CHAPTER 2
CONCEPTUALISATION OF VARIABLES
AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is considered important to provide a clear understanding, right from the beginning, of the concepts used in the present study, as well as the study’s underlying theoretical context. By doing so, the arguments and discussion pertaining to the necessity, relevance and focus of the current study, presented mainly in Chapters 3 to 5, are easier to follow. As a result, one can also better make sense of the various relevant methodological and empirical issues that are covered in the first two of these chapters.

2.1 Definition of terms

On entering the present field of study, it immediately becomes apparent that one is dealing with an area characterised by complex interactions, such as those between theory and practice, and among numerous variables.

In this section, the complex relevant terminology is defined. Gerdes (1988, pp. 122-123) accomplished much towards clarifying the main terms central to the field of sex-role development. Many of the definitions below are based on those provided by Gerdes. Additional formulations are acknowledged where appropriate.

2.1.1 Sex

Sex "refers to an individual's classification as biological male or female", as it appears on census forms, for example (Gerdes, 1988, p. 122). Many other authors agree with this notion. This is apparent from a number of further references.

Minas (1993) sanctions the aforementioned use of the term, and agrees that the term sex became restricted to references to biological, or genetic, male/female differences.

Sex is a biological term, referring to the way in which people are termed either male or female depending on their sex organs and genes (Basow, 1992, p. 2).

Sex is defined as a biological category, based on biological characteristics used to define male and female (Russo & Green, 1993). It also is a variable used in empirical studies to define gender operationally.

"Sex ... is distinguished from gender by what one is born as, that is female or male, and therefore is a biological concept" (Mannathoko, 1992, p. 72).

The latter definition suggests one area of confusion. That is the potential overlap between the two terms sex and gender. This is clarified next by properly distinguishing gender from sex.
2.1.2 Gender

Gender “refers to the individual's personal, psychological experience of being male or female” (Gerdes, 1988, p. 122). As such, it is a broader term than the word sex.

In keeping with commonly held thinking about the features distinguishing sex and gender, Minas (1993) prefers gender to mean those differences (between the sexes) that have social causes. In fact, she also cautions against being too rigid in restricting this to only social causes, and concedes that some interplay between social and biological, and even other causes, is possible.

According to Lorber (1989, p. 58) gender is "a set of oppositional relationships that sustain and are sustained by institutionalized patterns of behavior". It is, therefore, a social construct. She considers the tendency to view gender as resting on, or being determined by an obvious physiological and biological dichotomy only, to be an (unverified) assumption. It could also be argued that the concept of physiological and biological dimorphism emerges from the firmly held belief in two, and only two, genders. Thus, physiological sex differences, reproduction and sexuality are considered to be as much (if not more) socially constructed as biologically based. Lorber’s perspective or position is clearly biased towards the primacy of social determination in terms of gender vis-à-vis sex.

Gender is a psychological and cultural term, reflecting individuals' subjective feelings of male- or femaleness (Basow, 1992, p. 2). In terms of this view, most behavioural and personality differences between males and females are attributed to social factors (for example, rewards, socialisation, status effects, and expectations). Gender is thus constructed through historical, cultural and psychological processes, and stereotypes and roles are shaped by them. As such, sex-role stereotypes are seen as strongly held over-generalisations about those persons in the relevant social categories, or as structured sets of beliefs about the attributes that men or women will have.

"Gender is a social category, based on a social definition of the way males and females should differ physically, cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally" (Russo & Green, 1993, p. 381). Russo and Green also accepted that biological characteristics are included in the social category of gender. (Cf. the vastly different physical standards, related to gender ideals, and not biological sex, that males and females have as dieters and body builders.) Gender-related traits or other personal attributes are qualities that reflect the different gender-role socialisation of males and females and current expectations of behaviour (masculine and feminine qualities).

"Gender is a relational concept that denotes the manner in which women and men are differentiated and ordered in a given socio-cultural context" (Mannathoko, 1992, p. 72).

"Gender has been defined as socially constructed and culturally variable roles that women and men play in their daily lives" (Meena, 1992a, p. 1). For Meena, the definition includes structural inequality between men and women, as it is manifested in labour markets, political structures, and households.
and reinforced by custom, law and specific development policies. However, differences do not necessarily imply inferiority or superiority.

"Gender is the socially determined role of the individual that is ascribed as a result of his or her sex" (Juni & Grimm, 1994, p. 106).

From all the above attempts at defining gender, some common elements become clear. Gender seems to be the term reserved for describing elements of identity (personality) and behaviour closely tied to the psychological, social, and cultural (historical) functioning of men and women, who happened to be born as a member of either sex (biologically). The interface of the terms sex and gender with stereotyping is explicated in more detail in the next three subsections.

2.1.3 Sex role

Gerdes (1988, p. 122) posited that sex role "refers to appropriate behaviour, attitudes and role performance for members of one sex". Prinsloo (1990) further highlighted the descriptive and prescriptive connotations attached to sex roles and their definition. As a result, one could approach sex-role contents and practices either from a neutral, objective perception of reality, or from normative, dogmatic considerations, or a mixture of the two.

Reibstein (1988) tied sex roles to people’s "traditional" sex-appropriate attitudes and behaviour. She proposed a five-point model of sex-role development (see Figure 2.1). The rather oversimplified dichotomy in the model between past/family/enmeshment and current/society/separation (from family) has to be noted. The model covers the following five elements/points:

- the predispositions boys and girls are born with (nature), and how those are modified by own and societal expectations in specified domains (nurture);
- the development of what is needed in society through family-of-origin and societal mechanisms (these mainly refer to the influence of norms, myths and fears established and reinforced over time in/by the family, and in/by society, in mutual interaction);
- transition points in the life cycle that provide the conditions, impetus and opportunities for choices for, or against, traditional or more cross-sex role behaviour;
- the reconsideration of belief systems that determine the degree of flexibility and clarity in selecting new or old sex roles, which may lead to fear/anxiety; and
- the solution of the previous conflict through redefining value systems and determining the relative strength of the psychological and emotional claims made by family scripts.

