SUMMARY

People spend substantial parts of their life in a close dyadic relationship. The results range from the fulfillment of emotional, intellectual, social and physical needs, to physical and emotional abuse.

The study clarifies the association between sex-role identity type, with its two traits (masculinity and femininity), and relationship satisfaction, at the dyadic level. The latter implies a focus on the identical (or different) levels of presence of the two constructs among partners in couples. Extraneous factors and personal (non-dyadic) effects are covered in addition.

The two main variables are evaluated with the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) and Spanier’s Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). In each case, a second instrument was administered for validation. The survey-type study followed a correlational, cross-sectional design.

The main purposes have been to test new theoretical frameworks against empirical data, and knowledge production.

A three-pronged approach included: an extensive literature review to identify methodological and knowledge gaps; a theory-driven design and methodology to ensure a sound study; and empirical data collection to verify the theoretical position through hypothesis testing.

Likely sources of bias were countered by involving balanced numbers of male and female, and homosexual and heterosexual respondents, from non-student populations, over a wide age range, and living in close relationships spanning at least two years.

The correlational design and relatively small sub-samples dictated the application of descriptive frequencies, and chi-square, variance (ANOVA) and regression analyses, as statistical techniques.

The findings emerged as more similar than different for homosexual and heterosexual participants. This implies that homosexuals are not a deviant group, but equally able to achieve happiness. Congruent (identical) sex-role identity traits between partners were not strong(est) in predicting satisfaction. However, femininity and androgyny, as highest adaptive type, and identical sex-role identity types between partners did. As a result, the initial sex-role identity congruence theory has been modified into the adaptive femininity trait theory.

Married heterosexual women face a predicament. While for them an undifferentiated sex-role identity type correlates with their husbands’ happiness, and their own unhappiness, the inverse applies to their femininity and androgyny.

The practical implications of this and other conclusions are also detailed.

Key terms: Sex-role identity; sex-role stereotypes; sex roles; relationship satisfaction; marital satisfaction; dyadic relationships; androgyny; masculinity; femininity; personality.