Students' Progression to Post-graduate Studies:
An exploratory study on demographic attributes among Psychology Honours students at the University of Cape Town

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:_____Date:_____

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ABSTRACT

Background and objective: South Africa does not produce enough Doctoral graduates each year compared to other developed and developing countries. There are also too few Black and female graduates. Black postgraduates are particularly under-represented in psychology in South Africa. This is problematic for future knowledge producers. Gender, race, age, marital status, institutional and socioeconomic issues, and academic performance play a role in progression to postgraduate studies. The current study aimed to explore: (a) the demographic and academic characteristics of a cohort of Psychology Honours students at the University of Cape Town; (b) whether there was an association between gender and enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate studies; (c) whether there was an association between race and enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate studies; (d) whether there was an association between academic performance and enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate studies; (e) what students' reasons were for deciding to enroll or not to enroll in postgraduate degrees after Honours.

Method: Demographic and academic data was collected for a sample of 133 students, aged 20 to 48 years. Qualitative information about reasons for enrolling or not in postgraduate studies was gathered using a semi-structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and frequency distributions were used to explore the demographic and academic characteristics of the sample. Fisher's Exact tests and Chi-squares tested the associations between gender, race, academic performance and postgraduate enrollment. Qualitative answers were analysed for thematic content.

Results: Academic performance was weakly associated with enrolling or not in postgraduate studies. White females made up the majority of those who enrolled in postgraduate studies, but the majority within all race groups enrolled after Honours. Important reasons for enrolling included the necessity for postgraduate degrees for recognition and working professionally in psychology fields.

Conclusion: Academic performance is associated with enrollment or not in postgraduate studies. There is an under-representation of males and Black postgraduates in Psychology at the University of Cape Town. The availability of funding and supportive and encouraging interactions between students and academic staff, as well as having more Black academic faculty members are possible ways through which to create racial diversity within psychology.

Chapter One: Introduction

The Importance of Postgraduate Study

Economies are becoming progressively more constructed around the skills and knowledge that is possessed by its working population. Therefore, the part played by research, innovation and the significance of having a large number of people who have high levels of knowledge-based skills is very important for economic wellbeing and development (Council on Higher Education, 2009; Edwards, Radloff, & Coates, 2009).

The need for more Doctoral degrees (PhDs) in South Africa has been highlighted as the country moves from a commodity-based to a knowledge-based economy in which it is integral to have a highly skilled workforce. It is also extremely important for South Africa to increase its number of PhD graduates to allow higher education institutions and research organizations in the country to compete globally across all areas of research and academia. Additionally, individuals with doctoral degrees have the potential to contribute to all sectors of the economy in a much wider sphere than just research-related and academic areas. In knowledge-based economies, their skills may be in high demand; for instance, their critical thinking skills might be fruitfully used in numerous different spheres of industry and technology. Furthermore, postgraduates have skills that allow them to produce new knowledge and to apply this knowledge within their given fields and disciplines. For example, in the Psychology field in post-Apartheid South Africa, it is important for postgraduate students to produce new knowledge that challenges dominant White, male, and western ideologies and views within the field and to highlight the unique features of South African society (Council on Higher Education, 2009; National Research Foundation, 2007; Shefer, Shabalala, & Townsend, 2004; Shefer, van Niekerk, Duncan, & de la Rey, 1997). The personal benefits to individuals who obtain tertiary degrees include better job prospects in the labour market, as well as an increased likelihood of being employed. Furthermore, higher education affords individuals better earning prospects, which can potentially raise living standards (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2012).

Definitions of Postgraduate Degrees

The Council on Higher Education (2009) defines an *Honours* degree as a "qualification that has a minimum entry requirement of a first bachelor's degree and which has a minimum duration of 1 year" (p. 4). Similarly, it defines a *Master's* degree as a "qualification which has either a first bachelor's degree or an honours degree as a minimum entry requirement, which is of a level higher than that of an honours degree and which has a minimum duration of 1 year" (p. 4), and a *doctoral degree* as a "qualification which has either an Honours or Master's degree as a minimum entry requirement, which is of a level higher than a master's degree and which has a minimum duration of 2 years" (p. 4).

Typically in South Africa, unlike many foreign university programmes, students enroll in an Honours degree programme as a fourth year of study after a three-year undergraduate degree programme. An Honours degree is considered a "lower level" postgraduate qualification in South African higher education (Council on Higher Education, 2009; Du Toit, 2012; Mouton, 2007).

Doctoral Graduates Globally versus in South Africa

Currently, South Africa's annual production of PhD graduates is about 27 per million individuals in the population. This figure is substantially lower than that in developed countries such as the United Kingdom, which produces 259 PhDs per million in the population. The number of PhDs South Africa produces is also lower than that of Brazil, which is also a developing-world nation and which produces 43 PhDs per million in the population (Maharaj, 2009).

Postgraduate Study in South Africa

The South African PhD Project was initiated by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) in 2007 as a combined project with the South African Department of Science and Technology (DST). The main objective of the project is to increase the number of professionals in South African who hold postgraduate degrees. Other objectives of the project include (a) providing networks of support for potential PhD candidates and (b) making a contribution to creating a workforce that is more representative of the broader South African population. Furthermore, South Africa does not have the necessary number of qualified academic staff within its higher

education sector. In fact, only a quarter of those employed in instructional, technical, and research positions at tertiary institutions possess a Doctoral degree (National Research Foundation, 2007).

The Council on Higher Education's (2009) report on postgraduate studies, states that in general, there was much growth within the South African Higher Education system in both enrollments and graduates between the period 1990 and 2005. There was, however, a decline in postgraduate student graduations (from 31.3% to 26.9%). Master's degree first enrollments grew at an average rate of 4.4% between the period 2000 to 2005. There was a rise until 2003 and then a drop in overall Master's enrollments from 2003 to 2005. In PhD studies, first enrollments grew at an average growth rate of 7.5% between 2000 and 2005 and was the highest in 2001, but lowest in 2005. Humanities field's first enrollment growth rates, were amongst the lowest. For Doctoral studies first enrollments, however, the highest growth rates included the Social Sciences. In terms of graduate growth rates, the number of Master's graduates increased between the years 2000 and 2005. The annual average growth rate for PhDs increased slightly between 2000 and 2005. Notably the largest growth was in the Social Sciences. In terms of the amount of time postgraduates take to complete their studies and graduate, the figures are encouraging and similar when compared with European countries, North America and Australia. The typical South African Master's graduate takes about three years to complete their studies, and the typical Doctoral student takes an average of four and a half years to graduate.

Challenges Facing Postgraduate Education in South Africa

A number of problems face postgraduate education in South Africa. Some of these factors could explain why there are such low numbers of Doctoral students in the country. These include: a lack of national and international financial support for students, a lack of institutional attention and resources devoted to supporting postgraduate students, a large number of supervisors who are under-experienced and overburdened, and postgraduates are not well-prepared to engage in doctoral-level appropriate research (Mouton, 2007). Additional reasons postulated for the low numbers include inequality brought about by Apartheid, the limitations of the tertiary education system in its ability to enroll and provide supervision for Doctoral students and also various other constraints experienced by institutions (Department of Science

and Technology, 2011).

Professor Johan Mouton (director of the University of Stellenbosch Centre for Research on Science and Technology) commented on some of the problems facing postgraduate study in South Africa. He stated that the obstructions to postgraduate study go back to high school level and possibly even before. The issues begin with the low number of matriculation exemptions as well as too few quality passes in arithmetic and science. He also highlighted the problems of student poverty and debt and stated that, although there are about one hundred thousand bachelor degree graduates per year, most of these students have to enter the workforce immediately in order to pay off their student loans. Furthermore, he stated that South Africa is not likely to reach the targets for more PhDs by 2018, which the NRF and DST set, because the current PhD production rate is not high enough. He said that another problem with too few Doctoral graduates is that graduates on this level are needed to train the generations of academics who will follow. He also noted that one of the blockages in the pipeline to producing more PhDs is that there are not enough Black South Africans doing Master's degrees. These low numbers also stand in the way of transformation taking place within the higher education system. Most Black students, who are able to obtain their undergraduate degrees, do not go through to postgraduate level. The participation rates of White and Indian students though were similar to European participation rates (Dell, 2010).

Another highlighted challenge in postgraduate studies is that of supervisors who are overburdened with too many students to supervise. Estimates suggest that an average supervisor has to potentially take on as many as seven MA or PhD students and this may be even higher within the social sciences. It should also be taken into account that there are not enough young lecturers who can supervise and the ageing supervisors often do not take on new supervisees. There are also too many ongoing enrollments as a proportion of total enrollments and not enough graduates as a proportion of ongoing enrollments. Thus the university system takes strain because there are too many students in the system and not enough resources (e.g., supervisors and funds) to support these students. This "pile-up" in the system is mostly seen for females, Black African and Coloured students at MA level, although there were no differences between races at PhD study level (Council on Higher Education, 2009, p.

15).

Context of Higher Education in South Africa

The challenges faced by postgraduate studies today should be viewed in relation to South Africa's political past. During Apartheid, tertiary institutions were segregated according to racial groups namely Black African, White, Coloured and Indian (the racial terms that are used here do not imply that they are accepted as valid. They are the terms that were used to refer to population groupings under Apartheid). *White* refers to people who originated from Europe, *Black African* are those who are indigenous to Africa, *Coloured* refers to people of mixed race descent and *Indian* refers to descendants of indentured labourers who were brought to South Africa from the Indian subcontinent (Sennett, Finchilescu, Gibson, & Strauss, 2003).

For example, historically advantaged institutions (HAI) included the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS). Historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) included the University of Durban Westville (for Indian students), the University of the Western Cape (for Coloured students), the University of Zululand, the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA), University of the North, Fort Hare University and Vista. Universities that were specifically set out for attendance by those who were not classified as White were granted fewer resources and less research support. The range of programmes on offer at these HDIs were specifically aligned with what was considered to be the kind of appropriate careers that each race was being prepared for (Council on Higher Education, 2009; Divided Campuses: South African Universities, 1986).

Although universities are no longer segregated, there remain challenges for HDIs. These often include that they have few resources, poor facilities and too few academic and administrative staff with large numbers of students whose needs have to be met. There are often different academic outputs from HDIs compared to HAIs and insufficient staff skill levels when comparing the different types of institutions (Council on Higher Education, 2010; Kagee, Naidoo, & Mahatey, 1997). In addition to this, since the opening of tertiary institutions to all race groups after South Africa became a democracy, enrollments at HDIs decreased and enrollments at HAIs increased, which has led to decreased sustainability at HDIs (Department of

Education, 2001)

Research Assumptions

There is paucity in the literature regarding postgraduate studies and progression to postgraduate studies compared to studies regarding undergraduate students (O'Donnell, Tobbell, Lawthom, & Zammit, 2009). A central research assumption (Leedy & Ormod, 2010) has thus been made when looking at the literature related to these topics. The assumption is that some of the issues or factors that play a role in student's success or graduation at postgraduate level will also play a role in students' progress to postgraduate studies.

Factors playing a role in progression to postgraduate studies and graduation.

