

The Psychosocial Challenges and General Resistance Resources of Heterosexual Newlyweds

by

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ABSTRACT

Happy, stable marriages hold a number of benefits for individuals and society. Conversely, divorce is associated with many negative consequences. The foundation of a stable, long-lasting marriage appears to be constructed as early as during the newlywed period, and this period can either act as a buffer against, or a risk factor for, later divorce. The newlywed period is a time of adjustment, and newlyweds may be faced with a number of challenges that need to be managed. If enough resources are sought out and used, this time can have positive outcomes for the individuals involved. Therefore, the objective of this study is to identify the psychosocial challenges experienced most frequently by newlyweds, and the General Resistance Resources (GRRs) used most often to manage these challenges. As GRRs are used to manage challenges, one's overall Sense of Coherence (SOC) is increased. GRRs and SOC are used as the theoretical framework in the current study. This study makes use of an interpretative paradigm with a qualitative methodology, and a multiple case study design is utilised. Seven newlywed individuals were identified and recruited through word-of-mouth communication and social media. Data was collected through two rounds of individual semi-structured, in-depth interviews to elicit thick data. Content analysis was used to analyse collected data. The results indicate that the challenges experienced most frequently by the participants are differences in personality, habits and routines, inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics, and new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy. The GRRs used by all the participants were physical and biochemical GRRs, cognitive GRRs, and interpersonal-relational GRRs. Despite limitations in this study, the findings can be added to the current limited knowledge of the experiences of South African newlyweds. Helping professionals who are interested in strengthening marriages are encouraged to increase their knowledge of this specific group, as it is an important and beneficial point of intervention in the context of happier, more stable marriages overall.

Key words:

Marriage; Newlyweds; Challenges; General Resistance Resources; Sense of Coherence; Salutogenesis; Qualitative Research

OPSOMMING

‘n Gelukkige en stabiele huwelik hou ‘n aantal voordele vir individue en die samelewing in. Egskeidings, aan die ander kant, word geassosieer met verskeie negatiewe nagevolge. Die fondasie van ‘n stabiele langtermyn huwelik blyk reeds gevorm te word tydens die pasgetroude periode. Dié periode kan óf as ‘n buffer teen egskeiding optree, óf ‘n risiko faktor wees vir egskeiding. Die pasgetroude periode is ‘n tyd van aanpassing en ‘n tyd wanneer pasgetroudes ‘n aantal uitdagings in die gesig staar. Hierdie uitdagings moet aangespreek en bestuur word. As genoeg hulpbronne gebruik word, kan dié periode positiewe gevolge vir individue inhou. Die doelwit van hierdie studie is dus om die uitdagings wat gereeld deur pasgetroudes ervaar word te identifiseer en ook die Algemene Weerstand Hulpbronne (AWH’s) wat meestal gebruik moes word om die uitdagings te bestuur. Soos wat AWH’s gebruik word, word ‘n mens se Koherensiesin verbeter. AWH’s en Koherensiesin word as die teoretiese raamwerk in die huidige studie gebruik. Die studie maak gebruik van ‘n interpretatiewe paradigma met ‘n kwalitatiewe metodologie, en ‘n veelvuldige gevallestudie ontwerp is toegepas. Sewe pasgetroude individue is deur middel van mondelinge kommunikasie en sosiale media geïdentifiseer en gewerf. Data is versamel deur twee rondtes individuele semi-gestruktureerde, in diepte onderhoude om deeglike data te ontlok. Inhoudsanalise is gebruik om data te analiseer. Die resultate dui aan dat verskille in persoonlikheid, gewoontes en roetines, inter- en intrapersonlike gesinsdinamika, nuwe verantwoordelikhede, en afname in outonomie die uitdagings is wat die meeste ervaar word. Die AWH’s wat die meeste deur die deelnemers gebruik is, is fisiese en biochemiese AWH’s, kognitiewe AWH’s en interpersoonlike verhouding AWH’s. Ten spyte van die beperkinge in die studie, kan die bevindinge bygevoeg word tot die huidige beperkte kennis van die ervarings van Suid-Afrikaanse pasgetroudes. Professionele persone in helpende professies met ‘n belangstelling in die versterking van huwelike word aangeraai om hulle kennis te verbreed rakende die spesifieke groep, veral omdat dit belangrik en voordelig kan wees vir intervensie doeleindes in konteks van ‘n gelukkige, meer stabiele huwelik oor die algemeen.

Sleutelwoorde

Huwelik; Pasgetroudes; Uitdagings; Algemene Weerstand Hulpbronne; Koherensiesin; Salutogenesis; Kwalitatiewe Navorsing

DECLARATION

I (Yvonne Eloise Scott) declare that the dissertation hereby submitted by me for the M.A degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of the Free State is my own independent work and has not previously been submitted by me at another university/ faculty. I further cede copyright of the dissertation in favour of the University of the Free State.

Yvonne Eloise Scott

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Opsomming	iii
Declaration	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	x
Chapter 1: Literature Review	1
Introduction	1
Early Adulthood	3
Divorce and the Importance of the Newlywed Period	4
The Transition into Marriage and Associated Stressors	6
Financial Considerations	6
The Childbearing Decision	8
In-Law Relationships	9
Unrealistic Marital Expectations	10
Sexual Aspects	11
Marital Role-Sharing	13
Problems Related to Families of Origin	14
Potential Protective Factors in the Newlywed Period	15
Communication Skills	16
Financial Resources and Financial Management Skills	17
Conflict Management Skills	18

Social Support	19
Religion	20
Inherent Personality Traits	21
Tertiary Education	22
Couple Identity	22
Stress, Salutogenesis, Sense of Coherence and General Resistance Resources	23
Stress	23
Salutogenesis	25
Sense of Coherence and General Resistance Resources	25
Chapter 2: Research Methodology	31
2.1. Research Objective	31
2.2. Research Design	31
2.3. Sampling Procedures and Participants	32
2.4. Data Gathering	35
2.5. Data Analysis	36
2.6. Trustworthiness and Rigour	37
2.7. Reflexivity and Positioning	39
2.8. Ethical Considerations	41
Chapter 3: Results	44
3.1. Introduction	44
3.2. Psychosocial Challenges	44

3.2.1. Differences in Personality, Habits and Routines	45
3.2.2. Inter- and Intrapersonal Family Dynamics	48
3.2.3. New Responsibilities and Restricted Levels of Autonomy	54
3.2.4. Stereotypical Division of Household Chores	56
3.2.5. Inter- and Intrapersonal Conflict Regarding the Management of Joint Finances	59
3.2.6. Unmet Marital Expectations	60
3.2.7. Summary	62
3.3. General Resistance Resources	62
3.3.1. Physical and Biochemical GRRs	63
3.3.2. Cognitive GRRs	67
3.3.3. Interpersonal-Relational GRRs	71
3.3.4. Macrosociocultural GRRs	74
3.3.5. Artefactual-Material GRRs	76
3.3.6. Emotional GRRs	78
3.3.7. Valuative-Attitudinal GRRs	80
3.3.8. Summary	82
Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusion	83
4.1. Introduction	83
4.2. Research Objective and Brief Summary of Main Findings	83
4.3. Psychosocial challenges	84
4.3.1. Differences in Personality, Habits, and Routines	84
4.3.2. Inter- and Intrapersonal Family Dynamics	87

4.3.3. New Responsibilities and Restricted Levels of Autonomy	91
4.3.4. Stereotypical Division of Household Chores	93
4.3.5. Inter- and Intrapersonal Conflict Regarding the Management of Joint Finances	95
4.3.6. Unmet Marital Expectations	97
4.4. General Resistance Resources	99
4.4.1. Physical and Biochemical GRRs	99
4.4.2. Cognitive GRRs	101
4.4.3. Interpersonal-Relational GRRs	104
4.4.4. Macrosociocultural GRRs	105
4.4.5. Artefactual-Material GRRs	108
4.4.6. Emotional GRRs	109
4.4.7. Valuative-Attitudinal GRRs	111
4.5. Conclusion	113
4.6. Limitations of the Current Study	119
4.7. Recommendations for Future Research	121
Reference List	124

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographics of the current study's participants.	34
Table 2. Frequency table of the psychosocial challenge categories that were experienced by the newlyweds in their first year of marriage	45
Table 3. Frequency table of the General Resistance Resource categories that were used by the newlyweds to manage psychosocial challenges in the first year of marriage	63

Chapter 1: Literature review

Introduction

Marriage is a major domain of one's individual functioning (Chi et al., 2011). Furthermore, being happily married is associated with various positive individual outcomes, including general life happiness and satisfaction (Kamp Dush, Taylor, & Kroeger, 2008; Uecker, 2012). Marriage is also linked to a significant decrease in overall emotional distress and increased emotional health (Mernitz & Kamp Dush, 2016; Umberson, Thomeer, & Williams, 2013). In addition, according to McCarthy, Ginsberg, and Cintron (2008), happy marriages are also considered to meet individual security and intimacy needs better than any other relationship. Not only does marriage hold benefits for individuals, it is also considered to be a building block of society and as a significant aspect in the maintenance of family life through its provision of familial stability and social cohesion (Canel, 2013; Farnam, Pakgozar, & Mir-mohammadali, 2011; Idemudia & Ndlovu, 2013). Conversely, divorce has been associated with a number of negative consequences (Björkenstam, Hallqvist, Dalman, & Ljung, 2013; Heyns, 2010; Hughes & Waite, 2009; Lucas, 2005; Shor, Roelfs, Bugyi, & Schwartz, 2012; Wang et al., 2015). Consequently, helping professionals may assist in improving individual and societal well-being by focusing more attention on building strong marriages that do not end in divorce.

Research indicates that the foundation of a stable, long-lasting marriage appears to be constructed as early as during the newlywed period (Cao et al., 2015; Lavner & Bradbury, 2012; Lavner, Karney, & Bradbury, 2014; McCarthy et al., 2008; Neff & Broady, 2011; Wosidlo & Segrin, 2013). The newlywed period generally occurs for the first time during early adulthood (Erikson, 1963; Havighurst, 1972; Levinson, 1986; Statistics South Africa (StatsSA), 2014). Khalifian and Barry (2016) consider the newlywed phase to be the first year or two of marriage. Other studies include the first three years in this period, whilst a few researchers consider couples to be newlyweds up until five years of marriage (Ariplackal & George, 2015; Cao et al., 2015; Lavner, Lamkin, Miller, Campbell, & Carney, 2016). This period of time is generally experienced positively by individuals (Burgoyne, Reibstein, Edmunds & Routh, 2010). However, it is also a time that requires certain adaptations to be made. These adaptations may potentially be challenging for a newlywed and cause a significant amount of distress (Amato, 2010; Hall & Adams, 2011; Joseph & Subhashini, 2012; Kilmann & Vendemia, 2013; McCarthy et al., 2008; Scott, Rhoades, Stanley, Allan, and Markman,

2013). Stress is often viewed as inherently negative, but if the stress is managed effectively, it may result in positive outcomes (Antonovsky, 1987). Therefore, it is possible for newlyweds to manage the necessary adaptations of their new marriages in such a way that it results in positive individual and relationship outcomes.

The newlywed period is not only an important stage of marriage, but also an important point of intervention for helping professionals. Research has shown that it is more beneficial and effective to prepare a couple for marital challenges before they occur rather than waiting to do couple counselling later when a couple is already distressed (McCarthy et al., 2008; Williams, 2015). Farnam et al. (2011) finds that marital satisfaction in newlyweds is significantly influenced by the quality of premarital counselling. Furthermore, Scott et al. (2013) identifies various aspects that divorced individuals wished they had known or been taught before they had married their ex-spouses. This includes being taught about “the realities of marriage” and being provided with “tools” to deal with upcoming changes and challenges (Scott et al., 2013, p. 138).

Marital and premarital counselling has been found to be most effective if tailored to a couple’s specific context and needs (Farnam et al., 2011). The South African marital context is unique (Posel & Rudwick, 2014; Schaikh, Hoel, & Kagee, 2011; Singh, 2008; StatsSA, 2014; Stephenson et al., 2013) for a variety of reasons. Firstly, three different types of marriage are recognised by South African law, namely civil marriage, customary marriage, and civil unions (StatsSA, 2014). Secondly, polygamy is an accepted practice in various African and Muslim cultures in South Africa (Schaikh et al., 2011). Thirdly, South Africa was one of the earliest countries to legally authorise same-sex marriage, with homosexual couples being allowed to enter into civil marriages since 2006 (Sloth-Nielson & Van Heerden, 2014). Fourthly, a significantly high HIV-infection rate poses as an extra consideration in the sexual practices of many married couples (Stephenson et al., 2013). Therefore, the South African marital context differs from the marital context of international couples which tends to dominate research literature. Consequently, much is known about the psychosocial challenges and relevant protective factors for newlyweds in a number of other countries, including India, the U.S.A., Israel, and China (Ariplackal & George, 2015; Cao et al., 2015; Hall & Adams, 2011; Khalifian & Barry, 2016; Lavner, Karney, & Bradbury, 2013; Lavner et al., 2014; Lavner et al., 2016; McCarthy et al., 2008; Neff & Broady, 2011; Shalev, Baum, & Itzhaki, 2013). However, research on South African newlyweds, in particular the challenges they experience or available protective factors, is extremely limited (Botha, Van den Berg, & Venter, 2009; Hoel, 2012;

Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2006) (EBSCOHOST & Google scholar search; 16 October 2016). A literature review of available knowledge on newlyweds (both internationally and nationally), particularly with regards to challenges and protective factors, will now be presented.

Early adulthood

Early adulthood is the stage of life generally considered to exist more or less from ages 18 to 35 years (Erikson, 1980; Levinson, 1986). According to the family life course perspective, social roles and positions are acquired and lost throughout the life span (Elder, 1994). However, in early adulthood, “there is a dense clustering of such transitions”, as a number of important social changes tend to take place during a short period of time (Bucx, Raaijmakers, & Van Wel, 2010, p. 119). The transition to early adulthood includes the completion of one’s education, commencing with full-time employment, moving out of the parental home, and committing to new, long-term family roles such as marriage (Bucx et al., 2010; Goldscheider, Hofferth, & Curtin, 2014).

A number of well-known developmental theorists, including Erikson (1963), Havighurst (1972) and Levinson (1986), associate early adulthood with marriage, or at least with more long-term intimate commitments. For example, Erikson (1963) is well known for his psychosocial stages of development, and according to this theory, one is faced with a main psychosocial challenge during early adulthood: intimacy or isolation. Furthermore, Havighurst (1972) considers each life stage to contain certain developmental tasks that require attention and energy. According to Havighurst (1972), the tasks of early adulthood include mate selection and learning to live with this person as a marriage partner. In addition, Levinson (1986) invests much research into his theory of the life cycle and life cycle transitions. He theorises that early adulthood begins with the *Early Adult Transition*, and that one’s 20s and 30s are the peak years of the life cycle. Levinson (1986) postulates that it is during this time that one invests a great deal of energy into various aspects of one’s adult life, including starting one’s new family. In more recent years, research has found that people have started to get married later than used to be the norm, largely due to extended periods of tertiary studies (Arnett, 2004; Martin, 2004; Yeung & Hu, 2015). However, by the mid- to late-20s, the number of marriages by tertiary educated individuals begins to exceed those by individuals who did not attend university (Martin, 2004; Torr, 2011). In addition, according to the most recent South African marriage statistics (StatsSA, 2014), the majority of new brides in 2014 were between

the ages of 25 and 29 years, with a mean age of 30 from 2010-2014. The majority of new grooms were aged 30 to 34 years, with a mean age of 34 years from 2010-2014. Therefore, it appears that marriage during young adulthood is still the norm.

To summarise, early adulthood (age 18-35 years) is a life stage marked by a large number of social transitions. One of the most prominent social transitions during this stage is the onset of marriage. Marriage as a norm during early adulthood was identified by theorists including Erikson (1963), Havighurst (1972), and Levinson (1986), yet it still appears to be the norm at the present time (Martin, 2004; StatsSA, 2014; Torr, 2011). In South Africa, the average age at first marriage is currently about age 32 years (StatsSA, 2014). Therefore, it can be seen that many individuals encounter newlywed marriage at some point during the early adulthood period. The newlywed stage of marriage is an important point of intervention in the larger context of long-term marital stability and satisfaction, as well as reducing the risk of divorce with its adverse consequences. Divorce and the importance of the newlywed period will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Divorce and the Importance of the Newlywed Period

In keeping with international trends (American Psychological Association, 2013; Koshner, 2016), a large number of South African marriages annually end in divorce (StatsSA, 2014). Between 2003 and 2014, an average of 172 580 new civil marriages per year were registered in South Africa (StatsSA, 2014). During this period, between 20 980 and 32 484 divorces were filed annually. The highest number of divorces was found in marriages that lasted between 5 and 9 years, and 18.4% of divorces occurred in marriages that lasted less than 5 years (StatsSA, 2014).

For many divorcing or divorced individuals, divorce holds a variety of negative consequences. These consequences may include a long-term decrease in life satisfaction, increased susceptibility to illness, and a shortened life-span (Björkenstam et al., 2013; Lucas, 2005; Shor et al., 2012). Divorced individuals have also been found to experience higher levels of distress, depression, and substance abuse than married individuals (Hughes & Waite, 2009). A longitudinal study amongst 29 314 members of the U.S. military found that recently divorced individuals are significantly more likely to suffer from depression and substance-related disorders than those individuals who remain married (Wang et al., 2015). Furthermore,

according to qualitative research conducted in South Africa, divorce had a number of negative consequences amongst the 36 participants involved in the study (Heyns, 2010). These consequences included strong feelings of rejection, anger and loneliness, continued and frequent conflict (usually related to maintenance payments), and increased financial problems (Heyns, 2010). Finally, in another qualitative study amongst 12 South African nurses, divorce was described as bringing unbearable emotional pain, as well as a number of negative social, physical, and financial consequences (Murray, Peter, & Tshotsho, 2013). These consequences included guilt, trauma, feelings of rejection, depression, isolation, loss of resources, and hypertension.

Many factors may contribute to divorce. According to Cohen and Finzi-Dottan (2012) extramarital affairs or inherent relationship problems are the main causes of divorce. Hawkins, Willoughby and Doherty (2012) find that communication problems and growing apart are the most common causes of divorce amongst their 886 American participants. Financial problems, substance abuse, domestic violence, a lack of commitment, and frequent arguments or conflict are also indicated as reasons by divorced individuals (Scott et al., 2013). In a study conducted with traditional Israeli-Palestinian women (Meler, 2013) the main reasons cited for the dissolution of their marriages overlap with the reasons given in more Western societies, such as those cited above. However, a few additional reasons include violence perpetrated against them by their husbands, an overly patriarchal system in the home, and their nuclear families' lack of independence. These results are similar to research conducted in South Africa with Muslim women whose marriages also often end in divorce due to their husband's infidelity or physical abuse (Hoel, 2012).

The first year of marriage has been found to possibly reveal problems that are predictive of later divorce (Woszidlo & Segrin, 2013). This finding is supported by an American study amongst 169 couples which finds that marital distress can already be seen in the newlywed period and remains stable over time (Lavner et al., 2014). Problematic factors observed early in the marriage may include aspects such as anger and contempt, and negative behaviours such as blame (Lavner & Bradbury, 2012). Alternatively, it has also been found that the first two years of marriage are vital in creating a secure base for a stable and fulfilling marriage (McCarthy et al., 2008). In addition, couples who adequately cope with small challenges during the newlywed stage are more likely to successfully overcome more challenging obstacles later in their marriage (Neff & Broady, 2011). According to a Chinese study involving 144 couples, marital outcomes in the later years of a relationship can be attributed to daily interactions and

problem solving during the newlywed period (Cao et al., 2015). Therefore, it appears as if the newlywed period may act as a foundation (either positively or negatively) for later marital years.

To summarise, many marriages end in divorce every year (StatsSA, 2014). Divorce has a number of causes, as well as a wide variety of negative consequences for individuals, families, and society. A fifth of all divorces in South Africa occur during the newlywed period (the first five years) (StatsSA, 2014), indicating that this may be a stressful time for couples. The next section of the chapter will explore the transition into marriage and various aspects that may render the newlywed period a stressful time.

The Transition into Marriage and Associated Stressors

Getting married is a significant transition in many couples' relationships. In a study conducted in the United Kingdom with 42 couples, it was found that even in couples who had dated for a long time and had cohabitated before getting married, various aspects changed once they were married (Burgoyne et al., 2010). This seems to indicate that the formalisation or institutionalisation of the relationship through marriage may be accompanied by the need for certain adaptations to be made. In the study cited above, these adaptations included experiencing a greater sense of a couple identity, feeling more secure and committed to each other, and feeling more "grown up" (Burgoyne et al., 2010; p. 398). These changes were generally experienced as positive aspects of the new marriage (Burgoyne et al., 2010). However, certain aspects of a new marriage may also be experienced as challenging or potentially stressful. It has been found that some of the challenges of a new marriage may include making decisions about money, deciding about childbearing, and learning to deal with in-laws (McCarthy et al., 2008). Furthermore, couples may also need to negotiate realistic marital expectations, deal with misconceptions about sex, and agree on marital role sharing (Hall & Adams, 2011; Joseph & Subhashini, 2012; Scott et al., 2013). Finally, problems related to newlyweds' families of origin are additional challenges which may be experienced during the newlywed period (Amato, 2010; Hall & Adams, 2011).

Financial considerations. Firstly, various financial considerations may pose a challenge during the newlywed period. Financial stability and monetary resources are often

main determinants of the timing of marriage (Addo, 2014), with many young adults delaying marriage because of financial reasons (Settersten & Ray, 2010). Once couples are married, financial aspects continue to play an important role within their relationships. The merging of one's income with that of one's spouse has traditionally been seen as an essential part of marriage (Lauer & Yodanis, 2011). Generally, pre-marital couples, even if they are cohabitating, are less likely to merge their finances than married couples (Hamplova, Le Bourdais, & Lapierre-Adamcyk, 2014). Therefore, for many couples re-negotiation and adaptation regarding finances may need to occur once they are married. In this regard, it was found that couples tend to gradually develop a collective view of money throughout their first year of marriage (Burgoyne, Reibstein, Edmunds, & Dolman, 2007). The management of finances is a central relationship issue and is closely related to other aspects of couples' lives (Hamplova et al., 2014; Papp, Cummings, & Goeke-Morey, 2009).

Newlywed couples are, at times, faced with debt from the onset of their relationship. They may accrue debt to pay for their wedding and start their own joint home, or debt may be brought into the marriage by one of the spouses (Dew, 2008). Credit card and student loan debt is becoming an increasingly more frequent feature of early adulthood (Addo, 2014). In an American longitudinal study with 1078 couples, Dew (2008) found that the relationship between marital satisfaction and debt in newlyweds is mediated by various factors, including the amount of time the spouses spend together, arguments about finances, and the perception of financial unfairness by one of the spouses. As debt increases, couples tend to spend less time together, argue more, and experience a sense of unfairness, leading to a decrease in marital satisfaction (Dew, 2008). Furthermore, consumer debt (more than other types of debt) has been found to positively correlate with disagreements about finances and negatively correlate with marital satisfaction in both men and women (Dew, 2011). In addition, it was found that with an increase in consumer debt the likelihood of divorce also increases. These results are supported by another American study with 12 686 participants (Britt & Huston, 2012). This study implies that participants who often argue about finances are two and a half times more likely to experience decreased relationship satisfaction later in their marriage, as well as a greater probability of divorce. Furthermore, in a cross-cultural study with 2600 married couples recruited from Britain, the United States, Turkey, Russia, and China, it was found that finances was a highly prominent source of marital conflict in all five cultural groups (Dillon et al., 2014). Therefore, it seems as if financial aspects may be a source of conflict in the newlywed period, and throughout the later years of marriage. Finally, a very recent study by Barton and Bryant

(2016) explores the longitudinal relationship between financial strain and marital instability in 280 African American newlywed couples. The study shows that increased levels of financial strain are associated with marital instability over time. The study also shows that the increase in marital instability is related to the negative effect of financial strain on the perception of spousal warmth (Barton & Bryant, 2016). Thus, financial considerations need to be addressed and managed from the onset of marriage.

The childbearing decision. Furthermore, decisions surrounding childbearing may become more prominent once a couple is married, and may be encountered as an additional challenge in the newlywed period. In past generations, the decision to have children was almost an inevitable part of marriage, yet the rate of voluntary childlessness in Western societies has been steadily increasing in recent years (Avison & Furnham, 2015; Blackstone & Stewart, 2012; Rijken & Merz, 2014). Individuals or couples may recognise the negative aspects associated with parenthood, including the significant effect it may have on the wife's career trajectory in particular, as well as the potentially negative effect that raising a child might have on the couple's marital satisfaction and marital quality (Dew & Wilcox, 2011; Dykstra, 2009; Nezhad & Goodarzi, 2011; Shaw, 2011). In addition, certain personality traits and personal characteristics may be associated with voluntary childlessness. Intelligence appears to positively correlate with childlessness (Kanazawa, 2014). In an analysis of the U.K. National Child Development Study it was discovered that as the IQs of the female participants increased, the likelihood of life-time voluntary childlessness also increased (Kanazawa, 2014). Furthermore, in a cross-national study with 780 participants from 46 nationalities, voluntary child-free couples were more likely to be politically liberal and less religious than couples with children (Avison & Furnham, 2015). Child-free participants also had significantly lower scores for the personality traits of extraversion and agreeableness than participants who wanted children. In addition, these participants showed a significantly higher preference for independence than other participants. Couples who decide not to have children based on the abovementioned reasons or personal characteristics may face judgement and disapproval by their communities and family (Copur & Koropecj-Cox, 2010; Rijken & Merz, 2014; Shaw, 2011). This may be stressful for newlywed couples who make the decision to remain childless.

Decisions regarding childbearing may also result in conflict between newly married spouses. Conflict may transpire when spouses do not feel the same about parenthood, or if one

spouse wants to have children whilst the other does not. Recent research on this topic is sparse (EBSCOHOST & Google scholar search; 16 October 2016). However, Neal, Groat and Wicks' (1989) seminal research on the decision-making process that is involved when newlyweds decide whether or not to have children, remains informative. Findings indicate that, despite the normative nature of having children (usually during early adulthood, and the early stage of the marriage), many individuals view childbearing negatively, or with ambivalence. In their study, Neal et al. (1989) also refer to the concept of *couple ambivalence*, which is when spouses are in disagreement about the advantages or disadvantages of having children. The researchers do not explore the effect of this *couple ambivalence*, but posit that many of the couples are unaware of their incompatible views informing their childbearing decisions. More recently, an Indonesian study explored *pregnancy ambivalence* and its effect on contraceptive use (Barden-O'Fallon & Speizer, 2010). *Pregnancy ambivalence* can be defined as "vague or conflicting attitudes about fertility intentions" (Barden-O'Fallon & Speizer, 2010, p. 36). It was found that a larger proportion of husbands than wives consider an unexpected pregnancy to be unproblematic. These authors also discovered that husbands' attitudes about childbearing play a significant role in decisions about contraceptive use. This finding supports earlier research conducted in Bangladesh, in which contraceptive use was associated with the husbands' desire for more children (or no more children) more so than the wives' attitudes (Hossain, Phillips, & Mozumder, 2007). From existing research it remains unclear whether incompatible views about childbearing may be a potential stressor for newlyweds. Therefore, the effect of such incompatible views is worth further investigation.

In-law relationships. Challenges related to one's in-laws may also occur during the newlywed period. The relationship with one's in-laws is of great importance and may play an important role in the success of the marital relationship (Fingerman, Gilligan, VanderDrift, & Pitzer, 2012; Rittenour, 2012). The establishment of the in-law relationship is unique, and characteristics of this formation may at times be the source of challenges. Firstly, the creation of the in-law relationship is involuntary, as it occurs automatically as the result of a new marriage (MorrSerewicz & Hosmer, 2011). Secondly, the relationship with the parents-in-law resembles the relationship one shares with one's own parents (perhaps resulting in certain expectations); however, it exists without the shared family history (Fingerman et al., 2012). Thirdly, the formation of the in-law relationship is based on a formal delineation not found in other relationships, namely the wedding ceremony, and this may be accompanied by a change

in the relationship dynamics (Fingerman et al., 2012). Research indicates that the images individuals hold of themselves and their relationships in the future shape their hopes and fears (Eagly, Eastwick, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2009; Fingerman et al., 2012). Individuals may have certain expectations about how their relationship with in-laws will change after the wedding ceremony. If they hold negative images or expectations (often based on media stereotypes, as will be discussed later), this may lead to a variety of fears (Fingerman et al., 2012). One of the most common fears of newlyweds is that their in-laws will be critical or intrusive, whereas mothers-in-law commonly fear exclusion by their new child-in-law (Fingerman et al., 2012; MorrSerewicz & Hosmer, 2011).

