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Women's work? : an exploration of the lack of male interest in the field of professional psychology in South Africa.

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ABSTRACT

This research explored the possible reasons for the lack of males in professional psychology in the South African context, by examining the reasons why second and third year, male psychology students decide not to enter postgraduate studies in psychology. A mixed methods research design was employed. The quantitative aspect consisted of the administration of a questionnaire including the Male Attitude Norms Inventory-II (MANI-II), a questionnaire measuring levels of hegemonic masculinity, to test for the degree to which hegemonic masculinity may influence the decision to pursue or not to pursue postgraduate studies in psychology. The qualitative aspect involved semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with second and third year undergraduate, male, psychology students who specified that they did not intend on pursuing postgraduate studies in psychology. This aspect of the research was designed to determine the possible reasons for the decision not to pursue postgraduate studies in psychology, as well as to assess the degree to which masculinity affects this decision. Quantitative results showed that there was not a significant difference on the MANI-II between groups (although certain individual items did show significant results). The results of the qualitative interviews showed that many issues were potentially contributing to distorted and negative views of professional psychology, although a major finding was that the participants viewed their masculinity as being incompatible with the requirements of professional psychology and that professional psychology would be an unfulfilling career. Recommendations included greater education on the reality of the work involved in professional psychology as well as possibly increasing the exposure of undergraduate males to postgraduate and professional male psychologists as well as greater consultation to improve the media‟s representation to reflect the realities of psychological practice