Gender and postgraduate study. It is important to explore and attempt to understand the gender differences in graduate throughput. Gender differences influence future faculty make-up, which is likely to have an impact on the outcomes of women students' academic experiences (Meinholdt & Huberman, 1999).

Studies suggest that females may be less likely to continue their studies after an undergraduate degree and enroll for postgraduate studies. For example a UK study found that regardless of other factors such as social class, men were more likely to progress to a higher degree than females were. Furthermore, a larger proportion of men pursued higher degrees in research than women did. The explanation given for these gender differences is that there may be a tendency for some male-dominated study fields to attract greater numbers of male registrations for research degrees (Wakeling, 2005). Similarly, examining progression from undergraduate studies to postgraduate studies and using data from 150 Colleges in the United Kingdom, Wales (2012) reports that women were between 3.1 percent to 3.4 percent less likely to continue on to do postgraduate studies than their male student counterparts.

The US Survey of Earned Doctorates 2011 reports that for the total Master's graduates for that year, women made up the majority. Within fields, however this differed, with women making up in the majority in the Social Sciences, but the minority in Science and Engineering degree programmes. Within overall Doctoral graduates, however, women made up the minority of the total. Within fields, there were again differences. Men made up the majority proportion within both the Social

Sciences and the Science and Engineering fields (National Science Foundation, 2011).

South African postgraduate figures show that female first enrollments in Master's and Doctoral programmes were less than half of all postgraduate enrollments for the period 2000 to 2005. In 2005, females made up 46% of total enrollments for Master's programmes and only 40% for Doctoral programmes. In terms of graduate rates, females showed an increase in representation across most study fields. As can be observed in Table 1. the proportion of female Doctoral graduates increased in the Humanities faculty as well as in the Social Sciences and comprised a considerable share, but women still remained in the minority of Master's and Doctoral graduates during this period (Council on Higher Education, 2009).

Table 1.

Female Graduates per Field and Degree 2000 to 2005

	Master's		Doctoral	
Study Field	2000	2005	2000	2005
Humanities	18%	20%	14%	17%
Social Sciences	51%	48%	37%	41%

The Council on Higher Education (2009) also reports that in terms of gender differences and the time taken to complete a postgraduate degree in South Africa, there appeared to be no differences between male and female Master's students during the period 2000 or in 2005. However, in 2000, female students fell slightly behind in the completion of their degrees compared to their male counterparts. By 2008, though, both males and females took, on average, equally long to graduate from their studies (4.7 years).

In addition, female postgraduate students may face a number of challenges. In a qualitative study exploring the challenges faced by female Doctoral students and graduates, Moyer, Salovey and Casey-Cannon (1999) reported a number of challenging themes for the female postgraduate students in their sample. The majority of the women in the study disclosed financial difficulties as one of the most challenging aspects of Doctoral studies. Other highlighted themes included the

challenges of having to support children and families and the strain this placed on productivity, but also the strain their studies placed on their personal relationships. They reported that trying to balance their personal and professional lives posed a great challenge. A number of women reported that interpersonal conflicts with faculty members and thus breakdown in relationships during the course of their studies was challenging. These conflicts included issues around sexual harassment and the consequential barriers to accessing privileges. Other concerns the women mentioned were a lack of female academic role models and female members of their faculty as well as perceived inequality in opportunities for female academics and in what their salaries were compared to their male colleagues. Appel and Dahlgren (2003) report similar challenges for women Doctoral students including difficulties balancing family and work spheres.

Marital status and postgraduate study. In South Africa, the number of marriages has generally increased although there were fluctuations over time with regard to civil marriages for the period 2006 to 2010. Furthermore, the average age of males who have married for the first time remained steady at 32 years (33 years in 2010). The average age at which first-marriage females married also remained steady at 29 years for the same period. The average age of all males who married during this period was 34 years and the average age for female remained more or less steady at 30 years across this period (Statistics South Africa, 2010).

In the US, however, rates of marriage have steadily decreased for the period 2000-2010. In the US and similar to South African marriage statistics, women tend to get married at younger ages than men. But there is an over 80% chance that a man or a woman will be married by age forty. In addition, In the US, 32% of men and 31% of women get married during the course of their postgraduate studies (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012; National Center for Health Statistics, 2010; Price, 2005; Statistics South Africa, 2010).

Furthermore, women (Black and White) who are highly educated are more likely to get married than they were in the past. When they do, though, it is at an older age (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001). Decisions to delay marriage for those students in pursuit of postgraduate degree may be explained by marriage possibly being viewed

negatively as a potential impediment to performing well in graduate school (Ferreira, 2003).

Studies have shown that women obtain their PhDs at an older age than their male counterparts. Reasons for this may be due to women taking time between their undergraduate studies to have children, since optimal childbearing years for women are biologically time-restricted. Women thus, often do not follow the traditional academic career path, which includes doing a postgraduate, then a post Doctoral and then pursuing a full time senior/professorship position (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004; Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2010).

On the path to an academic career, having a family and the responsibilities that accompany this can be a disadvantage for women. Women often have to choose between their academic career ambitions and having a child (Halpern, 2008; Mason & Goulden, 2004). Mason (2012) reports that amongst a large group of Doctoral students in the US, men and women had the perception that academic careers are not family-friendly and that having a balanced family life and an academic career are incompatible. Furthermore, the author reports that Doctoral students in the sciences who become mothers during the course of their studies, are likely give up those ambitions.

This being said, being married has been shown to be a positive factor with regard to being enrolled in postgraduate education. For example, Price (2005) reports positive results for married student in his study on graduate outcomes that included a large number of students, across different study disciplines, over a twenty-year period. His results suggest that even after taking into account the individual characteristics of students who were married before commencing graduate school, they were not at a disadvantage to single postgraduate students. He reports that males who were married when they commenced graduate school were more likely to graduate than their single male peers. They also took slightly less time to graduate than single male students. In addition, married men were more likely to gain a semi-permanent university professorship. Married female students on the other hand, were not more likely to graduate than single females but they completed their degree quicker than their single graduate school peers. There was no difference in academic performance, however

between married and single females. In general there is a higher probability that married graduate students will publish papers during graduate school and also that they will publish more papers than single postgraduate students. On the other hand, married students were also shown to have poorer academic undergraduate performance scores when they entered graduate school, suggesting that they may not have been more prepared when entering postgraduate studies. The author notes, though that studies, which look at the impact of marriage on various outcomes (e.g., postgraduate persistence), could actually show results that reflect selection effects of a range of unobservable personal and situational characteristics that are at play.

Issues concerning race and postgraduate education. The topic of race is important to explore when looking at participation rates of South African postgraduate students in light of the country's Apartheid history and the legacy that still remains. In the context of this history, the South African Department of Education (DOE) (2001) has stressed the importance of equal access and equal chances of individuals to succeed within higher education.

A previously segregated South African educational system has led to a number of inequalities in education for different population groups in the country. Thus, there are differences in terms of the representation of Black (i.e., Black African, Coloured and Indian) students at South African universities (Kagee et al., 1997). These inequalities begin at a basic education level for many Black African, Coloured and Indian students who were, during Apartheid education, and may still be, educated at disadvantaged schools. Many disadvantaged schools, amongst other problems, lack resources such as stationary, teaching equipment and experience high numbers of learners in relation to teaching staff (Fiske & Ladd, 2006; Gilmour & Soudien, 1994; Huysamen, 2000; Sennet et al., 2003).

In particular, educational and socioeconomic disadvantages may mean Black students are less prepared for the academic demands of tertiary education than White students. As a result, many Black African students perform poorly or drop out of degree programmes before completion (Kagee et al., 1997; Huysamen, 2000). Considering this, many Black African students may not even reach postgraduate level.

However, many Black African students may not be educationally disadvantaged when they enter university because they have attended and matriculated from well-resourced private/independent schools (Shochet, 1994). Independent schools in South African, which were previously seen as mostly White and elite have dramatically changed in terms of racial equity. In a report for the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Black African learners were shown to make up the majority of total learners attending independent schools (58.3%), with White learners only representing 29.4%, and Coloured and Indian learners making up the remaining 12.3%. Most of the White learners however, attended high-fee independent schools compared to Black learners who attended low to average fee schools (Du Toit, 2003). Wales (2012) reports that in the UK, having attended a private high school increases the likelihood of progressing to postgraduate studies.

It is important to note that many public schools in South Africa are suburban ones that were previously White schools and are likely to be self-governed and generally more like well- resourced independent schools than the poorly resourced public schools which disadvantaged, Black learners typically attend. Independent/private schools may also not meet the typical assumption that they are privileged and well resourced. Many schools are located in rural areas or even in informal settlements. They may receive less financial support from the government because their status as independent schools limits their subsidy entitlements. They therefore often face similar challenges to poor public schools (Hofmeyr & Lee, 2004).

This being said, with the change in the country's political system and higher educational system, there have been many positive outcomes in higher education. For example, the South African Council on Higher Education (2009) reports that from 2000 to 2005 there were increased proportions in the number of postgraduate enrollments for Black (including Black African, Coloured and Indian learners). There was also an increase in Black African graduates at Honours Master's and Doctoral levels. There was also increased representation of Black African graduates across all fields for the same period. The CHE also reports that although there have been increases in proportion of Black African graduates (MA and PhD) during the period 2000 and 2005, White students still made up the largest proportions of graduates. The number of Coloured and Indian graduates remained similar over this period, with

some increases between 2000 and 2005. These race representations are shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

Race Per Degree Qualification Between 2000 and 2005

	Master's		Doctoral	
	2000	2005	2000	2005
Race				
Black African	27%	33%	19%	29%
White	61%	52%	70%	59%
Coloured	5%	6%	5%	6%
Indian	7%	8%	6%	7%

Note. Adapted from the Council of Education Higher Education Monitor Report 7, 2009

In terms of Master's first enrollments, White students comprised the largest proportion in the 25-34 year category and showed an increase over time. Indian first enrollments were the highest for 2001 and 2005 though. Black African students on the other hand, had the lowest first enrollment rates over this period.
Furthermore, the number of White and Indian graduate increases were much larger than the number of Black and Coloured increases. This suggests that White students in the age group 25 to 34 are more likely than Black Africans to enroll in postgraduate study and also to graduate. These participation rates, suggests that Black African students are still poorly represented in terms of postgraduate education enrollments compared to other races especially White South Africans. Postgraduate education in South Africa thus still appears to reflect the Apartheid legacy of unequal participation (Council on Higher Education, 2009). This is shown in Table 3.

The low numbers of Black African postgraduates means that there may not be enough Black academic staff in the future. Thus Black students may not have Black role models. A combination of poor salaries to attract Black staff members, and environments in historically advantaged institutions that may seem alienating, have been highlighted as contributing to the low numbers of Black faculty members

(Department of Education, 2001).

Table 3.