In seminal research by Duvall (1954), it was found that the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship tends to be the most problematic in-law relationship. Caughlin's (2003) *distressful ideals hypothesis* posits that one's ideal relationship directly influences one's perception of the actual relationship. This may account for some of the problematic relationship dynamics that occur between mothers and daughters-in-law (Fingerman et al., 2012). These problems may possibly occur because daughters-in-law often do not have direct experience in interacting with mothers-in-law, and therefore formulate certain expectations based on the perception they have of other people's in-law relationships (Rittenour, 2012). One of the main sources from which to draw and form perceptions is the media (Rittenour, 2012). The media continuously offers a very stereotypical view of the mother-/daughter-in-law relationship, and consequently a different cultural context has come to exist for this relationship than for other family relationships (Fingerman et al., 2012; Rittenour, 2012). Levy, Chung, and Canavan (2011) support the idea that societal stereotypes can be internalised and shape behavioural outcomes. However, it must be added that despite stereotypes, many people actually have positive relationships with their in-laws. Research shows that important determinants of positive in-law relationships are positive behaviours, expectations, and feelings regarding these relationships before the marriage ceremony (Fingerman et al., 2012).

Unrealistic marital expectations. In addition, distress may be experienced during the newlywed period because of unrealistic marital expectations. A vast majority of individuals and couples hold an unrealistic optimism that the future will be better than the present (Hall & Adams, 2011; Lavner et al., 2013; Markman, Rhoades, Stanley, Ragan, & Whitton, 2010). In an American qualitative study involving 21 couples it was found that many of the newlyweds

who were interviewed expected that marriage would fulfil their personal needs and enhance their relationships (Hall & Adams, 2011). In contrast to these expectations, the couples were generally disappointed as their relationships did not improve as expected. Holding highly optimistic expectations for one's marital satisfaction may set one up for disappointment if the expectations are not met (Lavner et al., 2013).

The expectations for increasing marital satisfaction over time are not realistic, as marital satisfaction has consistently been shown to decrease over the first few years of marriage (Lavner et al., 2013; Lavner et al., 2014). One American study examines the relationship between optimistic forecasts of marital satisfaction and actual marital satisfaction trajectories in 500 newlyweds (Lavner et al., 2013). Lavner et al. (2013) find that the female participants, who have the most hopeful expectations for their marriages over time, show the most significant decline in marital satisfaction during the first four years of marriage. In addition, the study shows that the women who are most optimistic tend to show more aggression towards their spouses, experience higher stress, and have lower self-esteem when measured at the onset of the research (at more or less six months of marriage). Lavner et al. (2013) hypothesise that high optimism and marital expectation may serve as psychological overcompensation in risky relationships. The authors also refer to an earlier study (Lavner, Bradbury, & Karney, 2012) which found that couples are likely to believe that their circumstances and satisfaction will improve over time, possibly accounting for many couples getting married despite premarital concerns.

A further example of the negative effects of high expectations is seen in a study by Lou, Chow and Chan (2004). Their sample consists of 87 women who were married and migrated from mainland China to Hong Kong. The results of the study reveal that the women whose expectations of their husbands and marriage are unmet, experience the greatest levels of stress and the lowest marital happiness. Therefore, having unrealistic, overly optimistic marital expectations may serve as a challenge during the newlywed phase, as it is likely that these expectations may not correspond with reality. This mismatch in expectations and reality could result in feelings of disappointment (Lavner et al., 2013; Lou et al., 2004), which may need to be managed individually, or as a couple.

Sexual aspects. Another typically experienced challenge during the newlywed period is sexually-related aspects. An American study with 15 newlywed couples found that

discussing sexual topics are much more difficult for couples (in particular for the wives) than the discussion of nonsexual topics (Rehman et al., 2011). In addition, it was revealed that the more negative behaviours are displayed during these conversations, the lower the individuals' relationship satisfaction. Although the majority of individuals engage in sexual activities before they are married (McGrath, Nyirenda, Hosegood, & Newell, 2009; Shisana et al., 2005; Zimmer-Gembeck & Helfand, 2008), certain misconceptions and expectations still exist around marital sex. In Hall and Adams's (2011) research a number of newlyweds express that the frequency of sexual intercourse is less than they had expected it would be. Furthermore, Lykins, Janssen, Newhouse, Heiman, and Rafaeli (2012) found that newlyweds are more likely to experience sexual arousal problems when there are differences in the spouses' sexual propensities. In other words, arousal problems may occur when one spouse is sexually excitable and the other is sexually inhibited. In addition, for the wives in their study, anxiety and stress are associated with lower sexual satisfaction (Lykins et al., 2012).

For couples who have not had sexual intercourse before marriage, sex may pose an even greater relationship obstacle (Shalev et al., 2013). Some couples only lose their virginity on their wedding night, and their reasons for this may be varied, but often include religious or cultural beliefs (Shalev et al., 2013; Williams, DeFazio, & Goins, 2014). The first sexual act is considered to have a significant influence on future sexual functioning and the relationship with one's sexual partner (Smith & Shaffer, 2013). Furthermore, a study conducted in a community of Modern-Orthodox Jewish people with 36 participants found that, for both men and women, the loss of their virginity on the wedding night was associated with behavioural and emotional difficulties (Shalev et al., 2013). These difficulties were found to continue for a period of time. This is problematic, as stress and anxiety may contribute to sexual malfunctioning (Lykins et al., 2012). Therefore, the stress or anxiety caused by the sexual difficulties discussed above may further exacerbate or cause additional sexual problems, becoming a self-perpetuating cycle if not addressed adequately.

Addressing these sexual aspects is important, as sexuality within the marital context plays a vital role in marital stability and marital quality (Yabiku & Gager, 2009). According to Yabiku and Gager (2009), research in biological and social sciences supports the idea that sexual intercourse fosters social attachment between individuals. They posit that it is through this mechanism that increased sexual frequency may contribute to greater marital satisfaction. In addition, these researchers found that sexual frequency negatively correlates with the dissolution of marriages. Some researchers have examined the importance of sexual

satisfaction, rather than frequency. Yoo, Bartle-Haring, Day, and Gangamma (2014) posit that sexual satisfaction in marriage significantly influences emotional intimacy between partners. The same study shows that men's general relationship satisfaction is related to their wives' sexual satisfaction. Other studies also show that sexual satisfaction is necessary in order to maintain a strong marital relationship (For an example, see Nourani, Jonaidy, Shakeri, & Mokhber, 2010). Finally, in an Iranian study with 65 randomly selected women applying for divorce, it is revealed that a lack of sexual satisfaction is significantly related to their decision to end their marriages (Gheshlaghi, Dorvashi, Aran, Shafiei, & Najafabadi, 2014). Therefore, sexuality amongst newlyweds is worth further investigation.

Marital role-sharing. Furthermore, negotiating each spouse's contribution towards the shared home may cause distress for newlyweds. This contribution is related to both the division of household chores and each spouse's financial contribution (Hall & Adams, 2011). For example, deciding on the satisfactory division of chores was found to be one of the unexpected adaptations amongst 21 American newlyweds (Hall & Adams, 2011). According to research, it is not only the amount of housework that each spouse does which determines their perceptions of fairness (Braun, Lewin- Epstein, Stier, & Baumgartner, 2008; Lee & Waite, 2010). The perception of fairness in the division of chores is also determined by factors such as gender ideology, each spouse's time availability, and perceptions about power (Braun et al., 2008). Furthermore, it has been postulated that higher marital commitment promotes relationship-maintaining behaviour, including engagement in household chores (Tang, 2012). Therefore, various aspects contribute to the way in which household chores are divided, as well as whether this division is perceived as fair or not. The perception that household chores are unfairly divided may lead to overt marital conflict (Britt & Roy, 2014). Furthermore, perceived unfairness in this regard has been associated with poorer relationship quality in females (Britt & Roy, 2014).

The financial contribution made by each newlywed spouse may be as important as their contribution towards household chores. Men are no longer automatically assumed to be the primary breadwinner, and dual-earner couples are currently in the majority in Westernised society (Britt & Roy, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). However, the perception still exists that husbands should earn more than their wives (Bertrand, Kamenica, & Pan, 2015). By examining American National and Community Surveys, Bertrand et al. (2015) find that, in

married couples where the wife earns more than the husband, marital satisfaction is lower and the likelihood of divorce is higher. This seems to indicate that the amount of money each newlywed contributes to their relationship may be related to other marital factors such as marital satisfaction and stability, specifically for newlywed couples where wives earn more than their husbands.

Problems related to families of origin. Lastly, factors related to newlyweds' families of origin may pose additional challenges during the first year of marriage. Various studies have found a link between experiences in one's family of origin and adult relationship outcomes (Amato, 2010; Dinero, Conger, Shaver, Widaman, & Larsen-Rife, 2008; Hardy, Soloski, Ratcliffe, Anderson, & Willoughby, 2015; Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2008). An individual's family of origin can affect his or her marriage in various ways. This may be related to the effect of learned behaviour on their own marital interactions, unresolved emotional issues carried into adulthood, or problems related to separating physically or emotionally from their family (Amato, 2010; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Hall & Adams, 2011; Hardy et al., 2015; Loken, Lommerud, & Lundberg, 2013). For example, it has been shown that children of divorce are more likely to get divorced as adults (Amato, 2010). This phenomenon has come to be known as the *intergenerational transmission of divorce* (Amato, 2010; Glenn & Kramer, 1987). Furthermore, recent research indicates that experiences in one's childhood family determine one's relationship self-regulation behaviour (the effort one invests in making relationship improvements) (Hardy et al., 2015). Marital satisfaction and outcomes are then impacted through this mechanism of relationship self-regulation (Hardy et al., 2015). For example, a South African study with 47 married couples found a significant relationship between roles and affective responsiveness in participants' families of origin and their marital satisfaction (Botha et al., 2009).

In addition, stress may arise as a result of physical or emotional separation from one's parents. When spouses originate from different geographical locations, a decision may need to be made at the beginning of the marriage (or cohabitation) regarding their joint place of residence in relation to their extended families (Loken et al., 2013). The decision to reside closer to the husband's family, the wife's family, or far from both families has an impact on present and future life stages. If the couple has children, their proximity to one or the other family of origin determines which family is more involved in childrearing (Loken et al., 2013).

Thus, the decision about residential proximity to families of origin may potentially prove to be stressful for newlyweds. Furthermore, some newlyweds may also find themselves being faced with competing loyalties after marriage (Hall & Adams, 2011). An American qualitative study found that newlywed wives in particular struggle to manage the tension of competing loyalties between their parents and their husbands (Hall & Adams, 2011). Furthermore, problems may also arise if families of origin are unwilling to separate from their married children. One of the main reasons for divorce in a sample of 20 Indian newlywed divorcees was that they felt they had not been given the space to form their own marital unit without interference from their families of origin (Ariplackal & George, 2015). It is thus clear that one's family of origin may potentially impact the newlywed period in numerous ways.

To summarise, getting married is a significant transition point in an individual's life, and tends to be accompanied by a number of adaptations. These adaptations may be potentially challenging for a newlywed. The main newlywed challenges found in previous literature were financial considerations, making decisions about childbearing, in-law relationships, unmet or unrealistic marital expectations, and sexual aspects. Furthermore, marital role sharing in terms of chores or financial contribution, as well as aspects related to the family of origin, were also found to be potentially stressful for newlyweds. However, various potential protective factors exist which may help newlyweds to manage the stressors of the newlywed transition. A variety of protective factors was found in previous literature, and will be discussed in the next section of the chapter.

Potential Protective Factors in the Newlywed Period

A variety of psychosocial factors may contribute to the successful management of newlywed adaptations. Neff and Broady (2011) maintain that the environmental context in which married couples function plays a role in marital outcomes. Generally, couples adapt more successfully to challenges and have higher levels of relationship satisfaction when they have good communication skills (Clements, Stanley, & Markman, 2004; Epstein, Warfel, Johnson, Smith & McKinney, 2013), sufficient financial resources (Dew, 2009) and effective problem solving abilities (Cohen, Geron and Farchi, 2010; Dennison, Koerner, & Segrin, 2014; Park & Park, 2013). According to Chi et al. (2011), social support was also found to be an

important coping resource during stressful periods amongst 1749 Chinese married participants. In addition, religious beliefs may also serve as a protective factor in a new marriage (Ellison, Burdette, & Wilcox, 2010; Fincham & Beach, 2010; Hernandez, Mahoney, & Pargament, 2011; Mahoney, 2010). Furthermore, certain personality traits (Cattell, 1989; Luo et al., 2008; O'Rourke, Claxton, Chou, Smith, & Hadjistavropoulos, 2011), education (Kreager, Felson, Warner, & Wenger, 2013; Woszidlo & Segrin, 2013), and a strong couple identity (Badr, Acitelli, & Taylor, 2007; Reid, Dalton, Laderoute, Doell, & Nguyen, 2006) have also been found to serve a protective function.

Communication skills. First of all, a couple's general premarital communication style may serve as a protective or risk factor during the first few years of marriage (Markman et al., 2010). Premarital couples with a high quality of communication were found to have higher levels of marital quality up to 10 years into the marriage (Clements et al., 2004), whilst high levels of negative premarital communication patterns were associated with lower levels of marital adjustment during the first five years of marriage (Markman et al., 2010). Epstein et al. (2013) also confirm the benefits of good communication skills. In their American study, over 2000 participants completed surveys on the role of seven different relationship competencies, and through the use of regression analysis they found communication competency to be the most significant predictor of relationship satisfaction. Accordingly, good communication skills may play an important role during the newlywed period by assisting with better marital adjustment, satisfaction, and quality.

Furthermore, various specific types of communication or specific communication skills are associated with positive marital outcomes. For example, David and Stafford (2015) refer to a specific type of communication, namely *religious communication*, and its protective role in marriage. Religious communication may include conversations about God or various aspects of one's religion (David & Stafford, 2015). A specific example of religious communication within a marital context would be if a couple discusses God's (or a chosen deity's) plans for their relationship (David & Stafford, 2015). In a study with 342 married couples, these authors found that religious communication was positively associated with marital quality and marital satisfaction. Therefore, it may be beneficial for religious newlyweds to purposefully engage in conversations about religious aspects for the sake of an improved marital relationship. Another important type of communication in marriage is *sexual communication*; in other words,

communication about sex. Sexual communication in marriage serves a number of functions (Hess & Coffelt, 2012). These functions include the achievement of both personal and relationship goals. In a study by Hess and Coffelt (2012) with 293 married participants, it is shown that there is an association between the use of sexual terms and marital satisfaction. Therefore, the use of sexual communication, specifically the utilisation of specific sexual terminology, may serve a protective function during the newlywed period.

Other researchers have chosen to focus on specific communication skills rather than types of communication. Burleson and Denton (2014) examine the relationship between supportive communication (for example, offering comfort and ego support), initiator tendency (namely, the tendency to initiate or avoid discussion about relationship problems), and marital satisfaction in 60 married couples. They discovered that initiator tendency in the husbands was positively correlated with marital satisfaction in their wives, but only if the husbands valued supportive communication skills. In addition, the wives' initiator tendency was positively associated with the husbands' marital satisfaction, regardless of the value placed on supportive communication by the wives (Burleson & Denton, 2014). Consequently, newlyweds may improve their marriages by deliberately initiating discussions about relationship problems, in combination with supportive communication, when necessary.

Financial resources and financial management skills. Furthermore, existing studies indicate that access to sufficient financial resources, as well as having good financial management skills, may be beneficial in marriage. In the first place, access to financial resources is generally associated with higher life satisfaction. In a sample of 1284 participants, Howell, Kurai and Tam (2013) found that, as the participants' economic status improved, their perception of financial security increased, which led to higher life satisfaction. In the second place, access to financial resources within a marital context has also been explored previously. For instance, Dew (2009) found that couples' assets tend to be positively correlated with wives' marital satisfaction.

In addition, research findings indicate that never arguing about finances during the first few years of marriage is a statistically significant predictor of high relationship satisfaction later in marriage (Britt & Huston, 2012). Certain financial management practices in particular seem to play a role in satisfactory marital relationships. According to Skogrand, Johnson, Horrocks, and DeFrain (2011), couples who self-identify as having very high quality marriages

allow one spouse to manage the day-to-day finances (accompanied by trust and good communication in this regard), have very little debt or at least have a plan for paying off their debt, and live within their means. Therefore, it seems as if having financial resources, or at least living within one's means and managing the financial resources that one does have, may be a protective factor for newlyweds.

Conflict management skills. Research also shows that problem solving or conflict resolution skills are important skills to have in a marriage. Conflict management skills are an important set of skills that is often included in preventative relationship education programmes (Bradley & Gottman, 2012). According to Bradley and Gottman (2012), conflict management is vitally important in the prevention of relationship problems and contributes to improved relationship stability and quality. These authors developed a program in which various relationship skills, including conflict management skills, were taught to 62 low-income couples with a tendency towards aggressive interactions. In comparison to a control group, intimate partner violence was reduced (measured at various points in time) through the skills-based training they provided. Thus, purposefully teaching at-risk engaged or newlywed couples various skills, including conflict management skills, may reduce the risk of physical aggression in their homes.

Furthermore, the presence of conflict management skills, specifically in relation to healthy marriages, has been explored by a number of researchers. For example, Cohen et al. (2010) investigate the presence and level of nine different relationship aspects in three types of enduring marriages (first and only marriages that had lasted for at least 40 years) in 51 couples. The three types of enduring marriages discovered were vitalised marriages (with high marital quality and marital satisfaction), satisfactory marriages (with lower levels of marital quality, but not significantly lower satisfaction than in vitalised marriages), and conflictual marriages (with poor marital quality and marital satisfaction). They discovered that in the group of vitalised marriages, problem solving capabilities were high and satisfactory for both spouses. The authors also found that amongst all the aspects assessed, problem solving or conflict resolution varied the most between the three types of enduring marriages. In addition, conflict resolution was the most significant determinant of the quality of enduring marriages (Cohen et al., 2010). A supplementary example is seen in a study with 307 migrant females in Korea, in which problem-solving ability was correlated with marital satisfaction (Park & Park, 2013).

Further analysis of the results shows that problem-solving ability acts as a mediator between acculturation stress and marital satisfaction. In addition, more recent research by Dennison et al. (2014) indicates that, amongst the 190 couples that partook in the study, the newlywed individuals' conflict resolution styles are predictive of their own marital satisfaction, as well as that of their spouses. Therefore, it is postulated that individual conflict resolution styles or problem solving skills brought to a marriage may serve as a protective factor during the newlywed phase, as well as later in the marriage.

Social support. Another potential protective factor may be social support, as research indicates that social support external to the couple, as well as support by one's spouse, plays a significant role in marriage. For instance, in stress-coping literature, social support has been revealed to play a significant part in the relationship between stressors and marital quality (Ben-Ari & Lavee, 2005; Chi et al., 2011). Some previous literature focuses specifically on the perceived support of friends and family. An example of this is research conducted by Chi et al. (2011) with 1749 Chinese participants. In this study it is found that perceived social support by friends and family plays a role in marital adjustment amidst various external pressures (Chi et al., 2011). In addition, Messersmith, Kunkel, and Guthrie (2015) conducted research that specifically examined the perceived social support received during the engagement period by 36 newlywed couples. The couples in the study considered the support received by others to be mostly beneficial during the engagement period, and they identified family, friends and counsellors/mentors as their primary sources of social support. Parents were considered to be particularly prominent providers of support during the engagement period. Furthermore, five types of support were identified, namely: emotional support, informational support, tangible support, esteem support, and network support. The support category that emerged most prominently and as the most beneficial type of support was emotional support, and this included encouragement, expressions of enthusiasm, and physical displays of caring during stressful times (Messersmith et al., 2015). Thus, perceived social support by friends and family may play a protective role during the engagement and newlywed period.

Support by one's own spouse may also serve as a protective factor during the newlywed period and throughout one's marriage. For example, an American longitudinal study with 172 married couples by Sullivan, Johnson, Pasch, and Bradbury (2010) indicates that social support behaviour between spouses is a significant predictor of marital satisfaction over time. They

also found that the type of social support behaviour (whether negative or positive) shown tends to remain stable over time, and influences the type of problem solving behaviour engaged in. In addition, when newlywed spouses are unable to provide or ask for support, they tend to experience greater levels of negativity during conflict management, and are at greater risk of divorce later in their marriage (Sullivan et al., 2010). A more recent study with a nationally representative sample of 1923 American married couples over the age of 50 also shows the importance of social support for relational and individual well-being (Ryan, Wan, & Smith, 2014). This research found that perceived spousal support is linked to higher subjective health ratings, and fewer functional problems. A further study of the importance of social support in marriage was conducted by Sullivan, Pasch, Lawrence and Bradbury (2015). The authors investigated the interaction between physical aggression, support behaviours, and marital outcomes. They discovered that physical aggression erodes marital stability and leads to greater risk of divorce by reducing husbands' support-seeking behaviour, and by decreasing wives' support-giving behaviours. Consequently, it may be helpful for newlywed couples to actively engage in supportive behaviour, as well as to seek out additional social support outside of the marriage.

Religion. Furthermore, a number of international studies have yielded findings indicating a significant relationship between religion and marital satisfaction in general (David & Stafford, 2015; Ellison et al., 2010; Hernandez et al., 2011; Mahoney, 2010). Specifically, an individual's relationship with God (or a deity of one's choice) has also been indirectly linked with marital quality (David & Stafford, 2015). This link may be accounted for by the emphasis religion places on love, compromise and forgiveness, the presence of which may help maintain greater marital satisfaction (Ellison et al., 2010). Related to the concept of religiosity is the idea of sanctification (Mahoney, 2010). Sanctification in marriage refers to viewing God (or a deity) as being a significant part of one's marriage or viewing elements of transcendence and purpose in the marriage (Hernandez et al., 2011). Research has discovered that viewing marriage as sacred is correlated with higher levels of marital well-being, and greater investment in and commitment to the relationship (Hernandez et al., 2011).

In addition, the joint participation in religious activities by spouses has been linked to greater marital adjustment (Lichter & Carmalt, 2009). Marital adjustment is considered to be a complex construct which includes aspects such as satisfaction, cohesion, consensus, and

affection in a marriage (Levin, Greene, & Solomon, 2016; Spanier, 1976). This is also supported by a large scale American study with 1995 participants, which found that when husbands and wives are both very religious, marital adjustment scores are significantly higher than that of less religious spouses (Schramm, Marshall, Harris & Lee, 2012). Furthermore, a Turkish qualitative study explores the role of religion in marital problem solving amongst 30 couples who had been married for at least 20 years (Balkanlioglu, 2014). The majority of the couples experience their religion as helpful in the problem solving process, and believe that their religion offers solutions to marital problems. Finally, a recent study conducted with 39 African American couples who had been married on average for 32 years discovered that religion is identified as the resource relied on most often in times of challenge (Vaterlaus, Skogrand, & Chaney, 2015). Consequently, religion may serve as a protective factor during the newlywed period.

Inherent personality traits. Previous literature also indicates that some personality traits may make it easier to adapt to marriage, or make it more likely that one will have a satisfactory marital relationship. For example, in seminal research, Cattell (1989) found that individuals that score highly on emotional stability (on the 16 Personality Fields questionnaire) tend to make better spouses than those individuals who score low in this field. In addition, researchers have also examined the role of the Five Factor model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992) in marriage. According to Luo et al. (2008), one spouse's level of neuroticism, openness, and agreeableness is predictive of the other spouse's marital adjustment. Furthermore, O'Rourke et al. (2011) conducted a study in which they examine the role of the Big Five personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism) in predicting marital satisfaction in couples who had been married for 30 years on average. They found that couples who show high extraversion (when an average was calculated based on both spouses' individual scores) experience greater levels of marital satisfaction. The same result was found for conscientiousness scores: when couples average high in conscientiousness, husbands in particular experience greater marital satisfaction (O'Rourke et al., 2011). High levels of agreeableness have also been found to be beneficial in marriage. Agreeableness has been shown to have a mediating effect between forgiveness and re-offending in relationships, with forgiveness being negatively associated with re-offending, but only amongst agreeable people (McNulty & Russel, 2016). As a result, it seems as if inherent

personality traits may either play a protective role or put couples at risk during the newlywed period and throughout the marriage.

Tertiary education. Furthermore, tertiary education may have indirect positive effects on marriage, as indicated by previous research. For example, Woszidlo and Segrin (2013) discovered that higher education levels were related to higher levels of self-reported mutual problem solving and marital quality, as well as better communication skills, in 186 married couples. In addition, their results indicate that educational attainment positively correlates with greater personal commitment to the relationship. Furthermore, a negative correlation has been found between women's level of education and divorce (Amato, 2010; Cherlin, 2010). This appears to be at least partially accounted for by the fact that more highly educated women tend to have more stable marriages than less well educated women, which reduces the risk of divorce (Kreager et al., 2013). Thus, newlywed individuals who are well educated may have better skills for negotiating the newlywed period and the adaptations that need to be made. In addition, they may experience more stable, long-lasting marriages as a result. The articles cited in this paragraph are the only articles that could be found that specifically refer to the protective role of tertiary education in marriage (EBSCOHOST & Google scholar search; 16 October 2016). Therefore, a lacuna clearly exists in the research on this point. Yet the results discussed above are noteworthy, and the protective role and benefits of tertiary education in relation to marriage warrant further exploration.

Couple identity. Lastly, a strong couple identity may serve as a protective factor in the newlywed period. A *couple identity* refers to seeing the relationship as an entity, instead of simply viewing two individuals as being part of a relationship (Acitelli, Rogers, & Knee, 1999; Miller & Caughlin, 2013; Reid et al., 2006). In addition, this entity is seen as an extension of oneself (Acitelli et al., 1999). Even for couples who have dated for a long time or have lived together, the formalisation of marriage seems to reinforce their couple identity (Burgoyne et al., 2010). This may appear to be yet another adaptation that is required as a newlywed; one which may even be stressful for some individuals (Hall & Adams, 2011). However, a couple identity may also serve a protective function in the marriage. According to Badr et al. (2007), having a strong couple identity may act as a cognitive resource during stressful times. Badr et al. (2007) reveal that having a strong couple identity serves as a mediating factor in the stress

processes of individuals who have to act as caretakers for terminally ill spouses. In these individuals, a couple identity is associated with better mental health outcomes. Reid et al. (2006) conclude that constant reinforcement of one's shared couple identity (with one's spouse) is associated with greater relationship satisfaction. The study also posits that a couple identity can consciously be induced for the sake of greater satisfaction. Unfortunately, recent research on couple identity is sparse (Miller & Caughlin, 2013), and the role of a strong couple identity in newlywed marriage is worth further research.

In summary, the newlywed period may be accompanied by a number of adaptations, but a number of protective factors exist which may assist newlyweds during this time. Many potential protective factors can be found in the literature, including good communication skills, sufficient financial resources, and effective problem solving abilities. Social support, religious beliefs and certain personality traits have also been found to be helpful in marital adjustment. Finally, educational attainment and a strong couple identity also serve as protective factors in marriage according to previous literature. These protective factors may be viewed within a specific theoretical framework. In the next section, the focus will shift from a general view of the newlywed period, to a more specific theoretical perspective on this stage. The newlywed period and its potential challenges will be viewed from a Salutogenic perspective, with a strong focus on Sense of Coherence and General Resistance Resources (Antonovsky, 1979; 1987).

Stress, Salutogenesis, Sense of Coherence, and General Resistance Resources

Stress. Stress is associated with problems in couples' relationships, including communication problems, aggression, a decrease in relationship satisfaction, and the dissolution of relationships (Allen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2010; Buck & Neff, 2012; Langer, Lawrence, & Barry, 2008). Although marriage is a normative transitional life event which can be anticipated and planned for, it is still a life event which may prove stressful for some newlyweds (Chi et al., 2011). Holmes and Rahe (1967) developed the Life Stress Inventory, in which marriage is rated as the seventh most stressful event an individual can experience out of a possible 43 life events. Consequently, it can be theorised that a seemingly positive life event is also potentially a highly stressful experience.

Stress has been defined as bodily or mental tension caused by factors which alter the body's balance (Bishopric, 2012), or as something which occurs when an imbalance exists between knowledge about the existence of certain needs and knowledge about ways in which to satisfy these needs (Schneiderman, Ironson, & Siegel, 2005). One of the most prominent authors in stress literature is Hans Selye, who developed the concept of the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). According to Selye (1936), when one faces a threat one moves through three stages, namely: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. He explains that the exhaustion stage is reached if or once one's resources are depleted. Furthermore, he also distinguishes between eustress and distress (Selye, 1936). Eustress is a positive, motivating type of stress, whereas distress is the result of persistent stresses, to which one is unable to adapt effectively.

All of the above-mentioned definitions of stress/stressors can be applied to marriage. However, Antonovsky's (1979) definition provides a framework against which marriage is viewed in the current study. A *stressor* is defined by Antonovsky (1979; p. 72) as "a demand made by the internal or external environment of an organism that upsets its homeostasis, restoration of which depends on a non-automatic and not readily available energy expending action." Marriage makes certain adaptation demands on a newlywed, which may upset his or her balance and cause tension. In addition, for people getting married for the first time, marriage is a new experience for which automatic responses are not readily available, and they are required to actively seek out and make use of various resources to manage the adaptations in order to return to a sense of homeostasis. Furthermore, Antonovsky (1987) divides stressors into three categories, namely: chronic stressors, major life events, and acute daily hassles. Marriage could be classified as a major life event as it is "specifiable in time and space" (Antonovsky, 1987; p. 29). According to Antonovsky (1987), major life events are expected, yet may have unexpected consequences which could possibly cause tension. In the case of marriage, the unexpected consequences may include the required adaptations that were discussed earlier. These adaptations may include financial considerations, decisions about childbearing, issues related to in-laws, unmet marital expectations, misconceptions about sex, deciding on satisfactory marital role-sharing, and conflict related to spouses' families of origin. In addition, Antonovsky's definition was chosen as it is directly related to his concept of *Salutogenesis* which takes a very positive view of stress in general. This perspective fits well with the study, as marriage itself is a positive event which brings numerous potential benefits, if the adaptations are managed effectively.

