'm more feminine." (Abdul)

"Well, it's like because I care a lot, I love people's stories; even their pain. So I think it makes me more like a female person in that way because I'm about talking about feelings which guys don't really do." (Simon)

For Abdul and Simon, it appears that while gender is not an essentialised construct (Burman, 1995; Cleaver, 2002), it remains a binary one characterised by opposing and mutually exclusive poles of masculinity and femininity (Shefer, 2007). In actively defining themselves as feminine, particularly in relation to the field of psychology and specifically the therapeutic specialisations, these participants seem to rely upon a view of masculinity as a single, coherent construct and locate their agency in choosing whether or not to behave in accordance with it as opposed to perhaps actively attempting to refashion it (Anderson, 2009; Butler, 1993; Frosch, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002). In similar fashion to the participants of Frosch, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) who defined themselves as 'exceptions to the masculine norm' through engagement in traditionally

female endeavours of art and drama, it seems that so too have Abdul and Simon adopted a 'feminised' gender identity based on their professional aspirations of becoming therapeutic psychologists. This may be argued to reflect an active defiance of one discourse, masculinity, in favour of subscription to another, femininity, by these men which seems to imply active defiance of hegemonic masculinity through intentional subordination to femininity (Anderson, 2009; Archer, 2000; Billington, Hockey & Strawbridge; 1998; Butler, 1990).

While these two participants suggest that their gendered identities are constructed in terms of adherence to feminine norms, the other participants (Josh, Geoffrey, Oscar and Jacob) appear to adopt a different understanding of their masculine identities as aspiring psychologists. For these participants, rather than considering themselves as 'feminine' in opposition to masculine, they appear to adopt a view of themselves which is closer to Connell's (1995) notion of multiple masculinities:

"I get asked a lot about what it's like being a male therapist or psychologist, and people think it's weird that I can sit and talk about feelings all day because that's supposedly 'women's work' but I don't think so. I think being a man means different things to different people and I see it as being able to care about people and not being a sissy because being a man can also be about taking care of people. I want to show people that feeling, caring and being responsible is manly too." (Josh)

"I think that the whole, 'how do you feel about that' line is used as a way of making it seem like less manly but just because it's not one person's idea of masculine doesn't mean it's feminine, if that makes sense. I try to show that in what I do." (Oscar)

"I don't know, I also think that the whole 'it's a woman's job' is silly because there's no reason men can't be psychologists. I don't see many differences between men and women because we all have different traits that are male and female. You can't be one or the other for me." (Geoffrey)

While Abdul and Simon appear to define their gendered identities as opposed to hegemonic masculinity, these participants all point towards masculinity being a more fluid and permeable construct in their suggestions that it can change and represent multiple ways of being that are not necessarily feminine. The view of masculinity as multiple (Connell, 1985) and fluid is therefore a basis for these men to, as Wetherell and Edley (1999) suggest, to attempt to redefine masculinity from within as opposed to defy it. These men may be argued to adopt what Shabalala and Bekuima (2007) term a splintered masculinity as a means of defining themselves by being willing to adopt and adapt rather than oppose and depose masculine norms. As such, these men appear to have, in terms of their work and studies as psychologists, attempted to (re)define rather than defy masculinity by (re)presenting social responsibility, emotional connectedness and care as masculine traits (Anderson, 2009; Connell, 1995; Shabalala & Bekuima, 2007; Shefer, 2007).

However, the (re)defiance and (re)definition of masculine gender norms has not been a consistent or uncontested theme within the narratives of identity of these men as while all of these men report

their shared aspiration to become professional psychologists as being atypical in terms of masculine norms, they are not equal in their disavowal of masculine values. These differences appear to relate to the specific professional streams of these men. While Abdul, Josh and Simon, all of whom are inclined toward therapeutic and community work as counselling psychologists, consider themselves to be amongst the "*outliers of masculinity because we talk about people's problems and feelings all day*" (Abdul) and therefore the closest bound of the group to 'feminine' norms, the other participants continued to express elements of hegemony in their narratives of identity. The most vocal in this respect were Geoffrey, Oscar (neuropsychologists) and Jacob (industrial psychologist) who suggested that men are of value to psychology because:

"While I know that this is a stereotype, it has been my experience, and reflects only my experience, I feel like men see things differently by staying analytic and logical about things while women do tend to focus on the whole picture and make judgements on feelings sometimes." (Jacob)

"I know that women are known to be great empathisers and therapists but I also feel like men add in terms of the science of it all. I think of myself as a scientist before anything else because while I'm interested in people and want to help, I think being a scientist is very important to me." (Geoffrey)

"I can't help but get away from liking those parts of psychology that are more grounded in the science and logic because it's that analytical part, not just the touchy feely side, that men add to psychology and that I am drawn towards." (Oscar)

These quotes may be argued to express, while apologetically so and therefore indicating some conflict or anxiety about their expression in a public space with the researcher because they are aware that such views are considered 'politically incorrect', some retained subscription to a more analytical, authoritative and ambitious element of their identities that is defined by the participants as characteristically and reluctantly masculine (Connell, 1995; Mkhize, 2006). Thus, while Abdul and Josh profess having in many respects abandoned the "*man mould*" entirely, chunks of this mould appear to sit on the shoulders of Geoffrey, Jacob and Oscar who admit more rational and investigative (traditionally masculine) traits in their identities as male psychology students in conjunction with traditionally feminine or feminised traits of empathy and sociability. What is shared amongst the participants, however, is a rejection of what Shabalala and Bekuima (2007) refer to as the 'destructive elements of masculinity' such as acts of aggression, competitiveness and dominance in favour of attenuated forms and in conjunction with prosocial actions of care and empathy (Cleaver, 2002; Shefer, 2007). Therefore, a redefinition of masculinity through attenuation and amalgamation, a sort of conscious androgyny (Richardson, 1996; Shefer, 2007), as opposed to pure defiance through contradiction forms an important theme of these men's narratives of identity.

Such redefinition of what is it to be a man and a male psychologist extends beyond traits into the area of sexuality, an issue which surfaced only in the accounts of two participants. The silence of

the other participants remains an area of speculation but may well be related to the lack of focus on this issue within the interview schedules developed for the purposes of this research study (Anderson 2009; Willig, 2008). However, the issue of sexuality was only raised on occasions in which it was outside of the norm, and therefore it may be argued that the issue of sexuality was not raised by these participants during the interviews because normative behaviours such as heterosexuality are often taken for granted and therefore assumed rather than attended to in discussions (Willig, 2008). Given that the silence was shared amongst those participants who are not actively engaged in psychotherapy where gender and sexuality are reported to surface as persistent and pervasive social phenomena, it may be that it was foregrounded for the counselling participants and not for the others (Foucault, 1990; Richardson, 1996). Both of these participants state that homosexuality is typically defined as "*the ultimate unmanning because people think you want to be a woman*" (Abdul). For Josh, "*being gay or straight doesn't really mean anything about masculinity because when you're a psychologist you realise one thing about you doesn't determine other things. I mean, you can be straight but still be caring and empathic because being gay doesn't mean you're more woman than a straight guy*". Thus, while both Abdul and Josh[4] recognise that homosexuality is conceived of as a 'deficiency of masculinity' (Connell, 1995; Wilkinson & Kritszinger, 1993), each participant contends that a conflation of sexual orientation and masculinity is neither helpful nor necessary given the flexible and changeable view masculinity to which they subscribe (Richardson, 1996). As such, there is not a conflation of homosexuality with femininity by these participants as Tiefer (1992) may have expected, given that both participants have suggested that masculinity can be flexed to contain traits some consider feminine. As such, a redefinition of masculinity is part and parcel of the gendered identities of each of these participants and a crucial element of their narrative of identities as high-performing male psychology students.

4.3. Passion and Pragmatics: Psychology as Freedom to Think and Feel

While these high-performing male psychology students all discussed masculinity, redefined or resisted, as a central theme in each of their narratives of identity, their self-professed 'atypicality' is suggested by each of them to extend beyond masculine norms of competitiveness, aggression and social dominance into the domain of professional motivation as well. While discussing their reasons for selecting psychology as a professional aspiration over alternatives, each of the participants noted that it had initially not been a career that they considered an option, let alone a long-term goal:

"It wasn't ever...'I'm going to be a psychologist'." (Geoffrey)

"It wasn't my intention at all, I just kind of fell into it." (Jacob)

[4] While the sexual orientations of these participants cannot be disclosed for reasons of confidentiality, one of the participants is homosexual while the other is heterosexual.

"I actually got into psychology by chance." (Oscar)

That each participant began his life narrative with a line suggesting how unexpected this career choice was, suggests a great deal about the professional options to which they were exposed throughout their lives and were socialised to pursue (Connell, 1995; Sander & Sanders, 2006). None of these men report having considered psychology their first option when entering tertiary education, often considering it a "*useful filler but nothing more*" (Simon), a response which mirrors the findings of Harton and Lyons (2003). For all of the participants, psychology is defined as "*women's work*" due to the professional emphasis on assuming a care-giving role and empathic attunement with the plight of others which are traditionally located within feminine discourses (Shabalala & Bekuima, 2007). While participants do not recall their parents, teachers and others actively dissuading them from psychology as a potential career, none of them recall it being offered or presented to them as an option either. As such, there indeed appears to be a view of psychology as "*women's work*" and as an unacceptable male professional identity by virtue of what may be considered a 'reinforcing silence' around this career as it pertains to men (Harton & Lyons, 2003; Sander, Sanders & Mercer, 2009).