MA and PhD Graduates According to Race per 1000 in Age Categories

	25-34 Age Group		35-44 Age Group	
Degree According to Race	2000	2005	2000	2005
Master's graduates				
Black African	0.32	0.4	0.51	0.70
White	6.71	8.53	5.22	6.24
Coloured	0.42	0.59	0.56	0.76
Indian	2.57	3.43	2.95	4.03
Doctoral graduates				
Black African	0.03	0.05	0.05	0.09
White	1.02	1.43	0.8	1.05
Coloured	0.04	0.09	0.05	0.11
Indian	0.28	0.41	0.32	0.49

Adapted from the Council on Higher Education Monitor 7, 2009

Additionally, in a qualitative study Moyer et al. (1999) found that participant's challenges related to ethnicity and race, included issues around tokenism, being excluded, racism and insensitivity to race. Issues also included others having a low expectation of minority students' (in the US these include Black African, Hispanic and Asian American) performance, being pushed to focus on work associated with their particular ethnicity or even singled out as an example or spokesperson for an ethnic group.

Age and postgraduate enrollment. Looking at age is important in terms of enrollment and throughput because graduation figures suggest that older students take longer to complete their studies. Thus if Doctoral students who follow academic careers take too long to complete their degrees they are likely to only become productive (i.e., produce publications, supervise etc.) fairly late in their academic careers. This is because holding a PhD is associated with academic publication output. It is important that aging faculty members are replaced by new academics who can act as supervisors. Those students who are potential knowledge producers are entering the

system very late and thus will also have little impact on research outcomes and knowledge production. Since those who hold academic positions at universities are aging, it is important that Doctoral graduates begin to publish at an early stage in their careers (Council on Higher Education, 2009).

South African tertiary education statistics show that the average age of graduates in postgraduate studies has increased over the period 2000 to 2005. For example, the average age of students who graduated from Honours has risen from 27 years to 30 years in this period. The majority of Master's students will graduate at age 34 and most Doctoral students will only graduate at the age of 40 years (Council on Higher Education, 2009). These figures are significantly higher than norms reported abroad, for example in the US the average age at which females graduate from Doctoral studies is 34 years and the mean age at which males graduate is 32 years (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004; National Science Foundation, 2011).

Academic performance and pursuing postgraduate study. The selection process for admission into graduate programmes has become increasingly important due to the proliferation of higher education in Africa since the 1980s. In cases where entry into a Master's programme is based upon selection, it appears that various disciplines in South African Higher education institutions use Honours performance as an important admission criterion (Graduate Management Admission Council, 2003; Swanepoel & Moll, 2004). This suggests that students' potential entry into a postgraduate programme would in large be based upon their undergraduate/Honours performance.

Specifically in the discipline of psychology, in foreign university postgraduate programmes such as Clinical Psychology and Neuroscience, for example, in the Yale University and Duke University Departments of Psychology, academic performance remains a heavily weighted admission criterion (Duke University [Duke], 2012; Yale University [Yale], 2012). Similarly, in South African university postgraduate programmes, for example, academic admission criteria into an MA in Psychology by Coursework and Research and MA in Clinical Psychology includes high Honours degree performance at the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS). At the University of Cape Town (UCT), an important admission criterion into an MA in Clinical Psychology programme includes good Honours grades. Admission requirements into

the MA in Neuropsychology at UCT is even more arduous and requires that applicants achieve an Honours grade point average (GPA) of at least 70% in order to be admitted (University of Cape Town [UCT], 2012; University of the Witwatersrand [WITS], 2012).

Reflecting on the importance academic performance plays in pursuing postgraduate studies, Mullen, Goyette and Soares (2003) reported in their study that undergraduate university performance had a strong independent effect on whether students enrolled in graduate school or not. Similarly, Wales (2012) found across UK universities that students who obtained a first or upper second pass were more likely to continue to postgraduate study.

In terms of whether academic performance predicts if individuals will be successful at postgraduate level, international and studies conducted locally have shown mixed results. For example, Kuncel, Credé and Thomas (2007) found that the most widely used predictors in admissions to graduate business schools, the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) and undergraduate grade point average (GPA) were valid predictors of students' academic performance in graduate school. The GMAT was a better predictor of performance than undergraduate performance and when combined they proved to be very good predictors of postgraduate performance at business school.

In a South African study, Swanepoel and Moll (2004) found that for a large group of students who were enrolled in a postgraduate Master's in Education programme, the final *average Honours mark* as well as *the number of times an Honours module was failed* was a weak predictor of Master's academic performance. *Average Honours mark* also proved to be a weak predictor of whether a student would complete a Master's degree or not. Thus, Honours performance was not a good predictor of success at postgraduate level. The authors suggest that, although it was not a good predictor of success once in a Master's programme, it was the most substantial predictor, and thus it may be regarded as a valid admission criterion for postgraduate programmes.

Role of financial/socioeconomic factors and postgraduate study. Studies show that factors such as socioeconomic status, parental education and financial support and fees play a role in the progression and completion of postgraduate studies.

For example, in a study using data from one hundred and fifty universities in the United Kingdom, findings show that high tertiary tuition fees are a barrier to progressing to postgraduate studies. The author suggests that a 10 percent increase in expected tuition fees is related to a 1.7 percent less chance that a student will progress to postgraduate education. Furthermore, results suggest that wealthier students are much more likely to progress to postgraduate programmes after completing undergraduate studies. For example, he reports that students who come from professional backgrounds make up around 60 percent of the proportion of those who progress to postgraduate studies. Those who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds (e.g., long-term unemployment in the family or never been employed) only made up 4 percent of the proportion of those who progressed to postgraduate study. He reports that this is the case even when undergraduate academic performance was taken into account. He also stated that there are few UK studies, which investigate the progression from undergraduate to postgraduate studies in terms of socioeconomic factors (Wales, 2012).

The Department of Higher Education and Training (2012, p. 63) stated in their Green Paper that although there have been substantial increases in the availability of funds, The National Student Financial Aid Scheme of South Africa has failed to keep up with the growing demand for higher education in this country. This failure is problematic because finances play a large role in entry to postgraduate programmes (Wales, 2012) and sufficient financial support is shown to increase the likelihood that Doctoral students will complete their studies and graduate in the US (Council of Graduate Schools, 2008; Ehrenberg, Jakubson, Groen, So, & Price, 2007).

Similarly, in South Africa, one of the major problems in postgraduate study output is that there is not enough funding at a national and institutional level to support postgraduate students Mouton (2007). In a different South African study looking at attrition and continuation at postgraduate level, financial issues were highlighted as challenging aspect of doing postgraduate study for those students who completed their

studies and those who terminated their postgraduate degree (Albertyn, Kapp, & Bitzer, 2008).

Parental education. Mullen et al. (2003) explored social and academic correlates of continuation to postgraduate study in the United States. They found that parents' education did not have an effect on their children's progression into MBA programmes and had minimal influence on progression to other Master's programmes. There was however, a strong effect of parents' education on progression into Doctoral programmes.

In the United States, statistics regarding Doctoral attainments for 2011 show that amongst Black graduates, the majority had mothers and fathers who only achieved a high school level of education or less. On the other hand, amongst White Doctoral recipients in the same year the majority had mothers and fathers who also achieved a higher degree. Across all Doctoral recipients, the majority had fathers who attained an advanced degree and the second biggest proportion had parents who achieved a bachelor's degree. The majority had mothers who obtained a high school level or less and the second largest proportion were those whose mother achieved a bachelor's degree. Thus students who achieved Doctoral degrees tended to have highly educated parents (National Science Foundation, 2011).

With this in mind, in South Africa, Black African students are very likely to be the first in their families (i.e., first-generation students) to go to university (Kagee et al., 1997). This fact suggests that progression to tertiary education and then to postgraduate studies may be an exception and not a norm for these students as they may lack the cultural socialization that tertiary educated parents foster regarding the expectancy and preparation for undergraduate university and beyond (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001).

Graduate programmes, supervision and research process issues. Studies conducted abroad and in South Africa suggest that factors related to postgraduate programmes, supervision during postgraduate studies and the research process can either enhance or hinder postgraduate studies.

For example, Ehrenberg et al. (2007) explored the outcomes and influences of parts of a nationwide project (the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Graduate Education Initiative GEI, 1991), which was created in order to improve the way that PhD programmes are structured and organized in the humanities and social sciences. The authors looked at how certain elements influenced attrition as well as better chances of graduation. The results also showed that the main route via which the GEI reduced attrition rates and improved graduation rates was through improving clarity and also motivating students to finish their dissertations as fast as possible.

In a qualitative study, Golde (2000) outlined the experiences of three Doctoral students who dropped out of their postgraduate programmes for different reasons. Of the themes that emerged from their narratives, the inability to adequately integrate into the academic environment played a role in attrition. Supervisor/ advising relationships that were problematic were also implicated in the students' decisions to drop out of their Doctoral programmes. Another theme that emerged was related to social integration and the student community and the students highlighted the importance of social interactions as part of the Doctoral experience.

In a South African study that investigated completion rates for postgraduates and looked at students' needs and experiences of postgraduate studies, responses were obtained from students who were currently enrolled, had just graduated and those who had suspended their studies. They highlighted a number of reasons for success as well as difficulties during their studies. Students who successfully completed their studies, reported having positive relations and interactions with faculty members, their supervisor and peers during their programme. They did, however, report that they found difficulties with research methodology (e.g., preparation of a title, designing the research project, managing their data and doing the data analysis). Students also reported that they found managing time, obtaining writing skills, using computer programmes and receiving and interpreting feedback as some of their biggest challenges. The importance of supervisor assistance in terms of guidance, monitoring progress and advice about research methods was also mentioned. They also highly rated the importance of the supervisor needing to be able to have sufficient expertise in order to give quality input, assess and evaluate the students' progress. Additionally, supervisors giving emotional support, encouragement and counseling played a

positive role. Furthermore, qualitative themes that were related to the most difficult features of their studies include personal factors such as being insecure and afraid during the process and balancing academic and personal roles. For those who suspended their studies, academic factors included that there was too much theory and they did not have enough interest in the field of study. The difficulties that related to various research skills was another theme, which emerged. The main reasons students ended their studies included pressure at work, feeling incompetent, feeling isolated and lack of achievement of what they had planned to learn. On the other hand, factors that contributed to students' success in their studies included being motivated, working hard, having the support of significant others, their supervisor and their institutions (Albertyn et al., 2008).

In a different study, some characteristics of successful research Masters students at a South African University have been highlighted. Under their supervisor's intensive guidance, they were able to produce more research reports due to encouragement, confidence building and being set shorter, manageable deadlines. They also responded positively under individual and group emotional support programmes that were well-designed and showed them care. Teamwork helped to motivate them when working towards publications. They also benefitted from having access to other recently graduated Master's and Doctoral students' dissertations as well as having their own work displayed. Lastly, these research students benefitted from supervision that demonstrated a clear track record of successful students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Rochford, 2003)

Postgraduate psychology. Postgraduate study in the US appears to be dominated by White students. For example, The American Psychological Association, using data from 476 US graduate departments of psychology report that the proportion of White students are far higher than Black students and other minorities. For example, in 2011, for all first year full-time Doctoral students in psychology professional school programmes, 80% were White. Only 10% were Black and the remainder were other minority groups. Across university psychology departments of first year Master's students, 80% were White and amongst Doctoral students 71% were White. Black Master's students only made up 6% of the proportion of students and for Doctoral studies they only made up 9% (Hart, Wicherski, & Kohout, 2011). These numbers

indicate that there are too few Black psychologists in the US (Williams, 2008) and the discipline generally attracts more women than it does men (Smith, 2004).