Salutogenesis. *Salutogenesis* refers to the question of the origins of health (Antonovsky, 1979; 1987). Antonovsky proposed the Salutogenic model to account for the reason why, despite facing significant stressors, many people manage to stay healthy. Here *health* is defined as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being” (World Health Organisation as cited in Antonovsky, 1979; p. 52). According to Antonovsky (1987; p. 7), the assumption that “stressors are inherently bad” is incorrect. Confrontation by a stressor results in a state of tension that needs to be dealt with. The outcome can then be pathological, neutral, or positive depending on the adequacy of one’s tension management (Antonovsky, 1987).

Sense of Coherence and General Resistance Resources. Antonovsky (1979; 1987) considers one’s overall Sense of Coherence (hereafter SOC) and the availability and use of General Resistance Resources (GRRs) to be the origin of health. Various potential protective factors for a new marriage have already been discussed. These factors can be seen as tools for managing the tension caused by the potential stressor (the adaptations of marriage). In the current study, these protective factors will be explored from a GRRs perspective. General Resistance Resources are defined as “any characteristic of the person, the group or the environment that can facilitate effective tension management” (Antonovsky, 1979, p. 99). As GRRs are used to manage challenges, an individual comes to experience life and the events that occur as increasingly more comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful. These three aspects are the core components of SOC.

Sense of Coherence is an individual’s overall orientation to life that expresses the belief that the world is structured, expected and understandable, that there are resources available to help meet demands, and that it is worthwhile to invest in and engage with these demands (Antonovsky, 1979; 1987). People who have a higher SOC are usually healthier and adapt better to changes and stressful life events than people with a low SOC. In addition, Antonovsky (1987) theorises that people with a strong SOC are better able to mobilise appropriate combinations of GRRs in seeking solutions to problems. Therefore, GRRs and SOC work together in a circular way. Consequently, the current study investigates whether newlywed individuals may be able to manage psychosocial challenges more successfully in their first year of marriage through the utilisation of GRRs. Although not directly explored in this study, theoretically the newlyweds’ overall SOC may be increased by using GRRs, assisting them in facing future challenges with greater potential for success (by making it more likely that they

employ the most appropriate and helpful GRRs at their disposal at that time) (Antonovsky, 1979; 1987).

As already discussed, GRRs include *any* characteristic that can be utilised to effectively manage tension (Antonovsky, 1979; 1987). However, this is quite a broad definition of GRRs, and it may be beneficial to consider a more detailed description and some specific examples of GRRs. Antonovsky (1979, p. 103) has taken the term *any characteristic* and mapped this more specifically into any “*physical, biochemical, artefactual-material, cognitive, emotional, valuative-attitudinal, interpersonal-relational, or macrosociocultural*” characteristics that can be used in effective tension management.

Physical and biochemical GRRs may include innate or biological characteristics such as genetics or neurological plasticity (Antonovsky, 1979). In terms of newlyweds specifically, these biological characteristics may refer to the newlyweds’ genetically determined temperament or personality traits, which may be drawn on to adapt better in a new marriage. As discussed earlier in this chapter, certain personality traits have been shown to be beneficial in the marital relationship.

Artefactual-material GRRs refer to one’s access to money or material resources (Antonovsky, 1979). It can be postulated that newlyweds who have ample financial resources may adapt better to marriage than newlyweds who are struggling financially and have a lack of monetary resources. This can be linked to the earlier discussions on the necessary financial adaptation in the first year of marriage, as well as to the discussion of money as a protective factor in marriage.

Cognitive GRRs include knowledge and intelligence (Antonovsky, 1979), which are generally acquired through formal education. Knowledge and intelligence serve as GRRs because they allow a person to access the necessary information (or additional resources) to solve problems and manage tension (Antonovsky, 1979). It can be linked to the protective factor of educational attainment as previously discussed, which has generally been found to be beneficial in marriage.

Emotional GRRs include a strong ego identity (Antonovsky, 1979). A strong ego identity alludes to an individual who has a stable, integrated sense of self whilst still being able to remain flexible (Antonovsky, 1979). According to Erikson (1968) ego identity refers to a combination of consciousness (differences in specific situations) and process (consistency in

changing circumstances). This also seems to express the idea of stability across time, whilst being flexible if necessary. Specific literature was not found with regards to ego identity being a protective factor in marriage. However, an emotional GRR would be relevant if a newlywed refers to their own identity as being stable despite their changing status (to that of being a spouse), whilst being flexible enough to incorporate this new role into their established sense of self.

Valuative-attitudinal GRRs are individuals' particular coping styles. A coping style can be defined as the combination of functional or dysfunctional cognitive and behavioural strategies used to manage stress (Weiten, 2013). Three overarching coping styles have been identified: task-orientated coping, avoidance coping, and emotion-orientated coping (Endler & Parker, 1994). A coping style that is characterised by high levels of farsightedness, flexibility, and rationality can be seen as a beneficial GRR for tension management (Antonovsky, 1979).

Interpersonal-relational characteristics that may be considered as GRRs include aspects associated with relationships and belonging (Antonovsky, 1979). These relational aspects consist of perceived social support, social ties to another person/ persons, and a sense of commitment. This can be linked to the discussions on social support and a couple identity as potential protective factors in marriage earlier in the chapter.

Lastly, *macrosociocultural GRRs* include one's culture as a resource for managing tension, as one's culture provides a sense of belonging, gives answers and prescribed ways of responding to environmental demands, and acts as a source of knowledge for unexpected occurrences (Antonovsky, 1979). Culture is defined as customary values and beliefs that *social, religious, and ethnic groups* (emphasis added) transmit from one generation to the next (Guiso, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2006). From this definition it can be seen that a *cultural group* may refer to one's social, religious, or ethnic group. Therefore, one's belonging in/to any of these groups may serve as a GRR. Antonovsky (1979; 1987) refers to culture as a GRR, implicitly including one's social, religious, or ethnic group as GRRs. However, he also chooses to elaborate specifically on one type of cultural group, namely religion. According to Antonovsky (1979), religion is also a *macrosociocultural GRR* which provides various aspects that make tension management easier and more effective (Antonovsky, 1979). Religion's role as a protective factor within marriage has also previously been discussed in this chapter.

As already mentioned, potential protective factors for the newlywed period will be discussed in the current study from a GRR perspective. Therefore, these specific categories of GRRs will be important concepts throughout the rest of the study.

Recent research indicates that a strong SOC may hold a number of individual mental health benefits. For instance, a study conducted in Greece with 220 individuals visiting a rural primary health care facility revealed that higher SOC scores are related with lower scores on the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) (Anyfantakis et al., 2015). These results support an earlier Greek study amongst 122 patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (Tselebis et al., 2013), in which the researchers found that with every one point increase in SOC, the depression score was reduced by 0.21 points. Furthermore, a Swedish study amongst 139 adolescent girls also showed a significant negative correlation between SOC and BDI scores (Henje, Serlachius, Larsson, Theorell, & Ingvar, 2010). In other areas of research, SOC has been investigated in relation to health-related quality of life (HRQoL). HRQoL refers to a patient's functioning and well-being in terms of illness and treatment (Fairclough, 2010). The higher a patient's SOC, the higher their HRQoL tends to be (Floyd et al., 2010; Langius-Eklöf, Lidman, & Wredling, 2009; Rohani, Abedi, Sundberg, & Langius-Eklöf, 2015). In addition, people with a strong SOC are less likely to experience controllable negative life events (Hochwalder, 2015), generally perceive their lives as less stressful overall, and tend to rate life events as less stressful than other people (Siman-Tov & Kaniel, 2011).

Antonovsky and Sourani (1988) also developed the idea of a family sense of coherence, rather than only an individually held SOC. In a Chinese study with 128 couples it was revealed that couples who held a strong family sense of coherence reported better family functioning and less anxiety (Ngai & Ngu, 2011). Family sense of coherence was also found to be beneficial during the transition to parenthood amongst 224 Chinese couples (Ngai & Ngu, 2014). Family sense of coherence directly influenced depressive symptoms in both parents, and mediated the effect of stress on marital functioning. A further example of SOC in relation to marriage is a study conducted with 147 Finnish cancer patients and their spouses (Gustavsson-Lilius, Julkunen, Keskivaara, Lipsanen, & Hietanen, 2012). The patients with high levels of SOC were found to have lower levels of anxiety and depression. The effect of SOC also seemed to indirectly affect the spouses in the study. Higher levels of SOC in one spouse were found to be partially associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression in the other spouse (Gustavsson-Lilius et al., 2012).

It is problematic that research specifically focused on General Resistance Resources is limited (EBSCOHOST search, 16 October 2016). This may be because GRRs are implicitly part of SOC (for which research has been cited previously). According to Antonovsky (1979; 1987), individuals who make use of GRRs come to experience life as manageable, meaningful, and comprehensible, leading to a higher SOC. Individuals with a high SOC in turn make use of more GRRs, more frequently. Thus, these two concepts are linked in a circular way.

However, a Japanese study indirectly referred to the GRRs used by Japanese athletes (Endo, Kanou, & Oishi, 2012). The study discovered that amongst their 716 participants, athletes generally had a higher SOC than non-athletes. SOC also increased in relation to the duration of time athletes had participated in sport. This particular study accounts for the increase of SOC over time through the mechanism of GRRs provided by partaking in sport. Personal characteristics which increased through participation in sport include a sense of sport competence, self-worth, physical strength, and an attractive body (Uchida et al., 2003 as cited in Endo et al., 2012), which have been found to lead to positive emotions and moods (Hashimoto, 2000 as cited in Endo et al., 2012). These positive moods and emotions may enhance stress management. The authors classify the enhanced emotions and moods as GRRs through this mechanism (Endo et al., 2012), and account for a higher SOC in athletes, because of these GRRs.

In another study (Griffiths, Ryan, & Foster, 2011), Antonovsky's theory was applied to 20 Scandinavian mental health service users. Semi-structured interviews which focused on problems the participants had experienced in their lives, and the way in which they had adapted and coped with these problems were conducted. The researchers mapped SOC theory onto the data, and this revealed that various previously identified GRRs were used by their participants to cope. All of the emergent themes were able to be classified according to SOC theory and the definition of GRRs. The researchers emphasised that this study was not done to add anything to Antonovsky's theory, but rather to affirm its relevance and applicability to recent research and samples (Griffiths et al., 2011).

In conclusion, a new marriage may be accompanied by a number of potentially stressful challenges. Stress has a number of negative consequences for individuals and their relationships. However, stress is not inherently bad. Stressors cause tension that need to be managed, and if managed well, stressors can have positive outcomes. Seven types of GRRs are

at a newlywed's disposal for the management of tension: Physical and biochemical GRRs, artefactual-material GRRs, cognitive GRRs, emotional GRRs, valutive-attitudinal GRRs, interpersonal-relational GRRs, and macrosociocultural GRRs. When taking a Salutogenic perspective of the newlywed period, it can be seen that SOC and the use of GRRs are a way in which newlyweds can remain healthy and well-functioning and achieve positive relationship outcomes. Recent international literature supports the use and benefit of GRRs, as well as the benefit of building a strong SOC (through the use of GRRs). However, little is known about the experiences of South African newlyweds in this regard.

Consequently, the current study's aim is to explore the psychosocial challenges experienced during the newlywed period, as well as to identify the use of GRRs in the management of these challenges, in a South African context. Therefore, the study's specific objective is to explore the psychosocial challenges experienced most frequently and the General Resistance Resources used most often in a sample of newlyweds, using Antonovsky's (1979; 1987) framework of Sense of Coherence and General Resistance Resources. The methodology utilised in the current study will be described in the next chapter, followed by the study's results and a discussion thereof.

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

2.1. Research Objective

The objective of this study is to explore and describe the unique psychosocial challenges experienced most frequently by newlywed individuals and the General Resistance Resources (GRRs) used to adapt to these challenges.

2.2. Research Design

The study makes use of an interpretative research paradigm with a qualitative methodology. An interpretative paradigm takes the stance that reality exists only through social constructions such as shared meaning, consciousness, and language (Myers, 2009). Therefore, an interpretative paradigm allows for a fuller understanding of the subjective, unique reality of the newlywed individuals (Howitt, 2011). In addition, from an interpretive paradigm, meaning is co-constructed by the researcher and the participant and comes to exist through the relationship between the two (Malterud, 2016). Thus reflexivity plays an essential role in this paradigm, as it allows the researcher to acknowledge his or her role in the research process and the constructed reality (Finlay, 2008). Reflexivity will be discussed under a separate heading later on in the chapter.

Qualitative research is useful when one is interested in researching human behaviour, as this may at times be too complex to capture purely in quantitative research (Isaacs, 2014). According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is a process of inquiry in which the researcher analyses words and reports detailed perspectives of participants in order to build a complex, holistic understanding of a phenomenon. Accordingly, qualitative methodology allows for a more complex, holistic description of the experiences of South African newlyweds and how they perceive their first year of marriage. In addition, qualitative methodology is particularly helpful in exploring the experiences of a group on whom little research has previously been conducted in South Africa.

A multiple case study design is utilised (Yin, 2013) in this research. Yin (2013) defines case study research as “an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon set within its real-world context” (p. 4). Furthermore, a case study design allows experiences to be captured in rich detail (Vohra, 2014). When participants and their experiences are embedded in a context, a case study design is the most appropriate design to use, as context is deliberately part

of the design (Yin, 2013). By using a multiple case study design in this study, more than one case was considered, allowing for replication and confirmation of the emerging information (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In addition, this design allows the newlyweds' experiences to be captured in rich detail, and makes provision for each participant to be viewed within the context of their unique marriage.

2.3. Sampling Procedures and Participants

Participants were identified and recruited through purposive sampling (Neuman, 2012). Purposive sampling is often used in exploratory research and is appropriate for use when one wants to access in-depth information from individuals with specific experiences or knowledge (Neuman, 2012).

Seven heterosexual newlyweds (from seven different couples) were identified and recruited through word of mouth communication and the use of social media (Facebook). The use of social media as a main platform for communication and information-seeking is very high amongst adolescents and young adults (Maczewski, 2007). According to the South African Media Landscape (2015), Facebook is the most popular social network in South Africa. It is reported that 11, 8 million South Africans make use of Facebook (22% of the population). Therefore, Facebook appeared to be a valid platform to access a large amount of South African individuals between the ages of 18 and 30 years. In addition, American research has found that social media is a viable research recruitment method (Yuan, Bare, Johnson, & Saberi, 2014), and that participants recruited in this way show no difference in ethnicity, education, gender, or income when compared to people recruited using traditional media (Frandsen, Walters, & Ferguson, 2014). Facebook has an almost equal amount of female and male South African users (SA Social Media Landscape, 2015). An invitation to participate in the study was placed on the researcher's Facebook profile daily in English and in Afrikaans for eight weeks. The invitation was also placed on the discussion boards of 13 different public Facebook groups repeatedly for the same period of time. Individuals who were interested in participating, or knew someone who would be interested, were asked to contact the researcher via her email address or cell phone number rather than on Facebook, in order to protect their anonymity from other Facebook users. A number of inclusion criteria were applied when recruiting the sample.

Firstly, the participants needed to be married for the first time. This was to ensure that this had been the first time that the individuals had been required to make the adjustments that

may accompany marriage. Secondly, the participants were to be married between six months and a year at the time of the first interview. This was to give the individuals time to settle into the new roles of the marriage and to allow for a time period in which adjustments may have needed to be made (Lavner et al., 2012; Lavner et al., 2013; Neff & Broady, 2011). Thirdly, the participants were required to be between the ages of 18 and 30 years. The focus was on one life-stage only in order to limit the possibility of age-related or developmental factors acting as nuisance variables if using participants from differing life-stages. In addition, according to Antonovsky (1979; 1987), one's Sense of Coherence (SOC) can only be increased until age 30, after which point it is at a set level. Because it might be beneficial for participants to be encouraged to increase their use of General Resistance Resources (GRRs) after the study, and consequently increase their overall SOC, the age limit of 30 years was applied to the sample. Fourthly, the participants (or the participants' spouses) must not have had children or have been expecting a child at the time of the first interview. Research indicates that the arrival of a child has a significant effect on marital satisfaction and other dynamics and roles within the marriage (Dew & Wilcox, 2011; Nezhad & Goodarzi, 2011). Consequently, the focus of this research is on the adjustments and challenges that have resulted directly from the new marriage itself, and this may be complicated by the possible confounding effect of a child within the new marriage. Fifthly, the participants must not have lived with their spouses before the wedding. This was an inclusion criterion because in co-habiting relationships, many of the traditional components of marriage are already seen (Ogunsola, 2011). These components may include, amongst other aspects, sharing economic resources, considering the possibility of child-bearing, and sharing a home and home-related responsibilities (Ogunsola, 2011). Therefore, couples who live together before marriage already start to address many of the challenges that newlyweds who did not live together before marriage only start to address after the wedding. The sixth inclusion criterion is that the participants needed to be able to express themselves effectively in Afrikaans or English, as these are the languages in which the researcher is competent. Lastly, the participants must not have been previously diagnosed with a psychological disorder. The reason for this inclusion criterion is that the presence of a psychological disorder in one of the spouses may be the cause of stress, unrelated to the adaptation of the new marriage itself (Lavner et al., 2016).

All seven participants were white, Afrikaans-speaking, Christian individuals. However, these demographic factors were not sought out intentionally, and the inclusion criteria did not limit participants to these specific demographics. Furthermore, as was discussed earlier, the

invitation to participate in the study was placed on a large number of public Facebook groups, open to a great amount of people with varied demographics. In addition, as also already discussed, participants recruited through social media have not been found to differ demographically when compared to traditional media recruitment (Frandsen et al., 2014), and theoretically, a more varied sample should have been accessed. In terms of other demographic variables, the sample consisted of five females and two males. Six of the participants held university degrees, and the ages of the participants ranged from age 22 to 28 years. Table 1 provides a summary of the participants' demographic factors.

Table 1

Demographics of the current study's participants

Participant (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Occupation	Length of marriage
Andrea	Female	24	Health care professional	11 months
Amy	Female	28	Lawyer	12 months
Phillip	Male	22	Employee in the construction industry	7 months
James	Male	25	Contract-based university employee	6 months
Tina	Female	23	Teacher	9 months
Simone	Female	25	Health care professional	6 months
Elri	Female	27	Teacher	6 months

2.4. Data Gathering

Data was collected through two rounds of individual semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews permit consistency of questioning whilst still allowing flexibility (Kvale, 2008). This allows for greater depth of data, as well as the emergence of new ideas (Kvale, 2008). In addition, semi-structured interviewing is beneficial for use in research when questions arise from a previous body of knowledge (Rowley, Jones, Vassiliou, & Hanna, 2012). In this study, all participants were asked basic open-ended, pre-determined questions, and additional questions were asked and elaboration sought based on individual responses. For example, questions were asked such as: *How have you experienced the first few months of marriage?* Or: *What challenges have you experienced in this time?* The participant's answers were then expanded on. However, participants were also asked whether they had experienced specific challenges or made use of specific resources, especially if they found it difficult to give specific spontaneous examples from their own experiences (Rowley et al., 2012). These specific questions were informed by the literature review.

Furthermore, two rounds of in-depth interviewing allowed for "thick" data to be elicited (Cooper & Hughes, 2015; Geertz, 1973). "Thick" data is personal and emotionally significant for the participants, and is detailed and expressive (Geertz, 1973). In both rounds of interviews, each of the participants spoke expressively and in detail about their new marriage and their experiences, both positive and negative. In addition, a number of the participants engaged in self-initiated reflection after the first interview, and were able to add various details to the previous data.

After the first interviews were conducted with each individual and the interviews were transcribed, transcriptions were sent to participants via email for member checks to be completed. This was to allow for feedback on whether the intended meaning of their experiences had been captured, and to ensure greater trustworthiness and rigour of the research (Cope, 2014). The transcriptions were password-protected, and the participants were given the necessary password via telephone. Follow-up interviews were then conducted to ensure greater depth of gathered data. Interviews were stopped once data saturation had been reached. The second round of interviews were again transcribed and provided to participants for member checks.

All of the interviews were conducted in a quiet, private room in the psychology department. The first-round interviews took 50 to 90 minutes each to complete. The second-round interviews lasted on average for about 30 minutes each. Furthermore, all of the participants were asked in which language they would prefer to be interviewed. Although all seven participants identified Afrikaans as being their first language, one of the seven participants preferred that the interview be conducted in English. She chose to have the interview conducted in English as she is highly competent in this language and prefers to use it in professional contexts.

2.5. Data Analysis

Once all the data had been transcribed and verified by participants (through member checks), transcriptions were analysed using content analysis. Content analysis transverses qualitative and quantitative methodologies, as it allows for the quantification of qualitative data (Crowe, Inder, & Porter, 2015). Criticism exists regarding the use of content analysis in qualitative research. Some researchers describe content analysis as being limited, because it does not provide enough analytic depth, and occurs only at the manifest level (Crowe et al., 2015). Content analysis is also sometimes considered to be the easiest approach within qualitative research methodology (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). However, as mentioned, content analysis allows for the quantification of data (Crowe et al., 2015), and this is particularly helpful in the current study, as the study aims to explore which challenges are experienced most frequently and which GRRs are relied on most often in a sample of South African newlyweds. Very little information regarding the experience of this particular population group is available. Therefore, having an indication of the frequency with which each category is present provides an indication of the types of challenges newlyweds in South Africa may experience most often, as well as the resources that are used and found to be helpful most often. It must specifically be mentioned that Antonovsky's (1979; 1987) overarching theory of salutogenesis, and specifically his construct of GRRs, is used to categorise the participants' data into meaningful units of analysis.

A wide range of sources were consulted before commencing with the process of content analysis. A few of the sources explicitly indicated that there is no fixed format or one system of rules that are used by all researchers in content analysis, and that a flexible approach may be taken within the overall methodological structure of content analysis

(Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Prasad, 2008). Furthermore, through comparing the content analysis process described or followed by various sources (Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Hamilton et al., 2014; Prasad, 2008; Stempel, 1989) it became clear that although similarities exist between the steps taken, variations were also prominent. Therefore, the content analysis process was guided through comparing and combining the consulted researchers' suggestions (Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Hamilton et al., 2014; Prasad, 2008; Stempel, 1989). Consequently, the current study's analysis is performed in several steps. Firstly, codes are developed prior to analysis, as the aim is to identify specific challenges and GRRs experienced by the newlywed individuals with reference to available literature. Therefore, this study makes use of a priori coding (Riazi, 2016). Secondly, each participant's interview transcriptions are read through once, dividing the text into meaning units and labelling each with a code as evident during this first reading. Each participant's transcriptions are then re-read a second time, continuing with the process of identifying meaning units and labelling these meaning units with codes, as well as making changes to the preliminary meaning units and codes as necessary. Thirdly, each participant's meaning units and codes are recorded in table format. These first three steps are repeated separately with each of the participants' transcriptions. This is then followed by re-reading all interview transcriptions consecutively to ensure greater consistency in the coding used in each individual transcription. Changes are made as necessary, and will be discussed in greater detail in the discussion section. Once the findings were in the process of being written up, it became clear through collaboration with the supervisors that some of the codes could be combined, and this was done. Furthermore, some of the code names were altered to encompass the experiences of the current study's participants more fully. These changes will also be discussed in the reflexivity section.

2.6. Trustworthiness and Rigour

Different criteria exist when examining the quality of quantitative or qualitative research. In quantitative research it is critical that rigour and validity is ensured (Cope, 2014). However, in qualitative research the emphasis is placed on ensuring trustworthiness and rigour (Cope, 2014). Four key criteria needed to be met if trustworthiness was to be enhanced in this study (Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2007). These four criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Firstly, credibility requires that there is consistency between the participants' reality and the presentation of this reality (Ryan et al., 2007). Polit and Beck (2012) also define credibility as the truth of the interpretation and representation of participants' views by the researcher. Credibility was enhanced by means of a research journal in which all decisions made throughout the research process were documented. In addition, interview transcripts were given to the participants for them to correct any errors or to clarify any misperceptions before coding the data, as a means of member checking. Another technique for enhancing credibility entailed the researcher engaging in an on-going process of reflexivity. Reflexivity will be discussed in a separate section under sub-heading 2.7. Lastly, credibility was enhanced through the supervisors' input in the research process. This input included their review and confirmation of codes used and applied during data analysis.

Secondly, transferability refers to being able to apply research findings to other similar contexts or groups (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Polit & Beck, 2012). This criterion is met if the study's results have meaning to readers who were not involved in the study (Cope, 2014). In addition, the criterion is also met if readers can relate the results to their own experiences (Cope, 2014). Transferability is enhanced by describing all methodology and steps taken in detail to allow for duplication by other researchers. Furthermore, the current study provides sufficient details about the participants and the research context so that readers can determine how transferable the results are to their own context.

Thirdly, dependability refers to consistency of data arising from similar research conditions (Polit & Beck, 2012). Furthermore, dependability is enhanced when enough details are given for readers to decide for themselves how dependable a study is (Ryan et al., 2007). Therefore, dependability is improved in the current study by providing readers with a detailed reflexivity section. However, the dependability of the study will also be ascertained if future researchers obtain the same results with similar participants in similar contexts (Koch, 2006).

Fourthly, confirmability requires that a clear description be given as to how conclusions and interpretations were reached (Ryan et al., 2007). This allows the researcher to demonstrate that data represents participants' responses, rather than the researcher's biases (Polit & Beck, 2012). The reflexivity section has been included in order to enhance confirmability, by allowing readers to understand the thought processes involved in the data analysis, as well as decisions taken throughout the research process.

2.7. Reflexivity and Positioning

One of the critiques of qualitative research is that it is overly subjective (Nayar & Stanley, 2015). Qualitative researchers agree that researchers cannot separate themselves from their culture or past experiences, and approach research with a specific view of reality. However, this does not have to be a limitation if the researcher explicitly clarifies their personal and epistemological beliefs. The clarification of beliefs is known as *positioning*. Positioning allows for readers to view research findings in light of what they know about the researcher's perspective (Nayar & Stanley, 2015). Reflexivity is a way in which one's positioning is made known. Furthermore, reflexivity is defined as the constant process of self-reflection by the researcher in order to increase the researcher's awareness of their perceptions, feelings, and actions (Hughes, 2014). In addition, reflexivity improves qualitative research by promoting rigour and through increased rigour, credibility of findings is also enhanced (Bishop & Holmes, 2013; Bover, 2013).

One way for the researcher to clarify their positioning is for the researcher to explain to the reader what the personal relevance of the research is, and why the researcher chose to do that specific research (Nayar & Stanley, 2015). I have a personal interest in the topic of marriage, both professionally and personally. I have had an interest in marriage and family counselling for a number of years, and felt that conducting my research on the experiences of newlyweds would increase my knowledge and would be applicable to my future work with clients. On a personal level, I am also in early adulthood and have been involved in a relationship for the past five years. I am currently engaged and will be getting married in 2017. Therefore, I had certain expectations and questions about my own future marriage, and was interested to learn about the experiences of other newlyweds as a way of personal preparation.

I was surprised by some of the data obtained. I had made some assumptions from my own experiences and perceptions about which aspects the participants would experience as distressing. For example, I had expected that the majority of the participants would share details of conflictual in-law relationships, as well as pressure from family or acquaintances with regards to the childbearing decision. However, these assumptions were not confirmed by the data. Instead, other psychosocial challenges which had not previously occurred to me, based on my own perceptions or from reading previous literature, emerged as prominent psychosocial challenges of the newlywed period. These results will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

Another way of clarifying my positioning for readers (Nayar & Stanley, 2015) is to elucidate my personal demographic factors, such as my gender, race, language, education level, and religion, and the way these factors may have influenced my perceptions and interpretations throughout the research process. Firstly, I am a female, and thus found myself sharing more perceptions and experiences in common with my female participants than with my male participants. For example, I have a level of insight into the psychosocial challenge associated with the childbearing decision, in particular, as experienced by a few of the participants. I do not want to have children, and have experienced the negative societal perceptions and critical evaluations of this decision by friends and family. Thus I understand some of the experiences in this regard, as will be discussed in the results and discussion chapter. However, another way how my gender could have played a role in the research process is that the male participants may possibly not have felt comfortable sharing their experiences with a female interviewer, and may have withheld certain experiences without me realising it. Previous research supports this hypothesis, as gender differences between researchers and participants have been shown to influence the research process through the resultant relationship dynamics (Bellamy, Gott, & Hinchliff, 2011; Galam, 2015).

Secondly, as a white, Afrikaans-speaking person, I was able to identify with my participants in terms of ethnicity and language as a cultural group, as all seven participants were white and Afrikaans-speaking (as their first language). It is possibly because of this cultural commonality that I view marriage in a similar way to my participants. They may have also felt comfortable opening up towards me, because of our common ethnicity. Furthermore, because of my competence in both Afrikaans and English, each of the participants was able to effectively express him- or herself in their first language or language in which they felt most comfortable, avoiding any potential language-barriers or miscommunication.