When gender roles refer to society’s evaluation of behaviour as masculine or feminine, it has a normative content (Basow, 1992, p. 2). This immediately brings into focus the part that sex-role stereotypes play, - an issue requiring some further clarification. At this point, it should also be noted that the terms sex and gender are linked interchangeably to roles, stereotypes, identity, and other concepts. However, gender, as defined above, is referred to almost without exception. Some further references to the literature explain the issues in more depth.
"Sex roles are social roles assigned on the basis of biological sex" (Russo & Green, 1993, p. 282). Women's gender role, for example, is thus one type of sex role. In most societies, masculine and feminine gender roles exist. Masculinity and femininity, thus defined, are in the eye of the beholder, and not in the person. One's degree thereof depends on social definitions, and not on personal attributes. The concepts of gender role and sex role have been muddled in the literature. They have often been used interchangeably. Russo and Green argue for a finer distinction, based on changes in women's status and position in society, requiring more complex conceptions of social roles. Gender, as a social category, defines separate statuses and positions (and therefore also expectations and norms, by virtue of their gender) for men and women. Gender roles are tied to the overall position of men and women in the larger society. Sex roles are linked to the characteristics of specific social institutions within society, such as the family. Sex roles are setting-specific in this sense. They may include roles such as wife, mother, aunt, etc. Russo and Green (1993, p. 383) preferred "sex roles to refer to the overarching category; gender role will refer to the feminine and masculine gender roles for men and women that are based on the position of their gender in society". However, this distinction seems to be tenuous. Also, the reference to general and specific aspects is confusing. Neither are they used consistently. In some cases sex roles are seen to be overarching (general), and in others again as very specific. Gender roles also describe overall societal positions.
Today one would perhaps think more in terms of “uncertainties”

Figure 2.1: Schematic illustration of a five-point model* of sex-role development throughout the life cycle
* Taken from Reibstein (1988, p. 156).

According to Mannathoko (1992), gender roles are the culturally determined patterns of behaviour such as rights, duties, obligations and status.

"Gender role consists of both the individual's private understanding of sexual identity and the public expression of the private understanding" (Juni & Grimm, 1994, p. 106, derived from Money and Eckhardt's 1972 definition). Thus, "gender roles derive from ego development, social learning and cognitive processes" (Juni & Grimm, 1994, p. 106, based on a 1991 definition of Offenbecher and a 1981 definition of Robinson and Green).

The common core or consensus seems to be that sex role and gender role both refer to socially determined behavioural elements observed among and/or prescribed to/expected from males and females in various roles.

2.1.4 Sex-role identity

In consonance with the last statement in the previous section, both sex-role and gender identity, as terms used interchangeably, "refer to the personality characteristics ascribed to masculinity and femininity” (Gerdes, 1988, p. 122). Other scholars agreed on the essential definition.

Gender identity refers to the content of an individual's subjective feelings of male- or femaleness (Basow, 1992, p. 2). Winstead and Derlega (1993) also essentially concur with this.

Gender-role identity (or sex typing) refers to the degree to which an individual identifies with societal definitions of masculinity or femininity (Basow, 1992, p. 2). It is also termed gender-role orientation and refers to "individuals' endorsement of personal characteristics considered appropriate (in a particular culture) for women and men" (Winstead & Derlega, 1993, p. 3). As such, it also refers to the degree to which sex-role stereotypes are adhered to.

"Gender identity is the self-recognition that one belongs to a gender category” (Russo & Green, 1993, p. 381).

Thus, masculinity and femininity attained the character of personality traits referring to the degree to which individuals exhibit neither, either, or both, of the two given psychological characteristics. Under 2.3.2 and 7.1.2, the operationalisation of these concepts receives detailed attention. Suffice it to take note at this stage that the strong simultaneous presence of masculinity and femininity in the same individual is referred to as androgyny.

When either masculinity or femininity, as independent characteristics, is referred to in the rest of this thesis, the term sex-role identity trait is used. The unique combination of the extent of the two traits in
any individual allows description of the resulting configuration as a sex-role identity type.

Spence (1985) devoted much effort during the decade spanning from the middle-1970s to the middle-1980s to unravel the essence of the concepts of masculinity and femininity. Central to this debate was whether or not a single-factor or two-factor model was at stake. Spence was of the opinion that researchers after Bem merely subscribed to a pseudo-acceptance of what had been put forward by Bem as a two-factor model (masculinity and femininity as two independent variables, instead of the two ends of a bipolar continuum). The core reason for this, as Spence explained, was that Bem eventually measured (through the Bem Sex Role Inventory) the degree of sex typing in an individual. The latter made use of a single continuum that described people with reference to two extremes (sex-typed, against not sex-typed). Had Bem in her gender-schema theory referred to two gender schemata, namely one for masculinity and one for femininity, this would truly be a two-factor model. According to Spence, the dilemma could be resolved by opting for multi-factor models. These would concentrate on the various classes of traits, attributes, values, interests, preferences and behaviours that differentiate between genders in a multi-factorial way, with various degrees of relationship among the factors. In line with this, Spence's definition of gender identity refers to the “fundamental existential sense of one’s maleness or femaleness, an acceptance of one’s gender on a psychological level that, with rare exceptions, parallels and complements awareness and acceptance of one’s biological sex” (pp. 80-81). She also considered sex-role identity a largely redundant term, and preferred gender identity. This she did because role distinctions between men and women in real-life situations should not be based on sex.