Similarly in South Africa, psychology postgraduate study programmes are dominated by females in general and specifically by White females. This is also the case for those working professionally as psychologists. Women also comprise the largest proportion of academics in psychology, except in the higher academic positions such as professorships (Skinner & Louw, 2009).

Issues that have been raised in relation to the low numbers of Black psychologists include whether White psychologists and even Black trained psychologists in South Africa, especially those who work in Black communities, are able to relate to the individuals in these communities they work in. White psychologists may not have enough knowledge about Black cultural discourses or practices and thus may not be able to offer help that is rounded. They also lack knowledge related to traditional and spiritual healing beliefs and thus neglect to consider this importance of these issues in African perceptions of the world and meaning making (Ruane, 2006, 2010).

Postgraduate admission into professional psychology programmes. In South Africa, progression to postgraduate study in psychology may be challenging. Gaining entrance into clinical psychology professional training programmes is notoriously difficult in that admission is limited to only a few students per year, and selection criteria are fairly strict. For example, the Master's in Clinical Psychology programme at the UCT limits its annual intake to 6-8 students. Selection criteria include, from the programme's side, racial equity and transformation requirements, and from the applicant's side, personal experiences and growth, experience within the relevant field, and good academic standing (D. Kaminer, personal communication, February 5, 2010).

Selection criteria for Master's in Neuropsychology training programmes are also strict. For example, those programmes at UCT and the University of the Witwatersrand require that applicants obtain at least a 70% Honours GPA. Entrance into Research Psychology programmes at the abovementioned universities also require that applicants achieve a 70% Honours GPA or be admitted with the approval

of a supervisor (University of Cape Town [UCT], 2012; University of the Witwatersrand, 2012).

Selection criteria are similarly strict at universities abroad. For example, Duke University states on their psychology graduate school admission page, "Each year we receive between 250 and 300 completed applications for admission to our clinical psychology program. Each year the department admits 4-7 clinical graduate students, which will result in 30-40 students being advised by our faculty at one time" (Duke University [Duke], 2012). Yale University states on their admission page, "Applicants should realize that the total number of applicants is many times larger than the number that can be admitted, so the competition for admission is very keen. Potential applicants for the Clinical Psychology program should be advised that admission to that program is especially competitive and that in recent years only about four out of approximately three hundred and sixty applicants have gained admission to the program" (Yale University [Yale], 2012).

To practice professionally as a clinical psychologist in South Africa, students are required to complete a Master's coursework and practical training in clinical psychology. Thereafter a one year internship at a public health facility must be completed as well as a community service year at a public health facility. Students then write a Professional Board for Psychology exam and thereafter they can register as a clinical psychologist. Currently there is no registration category for neuropsychologists in South Africa. (Health Professionals Council of South Africa, 2012; University of Cape Town [UCT], 2012). The university of Cape Town currently offers the following postgraduate courses: an MA in Clincial psychology (this includes coursework and a practical training toward professional registration), an MA in Psychological Research (students complete further coursework and a dissertation and it is only open to students who did their Honours at UCT), an MA in Neuropsychology (by coursework and dissertation), a Masters in Social Science in Psychology (by dissertation only) and a PhD in Psychology (by dissertation only).

Research Aims of the Present Study

Research suggests that South Africa produces too few Doctoral graduates every year compared to both developed and developing nations. This situation is problematic, as

economies need highly educated to contribute to research and innovation. There are also not enough postgraduates replacing ageing academics to supervise and produce more knowledge in various fields of study. There are also not enough Black graduates or female graduates, which suggests that the profile of higher education has not changed rapidly enough since the days of Apartheid (Council on Higher Education, 2009).

The literature on studies conducted abroad and in South Africa has highlighted a number of factors or issues playing a role in whether or not students enrol in postgraduate studies after their undergraduate studies. It is has also highlighted factors contributing to their success. These have included the role played by gender, race, age, marital status, high school education, socioeconomic factors as well as institutional and supervisory interactions.

There is paucity in the literature of studies conducted abroad (O' Donnell et al., 2009) and especially in South Africa regarding progression to postgraduate studies. As the Chief Executive Officer of the Council of Higher Education, Cheryl De La Rey suggests (regarding educational statistical publications), "Quantitative data provides an important but partial view. Much more needs to be done for us to gain a better understanding of postgraduate education in South Africa - the obstacles, the challenges and the success stories" (Council of Higher Education, 2009, p. 8).

Thus the aims of this research report were to explore and shed some light on the demographic and academic characteristics of a cohort of Honours Psychology students at the University of Cape Town. The aim was also to explore the reasons these students enrolled or did not enrol in postgraduate programmes after completing Honours. The view is that by trying to understand these characteristics better and the reasons behind decisions to pursue higher degree programmes, university departments and planning departments can make choices about how to attract postgraduate students. They can also understand where these students need assistance in order to be successful and to graduate.

Chapter Two: Methods

Study Design and Setting

This research took the form of a relational exploratory study. The study took place at the University of Cape Town, in the Department of Psychology.

Sample Characteristics

The sample consisted of 133 individuals who were enrolled in the Honours in Psychology programme at UCT during the period 2005 to 2010. Of the participants, 21 were male and 112 were female. Although most (n = 52) of the participants were 22 years old, 78% (n = 104) were between 21 and 24 years of age. The mean age was 24.16 years (SD = 5.18). Table 4 shows the undergraduate attendance breakdown of the participants. More detailed information regarding participants' demographic information can be viewed in the Results chapter.

Table 4.

Undergraduate Universities Attended

University	Frequency	%
UCT	91	68.4
UNISA	10	7.5
WITS	9	6.8
Stellenbosch	8	6.0
UJ	2	1.5
UKZN	4	3.0
Rhodes	3	2.3
UP	3	2.3
UWC	2	1.5
Foreign	1	0.8

Sampling Procedure

The target population for this study was students who had successfully completed an Honours degree in Psychology at the University of Cape Town over the period 2005-2009. This population was selected for convenience, due to time constraints within

the research. The population also comprised a substantial number of students (172) whose demographic and academic information was readily and easily available to use. When it was realized that there was an insufficient number of students in this population with complete, available data, an additional 43 students who completed their Honours in Psychology at the University of Cape Town in 2010 were added to the target population. This made the total in the target population 215 students.

Personal record files, which are housed in the Department of Psychology's administrative office, were used in order to obtain contact details (email addresses and telephone numbers) for the 215 students in the target population. The students were then sent, via email, a copy of a semi-structured qualitative questionnaire enquiring amongst other things if they registered for a postgraduate degree after completing Honours. The Department of Psychology's administrative office provided the names of students in the target population who registered for postgraduate Master's or PhDs in Psychology after doing Honours. Thereafter, the University of Cape Town Admissions Office and Institutional Planning Unit was contacted in order to find out if any of the individuals in the target population registered for a postgraduate degree programme at the University of Cape Town, but in other degree programmes.

Eighty-six participants replied to the emailed qualitative questionnaire. Hence, the response rate was 40%. Answers, regarding registration for postgraduate degrees, were obtained for a further 47 students from the Department of Psychology's administrative office at the University of Cape Town Institutional Planning Unit. The final sample of 133 students were then selected to make up the research sample because they provided data or data was provided for them with regard to the main variable of interest (i.e., did/did not register for a postgraduate degree after completing Honours). There was also complete data available about their demographic variables of interest.

Sources of Quantitative Data

The first source of quantitative data was those students' personal record files, which are housed in the Department of Psychology's administrative office. From those files, I collected information regarding the past Honours students' race, gender, marital status, age, tertiary institution they completed their undergraduate degree at and

whether they attended a public or private high school. I also obtained academic records for the Honours year. Any demographic or academic information that was unobtainable from the first data source was obtained from obtained from a second and third source of data, the University of Cape Town Institutional Planning Unit and the University of Cape Town Admissions Office.

Qualitative Data

As mentioned above, a questionnaire was emailed to all the past Honours students. This semi-structured instrument, which is reproduced in the Appendix, gathered qualitative data from participants as to reasons for currently or in the past pursuing/not pursuing a postgraduate degree, intent to pursue/not pursue such a degree in the future, and reasons for the latter decision. This provided the fourth source of data for the study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Cape Town's Department of Psychology. With regard to informed consent, a consent document was attached to the email sent to participants. This document informed participants about the purpose of the study, and noted that their participation was voluntary. Participants were invited to ask further questions about the study and were told that they could contact me if they wished to with questions regarding the study.

With regard to confidentiality, the consent form informed participants that their demographic and contact information, and their responses to the questionnaire, would be stored in limited-access computers and that only the principal investigator, the principal investigator's supervisor, and the relevant university examination and ethics authorities would have access to that information. Their identifying information would also not be associated with their demographic information or their questionnaire answers when reporting results.

Outcome Variables: Demographics and academics

The variables of interest in this study included: *gender* (male or female); *race* (White, Black African, Coloured, Indian, and Asian (referring to individuals who were born in

East or South East Asia or who originate from countries in this part of Asia); age at time of enrollment in Honours; marital status at the time of enrollment in Honours, type of high school matriculated from (public or private); type of tertiary institution graduated from for undergraduate studies at; Honours grade point average (GPA) and whether or not the individual enrolled in postgraduate study (MA or PhD) after completing Honours.

With regard to age, there was a limitation in the study in that only age at the time of enrollment was obtainable. Ages at time of enrollment in postgraduate studies were not obtainable due to lack of this data being fully available from data sources. Thus, an age estimate was calculated for those who replied to the qualitative questionnaire stating that they enrolled in postgraduate studies after Honours. Refer to the Results section for details of this calculation.

It should be noted that the University of Cape Town breaks down GPA into a number of categories. These include: a *first* class pass (i.e., 75%-130%), an *upper second* pass (70%-74%), a *lower second* pass (60%-69%), a *third* class pass (50%-59%) and a *fail* which is 49% and below. Because there were no GPAs below a *lower second*, only three categories were used for the purpose of statistical analysis.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive and frequency statistical analysis. The purpose of performing descriptive and frequency analysis on the data gathered using the above means was to explore, in a 6-year cohort of UCT Psychology Honours students, which demographic and academic variables characterize the sample.

Inferential statistics. Chi-square tests were used in order to explore the relationships between academic and demographic variables (gender, race, marital status at the time of enrollment in Honours, type of high school matriculated from, type of tertiary institution graduated from undergraduate studies) and continuing on to pursue MA and PhD degrees or not. The chi-square was chosen due to the demographic and academic variables, being categorical (Field, 2009). Whether or not the individual had registered for an MA or a PhD degree after completing the Honours year was a

dichotomous variable and so were many of the other demographic variables except race. Honours GPA also had more than two categories. Age was a continuous variable. Estimates of effect size estimate were also calculated where appropriate. Although Chi-square tests were done, the Fisher's exact test statistic was used because the sample was quite small. It was also found that the data violated the assumption of the chi-square test, which is that the expected frequencies within each data cell should not be less than 5 (Field, 2009). Thus both chi-squares and Fisher's tests will be presented in the Results chapter. Adjusted standardized residuals were calculated where appropriate.

