

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

A. Type of The Study

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design employing psychoanalytic textual analysis of film as its primary methodological approach. Qualitative research is appropriate when the research objective is to understand how phenomena are experienced and represented rather than to measure their prevalence or test causal hypotheses (Naeem et al., 2023). The psychoanalytic textual analysis of film is a specific variant of qualitative interpretive research that treats filmic characters as psychologically coherent subjects whose behavior can be read through established psychoanalytic frameworks including Freud's structural model of id, ego, and superego in order to generate interpretations that explain both what characters do and why they do it in terms that purely narrative accounts cannot provide (Elmacı et al., 2024; Bellagamba, 2023). The theoretical claims this study advances are generated by applying that framework systematically to a bounded corpus of scenes and evaluating the resulting interpretations against the empirical literature on divorce psychology and coping theory.

B. Object of The Study

1. Material Object

The material object of this study is the film *Marriage Story* (2019), written and directed by Noah Baumbach and produced by Netflix. The film stars Adam Driver as Charlie Barber and Scarlett Johansson as Nicole Barber, a married couple navigating the legal, emotional, and psychological process of divorce. The primary data of this research are drawn from the film's screenplay, dialogue, and narrative sequences as they pertain to the psychological experiences of the two principal characters.

2. Formal object

The formal object of this study is the psychological effects of divorce and the coping mechanisms experienced by the two principal characters, Charlie Barber and Nicole Barber, as depicted throughout the narrative of *Marriage Story* (2019).

C. Type of data and data sources

The type of data to be taken from this study are:

1. Text Characters, sentences and some dialogues.
2. Image: Visual illustration.
- C3. Data Source:
 - a) Primary data sources: material object taken from the marriage story.
 - b) Secondary data sources: previous research, other documents related to research.

D. Data Collection Technique

In this analysis, The researcher watched *Marriage Story* (2019) repeatedly in its entirety a to data extraction. The initial viewings served to develop comprehensive familiarity with the film's narrative arc, character behavior, emotional progression, and cinematographic choices. Subsequent viewings were conducted with specific analytical first for Charlie's arc, then for Nicole's arc to ensure that no psychologically significant scenes were overlooked. All viewings were conducted with subtitles enabled to support subsequent transcription accuracy.

E. Data Validity

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative data, this study employs four validity strategies appropriate to film-based qualitative interpretive research, applied across the data collection, coding, and analysis stages. The first strategy is theoretical triangulation: each scene retained in the final corpus was required to be independently legible under more than one of the three frameworks Freud's structural model, the Psychology of Divorce, and Coping Mechanisms Theory before being admitted to the analysis. Any interpretation that depended on only one theoretical lens without corroboration from a second was treated as a provisional observation rather than a confirmed finding. This strategy reduces the risk that findings are artefacts of a single theoretical framework rather than properties of the data itself. The second strategy is source triangulation: interpretations developed from primary data (the film's dialogue, visual staging, and character behavior) were cross-checked against secondary data consisting of peer-reviewed empirical studies on divorce psychology and coping mechanisms. Any interpretive claim that could not be grounded in both a specific scene observation and a corresponding theoretical or empirical reference was revised or removed. Source triangulation ensures that the study's interpretive claims are anchored in both the cinematic evidence and the scholarly literature rather than in one alone. The third strategy is theoretical member checking: each theoretical claim advanced in the Discussion (Section B of Chapter IV) was checked for consistency with the original formulations of the frameworks from which it derives. Claims that qualified or extended a theoretical framework rather than merely confirming it were stated

explicitly as qualifications rather than as direct empirical findings, distinguishing what the existing literature already establishes from what this study's case analysis contributes. The fourth strategy is **researcher reflexivity**: the researcher maintained a reflexive awareness throughout the analysis that interpretive judgments about fictional characters' unconscious states cannot be verified against the characters' own reports, as they can in interview-based research. To manage this limitation, the coding procedure described in Section F required that each code application be supported by directly citable dialogue or visual evidence; any interpretation that required inferential steps beyond what the text directly supported was flagged and subjected to additional cross-validation before being retained.