Early in the 1980s, Taylor and Hall (1982) conducted a review of developments in research on androgyny since 1974. They pointed out that a conceptual problem existed because of the different ways in which Bem, on the one hand, and Spence (and colleagues), on the other hand, saw androgyny. For Bem, androgyny initially comprised just the balance between masculinity and femininity, resulting in a threefold split with regard to sex-role identity. Spence and her colleagues reserved the term for those individuals scoring high on both, allowing for the well-known fourfold split or typology. The former became known as the interaction hypothesis, and the latter as the main effects hypothesis. Bem later adopted the four-way split or typology, but rather in terms of the salience of gender typing or schematicity, as explained later elsewhere (2.2). Through their meta-analysis, Taylor and Hall found that the first eight years’ research findings supported neither of the two models mentioned, but actually only a masculinity model. Hereby individuals measuring high on masculinity would be better adapted. Even the traditional sex-typed model was not supported. Possible reasons for this range of findings were supposedly the confounding effect of social desirability when measuring sex-role identity, greater variability in the items of the masculinity scale, or the greater behavioural referencing (definition) of masculinity items. Their call for more sophisticated research essentially led to a rapid increase in studies covering the topic of psychological androgyny over the decade or more that followed.

Androgyny became loaded with a very negative meaning after about 1980 (Bem, 1993). This was attributed to severe criticisms from the quarters of some feminist theorists. Three arguments were brought forward. First, men had been referred to throughout as actually being fulfilled to perfection by
acquiring a bit of emotion and femininity. (Women still had to be converted radically by being redefined androcentrically.) Further evidence of this was how "andro" was still placed before "gyne". The second argument was that the concept of androgyny was so gender neutral and utopian as to be devoid of any real connection to historical reality. In this vein, it had also been theorised at a too private and personal level to be of political value. The last argument was that androgyny reproduced (or reified) the gender polarisation it had sought to undercut. Bem pointed out how this battlefield was not uniform at all. The definitions of the concept varied tremendously with how and by whom they were used (i.e., many elements from the socio-historical context further defined the application of the concept).

The rationale for considering the evaluation of both self-rated and ascribed sex-role identity in the present research is also explicated more fully under 7.1.2, where reference is made to the work of Lamke, Sollie, Durbin and Fitzpatrick (1994) on the model proposed by Ickes.

2.1.5 Role

| Role, in a general sense, "refers to a position and the functions associated with it", for example, husband or mother (Gerdes, 1988, p. 122). |

Burr (1967) defined role as a cluster of behaviours relatively distinct from other behaviours as part of a relatively stable relationship. The latter, in turn, is defined from the viewpoint of symbolic interaction theory, as specifically adapted to serve as basis for research on marital relationships. The many forms of role expectations attached to roles, illustrate their normative (prescriptive) nature.

"Social roles are clusters of attitudes and behaviors associated with social positions" (Russo & Green, 1993, p. 382).

Roles in close relationships form a subset of roles occurring throughout social life. Because close relationships have all conventionally been heterosexual relationships, sex roles have received prominence. However, general role aspects (e.g., those pertaining to career persons) apply irrespective of the dyadic relationship status. In other cases, dyadic roles apply (e.g., those pertaining to homemaking). The latter do not overlap completely with sex, or even gender. They are also likely to differ between hetero- and homosexual dyadic couples. How responsibilities are divided for decisions and activities concerning the look of the interior of a room in the house, and the actual execution of drilling, painting, and the like, to effect the desired look, can serve as example.

As research and theory formulation progressed, three main marital and family-role systems also became discernible, namely the traditional, companionate and egalitarian systems (Gerdes, 1988). Each of them has its own advantages and disadvantages in any given family (or dyad). Many variations of them also exist. In the traditional system, the different characteristics and conventional preferences of each partner combines into a complementary relationship or role division. In the companionate (or comradeship) system, one partner’s career (usually, but not limited to, that of the husband in a
marriage) takes preference, and the rest of the role division is agreed upon through consultation, with support by either partner to the other’s roles a major part of the dynamic. In the egalitarian system, both partners often follow independent careers, and all the roles and responsibilities are shared according to each one’s needs, as mutually agreed through symmetrical interaction.

2.1.6 Relationship satisfaction

Relationship

For the purposes of this study, a close or intimate relationship is given a broader meaning than only within marital, monogamous cohabitation. Living together intimately over a number of years in stable relationships, such as non-marital cohabitation and same-sex relationships, are also included. The common denominator is living together as a dyad. Strickland (1981) pointed out that every person’s existence and experiences were almost entirely shaped by how he/she related to a significant other in a one-on-one dyadic affiliation.

While deliberately choosing to focus only on intimate dyadic relationships in the present study, the concerns raised by Hinde (1996) should not be forgotten. He warned that the nature, types and elements of relationships had not been described sufficiently. As such, the science of relationships deserves more attention. He defines a relationship as a series of interactions between individuals who know each other. The interactions concerned are affected by preceding interactions and in some way determined by the expectation of future interactions. Interactions are usually limited in time to a single or very short behavioural interchange between two people. Interactions and relationships not only involve behaviour, but also emotions, hopes, regrets, wishes and the like. Other facets at stake are the socio-cultural structures and physical environment within the relevant society or more specific groupings in which relationships function. A good taxonomy of the categories or dimensions of relationships should at minimum cover the content, diversity, qualities, relative frequency, patterning and reciprocity (or complementarity) of interactions, as well as themes such as conflict and power, self-disclosure, interpersonal perception, commitment and satisfaction. All the foregoing elements are in some way or another addressed in the present study by gathering data on intra- and inter-personal and other demographic variables, as built into the theoretical framework underpinning the present study (cf. especially Section 2.3 and Chapter 4).