The analysis proceeded across several steps, which are outlined in more detail in the results section. All analyses were conducted using the SPSS 20 software package. The threshold for statistical significance was set at $\alpha = .05$.

Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis was conducted in order to gain a richer understanding of some of the personal reasons behind decisions to undertake postgraduate study or not in the sample of participants.

The responses were first examined for thematic content and a number of response categories were generated for each of the three questionnaire items (i.e., reasons for currently or in the past pursuing or not pursuing a postgraduate degree, intent to pursue/not pursue such a degree in the future, and reasons for the latter decision. Two additional independent raters coded a random set of the responses and discussed the content in order to refine the coding categories and any discrepancies were considered and reconciled (respondents were anonymous to these raters and answers were not linked to participants identities). The examined responses were placed within each category/ theme and the themes were counted, ordered, and mentioned according to the frequency within which they occurred (from most to least frequently). No new themes were created once it was observed that no new thematic content emerged from the responses. This was done in order to gain a sense of what the most frequently stated (and most relevant) personal reasons were that underlie decisions to pursue or not pursue postgraduate studies for the respondents.

Specific Purpose of Analyses

The specific purposes of the quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted were to answer the following quantitative and qualitative research questions and hypotheses:

Quantitative questions

(a) What are the demographic and academic characteristics of a cohort of Psychology Honours students who enrolled in postgraduate study or did not enroll in postgraduate study?

(b) Hypothesis 1: Gender is associated with enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate study.

(c) Hypothesis 2: Race is associated with enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate study.

(d) Hypothesis 3: Academic performance is associated with enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate study.

Qualitative questions

(a) What were participants' reasons and motivations for enrolling in postgraduate degree programmes after Honours?

(b) What were participants' reasons and motivations for deciding not to enroll in postgraduate degree programmes after Honours?

Chapter Three: Results

This chapter outlines the results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses that were conducted in order to answer the following research questions, as well as to investigate the following:

(a) The quantitative analysis investigated the demographic and academic characteristics of a cohort of Psychology Honours students who enrolled in postgraduate study or did not enroll in postgraduate study. Based on literature, the following hypotheses were derived:
Hypothesis 1: Gender is associated with enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate study.
Hypothesis 2: Race is associated with enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate study.
Hypothesis 3: Honours performance is associated with enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate study.

(b) The qualitative analysis investigated what participants' reasons were for enrolling or deciding not to enroll in postgraduate degree programmes after Honours.

Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics and frequency distributions were used in order to examine the demographic and academic characteristics of a cohort of Psychology Honours students who enrolled in postgraduate study or did not enroll in postgraduate study.

Detailed descriptive statistics of participants' age at enrollment in Honours, as well as Honours GPA including means and standard deviations, can be found in Table 5. The youngest participant in the study was 20 years old and the oldest was 48 years old. The average age at Honours enrollment for participants over a 6-year period was 24.16 years. Most participants were 22 years old. As was briefly mentioned in the Methods section, an age estimate was calculated for those who replied to the qualitative questionnaire stating that they enrolled in postgraduate studies after Honours. A total of 54 participants disclosed the year in which they enrolled in

postgraduate studies. Their age at enrollment in postgraduate studies was calculated by adding the number of years between enrolling in Honours and enrolling in postgraduate to their age at Honours enrollment. An average age was obtained for these 54 participants. The average age of enrollment in postgraduate studies was 25.8 years. The CHE (2009) reported that the typical MA student takes 3 years to graduate. Roughly speaking, using the average age of 25.8 years and adding 3 years, an individual in this limited number of participants who progresses to an MA would graduate at about 28.8 years.

The average Honours GPA was 72.41 (i.e., an upper second) with the highest GPA being 86 (i.e., a first) and the lowest 60 (i.e., a lower second).

Table 5.

Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	*M*	*SD*	Minimum	Maximum
Age at enrollment in honours	133	24.16	5.18	20	48
Honours GPA	133	72.41	4.84	60	86

Frequency distributions. To explore the demographic characteristics of the sample, frequency distributions and percentages of each individual variable (including the categories within the variable) are displayed in Table 6.

Therafter, crosstabulations of individual and combined variables are presented in Tables 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 14, 15, 16 and 17.

Table 6.

Frequency Distribution of Each Variable

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	21	15.8
Female	112	84.2
Race		
White	105	78.9
Black African	9	6.8
Coloured	12	9
Indian	5	3.8
Asian	2	1.5
Marital status		
Married	8	6
Single	125	94
High school matriculated from		
Public	71	53.4.
Private	62	46.6
Tertiary institution completed undergraduate		
HAI	131	98.5
HDI	2	1.5
Honours GPA		
First pass	47	35.3
Upper second pass	54	40.6
Lower second pass	32	24.1
Enrolled in postgraduate study		
Yes	118	88.7
No	15	11.3

Table 7. shows the break down of gender and race. White females comprised the largest proportion 68.4%, (n = 91) of participants in this sample.

Table 7.

Crosstabulations of Gender According to Race

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
White Male	14	10.5
White Female	91	68.4
Black African Male	4	3
Black African Female	5	3.8
Coloured Male	1	0.8
Coloured Female	11	8.3
Indian Male	2	1.5
Indian Female	3	2.3
Asian Female	2	1.5

As displayed in Table 8. Single females made up the largest proportion 78.2.%, (n = 104) of participants in the sample.

Table 8.

Frequency Distribution of Gender According to Marital Status

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Married Male	0	0
Married Female	8	6
Single Male	21	15.8
Single Female	104	78.2

There were roughly similar proportions of White participants who matriculated from public high schools, 52.4% (n = 55) and private high schools, 47.6% (n = 50). Amongst the few Black African participants, most, 77.8% (n = 7)) matriculated from private high schools than public high schools, 22.2% (n = 2). All the Asian participants in the sample matriculated from public schools. This can be viewed in Table 9.

Table 9.

Frequency Distribution of Race According to High School

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	% Race
White at public school	55	41.4	52.4
White at private school	50	37.6	47.6
Black African at public school	2	1.5	22.2
Black African at private school	7	5.3	77.8
Coloured at public school	9	6.8	75.0
Coloured at private school	3	2.3	25.0
Indian at public school	3	2.3	60.0
Indian at private school	2	1.5	40.0
Asian at public school	2	1.5	100.0
Asian at private school	0	0.0	0.0

Variables according to postgraduate enrollment. The following frequency tables present each variable according to postgraduate enrollment.

Table 10. shows that out of all the male and female participants in the study, most enrolled in postgraduate studies.

Table 10.

Gender According to Postgraduate Enrollment

	Postgraduate Enrolment					
	Frequency		% Total Participants		% Within Gender	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Gender						
Male	20	1	15	0.8	95.2	4.8
Female	98	14	73.7	10.5	87.5	12.5

Table 11.

Race According to Postgraduate Study Enrolment

Postgraduate Enrolment						
	Frequency		% Total Participants		% Within Race	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Race						
White	91	14	68.4	10.5	86.7	13.3
Black African	9	0	6.8	0	100	0
Coloured	11	1	8.3	0.8	91.7	8.3
Indian	5	0	3.8	0	100	0
Asian	2	0	1.5	0	100	0

Table 11. shows that the majority of those who enrolled in postgraduate programmes after Honours were White, 68.4% (n = 91).

As shown in Table 12. the majority, 82.7% (n = 110) of those enrolled in postgraduate programmes were unmarried. Of the married participants, everyone enrolled in postgraduate studies. Of the single participants, most enrolled in postgraduate studies.

Table 12.

Marital Status According to Postgraduate Study Enrollment

	Postgraduate Enrolment					
	Frequency		% Total Participants		% Within Marital Status	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Marital status						
Married	8	0	6	0	100	0
Single	110	15	82.7	11.3	88	12

Of all those who enrolled for postgraduate study, most 46.6% (n = 62) matriculated from public schools, but the proportion was fairly similar to those who matriculated from private schools, 42.1% (n = 56).

Table 13.

Type High School According to Postgraduate Study Enrollment

	Postgraduate Enrolment					
	Frequency		% Total Participants		% Within High School	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Type of high school						
Public	62	9	46.6	6.8	83.7	12.7
Private	56	6	42.1	4.5	90.3	9.7

A large proportion, 87.2% (n = 116) of participants who enrolled in postgraduate programmes, graduated from historically advantaged tertiary institutions. All of those participants who graduated from historically disadvantaged institutions enrolled in postgraduate programme. This is shown in Table 14.

Table 14.

Type University According to Postgraduate Study Enrollment

	Postgraduate Enrolment					
	Frequency		% Total Participants		% Within University	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Type University						
HAI	116	15	87.2	11.3	88.5	11.5
HDI	2	0	1.5	0	100	0

As is evident in Table 15. participants who achieved a *first* overall pass made up the majority, 33.8% (n = 45) of those who enrolled in postgraduate study.

Table 15.

Honours GPA According to Postgraduate Study Enrollment

	Postgraduate Enrolment					
	Frequency		% Total Participants		% Within Hons GPA	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Honours GPA						
First	45	2	33.8	1.5	95.7	4.3
Upper second	42	12	31.6	9	77.8	22.2
Lower 2nd	31	1	23.3	0.8	96.9	3.1

Crosstabulations of gender, race and marital status according to postgraduate enrollment. The frequency distributions of crosstabulations of gender and race can be found in Table 16. Crosstabulations of gender and marital status are shown in Table 17.

White females comprised the majority of all postgraduate enrollments. This is presented in Table 16.

Table 16.

Gender by Race According to Postgraduate Study Enrollment

	Postgraduate Enrollment					
	Frequency		% within Total		% within Gender by Race	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Race by gender						
White Male	13	1	9.8	0.8	92.9	7.1
White Female	78	13	58.6	9.8	85.7	14.3
Black African Male	4	0	3.0	0	100	0
Black African Female	5	0	3.8	0	100	0
Coloured Male	1	0	0.8	0	100	0
Coloured Female	10	1	7.5	0.8	91	9
Indian Male	2	0	1.5	0	100	0
Indian Female	3	0	2.3	0	100	0
Asian Female	2	0	1.5	0	100	0

Single females made up the largest proportion of all those who enrolled in postgraduate studies. This can be seen in Table 17.

Table 17.

Gender and Marital Status According to Postgraduate Enrolment

	Postgraduate Enrolment					
	Frequency		% Total		% Gender by Marital Status	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Marital status by gender						
Married Male	0	0	0	0	0	0
Single Male	20	1	15	0.8	95.2	4.8
Married Female	8	0	6	0	100	0
Single Female	90	14	67.7	10.5	86.5	13.5

Inferential statistics. Chi-squares tests and Fisher's Exact tests were conducted in order to investigate the three afore-mentioned hypotheses. A chi-square analysis and Fisher's Exact Test for each hypothesis follows.