Thirdly, my level of education, and more specifically my Master's degree studies in Counselling Psychology, has directed the whole research process. Because of my tertiary education I have knowledge about interpersonal relationships in general, and more specifically about aspects associated with higher relationship quality, as well as risk factors in relationships. Therefore, my previously acquired knowledge guided my literature search when identifying typical challenges of the newlywed period, as well as potential protective factors. Furthermore, as an intern psychologist I see a wide variety of clients on a daily basis for the purpose of psychotherapy. As a result, I have experience in interviewing people, using active listening skills, and uncovering individuals' experiences. This may have contributed to greater depth in

the data. However, I also had to remain cognisant of the differences between a research interview and a therapy session, as well as how my role differs in these two different contexts.

Fourthly, as a Christian, I share a number of similarities with my participants in terms of their general world view and values. In addition, I view marriage in the same way as all my participants, from a Christian perspective. This may have allowed greater insight into their experiences. If some of the participants had been from a different religion, our different perceptions and practices in marriage may have differed greatly. However, a negative consequence of our religious similarities is that I may have over identified with the participants' experiences, or made assumptions of shared perspectives or interpretations without fully being aware of this.

Reflexivity can also be applied throughout the overall research process, for example during data collection and analysis (Hughes, 2014), and allows the researcher to make changes as necessary to ensure greater credibility of their research (Gilgun, 2006). Reflexivity was facilitated throughout the research process by making use of a research journal when specific realisations occurred, decisions needed to be made or changes needed to be implemented. Furthermore, improvements and changes were suggested by the researcher's supervisors, and after reflection and discussion changes were made as necessary. The main decisions and changes involved occurred whilst writing the literature review, as well as during data analysis and the interpretation of the data.

In summary, reflexivity is a way in which one's positioning is made known for the sake of greater trustworthiness in qualitative research. The process of reflexivity in the current study included the clarification of my personal and professional interest in the research topic, the elucidation of my relevant demographic factors and their impact on the research process, and identification of important decisions and changes made during the research process.

2.8. Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of the Humanities at the University of the Free State (ethics clearance number: UFS-HSD201/0588).

Written informed consent was obtained from each participant before starting with the interviews. Informed consent included details regarding: (a) the duration of participation, (b) the purpose of the research, (c) which information would be sought, (d) how gathered data would be used, and (e) how gathered data would be stored and disposed of (Ryan et al., 2007). Participants were also informed that participation was voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time (Ryan et al., 2007). In addition, the informed consent form included details regarding the steps that would be taken in the case of emotional distress (as will be discussed later). Informed consent forms have been stored in a securely locked cabinet to which only the researcher has access.

Interviews were conducted in a private office in the psychology department which was quiet and free from distractions. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Recordings were stored on a secure, password-protected computer during the transcription process. Transcriptions were also password-protected and only the researcher has access to the password. All transcriptions will be kept for a period of five years, in case of queries or disputes of the study's results. During the interviews, participants' privacy was protected by not prying into details not directly related to the research topic.

Protecting anonymity was not possible due to the real identities of participants being known to the researcher (Ryan et al., 2007). However, confidentiality was protected very stringently by assigning pseudonyms (Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2006). Furthermore, quotes to be written in the final research were carefully selected to avoid the representation of identifying details (Kaiser, 2009). In addition, where necessary specific identifying details (for example specific occupations, spouse's details, specific dates, or workplace and church names) were altered or omitted so as to decrease the likelihood of identifying participants' true identities.

In addition, the researcher was aware of the possibility that participants may experience emotional distress due to being asked to discuss the psychosocial challenges they had experienced in their first year of marriage. Therefore, the informed consent form included information in this regard, whilst participants were also verbally informed about the steps to be taken in the case of emotional distress. Each participant was informed (verbally and in writing) that if he or she required debriefing, or individual or marital therapy, he or she would be referred to the psychology Masters' adult practice coordinator (Dr Jacques Jordaan - (051) 4012890) to arrange for therapy, at no cost to themselves. The researcher asked each participant

at the end of each of their interviews how they had generally experienced the interview process, and whether they required a referral to be made for therapy. None of the participants indicated that this was necessary.

Lastly, after the submission and acceptance of the dissertation, the participants will be contacted to arrange for the verbal feedback of research results. The feedback will be provided to each participant individually in the same private office where the interviews were conducted. The feedback session will allow participants to comment on the final results, as well as ask any questions they may have in this regard. By providing feedback, participants may also benefit from the current study, as they will be informed about the GRRs that appear to be most frequently used to manage newlywed challenges in a South African context, and encouraged to utilise such resources more frequently in their own marriages.

Chapter 3: Results

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the current study are presented. The experiences of the newlyweds have been explored and, in this chapter, the psychosocial challenges experienced by the participants and the General Resistance Resources (GRRs) they employed are provided by breaking the data into segments. These segments are assigned to categories which are ordered according to the frequency with which they occurred in the sample. In this way, the psychosocial challenges experienced most often and the GRRs used to manage these psychosocial challenges most frequently by the participants will be revealed.

3.2. Psychosocial Challenges

Table 2 provides a summary of the categories in terms of the psychosocial challenges experienced by the participants in their first year of marriage, as well as the frequency with which each category was reported. According to the results in Table 2, differences in personality, habits, and routines was experienced by six of the seven participants, making it the most commonly reported psychosocial challenge. Inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics, as well as new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy were the second-highest reported psychosocial challenges, each being encountered by four participants. Each of the other reported psychosocial challenges were encountered by three of the seven participants.

Table 2

Frequency table of the psychosocial challenge categories that were experienced by the newlyweds in their first year of marriage

Psychosocial challenge categories	Frequency
Differences in personality, habits, and routines	N = 6
Inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics	N = 4
New responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy	N = 4
Stereotypical division of household chores	N = 3
Inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances	N = 3
Unmet marital expectations	N = 3

Each psychosocial challenge category will be elaborated on by presenting relevant quotes from the interviews. The quotes have been translated from Afrikaans to English where necessary by the researcher, who is bilingual and fully competent in both languages. Each quote which was used was individually translated into English by the researcher, and the resultant English quote then translated back into Afrikaans to make sure that the meaning of the quote had remained the same (also known as back translation- Brislin, 1970).

3.2.1. Differences in personality, habits and routines. The category of differences in personality, habits and routines (Table 2) included distress caused by differences in prominent personality traits. Furthermore, it included one of the spouse's habits that caused conflict during the newlywed period, or conflict caused by differences in daily routines. Six of the participants

reported that these differences caused distress and irritation during the first year. Therefore, this was the most frequently experienced challenge in the current study.

Personality is defined as an individual's stable pattern of behaviour and experience over time (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000). In this regard, Phillip appeared to experience some frustration in his first year because of personality differences:

"The only time I'm really irritated is- she's very free, she thinks tomorrow is just another day, while I like to plan... so initially we argued a bit" [Interview one].

In addition, Elri highlighted this challenge when she reported that there are considerable differences in certain aspects of her and her husband's personalities:

"He is the neatest person that I know, and I am not the neatest person that I know...he's hyper-neat. So he doesn't like it when I'm untidy" [Interview one].

Simone also reported a prominent difference between herself and her husband in terms of neatness. According to Simone, her husband is incredibly neat and has a specific way of completing tasks which results in overt marital conflict:

"My husband is a very cleanly (sic) person...and needs things to be done his way...I feel like whatever way you do it to get to the end result is fine...Sometimes there's a bit of irritation, like does it matter if I clean the mirror by rubbing it clockwise instead of anti-clockwise?" [Interview one].

Therefore, it appears as if these participants may have been grappling with the way in which their spouses' personalities differed from their own, but also the way in which their spouses' personalities directly influenced the participants' daily lives negatively at times.

Furthermore, habits and routines were a source of conflict for some of the participants. Habits refer to automatic processes that predict behaviour, or automatic behaviours that are not influenced by intention (Allom, Mullan, Cowie, & Hamilton, 2016). Such automatic behaviours caused conflict for Amy, who mentioned how differences in habits were a difficult adaptation during the newlywed period:

“I think the biggest thing is to get used to each other’s habits... You’re used to your way of doing things” [Interview one].

This experience was further highlighted when she stated:

“Switching off the lights...I go from one room to another, and that makes him want to jump through the roof” [Interview one].

In addition, routines are defined as repeated practices of behaviour that are characterised by instrumental communication and time commitments, for example a specific time and place of family meals (Fiese, 2002; Spagnola & Fiese, 2007). Differences in routines posed a challenge for Phillip, who reported that differences in sleeping patterns resulted in discord at times:

“Sleep. I was in the routine of getting up at half past 4 every morning...and I go to bed very early. While she goes to bed late. And that caused a bit of conflict” [Interview one].

In addition, Andrea expressed that differences in sleeping patterns frustrated her as well:

“I feel as if I have to stay awake later at night, and I actually want to go to bed. I like going to bed early” [Interview one].

Later on she continued:

“Sometimes he wants me to stay awake with him and talk, and I actually need to get up early for other responsibilities, or things that are important to me. So sometimes I can get quite angry about it” [Interview one].

Furthermore, Tina reported that both sleeping patterns and dietary preferences were a source of conflict for her and her husband:

“It also led to fights, because we didn’t go to sleep at the same time...and food was an adaptation. Like the eating. It probably sounds silly, but like the way we eat.” [Interview one].

Differences in routines were also challenging for Elri:

“Because one comes from two different families, one sometimes has to make adjustments...there were a lot of small things that we probably had to sort out at first” [Interview one].

This experience was shared by Simone:

“I find it difficult to do it his way...he thinks his way is obvious to everyone...so I think that is our other big problem” [Interview one].

Routines and habits seem to be formed over time and within one's family of origin. Therefore, spouses bring two varied sets of routines and two separate histories of learned habits into a marriage. As a result, differences need to be negotiated within the new marital unit, resulting in the formation of entirely new routines, or one spouse's routines and habits being given preference over the other.

What seems evident from these quotes is that habits and routines may not typically be expected to be exceedingly taxing stressors, yet they appeared to be potential psychosocial challenges of the newlywed period that needed to be managed. Furthermore, personality is generally quite stable and engrained, and therefore may not be easy to change if it causes conflict once married. In addition, differences in personality, habits, and routines are not aspects which can be avoided completely due to different family backgrounds or cumulative life experiences.

3.2.2. Inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics. The category of inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics (Table 2) included any challenges related to family dynamics or relationships. Firstly, this category encompassed all challenges related to families of origin, such as the effect of learned behaviour on marital interactions, unresolved emotional issues originating in one's family, or problems related to the physical or emotional separation from one's family once married. Secondly, inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics incorporated distress caused by the new in-law relationships. In-law relationships may have been distressing due to negatively perceived changes in relationship dynamics with the spouse's family once married, or unmet expectations of one's in-laws. Thirdly, distress related to the childbearing decision may also be categorised in terms of inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics. The childbearing decision may have been potentially challenging due to aspects such as societal disapproval of voluntary childlessness, dissimilarities between spouses regarding the intention to have children or the timing of planned pregnancy, or an inner conflict related to making

sacrifices to have a child. Consequently, inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics were considered to be a source of distress by four of the participants.

Inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics specifically related to participants' families of origin exerted an influence on the behaviour and experiences of a number of the participants (n=4) during their first year of marriage. For example, Andrea expressed that she had a number of unresolved issues related to her own family that posed a problem in her new marriage:

“My dad is someone who one cannot rely on. All the silly things that your parents do come back” [Interview one].

In addition, she expressed frustration that she often found herself responding in the same way in which her mother always does:

“And it frustrates me incredibly in terms of myself, because when I feel a particular way, I realise that’s how my mother always felt in such a situation” [Interview one].

A further example of this category was provided by Amy, who struggled to separate herself, both emotionally and physically, from her parents:

“We both lived with our parents for a long time...and those first two months...at a point it feels ‘that was nice’, but then you want to go home. You miss your house and everything there, it was quite difficult...you start to miss your house, and your parents, and everyone” [Interview one].

She later elaborated on this by elucidating:

“We try to visit both of our parents the same amount, but sometimes things just work out that we visit my parents more often, or his parents more often. And sometimes it feels to me as if I’m being forced to go with him to his parents, but it would actually be nice to also visit my parents. This has also caused problems in the past” [Interview one].

Tina shared this challenge of separating from her family:

“My father and I are very close. At first I would ask my dad about things that I could have asked my husband...it’s very difficult for me to make the switch (from being a daughter to being someone’s wife)” [Interview one].

Later on in the interview she continued by saying:

“I think the most difficult thing for me was, he wants to see his parents often. And my parents live far away, so I can’t see them often...I think it was the most difficult thing for me, because I’m so close to my parents. I want to visit them almost every weekend”
[Interview one].

Another participant who struggled with this separation from her family was Elri, who mentioned:

“It has caused fights before. I feel we are so used to going to my family, and I’ve felt bad about that before...we visit his mom often...but we don’t see his dad often...and we have fought about it a bit, and he has said to me ‘stop just speaking about your mom all the time, we almost never see my father’” [Interview one].

She elaborated on this challenge in her follow-up interview by explaining:

“It was the first time about a month ago when I went home (to visit my parents), that I didn’t cry when we left” [Interview two].

Therefore, from the data it seems as if one’s feelings towards one’s own family, whether positive or negative, may play a prominent role in the first year of marriage. Conflictual or negative feelings towards one’s family of origin may result in intrapersonal distress, or even overt marital conflict due to one spouse’s unresolved emotional issues. However, a positive attachment to one’s family may also result in these same consequences, as newlyweds may desire more time with their family of origin than is possible or expected by their spouse.

Furthermore, the in-law relationship is an aspect of inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics that warrants mentioning. Varied experiences related to in-law relationships were discussed in the interviews. Two of the participants found their in-law relationships to be a source of internal distress during their first few months of marriage. For example, Andrea felt that marriage allowed her mother-in-law to be more critical of her:

“My mother-in-law also perhaps feels a bit more comfortable telling me how she feels about things...but I don’t necessarily always want to hear the bad things” [Interview one].

She expressed frustration about this aspect again in her follow-up interview:

“And they were really on my case, I must say. But it’s probably because I’m their daughter now. But oh my word, they were on my case!...It’s difficult” [Interview two].

In addition, Elri experienced a great deal of internal conflict related to her father-in-law. Her husband’s parents are divorced, and Elri knew that the divorce was a result of her father-in-law’s transgressions. Once married, she found it more demanding to accept her father-in-law than before they were related. This inner conflict was expressed with the following comment:

“When it’s suddenly your mother-in-law and father-in-law it’s a bit more difficult, because sometimes you look at them with new eyes...suddenly he’s your father now, and you have to accept him as your own father” [Interview one].

She emphasised this challenge again in her follow-up interview when she revealed:

“Yes, I mean you look at your own father in a certain light, and then he (husband’s father) is now your new father...when your own father has been a very good father to you, then there are definitely certain expectations” [Interview two].

Alternatively, a number of the participants (n=3) expressed a great deal of positive emotions towards their in-laws. Elri’s experience towards the in-law relationship in particular was multi-faceted. Despite the internal conflict she felt in relation to her father-in-law, she shared a close, positive relationship with her mother-in-law:

“My mother-in-law, I love her very much, the two of us are like - she’s just like my own mother...I can share anything with her” [Interview one].

Elri continued by explaining:

“My mother-in-law is the most comfortable person I know. She’s like a friend. I can pop in to visit her any time, and she can pop in to visit me any time” [Interview one].

The contradictory feelings towards her in-laws can be accounted for in different ways. One possibility is that she may have developed a stronger emotional connection with her mother-in-law over times, as a result of their shared negativity towards what her father-in-law did in the past. Alternatively, she may always have been emotionally close to her mother-in-law, which may have made it more likely that she would subconsciously side against her father-in-law. Another example of a positive in-law relationship was provided by Tina. She expressed

that the relationship with her in-laws was pleasant prior to marriage, and that these dynamics continued into the newlywed period:

“His family was already my family, and my family was already his family...so I didn’t really expect that anything would change” [Interview one].

Finally, James also enjoys a close relationship with his in-laws:

“Her family has been very open towards me since the beginning. They had already accepted me, and we get along well, and I have a good relationship with her father. And with her mother” [Interview one].

To summarise, the varied data related to participants’ in-law relationships appears to indicate that negative experiences in this regard may at times occur, yet are not inevitable. In the current study, two participants experienced negative in-law dynamics, and three specifically indicated that they enjoyed positive relationships. Therefore, stereotypical negative in-law relationships did not appear to be the norm for all the participants in the current study, with more positive reports than negative reports being provided in this regard.

The childbearing decision as an aspect of inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics was a challenge for two of the participants during their first year of marriage. In addition, this aspect seemed to be fairly distressing for them. For Andrea, for example, the decision posed an internal conflict as she recognised that she would have to sacrifice her career in order to be a mother. This internal conflict was expressed as follows:

“With the housewife thing I really want to be a mother. So that is what I will be one day. I didn’t realise it would be so difficult to leave my career. So that is something which I realised recently. I’m going to have to get to a point in my life where I will have to leave my career and be ready for children. Where I never thought that option would even become a consideration for me” [Interview one].

She elaborated on this challenge by saying:

“It’s very difficult for me. In my mind I want to be pregnant next year, but I don’t know if I will be able to stop or pause my career for so long to make it possible” [Interview one].

In Amy's case, the childbearing decision initiated conflict, because her husband was ready to start a family before she wanted to do so. She mentioned:

"He pressurised me quite a lot about having kids now...there was a bit of a difference regarding when...he continuously asked me when I want children, then not even a week would pass before he would ask me again" [Interview one].

In addition, the differing feelings between her husband and herself related to childbearing, elicited additional internal conflict for Amy:

"One really wants to, but one knows it's not the right time. But then, I don't know, it also half feels...as if you are, not less, but half as if it takes something away from you. Because now, it's usually always the woman that continuously nags about having children. But in our situation this was not the case. One feels as if one is less feminine or motherly...because I don't want to have children now, but he does" [Interview one].

In Amy's follow-up interview she again spoke about this challenge:

"I'm the woman. I'm supposed to be the one putting pressure on him" [Interview two].

Consequently, from this data it appears as if intrapersonal conflict played a large role in these participants' distress with regards to the childbearing decision, rather than only overt marital conflict concerning the decision.

For a number of the participants, it appeared to be difficult to separate from their families of origin and to focus on their new family unit. The separation caused both internal and external conflict for the participants. This was the case regardless of the age of the participants. In addition, unresolved emotional issues from the family of origin were also seen to cause conflict for one of the participants. As a result, it seems as if one's experiences in and feelings toward one's family of origin are important considerations when getting married. Furthermore, in-law relationships as an inter- and intrapersonal family dynamic were challenging for two participants. However, this relationship was actually positive for three of the participants. Therefore, although in-law relationships contributed to this specific challenge, it was not particularly prominent. Lastly, the childbearing decision presented as a challenge for very few of the participants. Most of the other participants explain that, although the topic had become more prominent once they were married, it was not yet a psychosocial challenge they

encountered, as child-bearing was more a future-orientated decision for them. However, some of them mentioned that conflict may arise around child-bearing later in their marriage. Therefore, it can be seen that inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics were frequently experienced as challenging by the participants. These challenges were mainly related to participants' own families (n=4), rather than their in-laws (n=2), or their decision to have children (n=2). An additional aspect to note is that inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics were only experienced as challenging by female participants. These aspects will be elucidated on in the discussion chapter.

3.2.3. New responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy. The category of new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy (Table 2) as a psychosocial challenge included increased feelings of responsibility towards their spouse or simply a generalised feeling of increased responsibility overall. The category also included the necessity to focus less attention on individual needs for the sake of the marital unit. For four of the participants these aspects caused some frustration during the newlywed period.

For a number of the participants, distress resulted from being required to shift their focus from themselves to their spouse or the marital unit. For instance, Andrea found it difficult to take her husband into consideration each time she was required to make a decision:

“I am quite independent in certain regards, so it is sometimes quite challenging to first run something by him before making a decision” [Interview one].

This theme was further reiterated in the follow-up interview when she explained that they no longer have their own, independent activities:

“But I’ve noticed that both of us actually have a need to do things that don’t involve the other person” [Interview two].

Phillip also spoke about relinquishing a large portion of his freedom and personal desires for the sake of his wife:

“I didn’t realise how demanding she can be. One doesn’t realise how much attention a person can really need. And I think that was probably the biggest thing: to suddenly lay

down everything that you are, and look after another person. It's difficult. It's very difficult to just stop who and what you are" [Interview one].

As an introvert, Simone found it difficult to have less solitary time. This was evident when she said:

"Sometimes it is a challenge to have alone time...not to have a person around me all the time... so that's sometimes difficult for me, because I feel often I would just need to recharge a bit on my own, and you know then he will kind of seek my company...so I think that is sometimes difficult. Because I do want to see him, and I do want to spend time with him, but I also need some time alone" [Interview one].

Later on in the interview she again elaborated on the same difficulty:

"That's like something that's an adaption for me. Because I mean when we were living apart, obviously I had time alone in the morning or in the evening. And now I don't have that little bit anymore" [Interview one].

Consequently, it appears from the data as if the formation of the marital unit may occur at the expense of autonomy and individual needs. This shift in focus appeared to present as a psychosocial challenge for the newlyweds.

The shift from self-focus to a couple-focus was also accompanied by an increased sense of responsibility towards their spouse, or towards the new life-role generally for a few of the participants (n=2). Amy found herself feeling overwhelmed by her new marital role numerous times during the first year of marriage, as shown in her comment:

"And now you're the wife, and all these things are expected of you, and you don't actually know where to start...it feels like a mountain falling down on you" [Interview one].

She further elaborated on this experience later on in the interview, when she mentioned:

"Everything used to be done for me, but now it's my responsibility. It was terrible. Especially if you get home from work, you're tired, you have sport after work, you have stuff you have to do, and then you get home at 8 o'clock and everything is waiting for you" [Interview one].

Amy again referred to this particular challenge in the follow-up interview when she mentioned:

“Then I became fully aware of the responsibilities. And I realised that nothing is going to be done if I don’t do it” [Interview two].

Phillip shared this sense of greater responsibility:

“And you know it’s your wife now, and if something happens... it’s your responsibility. It feels strange to suddenly have this terrible responsibility. I am responsible for a life, and that’s not easy” [Interview one].

Therefore, it seems as if marriage may not only require less self-focus and more consideration and inclusion of one’s spouse, but that this consideration and inclusion may actually be experienced as quite burdensome for some newlyweds.

To summarise, new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy appeared to be quite a frequent psychosocial challenge in this sample of participants. Consequently, there seems to be both disadvantages and advantages (as will be discussed in the next section) associated with the formation of a couple identity, and the merging of one’s lives, interests and activities.

3.2.4. Stereotypical division of household chores. The category of stereotypical division of household chores (Table 2) included disagreement or unhappiness about the division of chores, seemingly based at least partially on societal norms and stereotypes. Three of the participants expressed tension surrounding household chores. Andrea specifically struggled a great deal with this challenge, and expressed a great deal of frustration regarding doing most of the chores without sufficient help. This was seen when she mentioned:

“I became so frustrated...I had this expectation of ‘just do something to help me’” [Interview one].

This theme was further supported when Andrea stated:

“I said he does nothing, and he thought he does a lot. He felt that he did his part and I didn’t notice...we actually fought about it. It was really something so small that became quite a big issue” [Interview one].

A further example of this category was provided by Amy, who expressed the feeling that her husband does not help her enough with household chores:

“If I don’t get to everything in the week, then I do it on a Saturday. Then I half expect him to also be there on a Saturday...I can’t do everything...then he, for example, has other things that he needs to go do. Then it feels that he actually could have arranged his stuff to help me” [Interview one].

Amy further elaborated on this aspect by saying:

“I can’t wait for him to get home in the evening and help me when he works late. Somewhere the things have to get started, because otherwise it gets too late. So it was quite bad for me that he doesn’t help me” [Interview one].

Simone experienced few challenges overall during her first few months of marriage, but the division of household chores was a particularly frustrating aspect for her.

“I think our biggest source of conflict...is the issue of who cleans the house” [Interview one].

Both Simone and her husband work in the healthcare profession, yet Simone’s career was more time-consuming at the time of the interviews. She expressed her frustration in this regard later on in the first interview by explaining:

“He feels that I don’t do as much as he does, but to be fair, I work 80 hours a week and he works 40 hours a week...I kind of feel the person who works twice as long gets to do less...the issue here is the difference between fairness and equality...he feels we are equal, so we should do 50/50. I feel I work twice as long so it should be 75/25” [Interview one].

Therefore, for these three participants, the division of household chores appeared to cause considerable internal conflict as well as overt marital conflict during the first few months of marriage. All three expressed a sense of unfairness regarding the amount of chores for which they were responsible.

An additional dimension of this challenge which warrants discussion is that stereotypical gender roles and societal norms seemed to play a role in this specific challenge. This psychosocial challenge caused frustration and was accompanied by a sense of unfairness for only female participants, and all three of these participants referred to gender stereotypes exerting influence in this regard. Andrea (a health professional) explained:

“Men don’t like cleaning. Or washing dishes” [Interview one].

Simone (a health professional) reported with frustration how other people feel about her complaints regarding household chores:

“A lot of people feel that I should feel fortunate that at least my husband is willing to do 50%. And I kind of feel like we’re in 2016, he can do his damn part” [Interview one].

Finally, Amy (a lawyer) mentioned a similar experience:

“I think men still assume it’s a woman’s responsibility, even though we both work full-time” [Interview one].

Consequently, it appears as if stereotypical gender norms may contribute to an unfair distribution of household chores. However, it is also possible that these participants had simply used gender norms and stereotypes to interpret the division of chores in their own homes.

These quotes and the experiences of these newlyweds seems to indicate that division of household chores may sometimes be considered to be quite trivial and something that is not purposefully prepared for before marriage. However, it may become a prominent psychosocial challenge during the newlywed period. In addition, whether the division of chores presents as a marital challenge or not seemed to depend on various factors. This included not only how many of the household chores each spouse took responsibility for, but also each spouse’s perceptions of fairness, as well as their personal expectations regarding this aspect. In addition, it seems possible that certain gender stereotypes regarding women’s primary responsibility for domestic aspects may also have placed more pressure on the female newlyweds in this regard, than on the male newlyweds.

3.2.5. Inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances. The category of inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances (Table 2) included problems related to the merging of incomes, debt brought into the relationship by either spouse, or arguments about finances. This category was a challenge for three participants in the sample. Marriage was accompanied by a great deal of financially-related distress for Phillip (an employee in the construction industry):

“I think the biggest stress was financial...are you going to make enough money every month to provide her with the lifestyle she has now, to keep up with that standard?”
[Interview one].

Phillip and his wife also engaged in a great deal of overt conflict with regards to money:

“Yes, we argued a lot (about money). I was very angry a couple of times, because then she would want to buy something, and I would say “no”, and she wasn’t raised that way” [Interview one].

Furthermore, Tina (a teacher) found herself arguing with her spouse regarding differences in opinion about the overall management of their finances:

“He loves to save money. Where I feel ‘but why? What is that money going to bring us?’” [Interview one].

Consequently, finances seemed to be a source of internal and external conflict for these two participants. On the one hand, internal conflict resulted for Phillip, because of the perception he seemed to have that he is responsible for providing his wife with a certain standard of living once married. On the other hand, external conflict appeared to occur for both of these participants because of differences in opinion regarding money management.

Furthermore, for James (a contract-based university employee), one of the few psychosocial challenges he experienced in his first year of marriage was the merging of finances, and accepting his wife’s money as his own. He reported:

“It was difficult for me. I didn’t want to use her money. At that stage I didn’t have an income...she had more money, so I decided that I wouldn’t use her money for my things” [Interview one].

He elaborated on this by stating:

“I didn’t want to sponge on her...I didn’t want to be a stay-at-home dad type of man that uses her money, and just does the household chores. I didn’t want to do that at all”
[Interview one].

This sentiment was shared by Tina, who found it difficult to accept her husband’s money as her own:

“It was very difficult for me. It was difficult for me to ask him for money” [Interview one].

Therefore, these quotes seem to show that distress arose for these participants because of not wanting to be financially dependent on their new spouses.

To summarise, from the data it appears as if a few factors may play a determining role in whether money causes distress for newlyweds or not. These factors include spouses’ perceptions about money, whether spouses have similar views on money management, and the financial contribution made by each spouse. Furthermore, the extent of a couple’s overall financial resources also appears to play a role in whether finances cause distress or not. As an employee in the construction industry, a contract-based university employee, and a teacher, all three of the participants who experienced financial aspects as challenging were from a middle-class financial status. Therefore, their experience may have been different from that of other participants, or other newlyweds generally, who are more affluent.

3.2.6. Unmet marital expectations. The category of unmet marital expectations (Table 2) referred specifically to the disappointment that arose when expectations that marriage would fulfil participants’ personal needs or enhance the relationship remained unmet. Disappointment in this regard was experienced by three of the participants as a challenge in their first year. Tina experienced the first three months of her marriage as exceedingly challenging, as she and her spouse fought frequently about a number of daily hassles and differing opinions, and felt that this challenging period was contrary to what she had imagined would be the case:

“Everyone says that it’s the honeymoon phase, but we were literally still on honeymoon when we started to fight...that wasn’t nice” [Interview one].