Relationship satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is defined, for the purposes of this study, as the degree to which individuals experience their personal relationships (of at least two to three years duration) as satisfactory, happy and successful. The definitions of happiness, success, and satisfaction have created considerable confusion in the past. Generally speaking, satisfaction and happiness may be taken to refer to individual attributes (experiences), whereas success refers to the congruence of their experience among both partners in a dyad. The term “success” is also sometimes reserved for conclusions about relationship outcomes or status over time, for example, ending or not ending in divorce or separation. A further complication has arisen in attempting to define the specificity or comprehensiveness of the measured levels of satisfaction. One can study general or overall relationship satisfaction, or selected aspects of it, such as sexual satisfaction and fulfilment. These and other issues are briefly
Burr (1967) pointed out that of the sample of research publications analysed by Nye and Bayer for the period covering 1947 to 1961, as many as about 16% had marital adjustment as the dependent variable. However, a myriad of ways were used to conceptualise and operationalise it. This rendered progress in the field of study difficult. Burr hoped to address this problem by focusing his attention anew on the conceptualisation of this construct, and working towards developing new theoretical frames of reference in this regard. Recent developments in the field caused this early work to largely fade into oblivion. It should be noted that although Burr focused on the concept of marital satisfaction, the principles applied are also applicable to relationship satisfaction in the wider sense.

Burr attended to the definition of the construct of relationship satisfaction in detail. He located his discussion within both the so-called generalist (conceived mainly by Burgess) and the specific approaches (as followed by Landis, and also Bowerman).

According to the generalist approach, marital success can be viewed as one general factor. It is conceptually unique, and has symbolic meaning as a single concept. The concept is defined by the criterion chosen to measure it, which could also be composite. One such composite-criterion system selected five components:
- agreements (and settlement of disagreements);
- common interests and activities;
- demonstration of affection and confiding;
- satisfaction with marriage; and
- absence of feelings of unhappiness and loneliness.

These components were not considered deserving separate concern, but were seen to act within an additive relationship to provide information on the crucial variable, marital success.

Several criticisms were levelled against the generalist approach. One of them was that it did not provide the possibility to distinguish variation (levels of success) in different areas of marriage. Furthermore, it was impossible to really know what the final score represented. Statistically speaking, independent variation between the various components results in error variation in the measurement of the general variable. [A generalist approach is often followed when applying global measures, such as the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS). It measures an individual’s subjective evaluation of his/her relationship (Vaughn & Matyastik-Baier, 1999).]

In the specific approach, the interest is in specific factors of the marital relationship, such as sexual satisfaction, or the satisfaction of partners with their spouses’ way of dealing with family finances. The most prominent criticism in this regard is the inability of researchers to reach adequate sophistication in the operationalisation of measuring procedures. This results in little ever being published on the reliability and validity of their methods.
In order to satisfy the principle of conceptual clarity, Burr insisted that clear definitions of phenomena be made so that they could be properly distinguished from each other in reality. A next step was to make a distinction between two different purposes for which definitions of marital satisfaction were required. On the one hand, defining and measuring marital satisfaction could have social or general goals. On the other hand, they could have specific or personal goals. Put differently, researchers either wanted to study the relationship between marriage (or marital satisfaction) and extramarital conditions and circumstances, also involving other people and social systems, or to examine specific intra-marital behaviours, restricted to the partners only. Accordingly, definition and measurement were required to take the appropriate interfaces into consideration. Burr judged an index of integration or cohesion (cf. Spanier’s instrument under 7.1.1) to be valuable, as were components, such as the degree of similarity of family interests, personality development, and functionality in society. In Burr’s eventual proposal towards redefinition, he declared a preference for the term marital satisfaction. Marital happiness could be a possible synonym, unless the purpose was to assess euphoric ecstasy.

Corrales (1974) used the elements of love and affection, understanding, companionship, sociability, and tension management to determine the degree of relationship satisfaction (by applying the 1968 Marital Adjustment Balance Scale (MABS) of Orden and Bradburn). He chose to develop the earlier composite-criterion instrument of Burgess into a multiple-criteria system. According to Corrales, difficulty is often experienced with composite-criterion scales, as the aggregate score is difficult to interpret or link to anything substantive within relationships. Marital satisfaction and happiness early on became interchangeable concepts, referring to a subjective state of satisfaction (or euphoria, or pleasure) with the marital situation or specific aspects thereof.

Spanier (1976) maintained a close link between the theoretical notions underlying constructs and how they could be measured operationally. This logically flowed from his emphasis of the process nature of dyadic adjustment. It follows that measures of relationship satisfaction (or dyadic adjustment, in his terminology) have to evaluate the events, circumstances and interactions capable of moving a couple back and forth along a continuum of relationship development. Thus, Spanier’s argument towards an appropriate definition stated that “dyadic adjustment is a process of movement along a continuum which can be evaluated in terms of proximity to good or poor adjustment” (p. 17). Heuristically, this movement allows for a measure evaluating the relationship at a given point in time. Finally, “dyadic adjustment can be defined as a process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of: (1) troublesome dyadic differences; (2) interpersonal tensions and personal anxiety; (3) dyadic satisfaction; (4) dyadic cohesion; and (5) consensus on matters of importance to dyadic functioning” (p. 17).