Hypothesis 1: Gender is associated with enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate study. There was no significant association between participants' gender and whether or not they enrolled in postgraduate studies $X^2(1) = 1.058$, $p > .05$. The Fisher's Exact test ($p = .464$) also indicated no significant relationship between participants' gender and whether or not they enrolled in postgraduate studies. Chi-square results are presented in Table 18.

Table 18.

Chi-Square Test Between Gender and Postgraduate Enrollment

	X^2	Df	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Gender*Postgraduate enrollment	1.058*	1	.464

* $p < .05$

Hypothesis 2: Race is associated with enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate study. There was no significant association between participants' race and whether or not they enrolled in postgraduate studies $X^2(1) = 2.581$, $p >05$. The Fisher's Exact test ($p = .890$) also indicated no significant relationship between participants' race and whether or not they enrolled in postgraduate studies. Chi-square results can be seen in Table 19.

Table 19.

Chi-Square Test Between Race and Postgraduate Enrollment

	X^2	Df	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Race*Postgraduate enrollment	2.581*	1	.596

* $p < .05$

Hypothesis 3: Honours performance (i.e., GPA) is associated with enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate study. There was a significant association between participants' Honours three GPA categories (i.e., achieving a First, Upper Second)

and whether or not they enrolled in postgraduate studies $X^2(1) = 10.906$, $p < .05$. The Fisher's Exact test ($p = .006$) also indicated a significant relationship between participants' Honours GPA and whether or not they enrolled in postgraduate studies. Although there is a significant association between the variables, there is a small effect size (Cramer's $V = 0.28$). This suggests that the strength of the association is weak (Field, 2009). These results can be seen in Table 20.

Table 20.

*Chi-Square Test Between Three Honours GPA Categories and Postgraduate Enrollmen*t

	X^2	Df	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
3 Honours GPA Categories*Postgraduate enrollment	10.906	1	.004

* $p < .05$

Furthermore, adjusted standardized residuals were calculated in order to see where the significant association between the three Honours GPA categories lies. The results suggest that obtaining an *Upper Second* Honours GPA, significantly reduces the chance that an individual will progress to postgraduate studies, $z = 3.30$, $p < .001$.

Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis. Themes that emerged from participants' responses to the questionnaire are presented in Table 21 and Table 22 in order of the number of times they were mentioned by participants. Some participants mentioned themes that fit in to more than one category, thus number of themes do not add up to the total number (n =101) of questionnaires that were completed.

Table 21.

Reasons For Enrolling in Postgraduate Studies

Reason	Frequency
Necessary step toward a professional qualification	39
Enjoyment of academia & supervisor encouragement	17
Professional recognition	8
Make more attractive for the job market	8
Funding was a draw card	6
Intention to pursue a career in academia	2
Value of education (e.g., raising ses)	2
Parents are academics	1
Opportunity to study without major commitments	1

Participants mentioned most frequently that they enrolled in postgraduate studies because it was a necessary step in order to pursue a professional or vocational qualification (e.g., clinical psychology). Some participants stated that they desired professional recognition within their study field, which they perceived was attainable through doing a postgraduate degree (third most frequent). Of those who stated that they enrolled in postgraduate studies, 57 enrolled in psychology courses. Of those, 49 stated that they enrolled in psychology professional path courses. These included Clinical Psychology, Neuropsychology by Coursework, Counselling Psychology, Educational Psychology, Research Psychology and Organisational Psychology.

The second most frequently mentioned theme was the enjoyment of being involved in research and academia. As part of this theme, participants mentioned that encouragement from a supervisor influenced their decisions to further their studies after Honours. Many felt that doing a postgraduate degree would make them more sought after in the job market. For many participants, the availability of funding was a significant motivator for enrolling in postgraduate studies.

Themes occurring less frequently were the intention to pursue an academic career was mentioned by a small few. The value of education as a tool to be able to change one's socioeconomic standing was mentioned by a small number as well.

The themes that occurred the least frequently was that having few serious commitments contributed to decisions to pursue postgraduate study. In addition, one participant stated that pursuing postgraduate studies was a natural step as his parents were academics

The most frequently mentioned reason for not enrolling in postgraduate study was uncertainty about which career path to follow and requiring time after Honours to explore this. The second most frequently mentioned theme was being declined a place in the programme of choice. Of those that mentioned this theme, all were specifically declined places in a Clinical Psychology MA training programme. Gaining work experience rather than academic learning was mentioned with equal frequency. For some, financial issues and a dislike of doing research influenced their decisions not to enroll in postgraduate studies. These themes and frequencies are displayed in Table 22.

Table 22.

Reasons For Not Enrolling in Postgraduate Studies

Reason	Frequency
Declined a place in chosen programme	7
Uncertain about career path & needed time to decide	5
Gain work experience rather than academic	5
Financial issues played a role	3
Dislike of research	2

Themes that emerged are described and some examples given under the three question item headings in the qualitative questionnaire. The headings include: *reasons for pursuing a postgraduate degree*, *reasons for not pursuing a postgraduate degree* and *reasons for intending to pursue a postgraduate degree in the future*.

Reasons for pursuing a postgraduate degree

a) A Master's or PhD is a necessary step toward obtaining a professional or vocational qualification

"My choice of career was to become a clinical psychologist and this is the degree which one needs to register and practice in this field".

"My goal was always to complete my masters, to further my education and to obtain a vocational degree. Clinical Psychology fascinated me from a personal and intellectual perspective".

"Two factors inspired my decision to enroll for my Masters degree: firstly, I decided to enroll for my Masters as this was a requirement for specializing in clinical neuropsychology. Secondly, I enrolled because I was interested in designing and implementing a longitudinal research study. I believed the Masters program would give me the time and recourses to pursue such a study".

"Yes, I enrolled for a Masters in Community Counselling (Psychology) at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2010. MA by coursework and thesis is a requirement to practice in South Africa – a means to an end in a degree that I really liked".

b) Pursuing a postgraduate degree due to enjoyment of research and academia as well as supervisor support/encouragement

"Mainly I was/am passionate about the subjects of my research. I also enjoy research and it cannot be done adequately without access to a library so the bottom line is – you want to do research you need to be affiliated to a university. Secondly, an honours degree on its own is pretty worthless".

"There are three main factors that lead to my decision to continue with postgraduate studies. Firstly, I really enjoy academia, research and writing

and wanted to continue with academia for this intrinsic reason. I love reading about new fields, theorizing, discussing and debating".

"Initially MA motivation was all about (1) I had decided to do this, and (2) I wanted to be a neuropsychologist. However now I love the research niche that I am in, I love tutoring, and I would like to be a lecturer. I don't want to miss the opportunity to work with my fellow colleagues in this field".

"Yes. Since my Honours degree in Psychology at the University of Cape Town I have completed a Masters degree in psychological research at the University of Cape Town (2007/2008). I am currently in the process of doing my doctorate in psychology at the University of Cape Town. The decision to do my Masters was motivated by my supervisor and my interest that I had developed in the field of gender-based violence. Motivation to embark of my PhD was due to my interest in the field and my contact and volunteer work I had established with a locally run action group for East African refugees and South African women".

c) A Master's or PhD will provide professional recognition in my relevant field of study

"Doing neuropsychology and need a PhD to be taken seriously in the field. I did not want to be limited in terms of promotion and job opportunities later in my career by not having a PhD".

"I wanted to expand my social science academic base for career purposes as well. After doing my Honours, I worked for a year and a half with various NGO's and social projects (mostly with refugees). It's a career I would like to pursue and I knew that if I wanted to work seriously in policy and development, I would need a postgraduate degree in the broader Social Sciences".

d) Doing an MA/ PhD would make one more, attractive or sought after in the job market and there are limited work opportunities if one only has an undergraduate degree

"The Honours course gave me a sound skill basis, but I felt that my skills were too general and lacking in expertise in any specific area. I wanted to build on my research skill set and attain new ones. The best way to do this was to continue with a Masters. With regards to the job market, I felt that the Honours course was a stepping-stone towards getting my desired employment, but not enough. I felt that I stood a better chance if I had a higher degree".

"When I completed my honours degree, I didn't feel that this degree alone was sufficient to get a good and well-paid job".

"I thought it would help in finding a job in the Psychology field if I had more than an honours degree. I was also interested in the larger project that I was working on and there were job opportunities and work experience that went with it".

e) The availability of funding as an important motivating factor when deciding to do a Master's or a PhD

"I wanted to further my research career. I was working on a project, which was part of a larger study and there was sufficient funding, resources and support for me to continue this project for my MA. I then upgraded to PhD for similar reasons. Both my supervisors were supportive of this decision and agreed to supervise my PhD. I am interested in the project I am working for and one of my supervisors has funding for the project which has been a huge benefit, not only personally but also for the running costs of the project".

"I was being financially sponsored by the Postgraduate funding office at UCT. It would have been awful not to study given that I was so fortunate to have been sponsored".

f) Parents did postgraduate studies or are involved in academia

"I love academia and will definitely be going for a terminal degree in the near future. I think this is because both my parents have gone through postgraduate education and have worked at academic institutions since before I was born. So the value of education and continued learning is a very important one to me".

g) An intention to pursue a career in academia

"Yes, I have enrolled in the MA Psychological Research degree with the Neuropsychology coursework. I am handing in on 11 Feb, and would like to enroll in PhD. Initially MA motivation was all about (1) I had decided to do this, and (2) I wanted to be a neuropsychologist. However now I love the research niche that I am in, I love tutoring, and I would like to be a lecturer. I don't want to miss the opportunity to work with my fellow colleagues in this field".

"I enjoy research, and could pursue academia as a possible career, so enjoy the opportunity to study further. I thoroughly enjoyed the content and balance of the particular course and what it offered, and was keen to learn more and enhance my expertise in the particular field".

h) Valuing education as a means of empowerment and raising self/others' socioeconomic situation

"Yes I have enrolled at UCT for a Master in Social Science in Psychology I grew up in Athlone, which is situated in the Cape flats in Cape Town. As a female on the Cape flats the odds of making it out of there and accomplishing something with your life are not too good. These are the circumstances that have motivated me too study. I have every intention of completing a PhD after finishing Masters because I believe that education is the only way to empower yourself and improve your circumstances (i.e., financial, social). As a female it is even more important that you have an education to secure your freedom

and independence. To study is a privilege, so as long as I am able to do so I will take full advantage of the opportunity that so many people who have a similar background to mine are not able to for various reasons. In addition, I want to change my community and have a positive influence and I can only accomplish this by studying further".

i) It was a good opportunity to register for an MA/ PhD while not having serious commitments and having the freedom to do so

"*Having no current commitments preventing me from studying further".*

Reasons for not pursuing a postgraduate degree

a) There was uncertainty about which career path to follow and needed time to decide which one to pursue

"I did not register for a master's degree after completing my Honours degree as I felt that I was not yet certain what kind of field I wanted to specialize in. None of the fields of research that were being undertaken by academics in my department really struck a chord with me and I didn't want to study something that I wasn't passionate about. I felt like the wisest decision was for me to mature and wait and see what kind of person I would become before spending so much money on a MA. I also wanted to save some money to pay for the degree".