For each of the participants, it appears that the initial decision to go into psychology was less due to the attractions of the field that psychology attracted them as a career, than that alternative, and more traditional 'men's work', roles and occupations were unattractive or unavailable to them (Sander & Sanders, 2007; Shabalala & Bekuima, 2007). Several participants reflected on how they had become disillusioned or disappointed in career options to which they had originally aspired:

"Those kinds of professions just didn't go anywhere for me." (Oscar)

"There was a lot of seemingly good but later dodgy stuff out there in the working world." (Abdul)

"I just couldn't stand the thought of doing that sort of work every day." (Jacob)

"I was in hell...that work just didn't do anything for me." (Geoffrey)

While the quotes provided include references to "that sort of work" in a general sense, and while some of the participants engaged in a wide-range of alternative professional fields including teaching English in foreign countries and manual labour, all of these men report law being their primary career choice when entering university. While Jacob, Josh and Geoffrey recall finding jobs shadowing lawyers, journalists and even politicians employed within local government before entering university, they report finding these experiences tremendously "*disappointing and kind of disheartening*" (Jacob) as "*even though they were what I expected, I didn't expect how I would feel. I found that work so uninteresting*" (Josh). Such quotes speak to a lack of personal investment and enrichment in such work as Geoffrey adds that "*It's fine that law and medicine guarantee you a good living financially but they don't guarantee you a good life*". In each of their stated motivations there is clearly a movement away from more traditional male occupations rather than a movement

towards psychology specifically. As such, it seems that psychology has been an option revealed only once the wide-array of more traditional male roles proved inadequate or inappropriate to their goals or values (Harton & Lyons, 2003; Langa, 2012).

However, while engagement in more traditional roles appears to have preceded these men's selection of psychology as their professional aspiration, they do not present psychology as a regrettable second choice. Jacob suggests that "*Work is the thing you spend most of your adult life doing, so more important to me than money or prestige has been doing something that I wake up in the morning wanting to do*". This sentiment was shared by all of the participants as they discussed their feelings about psychology:

"I started psychology and just found myself loving it more and more, no question and no doubt." (Geoffrey)

"For the first time I just sat feeling like I could do this for the rest of my life." (Simon)

"I just love what I do and have this thirst for knowledge. I didn't get that from anything else." (Abdul)

Thus, while disillusionment with more traditional occupations provided the initial impetus for these men, psychology itself then thoroughly engaged them. This new career direction is suggested by the participants to have carried the benefit of allowing them entry into a field of practice about which they are passionate but also carried an associated cost of moving them further from the secure terrain of masculine interests of earning power and prestige (Connell, 1995; Cleaver, 2002; Shabalala & Bekuima, 2007). For these men, "*psychology was a risk worth taking*" (Oscar) because "*while it doesn't have the same status of being a doctor, or the same pay check as a lawyer for some. It's something I choose for myself and love and that's what matters*" (Geoffrey). Jacob adds that "*earning power and money are important but they're less important to me than loving what you do, so I chose psychology because it's what I love to do*". As such, passion appears to be the primary motive that these men express for selecting psychology as their career choice as each of these high-performing male psychology students refer to a sense of inspiration in the field not present in their prior professional pursuits and report actively choosing to pursue this passion regardless of pragmatic issues of earning potential or even any certainty of entry into the profession.

While passion seems to have overcome more pragmatic considerations in the view of most of these men, Jacob's comment above includes a reference to the comparative earning potential of the profession (Skinner & Louw, 2009; Stead, 2004). While all of these men adopted traditionally high-earning male-dominated professions of law, politics and medicine as the measuring-stick against which they evaluated psychology as a career, alternative disciplines within the humanities or other helping professions were not mentioned. These men appear to have relied solely upon 'upward' social comparisons (Billington, Hockey & Strawbridge, 1998) which has essentially downplayed the role of earning potential in their accounts. For Jacob, while psychology may be

"*less prestigious and lower on the pay-grade*" than professions such as law or medicine, he also notes that "*I can't fool myself that it's purely passion because in the humanities, psychology is the only real work option because with any other degree all I could really become is a lecturer*". Thus, while the participants suggest that financial considerations did not play a part in their career choice, psychology appears to represent the most prestigious and profitable alternative to traditional male occupations indicating that 'downward' comparisons may have been equally important in their decision to pursue psychology as a profession (Anderson, 2009; Cleaver, 2002; Stead, 2004; Super, 1996).

This decision was also by no means purely individual in that each participant mentions their parents' views on their choice (Anderson, 2009; Super, 1996). All of the participants state that their parents had neither suggested nor supported their decision to enter into professional psychology specifically and suggest that their parents gave them support in making their own independent choice to pursue their own ambitions. In some cases, this unconditional support seems to reflect a lack of knowledge of the profession on the part of parents:

"*My parents have always been supportive and told me I can be anything I want to be as long as I'm happy, so although they don't know much about the whole psychology thing, they have been very supportive."* (Jacob)

"*Well, my family don't really understand why I chose psychology but even though they might not understand it, they support my decision because they support me*." (Oscar)

In other cases, there is a suggestion that parents required some convincing before offering their support:

"*My dad, as a doctor, wasn't happy to say the least because his son is now pursuing the dreaded BA psychology...dreaded because it's considered a financial black-hole, but he came around eventually because he knew I need to do what I want to do with my life*." (Geoffrey)

"*My family didn't like the idea of psychology because they want me working and earning lots of money fast and this career isn't seen as doing that but they allow me to do what I need even if it's a burden*." (Simon)

In Geoffrey's case, it is clear that his father initially felt that psychology was insufficiently prestigious but it is also evident that the financial and emotional security of the family afforded Geoffrey this freedom of choice. Therefore, there is again a defiance of hegemonic norms in the intentional relegation of earning potential to the periphery by these men but also a continued support and openness on the part of their parents that appears to make such concerns inconsequential to them (Erikson, 1981; Stead, 2004; Super, 1996). As such, while there appears not to have been any sustained resistance by their families to entering into professional psychology nor a support for this option in its own right, a privileging of their autonomy (their freedom to think, feel and behave as they choose), appears to have allowed them to walk beyond the horizons of

hegemony and pursue their passion. As Super (1996) contends, their similar life spaces appear to have accommodated their autonomy to allow for an exploration of career options which made what may be delimiting impossibilities for others real possibilities for each participant due to their parents' own openness and respect for them. In Simon's case, the initial opposition from his parents to his studies in psychology was on very different grounds. In his case, his family was concerned the lengthy training entailed for a relatively unknown professional path with uncertain financial rewards. This points towards the racialised class differences in the life narratives of the participants. Specifically, it appears that for white participants whose parents hold advanced university qualifications and are of a higher socio-economic status, the option of pursuing a career in psychology was resisted due to the fact that it represented a step down (so to speak) in terms of earning power and professional prestige whereas for African participants whose parents were of a lower socio-economic standing with no tertiary education, psychology (though not well understood) was less strongly resisted in that it represented upward social and economic mobility for their sons (Langa, 2012; Super, 1996). Parental support for these aspiring psychologists is shaped by issues of class (earning-power and social status) (Cleaver, 2002; Harper, 2004).

While for different reasons, the participants' parents appear to have either actively supported their career choice or at least allowed them to make this choice on the basis of their own interests and passions. Participants also reported strong identification with a valued role model or mentor within the field of psychology:

"*She really inspired me because without her I probably would not have the same desire to think, to learn and to know that I do now. She really made me want to be a psychologist even more than I thought I did*." (Simon)

"*Well, there was this one professor and just spending time with him, listening to what he said and they way he thought and treated people made me want to be a psychologist because he inspired me to want to be me and be better*." (Jacob)

"*I think that without her, I would never have come this far in psychology. Sitting in her classes and listening to her thoughts, especially when she became my supervisor, I just loved this field more and more*." (Geoffrey)

As all of the participants suggest, having a role model within the field of psychology served to inspire and motivate their continued engagement in the field. For Marcia (1980), this reflects a powerful and important identification with another, potentially in the absence of a guiding parent, that often serves to anthropomorphise the valued qualities of the field. In less abstract terms, Super (1996) suggests that role models serve as an essential factor in career selection because such individuals come to enter into both professional and personal elements of one's life space creating immense influence on the lives of these participants. Thus, on the basis of such contentions, it may be argued that the presence of such role models served to enhance the motivation of each of these men to become psychologists by providing a relatable professional

predecessor who could provide both emotional and professional guidance and thereby strengthen a desire to move closer to this ideal future self (Hook, 2004; Super, 1996) by progressing academically within the field of psychology.

4.4. Scientist-Practitioner: Psychology as Knowledge and/or Helping

Inasmuch as passion represented a powerful theme which permeated each participant's narrative of identity as a high-performing male psychology student, their passions and penchants were by no means identical. While each participant reported a specific professional interest, often related to a particular stream of post-graduate training, a tension emerged between the participants regarding whether they define themselves as scientists and/or practitioners (Brems, 2001; Skinner & Louw, 2009).

While the scientific and empathic elements of psychology are often dichotomised the participants made it clear that they see these motivations as complementary. Josh's statement encapsulates this: "*Most of us get into this profession because we care about making the world a better place in whatever way we can. Some people do it through one-on-one therapy, others through community projects and some people do research to help us understand or discover new things.*" Skinner and Louw (2009), as well as Harton and Lyons (2003), contend that the most persistent and pervasive reported motive for entry into professional psychology is a desire to change the, or at least someone's, world. Without intending to question the authenticity of these asserted altruistic motivations, Billington, Hockey and Strawbridge (1998) remind us that participants' narratives are not merely transparent accounts of their lives but rather articulations of self in relation to another. In this case, these articulations of self were negotiated in relation to a white, middle-class clinical psychology masters student who represents the professional identity of psychology. As such, it may be argued that such disclosures may have been elicited or at least emphasised in relation to the researcher as audience (Billington, Hockey & Strawbridge, 1998; Willig, 1998).