F. Technique of analyzing Data

The data were analyzed through a deductive thematic coding procedure in which the coding scheme was derived directly from the theoretical frameworks established in Chapter II rather than allowed to emerge inductively from the data alone. This procedure proceeded through four stages described below: (1) construction of an a priori coding scheme, (2) application of codes to discrete scene units, (3) theme development and refinement across multiple viewings, and (4) selection of the final scene corpus. This sequence is reported in detail so that the analysis can function as a replicable coding procedure and so that the theoretical triangulation claim made in Section E rests on a stated, auditable process rather than on the researcher's general familiarity with the film.

1. Construction of an a priori coding scheme. Prior to data extraction, two parallel sets of codes were defined directly from the theoretical review in Chapter II, one set corresponding to each research question.

a. Psychological-effect codes (Research Question 1), drawn from the Psychology of Divorce framework (Chapter II.B.1): *identity disruption, denial, anger, bargaining, depression/grief, acceptance, physical/socioeconomic deterioration, and gendered loss pattern*. Each code was given a short operational definition before viewing began for example, *denial* was operationalized as dialogue or behavior in which a character explicitly minimizes, rationalizes, or refuses to acknowledge the adversarial reality of the separation so that code application would not rest on the researcher's general impression of a scene.

b. Coping codes (Research Question 2), drawn from Coping Mechanisms Theory and the Transactional Model (Chapter II.B.2): *primary appraisal (threat/challenge), secondary appraisal (resource evaluation), problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, adaptive coping, and maladaptive coping*. As with the psychological-effect codes, each coping code was operationally defined for example, *problem-focused coping* was operationalized as dialogue or action in which a character identifies a specific, controllable dimension of the divorce process and directs concrete planning or negotiation toward it (Obbarius et al., 2021).

2. Application of codes to scene units. During the repeated viewings described in Section D, the film was segmented into discrete, time-stamped scene units, each bounded by a clear change in setting, participants, or dramatic purpose. Every scene unit was screened against the full coding scheme established in Stage 1. A code was applied to a scene only when the scene contained directly citable dialogue, character behavior, or visual staging that unambiguously matched the code's operational definition; a general thematic resemblance to a code, without a specific citable instance, was not sufficient for the code to be applied. A single scene could receive more than one code for example, a scene could be coded for both "identity disruption" and "denial" if both were independently supported by the scene's content and a scene already coded under Research Question 1 could later also receive a Research Question 2 code if it separately satisfied a coping code's operational definition. Code-scene correspondences were recorded in a coding log maintained separately for Charlie's and Nicole's arcs, recording the timestamp, the applied code(s), and the specific dialogue or visual detail supporting each code.

3. Theme development and refinement across multiple viewings. Code application was not finalized in a single pass. In the first viewing pass, codes were applied provisionally and broadly, producing an initial pool of several dozen tagged moments. In the second and third passes one focused exclusively on Charlie's arc and the other on Nicole's, consistent with the analytical sequence described in Section D each provisionally tagged moment was re-examined against the operational definitions with stricter criteria, and overlapping or redundant provisional tags were consolidated into the theoretically grounded codes established in Stage 1 for example, early provisional tags of "frustration" and "resentment" were consolidated into the single grief-stage code "anger" specified by Avis et al. (2021), rather than being retained as separate, theoretically ungrounded categories. In a fourth and fifth pass, each retained code-scene pairing was cross-checked for theoretical triangulation: the scene was confirmed to be independently legible under the specific theory cited for that code in Chapter II, and any tagged moment whose evidentiary basis depended on inference beyond what the dialogue or visual record directly supported was discarded. This iterative process of tagging, consolidation, and cross-checking is what reduced the initial pool of provisionally tagged moments to a final, theoretically saturated set of codes and scenes.

4. Basis for selecting the final scene corpus. From the refined pool produced in Stage 3, scenes were retained in the final corpus presented in Chapter IV according to three explicit inclusion criteria: (a) theoretical clarity the scene contains direct, citable dialogue or unambiguous visual evidence corresponding to at least one code, without requiring substantial interpretive inference; (b) non-redundancy where multiple scenes evidenced the same code with comparable clarity, only the most textually explicit instance was retained as a newly numbered scene in the corpus, so that the corpus would not be inflated with repetitive evidence for a single code; and (c) arc coverage the retained scenes, taken together, had to span each character's full emotional trajectory as theorized in Chapter II, from the pre-crisis phase through to acceptance or its absence, and had to provide evidence relevant to both research questions..