"I wanted to travel and work overseas for a bit. I went into my Bachelors degree immediately after school and after 4 years of straight studying, I needed a break. I needed a bit space to get some perspective, to make sure, was this what I really wanted to do for the rest of my life? Taking that next step to studying MA was quite a big decision for me, I needed to be absolutely certain. But never having worked in any other proper job before, I felt like I needed to experience it, and be in a different place, live new experiences".

b) Being declined a place in a chosen programme

"I applied for an MA in Clinical Psychology at UCT and was declined. I knew that I could not work in the field with only an Honours in Psychology (even though it is four years of work). I wish to work in an institutional setting and I feel that being a qualified clinical psychologist would be the best route to get there. After being declined I did not pursue the idea further as I realized that I was too young and inexperienced for any masters program at any university".

"I did not enroll for a Master's degree because I did not receive acceptance to complete a MA in clinical psychology at UCT when I applied for 2009. At that stage I was not interested in further research studies in Psychology. I wanted to gain practical work experience and financial security".

c) A desire to gain more work experience rather than academic experience

"For my purposes (teaching and training) my psychology honors and PGCE will be sufficient. I would rather actively be out there teaching and training and not studying. Any further studying would either be directly linked to the work I was doing, probably in order to write up any interesting findings as a thesis. Or I would study overseas in a completely different field (like finance), in order to have a different experience".

"After Psychology Honours I decided to study Organisational Psychology Honours as my career interests changed to the corporate field. However, after that Honours year, I decided not to enroll in a MA degree because I felt ready to enter the world of work after 5 years of studies (3-year BA and 2 year x Honours), excessive studies (beyond Honours level) without actual work experience decreased a students ability to enter the job market (something I have discovered while working for more than 2 years in the recruitment industry). Interestingly, with increasing education, a student's employability increases to a specific point, such as Honours level, but decreases again if this is not balanced with relevant work experience".

d) Financial issues played a role in reasons for not pursuing postgraduate studies

"Just do not have the finances to support studies and living, also too lazy to see myself studying at the moment".

"Finances and lack of experience, knowing that it would negatively affect the chances of me being accepted as the Masters degree in Psychology is very hard to get into".

e) A dislike of doing research

"I don't enjoy working completely on my own; didn't want to be poor for another 2 years; don't enjoy some aspects of research".

"After the completion of my Honours degree, I realized that I did not want to go into research and, therefore, did not apply to do an MA".

Reasons for intending to pursue a postgraduate degree in the future. Only four participants stated reasons for intending to pursue a postgraduate degree in the future, but these reasons did not present anything new compared to those who had enrolled. The theme, which they all mentioned was that a postgraduate degree is a necessary step toward obtaining a professional or vocational qualification.

"I would like to learn more about child development, to have a Masters degree so that I can open up a practice as a Psychologist one day, to have greater credibility for the work that I am doing anyway".

Summary of the Main Findings

Quantitative findings: Sample characteristics

Gender and race. The majority of the sample comprised females. In particular, White females made up the largest proportion of the participants.

Age. The average age of participants was about 24 years and most of the participants were 22 years old. The estimated average age of postgraduate enrollment using a limited number of participants was 25.8 years.

Marital status. A large majority of the participants were single.

Type of high school matriculated from. Most of the participants attended public high schools, however, a large proportion attended private high schools. Amongst White, Coloured, Indian and Asian participants, most matriculated from public high schools. Amongst Black African participants most matriculated from private schools.

*Undergraduate university. M*ost of the participants completed their undergraduate studies at HAIs. In fact, only two participants attended HDIs.

Honours GPA. Most participants achieved an *upper second* GPA, with the smallest proportion achieving a *lower second*. When the proportion of those who achieved a first and an upper second combine they make up a large proportion (75.9%) of the sample.

Postgraduate enrollment. Most of those who completed the Honours in Psychology course at UCT between 2005 and 2010 went on to enroll in postgraduate studies. The majority of all those who enrolled in postgraduate degrees were White female participants. Amongst White and Coloured participants, the majority enrolled. Amongst Black African, Indian and Asian participants, all students enrolled in postgraduate programmes. Amongst married participants all individuals enrolled and amongst single participants most enrolled.

Quantitative findings: Status of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. Gender was not associated with enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate study.

Hypothesis 2. Race was not associated with enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate study.

Hypothesis 3. Honours performance was significantly associated with enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate study, but this was a weak association. Obtaining a second-class Honours GPA significantly reduced the chance that an individual progressed to postgraduate studies.

Qualitative Findings

Reasons for enrolling in postgraduate studies. The most frequently mentioned reason for deciding to enroll was that a postgraduate degree was a necessary step toward professional qualification. Other most frequently mentioned themes included, the enjoyment of academia and supervisor support, the professional recognition a postgraduate degree affords one, that a postgraduate makes one more attractive to the job market and funding played a role in deciding to enroll in postgraduate studies.

Reasons for not enrolling in postgraduate studies. The most frequently mentioned reasons for not enrolling included being declined a place in the programme of choice (i.e., Clinical Psychology), needing time to decide on which academic or career path to follow and wanting to gain more work experience rather than academic experience.

Chapter Four: Discussion

Quantitative Analysis

Gender and race. The results show that in this particular cohort of Psychology Honours students, White females represented the majority. Black African, Coloured, Indian, and Asian students were considerably under-represented in this psychology programme. Males were also significantly under-represented. These findings mirror the demographic profiles of psychology students in the US as reported by (Hart, et al., 2011) and also in South Africa as reported by (Skinner & Louw, 2009). In the broader sense, the demographics also reflect the demographic profile in the Humanities and Social Science fields in South Africa, where females make up a large proportion. These findings, as has been suggested, may still reflect the South African education system legacy of Apartheid (Council for Higher Education, 2009).

Age and postgraduate enrollment. The findings showed that the average age of participants at Honours enrollment was 24.1 years and most of the participants were 22 years old. Considering that the course is only one year, the average age at which these Honours students would have graduated is much younger compared to the national average (i.e., 30 years) reported by the Council for Higher Education (CHE) (2009) for 2005.

As mentioned, an estimate for age at enrollment for postgraduate enrollment was used for a limited number (54) of students who indicated that they enrolled in postgraduate studies. For these individuals, based on the average age at enrollment (25.8 years) in Honours, and the typical 3 years (Council for Higher Education, 2009) taken to graduate from Masters, an individual will graduate at 28.8 years. This is a significantly younger than the national average age of MA graduates reported by the CHE (2009). Although this is only an estimate, it suggests a reasonable age for graduation within this particular group and cohort of students. Provided these students were not to take breaks between their studies, they could potentially contribute to their various career fields and knowledge production at a reasonably young age.

Marital status. A very low percentage (6%) of the research sample was married at the time the data was gathered. This could be because these students prefer to put off getting married in order to pay greater attention to successfully completing their studies. This is supported by Goldstein and Kenney (2001) who state that educated people, are getting married later in life and Ferreira (2003) who suggests that individuals may delay marriage as they fear that being married could negatively influence their performance in graduate school. In addition, the average age of these participants was 24.1 years and the majority were 22 years old. These are well below the South African national average ages for marriage for males (32 years) and females (29 years) reported by Statistics South Africa (2010).

Type of high school matriculated from. The finding that, of the few Black African participants in the sample, most matriculated from private schools reflects similar findings reported by Du Toit (2003) who suggests that the demographic profile of private schooling has changed since South Africa's democracy. Although as mentioned before, amongst White, Coloured, Indian and Asian participants, most matriculated from public high schools. There were fairly equal proportions of students who attended private schools and public schools and went on to postgraduate studies in this group of students. Although not a focus of this study and thus not statistically inferred, this suggests that the type of school they attended perhaps did not play that much of a role in determining whether they went on to enroll in postgraduate studies or not.

Undergraduate university. Most of the participants completed their undergraduate studies at HAIs, in fact only two participants attended HDIs. This may be explained by the fact that the majority of those enrolled in the Honours programme did their undergraduate studies at UCT and it may be a natural progression to attend the university one attended during one's undergraduate studies. It is possible that UCT may want to retain the students they already have in their system in the hope that they will continue on to higher degrees, which, ultimately as mentioned throughout this study, is the key to more Doctoral graduates (more knowledge contributors) in psychology at UCT and in South Africa.

Gender, race, and postgraduate studies. In terms of hypothesis 1., (i.e., *gender will be associated with enrolling or not in postgraduate studies*) the findings suggest that statistically there is no association between gender and enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate studies. These findings contradict statistics in the US (National Science Foundation, 2011), UK (Wales, 2012) and in South Africa (Council on Higher Education, 2009), which suggest an association between gender and postgraduate enrollment with men being more likely than women to progress to postgraduate study.

The findings with regard to hypothesis 2., (i.e., *race will be associated with enrolling or not in postgraduate studies*) shows that there was also no statistical significance between race and enrolling in postgraduate studies. This is in contradiction with demographic profiles shown by the Council for Higher Education (2009), which show that White students make up the majority of enrollments in postgraduate studies.

However, when one looks at the demographic profile of this particular cohort of students over the last six years, White students dominate in terms of going onto postgraduate studies. This would be the case when one takes into account that they made up the largest proportion of Psychology Honours students during this period. When going further and looking within each group, the majority of all White males, White females and Coloured females enrolled in postgraduate programmes after completing Honours in Psychology at UCT. All Black African male and female participants enrolled after Honours. So did all of the Coloured males and the Indian males and females. Both Asian females enrolled in postgraduate studies. Although not statistically speaking, these are positive findings as it appears that regardless of race, UCT Honours in Psychology students have tended to progress to postgraduate studies.

These findings show that the demographic picture of Psychology at UCT is largely dominated by White females. In terms of what it means for the profession in South Africa, once again raises questions about how predominantly white psychologists can relate to the members of Black communities within which they will be working in and which internships and community service are based (Ruane, 2006, 2010).

The picture is not entirely negative when considering that the Black participants in the study all went on to do postgraduate studies. As was highlighted by the Department of

Higher Education, (2001) universities need to address how to attract more Black postgraduate students who will then go on to become faculty members and roles models for other Black students. This may be particularly relevant in Psychology where as has been seen, Black students are the minority.

With regard to Hypothesis 3 (i.e., Honours GPA is significantly associated with enrollment or not in postgraduate studies), the finding that Honours' grade point average is significantly associated with enrollments in postgraduate studies, supports the third hypothesis of this study. This finding suggests that academic performance may be an important factor that determines the likelihood that students will enroll in postgraduate studies. As such, the present data are consistent with Swanepoel and Moll (2004), who stated that where admission into postgraduate programmes use selection criteria, academic performance is considered important. The majority 75.9%, (n = 101) of the students in this sample achieved a first or an upper-second class pass and can thus be considered as academically strong. Bearing in mind that universities have stringent admission criteria (e.g., see UCT and WITS psychology admission website pages), this was likely to be an important determining factors for why these students were able to gain entrance into their Masters or Doctoral programmes of choice. This finding is further supported by Mullen et al. (2003) and Wales (2012), who found that academic performance (especially obtaining a first-class pass) enhanced the likelihood that students would progress to postgraduate studies.