For some participants, namely Geoffrey and Oscar, their identities as male psychology students were constructed in terms of a scientific focus and they repeated the conventional view of therapy as a *more* feminine stream of psychology:

"*Well, nearly all the therapists I know are women and almost all of the men are researchers, so it seems like that's how things just get divided based on gender norms. I just feel like men move away from therapy because it's so 'touchy feely' while research is analytical and more professionally acceptable I suppose."* (Geoffrey)

"*I've always been more into the science of it all, the facts and figures that neuropsychology can give you. Therapy can feel too airy-fairy for me so I lean to research because it feels grounded and your more like a typical working man because you go do work all day, explore new ideas and stuff and come home without emotional burdens."* (Oscar)

These statements reflect residues of hegemonic views of men's work as lacking emotional investment and caring and characterised rather as objective and analytic 'office work' (Andrews, 2004; Skinner & Louw, 2009). As such, while these men consider themselves atypical in terms of masculine norms, they also do not define themselves as a-masculine or anti-masculine in this regard as they retain a professional identity more closely, and explicitly, aligned with hegemonic norms (Cleaver, 2002; Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1990). For Geoffrey and Oscar, neuropsychology represents "*the more male and scientific of the psychology streams*" (Geoffrey) due to its professed grounding in "*biology rather than emotion*" (Oscar) and therefore seems to carry less discomfort for them as interests in science are conventionally masculine (Brems, 2001).

It therefore appears that these men are motivated by their minds *and* their hearts as their passion stems primarily from a desire to understand and explain psychological phenomena and in this way make a contribution to society rather than the more usual motivation expressed as a desire to 'help' others (Day, 1995; Harton & Lyons, 2003). Thus, an important distinction may be made in this respect as while these psychologists define themselves as socially interested and socially responsible men who reject destructive hegemonic male norms of aggression, competitiveness and dominance (Anderson, 2009; Shabalala & Bekuima, 2007), they also do not adhere to more conventional models such as Day's (1995) 'wounded healer' which theoretical understanding is secondary to the explicit primary and practical goal of aiding others. The more empirical and scientific elements of the self-articulations fore-grounded by Geoffrey and Oscar are however, not seen as antithetical to this helping orientation. For these men, to be a helper and a thinker are defined differently but not dichotomously: the understanding of thinkers is not passionless and may include either an explicit or implicit helping orientation. On the other hand, the helping orientation of the therapeutically oriented men is not without a focus on understanding others in theoretically rigorous ways (Brems, 2001). However, while they are united in a desire to understand and help, their alignments with hegemonic masculine norms of objectivity and analytic-mindedness differ according to whether they are more inclined towards therapy or empirical and biomedical branches of psychology with the latter representing more conventional male pursuits and the latter suggesting a weaker adherence to hegemonic standards of masculinity (Cleaver, 2002).

4.5. Life Struggles as the Route to Empathy: Helping Self and Others

While not all of the participants defined themselves explicitly or exclusively as 'helpers' in the strictest sense, all of them did report a sense of empathy and social awareness which had been present from an early age and had developed as a result of challenging, even traumatic, life experiences (Brems, 2001; Sander & Sanders, 2007).

For each of the participants, irrespective of the professional stream pursued, psychology involves a significant interpersonal component which they all report "*coming naturally*" (Oscar) to them:

"*I've always been the kind of guy who can meet and chat and get along with anyone*." (Abdul)

"*I've always been someone who people feel they can speak to.*" (Geoffrey)

"*I just have this way of relating to people that helps them open up because they don't feel judged*." (Josh)

As their narratives expanded and they began to discuss their lives in more detail, the participants began to link this sense of "*personal connection to other people*" (Simon) to a number of meaningful life experiences and relationships (Currie, 2011). The most prolific theme in this regard was that of feeling different to others at an early age, as many of these men recall "*not being like other kids"* (Geoffrey) and "*not fitting in so well*" (Abdul) for much of their lives. This sense of difference appears to have stemmed from different places for each of the participants as while one participant recalls that his homosexual orientation contributed heavily to his feelings of being different, others reported that poverty, race or their nationality as being aspects of themselves that "*just didn't gel with some people*" (Jacob). Therefore, each participant felt that experiences of being different and even marginalised contributed to a strengthened sense of empathy (Brems, 2001).

Although being 'different' and being 'marginalised' were often conflated in the accounts of the participants, a nuanced distinction between the two experiences as they contributed to the life trajectories of the participants is notable (Andrews, 2004; Currie, 2011; Wengraf, 2001). While some of the participants recalled feelings of difference sparking an interest in the lives of others and the inner-workings of humanity (Brems, 2011; Sander & Sanders, 2007), other participants suggested that their own experiences of victimisation and marginalisation led this interest to grow into a desire to help others over and above understanding them:

"*Being in therapy myself after that pretty traumatic stuff made me realise the power of psychology, I wanted to share what I got with other people*...Even when my brother was diagnosed with Asperger's I just found it make me want to help even more." (Josh)

"*I was interested in people because I had suffered myself. Now I could help them in ways that I didn't have open to me."* (Simon)

"*I knew how it felt to be hurt so I wanted to be useful so that people would know how it felt to be healed.*" (Abdul)

In her research on what motivated neophyte therapists to pursue professional psychology, Brems (2001) found that most therapists reported a sense of interpersonal connection to and responsibility for others as a result of multiple life experiences often linked to loss, conflict and other traumas. Indeed, Sander and Sanders (2006) note that often psychologists enter into therapeutic training in order to resolve some traumas of their own or those of their family members or because psychological strife has become a consistent aspect of their own lives. Such considerations appear appropriate for these men given that all of them report experiencing significant traumas, however, only those who entered or seek entry into therapeutic streams of psychology, namely Abdul, Josh and Simon, suggest feeling compelled to help others. Thus, the

'wounded healer' complex noted by Day (1995) is an important theme in the lives of some participants as their own life experiences appear to have developed a sense of empathy for others as well as a desire to help which are aspirations dually met within the field of therapeutic psychology (Brems, 2001; Day, 1995).

4.6. Diversity and Difference: Fostering an Interest in Humanity

While feelings of difference appear to have reportedly nurtured a strong sense of empathy and interpersonal connectedness (Brems, 2001) within these men, they also report that their feelings of difference were often tied to early life experiences of geographical movement and exposure to multiple cultures (Billington, Hockey & Strawbridge, 1998; Harvey, 1985):

"*When I was young we moved a lot so I got to experience a lot of different lifestyles. By the time I was an adult I'd lived in different parts of South Africa, Australia and the US so I'd soaked up a lot of different cultures and even got a bit of an odd accent [laughs] from it all*." (Abdul)

"*My dad had us move a few times so between being in South Africa during apartheid, then to living in Australia where my dad became an honorary member of one of the Maori tribes to getting a thick German accent from my gran that kids would tease me for, I got to see different people and different ways of life since I was young*." (Geoffrey)

"*Probably the most unique thing about my family is that we're quite an unusual blend of people because we are white, coloured and black and some are Muslim while others are Christian. Even though SA is kind of a rainbow nation it's still not common to have the whole rainbow in one family under one roof!*" (Josh)

"*When I was a kid we were always on the move so I saw so many different cultures, so many languages. I got to see that there is no one way of living because people can be so different in good ways and bad ones too and that really inspired me about people*." (Simon)

Harvey (1985) theorises this sort of 'globe-trotting' as having a profound influence on the social modes of behaviour for individuals who participate in a more global village. He argues that exposure to various and varied ways of life often carries the effect of diluting the force of social prescriptions on such individuals given their awareness of alternatives. As such, Yuval-Davis and Stasiulis (1995) postulate that early geographical movement and exposure to multiple cultural milieus, far from creating confusion and disorganisation in identity construction, often leads individuals to develop a more eclectic and sophisticated self-understanding due to their literally and metaphorically broadened horizons of possibility. These authors suggest that the social consciousness of individuals who experience migration often comes to increase in complexity given the awareness of a need to adjust to alternative modes of being and such awareness of difference that is broader than individual idiosyncrasies and includes customs and values of entire peoples.

This appears to be the case for each of these men as while they suggest being outliers in respect to hegemonic masculinity due to their tendency to avoid "*taking ways of life for granted*" (Oscar),

their sense of difference is by no means restricted to gender norms and involves cultural elements as well:

"*When I was young and we first started going to mixed race and mixed language schools, I was blown away by how different everyone was at the time. I didn't find it scary like some of my friends, I just sat there in class wanting to understand why we are different and where they come from. I think back to those times now when I'm doing psychology*." (Oscar)

"*When I first got to my school here in South Africa, I still spoke a mix of languages and my English was appalling so although I got picked on sometimes I was able to learn a lot about what life is like here and in other places too... I remember being very young and seeing the Maoris, how they live, and began to feel fascinated by people. So it wasn't surprising I came into psychology."* (Geoffrey)

"*The kids in New Zealand used to make fun of me because I talked differently and stuff. I didn't care but I was aware how different things were over there and once I got used to it we had to move back here [South Africa]. So that time I didn't mind because I'd started getting interested in it all, our difference and who people are. Now I do it for a living [laughs].*" (Abdul)

What their accounts suggest is an unwillingness or inability to shy away from difference when confronted so frequently by it (Hook, 2004). Their experiences of multiple ways of life appear to have developed in these men an interest in a changing and varied world of people as they were not encased by a 'cultural container' (Yuval-Davis & Stasiulis, 1995) that narrowly filtered the effects of alternative lifestyles. While there does appear to be some level of difficulty with such adjustments for the participants as children, their accounts indicate a willingness to accept difference because they were accustomed to it while the negative and even fearful reactions of 'native children', as Oscar notes, seems to stem from the surprise and uncertainty generated by such novel and rare experiences (Currie, 2011; Hook, 2004). As Harvey (1985) proposes, travellers and migrants often prefer the view from the shore of a new island as they are not confronted, as natives may be, with the infinite ocean that they have journeyed to arrive there. Thus, the experience of diversity and difference as facilitating a sense of empathy and interest in humanity, a desire to understand others that is shared by all of these high-performing male psychology students (Sander & Sanders, 2007; Yuval-Davis & Stasiulis, 1995) adding a new perspective to the available literature.