She further elaborated on this challenge by saying:

“I thought we were going to become more in love in that first period of time which didn’t happen...sometimes I felt that we didn’t love each other” [Interview one].

Amy also experienced disappointment at the beginning of her marriage, as she expected the marriage to improve their relationship, and she explained:

“I thought that we would like each other more, or love each other a lot more. But it stayed the same. It didn’t change into a fairy tale” [Interview one].

This was reiterated when she later mentioned:

“You expect this wonderful time, but it’s actually a difficult time” [Interview one].

In her follow-up interview Amy again made reference to her unmet expectations:

“I don’t know where one gets these ideas, but it was quite a shock (when it didn’t turn out that way)...it made me a bit unhappy” [Interview two].

Andrea discussed some disappointment and longing for the excitement she had experienced at the beginning of her relationship:

“I feel as if that in-love feeling...that excitement has lessened a bit. I feel that it is more important to me than it is to him... I miss that” [Interview one].

In addition, she had an expectation that she and her spouse would spend all their time together, and was disappointed that this was not the case:

“It feels as if he still has a bit of a need to spend time with his male friends...and I want to do everything together as a couple” [Interview one].

Therefore, it seem as if these three participants had a variety of expectations that were unmet during their first year of marriage.

Consequently, these quotes appear to indicate that at times it is not an occurrence itself that causes distress, but rather a discrepancy between that occurrence and one's expectations thereof. For example, two of the participants seemed to have expected marriage to enhance their relationships, and did not seem to expect the extent of the adaptation and challenge that marriage would bring. One of the other participants was disappointed by her spouse's need to spend time with his friends rather than with her, as she had the expectation that they would only engage in activities as a couple. Therefore, it is clear that unmet marital expectations can cause internal or external conflict for newlyweds, and this may be avoided if individuals have a more realistic view of marriage.

3.2.7. Summary. It appears that the most frequently experienced psychosocial challenges for these participants were thus differences in personality, habits and routines (n=6), inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics (n=4), and new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy (n=4). Other psychosocial challenges were also experienced in the newlywed period - although less frequently - namely the stereotypical division of household chores (n=3), inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances (n=3), and unmet marital expectations (n=3).

3.3. General Resistance Resources

In response to the psychosocial challenges that have been outlined earlier in this chapter, the General Resistance Resources (GRRs) used to manage these challenges will be discussed in the next section. Table 3 provides a summary of the GRR categories employed during the first year of marriage by the participants in the study, as well as the frequency with which each GRR category was utilised. According to the categories in Table 3, the most commonly utilised GRRs were physical and biochemical GRRs (n=7), cognitive GRRs (n=7), and interpersonal-relational GRRs (n=7). Other categories which were reported are macrosociocultural GRRs (n=5), artefactual-material GRRs (n=3), emotional GRRs (n=3), and valuative-attitudinal GRRs (n=3).

Table 3

Frequency table of the General Resistance Resource categories that were used by the newlyweds to manage psychosocial challenges in the first year of marriage

General Resistance Resource categories	Frequency
Physical and biochemical GRRs	N = 7
Cognitive GRRs	N = 7
Interpersonal- relational GRRs	N = 5
Macrosociocultural GRRs	N = 3
Artefactual-material GRRs	N = 3
Valuative- attitudinal GRRs	N = 3

Each GRR category which was used will be elaborated on by presenting relevant quotes from the interviews. In this case, the quotes were again translated from Afrikaans to English by the researcher, after which resultant English quotes were translated back into Afrikaans to make sure that the meaning of the quotes had remained the same (Brislin, 1970).

3.3.1. Physical and biochemical GRRs. The category of physical and biochemical GRRs (Table 3) refers to innate or biological characteristics, for example, genetics, temperament, or personality traits (Antonovsky, 1987). All seven participants reported that various innate or biological characteristics facilitated the adaptations required in the first year of marriage. Thus, all seven participants appeared to make use of physical and biochemical GRRs.

Agreeableness in particular was reported to be used by a number of the participants (n=4). *Agreeableness* refers to a tendency to be cooperative and trustful (Costa & McCrae,

1995). Agreeable people are characterised as tender, straightforward, modest, altruistic, and trustworthy. They also tend to value harmony in their relationships (Costa & McCrae, 1995). For example, Andrea felt that her agreeableness made the newlywed period easier:

“But I quickly forget past things, because it’s been dealt with” [Interview one].

Amy referred to her agreeableness as a resource during this time as well:

“I don’t like getting angry and fighting the whole time, so I compromise easily”
[Interview one].

Furthermore, in her follow-up interview, Tina emphasised the importance of her agreeableness as a resource:

“I think the willingness to forgive easily, and not to hold a grudge...it is also a positive characteristic that I have” [Interview two].

Finally, Elri also spoke about how helpful her agreeableness had been in the first few months:

“I’m not someone who loves to fight” [Interview one].

Thus, it appears from the comments as if agreeableness was considered to be a beneficial trait by four of the newlyweds. In addition, it may be worth noting that gender again seemed to play a role in this aspect, as all the participants who reported agreeableness to be particularly helpful are females.

Two other personality traits, as identified by Costa and McCrae (1995) as part of their Five Factor model of personality, were used as resources during the newlywed period: *Openness to experience* and *conscientiousness*. James and Phillip both reported the use of *openness to experience* in managing the necessary newlywed adaptations. *Openness to experience* is defined as the tendency towards intellectual curiosity and creativity, as well as a preference for variety and novelty (Costa & McCrae, 1995). James considered his openness to new experiences to have made the marital transition easier:

“For life-roles, yes. I don’t have any problem in making adaptations in that” [Interview one].

Another participant who considered a high level of openness to be helpful was Phillip:

“I prefer it to continuously try new things, and I think it helped...I think in that way it also made it fun for her” [Interview two].

Furthermore, *conscientiousness* was also seen as a resource in the newlywed period by one of the participants. *Conscientiousness* refers to the tendency to be dependable, organised, show self-discipline, be achievement-striving, and act dutifully (Costa & McCrae, 1995). Simone reported conscientiousness as being one of her most beneficial innate traits during the newlywed period:

“I definitely see the value in thorough preparation before marriage for myself...I can't really imagine it going any other way, because I'm a very researchy (sic) person... Preparation, thorough preparation. I think that is probably what made the biggest difference” [Interview one].

Therefore, it could be seen that a number of Costa and McCrae's Big Five personality traits (Costa & McCrae, 1995) may play a beneficial role in the newlywed period. This included high levels of agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscientiousness.

Furthermore, a tendency to engage in introspection and self-knowledge was also used as a resource by a number of the participants (n=3). *Introspection* is regarded as a method for uncovering the operations of one's own mind, and is considered to play an essential role in problem-solving (Jakel & Schreiber, 2013). Introspection is often considered to be the same as self-observation, self-reflection, or self-monitoring (Brown, 1987), and may thus be linked to, or play a role in, one's overall self-knowledge. *Self-knowledge* is defined as the integration of life experiences into a meaningful whole which corresponds with one's real self (Ghorbani, Watson, Fayyaz, & Chen, 2015). Phillip explained how a preference for introspection and self-knowledge made the newlywed adjustments easier for both him and his wife:

“It frustrates me when we fight. I want to know why we fought, so I will think about it. Until I feel that I've found the answer” [Interview two].

Simone also reported regular introspection as a resource:

“Introspection. Thinking about things. If something went wrong, how can it be avoided in the future” [Interview one].

Another participant who found introspection to be helpful was Elri:

“I’ll first think a bit about everything, and then I’ll say something” [Interview one].

Thus, from the data it appears as if introspection and self-knowledge may be helpful in managing psychosocial challenges by preventing recurrent conflict about the same challenges over time. In addition, it generally seems as if marriage may be a time in which personal reflection and growth is also a requirement in order to adapt successfully.

A number of other innate and biological characteristics were also mentioned by the participants. Andrea acknowledged the role of empathy in the newlywed period:

“I would say empathy (has been helpful). If something bad happens, I don’t always look for a solution. I just say “that’s awful” [Interview one].

Amy considered it helpful that she is able to stay positive:

“The fact that one stays positive...it really helps quite a lot...if you tend to be more positively inclined, you will get better results” [Interview one].

James reported that an easy temperament made the newlywed period easier:

“We both have a very easy temperament...that really makes it very easy” [Interview one].

According to Tina her patience enabled her to manage her emotions better, which held benefits for her relationship:

“Having so much patience also helped...when he gets angry, I don’t also immediately get angry” [Interview one].

Therefore, from the data it appears as if a wide variety of innate or biological characteristics may help newlyweds to manage the psychosocial challenges of the newlywed period more successfully. In addition, different newlyweds may consider different inherent characteristics to be beneficial, depending on their specific circumstances and the characteristics of their spouses or their marital unit as a whole.

Differences in personality may cause tension in a marriage, as was seen earlier in this chapter. However, the presence of certain inherent personality or biological traits may also serve as a resource. This is clear from the fact that all seven participants mentioned various innate traits that served as a resource in managing the necessary adaptations of the newlywed period more effectively. A number of the participants referred specifically to a degree of agreeableness, as well as introspection, being beneficial traits in this period.

3.3.2. Cognitive GRRs. The category of cognitive GRRs (Table 3) refers to acquired knowledge or intelligence, which allow access to other resources (Antonovsky, 1987). A wide variety of knowledge sources were consulted by the participants. Therefore, cognitive GRRs were used by all seven participants to manage the psychosocial challenges of the newlywed period.

Four of the participants attended premarital classes and considered this to be beneficial. For example, Amy found it very helpful to have attended premarital classes where she learnt communication skills to be applied in her marriage:

“Premarital classes...if one takes what he said one should do, it helps” [Interview one].

Another example was provided by Tina who attended premarital classes with her husband. She reported learning about the differences in their personalities:

“We had a class...about the personalities, and how you work with this personality and that personality. And that helped a lot” [Interview one].

Elri and her husband found premarital classes to be very helpful as well:

“We really learnt so much from him... but there were also many other couples, and then strange enough, they are sitting in exactly the same situation as you are. Same circumstances. In those classes we really learnt a lot” [Interview one].

Simone also experienced the benefit of attending premarital classes:

“That (the premarital classes) was actually very nice. And if someone had to ask me if they had to do it, I would say yes” [Interview one].

Consequently, it appears as if all the participants who attended premarital classes (n=4) found it to be a helpful resource, because of the knowledge gained which could be applied in the management of psychosocial challenges. In particular, Tina's quote about the knowledge she gained regarding different personalities can be linked to the psychosocial challenge category of differences in personality, habits, and routines as discussed earlier in the chapter.

Furthermore, a few of the participants (n=2) gained knowledge from work experiences that could be applied in their marriages. Elri reported that her experience as a teacher taught her about discipline and life-balance:

“Discipline at work, definitely. I mean, you have to learn to use your time at home and your time at work effectively. And you have to learn to juggle both, because I mean you don't want to take your work home. So you have to learn to be disciplined. And then apply it at home too” [Interview one].

In addition, work experience and people skills acquired in the work place served as a resource for Phillip (construction worker), as well:

“To be at a job where I have to work with people on a daily basis, and one meets different personalities...it makes it easier for you” [Interview one].

He reiterated this aspect when he mentioned:

“You have to communicate with people all day, every day at work...and it definitely shapes you...to speak more nicely to someone” [Interview one].

Consequently, it seems from the quotes as if work experience may teach individuals skills such as discipline, communication skills, and tolerance of different personalities, that are helpful in managing the challenges of the newlywed period. The tolerance of personality differences, in particular, is a skill that can be used in the management of the psychosocial challenge of differences in personality, habits and routines, as discussed earlier in the chapter.

In addition, tertiary studies served as a cognitive GRR for a number of the participants (n=3). Amy learnt to persevere during her tertiary studies:

“I think when we studied, hell, one spent day and night studying, and that was difficult, but you always hung in there, because you knew it was going to get better. I really think that helped (in our first year)” [Interview one].

James’ background in psychology appeared to make a difference in his own marriage, which could be seen in this statement early in his interview:

“I want to make her very happy, so the things I know about protecting relationships, those are the things I tried to strengthen and build up a lot” [Interview one].

He elaborated on this resource later on in the interview when he said:

“I am interested in...couple satisfaction, or the things that make couples happy, so it’s important to me and I’m interested in it. So I didn’t think it would be a problem. I thought things would go well, and I had good expectations” [Interview one].

In his follow-up interview, James again emphasised the role of his psychology background in his relationship with his wife, when he mentioned:

“When looking at various personality traits theoretically I again realised that she is quite exceptional in that regard” [Interview two].

In addition, being a health professional, with some knowledge about psychology, seemed to serve as a resource for Simone:

“I do think having a bit of psych background does give me a bit more insight into why he does things a certain way. I do think it made me a bit more understanding of where he’s coming from...not doing things a certain way makes him anxious...so I try to accommodate him in that way. I understand why. I hate it, but I do understand why he thinks that way” [Interview one].

Therefore, it would seem as if tertiary education may also be an advantage for newlyweds if they apply the knowledge learnt during that time in their marriage. For Simone, in particular, it appeared as if her psychological knowledge helped her to manage one of the psychosocial challenges with which she was confronted. Earlier in the chapter it was shown that her husband’s personality, habits, and routines caused her frustration. However, from the quote presented here it seems as if this cognitive GRR helped manage this challenge by providing her with the necessary insight to be willing to make certain compromises.

A few of the participants also took the initiative to increase their knowledge about marriage and relationship enhancement in less formal ways (n=4). For instance, in Andrea's follow-up interview she referred to her use of cognitive GRRs:

"While I was still in school I started reading things, and watching DVDs, which I must say gave me insight into marriage" [Interview two].

Furthermore, Simone found it helpful to constantly increase her knowledge about marriage and relationships by reading:

"I do quite a lot of reading in my spare time, because I love Google, just reading stuff. It's not necessarily even marriage articles, just articles on interpersonal relationships...I mean to gain the knowledge" [Interview one].

In addition, Tina increased her marital knowledge through reading, as well:

"I read a lot of wedding magazines" [Interview one].

Finally, Andrea also referred to an acquired ability to rationalise various occurrences, which made the newlywed period easier:

"I went to see a psychologist...and it's as if I learnt to rationalise things from that time onwards and I feel that it's been very helpful now and in my marriage" [Interview one].

In summary, it seems possible that newlyweds can increase their knowledge about marriage in a variety of ways, which are not all dependent on formal premarital classes or specific work experience or tertiary studies.

A variety of sources can increase one's knowledge about marriage. In this sample, the sources of knowledge included premarital classes, work experience, tertiary study experiences, and informal self-directed preparation for marriage. For all of the participants, cognitive GRRs played a prominent role in the newlywed period. From the quotes, cognitive GRRs seem to be particularly helpful in managing the psychosocial challenge of differences in personality, habits and routines, as three participants alluded to the management of this challenge through cognitive GRRs. In addition, it appears as if cognitive GRRs (knowledge in particular) are generally resources that newlyweds can acquire and foster, in order to adapt more positively to marriage.

3.3.3. Interpersonal-relational GRRs. The category of interpersonal-relational GRRs (Table 3) includes aspects associated with relationships and belonging (Antonovsky, 1987). All seven participants found relationships to be helpful resources when facing the psychosocial challenges of their new marriages, including unrealistic marital expectations, the management of joint finances, and increased responsibility.

Spousal support and belonging within the marital unit was identified as a resource by a number of the participants (n=3). Tina described herself as a strongly introverted individual, and explained that she does not really need many friends. However, she experienced her husband's support as a significant resource during the newlywed period:

“He’s my rock...it’s nice to know that even though I had a bad day, I’m going home now and he’s going to be there and almost carry me until the next day” [Interview one].

She emphasised the presence of this resource by mentioning:

“Even when we fought, he was still there for me. And I never doubted that” [Interview one].

This is similar to Simone's experience, who explained that, while external social support did not really assist in the management of any psychosocial challenges, she could not have made the transition to marriage so easily without her husband's support, especially in the context of a large amount of work pressure:

“I think that is paramount! When I get home I don’t want to deal with problems like ‘why are you never home?’ I kind of need the support” [Interview one].

She emphasised this aspect again in her follow-up interview, by saying:

“I think the biggest part is just having unconditional support from your spouse. That’s really nice...it’s small things, but he takes me into consideration...and it’s just thoughtful stuff like that that just tells me you know, it’s good, even if I’m not at home...it’s nice to have someone who just kind of tries to take care of you a little bit” [Interview two].

In addition, Andrea referred mostly to aspects related to her husband's support and belonging within their relationship during this time:

“We are sort of the “it” couple...people like to be around us. I think he enjoys it that people look up to us...on the one hand it is as if one then wants to appear perfect”
[Interview one].

She later elaborated further on this resource:

“Just that support from my own husband; that I don’t even have to go ask other people for advice” [Interview one].

Therefore, from the data it seems as if support from one’s spouse can be a very helpful resource in managing psychosocial challenges, related to either the new marriage or other external stressors.

In addition, a few of the participants (n=2) reported the benefit of external social support. For example, Phillip found it very helpful to draw on the social support offered by his male friends during the transition period of marriage:

“Just to have someone who you can talk to about anything. Things that you can’t talk to your wife about...sometimes you need that male bonding, and I think that’s something that made it easier for me” [Interview one].

In addition, in his follow-up interview he mentioned how he found his parents’ support to be essential during this transition:

“I definitely realised how much help I received from my parents... I definitely wouldn’t have made it without my parents” [Interview two].

Lastly, Elri discussed how their families simplified the newlywed transition for them by helping them to avoid or manage possible challenges:

“Of course our families...they are always there for us” [Interview one].

Later on in the interview, she emphasised the benefit of this resource again:

“I think perhaps, because we are in such a safe environment with so many people who love us, it makes it easier for us” [Interview one].

Consequently, from the data it appears as if social support from family and friends was a beneficial resource for these two participants during the newlywed adaptations. One participant seemed to experience his friends' support as beneficial because it provided him with some independence, whereas the other participant's family appeared to help her feel safe in a time marked by change.

Other participants (n=2) found their relationships with friends and family to be beneficial, specifically because they served as a source of advice. For example, in times of doubt and challenge, Amy found it helpful to speak to friends and family:

“To hear other people’s opinions and know that you’re not alone” [Interview one].

This was supported by the following statement later:

“Just talking to my mom, and having her tell me that it is an adaptation and it is difficult. Your friends, to hear how they actually experienced it” [Interview one].

James also relied on the advice of others, and this allowed him and his wife to avoid a great deal of possible challenges:

“There (in terms of sexual aspects) I also asked my sisters for advice, so that our expectations were realistic” [Interview one].

James elaborated further on this aspect by later mentioning:

“I asked my sisters, because both of them got married recently and they both manage their money differently. And I also asked my parents, and we looked at what her parents do” [Interview one].

To summarise, these quotes may indicate that receiving advice from other married individuals can possibly be very beneficial for newlyweds. Advice may help newlyweds to avoid certain psychosocial challenges completely, or at least learn ways to manage these challenges from more experienced people.

Consequently, from the quotes in this section overall it can be seen that interpersonal-relational GRRs are a vital part, and significant resource, in managing the possible tension

arising from the new marriage. Social support takes many forms and is helpful in different ways for the participants. This includes support from friends, family, or one's own spouse. Furthermore, for some of the participants, social support takes the form of advice and guidance to avoid, or at least normalise, marital challenges.

3.3.4. Macrosociocultural GRRs. The category of macrosociocultural GRRs (Table 3) refers to aspects directly associated with one's culture, such as a sense of belonging, answers, prescribed ways of responding, and knowledge (Antonovsky, 1987). Religion can be classified as a cultural group (Antonovsky, 1987). Five of the participants made reference to the use and benefit of religion, in particular Christianity, as a resource during the first year of marriage. Religion was beneficial in a number of different ways for the participants.

For a few of the participants (n=3), the benefit of Christianity lay in the provision of shared activities to engage in. For instance, Amy felt that religious activities brought her and her spouse closer together:

“Now one reads the Bible together in the evenings, and that also makes a difference. Not just for conflict, but also in your relationship. It also brings you closer to each other” [Interview one].

Shared religious activity was a resource for Phillip as well:

“We read the Bible together every day, and I feel that this has brought us closer together” [Interview one].

Tina also found religion to be helpful, and she explained:

“I think the biggest thing is that we grew together in God. And I think if we didn't do that, it would have also been very difficult for us. Because I see if we didn't read the Bible together in the morning, we both have chaotic days. So I think it helped a lot” [Interview one].

The benefit of shared religious activities for Tina was again mentioned later on in the interview:

“I think when we do Bible study together or pray together...it also helps us to help each other grow” [Interview one].

From these quotes it seems as if shared religious activity acted as a resource for these participants, through fostering a stronger couple identity.

In addition, their Christian faith served as a source of strength and peace for a few of the participants (n=3). For example, going to church or reading the Bible together helped Amy to feel encouraged and strengthened to face their challenges again:

“When one walks out of church one feels as if one has strength for the new week” [Interview one].

Furthermore, James gained the sense that no challenge is unmanageable for them, because of their faith in God:

“So we know the problems will come, but they won’t push us apart, or throw us off track, or be unmanageable” [Interview one].

For Elri, one of the most special aspects of her marriage, and something that has strengthened her marriage, is the fact that she can ask her husband to pray for her when necessary:

“There’s nothing I enjoy as much as in the evenings when I’ve had a difficult day, and I know I can ask him to pray for me” [Interview one].

In addition, Elri explained that she feels a relationship with God plays a more prominent role than anything else in one’s marriage:

“It’s probably the most positive aspect of all...if God isn’t part of your marriage, then I don’t know how you even have a marriage” [Interview one].

Therefore, it appears as if these participants’ belief in a higher power provided them with a sense of stability in a time filled with adaptations.

Lastly, Christianity provided a prescribed way of behaving in marriage for the two male participants. An example of this was given by James:

“One way in which it has helped is by providing values and a prescribed way of treating each other and loving each other. That idea of putting the other person’s needs above your own” [Interview one].

Phillip also explained how religion provides a prescribed way of treating one’s spouse:

“When you start reading the Bible there are many examples where husband and wife fight, or where reference is made to the relationship, what the wife’s role is and what the husband’s role is. Responsibilities. And if you read that together it definitely makes a difference” [Interview one].

From the data it appears as if this provision of a prescribed way of behaving in marriage may be particularly helpful in the psychosocial challenge of new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy discussed earlier in the chapter.

Therefore, it is clear that religion as a macrosociocultural GRR served as a resource for the participants in a number of ways. These ways included the provision of shared activities to engage in, a sense of peace and strength, and a prescribed way of behaving. Most of the participants emphasised the importance of their faith during the marital transition.

3.3.5. Artefactual-material GRRs. The category of artefactual-material GRRs (Table 3) refers to having access to money or material resources (Antonovsky, 1987). Three of the participants made reference to the benefit of money or material resources during their first year of marriage. James felt that his wife’s access to financial resources made the newlywed adaptation much easier:

“Yes, definitely! I think especially the fact that she got a new job, a good job, so easily, definitely made it easier for us” [Interview one].

He emphasised the benefit of this resource again later on by saying:

“We didn’t have that financial stress that people normally have when they live together for the first time” [Interview one].

Thus, it appears as if money-related aspects were multifaceted for James. On the one hand, it was very challenging for him to accept his wife's money as his own. On the other hand, however, he also saw the value of his wife earning a good salary in making the newlywed period easier. This is a sentiment shared by Phillip (an employee in the construction industry):

"I think the fact that my company gives me a house takes a lot of stress away, because no matter what, I don't have to stress about whether I can make the monthly home loan payments" [Interview one].

Phillip reiterated this aspect in his follow-up interview, when he said:

"And other benefits too. A bunch of nice stuff. I have a house, I have DSTV, I have a full-time maid, we have an allowance for accommodation when I work on a project, those types of things. A car, life insurance, pension. Those types of things that one has from the beginning, offers a lot of relief...it takes a lot of stress away" [Interview two].

However, as is the case for James, money-related aspects were also complex for Phillip. Although he seemed to believe that he had access to a number of beneficial material resources, he still felt pressurised to maintain his wife's previous life standards.

Finally, Simone mentioned the following regarding her and her husband's strong financial position (both earn good salaries in the health care profession):

"We are in a very fortunate position that we earn enough money that it's not a constant stress...we can afford nice things, we can go on holiday if we wish. So I think it just takes a lot of stress away. It's also that we both earn the same amount. It's not like one is taking care of the other...so I think that makes it easy" [Interview one].

Later, she continued by mentioning:

"You know, it's not like I get home with a dress and I have to explain to my husband why did I spend this money. I spent it because it's mine. I think that's nice. And I think that's something a lot of women struggle with, especially if they are not earning as much or not earning anything at all, and they are like dependent on their husbands...which I feel I'm very fortunate not to have to do" [Interview one].

Therefore, these three participants considered artefactual-material GRRs to be beneficial for a variety of reasons during the newlywed period.

To summarise, the majority of the participants did not indicate that money was necessarily a resource or distressing during the newlywed period. However, for these three participants it made a considerable difference in their first year of marriage. For both male participants, access to finances and financial resources seemed to decrease their overall distress as well as additional concerns during the adaptation period. For one of the female participants, the benefit of artefactual-material GRRs was related to the fact that she has her own money and does not have to rely on her husband when she wants something, perhaps providing a sense of independence despite the new marital unit. Therefore, money as a resource appeared to have helped these three participants specifically to manage the psychosocial challenge of responsibility and less individualism, as discussed earlier in the chapter.

3.3.6. Emotional GRRs. The category of emotional GRRs (Table 3) refers to having a strong ego identity (Antonovsky, 1987). A strong ego identity is further defined as a stable, integrated sense of self, whilst remaining flexible (Antonovsky, 1987). Maintaining a stable, integrated sense of self within the new marriage was experienced as a resource by three of the participants. For example, James indicated the he knows the importance of still having one's own interests and identity outside of the relationship:

"I have a bunch of things that I'm involved in, and she has a bunch of series that she watches, books that she reads, that I have no interest in...we give each other space to do that" [Interview one].

This facet was emphasised again later on in his interview when he said:

"Yes, definitely (it has been helpful). We can both still be who we are...look, we don't spend every minute of every day together. We do things on our own too, and we are comfortable with that...it's like, one would even get tired of too much honey. So, because it's limited, it's still valuable to us" [Interview one].

This was a sentiment shared by Simone:

"I can't be us all the time, and I definitely think we have our own separate personal lives within the relationship still...I think definitely for us it has been helpful, because we are both introverts" [Interview one].

Later on in her interview, Simone again emphasised this resource when she spoke about their religious beliefs and activities:

“But I think it’s nice. It is a shared thing, but also a separate thing that we both understand it’s personal to us. So we know not everything necessarily has to be together” [Interview one].

Finally, Tina experienced a process of growth from the engagement period and throughout the first few months of marriage, which she saw as very helpful in the context of her marriage. This was evident from her comment:

“I also had to be on my own for a while. And I think that also helped...it helped me to become more independent. It also helped to see that I actually can take care of myself” [Interview one].

Later on in the interview she emphasised this aspect again, by saying:

“I think I just realised that I have to be my own person. I can’t live my whole life under someone, like I had always done. I had to become my own person. I had to start making my own decisions...so I think it made me almost a stronger person. And he also made me a stronger person, because he said to me ‘let’s build you up. We are not going to be so dependent anymore. Let’s make you yourself” [Interview one].

Thus, emotional GRRs were present for these three participants in different ways during the newlywed period. Individual activities and interests outside of the marital unit appeared to be a resource because of varied reasons. This included the way in which limited time with one’s spouse adds value to joint time and activities. At first this may seem contradictory; however, one of the participants specifically indicated that he appreciates the time he spends with his wife more, because they do not spend all their time together. In addition, separate activities and interests may be particularly beneficial and important for introverted newlyweds, who draw energy from time spent alone (Jung, 1971). Lastly, retaining a sense of independence appears to possibly foster a stronger sense of self and individual well-being in some newlyweds.

To summarise the data related to this category, only three participants specifically referred to emotional GRRs as a resource during the newlywed period. This may be because the questions did not elicit this aspect enough, or perhaps the participants did indeed not make

use of this type of resource. However, it was still clearly indicated as helpful by at least three of the seven participants and was therefore included. The benefit of emotional GRRs seemed to lie specifically in its management of the psychosocial challenge of *new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy*.

3.3.7. Valuative-attitudinal GRRs. The category of Valuative-attitudinal GRRs (Table 3) includes an individual's overall coping style which is characterised by farsightedness, flexibility, and rationality (Antonovsky, 1987). Three of the participants referred to an overall, general coping strategy marked by these characteristics. For instance, Andrea reported this type of coping strategy as a helpful resource in her life and in her marriage:

“My willingness to change and the ability to change according to changing circumstances” [Interview one].

Later on in her interview, Andrea reiterated the presence of this coping strategy when she said:

“I feel that I also have the ability that if something bad happens, I am able to rationalise it” [Interview one].