In general terms, Bahr and Day (1978) followed the outlines of the definitions proposed by people such as Spanier and Burr in the previous decade. Marital satisfaction was taken as one aspect of overall marital adjustment. It was seen as separate from marital consensus, cohesion or affection. It became the subjectively experienced feeling of contentment or gratification with the marital situation as a whole. As such, it was the subjective perception an individual had of the quality of his/her marriage.
Later research focused on isolated issues within the broader measurement debate, but did not really contribute more to the state of the art. Jayne (1982), for example, indicated how sexual satisfaction (orgasm) appeared to correlate with marital happiness (for women). However, this was only true at the extremes of the scales, that is, consistently or never experiencing orgasm predicted happiness or unhappiness.

Recent years saw a proliferation of efforts to refine measures of relationship or marital satisfaction. This situation is all too evident when inspecting Column F in Table 3.1 (Chapter 3), where the many tools underpinning the empirical findings reviewed for the present study, are listed.

According to Bradbury (1995), such abundance of instruments hampers practitioners (and even researchers), who in a sense become victims of their own success, when they have to select the most appropriate instruments for assessing the nature and quality of marriage. As a result, he reviewed the large body of longitudinal research literature on marriage (115 studies), proposed a model or framework for the core domains of marriage, and related the various instruments to the aspects of the model. He contended that marital functioning involved:

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\begin{align*}
\text{marital quality and stability} & \quad \leftarrow \quad \text{adaptive processes} \quad \leftarrow \quad \text{stressful events} \quad + \quad \text{enduring vulnerabilities}
\end{align*}
\]

The *Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (DAS) of Spanier was acknowledged as (one of) the most widely used tool(s). Bradbury, Fincham and Beach (2000) later revisited aspects related to the conceptualisation and measurement of marital satisfaction. Although the *DAS* could be criticised for inflating associations between self-report measures of inter-personal processes and marital quality, this only occurred in cross-sectional work, and not longitudinal research. The *DAS* constructs were still deemed appropriate for many applications, and researchers were advised to use existing tools rather than develop more materials that were not standardised.

Bierhoff (1996) recommended the so-called investment theory of love as the basis for assessing relationship satisfaction, as it describes the latter in terms of the effect of high rewards and low costs. This notion of satisfaction, according to Bierhoff, is rooted firmly in Kelly and Thibaut's exposition of exchange theory published in 1978. Relationship commitment, in turn, is a function of relationship satisfaction, the quality (low) of alternative relationships, and investment in the relationship. The latter includes external or common possessions and intrinsic contributions such as self-disclosure. Murstein (1997) defended the value of exchange theory in the context of evaluating male-female relationships. He considered this necessary after efforts by Wood to discredit it as androcentric. In her attempts to do so, Wood (according to Murstein) erred in the opposite direction by falling into sex stereotypy. Wood argued that women could not be evaluated justly through an investment-reward theoretical model, because women would be perceived (as the result would be for men by using tools created by men) in terms of their supposed focus on rights instead of needs, individuality instead of interdependence, fairness instead of caring, and self-interest instead of responsiveness to others. However, Murstein argued that Wood unnecessarily dichotomised the matter and exaggerated the issue, as the conceptual phenomena (such as exchange) were universal and would apply to both sexes, even though they may differ on them in extent.
Fowers and Applegate (1996) raised the concern that problems in conceptualising marital quality reduced the value of many research findings. Their two main arguments were that marital quality was seen as individual perceptions rather than dyadic variables, and that self-report measures of marital quality were contaminated by social desirability. In order to solve some of the dilemmas, they re-investigated the conceptual notion of marital conventionalisation, proposed long before (in 1967 by Edmonds, according to them). This notion entails that satisfied spouses typically rate their partners and marriages as much more positive than others would. Together with this, a positive (or negative, for that matter) spiral would be created (called the dyadic (dis)satisfaction maintenance pattern), whereby perceptions determine own behaviours, which in turn lead to concomitant spousal behaviours perpetuating the initial perception. Through cluster analysis, the two researchers indeed confirmed the link between marital satisfaction and idealistic distortion. However, the findings of the two researchers, having involved 2,108 members of an American Christian fraternity across 31 states, were still inconclusive, and did not necessarily confirm the conventionalisation concept. The chance existed that Christian couples avoided divorce on moral grounds, more often achieved positive outcomes, and stayed together even when things did not work out. It has to be noted that other potential causes of positive ratings of relationships, such as protecting one’s self-worth (i.e., not acknowledging own failure), were also not investigated.

Kurdek (1997) questioned the wisdom of using global measures of relationship adjustment, especially when specific links with other variables had to be investigated. As example, he cited the greater meaningfulness of assessing relationship commitment, within a relationship maintenance focus, in association with the impact of neuroticism. (More findings from this study are reported in Chapter 4, under 4.2.4 and 4.2.5.) In another study, problem solving was linked to relationship quality assessed as intimacy, autonomy, equality and perception of barriers to leaving (cf. 4.2.5).

A unique attempt to accommodate finer nuances in conceptualising relationship satisfaction was made by Bodenmann, Gottman and Backman (1997). They linked relationship satisfaction to types of couples. The latter comprised a typology describing the following couple dynamics:
- hostile couples, showing high rates of conflict engagement and negativity, and low levels of positive reinforcement;
- hostile detached couples, showing similar, but more brief conflict engagement, albeit in an emotionless uninvolved way;
- validator couples, showing openness in communication, much display of affection, and sharing;
- volatile couples, showing passion, intimacy and high affective expression, but also autonomy; and
- avoider couples, showing emotional shallowness and the minimisation of conflict.