Importantly, however, while difference was represented within each participant's narrative, the specific kind of differences alluded to in their accounts, those of race and nationality, became a shared silence amongst the participants- one to which I found myself oblivious until the phase of interview transcription (Willig, 2008). Only on one occasion was race brought into the account of a participant or even mentioned explicitly as Oscar had asked me: *Am I allowed...Is it alright to talk about race?*". After encouraging him to speak about race however he chooses as this is a space for his story, Oscar trepidaciously discussed this topic with visible anxiety clear in his tendency to stutter and shift topics very quickly after broaching this issue (Bold, 2011; Hewitt, 2007; Kvale,

1996; Willig, 2008). Therefore, although race was not expressed as part of the participants' narratives of identity, it does appear to be an issue that remained silent but tangible in the room and perhaps represented for them an area of danger due to my identity as a white male psychology student often of equal or higher academic positioning. It may be that racial disparity along with other differences of authority may have led to this shared silence within our narratives of identity as such narratives are not merely transparent accounts of the way their lives have been but rather, as Billington, Hockey and Strawbridge (1998) remind us, articulations of self in relation to another, in relation to me (a middle-class white male and clinical psychology masters student) who may represent many different things to each of the participants too threatening to allow entry into a public and shared space (Foucault, 1970; Willig, 2008).

4.7. Dynamic Living: In Search of the Changing Self

Much like their cultural milieus and interpersonal spaces were dynamic and constantly changing, these men also report a persistently changing sense of selfhood and personality that contributed to their entry into professional psychology and remains important in their articulation of selfhood (Freeman, 2000; Sander & Sanders, 2007). For each these high-performing male psychology students, as discussed earlier in *Section 4.3* of this analysis, psychology was by no means an anticipated or deeply considered career choice. While all of the participants recall having 'fallen into the field' somewhat serendipitously, they all suggest having spent a great deal of time experimenting with different academic and career options before settling into psychology:

"*I did a lot before I finally chose psychology. I had taught English Germany, worked with kids in New Zealand too. I tried odd jobs like bartending too but I felt like I needed to actually try things before I could choose one and psychology just felt right*." (Abdul)

"*I had so many options because I wanted to do law, journalism, sociology and maybe try my hand at politics but once I got the experiences of them I really sat down and felt like I couldn't see myself doing them. When I tried out psych I just knew I'd found it because I'd be excited to wake up every morning and I knew the job journey was over*." (Jacob)

Whether the occupations and fields were traditionally masculine or not, experimentation with alternatives for these men extended beyond the professional field and filtered into their academic careers as many report having tussled with decisions about majors as they continued to select new and unanticipated subjects to pursue:

"*I had weird things that I never thought I'd do but only once I'd completed the module did I feel like I could make a choice. It was like a process of elimination because I did courses in African languages, sign language, visual art and goodness knows what else and as I did more courses I got to know more and more what I wanted to do: psych*." (Geoffrey)

"*I did a lot of different subjects and experiencing all of them helped because once I saw what else is out there I knew where I wanted to go*." (Josh)

These accounts all point towards a sort of professional 'identity moratorium' (Marcia, 1980) which extended into young adulthood for each of these men. While a crisis for them on occasion, a sense of openness and preservation of their dependency by their parents through continued emotional and financial support, as Simon often remarked, seems to have prevented any sort of identity foreclosure in this respect as none of the participants reported feeling pressured into assuming a role before they were ready (Erikson, 1981; Giddens, 2007). Thus, these men state that they were afforded an opportunity to explore the various occupational and academic possibilities presented to them but nonetheless found mere contemplation inadequate and inferior to active and concrete experience. Super (1996) may conceptualise the "*thirst for experience not just knowledge*" (Josh) suggested in the narrative of the participants to represent a need to confirm thoughts and validate expectations as a result of uncertainties and doubts. Indeed, this may be valid given the unstable and dynamic nature of their early lives which may have nurtured an 'explorer mentality' (Harvey, 1985; Frosch, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002).

While some theorists may understand this experimentation as a search for certainty, narrative theorists such as Freeman (2001) note alternative possibilities which are rooted in motives less anxiety-driven and more concerned with enrichment. Harton and Lyons (2003) found in their focus group discussions with male psychology students that their participants frequently commented on psychology being an attractive field due to the variety and continuous novelty of the work, a finding supported by the responses on the participants of this study as well:

"*I love the fact that it's never dull or monotonous, it's not like sitting at a desk doing the same things everyday because, firstly, there's so much to do in this field and, secondly, even when you do something it's never the same because the people are always changing. That makes it fun and exciting because every day is new*." (Jacob)

"*I think this field is amazing because you never know what will happen next. You kind of have an idea but people's stories and problems are different, you have different theories to make sense of them and there are so many things to do within each field that it's difficult to get bored*." (Oscar)

Therefore, what these men hope to find enriching about their work is not only the enjoyment of forwarding the corpus of scientific knowledge and helping others to work through their emotional difficulties, but also the sense of excitement and novelty introduced by the wide and varied scope of activities included within the field. While Harton and Lyons (2003) note this having been a response to their focus group discussions, it remains an under-acknowledged motivation for aspiring psychologists and Brems (2001) contends that present research on motives for becoming psychologists is limited due to its myopic focus on therapy and a desire to help. As Sander and Sanders (2006) argue, there is often too strong a focus on the helping orientation of psychologists and therefore a focus on altruism as opposed to personal enjoyment of the profession when studying psychologists. Thus, such a finding is of value in suggesting that an important theme of

the narratives of identity for high-performing male psychologists is their love of variety which caters to their iterative sense of self (Giddens, 2007; Hall, 2010).

Therefore, it seems that such experimentation and is better understood not, as anxious attempts to make sense of life experiences as Frosch, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) suggest, but rather as expressions of personal richness and unapologetic variability of self (Freeman, 2001) that is linked to early experiences of a variable world which may underpin a variable and changing sense of self (Hall & Du Gay, 2010; Yuval-Davis & Stasiulis, 1995) as these men suggest that:

"*I've always been quite spontaneous and making plans seemed silly when their too far in the future because I always feel like I'm changing and growing and can't be sure I'll still want those things*." (Abdul)

"*Well, I never thought further into the future because possibilities are changing and I change with them*." (Simon)

Therefore, the participants in this study report a previously unacknowledged sense of creativity, variability and spontaneity in their professional and personal articulations of self that is catered for in the field of professional and academic psychology with its focus on individuality and self-expression (Gilligan, 1993; Sander & Sanders, 2007; Shefer, 2004). Thus, a variety of work is an important theme in the narratives of identity of these men as the professional variety that they enjoy compliments their iterative articulations of self (Freeman, 2001).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

On the basis of the abovementioned findings and analysis, it may be concluded that high-performing male psychology students exhibit a well-developed social consciousness which was developed and later enhanced by their engagement in academic psychology as opposed to initiated or created by it (Freeman, 2000; Hall, 2010; Harton & Lyons, 2003). Of paramount importance within the identity constructions of these participants have been an active resistance to and even redefinition of masculinity through either conscious subscription to more feminine social discourses or attempts to revision masculinity as multiple and fluid through their professional endeavours (Anderson, 2009; Connell, 1985; Shabalala & Bekuima, 2007). By studying and working as male psychologists these men refer to breaking or reshaping the "*man mould*" (Jacob) imposed by hegemonic norms by being empathic and emotionally invested caregivers in their profession and relying on a blend of traditionally masculine and feminine traits in performing this role thereby shattering or at least blurring essentialised gender binaries while reconciling destructive masculine norms with pro-social female ones in their professional identities as aspiring male psychologists (Blackbeard, 2005; Lindeggar & Maxwell, 2007).

This defiance of hegemony and (re)definition of masculinity is reported by the participants to extend into their professional decision-making in terms of their relegation of concerns about earning-potential and prestige to a peripheral status, rather than making them entirely absent, and focussing instead on job satisfaction and passion as motives for the selection of psychology as a career (Marcia, 1980; Super, 1996). However, far from being attracted to psychology purely in its own right, the rejection of hegemonic norms by these men is also notable in their expressed sense of disillusionment with traditional masculine occupations and roles as only once the curtain of hegemony was initially drawn back by these men did they report feeling able to consider the option of psychology as a career which would involve an ongoing resistance to or definition of hegemonic masculine norms and values (Cleaver, 2002; Harvey, 1985; Super, 1996). This passion was found to be reluctantly allowed by their parents and fostered and fuelled by significant role models within the field of psychology with whom the participants identified (Marcia, 1980; Super, 1996). However, notable class and racial differences were apparent in this regard as while white participants from middle-class backgrounds initially encountered strong resistance from their parents regarding their entry into psychology given its feminine professional identity and the reduced certainty of earning power, African participants from impoverished backgrounds incurred less resistance from their parents in this regard due to a reported lack of understanding of the profession and their view of psychology as offering an opportunity for their children to experience upward social mobility through a comparatively better paying and more prestigious profession than their own.