In this group of students, however, the finding that obtaining an upper second-class pass significantly reduces the chance of enrolling in postgraduate studies compared to obtaining a first-class pass suggests that academic excellence plays an important and possibly differentiating role in progression to postgraduate studies.

Qualitative Themes

Reasons for enrolling in postgraduate studies. The most frequently mentioned themes that *postgraduate was a necessary step to qualifying in a professional field* and that the desire for professional recognition can be looked at together. This may be understood in light of the fact these students that are/were psychology students. A

large number (49) of students who replied to the questionnaire had enrolled in psychology professional path courses. These included Clinical Psychology, Neuropsychology by coursework and research, Counselling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Organisational Psychology. This tells us that for psychology students in particular, postgraduate study is crucial to progressing to their professional career paths. This is also in line with official professional registration regulations in South Africa (Health Professional's Council of South Africa, 2012; University of Cape Town [UCT], 2012). Neuropsychology students in particular, who are unable as yet to officially register as neuropsychologists, would need to advance in their studies in order to be professionally recognised amongst their peers in the field. They would also desire to do the coursework/practical training in order to advance to the highest level and possibly set themselves apart from those who do generalised research degrees. For example one student said that,

> "*Doing neuropsychology and I need a PhD to be taken seriously in the field. I did not want to be limited in terms of promotion and job opportunities later in my career by not having a PhD."*

A related theme only mentioned by two people was that they enrolled in postgraduate degrees because they wanted to pursue academic careers. Advancing in tertiary education thus fits with the general pathway toward academic careers, an undergraduate, an Honours, a Masters or PhD and then hopefully a faculty position (Jacobs &Winslow, 2004).

Pursuing postgraduate studies because their *parents were academics* was not an important theme which emerged from these participants, but it is supported in the literature for example Mullen et al. (2003) show an association between parent's education and students' progression to Doctoral programmes.

Doing postgraduate studies before having major commitments was also not a major theme in this study, although "major commitments" was not elaborated on. This could relate to family or financial commitments and this topic has been previously touched on under the topic of marital status with regard to putting off marriage and family life until after studying.

Another major theme, which emerged from those who enrolled in postgraduate studies was related to the enjoyment of academia and supervisor support and encouragement, which appeared to develop during their enrollment in Honours. They also appeared to have positive relationships with their supervisors who supported their areas of academic interest, which played a role in their decisions to continue studying. A lack of interest in one's field of study has been shown to contribute to decisions to discontinue postgraduate studies. On the other hand, a supportive, environment in which there is guidance and mentoring can make the difference in decisions to persevere with studies (Albertyn et al., 2008). Although these were some of the reasons influencing individuals' successful graduation or prematurely terminating their studies, it is assumed that these reasons may also influence decisions to continue with studies. For example, a student stated,

> *"I am currently in the process of doing my doctorate in psychology at the University of Cape Town. The decision to do my Masters was motivated by my supervisor and my interest that I had developed in the field of gender-based violence".*

This aspect is important for university departments, lecturers and faculty members to consider when trying to attract postgraduate students. How they conduct their interactions and interpersonal relationships with their students appears to negatively or positively influence whether they enjoy their student experiences and decide to further their studies. Holding in mind students' particular study interests may also be a factor to consider when trying to attract more students to do MAs or PhDs.

A theme that came up with one of the highest frequency was that postgraduate education makes one more attractive to the job market. Another, pursuing postgraduate education for the value and benefit of education, which was highlighted but only by a two participants, can also be viewed together. These views are supported by findings of the Organization for Economic and Cooperation and Development (2012) who suggest that research shows that higher education provides personal benefits to individuals in the form of better job opportunities and better

earnings. Educated people are also highly sought after in knowledge-based economies (Council on Higher Education, 2009).

The issue of funding and financial support being available came up for a number of students, but not that many, as influenced some participants' decisions to enroll. This of course plays an important role in South Africa where university education is costly. Mouton (2007) highlights the problem of student poverty and debt, which force many students to enter the workforce after their undergraduate studies instead of progressing to higher degrees. The Department of Higher Education and Training (2012) also states that financial aid schemes cannot keep up with funding needs of postgraduate students. Issues of funding and financial support were also a theme for not enrolling in postgraduate studies. As Wales (2012) also found, finances and other socioeconomic factors play a role in the progression to postgraduate studies. This finding is important as it suggests that universities should, where possible offer adequate research funding to attract students to study further.

Reasons for not enrolling in postgraduate studies. Reasons for not enrolling mostly had to do *with being declined a place in the programme (this was mostly in a clinical psychology programme)*. As mentioned admission criteria are stringent and places are limited. Thus for psychology students, this is a significant determinant of doing postgraduate studies. Of those who still wanted to enroll, all wished to attempt to get into clinical psychology programmes.

Interestingly, in this group of students, needing time to decide on which academic or career path to follow and wanting to gain work experience rather than academic experience were not mentioned by many. This makes sense in light of most individuals following specific career paths within psychology and having chosen this particular Honours programmes to follow those paths. These individuals may be those who did the Honours for the advancement of their education in general rather than to follow a specific career path, or that an MA or PhD is unnecessary in their field. For example, one student said,

> *"For my purposes (teaching and training) my psychology honors and PGCE will be sufficient. I would rather actively be out there teaching and training*

and not studying. Any further studying would either be directly linked to the work I was doing, probably in order to write up any interesting findings as a thesis".

Two individuals merely did not enjoy doing research. This fits with the fact that conducting a research dissertation is an essential part of a Master's or Doctors degree (Du Toit, 2012). For example one of the participants stated,

"After the completion of my Honours degree, I realized that I did not want to go into research and, therefore, did not apply to do an MA".

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

In interpreting these findings it is important to note that a limitation to this study was the fact that the participants represent a particular group of Honours students in a particular course at a particular university. Thus the findings cannot be generalised to students in other study fields, enrolled at UCT or other universities. The sample was also relatively small and White females made up a disproportionate majority, which also affects the ability to generalise the results to other student populations.

Future research should therefore focus on a larger, more representative group of students across faculties in order to explore their demographic characteristics and reasons for pursuing postgraduate studies.

Age at enrollment was also a limitation because this was estimated based on age during Honours and not at the time of enrollment in postgraduate studies. It was also estimated using a small number of students. In future studies, the age at postgraduate enrollment will be specifically enquired upon.

Measures of socioeconomic status may be an interesting factor to consider and to explore in further research in order to find out how this influences decisions to enroll in postgraduate studies. This was not focused on in the present study due to time constraints.

Conclusion

South Africa needs to produce more Doctoral students than are currently produced in order to increase the number of highly educated people who can potentially contribute to enriching the economy. Educated individuals can contribute to the country in many ways through the knowledge and skills they possess (e.g., through innovation and sharing their skills and knowledge with others). Demographically however, although improvements have been seen, South Africa does not have enough Black graduates or enough female graduates. Females, however, although still in the minority, make up a large proportion in the Social Sciences (Council on Higher Education, 2009; National Research Foundation, 2007). In psychology, both abroad (e.g., in the US) and in South Africa, females are the majority of postgraduate students as well as the majority of those who practice professionally in the psychology field (Hart et al., 2011; Skinner & Louw, 2009; Williams, 2008).

The literature outlined a number of factors that play a role in whether students further their studies after undergraduate studies or not. Due to paucity in the literature on the progression of students to postgraduate studies (O'Donnell et al., 2009), the research aimed to explore the demographic characteristics of a cohort of Honours in Psychology students at the University of Cape Town. The research aims were also to explore the hypotheses that gender, race and academic performance would be associated with enrolling or not enrolling in postgraduate studies. Furthermore, a qualitative questionnaire was used in order to gain a richer understanding of the reasons why this particular group of students decided whether or not to enroll in postgraduate studies after completing Honours. Although there are shortcomings in the research in terms of its ability to generalise the findings to other study fields, the aim was to contribute to the knowledge about why students progress to postgraduate degrees.

The findings of the research show similarities to the nationally reported demographic profiles of postgraduate students in South Africa (Council on Higher Education, 2009). For example, although race and gender were not statistically associated with whether or not students enrolled in postgraduate studies, the demographics provided more detail. White students were the majority of those enrolled in the Honours class

over a six-year period. White participants were also the majority who enrolled in postgraduate courses after Honours.

In particular though, the majority of those enrolled in Honours and in Master's and Doctoral programmes were White Females. These findings mirror the profiles of psychology postgraduate students and qualified psychology professionals both abroad and in South Africa where White females dominate the field. This finding has been highlighted in the literature as being problematic. This is because it raises questions around whether White psychologists in the South African context can sufficiently assist and connect with the cultural experiences, traditions and beliefs of the individuals they work with in Black disadvantaged communities. These communities are inevitably where they will complete their compulsory internship and community service placement requirements (e.g., Ruane, 2006, 2010).

The finding that most of the students in this particular programme, regardless of race, enrolled in postgraduate studies after Honours is encouraging. It does however seem to be related to two major themes, which were mentioned. That is in order to work in a professional psychology career and be professionally recognised, a postgraduate degree is a necessity. For this reason, in this particular group of students, this trend is likely to continue.

The finding that academic performance was associated with whether or not students enrolled, suggests that academic performance still plays an important role in continuing to postgraduate studies. This is possibly through strict admission criteria especially in psychology professional courses as well as academic excellence (e.g., University of Cape Town [UCT], 2012; University of the Witwatersrand [WITS], 2012).

Another encouraging finding was that within the few Black African students who were in the cohort, they all went on to do postgraduate studies. The low numbers of Black psychology students is of course concerning because as was raised by the Department of Education (2001), there will not be enough Black role models or knowledge producers in future, especially in the psychology field.

Other qualitative themes which arose were around good, supportive supervisory relationships and the enjoyment of academia, as well as that the availability of funding playing a role in decisions to continue or not. These suggest potential ways to attract more postgraduates. The availability of funding and employing more Black psychology faculty staff are possible routes through which to attract more Black postgraduate students and ultimately create more Black psychology academic staff and psychologists in the future.

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Appendix:

Postgraduate Study Questionnaire

Please answer the following open-ended questions:

Question 1

Have you enrolled for an MA or PhD degree since completing your Honours degree in Psychology? (Please elaborate as to **which degree** you registered for and in **which field of study** it is/was in, e.g., Psychology, Public Health etc. and at **which university** you are/were enrolled at and **which year you enrolled**).

Question 2

If you answered **YES**, to 1), please outline and describe some of the factors and reasons that led to your decision *to enroll* for an MA or PhD degree or both.

Question 3

If you answered **NO** to 1), please outline and describe some of the factors and reasons that led to your decision to *not enroll* for an MA or PhD degree or both.

Question 4

a) If you did not enroll for a higher postgraduate degree after completing your Honours, do you intend to enroll for an MA or PhD degree in the future?

b) If you still intend to enroll, please outline and describe some of the reasons you took a break before pursuing an MA or PhD degree AND the reasons you still wish to enroll.

c) If you do not intend to enroll in the future, please outline and describe some of the reasons you do not want to do an MA or PhD.

Thank You