Andrea again referred to the importance of such a coping strategy in her follow-up interview:

“I really believe that people would struggle less if they were more flexible” [Interview two].

James made frequent reference to his general attitude of flexibility, rationality, and farsightedness in dealing with challenges, and the changes accompanying his new marriage as well. Early in his first interview, James expressed the following:

“We tried to see it realistically...it's not that you are getting your fairy tale chosen one...it is two people with negative and positive aspects, who have to work on it together...that possibly makes it a bit easier for us” [Interview one].

Later, James again referred to the coping strategy on which he usually relies:

“Also the ability to consider many different aspects, and to look ahead a bit” [Interview one].

In addition, in his follow-up interview James again emphasised the presence of this valuative-attitudinal GRR:

“One’s attitude towards problems determines how you interpret them” [Interview two].

Finally, Simone also seemed to rely on an adaptive coping strategy in order to manage the newlywed period more successfully. Throughout her interview, she made a number of comments in this regard. She appeared to have a very rational view of the decision to marry her partner:

“Before we got engaged I decided it would be important to speak to a professional about it. Like is this really a good idea? Am I too young to make this decision? And um, we, the psychologist that I spoke to and I decided it is something I am capable of deciding for myself” [Interview one].

Simone continued by saying:

“And I think it was very nice just to speak to someone, you know, and to hear maybe you are on the level to make that decision. So it made me a lot more relaxed. I was so scared that I was just jumping in to it, because you are so in love. And it's so amazing. I mean, it's stupid. You feel that way about a lot of boyfriends. So I just wanted to make sure there's a difference this time” [Interview one].

Furthermore, she expressed the following about the newlywed adaptations:

“With a little bit of compromise from both sides it's not difficult to overcome, and you know just like logically speaking about it” [Interview one].

In addition, Simone referred to an element of flexibility that has helped her to solve problems in her marriage and other areas of her life:

“I think I have to do it every day in my job, and I do it at home as well. So I think it is probably one of my stronger points. I think I am a very flexible person. And I can compromise easily, and I do see other points of view quite easily. So I do think that does make it a bit easier” [Interview one].

From these quotes it seems as if a flexible, rational, and farsighted coping strategy was used in different ways by the three participants to manage the challenges of the newlywed period.

It appears as if valuative-attitudinal resources may be a beneficial aspect for some newlyweds in the management of psychosocial challenges. James in particular seemed to have made the overall marital adaptation most successfully, having experienced the fewest challenges of any of the participants, and also not even experiencing these few challenges as overly distressing. Simone also experienced the newlywed transition to be manageable and experienced very few challenges in relation to the other participants. James's and Simone's overall rational, farsighted and flexible coping styles were evident right throughout their interviews. In addition, this valuative-attitudinal GRR appeared to be an aspect that played a prominent role in their perceptions and experiences of the newlywed period. It seems as if valuative-attitudinal GRRs may be beneficial in particular for the management of unrealistic marital expectations (as discussed earlier), because it is characterised by rationality.

3.3.8. Summary. From the above quotes it appears as if physical and biochemical GRRs, cognitive GRRs, and interpersonal-relational GRRs were the most frequently used GRRs in this sample. Each of these types of GRRs was used by all seven participants to manage the psychosocial challenges of the newlywed period. In addition, macrosociocultural GRRs were used by five participants, whereas artefactual-material, emotional, and valuative-attitudinal GRRs were each used by three participants. These GRRs were used in particular to manage psychosocial challenges such as differences in personality, habits and routines, the psychological pressure of new responsibilities, restricted levels of autonomy, and unmet or unrealistic marital expectations.

The categories presented in this chapter warrant more detailed discussion. Therefore, the next chapter will present a detailed discussion on the following psychosocial challenges: *differences in personality, habits and routines, inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics, new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy, stereotypical division of household chores, inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances, and unmet marital expectations*. Furthermore, the utilisation of the following GRRs will also be discussed: *physical and biochemical GRRs, cognitive GRRs, interpersonal-relational GRRs, macrosociocultural GRRs, artefactual-material GRRs, emotional GRRs, and valuative-attitudinal GRRs*.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusion

4.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on presenting a discussion of the current study's results. The discussion will commence with restating the research objective and summarising the main findings. An interpretation of the results will then follow, organised according to the psychosocial challenges experienced, and then the General Resistance Resources (GRRs) used to manage the psychosocial challenges. The interpretation will take into account previous literature, and suggest possible explanations for the results. Following the interpretation of the results, a conclusion for the study will be provided which includes the implication of the results for future practice. Lastly, the current study's limitations, as well as recommendations for future research, will be offered.

4.2. Research Objective and Brief Summary of Main Findings

The objective of this study is to explore the psychosocial challenges experienced most frequently by a sample of newlyweds, as well as the GRRs employed most often by the newlyweds to manage these challenges. It appears as if the psychosocial challenge experienced most frequently by the newlyweds in this particular sample was related to *differences in personality, habits and routines* (n=6). In addition, *inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics*, as well as *new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy* each caused stress for more than half of the sample (n=4) respectively. Other psychosocial challenges experienced by the participants in their first year of marriage were the *stereotypical division of household chores* (n=3), *inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances* (n=3), and *unmet marital expectations* (n=3). Furthermore, according to the analysis of the data, and its conceptualisation according to Antonovsky's (1979; 1987) concept of GRRs, it would seem that the GRRs used most often were *physical and biochemical GRRs*, *cognitive GRRs*, and *interpersonal-relational GRRs*. These three types of GRRs were used by all seven of the participants. In addition, *macrosociocultural GRRs* (n=5), *artefactual-material GRRs* (n=3), *emotional GRRs* (n=3), and *valuative-attitudinal GRRs* (n=3) were also used to manage the psychosocial challenges of the newlywed period in the current study.

4.3. Psychosocial Challenges

4.3.1. Differences in personality, habits and routines. *Differences in personality, habits and routines* emerged from the results as one of the most frequently experienced challenges of a new marriage. Six of the seven participants made reference to such differences causing frustration, as well as marital conflict in the newlywed period. This psychosocial challenge was not found in existing literature as a prevalent challenge for newlyweds; yet this challenge emerged from the data in the current study as the most frequent psychosocial challenge experienced in the first year of marriage.

Very little previous literature could be found indicating that *differences in personality, habits and routines* may be a psychosocial challenge for newlyweds. Previous literature hypothesises that the *Spousal Discrepancy Theory* (Kurdek, 1993) may account for the frustration and conflict that is caused by personality differences between spouses. The *Spousal Discrepancy Theory* posits that significant differences in personality put couples at risk for conflict (Kurdek, 1993). Kilmann and Vendemia (2013) tested the *Spousal Discrepancy Theory* with a sample of 244 distressed American couples. Their results support this theory and found that significant discrepancies exist between distressed partners. The traits that differed most significantly between the husbands and wives were impulsivity, competitiveness, cooperativeness, dependence, and responsibility. Therefore, in applying the *Spousal Discrepancy Theory* to the current study, it may be posited that differences in personality in newlyweds may already put them at risk for conflict from the very beginning of their marriages. In terms of distress caused by differences in habits and routines during the newlywed period, previous literature was again sparse, except for one American qualitative study with 21 couples by Hall and Adams (2011). In their study, daily hassles were found to be one of the unexpected challenges in the newlywed period. Differences in routines were reported as particularly frustrating for some of the participants in Hall and Adams' (2011) study, simply because it was an experience that had not been prepared for, or thought of as a potential challenge.

However, as mentioned, *differences in personality, habits and routines* was considered to be the most frequently experienced challenge in the current study (n=6). Various explanations may account for this occurrence.

Firstly, individuals experience *differences in personality, habits, and routines* before marriage; however, they may not cause significant levels of inconvenience or conflict until the individuals start sharing a home (Hall & Adams, 2011; Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2009).

Cohabitation before marriage is associated with poor relationship outcomes and higher rates of divorce (Brown, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright, 2006; Jose, O’Leary, & Moyer, 2010). However, researchers have begun to distinguish between different types of cohabitators (Gold, 2012; Willoughby, Carroll, & Busby, 2011). In a study of 1365 non-married, cohabitating American couples, engaged cohabitating couples with a clear, agreed upon intention to marry were found to be doing as well as couples who did not cohabit before marriage (Willoughby et al., 2011). In fact, many of these couples were shown to have even better marital relationship outcomes than couples who did not cohabit before marriage (Willoughby et al., 2011). One of the reasons for this finding is that couples who cohabit before marriage are able to identify whether they are suitably matched before getting married (Coast, 2009; Gold, 2012). Cohabitation may then be seen as a trial marriage (Gold, 2012). If the couple feels that there is a mismatch between them, the union would not continue on to marriage (Gold, 2012), whereas couples who do not live together before marriage may only become aware of their mismatch during the newlywed period. In the current study, participation was limited to newlyweds who had not cohabitated with their spouses before marriage. Therefore, it is possible that *differences in personality, habits and routines* presented as a psychosocial challenge most frequently, because it is an aspect which the participants were not directly faced with or required to address until moving in together after marriage.

Secondly, it is possible that *differences in personality, habits and routines* may initially have seemed trivial to the participants, or the religious leaders or professionals who prepared them for marriage (for the participants who attended premarital counselling or education). *Differences in personality, habits and routines* as a marital challenge does not appear frequently in previous literature, whereas a variety of research articles can be cited regarding other potential marital challenges, such as financial considerations, the childbearing decision, in-law relationships, sexual aspects, unmet marital expectations, marital role sharing, and family of origin dynamics (Amato, 2010; Joseph & Subhashini, 2012; McCarthy et al., 2008; Scott et al., 2013). In addition, very limited research exists on the experiences of South African newlyweds (EBSCOHOST & Google scholar search; 16 October 2016). As a result, these *differences in personality, habits and routines* may not typically be expected to be exceedingly taxing stressors for Afrikaans-speaking, white South African newlyweds, and they may not be adequately prepared for this particular challenge when other marital aspects seem more prominent or likely to occur.

Thirdly, *differences in personality, habits and routines* are not aspects which can be avoided completely, due to different family backgrounds or cumulative life experiences. In particular, routines are agreed upon within specific family units and are unique to these family units (Koome, Hocking, & Sutton, 2012). Therefore, when two individuals marry and cohabit for the first time (in the case of the current study), they bring two unique sets of routines to the new marital unit and home. Consequently, newlywed couples who do not cohabit before marriage will need to negotiate routines for their home. This would probably require compromise, as new routines either need to be entirely re-established, current sets of routines combined, or one individual's family routines need to be accepted at the expense of the other spouse's routines. It is important that a couple negotiates satisfactory routines for their home, as routines have been shown to promote feelings of belonging and security through the structure they provide (Fiese, 2006). Consequently, although differences in routines may be a challenging aspect of new marriage, routines may also become an *interpersonal-relational GRR* if successfully negotiated and established.

To summarise, in the current study *differences in personality, habits and routines* was identified as a prominent psychosocial challenge of the newlywed period, although this was not found to be a challenge in international literature. A few possible explanations were suggested for the high frequency of this psychosocial challenge in the current study. Firstly, research participants had not cohabited before marriage. Secondly, this psychosocial challenge may not have been expected to be a prominent challenge of the newlywed period, and adequately prepared for. Thirdly, *differences in personality, habits, and routines* is not a challenge that can be avoided due to the fact that these aspects develop over a long period of time before marriage, and may become engrained in a newlywed's perceptions and expectations (Walsh, 2012). Therefore, couples need to be helped to manage these differences by encouraging the use of certain GRRs, rather than simply trying to avoid the challenge. As was seen in the results chapter, *cognitive GRRs* specifically were used by a number of the participants to manage the psychosocial challenge of *differences in personality, habits and routines*. Furthermore, the *physical and biochemical GRR* of agreeableness may also play a beneficial role in managing this specific psychosocial challenge. As discussed above, negotiating new routines for the marital unit may require some compromise. Agreeable people are characterised as tender, straightforward, modest, altruistic, and trustworthy. They also tend to value harmony and cooperation in their relationships (Costa & McCrae, 1995). Therefore, people who show higher levels of agreeableness may be able to manage differences in routines

(in particular) more successfully. A more detailed discussion on the use of these GRRs in managing the identified psychosocial challenges will follow later in the chapter.

4.3.2. Inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics. The second most frequently experienced psychosocial challenge for the participants (n=4) was related to *inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics*. This psychosocial challenge included distress related to separation from participants' families of origin, problematic in-law relationships, and internal or external conflict as a result of the childbearing decision.

Three of the four participants who experienced this psychosocial challenge struggled, in particular, with emotional separation from their families of origin. A possible interpretation for this challenge is that all the participants were young adults. During young adulthood, many individuals start to form their own families. However, during this time, particularly at the beginning of young adulthood, individuals may still be in the process of fully separating from their parents and gaining adult independence (Levinson, 1986). Levinson (1986) refers to this time as the *Early Adult Transition*. The developmental stage of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004) may also be relevant in the discussion of this challenge. Emerging adulthood will be elaborated on in greater detail later in the chapter; however, it warrants mention here too. Emerging adulthood is characterised by feeling in-between adolescence and adulthood (Reifman, Colwell, & Arnett, 2007), amongst other characteristics. Consequently, the participants who found themselves struggling to separate from their families of origin may have experienced this psychosocial challenge because of not yet fully having achieved adulthood. Therefore, some of the issues related to family dynamics during the newlywed period may be accounted for by normative development.

Generally, contradictory literature exists regarding in-law relationships. On the one hand, some previous literature indicates that the in-law relationship may at times lead to internal or overt conflict for married individuals (Duvall, 1954; Fingerman et al., 2012; MorrSerewicz & Hosmer, 2011; Rittenour, 2012). On the other hand, literature has found that problematic in-law relationships are often only a stereotype and that many people enjoy satisfying in-law relationships (Fingerman et al., 2012). In the current study, few of the participants mentioned in-law relationships as being specifically challenging during the newlywed period (n=2). In addition, a few of the participants (n=3) reported very close relationships with their in-laws. Therefore, negative, distressing in-law relationships did not

appear to be the norm in the current study. However, this result must be considered in the context of using only a small sample, and cannot be considered to represent the experiences of other South African newlyweds generally. Furthermore, family relationships tend to differ amongst the cultural groups in South Africa (Moore & Govender, 2013; Posel & Rudwick, 2014; Singh, 2008), and therefore, the experiences of white, Afrikaans newlyweds in relation to their in-laws cannot automatically be assumed to be the same as in-law relationships in other South African cultures. Consequently, the experiences of South African newlyweds in relation to their in-laws generally are currently inconclusive.

A third aspect of the psychosocial challenge of *inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics* is the childbearing decision. Two female participants experienced internal conflict and distress as a result of the childbearing decision. One participant was faced with feelings of ambivalence and sadness when she realised that she would have to sacrifice her career to have children. Previous studies have found that both men and women generally consider their careers to be equally important and want their lives to include both a career and parenthood (Eriksson, Larsson, Svanberg, & Tyden, 2013; Gerson, 2010; Hoffnung, 2004; Weer, Greenhaus, Colakoglu, & Foley, 2006; Zhou, 2006). Historically, combining work and family has usually been very typical for men, yet more difficult, and sometimes impossible for women (Hoffnung & Williams, 2013). According to Gerson (2010), many women realise that achieving work and family balance would be very difficult, yet they also feel that paid employment is a requirement to ensure personal autonomy. In a longitudinal study which followed 200 American women for 16 years (Hoffnung & Williams, 2013), comparisons were made between three role-status outcome groups, namely those women who had careers and motherhood, those who were non-working mothers, and those women who had no children and only full-time employment. Many of the participants (from all three role-status groups) reported that their decisions regarding motherhood and employment were complex and had caused much distress. Furthermore, a qualitative study with 11 Korean mothers found that a number of the participants had regrets and negatively judged themselves for the decision to be full-time, stay-at-home mothers (Jung & Heppner, 2015). Therefore, it appears as if decisions surrounding employment and parenthood continue to be difficult for women and result in internal conflict, despite more egalitarian societal values than had been the case in the past.

Another participant questioned her femininity when she realised that her husband was ready to start raising a family before she was. Motherhood has been linked to femininity and womanhood in the past (Gillespie, 2003; Letherby, 1999; Letherby, 2002; Meyers, 2001). It is

noteworthy that motherhood has previously been considered as a necessity for a woman's gender identity, well-being and self-esteem (Meyers, 2001), an essential part of ideal womanhood (Letherby, 1999), and as the core of what women do and who they are (Gillespie, 2003). More recently, it has also been found that women who do not want children are negatively perceived as abnormal, selfish, and immature (Rich, Taket, Graham, & Shelley, 2011). In addition, motherhood is defined as natural, whereas non-motherhood is considered unwomanly (Rich et al., 2011). Furthermore, in a qualitative study with 30 Swedish childfree women, many of the women expressed that their bodies simply did not have the biological urge to reproduce (Peterson & Engwall, 2013). A number of these women interpreted the absence of a reproductive urge as lacking or missing something that other women had. Consequently, it appears as if historically, and continuing into recent times, women are supposed to want children. This echoes the internal conflict of the participant mentioned above. In her case, even just the delay in the desire for children has led her to feel unwomanly.

An additional dimension of *inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics* is that only female participants experienced inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics as a source of distress (four of the five female participants, but neither of the male participants). In addition, most of these participants experienced more than one aspect within this category (in-law problems, issues related to their family of origin, and distress caused by the childbearing decision). Hall and Adams (2011) found that the female newlywed participants in their qualitative study struggled with feelings of competing loyalty towards their families of origin and their new husbands twice as frequently as the male participants. In addition, as discussed above, decisions around balancing careers and childbearing, as well as the link between childbearing and gender-identity have always been much more prominent issues for women than for men (Jung & Heppner, 2015; Peterson & Engwall, 2013). Moreover, women also tend to generally experience a greater level of family responsibility than men do. For example, it is often the wife that becomes responsible for the care-giving of ill or elderly parents (in a variety of cultures), whether her own, or her parents-in-law (Attias-Donfut, Ogg, & Wolff, 2005; Krzyżowski & Mucha, 2014; Paillard-Borg & Stromberg, 2014). Consequently, it seems as if various aspects related to family dynamics generally are more challenging for females than for males, as was the case for the participants in the current study.

The role of a very specific cultural background may also warrant discussion. All of the participants were white, Afrikaans-speaking individuals. In addition, as mentioned above, all the participants who struggled with the psychosocial challenge of *inter- and intrapersonal*

family dynamics were female. Therefore, some consideration should be given to the role that being a white, Afrikaans female in particular may have played in this challenge. Kotzé and Griessel (2008) propose that the psychological development of Afrikaner women is extensively influenced by their cultures. Furthermore, according to Kotzé and Griessel (2008), the Afrikaner culture has evolved out of a number of specific historical events that have resulted in a generally masculine or patriarchal culture overall. Therefore, Afrikaner women have come to adopt a general attitude of obedience and submissiveness in order to fit in to their patriarchal culture (Maritz, 2004). Research by Roos and De Jager (2010) also supports the central role that the Afrikaner culture plays in the identity and psychological development of Afrikaner females. Their study explores the subjective experience of loneliness in 15 elderly Afrikaans-speaking women, in particular, the perceived causes of their loneliness. One of the most prominent results that emerged from their research was that many of the women described a sense of loss of self. They related this loss specifically to the way in which their identity had been closely entwined with their socialised roles in relation to their husbands. According to Roos and De Jager (2010), these Afrikaner women had not developed independent identities that could continue in the absence of their previous traditional roles. Consequently, it is possible that Afrikaans-speaking women have been raised to live in submission to the male figures in their lives. The dominant male figure in their lives would thus be their fathers until marriage, after which the husband would take over this role. This hypothesis is supported by one of the current study's participants in particular who indicated that she struggled a great deal to make the mental shift from being a daughter to being a wife. She also mentioned that marriage presented a change from being under her father's protection to being under the protection of her husband.

In conclusion, *inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics* was a frequently experienced psychosocial challenge in the current study. This category included aspects related to family of origin issues, distress related to the in-law relationship, and conflict related to the childbearing decision. Three of these four participants struggled in particular with emotional separation from their families of origin. However, most of these participants struggled with more than one of the above-mentioned aspects. A number of reasons were proposed to account for the high frequency of *inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics* as a psychosocial challenge, including normal developmental factors (Levinson, 1986), the female gender (Jung & Heppner, 2015; Peterson & Engwall, 2013), societal norms and expectations (Hoffnung & Williams, 2013; Rich et al., 2011), and the influence of the Afrikaner culture (Roos & De Jager, 2010; Kotzé &

Griessel, 2008). In order to manage this particular psychosocial challenge, *cognitive GRRs* may again play a beneficial role. In premarital counselling, health professionals can teach couples skills to manage this particular psychosocial challenge. The role of *cognitive GRRs* in the management of this challenge will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

4.3.3. New responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy. Another frequently experienced challenge was that of *new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy*. Four participants experienced this psychosocial challenge during the newlywed period. According to seminal research by Minuchin (1974), marriage is marked by joining two individual lives together through accommodation and boundary creation or restructuring. This is also supported by more recent researchers, who indicate that the boundary creation or restructuring of marriage requires a great deal of flexibility and change (Ariplackal & George, 2015). An Indian study with 20 individuals who were divorced as newlyweds found that one of the challenges experienced most frequently during the newlywed period was the transition that needed to be made from being an individual unit to a couple unit (Ariplackal & George, 2015). As seen in the results chapter, the new marital unit and a couples' couple identity may serve as an *interpersonal-relational GRR* during the newlywed period. However, for some newlyweds the formation of the marital unit may rather result in internal conflict and distress, and bring with it feelings of responsibility and limited autonomy. This specific psychosocial challenge is an additional challenge which was not prominent in literature regarding newlyweds, yet emerged as a frequent challenge in the current study. An American qualitative study with 21 newlywed couples by Hall and Adams (2011) was the only article which could be found which referred specifically to the presence of this psychosocial challenge. However, a variety of explanations may account for the current sample's experience of *new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy* as a prominent psychosocial challenge.

Firstly, this may possibly be accounted for by normative developmental aspects. According to Arnett (2004) adolescence and early adulthood is separated by *emerging adulthood*. He postulates that emerging adulthood is experienced by many Westernised individuals between the ages of 18 and 29, as a result of lengthy tertiary education before entrance into full-time employment, marriage, parenthood or other adult roles (Arnett, 2004). Emerging adulthood is characterised by instability, exploration, self-focus and feeling in-between adolescence and adulthood (Reifman et al., 2007). For the participants who found this

aspect of marriage to be particularly challenging, it is possible that they were still transitioning from emerging adulthood to early adulthood. If this were the case, then they might still have felt a need for self-focus (Reifman et al., 2007), yet focus needed to be shifted to the new marital unit. Therefore, developmental factors may result in frustration or distress for emerging adults during the newlywed period, as marriage may limit autonomy. One of the participants in particular who experienced this aspect as challenging was only 21 years old when he was married. He reported that he had to distance himself from many of his friends for the sake of his marriage, as well as having to stop participating in many of his recreational activities, because his wife did not approve of them. Limited autonomy was reported to be very challenging for him during the first few months.

Secondly, according to the *Family Development Theory*, marriage triggers the transition to a new life stage (Rodgers & White, 1993). This new life stage requires the adoption of new roles and norms. Once married, a certain mental transition is required regarding one's role in the relationship (Rodgers & White, 1993), and it is possible that this may be accompanied by a greater sense of responsibility. In addition, marriage seems to require, or elicit, more responsibility and dedication towards one's partner than before. The dedication of spouses towards each other in marriage has been found to far exceed the dedication of partners in a non-marital relationship, regardless of the length of the relationship or cohabitation (Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2002). This is supported by the experience of a number of the current study's participants. All of the participants dated for a minimum of three years before marriage. Two of the participants dated their spouses for eight years and nine years, respectively, before marriage. The participant who had dated her spouse for nine years before marriage appeared to experience a greater deal of distress related to her new marital responsibilities than any of the participants. Therefore, it appears as if marriage is indeed accompanied by greater responsibility than dating (regardless of the length of the premarital relationship), which caused distress for these newlyweds.

Thirdly, once married, many of the responsibilities that had once been taken care of for an individual by their parents now have to be done by themselves (Hall & Adams, 2011). These responsibilities may include aspects such as maintaining a home or financial responsibilities. Marriage has also been found to be accompanied by the need for further "big decisions" to be made, for example about childbearing (Hall & Adams, 2011; p. 382). Besides one qualitative study with 21 newlywed couples (Hall & Adams, 2011), no other specific research could be found with regards to this hypothesised reason for a sense of increased responsibility in

newlyweds. However, this hypothesis was supported in the current study by one of the participants in particular. The participant struggled immensely with the increased sense of responsibility that occurred soon after the commencement of her new marriage. She specifically referred to how difficult this was for her, because of the fact that her parents had previously done many things for her, that she now had to do for herself and for her husband. The participant lived with her parents until she got married (at age 27).

To summarise, *new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy* was a frequently experienced psychosocial challenge for the participants in the current study. Possible interpretations for the frequency with which this challenge was experienced include normative developmental aspects, and the fact that marriage by its very nature seems to require or elicit greater levels of responsibility and dedication. Furthermore, once married a newlywed may need to start taking responsibility for aspects previously taken care of by parents, and marriage may also be accompanied by the need for further important decisions to be made. The psychosocial challenge of *new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy* during the newlywed period may be managed by relying on *emotional* and *cognitive GRRs*. Additional discussion will follow on the role of these GRRs further on in the chapter.

4.3.4. Stereotypical division of household chores. The *stereotypical division of household chores* was experienced by three of the participants in the current study, and it warrants discussion because of the way in which gender role expectations and societal norms and stereotypes seem to underlie or contribute to this particular challenge. The division of household chores was only a challenge for female participants in the current study. In addition, all three of these women referred to the role which gender stereotypes and norms played in their experiences. The small sample size must be taken into consideration, and these results cannot be generalised. However, the results still confirm previous literature which indicates that marital roles are often determined by underlying gender attitudes (Davis & Greenside, 2009). A recent study indicates that Southern African cultures tend to place males and females in specified gender roles, where males are superior, and women are inferior and responsible for household chores (Sechele, 2015). In many of these cultures, women tend to have a great deal of responsibility, but little input in making important decisions in the family (Sechele, 2015). Furthermore, literature indicates that although women have become increasingly more involved in full-time employment, the division of household chores has generally remained

unequal between men and women (Röhler & Huinink, 2010). For example, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics (2010), for every 2 hours men spend on housework per day, women spend 2.6 hours on chores per day. In addition, in a study with 358 young adult participants, it was shown that the female participants ideally desired equality in household chores once married, yet their realistic expectation was that household chores would not be divided in this way and that they (the females) would be responsible for a much larger share of household chores than their male counterparts (Askari, Liss, Erchull, Staebell, & Axelson, 2010). Therefore, it appears as if the female participants in Askari et al.'s (2010) study expected that the division of household chores would continue to be based on traditional gender norms and stereotypes. However, the experiences of the current study's participants are contrary to the research findings discussed above, as they found themselves disappointed and frustrated when their husbands did not divide the chores equally or fairly as they had expected. This was especially the case, because they (the wives) were also employed in demanding full-time jobs (a lawyer, and two healthcare professionals, respectively).

Gendered roles and stereotypes are problematic in newlywed marriages, as they have been found to be related to lower marital satisfaction and less stability (Davis & Greenstein, 2009). For example, in a longitudinal study conducted with a sample of 146 African American couples, it was found that marital love decreased over time in couples where the wife spent significantly more time doing housework than the husband (Stanik, McHale, & Crouter, 2013). For the couples who divided housework more equally, marital love remained stable over time (Stanik et al., 2013). The three female participants who experienced the psychosocial challenge of the *stereotypical division of household chores* expressed high levels of frustration in this regards, as well as negative feelings towards their husbands. In addition, the perceived unfairness of the division of chores led to frequent overt marital conflict during their first year of marriage. Therefore, the participants' experiences seem to confirm previous literature on the negative effects of unequal chore division.

Consequently, the division of chores continues to be determined by gender stereotypes, with the bulk of household responsibilities being assigned to the wives, despite increased responsibilities in full-time employment. This unequal division of household chores is problematic as it appears to hold negative consequences for the marital relationship. Therefore, it is a psychosocial challenge which needs to be addressed and managed. *Cognitive GRRs* in particular may prove helpful in managing the psychosocial challenge of *stereotypical division of household chores*, as will be discussed later in the chapter.

4.3.5. Inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances. *Inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances* was experienced as a psychosocial challenge by three of the participants. Generally, past research has associated economic factors and financial resources with relationship quality (Conger, Conger, & Martin, 2010; Hardie, Geist, & Lucas, 2014). In the current study specifically, one of the participants experienced an immense sense of self-imposed pressure and internal distress because of the belief that he needs to continue providing his wife with her previously experienced socio-economic status. This may be related to continuing societal pressure on men to remain in the role of primary breadwinner (Gaunt, 2013; Gershuny, Bittman, & Brice, 2005). Although women are becoming increasingly more involved in the workplace, with dual-earner homes being the norm, couples that abide by traditional household roles are viewed more favourably than couples who deviate from traditional roles (Gaunt, 2013). Consequently, it is hypothesised that there is more pressure on male newlyweds to earn an adequate salary to be able to provide for themselves and their wives than on female newlyweds.