The accommodation of the participants' professional identity moratorium experienced (Marcia, 1980) by their parents is also linked to their somewhat fragmented early lives which these men suggest having been characterised by frequent geographical movement and exposure to multiple

cultures (Harvey, 1985; Yuval-Davis & Stasiulis, 1995). All of these men report experiencing difference as fascinating and inviting, as opposed to frightening and intrusive, leading to a lifelong preoccupation with the human condition (Giddens, 2007) which has not been noted in any prior research suggesting a valuable finding meriting further empirical exploration. This fascination was revealed to carry a primarily scientific or intellectual flavour for some men which is seldom accounted for in current literature (Harton & Lyons, 2003; Sander & Sanders, 2006) while carrying a more traditional 'wounded healer' and altruistic sentiment for those men inclined towards therapeutic streams of psychology (Brems, 2001; Day, 1995). While the understanding of the participants who consider themselves scientists is directed towards the goal of helping others, the therapeutically inclined participants of the study report helping being facilitated by understanding suggesting that the differences between these men in terms of their professional streams may be an issue of focus or emphasis as opposed to category. However, a difference which does begin to separate the self-professed scientists from the helpers is a stronger adherence to hegemonic masculine norms of scientific objectivity and professional prestige as opposed to more traditionally feminine values of emotional support and performing care-giver roles (Brems, 2001; Sander & Sanders, 2007; Skinner & Louw, 2009). As such, it may be argued that the extent to which these men resist or redefine hegemony is fore-grounded by their professional identities within the field of psychology with therapeutically inflected psychologists venturing further into the resistance and redefinition of masculinity based on the predominance of traditionally feminine values within such work (Harton & Lyons, 2003; Shabalala & Bekuima, 2007).

Moreover, while the altruism of aspiring male psychology students has often been noted as a theme in their narratives of identity (Brems, 2001; Day, 1995), this study presents a sense of personal enrichment through engagement in dynamic, novel, creative and spontaneous work embodied in academic and professional psychology as an often overlooked theme of their life stories (Harton & Lyons, 2003). These men appear to subscribe to an iterative mode of self-articulation promulgated by narrative theorists such as Freeman (2000), Ricouer (1981) and Clandinin (2007) which they suggest being well suited to the profession of psychology given its focus on individuality, self-expression and change. Thus, a self in flux and the concomitant willingness to embrace rather than shy away from such change by these men not only speaks to the appropriateness of the method of this study but also the a useful contribution to the corpus of knowledge on the narrative of identity of high-performing male psychology students.

While the time limited nature of this research study necessitates the circumscription of the breadth of the research topic, thereby restricting potential formal recommendations for further research, a few broad recommendations may be made on the basis of the results of this study. To begin with, while masculinity has been explored on a number of fronts within this research study, including essentialism, gender binarism and experiences of gender bias in terms of male identity construction, one area of importance which appears to merit further consideration is that of

sexuality. On the basis of Tiefer's (1992) postulation of the conflation of homosexuality and lack of adherence to hegemonic masculine norms in contemporary South African culture, as well as the participants' shared assertions that elements of femininity and masculinity are independent of sexual orientation, is may be suggested that further research into these matters may be of value in grasping the more intimate details of sexual identity and masculinity within the lives of aspiring male psychologists and their relation to fields of specialisation or even their work as therapists, clinicians or researchers. However, sexuality is by no means the only area of human behaviour left unexplored in this research study as while issues of difference formed important themes in the life narratives of each of the participants, racial and class differences, which are often conflated, for Mkhize (2006) and Langa (2012) within the South African context, were present in the room but silent within the accounts of each of the participants. As such, meaningful explorations of class and race as elements of the identities of high-performing male psychology students, merit further attention in future research as such research may provide insights into the narrative of identity of a diverse and often overlooked population of black male psychology students amongst others within the South African context.

Beyond considerations of multiple content areas of further exploration is the issue of which populations may warrant further empirical study. While the participants included within this particular research study came from a wide-range of cultural, academic, racial and socio-economic backgrounds three particular academic streams were not represented as these participants discussed their narratives of identity; namely those from the clinical, educational and research psychology streams (Sander, Sanders & Mercer, 2009). While reflexive considerations of the researcher led to the decision to omit aspiring clinicians from the research sample (Bold, 2011; Kohler-Reissman, 2008; Willig, 2008) and a lack of voluntary participation from the available population of aspiring research and educational psychology students (American Psychological Association, 2002; Hewitt, 2007) prevented access to the voices of those students, these populations form large and influential circles within the broad body of psychologists in the professional and academic arenas of South African psychology (Sander & Sanders, 2006). As such, further research into the narratives of identity of those high-performing male psychologists who may have stronger inclinations towards treatment of psychopathology or empirical investigation respectively is recommended.

Finally, in order to supplement and enhance future research into this topic, additional forms of analysis may prove valuable in deepening the data gathered using narrative interview methods (Willig, 2008). While this study employed a thematic analysis in the interpretation of data gathered using a narrative interview method, an in-depth narrative analysis of such data may enhance interpretative efforts as horizontal or thematic analysis of contextual and personal experiences can be structurally complemented by the vertical analysis of interrelations between each participant's reconstructed past, perceived present and anticipated future (Currie, 2011; McAdams, 2001). In

this way, not only are vital experiences and ideas represented within each participant's life story but also be ordered in a coherent and idiosyncratic manner allowing for a structured conceptual account of identity construction both in terms of content (thematic analysis) and structure- the unique life trajectory of each high-performing male psychology student (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Wengraf, 2001). As such, this stage of analysis draws attention not only to the life lived or the experiences highlighted by each participant that are thematically coded, but also the story told by considering the structure of the story and the areas of strongest and weakest focus as they relate to one another in each participant's account (Wengraf, 2001).

Thus, through the utilisation of multiple analytic procedures and by extending the focus of this study to related issues of sexuality and race as well as to omitted populations of clinicians, researchers and educational psychologists, our understanding of the narratives of identity of high-performing male psychology students and indeed all aspiring psychologists within the South African context may be enhanced allowing for a fuller and richer appreciation of the men who defy and redefine hegemony through their work in the field of psychology.

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Appendix A

Participant Information Sheet

Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: 0716888203
Email: 570210@students.wits.ac.za

Dear Participant,

My name is Anthony Townsend, and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is high-achieving male psychology students' identities and I would like to invite you to participate in this study because I consider you to be such a student. This research is considered important because men currently represent a shrinking population within the field of psychology and very little information on why this is happening is available. Therefore, this study aims to gain more information about how these students develop their identities within the South African psychology profession. Participation in this research will involve being interviewed twice by myself in the Umthombo building, at a time that is convenient for you. Each interview will last for approximately one and a half hours. With your permission these interviews will be recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Participation is voluntary, and no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. All of your responses will be kept confidential, and no information that could identify you would be included in the research report. The interview material (tapes and transcripts) will only be available to my supervisor, Prof. Jill Bradbury, and myself. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point.

If you choose to participate in the study please fill in your details on the form below and place it in the sealed box in U211. I will empty the box at regular intervals, and will contact you within two weeks in order to discuss your participation. Alternatively I can be contacted telephonically at 071 688 8203 or via e-mail at 570210@students.wits.ac.za if you have any questions.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute to a larger body of knowledge on identities of high-achieving male psychology students and can help to inform the development of policies and procedures for recruitment and selection of psychology students in South Africa.

Kind Regards,
Anthony Townsend

Participant name:_____
Contact number: _____

Appendix B

Narrative Interview Guide

The interview will begin with the following **introductory statement**:

"*Thank you for coming to the interview. As you know, my research is concerned with high-performing male psychology students' identities and so this first interview is really about giving you an opportunity to tell me your story about how you got to where you are now. I'll begin with a broad question and from then on I will ask questions about topics that you bring up in order to get more information. Remember that you do not have to answer any questions that you don't want to and we can end the interview at any time if you no longer wish to participate. If you need to take a break, just let me know and we can stop for a while. Altogether the interview should take about one and half hours. Do you have any questions?*"

Once questions have been answered and informed consent for participation and the use of audio-recording equipment has been obtained, the interview will begin.

Open-ended questions on main narration: "So tell me how you came to pursue a career in psychology? What sorts of experiences have made meaningful impact on how you define who you are?

Prompts to be employed during the interview:

Encouragers: To elicit more information about the participant's responses

Repetition encouragers: Repeating a word used by the participant
Phrase encouragers: Phrases such as "Tell me more about that"
Semi-verbal encouragers: The use of utterances such as "mmm"
Non-verbal encouragers: The use of gestures such as widening eyes, raised eyebrows and leaning forward

Appendix C

Semi-Structured Interview Agenda

The interview will begin with the following **introductory statement**:

"*Thank you for coming to the interview. As you recall from our last interview, I asked you to talk about your own life story and how you came to pursue a career in psychology. The aim of this interview is to explore some of the ideas and experiences that you mentioned in a little more detail and to make sure that nothing you mentioned is missed out or misunderstood. Remember that you do not have to answer any questions that you don't want to and we can end the interview at any time if you no longer wish to participate. If you need to take a break, just let me know and we can stop for a while. Altogether the interview should take about one and half hours. Do you have any questions?*"

Once questions have been answered and informed consent for participation and the use of audio-recording equipment has been obtained, the interview will begin.

Interview agenda items:

Why did you choose to study psychology?

What kind of psychology interests you? / **If the participant is a master's student**: Why did you choose this field of psychology?

Tell me about particular personal qualities that you think make you suited to working in this field.

How many men are in your class? How has this been different in other years of study in psychology? Is this pattern similar or different to the other disciplines that you are studying / have studied? Do you think there is something in particular that you share with other men who are interested to become psychologists?

What has it been like for you to be part of the minority in your class?

What other careers might you have pursued/ pursue[5] if not psychology?

Tell me about your academic life.

What school did you attend before university and how did you experience it?

Tell me about your experiences of university life and culture.

What have your experiences been growing up in your family?

What work do your mother, father and siblings do?

Do you think that there are particular qualities that men bring to the discipline / practice of psychology that are different to what women may offer?

How do you imagine your future career?

[5] Depending on whether the participant has been accepted into an MA programme.