The findings concerning the link between communication patterns and relationship satisfaction are reported in Section 4.2.5.

In summary, the conceptualisation of relationship (or marital) satisfaction ranges from an oversimplified notion of only having a choice between specific- and composite-criterion measures, to
Conceptualisation and theoretical framework

In essence, each approach strives towards the clear demarcation of a single phenomenon and operationalising it well once and for all. However, it was acknowledged that the task was not so simple, and finer nuances were required. The latter would provide for the process nature of relationship satisfaction (adjustment or development), as well as different levels of abstraction, depending on the purposes for which an assessment was required. Freeston and Pléchaty (1997) underscored the latter point by arguing that there was room for a range of instruments (definitions). More comprehensive measures of adjustment and satisfaction, as well as simpler measures of marital quality both have their place. The *Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT)* would serve as a good example of a limited-item measure, based on a broad definition for general contexts. The *DAS* would be a more comprehensive tool for more sophisticated applications.

2.1.7 Other issues of terminology

Other, more marginally related concepts are defined later where appropriate (especially in Chapter 7). They include biographical and nuisance variables, and the sub-measures of relationship satisfaction or happiness. Furthermore, the core concepts and constructs of the present study are clarified more precisely along with the operationalisation of the variables, also in Chapter 7.

The concept or construct sex-role stereotype is closely linked to sex-role identity. Prinsloo (1990) reported on the agreement between various scholars about its content. Sex-role stereotypes refer to the set of conceptions among a majority of members of society (consensus, therefore) about the characteristics belonging to the two sexes. Deaux and Kite (1993, p. 127) confirmed the "remarkable staying power" of such gender stereotypes.

Russo and Green (1993) defined sex-role stereotypes as the characteristics pertaining to individuals holding particular sex roles (for example, mothers are nurturant). Gender-role stereotypes are a subset of sex-role stereotypes, and apply to gender roles (for example, women are nurturant whether or not they are engaged in other sex roles; they will like/nurture babies whether they are mothers or not). In this sense, sex-role stereotypes overlap gender-role stereotypes, without necessarily being identical.

Throughout the current study certain concepts are used consistently. To make it easier to follow the ensuing chapters presenting the literature review, but specifically the research problem, hypotheses and design, the sex-role identity terminology used, is clarified in Table 2.1. The current study investigates both self-reported and ascribed sex-role identity, as is explained elsewhere (under 4.1.4, 5.3.3 and 5.3.4). The central concepts are printed in boldface, while further clarification is provided in normal text font. Their specific application in the present study is explained in detail in Section 2.3.

Table 2.1: Terminology used to refer to sex-role identity type and trait configurations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex-role identity type combinations in relationships (E.g., a partner is either androgynous, masculine, feminine or undifferentiated; see Section 2.3.2)</th>
<th>Sex-role identity trait descriptions (E.g., every sex-role identity type comprises a high or low value for each of masculinity and femininity)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOMO-GENDER DYADS</td>
<td>Mono-type / mono-gender dyads or pairs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conceptualisation and theoretical framework

(Individuals have an identical sex-role identity type) (I.e., masculinity and femininity)

"MIXED" DYADS
Sex-role identity types not identical
(But traits are still partly identical)
(Either masculinity or femininity trait is identical)

PARTLY IDENTICAL
Identical masculinity, but different femininity
(Dif)
Different masculinity, but identical femininity

HETERO-GENDER DYADS
Hetero-type / hetero-gender dyads or pairs
(Individuals have non-identical sex-role identity types)

NOT identical
Neither of the sex-role identity traits
(I.e., neither masculinity nor femininity)

The link between sex-role identity (type and trait) configurations and relationship satisfaction within the relevant dyads is also a specific object of the present study. Again, for clarity from the outset, the terminology concerned is summarised in Table 2.2.

These are the key concepts in the present study. A clear understanding of these concepts will expedite finding one’s way through the material to follow.

The next step is to present and discuss the theoretical thinking that has informed the way in which the current study approached and dealt with its research variables. This is done at two levels. The first is to portray the broader theoretical assumptions and context within which the current study can be situated (2.2). Then the theoretical perspectives and models selected for application to the current study are presented (2.3).

Table 2.2: Terminology related to the analysis / etiology of the sex-role identity dynamics underlying relationship satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience of relationship (marriage)</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Dissatisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ACCORD</td>
<td>DISCORD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identical</td>
<td>(Congruence, correspondence, commonality)</td>
<td>(Incongruence, competition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-identical (Different)</td>
<td>ACCEPTANCE</td>
<td>NON-ACCEPTANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Congruence, correspondence, commonality)</td>
<td>(Compatibility, adaptation, complementarity)</td>
<td>(Incompatibility, failure to adapt, conflict)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed * (m id, f dif)</td>
<td>Accord in terms of masculinity</td>
<td>Discord in terms of masculinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptance in terms of femininity</td>
<td>Non-acceptance in terms of femininity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed * (m dif, f id)</td>
<td>Acceptance in terms of masculinity</td>
<td>Non-acceptance in terms of masculinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accord in terms of femininity</td>
<td>Discord in terms of femininity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* m = masculinity, f = femininity, id = identical, dif = different
2.2 Macro-theoretical assumptions

In the previous section, the importance of demarcating and defining constructs before embarking on a study is emphasised. As a logical outcome, the central constructs have been properly conceptualised (2.1). The theoretical issues underlying sex-role related behaviours, and the relevant field of research, are considered next (2.2). Understanding the theoretical context of the present study facilitates a theory-driven and methodologically sound approach to the research.