Furthermore, for two of the participants, overt marital conflict resulted because of different views regarding the management of joint finances. Societal assumptions have historically existed that women manage financial resources more responsibly than men, and thus should be in charge of the allocation of joint finances (Bobonis, 2009; Gummerson & Schneider, 2013; Lundberg, Pollak, & Wales, 1997). However, later economists and researchers started postulating that households rather combine all finances and act as “single entities with all members having shared preferences” (Gummerson & Schneider, 2013, p. 813). Either way, within a family or couple-unit, joint money needs to be managed and directed towards the purchase of various necessities and luxuries. The management of financial resources and the allocation of finances may be determined by various factors. For example, research has found that gender differences exist regarding the allocation of finances, as men and women tend to spend greater portions of their income on different things (Bobonis, 2009; Schmeer, 2005). Furthermore, a couple’s overall socio-economic status, the amount of adults living in the shared home, and the wife and husband’s respective financial contribution to the home may also determine the management and allocation of shared finances (Gummerson & Schneider, 2013). In a South African study by Gummerson and Schneider (2013) which examined data from two nationally representative surveys, it was found that in homes where wives earn more than their husbands, their households spend more money on food and less on alcohol, regardless of other economic or demographic factors. As mentioned, two of the

participants (one male and one female participant) in the current study experienced overt marital conflict associated with the management of joint household finances, as they disagreed about the use of their money. Based on the previous literature presented above, the presence of this psychosocial challenge may be related to differing gender preferences in financial allocation.

Lastly, two of these participants struggled in particular because they were reliant on their spouses' as primary breadwinners at the start of their marriages. This caused a great deal of internal conflict for both participants, as they did not want to make use of the money which they perceived to be their spouses' money, whilst they were unable to contribute equally to their joint finances. As discussed earlier, the negotiation of marital role sharing includes both the division of household chores, as well as deciding on each spouse's contribution to the couple's finances (Hall & Adams, 2011). In the current study, the reliance on one's spouse as the primary breadwinner was experienced as distressing for individuals from both genders. Previous literature indicates specifically that couples in which the wife is the primary or sole-breadwinner tend to face societal disapproval (Coleman & Franiuk, 2011; Gaunt, 2013; Gershuny et al., 2005). As discussed earlier, marital satisfaction also tends to be lower in dual-earner couples when the wife earns significantly more than the husband (Bertrand et al., 2015). Consequently, when newlywed wives are in full-time employment whilst their husbands are not, or when newlywed wives simply earn more money than their husbands, the couple may experience negative consequences. In addition, as mentioned, one of the female participants also found it challenging to rely on her husband as the primary breadwinner in their home (whilst she was only able to make a very small financial contribution). Dual-earning couples tend to experience benefits that are not experienced in single-earner homes. For example, the division of household chores is more likely to be perceived as fair by couples in which both spouses earn an income than in couples with a single breadwinner (Ayub & Iqbal, 2012). Furthermore, dual-earnings generally allow for greater financial stability and improvements in a couple's standard of living (Mohsin, 2014). Therefore, dual-earner newlywed couples may be less likely to experience certain psychosocial challenges than newlywed couples in which only one spouse is employed, specifically the psychosocial challenges of *the stereotypical division of household chores and inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances*.

To summarise, *inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances* was experienced as a psychosocial challenge for three of the participants in the current

study. This challenge was related specifically to the internal distress of feeling the need to provide financially once married, disagreement about the management or allocation of joint finances, and the reliance on a spouse as the primary breadwinner in the home. Traditional societal perceptions of the husband as the primary breadwinner seemed to contribute to the internal distress felt by both male participants related to this particular challenge. Furthermore, gender also may have contributed to some extent to the management of joint finances, as research shows that there are gender differences in financial management and allocation. Lastly, dual-earner couples generally may experience less marital challenges than single-earner couples (specifically challenges related to *the stereotypical division of household chores and inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances*). Health professionals may assist premarital or newlywed couples to manage this particular psychosocial challenge through the use of *cognitive GRRs*. This will be discussed later in the chapter.

4.3.6. Unmet marital expectations. Three of the participants in the current study experienced *unmet marital expectations* as a psychosocial challenge of the newlywed period. Two of these three participants had specifically expected that marriage would improve their relationships and that the newlywed period in particular would be a highly enjoyable period of time. This is similar to the experiences of the newlyweds in Hall and Adams' (2011) study. Contrary to the expectations of the participants in the current study, however, their relationships did not improve after marriage, and the newlywed period was challenging and required a great deal of adaptation. As discussed in the literature review, previous research indicates that the newlywed period is often a challenging time, with many adaptations that need to be managed (Amato, 2010; Hall & Adams, 2011; Joseph & Subhashini, 2012; Kilmann & Vendemia, 2013; McCarthy et al., 2008; Scott et al., 2013). Therefore, the current study supports previous literature in this regard. The third participant who experienced this particular psychosocial challenge seemed to have realistic expectations about the newlywed period and also had not expected marriage to improve their relationship. However, she had expected that her relationship satisfaction would at least remain stable over time, and she found herself disappointed when various relationship factors began to decline during the first year of marriage. This expectation has also been shown to be unrealistic by previous literature, which indicates that marital satisfaction steadily declines over the first few years of marriage (Lavner et al., 2013; Lavner et al., 2014). Consequently, all three of these participants increased their

own risk of being disappointed by having developed unrealistic expectations about marriage during the premarital period of their relationships.

One potential contributor to their unrealistic marital expectations (which consequently become unmet marital expectations) is media stereotypes and ideals, perpetuated through movies. Romantic movies almost exclusively portray relationships in which love ultimately conquers any problem, overt displays of romantic affection are frequent, and sex is plentiful and problem-free (Galloway, Engstrom, & Emmers-Sommer, 2015; Johnson & Holmes, 2009). Accepting these portrayed ideals as reality may lead to intolerance of mundane routines of long-term marital commitments or marital conflict (Galician, 2007). In a survey of 228 American young adults, it was discovered that there existed a significant positive relationship between a viewing preference for romantic movies and idealised expectations of love and relationships (Galloway et al., 2015). Therefore, it can be seen that individuals who enjoy watching romantic movies may be at a greater risk of developing unrealistic marital expectations, than people who prefer other movies, and may find themselves disappointed once married. Furthermore research indicates that more females than males favour romantic movies (Fischhoff, Antonio, & Lewis, 1998; Galloway et al., 2015). As a result, it could be postulated that there may be a greater proportion of women than men with unrealistic marital expectations (through the viewing of idealised relationships in movies). Interestingly, only female participants reported unmet marital expectations as a psychosocial challenge of the newlywed period, which may support this hypothesis.

To summarise, unmet marital expectations was a psychosocial challenge for three female participants in the current study. Their marital expectations appeared to remain unmet, as the expectations were unrealistic to begin with. It is possible that the media promotes idealised, unrealistic expectations of marriage, and that a preference for watching romantic movies may put newlyweds at risk of experiencing this psychosocial challenge. *Cognitive GRRs* and *valuative-attitudinal GRRs* may be used to counteract the effect of having unrealistic marital expectations before marriage. This suggestion will be discussed in greater detail in the conclusion.

4.4. General Resistance Resources

4.4.1. Physical and biochemical GRRs. *Physical and biochemical GRRs* refer to innate or biological characteristics, for example, genetics, temperament, or personality traits (Antonovsky, 1979). The fact that all the participants found specific inherent traits, such as agreeableness, self-knowledge, a tendency towards positivity, empathy, openness, an easy temperament, patience, and conscientiousness to be helpful in their marriages supports a number of previous international studies (Cattell, 1989; Luo et al., 2008; Ghorbani, Watson, Fayyaz, & Chen, 2015; McNulty & Russel, 2016; O'Rourke et al., 2011).

Furthermore, as mentioned in the current study's results, the specific personality trait which was considered helpful by the greatest number of participants was agreeableness (n=4). Agreeableness refers to a tendency to be cooperative and trustful (Costa & McCrae, 1995). The protective role of agreeableness in marriage has been confirmed in previous literature (Cundiff, Smith, & Frandsen, 2012; Luo et al., 2008; McNulty & Russel, 2016). Agreeableness might be particularly helpful in the newlywed period, as it is a time of merging lives and restructuring boundaries (Minuchin, 1974). The trait of agreeableness may make this period easier as it allows an individual to be more willing to compromise, see things from their spouse's perspective, and be more tender-minded towards their spouse who is also trying to adapt to their new marriage. This confirms a previous Nigerian study that found that as agreeableness increased in the 282 participants, their preference for negotiation also increased (Ome, 2013).

An additional aspect to discuss is that only female participants (n=4) specifically referred to agreeableness as a helpful trait during their newlywed period. A gender stereotype which exists is that women should be high in agreeableness (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004), whilst it is socially expected that males be more disagreeable (Centre for Advanced Human Resource Studies, 2012). Men who are agreeable have been found to be negatively perceived in the workplace, and to earn significantly less and be promoted at a slower rate than disagreeable men (Centre for Advanced Human Resource Studies, 2012). Therefore, it appears as if societal norms may contribute to the development of higher agreeableness in women than in men (who may actually be rewarded for low levels of agreeableness). This may have contributed to the female participants in the current study having higher levels of agreeableness at their disposal during the newlywed adaptations than the male participants.

In addition, a tendency for introspection and self-knowledge was also considered to be beneficial by a number of the participants (n=3). Introspection is regarded as a method for uncovering the operations of one's own mind, and is considered to play an essential role in problem-solving (Jakel & Schreiber, 2013). Good problem-solvers are considered to make use of introspection, in particular when approaching new problems (Jakel & Schriber, 2013). Therefore, it seems that introspection may be beneficial in a new marriage, as newlyweds need to face marital adjustments and problems that are new. Furthermore, introspection is often considered to be the same as self-observation, self-reflection, or self-monitoring (Brown, 1987). Thus introspection may be linked to, or play a role in, one's overall self-knowledge, which can be defined as the integration of life experiences into a meaningful whole which corresponds with one's real self (Ghorbani et al., 2015). Self-knowledge is also linked to marital satisfaction and relationship quality (Ghorbani et al., 2015; Tenney, Vazire, & Mehl, 2013). One of the ways in which greater levels of self-knowledge is beneficial in marriage is that self-knowledge results in greater sensitivity to personal desires and responsibilities that contribute to a more successful marriage (Ghorbani et al., 2015). This sensitivity also makes it possible for a spouse to change his or her behaviour in such a way as to move towards a happier marriage in future (Ghorbani et al., 2015). Another study with 80 university students by Tenney et al. (2013) also supports the idea that individuals with higher levels of self-knowledge are able to better utilise their strengths and weaknesses within their relationships, resulting in higher relationship quality (Tenney et al., 2013). In the context of the current study, three of the newlyweds referred to the tendency to purposefully explore the reasons behind marital disagreements, as well as being mindful regarding their own behaviour and the way to adjust this behaviour in order to solve marital problems and improve their relationships in the future. Thus, this process seems to combine elements of introspection and self-knowledge, and the presence of these innate traits (of a tendency towards introspection and high self-knowledge) appeared to serve as a *physical or biochemical GRR* for these three participants.

In summary, *physical and biochemical GRRs* were used by all seven participants to manage the psychosocial challenges of the newlywed period. Agreeableness and a tendency towards introspection and self-knowledge were innate characteristics that were mentioned by a number of the participants, specifically. *Physical and biochemical GRRs* may be helpful for managing the newlywed adaptations in general, as a number of personality traits are seen as protective factors in marriage (Cattell, 1989; Ghorbani et al., 2015; Luo et al., 2008; O'Rourke et al., 2011). However, *physical and biochemical GRRs* may be particularly helpful in

managing the psychosocial challenge of *differences in personality, habits and routines*, as this is a challenge that requires compromise and conflict management skills, and therefore traits such as agreeableness, self-knowledge, and introspection can be quite helpful. This will be elaborated on when the implication of the current study's findings are discussed.

4.4.2. Cognitive GRRs. According to the analysis from a GRR perspective, *cognitive GRRs* were also used by all the participants. *Cognitive GRRs* refer to acquired knowledge or intelligence which allows access to other resources (Antonovsky, 1979). Various aspects or variables discussed in previous literature may be viewed as cognitive GRRs, based on the definition provided above. For instance, emotional intelligence may be viewed as a *cognitive GRR*.

Emotional intelligence is defined as an ability to understand, perceive, and regulate emotions adaptively in oneself and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Schutte et al., 1998). Different authors emphasise different characteristics or elements of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Schutte & Malouff, 1999) with some definitions emphasising cognitive elements in particular (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000). Furthermore, it has been found that emotional intelligence can be taught and acquired (Jafaribalalmi, Khalilian, Poghosyan, Navabinezhad, 2016). Thus, it can be viewed as a *cognitive GRR*.

Emotional intelligence as a *cognitive GRR* may be an important resource during the newlywed period, as emotional intelligence has been linked to having better interpersonal relationships generally (Schutte et al., 2001). Schutte et al. (2001) conducted a total of seven studies which all investigated the link between emotional intelligence and various elements of interpersonal relationships. One of the seven studies explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and social skills amongst 77 participants. The study found that social skills were higher in the participants with higher emotional intelligence (Schutte et al., 2001). Furthermore, another one of the seven studies by Schutte et al. (2001) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and cooperation amongst 38 participants. It was found that higher emotional intelligence was positively correlated with higher willingness to cooperate. This can be linked with the *physical and biochemical GRR* of agreeableness discussed earlier. Lastly, in one of the seven studies, Schutte et al. (2001) also found that amongst 37 married individuals, marital satisfaction was significantly higher in the participants who rated their spouses as having higher levels of emotional intelligence. Therefore, it seems

possible that newlyweds who have acquired a higher level of emotional intelligence may possess better social skills overall, be more cooperative in the process of merging their lives with their new spouses' lives, and enjoy greater marital satisfaction during the newlywed period.

In more recent literature, the protective role of emotional intelligence in marriage is also supported. For example, in an Indian study conducted with a sample of 200 married women, it was found that there is a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and marital adjustment (Parameswari, 2016). Marital adjustment is considered to be a multifaceted construct which includes dimensions of satisfaction, cohesion, consensus, and affection in a marriage (Levin, Greene, & Solomon, 2016; Spanier, 1976). Consequently, emotional intelligence in newlyweds may contribute to higher levels of various other beneficial interpersonal constructs, such as marital satisfaction, cohesion, consensus, and affection.

None of the participants in the current study specifically referred to their emotional intelligence as being a resource during the newlywed period. However, when looking at the definition of emotional intelligence, as provided above, it is possible to view some of the data which has been categorised as *physical and biochemical GRRs* as emotional intelligence (a *cognitive GRR*) as well. For example, the protective role of introspection for three of the current study's participants has previously been discussed. Introspection was defined as a process of uncovering the operations of one's own mind, and has also been called self-observation, self-monitoring, and self-reflection (Brown, 1987; Jakel & Schreiber, 2013). This is similar to the definition of emotional intelligence which indicates that emotional intelligence is a process of understanding, perceiving, and regulating emotions adaptively in oneself (and others) (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Schutte et al., 1998). Therefore, it is possible that what has been perceived and categorised as introspection (*a physical and biochemical GRR*), may additionally, implicitly, indicate the presence of emotional intelligence as a resource for three of the study's participants.

In addition, the participants (n=7) referred directly to various other sources of knowledge that helped them manage the challenges of the newlywed period, and these knowledge sources have also been categorised as *cognitive GRRs*. This included work experience and work-related skills that were applied within marriage, premarital classes or counselling (referred to as premarital counselling from here on), tertiary experience or learning, and self-directed, informal, premarital preparation. The sources of knowledge consulted by the

participants were varied, but all of these sources built knowledge and skills that the participants could use to manage the psychosocial challenges of their marriages better. Previous literature was consulted to determine whether specific support could be found for the protective role of these reported aspects. However, previous literature could only be found for premarital counselling and educational attainment (tertiary learning) as protective factors in marriage. Therefore, these two examples of *cognitive GRRs* will be discussed below.

Premarital counselling (as a specific example of *cognitive GRRs*) was attended by more than half of the participants (n=4). All four of these participants emphasised the benefit of counselling to their marriages and the way in which the skills learnt in counselling were purposefully used during the newlywed period to manage the challenges that arose. The value of premarital counselling is supported by a number of international studies. For example, in a study with 1244 married Orthodox Jews, premarital education was significantly associated with greater marital quality (Maybruch et al., 2014). Furthermore, premarital education was associated with help-seeking behaviours later in marriage when problems arose, amongst 2126 American participants (Williamson, Trail, Bradbury, & Karney, 2014). Lastly, premarital classes were found to mitigate the risk of premarital cohabitation in 662 American couples (Rhoades et al., 2015). Therefore, premarital counselling or education holds a number of benefits in marriage, and it appears beneficial for engaged couples to be encouraged to attend such sessions. The implication of this finding will be elaborated on later in the chapter.

Furthermore, three participants in the current study indicated that they had learnt various skills and acquired knowledge during their tertiary studies which served as resources or protective factors in the newlywed period. Firstly, tertiary studies fostered perseverance (which can also be seen as a *physical and biochemical GRR*) in one of the participants. Secondly, two participants referred specifically to their psychology modules and the way it had led to an acquired understanding of interpersonal relationships and marital satisfaction, greater empathy, and understanding and insight into their spouses' personalities and behaviours. The protective role of educational attainment has been shown in numerous previous studies. For instance, Kreager et al. (2013) conducted a study with 914 married women in the USA in which they indicated that the more highly educated women had more stable marriages and a reduced risk of divorce longitudinally. Furthermore, Woszidlo and Segrin (2013) found that higher education levels were correlated with higher self-reported mutual problem-solving, marital quality, and communication skills, as well as higher levels of personal commitment to the relationship, amongst 186 American couples. Educational attainment is considered to be a

cognitive GRR through the way in which it increases an individual's overall knowledge, and allows for the acquisition of further knowledge and access to other GRRs (Antonovsky, 1979; Read, Aunola, Feldt, Leinonen, & Ruoppila, 2005).

Cognitive GRRs seems to be one of the most widely applicable resources in managing the psychosocial challenges of the newlywed period, as all seven participants made use of some form of *cognitive GRR*. In addition, *cognitive GRRs* can also be applied in the management of all of the specific psychosocial challenges previously discussed in this chapter. This includes *differences in personality, habits and routines, inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics, new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy, the stereotypical division of household chores, inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances, and unmet marital expectations*. This will be addressed further on in the chapter when the implications of the current study's results are provided.

4.4.3. Interpersonal-relational GRRs. Various *interpersonal-relational GRRs* were also considered to be paramount in managing the newlywed period by all the participants. *Interpersonal-relational GRRs* include all resources related to relationships and belonging (Antonovsky, 1987), and therefore there was a great deal of variation as to which relational aspects participants considered helpful. Some found emotional support from friends and family to be helpful, others saw the benefit of advice received from loved ones, whilst a few participants explained that the support from their spouse and their couple identity was sufficient in managing the challenges arising from their new marriage. This supports previous literature on social support as a protective factor in marriage (Ben-Ari & Lavee, 2005; Chi et al., 2011; Ryan et al., 2014; Sullivan et al., 2010; Sullivan et al., 2015).

Social support is defined as the perception that an individual has that he or she belongs to a social network in which affection and different forms of help can be received (Folkman, 1984). This network can include family, friends, colleagues, or helping professionals (Folkman, 1984). There are different forms of social support including, amongst others, emotional support and instrumental support (Wang et al., 2015). The experiences of the current study's participants can be divided between these two types of support. On the one hand, it can be seen how emotional support became a resource during the newlywed period for some of the participants (n=5) in three ways. This included the sense of safety provided by family members, the supportive quality of the couple identity shared with their spouse, and the presence of

friends who simply provided their friendship and acted as an outlet for stress caused by the new marriage. On the other hand, instrumental support was utilised in the current study by the participants who referred to the protective role which advice from family and friends played in the newlywed period (n=2). An interesting finding in previous research is that the marital outcomes of these two types of social support differ, depending on the source of the support (Jiang et al., 2014). Emotional support provided by directly involved family members or one's spouse has positive effects on marriage quality and family cohesion. In contrast, instrumental support provided by individuals outside of the family was found to have a negative effect on marital and family variables (Jiang et al., 2014). However, in the current study, all seven participants seemed to benefit from social support, regardless of the type and source of support. What is noticeable, however, is that more of the participants experienced emotional support as a resource (n=5) than the number of participants who considered instrumental support to be a resource (n=2). In addition, four participants referred to the benefit of social support from outside their marital unit, whilst three participants relied solely on support directly within their marital unit, and did not consider social support from other people to be a resource.

Social support external to the marital unit or from their spouse, whether emotional or instrumental, was considered to be an *interpersonal-relational GRR* by all seven participants. *Interpersonal-relational GRRs* were linked in particular to the management of the psychosocial challenge of *internal and external conflict about money*. One of the participants referred to seeking advice about money management from his parents and in-laws in order to make an informed decision about his (and his wife's) own money management practices. In addition, it was also reported by two participants that *interpersonal-relational GRRs* were beneficial in avoiding certain challenges completely, such as unrealistic expectations about sex. For the other participants *interpersonal-relational GRRs* appeared to be beneficial in the general adaptation of the newlywed period. Therefore, *interpersonal-relational GRRs* seem to be resources which helping professionals should encourage premarital couples, or newlyweds, to seek out and make use of.

4.4.4. Macrosociocultural GRRs. *Macrosociocultural GRRs* include one's culture as a resource for managing tension by providing answers and prescribed ways of responding to environmental demands, and acts as a source of knowledge for unexpected occurrences (Antonovsky, 1979). *Macrosociocultural GRRs* were utilised by five participants during the

newlywed period. However, the participants' data yielded only religion as a specific *macrosociocultural GRR*, rather than broader cultural issues and their role in the newlywed period. Furthermore, broader cultural issues were also not explicitly elicited by the interview questions. This is a limitation of the current study. Therefore, to compensate for this oversight, the role of culture generally in marriage will briefly be explored in this section. In addition, the literature review focused on religion generally as a protective factor, rather than looking at specific religious affiliations in the context of marriage. Because all seven participants reported that they were Christians, Christianity's role in marriage will also be explored.

Culture is defined as customary values and beliefs that social, religious, and ethnic groups transmit from one generation to the next (Guiso, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2006). Furthermore, cultural beliefs refer to

...the ideas and thoughts common to several people that govern interaction—between these people and among them, their gods, and other groups- and differ from knowledge in that they are not empirically discovered or analytically proved (Alesina & Giuliano, 2015, p. 900).

In addition, culture has been found to inform individuals' values and preferences, and serves to motivate behaviour (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000; Kaplow & Shavell, 2007). Therefore, it seems as if the cultural group to which a newlywed belongs may directly influence his or her relationship values, and inform their interactions and behaviour within the newlywed period. Earlier in this chapter, the role of the Afrikaner culture on the current study's participants was discussed. In particular, the discussion emphasised the way in which Afrikaner women have been raised to be obedient and submissive to men, even within their marriages (Maritz, 2004). Consequently, it can be seen that culture and marriage is linked, and that belonging to different cultural groups may have different influences on one's marriage. According to Antonovsky (1979), culture serves as a resource because of the way it provides answers and guidelines for behaviour. Therefore, culture may be a resource during the newlywed period, because it can provide newlyweds with a prescribed approach, almost like a script, to manage in a situation which they have not encountered before. This may reduce overall distress. Next, Christianity as a specific cultural group and its link to marriage will be discussed.

All seven participants were Christians. Christianity offers guidelines for marital and family relationships (Vorster, 2016). Traditionally, Christianity's view of marriage and the guidelines offered in this regard were related to heterosexual, monogamous marriage in which the man is the head of the home and the woman is required to place herself in a more submissive role (Vorster, 2016). However, more recently this view of marriage is being challenged, even amongst Christian couples, by different forms of relationships, such as premarital cohabitation and homosexual marriage (Vorster, 2016). Van Eck (2007) refers to the idea of postmodern marriage which differs completely from the traditional Christian view of marriage. Nonetheless, despite these changing perspectives on marriage, the seven participants all seemed to still hold a more traditional Christian view on their own marriages. A few of the participants expressed the idea of specified relationship roles and responsibilities based on their beliefs, namely the husband's role as the head of the home, and the wife in a submissive role. Furthermore, none of the participants had lived with their spouses before marriage, and all seven participants were virgins until their wedding night. Christianity is generally associated with feelings of shame towards pre-marital sex (Jones, 1996; Piper, 2009). It has been found that a large number of Christian individuals report having sex outside of marriage and that a wide range of views exist on sexuality amongst Christians (Turns, Morris, & Lentz, 2013). However, the traditional standard still appears to be for Christians to wait until marriage to have sex (Turns et al., 2013). Therefore, it can be seen how Christianity as a cultural group played a direct role in informing the participants' values, beliefs and behaviours within their relationships. In this way, Christianity as a *macrosociocultural GRR* may generally be helpful in the newlywed period, because it serves as a prescription for behaviour in a new situation (as culture generally does).

In conclusion, religion as an example of *macrosociocultural GRRs* was considered to be a resource during the newlywed period for five of the participants. Religion is only one example of *macrosociocultural GRRs*, and therefore, a brief discussion of culture in general was provided. Belonging to a particular culture may provide newlyweds with prescribed ways of behaving in the unfamiliar situation of a new marriage, and therefore, can be seen as a resource during this time. Furthermore, Christianity as a very specific *macrosociocultural GRR* was then elaborated on in greater detail, as all five of the participants who viewed religion as a GRR are Christians. Christianity also seemed to act as a resource for the current study's participants through providing prescribed ways of behaving in marriage.

4.4.5. Artefactual-material GRRs. *Artefactual-material GRRs* refer to being able to access financial and other material resources (Antonovsky, 1987). Three of the participants indicated that access to financial resources was a protective factor during the newlywed period. Both male participants in the current study indicated that *artefactual-material GRRs* were resources for them because of the way in which it seemed to decrease their overall level of distress during the newlywed period. This may be related to the discussion earlier about societal norms that dictate that males should be the primary breadwinner (Gaunt, 2013), and the hypothesis that male newlyweds perceive that they have a greater responsibility to provide financially for their wives than the other way around. Therefore, it can be seen that *artefactual-material GRRs* may be particularly helpful in managing the psychosocial challenge of *inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances*, particularly for male newlyweds. A detailed discussion about married men's financial burden as a result of the societal norm of male breadwinners was presented under the discussion of *inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances*. Therefore, this aspect will not be discussed again here. However, one of the female participants also reported *artefactual-material GRRs* to be beneficial during her first year of marriage, and this requires some further exploration.

The female participant who mentioned the protective role of *artefactual-material GRRs* specifically indicated that she valued the fact that she earns a good salary (equivalent to that which her husband earns). Furthermore, she reported that having access to this income means that she is able to spend her money on whatever she wishes, without being required to rely on her husband financially, or needing to justify her expenses to her husband. Thus, it appears as if *artefactual-material GRRs* provide this participant with a sense of autonomy, and therefore, helps her to manage the specific psychosocial challenge of *new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy*. As discussed earlier, balancing a full-time career and family life is at times challenging for women (Hoffnung & Williams, 2013). However, the current study reveals that a full-time career (and consequently a separate source of income) may also be a resource or be perceived positively by women. This result supports a previous qualitative American study with 15 women who were the primary breadwinners in their homes (Meisenbach, 2010). Meisenbach (2010) found that these women experienced a number of positive outcomes related to their financial role in their homes. These positive outcomes included feelings of empowerment, greater independence (or autonomy), and satisfaction related to goal-

achievement (Meisenbach, 2010). Consequently, full-time employment and self-earned financial resources can be particularly beneficial for female newlyweds.

To summarise, *artefactual-material GRRs* were beneficial for three participants in the current study. For the male participants, *artefactual-material GRRs* assisted in the management of *inter–and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances*. For the female participant, *artefactual-material GRRs* helped to manage the psychosocial challenge of *new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy*. Unfortunately, not all newlyweds have access to sufficient financial resources. However, in such cases, newlyweds could be assisted to manage the abovementioned psychosocial challenges in alternative ways. For example, as already mentioned, *inter –and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances* could be managed through the use of *cognitive GRRs*, whilst *new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy* may be managed by utilising *cognitive GRRs* and *emotional GRRs*.

4.4.6. Emotional GRRs. Three participants indicated that they made use of *emotional GRRs* during the newlywed period to navigate the necessary adaptations. As previously discussed, *emotional GRRs* refer to a strong ego identity (Antonovsky, 1979). An individual with a strong ego identity has a stable, integrated sense of self, whilst still being able to remain flexible (Antonovsky, 1979). Therefore, in the context of the current study, a strong ego identity referred not only to references of having a stable sense of self, but also to a participants' ability to maintain an individual identity and individual interests, despite the formation of a couple identity.