Appendix D

Informed Consent for Participation

Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: 0716888203
Email: 570210@students.wits.ac.za

I _____(full name) give my informed consent to participate in the research study being conducted by Anthony Townsend, a post-graduate student in the Department of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology.

I understand that the aim of the study is to explore how high-performing male psychology students construct their identities and that I have been invited to participate in this study because I am considered to be such a student. It has been explained to me that the importance of this research lies in the fact that men currently represent a shrinking population within psychology and that male psychology students have been largely overlooked in past research. Therefore, this study has been undertaken in order to gain more information about this population and how they construct their own identities within the context of the South African psychology profession.

I have been informed that participation in this study is voluntary, that I may refuse to answer any questions that I do not wish to answer and that I have the right to withdraw my participation in the study at any time. I understand that my academic training and results will in no way be affected, either positively or negatively, by my decision of whether or not to participate in this research study. I also understand that all information that I provide during the study will be kept confidential by the researcher and his supervisor and will only be disclosed to others with my permission. I am aware that the transcripts and recordings of the interview will be kept in a secure place by the researcher and will be destroyed in two years if the study is not published or six years if the study is published. Although direct quotes from the interview may be used, I have been informed that it will not be stated that the quote came from me. I am aware that there are no foreseeable risks involved in my decision to participate in this research study and have been instructed to approach Student Counselling or call Lifeline, a free telephonic counselling service at 0861 322 322 should I require any assistance. Finally, I am aware that I may ask for access to the findings of the research should I be interested.

Signature: _____ Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E

Informed Consent for Audio-Recording Interviews

Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: 0716888203
Email: 570210@students.wits.ac.za

I _____(full name) give my informed consent to allow for the use of audio-recording equipment during the interview being conducted by Anthony Townsend, a post-graduate student in the Department of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, as part of his research study conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology.

I understand the reason for recording the interviews is to ensure accuracy and have been informed that all information I provide during the interviews will be kept confidential by the researcher and his supervisor; meaning that no information that will identify me will be disclosed to others without my permission and that no other people apart from the research will have access to the audio-recordings. I have been informed that the interviews will take about an hour and a half each. I am aware that the transcripts and recordings of the interview will be kept in a secure place by the researcher.

Signature: _____ Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F

Excerpt of a Coded Interview Transcript

PARTICIPANT: Josh
QUALITY OF AUDIO: Good
DURATION: 105 minutes
NATURE OF TRANSCRIPTION: Interviews (preliminaries not transcribed).

PRELMINARY IMPRESSIONS

A rich and entertaining life story with intense focus on emotional experiences with family members and problems of mental health. He seems to not only aim to be a helper but moreover an advocate for large scale change. There is a strong focus on defying hegemony to provide a caring, responsible attitude to masculinity and a willingness to embrace the difference of one's self and others and to enjoy diversity as opposed to despising difference. His passion was conveyed in the richness of his disclosures and he clearly presents a critical and socially responsible mindset.

REFLEXIVITY ISSUES

I found it difficult not to be a therapist on occasions when he raised difficult experiences and life traumas but also found that I had to monitor my own reactions to his discussions about working with pathology due to my own considerations around scope of practice. Although we had our differences in this regard, I found that a few points of resonance included our shared insights into the value of psychology in helping individuals with ASD's and a shared focus on using emotion over aggression as males.

NARRATIVE INTERVIEW

Interviewer: Okay so essentially the question I have is if you can tell me how you came to pursue a career in psychology and what sorts of experiences have made a meaningful impact on how you define who you are.

Josh: I mean look it's an interesting question. I think for a long time I've been quite interested in what makes people tick and how people work and how they think and how it then affects the way they behave and sort of how they kind of histories have affected the way that they now exist [**CODE 22: INTEREST IN HUMANITY**]. And I think I've grown up in a really interesting family with quite a unique family actually in the South African context. Both my parents were anti apartheid activists and both imprisoned [**CODE 23: FAMILY INFLUENCES AND EXPERIENCES; CODE 3: SOCIAL INTEREST AND ADVOCACY**]. I think growing up in that kind of

environment kind of led me to kind of, I sort of began to define myself very differently to a lot of my peers, because I grew up in a very different environment to my peers grew up with a lot of different views to a lot of my peers. I think what that led to is it led to me trying to kind of understand how it was that my upbringing affected me so completely differently to other people. So, I mean I think that that's the first thing. Trying to understand how I fit into a group of peers, and I think kind of almost trying to work out how to relate to them in a way that we both, we can kind of get on well and I can kind of lead quite a good life. Which sounds a bit bizarre I guess. I think that that's part of it [**CODE 24: TRYING TO UNDERSTAND BEING DIFFERENT**]. I think also, you know. I, grew up in a family where there has been a fair amount of mental illnesses. I have a brother who had got Asperger's syndrome. That's taken ages and ages to diagnose. He's gone through ,any different diagnoses. He went, he was initially diagnosed with ADD, and then ADHD then bipolar, schizophrenic, recently in the last two years, Asperger's Syndrome. I've got a grandmother who was bipolar and a mother who suffered from major depression, my whole life and I think kind of being exposed to that also, a lot of people don't get it. They don't understand people like that, and I do because it's what I've grown up around and I think, I think kind of trying to get other people to understand it led me into the field of psychology but getting into psychology has been a long complicated road for me [**CODE 25: FAMILY HISTORY OF MENTAL ILLNESS**]. Basically I thought about psychology for a long time growing up and in school and stuff. I took a year of after school where I was meant to travel and didn't and I ended up doing community work in and around Johannesburg, mainly Eldorado park and experienced really quite traumatic stuff. It was stuff that, not personally, that traumatized me but it was watching other people's trauma I think. I came across people, one of the most experiences was working in Kliptown. There's a train station that runs through Kliptown and getting a call from my manager saying there's been a huge accident, there's a woman who has been hit by a train, there's no way that she is going to survive. ES aren't going to be able to help her and all we want to do is go and see if we can offer some support to the community. Off we went fresh faced 18 year old not really equipped in any way for this but off I go and I end up holding this woman's hand as she dies. That was quite traumatic for me. It was also quite traumatic for me experiencing the way the community experienced it. What that meant for me was trying to make sense of that for myself. Make sense of that trauma for myself and make sense of the way the community made sense of the trauma. And as I said I was kind of led towards psychology somewhere [**CODE 16: LIFE TRAUMA; CODE 18: A DESIRE TO HELP**]. My oldest brother studied psychology until honors. He's a lot older than I am. He's 14 years older than I am,

but even when he was studying I sort of was interested in what he was doing. So I chatted to him a little bit at a very superficial level. And it was interesting. I enjoyed the conversations so I was drawn to psychology. In that gap year, I mean I had the experiences which kind of brought me, again I guess towards psychology [**CODE 23: FAMILY INFLUENCES AND EXPERIENCES**] but at the same time what I realized was actually psychology as I understood was not somebody, I didn't feel like I was making enough of a meaningful change. The one on one stuff, dealing with couples and families, small pockets of changes as opposed to larger changes. I got into a couple of discussions with people that I quite respect and got pulled completely away from psychology for exactly that reason [**CODE 18: A DESIRE TO HELP**]. In my first year, I ended up studying philosophy and politics with a bit of sociology thrown in there[**CODE 12: EXPERIMENTING TO FIND PRIORITIES**] and in the middle of my first year, my Asperger's brother was at a school, he was at a school called Viva College. Viva was meant to be a school for kids with schizophrenia, bipolar, just biochemical brain disorders. Which led to obviously mood disorders, psychology disorders. And I ended up going out to school to, he boarded there, I ended up going out there and interacted with a couple of the kids and in particular one of them, a lonely girl there, a girl named Saul. Saul ended up of kind of changing my life in a way like, not necessarily in a positive way but in a way that pulled me straight back to psychology. She was severely severely unstable. She was schizophrenic and unmedicated actually at that point and you know, my brother felt quite sorry for her, she was at school full time. Her family abandoned her so she invited her to come stay at our house one weekend. That weekend was quite a hectic weekend for me. She being schizophrenic had some issues with understanding boundaries and just perception of reality I guess and misread one of the conversations that we had and made it quite sexualized conversation and ended up over the course of that weekend sort of trying very very hard to kind of, just kind of get me interested in her. And the harder I pushed away, the more she kind of became interested I think. That turned into a kind of month or two month thing which became quite traumatic for me [**CODE 16: LIFE TRAUMA; CODE 23: FAMILY INFLUENCES AND EXPERIENCES; CODE 25: FAMILY HISTORY OF MENTAL ILLNESS**] and put me into therapy myself. Being in my own therapy kind of really spoke to me about the change that psychology can make. I think that was the beginning of bringing me back into psychology [**CODE 26: THE WOUNDED HEALER**]. In my second year I started from scratch and started with psychology. And just found myself really enjoying it and doing quite well. I think, even at that point I was still kind of a bit hesitant to do psychology for exactly the reason [**CODE 7: PASSION**], I mean I think social service is something that has