The brief to introduce the theories underlying the current study is executed in three sub-sections. First the study of sex roles and gender relations is placed within an exposition of the role, place and contribution of feminist theory to social research (2.2.1). This body of knowledge became known widely as feminist research. However, scholars are divided passionately over what feminist research is, and what it is not. The point is, though, that no research on issues of gender can ignore the many and diverse contributions on the link between feminism and research. Second, Bem’s most recent contribution to the theoretical debate, through refinements that became known as her theory of gender schematicity, is presented (2.2.2). In the third instance, various other theories are also cited (2.2.3). They often pertain to the integration of variables other than the dependent (relationship satisfaction) and independent variables (sex-role identity) into the design of the present study. More recent developments in the area of sociological theory are also introduced here.

An important note has to be made now on the relevance of more classical psychological theories. Bem (1985) related that three theories of sex typing had been particularly influential for sex-role studies, being psychoanalytic theory, social learning theory and cognitive-developmental theory. In a predecessor study (at master’s-level) to the present doctoral research, Prinsloo (1990) covered these and other contributions, which are, for the sake of brevity, only briefly summarised. A further observation is important, namely that the relevant elements from the very broad, earlier psychological frameworks have been incorporated into more specific recent theories. The following core contributions were made by the relevant broader psychological theories (selected references to informative sources from which material was gleaned, are listed in each instance):

- **Psychoanalytic** and **neo-psychoanalytic** perspectives propose that biological givens (maleness and femaleness) are resolved mainly through intra-psychic processes during puberty into sex-role identity outcomes, which would determine the salience or extent of masculinity and femininity in a person as core part of his/her ego development and functioning (Bem, 1981b; Deutsch, 1944; Fogel, Lane & Liebert, 1986; Gerdes, 1988; Joffe, 1985; Jung, 1969; Noam & Wolf, 1987; Reinisch, Rosenblum & Sanders, 1987; Sayers, 1987).

- **Social learning theory** postulates that the environment, more than biology or intra-psychic processes, is at play in how individuals model their sex-role behaviour through processes such as punishment, reward, imitation and identification on behaviours observed and experienced by them. Differences in this process for boys and girls explain the uniqueness of adult sex-role functioning (Bem, 1981b; Fein, 1978; Gerdes, 1988; Reinisch et al., 1987; Sayers, 1987; Smith, 1986).

- **Cognitive-developmental theory** states from the structure and functioning of cognition that rational thought processes, not excluding social learning and moral thinking, determine how
schemas, from childhood onwards, become the internalised, underlying cognitive structures regulating perception and behaviour, also with regard to sex roles (Bem, 1981b; Fein, 1978; Reinisch et al., 1987; Santrock, 1983; Sayers, 1987; Smith, 1986; Wine, 1987).

- **Attribution theories** relate how clues about aspects of own and others' behaviour, ideas, thinking and values in situations facilitate the giving of meaning by individuals to own present and future behaviour and perceptions, to such an extent that also sex-role behaviour can be explained thereby (Baron & Byrne, 1984; Feldman, Biringen & Nash, 1981).

- **Biological, genetic and neurological determinants** also claim to explain sex / gender differences according to a rather recent body of knowledge making use of increasingly sophisticated tools and methods for isolating the contribution of biological factors with regard to sex-role characteristics and behaviour. Examples would be differences between males and females in brain functioning and the effects of neuro-chemical or hormonal processes (Ellis, 1986; Fedigan, 1986; Gerdes, 1980; Reinisch et al., 1987; Sonnendecker, Polakow & Gerdes, 1981).

### 2.2.1 Role and contribution of feminist research

Even before feminist research was identified as such, some early efforts had been made to adapt existing theory to pertinently accommodate issues of gender. A good example comes from the 1960s, when Burr (1967) based his research in the field on *symbolic interaction theory*. This occurred before the modern Feminist Movement made its mark on the hegemony of globally prevailing science and research paradigms. Burr did not simply accept that individuals acquire meaning through socialisation within society over time and in differing social situations, with language playing a prominent role. Instead, he emphasised the relative stability of identity, and the ways in which meanings influence relationships, and not the reverse. In terms of the latter, marital relationships were given prominence in his study. The behaviour of individuals in certain roles does not always conform to the role expectations associated with the roles. In such cases, role (behaviour) discrepancies arise. For him, this was a crucial variable determining marital satisfaction. Burr posited that as role discrepancy increased, the likelihood of not reaching marital goals (marital satisfaction) decreased. He thought that this influence was moderated by the importance attached to role behaviour discrepancies. Such a theoretical position suggested that the strength of sex-role stereotypes at least partly determined the outcome of relationship satisfaction. However, the contribution to theory was not yet sophisticated.

Less than two decades later, the nature of the debate and the actual content of research approaches to gender studies had changed radically, as can be seen from the discussion presented henceforth.

In 1983 and 1984, Wilkinson (1986a) convened two symposia as part of the annual conferences held by the British Psychological Society. Their purpose was to reflect on feminist research in social psychology. After the symposia, Wilkinson invited ten people to publish a collection of the fruits of their research work. All contributors were active in social psychological research that seemed to her to be "feminist in orientation, emphasis or intention" (p. 1). The resulting book was deemed to be very much a first step in a then lively and developing field in Britain. As such it heralded the appearance of a body of research formally identifiable as feminist research.
The book had two major aims. The first was, as generally indicated in the previous paragraph, to collect a body of relevant research in the emerging field. The second aim was to contribute to the debate about the characterisation and practice of feminist research. This characterisation (or definition) given to feminist research at that stage, was therefore very seminal, though still parochial. All the more so because each author, without being given specific parameters or criteria for what had to be included or excluded, had to indicate the ways in which they regarded their work as feminist. The idea, therefore, was to explore common themes that could present themselves.