One of the key theorists on personality (and identity) development is Erikson (1963; 1968; 1980). According to Erikson (1968), personality development is divided into eight stages, with each stage requiring the resolution of a specific developmental crisis (Erikson, 1968). Furthermore, personality develops in a fixed order, with each stage of development building on the previous stage. For the purposes of the current discussion, two developmental stages are particularly relevant, namely adolescence and early adulthood. According to Erikson (1968), adolescence requires the resolution of the developmental crisis of identity versus role confusion. Adolescence is emphasised as the most important stage for identity development (Berk, 2006). During early adulthood, the central developmental crisis to be resolved is that of intimacy versus isolation (Erikson, 1968). An important consideration to note is that according

to Erikson (1980), the failure to successfully resolve the specific developmental crisis of a particular stage reduces one's ability to successfully resolve future developmental crises. Therefore, according to Erikson (1980), an individual has to successfully resolve the psychosocial challenge of identity versus role confusion in order to be able to resolve the next psychosocial challenge of intimacy versus isolation successfully. In other words, it is not possible for a young adult to achieve a satisfactory level of intimacy and connection to other people if they do not have a stable sense of personal identity. Individuals without a strong identity are often unconsciously afraid of intimacy and losing their autonomy (Tuce, 2014). Such individuals either isolate themselves completely, or repeatedly and unsuccessfully attempt to form intimate relationships with other people (Erikson, 1980). According to Tuce (2014), these types of individuals may even get married, hoping that "by finding each other, they will find themselves" (p. 228), frequently resulting in divorce (Leman, Bremner, Parke, & Gauvain, 2012). Consequently, it seems vitally important that newlyweds have strong ego identities in order to form strong, intimate marriages that do not end in divorce.

Marcia (1994) is also a well-known theorist and researcher in identity development. He viewed identity in terms of four possible identity statuses, namely identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, identity diffusion, and identity achievement (Marcia, 1994). In the identity foreclosure status, an individual has committed to an identity without any self-exploration. Identity moratorium involves a great deal of exploration; however, in this status a commitment to a particular identity has not yet been made. In the identity diffusion status, an individual avoids exploration or commitment to an identity completely. Lastly, identity achievement is characterised by a high level of exploration ending in a self-directed, self-determined commitment to an identity (Marcia, 1994). Identity achievement would thus be the identity status most closely related to having a strong ego identity. Identity achievement (and a strong ego identity) is associated with higher individual psychological well-being overall (Abu-Rayya, 2006; Liao, Bluck, & Cheng, 2015). For instance, in a Taiwanese study with 85 undergraduate women, it was found that there was an association between having reached the identity achievement status and higher psychological well-being (Liao et al., 2015). The link between identity and relationship factors has also previously been explored. For example, in a study conducted with 279 Chinese university students and 204 Australian university students, it was found that the identity achievement status was predictive of having had a previous romantic relationship (Moore, Leung, Karnilowicz, & Lung, 2012). This appears to support

Erikson's (1980) theory that the ability to form an intimate relationship is dependent on the achievement of a strong ego identity.

To summarise, three participants in the current study considered a strong ego identity (as an *emotional GRR*) to be a resource during the newlywed period. In other words, the fact that they seem to have reached the identity achievement status and have a stable identity assisted them in the successful formation of a new marital relationship. Therefore, the current study's results supports previous literature (Erikson, 1980; Liao et al., 2015; Moore et al., 2012) on the importance and benefit of a strong ego identity generally and in relationships. Consequently, it would be important that newlyweds had engaged in adequate self-exploration and to have made a commitment to an identity (identity achievement) before marriage, in order to approach the newlywed period with a greater likelihood of success. However, it is possible for unresolved developmental crises to be resolved at a later time in the lifespan (Berk, 2006; Erikson, 1980). Therefore, if a newlywed had not achieved a strong ego identity prior to marriage, identity achievement can be reached and a strong ego identity can still be developed during early adulthood (or once they have become aware of the importance of this identity achievement). The development of a strong ego identity as an *emotional GRR* can be encouraged within premarital counselling (a *cognitive GRR*), as will also be discussed in the conclusion.

4.4.7. Valuative-attitudinal GRRs. *Valuative-attitudinal GRRs* refers mainly to an overall coping style which is characterised by farsightedness, flexibility, and rationality (Antonovsky, 1987). Three of the participants provided data which could be classified as indicating this type of overall coping style.

Coping, or an individual's overall coping style, is defined as a complex self-regulatory construct that includes all the behavioural and cognitive strategies used to manage stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). One's overall coping style is thus determined by the types of coping strategies (behaviours and cognitions) applied over time and across contexts. Some researchers divide coping strategies broadly into problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping strategies (Stratta et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2010). However, other specific coping strategies are also discussed in the literature, including positive-reinterpretation, avoidance, self-blame, fantasising, and help-seeking behaviour (Rahat & Ilhan, 2016; Xiang, Wang, Jiang, & Mo, 2016). For example, in a study conducted with 527 Turkish, at-risk first-year university

students, using positive-reinterpretation of events as a coping strategy predicted overall adjustment to university (Rahat & Ilhan, 2016). Furthermore, Xiang et al (2016) investigated the emotional responses of 210 Chinese earthquake survivors. They found that problem avoidance, self-blame, fantasising, and help-seeking strategies were associated with higher levels of negative emotional responses (Xiang et al., 2016). Therefore, it can be seen that the coping strategies used in specific circumstances can either have positive or negative outcomes for an individual. As mentioned, Antonovsky (1987) considers a flexible coping style to be a resource. In other words, if an individual is able to apply different strategies in different situations, depending on the specific context, rather than rigidly applying the same strategy in all situations, it can be viewed as an *emotional GRR*. Therefore, whether a coping style can be considered to be an *emotional GRR* or not, is dependent on the flexibility of coping strategies utilised, rather than the specific type of coping strategies which are used.

Furthermore, coping styles and strategies can also be discussed within the context of marriage in particular. According Yuksel and Dag (2015), the marital relationship is meaningfully affected by a couple's ability to cope with stress. These authors refer specifically to earlier literature which indicated that individuals' coping mechanisms or strategies is one of the most significant aspects in the association between marital problems and emotional health (Li, Guiseppe, & Froh, 2006). For instance, in a study with 248 Turkish women, Yuksel and Dag (2015) showed that when women who were experiencing a low level of marital adjustment utilised overall submissive and helpless coping styles, they experienced poorer psychological health. In an earlier study, Gouveia, Galhardo, Cunha and Matos (2012) also explored the role of coping styles in 100 couples suffering with infertility problems. Their study revealed that in men, depression was positively correlated with an avoidant coping style, as well as negatively associated with psychological flexibility. For the female participants, depression was negatively associated with rational coping styles and psychological flexibility (Gouveia et al., 2012). Gouveia et al.'s (2012) results can be linked to Antonovsky's (1987) classification of a flexible and rational coping style as an *emotional GRR*, as it is shown by their results that both psychological flexibility and rationality seemed to play a protective role when facing the stressor of infertility.

In summary, coping styles characterised as rational, flexible, and farsighted played a protective role during the newlywed period for three of the current study's participants. Coping is a complex, multi-faceted construct consisting of a variety of behavioural and cognitive strategies. If a newlywed can apply suitable coping strategies in a flexible manner, depending

on the particular adaptation or psychosocial challenge they are facing, whilst also displaying rationality, and a long-term perspective of their current challenges, they can experience positive outcomes. Therefore, this type of coping style as an *emotional GRR* may assist a newlywed in the overall transition into marriage with all its psychosocial challenges. However, *emotional GRRs* may be beneficial in particular in the management of *differences in personality, habits and routines*, as this is a psychosocial challenge which requires negotiation, compromise and flexibility. *Emotional GRRs* may also be highly beneficial in managing, or even avoiding *unmet marital expectations*, due to the rationality of the coping style and being able to take a more realistic view of marriage and the challenges it may bring. *Emotional GRRs* can be fostered through the process of premarital or marital counselling (*cognitive GRR*), which will be elaborated on later.

To conclude, the psychosocial challenges experienced by the participants in the current study, as well as the *GRRs* used to manage these psychosocial challenges have been discussed. The most frequently experienced psychosocial challenges were *differences in personality, habits and routines* (n=6), *inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics* (n=4), and *new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy* (n=4). Furthermore, the *stereotypical division of household chores* (n=3), *inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances* (n=3), and *unmet marital expectations* (n=3) were also psychosocial challenges experienced during the newlywed period in the current study. The *GRRs* used most often to manage these psychosocial challenges were *physical and biochemical GRRs* (n=7), *cognitive GRRs* (n=7), and *interpersonal-relational GRRs* (n=7). In addition, *macrosociocultural GRRs* (n=5), *artefactual-material GRRs* (n=3), *emotional GRRs* (n=3), and *valuative-attitudinal GRRs* (n=3) were also applied in the management of psychosocial challenges. In the next section of this chapter a conclusion with implications for practice will be provided, followed by limitations of the current study and recommendations for future research.

4.5. Conclusion

Helping newlyweds to adapt more successfully to their new marriages holds a number of long-term benefits for the individuals involved and society (Canel, 2013; Cao et al., 2015; Farnam et al., 2011; McCarthy et al., 2008; Neff & Broady, 2011; Woszidlo & Segrin, 2013). At

the individual level, marriage is correlated with greater levels of general life happiness, and has been found to meet intimacy and security needs better than any other relationship (Kamp Dush et al., 2008; McCarthy et al., 2008), whilst at the societal level, marriage is considered to be an aspect that provides structure to society, and is perceived to play a significant role in maintaining family life (Canel, 2013; Farnam et al., 2011; Idemudia & Ndlovu, 2013). However, the only way to assist South African newlyweds efficiently is to gain an understanding of their unique experiences (Farnam et al., 2009; Posel & Rudwick, 2014; Schaikh et al., 2011; Singh, 2008; StatsSA, 2014; Stephenson et al., 2013). The current study explores the experiences of a sample of white, Afrikaans, Christian newlyweds, with a specific focus on the psychosocial challenges they experienced most frequently during the first year of marriage, as well as the General Resistance Resources (GRRs) they used to manage these challenges.

The newlywed period was experienced as a time of adaptation for the participants. This supports previous literature on the experiences of newlyweds (Amato, 2010; Hall & Adams, 2011; Joseph & Subhashini, 2012; Kilmann & Vendemia, 2013; McCarthy et al., 2008; Scott et al., 2013). The current study found that the psychosocial challenge experienced most frequently by the participants was *differences in personality, habits and routines*. More than half of the participants also encountered challenges in relation to *inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics*. Furthermore, more than half of the participants also experienced *new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy* to be a challenging aspect. Lastly, additional psychosocial challenges of the newlywed period which were experienced by a number of the participants included *the stereotypical division of household chores* (n=3), *inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances* (n=3), and *unmet marital expectations* (n=3). Consequently, it is clear that marriage may present newlyweds with a number of stressors that need to be managed.

Antonovsky (1987) theorised that stressors are not inherently bad, and that tension can be managed in such a way that positive outcomes may even be the result. Various General Resistance Resources (GRRs) were used by the newlyweds to manage the challenges they were faced with in their first year of marriage. Three types of GRRs were used by all of the participants. These three GRRs were *physical and biochemical GRRs*, *cognitive GRRs*, and *interpersonal-relational GRRs*. In addition, *macrosociocultural GRRs* were also used by a number of the participants (n=5), as well as *artefactual-material GRRs* (n=3), *emotional GRRs* (n=3), and *valuative-attitudinal GRRs* (n=3).

As mentioned earlier, it is particularly important that helping professionals who are interested in strengthening marriages increase their knowledge of the experiences of newlyweds, as this is an important and beneficial point of intervention in the context of happier, more stable marriages overall (Cao et al., 2015; Lavner & Bradbury, 2012; Lavner et al., 2014; McCarthy et al., 2008; Neff & Broady, 2011; Woszidlo & Segrin, 2013). The results of the current study can be used to inform South African helping professionals on the types of psychosocial challenges newlyweds need to be prepared for, as well as the resources that they need to purposefully seek out during their first year of marriage. The implications of the current study's results will briefly be provided.

Although a number of GRRs were considered as beneficial by the participants, *cognitive GRRs* in particular were one of the most frequently used GRRs, and these were also directly applicable in the management of all the psychosocial challenges discussed. *Cognitive GRRs* refer to acquired knowledge or intelligence, which allow access to other resources (Antonovsky, 1987). From a helping professional's perspective this implies that premarital education and counselling (referred to as premarital counselling from here onwards) as a *cognitive GRR* should be encouraged whenever possible, and should be used to address the psychosocial challenges identified in this study. Premarital counselling can assist couples to learn a number of skills, as well as increase their knowledge, which may assist in the resolution of conflict and the management of various psychosocial challenges.

Within premarital counselling, couples should be prepared for conflict that may arise from *differences in personality, habits and routines*, as it was the most frequently experienced psychosocial challenge in the current study. This is particularly important when assisting engaged couples who do not cohabit before getting married. In premarital counselling, communication can be facilitated around the fact that *differences in personality, habits and routines* may cause challenges, which may help normalise the challenge for couples. In addition, it might prove helpful to educate them on personality differences, possibly conducting personality assessments on each partner. Awareness can then be raised about personality differences, and a discussion can be facilitated around the implications of their different personalities. Couples can also be taught communication skills that can assist them in compromising regarding daily routines.

Furthermore, the communication skills which are taught to the couples can also be used to manage a number of other psychosocial challenges. For example, communication skills may

assist them to openly discuss their feelings related to each other's families, and to reach certain decisions and compromises regarding the frequency with which it is possible to visit each family of origin, and the frequency with which each set of in-laws will be visited. This may help them to manage the psychosocial challenge of *inter- and intrapersonal family dynamics*. Communication skills which are taught to newlyweds can also be used to communicate about differing approaches towards money management. Through effective communication, newlyweds can arrive at mutually-agreed upon decisions regarding the management and allocation of joint finances, therefore, assisting in the management of *inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances*.

In addition, acquired communication skills can also be used to manage *new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy*. Communication skills can be used to communicate openly with their new spouse if they feel burdened by responsibilities. Through communication, spouses can also discuss ways in which certain responsibilities can be shared between spouses, so as to not over-burden one spouse. However, this specific psychosocial challenge can also be addressed in counselling in other ways. For instance, any irrational beliefs which spouses have about responsibility for the other spouse or aspects in their marriage (in other words, assuming responsibility for aspects that are not truly within one's control) can be addressed and directly challenged and resolved in counselling. In addition, couples may be assisted with and prepared for *new responsibilities and restricted levels of autonomy* by encouraging engaged individuals or newlyweds in counselling to retain a few individual interests and activities to maintain some feeling of autonomy. Not only may this help lessen the impact of this potential challenge, but retaining some individual interests may also be a protective factor during this time. Individual activities and independence may be linked to (and help develop) a strong ego identity, which could become an *emotional GRR* for the newlyweds. Furthermore, some activities engaged in by the spouses individually may also increase their access to additional social support, becoming an *interpersonal-relational GRR*.

Besides challenging irrational beliefs regarding responsibility within the relationship, the couples' perceptions that the male has to be primary breadwinner and has to earn more than the wife can also be openly discussed in counselling, challenged and resolved as necessary. Couples can be psycho-educated about traditional norms that are changing, to normalise deviation from traditional family roles. This is the case, in particular, if the wife is the primary breadwinner at the time of counselling. However, even if the husband is the primary breadwinner as traditionally expected, this topic can still be discussed in case the couple's roles

change in the future. By doing this, the couple may be helped to manage or avoid certain aspects which may typically contribute to *inter- and intrapersonal conflict regarding the management of joint finances*.

The *stereotypical division of household chores* is another psychosocial challenge which can be addressed in premarital counselling and, thus, through the use of *cognitive GRRs*. Through psycho-education, therapists need to make couples aware of underlying gender norms and stereotypes in society, as well as educate them about the negative marital effects of dividing household chores based on these norms and stereotypes. Furthermore, couples should be encouraged to negotiate more equal division of household chores. Helping professionals can teach couples assertiveness and conflict management skills to assist in this negotiation. A further benefit of teaching couples conflict management skills is that the effective use of these skills would potentially increase the cooperation and harmony between spouses. Since these are central aspects of the personality trait of agreeableness (Costa & McCrae, 1995), teaching couples conflict management skills may foster greater levels of agreeableness. In this way, conflict management skills can also be linked indirectly to *physical and biochemical GRRs*, which was also one of the most frequently used GRRs.

Furthermore, *unmet marital expectations* can also be addressed in premarital counselling (as a *cognitive GRR*). As previously discussed, it appears as if unmet marital expectations often result because of unrealistic expectations being developed prior to marriage. These unrealistic expectations may often be based on idealised media portrayals of relationships and marriage. This may be counteracted in premarital counselling by providing couples with psycho-education on the realities of marriage, in particular the psychosocial challenges that are frequently experienced in the first year of marriage, so that they do not believe that it is a problem-free period of marriage. In counselling it can also be ascertained whether individuals have rational expectations of marriage, or whether unrealistic expectations predominate. If unrealistic expectations exist, they can be challenged and replaced with more rational, realistic expectations. In this way, a helping professional can also help to foster a more rational overall coping style, which may further become a *valuative-attitudinal GRR* to be used during the newlywed period when facing other psychosocial challenges.

Lastly, helping professionals can use premarital counselling to encourage couples to access more *interpersonal-relational GRRs*, which was another frequently used type of GRR (n=7). A longitudinal study with 13 Canadian couples found that a strong couple identity is not

only helpful in a marriage, but also that it can purposefully be induced for the sake of greater marital satisfaction (Reid et al., 2006). The protective role of a strong couple identity in marriage was also supported by Badr et al. (2007) in a study with 92 individuals that had to take care of their chronically ill spouses. More recent research on the protective value of a couple identity is sparse; however, based on the previously cited studies, fostering a strong couple identity during the newlywed period may have positive effects during this time of transition. Therefore, newlyweds can be encouraged to engage in joint activities that can help foster their couple identity. These joint activities may simply include general hobbies that the spouses enjoy, but it can also include shared religious activities, a *macrosociocultural GRR*, in particular. A number of the participants in the current study reported that attending church, reading the Bible or praying together helped them to feel closer to their spouse. This confirms previous literature on shared religious activity as a protective factor in marriage (Lichter & Carmalt, 2009). In addition, couples can also be encouraged to develop their own family rituals to foster their couple identity. Family rituals differ slightly from family routines (discussed earlier in the chapter). Similar to routines, rituals involve instrumental communication and the repetition of behaviour over time (Crespo et al., 2013). In addition to these aspects, however, rituals also ascribe symbolic meaning to specific interactions and behaviours (Crespo et al., 2013). Rituals have been found to promote family cohesion and identity (Cigoli & Scabini, 2006). Furthermore, rituals have been associated with closeness and relationship quality in married couples (Crespo, Davide, Costa, & Fletcher, 2008). Rituals include family celebrations and traditions (Spagnola & Fiese, 2007). Therefore, couples can develop their own traditions, and purposefully celebrate events and milestones within their relationship as often as possible.

It can be seen that premarital counselling (or marital counselling during the newlywed period) may possibly assist couples in a number of ways to manage some of the most frequent psychosocial challenges of the newlywed period. The value of premarital counselling lies in the skills and knowledge it provides to newlyweds, which makes it a *cognitive GRR*. However, during counselling, helping professionals can also make recommendations that help newlyweds to access other GRRs, such as *physical and biochemical GRRs*, *interpersonal-relational GRRs*, *emotional GRRs*, *valuative-attitudinal GRRs*, and *macrosociocultural GRRs*. In this way, it is possible for helping professionals to assist South African newlyweds to manage the potential psychosocial challenges of the newlywed period more successfully, leading to long-term individual and societal benefits.

4.6. Limitations of the Current Study

Certain limitations must be taken into account when considering the findings and their implications. Firstly, the sample consisted of seven white, Christian, Afrikaans speaking individuals. This was not intended, and steps were taken that should have allowed for a more varied sample. The steps included not limiting participants to specific demographic factors such as gender, race, or religion. In addition, the invitation to partake in the study was placed on 13 public Facebook groups that were open to a wide range of diverse individuals, in both English and Afrikaans. However, the findings in the research only represent the experiences of a very specific group of people with specified demographics, and therefore cannot be assumed to apply to newlyweds who are from different cultural, racial, or religious backgrounds.

Secondly, limitations exist with regards to the interview process. Questioning regarding *emotional GRRs* was not adequate in all the participants' interviews. It is unclear whether this type of GRR was only used by three participants because questioning did not elicit this aspect enough, or whether participants did not really make use of *emotional GRRs* or find this type of GRR to be helpful. It is possible that *emotional GRRs* (in particular a stable, integrated ego identity) was not a focus during the newlywed period for most of the participants, because this was a time in which focus was shifted to the formation of the marital unit instead (Minuchin, 1974). In addition, questioning may not have been sufficient to elicit the use of *valuative-attitudinal GRRs* during the newlywed period. As discussed previously, *valuative-attitudinal GRRs* refer to a coping style marked by flexibility, rationality, and farsightedness (Antonovsky, 1979). Coping is defined as a multi-faceted self-regulatory construct that includes all the behavioural and cognitive mechanisms used to manage stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Therefore, a major factor that could have influenced the frequency with which this GRR was reported could be that a coping strategy is a more global characteristic of an individual, which is not as concrete as some of the other examples of GRRs. In other words, the use of other GRRs to manage the challenges of the newlywed period may actually be considered part of a newlywed's overall coping strategy. As a result, *valuative-attitudinal GRRs* may be entwined with the other GRRs, and the questioning in the interviews may not have been specific enough to clearly elicit *valuative-attitudinal GRRs* as a separate component from the use of all the other GRRs. Another aspect which was not addressed adequately in the interview process was *macrosociocultural GRRs*. Religion was the only example of *macrosociocultural GRRs* which was directly asked about in the semi-structured interviews, whereas culture generally as a

resource was not included, which may be construed as a limitation in the current research. However, culture as a protective factor or a resource during the newlywed period could have emerged as a category from the data without direct questioning, if any of the participants had indeed experienced it as a noteworthy resource. Nonetheless, culture in relation to marriage in general was discussed earlier in this chapter.

Thirdly, it is possible that newlyweds who have experienced the transition to marriage as exceedingly challenging may have not been willing to volunteer as participants to talk about their experiences. Therefore, the seven participants who took part in the current study may be newlyweds who have managed the newlywed transition effectively, which then supports the theory that the outcomes of tension management is related to the availability and utilisation of GRRs (Antonovsky, 1979; 1987). However, it is possible that there are newlyweds who have adequate GRRs available, and even use these GRRs, yet still have very negative or pathological outcomes during the first year of marriage. Consequently, a limitation may be that the experiences of struggling newlyweds generally may not have been captured in the research process. In addition, the applicability of Antonovsky's (1979; 1987) theory to struggling newlyweds cannot be gauged.

Fourthly, the research was cross-sectional, exploring the experience of particular psychosocial challenges and the use of specific GRRs up until a particular point in time. Although follow-up interviews were conducted, the time between the first interviews and the second interviews was not sufficient (the time lapse between interviews ranged from about two weeks to two months) to get a longitudinal view of the continued process of marital adaptation and use of GRRs to manage psychosocial challenges over time. This may be considered to be a limitation, as the marital adaptation should rather be seen as a process, rather than an isolated occurrence which. Furthermore, inferences cannot be made regarding the use of GRRs on overall SOC, marital well-being, or individual well-being over time. Thus, it may have been more beneficial to conduct the first round of interviews when the newlyweds had been married for only 3 months, and then again right at the end of the first year of marriage (12 months). However, due to time-constraints and the nature of the Applied Psychology Master's degree, a longitudinal approach was not a possibility.

4.7. Recommendations for Future Research

Despite the limitations, the results of the study can be added to our current knowledge about the experiences of newlyweds in South Africa. This is beneficial as research on South African newlyweds is extremely limited (EBSCOHOST, Google Scholar, and Sabinet search; 16 October 2016). However, various recommendations can be made for future research on this specific population.

Firstly, recommendations for future research include replication of the current study with a larger, more representative sample. Therefore, purposive sampling can still be used; however, criteria can be included regarding the number of participants required from each racial group, and sampling continued until a specified number of participants from each racial group has been recruited. Furthermore, organisations associated with different religious affiliations can be approached for recruitment purposes, in order to include participants from different religions. Another suggestion is that the current study be replicated, but that thematic analysis be used to analyse the data, rather than content analysis as was used in the current study. Although content analysis has allowed for the identification of the most frequently experienced psychosocial challenges and utilised GRRs, thematic analysis can identify recurring themes. These themes can provide helping professionals with a different perspective on the experiences of newlyweds than the current studies.

Secondly, the experiences of South African newlyweds, in a broader sense than psychosocial challenges and GRRs, can be explored using different methodologies, including the incorporation of theoretical triangulation, and the use of a mixed-method methodology or a quantitative approach. Theoretical triangulation refers to the use of more than one theoretical framework in the interpretation of research data (Pitre & Kushner, 2015). Theoretical triangulation allows one to “explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour (*sic*)” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 195). In other words, the experiences of South African newlyweds could be explored and interpreted, as has been done in the current study, using Antonovsky’s (1979; 1987) theoretical framework. However, to increase the richness of data, the same data could be interpreted from additional theoretical frameworks. These various interpretations can then be compared, or integrated to increase the depth of understanding regarding the experiences of South African newlyweds.

A quantitative approach could also be taken to explore Antonovsky’s (1979; 1987) constructs in the context of newlywed marriage, instead of a qualitative approach as in the

current study. For example, the relationship between Sense of Coherence (SOC) and marital adjustment could be explored quantitatively. People who have higher levels of SOC are usually healthier and adapt better to changes and stressful life events than people with a low SOC (Antonovsky, 1987). Therefore, it is hypothesised that individuals who have a higher SOC before marriage will adapt better to the newlywed period and its adaptations overall than individuals with a lower SOC. Thus, the SOC of engaged participants could be measured before marriage using the Orientation to life questionnaire (SOC scale) (Antonovsky, 1987). At the end of their first year of marriage, the participants' marital adjustment can be measured and the correlation between SOC and marital adjustment determined, in order to assess whether marital well-being is higher in individuals who had a higher SOC before marriage. Furthermore, the correlation between SOC and marital adjustment could also be explored longitudinally. The same couples described above could have their overall marital adjustment assessed again after the newlywed period, thus at least five years after getting married (Ariplackal & George, 2015; Cao et al., 2015; Lavner et al., 2016), in order to determine whether higher levels of SOC are positively correlated with better marital adjustment over time, as well.

Thirdly, the current study focused on the psychosocial challenges and GRRs of heterosexual newlyweds, and the findings cannot be assumed to represent the experiences of homosexual newlyweds. The rate of homosexual marriage has consistently been increasing (StatsSA, 2014), and therefore therapists who offer premarital and marital counselling will increasingly be encountering homosexual couples in therapy. It cannot be assumed that homosexual newlyweds experience the same challenges as heterosexual newlyweds, or that the same GRRs would be considered to be helpful by these newlyweds. This hypothesis is supported by previous international research which indicates that homosexual couples not only experience the challenges often faced by heterosexual couples, but also experience additional challenges related to their sexual orientation (Cochran & Mays, 2009; Hatzenbueler, McLaughlin, Keyes, & Hasin, 2010; Kurdek, 2006; Woodford et al., 2010). These additional challenges include discrimination and stigmatisation (Cochran & Mays, 2009; Hatzenbueler et al., 2010; Woodford et al., 2010), and less social support from their families than heterosexual couples (Kurdek, 2006). Therefore, newlywed homosexuals may experience greater levels of overall distress than heterosexual newlyweds in their first year of marriage, but may also be deprived of familial social support as an *interpersonal-relational GRR*. In addition, literature on the experiences of South African homosexual newlyweds could not be found (EBSCOHOST and Google Scholar search, 22 September 2016), leaving South African

marriage therapists uninformed when working with this population group. Marital counselling can only be truly effective if evidence-based and tailored to the specific needs of the couples one encounters (Farnam et al., 2011). Consequently, it is recommended that South African health professionals conduct research to explore and understand the experiences of homosexual newlyweds in particular.

Fourthly, as discussed in the limitations section, it is possible that severely distressed newlyweds did not feel comfortable to partake in the study and to share their experiences of the newlywed period. Therefore, the role of GRRs in managing the psychosocial challenges of distressed newlyweds could be compared with the role which GRRs play in managing the psychosocial challenges of well-adapted newlyweds. This could be done by recruiting a sample of distressed newlyweds who visit helping professionals for marriage counselling during the newlywed period. Various ethical considerations would have to be taken into account. For example, helping professionals would have to be approached, and they would have to seek permission from their clients, before any of their details could be released to the researcher. By comparing a group of distressed newlyweds to a group of well-adapted newlyweds, the theory informing the current study could be tested (Antonovsky, 1979 1987), as it is hypothesised that the newlyweds who use the greatest number of GRRs would experience positive outcomes, whilst newlyweds who use the fewest GRRs would experience negative outcomes. The results would offer greater support for the implication and assumption that seeking out and using GRRs is a beneficial recommendation for premarital couples.

To summarise, greater knowledge through research about the experiences of South African newlyweds would allow helping professionals and religious leaders to better prepare couples for the upcoming psychosocial challenges of marriage, and to assist them to manage the challenges successfully. However, for research findings to truly be helpful, they would have to represent the experiences of varied newlyweds from different racial backgrounds, cultural groups, socio-economic classes, religious affiliations, and sexual-orientations, as well as newlyweds who are not coping well with the adaptations of the newlywed period

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