been deeply distilled in me, because of the upbringing I have, having a social conscience. It's really important to me, and part of that is wanting to kind of make a change. Substantial change, be a meaningful part of psychology in a large scale way. Which is what I think what drew me to psychology initially. So getting into psychology again, I was hesitant about it, I didn't feel it was necessarily making enough of a change. And you know, came across social psychology and was kind of uncertain about it. This is kind of quite superficial. It didn't really speak to me in a really substantial way. I stuck with it, it still interested me. At the end of the day I'll have a triple major and I don't have to go into psychology. But it interests me so let me just see. Maybe I will find a way to utilize psychology in a broader scale way. No idea about community psychology for example. I think in third year, before I started third year. In third year you choose your subjects and which courses you want to do[**CODE 3: SOCIAL INTEREST AND ADVOCACY**] . I had a friend who was doing honors in my third year and before I chose my subjects I spoke to her, and she is being completely drawn away from mainstream psychology. And I spoke to her and she said listen I know you're pulled towards majoring in mainstream psychology because it really interests you. Pathology is something that is something that fascinates you. Do yourself a favour and get a good split, do two courses of mainstream, two courses of just like, and then she suggested community psychology and health psychology [**CODE 11: SUGGESTION BY FRIENDS**]. I think what happened, I did enroll in psychology in the first block and loved it. Really found it fascinating. [unclear] and everybody else was doing child and adolescent. Something kind of twigged in me. This is somewhere I wanted to go with my life. It aims at policy change, really substantial like long term change. And so I, I kind of went with it and then I did community psychology towards the end of the year and it also kind of really spoke to me. When I had the chance to do it in honors, I took community psychology in a heartbeat. It was just, this was my natural, this was where I was pulled to. And that course made me feel like maybe psychology was somewhere I could go. It didn't have to be this one on one thing. I like the one on one stuff. I find real value in it and I think that that kind of being exposed to it in my first year through my own therapy showed me how phenomenal one on one counselling can be. I was hesitant about wanting to do that my whole life. I wanted something else and community psychology provided that for me I think. To think why I opted to go for mac, this year. I applied for a couple of the clinical courses both here and at UCT. But I went into the Mac interviews first. As soon as I got into Mac I knew, and so I, the interview processes because my goal won't be reached **[CODE 7: PASSION; CODE 3: SOCIAL INTEREST AND ADVOCACY]** I think that's kind of the story of how I got into psychology in a nutshell. I think, the stuff

around my younger brother, that's my brother with Asperger's, was also a kind of really kind of, [unclear] in me getting into psychology I think because his life is not an easy life. You know. He's completely misunderstood, he's very socially isolated and has been his whole life, and he's been the subject of much ridicule I think because he's different. He sees the world in a very different kind of way. And I kind of, because I grew up with him I kind of learnt how to work with him and what kept him happy and what kept him interested and what really kind of sets him off in a very negative way. I kind of got him over time. It wasn't easy, but as, a, I'm only four years older than him, and as a four or five year old with a two year old brothers who is behaving in a way that I find quite unusual, you don't get it [**CODE 25: FAMILY HISTORY OF MENTAL ILLNESS**]. But the older I got the more I kind of began to get it I think and the more I noticed that people didn't and, sort of I think psychology is the field that provides those people with the kind of support that they need, I think. I think for that reason like a sort of clinical, counselling one-on-one stuff becomes quite useful for me. Because like I've seen through my brother, how that kind of support can really be life changing [**CODE 18: A DESIRE TO HELP**]. Ja, I mean I think, you know just speaking to my parents about their experiences during apartheid as activists during interrogation in prison, trying to understand how that's affected them during the rest of their lives. How it affected the way they brought me up. Or the fact that they adopted my younger brother who has got Asperger's and fostered the son of a woman who worked for us. And through like, a lot of really difficult times, he's turned out to be a substance abuser, in and out of rehab. An unfaltering loyalty to him despite all of that and trying to understand that. I never got that [**CODE 23: FAMILY INFLUENCES AND EXPERIENCES**]. I think, the feeling of what I'm saying is trying to understand, the people around me and what made them tick led me to the field of psychology [**CODE 22: INTEREST IN HUMANITY**].

Appendix G

Stage 1 Thematic Analysis Data Sheets

Participant 1: Geoffrey

Theme	Quote/ Keyword/Paraphrase	Page numbers
CODE 1: Unanticipated career choice	"It wasn't ever, I'm going to be a psychologist"	1,21
CODE 2: Disillusionment with traditional occupations/ roles	"I was in hell…just not for me"	1,13,21,22
CODE 3: Social interest and advocacy	"It's as much political as it is scientific, finding a solution to solve social problems and help people"	1,18
CODE 4: Naturally empathic and sociable	"I've always been someone people have spoken to"	1,7,9,11,21,23
CODE 5: Parental dis/approval	"My dad was not happy to put it lightly…over time he realised I love it and it's a respectable career"	2,13,14,16
CODE 6: Uncertainty about future career	" I didn't really know what I wanted to do for the longest time"	2,8,9
CODE 7: Passion	"I found myself loving every second of it"	2,3,4,7,8,10,11,12,17,18
CODE 8: The biologist/ scientist	"I always wanted to explore the human mind, but more the brain"	2,5,6,7,9,14,17,22,23
CODE 9: Valued role model in psychology	" I'm a big believer that if the lecturer is passionate its infects you and you love it too"	2,3,4,10,12
CODE 10: Creativity and spontaneity (willingness to experiment)	"I like the idea of expressing myself and entering other people's worlds by just trying things"	2,3,9,11,12,14,16,20
CODE 11: Suggestion by friends	"My friends said we're doing it so I tried it"	2
CODE 12: Experimenting to find priorities	"I just took a broad range of subjects to figure out what I like"	2,3,5,8,11,12,20,21
CODE 13: Academic Achievement	"Doing well meant a lot, motivated me to keep going"	3,4,5,11,13,16
CODE 14: Perseverance despite failure/hardship	"I just said there's no way I'm not getting in for this"	4,5,6,7,8
CODE 15: Lone male and the gender non-issue	"I never really minded being the one guy in class"	4,18,19
CODE 16: Life Trauma	"Things were falling apart and n one knew what to do"	12,13
CODE 17: Early geographical movement and cultural exposure	"I had the fortune of travelling a lot and meeting lots of interesting people"	15,21,22
CODE 18: A desire to help	"I like helping people help themselves"	17
CODE 19: The caring, feminine man who defies hegemony	"No male psychologists pour testosterone from every pore"	19
CODE 20: Males as checks against gender bias	"Just our innate masculinity can help"	19
CODE 21: Men as scientists and women as healers	"All the guys are in research because its less touchy-feely"	20
CODE 22: Interest in humanity	"I find the human mind fascinating"	17,14,22
CODE 23: Family influences and experiences	-	-
CODE 24: Trying to understand being different	"I was different to other kids in SA"	15,21
CODE 25: Family history of mental illness	-	-
CODE 26: The wounded healer	-	-
CODE 27: A love of variety	"Doing psychology means you can do so many different things"	2,5,6,7,9,14,17,22,23
CODE 28: Homosexual healer	-	-
CODE 29: Psychology as helping understand everyday life	-	-
CODE 30: Earning potential	-	-

Participant 2: Josh

Theme	Quote/ Keyword/Paraphrase	Page numbers
CODE 1: Unanticipated career choice	"Wasn't sure where I was going with it"	8
CODE 2: Disillusionment with traditional occupations/ roles	"I didn't find any of it useful or interesting and couldn't be bothered"	18,19
CODE 3: Social interest and advocacy	"Social service is something distilled in me"	1,3,4,6,7,9,10,11,12
CODE 4: Naturally empathic and sociable	"I have this way of relating to people so that they just open up and don't feel judged"	13,14,15
CODE 5: Parental dis/approval	-	-
CODE 6: Uncertainty about future career	"I'm not sure where it will go from here because I'm always changing"	
CODE 7: Passion	"I loved what I'm doing and have this thirst for knowledge"	3,4,9,10,12,22,23,24
CODE 8: The biologist/ scientist	-	-
CODE 9: Valued role model in psychology	-	-
CODE 10: Creativity and spontaneity (willingness to experiment)	"I am always willing to try new things and discover things about myself"	11
CODE 11: Suggestion by friends	"So she said try it and I did"	3
CODE 12: Experimenting to find priorities	"So I tried all sort of different things to see what I found interesting"	2,8,9,19,21,22
CODE 13: Academic Achievement	"I did really well and that made it more important"	13,22
CODE 14: Perseverance despite failure/hardship	"If I had the choice, I'd choose it all over again"	22,23
CODE 15: Lone male and the gender non-issue	"I never had a chip on my shoulder about being the only guy"	14,16
CODE 16: Life Trauma	"It was pretty traumatic stuff, for me and for them and I was trying to make sense of that"	2,3
CODE 17: Early geographical movement and cultural exposure	"Seeing all these cultures and difference made me curious about people"	5,6,7,21
CODE 18: A desire to help	"I wanted to make a difference to them…pockets of change"	2,10,12,13
CODE 19: The caring, feminine man who defies hegemony	"I never wanted to be that guy, I think men are caring and respectful and supportive"	14,15,16,17,20
CODE 20: Males as checks against gender bias	-	-
CODE 21: Men as scientists and women as healers	-	-
CODE 22: Interest in humanity	"I've always been interested in what makes people tick"	1,4,13
CODE 23: Family influences and experiences	"I grew up in an interesting family so that had an impact"	1,2,3,4,5,6,8,13,23,24
CODE 24: Trying to understand being different	"I had different views to my peers so I wanted to understand how we all fit together"	1,6,8,23,24
CODE 25: Family history of mental illness	"I had a lot of people in my family who were mentally ill so I was always around it"	2,3,4
CODE 26: The wounded healer	"Being in therapy myself made me realise the power of psychology"	3
CODE 27: A love of variety	"There are so many things I want to do"	11,12,18,23,24
CODE 28: Homosexual healer	"Most men in our profession are gay, so they can handle emotion"	14
CODE 29: Psychology as helping understand everyday life	-	-
CODE 30: Earning potential	-	-

Participant 3: Jacob

Theme	Quote/ Keyword/Paraphrase	Page numbers
CODE 1: Unanticipated career choice	"It wasn't my intention at all, just kind of fell into it"	1,2
CODE 2: Disillusionment with traditional occupations/ roles	"I just couldn't stand the thought of doing that everyday"	1,5,9,16,21,22,23,24
CODE 3: Social interest and advocacy	"It was about helping people, making change"	1,23
CODE 4: Naturally empathic and sociable	"I've always been the kind of guy who can meet and chat and get along with anyone"	10,14,15,19,20
CODE 5: Parental dis/approval	"So they weren't too happy and said I must make up my own mind"	2,7,23
CODE 6: Uncertainty about future career	"I needed to find something I wanted to spend my life doing, not knowing what is could be"	11
CODE 7: Passion	"I was loving it nonstop, there was no doubt, no question"	1,2,3,4,5,6,8,12,15,16
CODE 8: The biologist/ scientist	"There's something fascinating about breaking it down and analysing it"	13,15,18,19,24
CODE 9: Valued role model in psychology	"He really inspired me and made me want to do this"	3,4,5,14,22
CODE 10: Creativity and spontaneity (willingness to experiment)	"I was willing to just give it a go and see what comes out a lot of the time"	5,19
CODE 11: Suggestion by friends	-	-
CODE 12: Experimenting to find priorities	"I just kept trying it out. Let's do stuff"	5,19
CODE 13: Academic Achievement	"Achieving well really motivated me to keep going"	7,10
CODE 14: Perseverance despite failure/hardship	"It was pretty awful but I knew there was better stuff coming"	17
CODE 15: Lone male and the gender non-issue	"I never really minded being the only guy"	15,16
CODE 16: Life Trauma	"I really hated that time of my life"	17
CODE 17: Early geographical movement and cultural exposure	"I travelled a lot and got exposed to very different people and places"	17,21
CODE 18: A desire to help	"To make an impact on their lives was so cool"	13,14
CODE 19: The caring, feminine man who defies hegemony	-	-
CODE 20: Males as checks against gender bias	"We keep bringing in a new perspective to balance female ideas	26,27
CODE 21: Men as scientists and women as healers	"We can be more logical while their more emotional and global"	24,25,26
CODE 22: Interest in humanity	"I love trying to understand people beyond textbooks"	1,5,6,9,12,13
CODE 23: Family influences and experiences	"They meant a lot to who I am today"	20,21
CODE 24: Trying to understand being different	"I always wanted to make sense of these things between me and others"	2,17
CODE 25: Family history of mental illness	-	-
CODE 26: The wounded healer	-	-
CODE 27: A love of variety	"There was just so much to learn and do and I loved that"	7,8,9,14,17
CODE 28: Homosexual healer	-	-
CODE 29: Psychology as helping understand everyday life	"Its stuff you do every day and need to understand"	6,7,17,18
CODE 30: Earning potential	"I knew the kind of job I could get with it"	7,16

Participant 4: Oscar

Theme	Quote/ Keyword/Paraphrase	Page numbers
CODE 1: Unanticipated career choice	"I actually got into psychology by chance"	1
CODE 2: Disillusionment with traditional occupations/ roles	"They just didn't go anywhere"	1,10
CODE 3: Social interest and advocacy	"Trying to make the world a better place"	1,13
CODE 4: Naturally empathic and sociable	-	-
CODE 5: Parental dis/approval	"My mother always told me the most important thing I can do is understand what a human being is like"	3,5
CODE 6: Uncertainty about future career	"I'm not sure where I'll go next"	4
CODE 7: Passion	"I did it and I really enjoyed it"	1,6
CODE 8: The biologist/ scientist	"I'm a more critical, learned thinker now"	2,3,5,6,7,8
CODE 9: Valued role model in psychology	-	-
CODE 10: Creativity and spontaneity (willingness to experiment)	"I was willing to try out new things and find new ways"	2,10
CODE 11: Suggestion by friends	"A friend recommended it to me and he was right"	1,3,6
CODE 12: Experimenting to find priorities	"So I tried out other stuff to help me find a path"	2
CODE 13: Academic Achievement	"It forced me into the library and changed me for the better"	2,6,12
CODE 14: Perseverance despite failure/hardship	"I survived all of it"	11
CODE 15: Lone male and the gender non-issue	"I never really noticed I was the only guy"	9,10
CODE 16: Life Trauma	"I got teased a lot and had no parents"	12
CODE 17: Early geographical movement and cultural exposure	"When we moved things were always different"	7,11
CODE 18: A desire to help	"I always wanted to make an impact on someone's life"	1,4,13
CODE 19: The caring, feminine man who defies hegemony	-	-
CODE 20: Males as checks against gender bias	-	-
CODE 21: Men as scientists and women as healers	"I'm analytical not emotional"	8,12
CODE 22: Interest in humanity	"I always wanted to understand people"	3
CODE 23: Family influences and experiences	"I blamed my parents for a lot because they brought me here"	7,12
CODE 24: Trying to understand being different	"I always wanted to understand how other people could be that way"	8,24
CODE 25: Family history of mental illness	-	-
CODE 26: The wounded healer	"I was interested because I still suffer myself"	7
CODE 27: A love of variety	"I want to do all these things, no need to choose one or the other"	5,2,7,12
CODE 28: Homosexual healer	-	-
CODE 29: Psychology as helping understand everyday life	-	-
CODE 30: Earning potential	-	-

Participant 5: Simon

Theme	Quote/ Keyword/Paraphrase	Page numbers
CODE 1: Unanticipated career choice	"I never saw myself doing psychology"	1
CODE 2: Disillusionment with traditional occupations/ roles	-	-
CODE 3: Social interest and advocacy	"I wanted to help how society functions"	7
CODE 4: Naturally empathic and sociable	"I've always loved hearing people's stories"	2,3
CODE 5: Parental dis/approval	"I'm conflicted between my own desires and my family's needs"	4,5,10
CODE 6: Uncertainty about future career	"I was never sure what I'd do"	2,3,5
CODE 7: Passion	"I just enjoyed it more and more"	1,11,12
CODE 8: The biologist/ scientist	"Its developed me intellectually so I can investigate what I've always dreamed of"	3
CODE 9: Valued role model in psychology	"The people made it for me as much as the material"	3
CODE 10: Creativity and spontaneity (willingness to experiment)	"I liked trying all these ideas and things out"	7
CODE 11: Suggestion by friends	"They taught me new ways of viewing things"	2
CODE 12: Experimenting to find priorities	"I tried things out and started seeing what I liked or not"	8
CODE 13: Academic Achievement	"Seeing what you could have done better makes you grow"	8
CODE 14: Perseverance despite failure/hardship	"It becomes so difficult but I keep going"	4,5,6,10
CODE 15: Lone male and the gender non-issue	"There are more ladies but it's not bad or anything"	10,11
CODE 16: Life Trauma	"It was painful and scary"	5
CODE 17: Early geographical movement and cultural exposure	"I moved and it changed the way I thought about life"	2,5
CODE 18: A desire to help	"I always want to help people in some way"	2,3
CODE 19: The caring, feminine man who defies hegemony	-	-
CODE 20: Males as checks against gender bias	"It shows the field is not just for or about women"	11
CODE 21: Men as scientists and women as healers	"I like interrogating and delving deeper"	8
CODE 22: Interest in humanity	"I am interested in dimensions of people"	7
CODE 23: Family influences and experiences	-	-
CODE 24: Trying to understand being different	-	-
CODE 25: Family history of mental illness	-	-
CODE 26: The wounded healer	-	-
CODE 27: A love of variety	"I like doing these different things that complement each other"	3,7
CODE 28: Homosexual healer	-	-
CODE 29: Psychology as helping understand everyday life	"I could see it out there in front of me"	2
CODE 30: Earning potential	"Making money to support my family"	4,11

Participant 6: Abdul

Theme	Quote/ Keyword/Paraphrase	Page numbers
CODE 1: Unanticipated career choice	"Out of the choice it was what I picked, it wasn't a planned thing"	1,2
CODE 2: Disillusionment with traditional occupations/ roles	"There's a lot of seemingly good but dodgy stuff out there"	10,13
CODE 3: Social interest and advocacy	"I wanted to be of use to society"	2,4,6,10,11
CODE 4: Naturally empathic and sociable	"It comes back to, people are all the same"	10,12
CODE 5: Parental dis/approval	"My dad said why not do psychology?"	2
CODE 6: Uncertainty about future career	-	-
CODE 7: Passion	"I just loved it"	9,12
CODE 8: The biologist/ scientist	-	-
CODE 9: Valued role model in psychology	-	-
CODE 10: Creativity and spontaneity (willingness to experiment)	"I was out to find myself in all of this different stuff"	1,3,5,8,12
CODE 11: Suggestion by friends	-	-
CODE 12: Experimenting to find priorities	"I tried out different avenues of life"	1,2,3,4,5
CODE 13: Academic Achievement	-	-
CODE 14: Perseverance despite failure/hardship	"I got through it although it was really bad and good"	6
CODE 15: Lone male and the gender non-issue	"It's mostly female but it's never been a problem"	10,11
CODE 16: Life Trauma	-	-
CODE 17: Early geographical movement and cultural exposure	"I've been all over the place, no real base now"	2,5
CODE 18: A desire to help	"I wanted to help people"	2,6,10
CODE 19: The caring, feminine man who defies hegemony	"We're more feminine caregivers, not rah rah males"	11
CODE 20: Males as checks against gender bias	"Men can give a different view to women"	13,14
CODE 21: Men as scientists and women as healers	-	-
CODE 22: Interest in humanity	"I wanted to know what makes people tick"	9
CODE 23: Family influences and experiences	"My mom and dad had a lot to do with it"	10,13
CODE 24: Trying to understand being different	"I was quite different to the other local kids"	2,3
CODE 25: Family history of mental illness	-	-
CODE 26: The wounded healer	"I knew how it felt to be hurt"	2,6
CODE 27: A love of variety	"I want to do a lot of different things"	7,9
CODE 28: Homosexual healer	"It helped, being gay, to get people in a new way"	3,9
CODE 29: Psychology as helping understand everyday life	"I see things in textbooks unfold in real life"	8
CODE 30: Earning potential	-	-

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