Granting that feminist research was still young and changing rapidly, Wilkinson did attempt to provide some very general orientation to the contents of the book. In doing this, “two particular ‘themes’ that appear(ed) central to the contributions and, thus, particularly characteristic of feminist research” (p. 2), were explicated a bit more.

“First, feminist research is based on an exploration of women’s own knowledge and experience, in a disciplined, scholarly and rigorous way” (p. 2). This female perspective was regarded as central to the research, and did not provide an additional or comparative viewpoint (to men’s viewpoint, that is). The argument was extended to include another perspective. This perspective was based on the premise that knowledge was socially constructed within a given social, cultural and historical context. Women’s knowledge, therefore, also had to be explored and grounded in its own specific contexts. These contexts were often multiple in nature, and included the notions of inconsistency and contradiction. In addition, many would also include an analysis of the role of power in this regard, especially in terms of determining the form and representation of such social knowledge. The latter can be seen both in relation to women’s position in society, and in terms of the role of the researcher in his/her research.

The second main theme came closer to the aforementioned examination of the researcher’s role. Feminist research was said to critically evaluate the research process. It did not merely extend traditional research into non-sexist ways of researching, making it more relevant to women, but its adequacy in reflecting women’s experience was at stake. Reconceptualisation—in terms of ideology, theory and method—thus became necessary.

Wilkinson also distinguished between “non-sexist” research, “feminist” research, “women’s studies” and other related approaches. Feminist research was seen as distinct from (and much more than) non-sexist research. Feminist psychology was more focused (in the discipline of psychology) than multidisciplinary women’s studies. The psychology of sex roles may or may not be feminist. The psychology of sex roles also had more prominence (at least initially) in the USA, and focused more on content than approach. The origins and maintenance of personality traits, attitudes, abilities, motivation, achievement, pathology, etc. were considered in terms of sex-role socialisation and sex-role stereotyping. Included would be the work, such as that of Bem, to measure and explain gender identity.

The essential criterion by which feminist research should be evaluated, was whether or not its theories and methods were able to illuminate women’s experience. This did not of necessity imply an exclusive
focus on women, but demanded that the female perspective be utilised "to foster the development of a more genuinely human psychology; to deepen our understanding of the whole of human experience - both male and female" (Wilkinson, 1986a, p. 6).

In this way, the first formal efforts were made to carve a niche for what became known as feminist research. Wilkinson (1986b) soon provided a more detailed characterisation of feminist research based on a survey of a fairly large body of literature in psychology. In this manner, a more descriptive than prescriptive definition was arrived at. The more general distinction made between the various terms in the previous two paragraphs, was now explicated more thoroughly. **Non-sexist research referred to the avoidance of sexist practices such as assuming that the male experiences, which were more frequently studied, were sufficient predictors of female experiences.** In addition, such practice was more or less always attached to the aim of reaching some absolute standard of objectivity (i.e., a strongly positivistic approach).

As a result, the more precise term, **feminist research**, came to be preferred. Following a definition of Klein (Wilkinson, 1996b), feminist research was considered to be the assumption of a perspective valuing women’s experiences, ideas and needs in their own right. The definition deliberately stopped short of demanding an ideological commitment to supporting the aims of the Women’s Liberation Movement.

Although feminist research and **women’s studies** were used interchangeably from time to time, two distinct aspects made differentiation possible, and even feasible. The first of these was in terms of the disciplinary rooting, so to speak, whilst the second was in terms of the nature (objective, or arena) of the activity.

In the first sense, **the term women's studies was used as an all-embracing one.** It covered both academic research, following various approaches in studying women, and establishing multi-disciplinary courses on the social and cultural context of being a woman. Feminist, in this sense, was used for more focused research of the kind overlapping with the Kleinian definition cited above, and as reflected in the research process. Obviously, it could form a subset of women's studies.

In the second sense, feminist was closely tied to taking conscious political action aimed at changing women's status in society, i.e., the activist side. In opposition to this, women's studies **took place within a regular, institutional context.**

The increasing criticism coming from the side of feminist research (against the then-mainstream research in the social sciences), was directed mainly at content, ideology, theory and methodology.

In terms of **content**, the extent to which women were ignored, and were thus forced to stay invisible in the findings of science, as well as the way in which biased (i.e., based on male samples) findings were generalised to all humans, was questioned.
At a more sophisticated level, the systematic exclusion of women from men's culture was attacked as an unscientific, ideologically determined bias. In more subtle forms, women's experiences were distorted and misinterpreted. This happened because of uncritical comparisons with male norms, or in terms of stereotypes shaped by men. [It is noteworthy to observe that some feminist theorists, such as Denmark and Paludi (1993), forced the pendulum to swing fully to the other side by insisting that the psychology of women should treat women as the norm.]

Theory was castigated especially for perpetuating divisive dichotomies (because of sexist models leading to strict masculinity-femininity splits) in its attempt to explain socialisation and gender roles, for example.

Methodologically speaking, the values underpinning mainstream research were questioned, and dissatisfaction was voiced about the inadequacy of reigning methodologies to do justice to many facets of women's experience. In particular, traditional research was denounced for not stating its assumptions. On the contrary, it implicitly or explicitly claimed to be value-free (even completely rational and objective). In this regard, the dichotomy between agentic and communal research was also brought to the fore. The former type of research separates, orders, quantifies, manipulates, and controls. The latter type adheres to naturalistic observation, is sensitive to intrinsic structure, qualitatively describes patterns, and participates more personally. Laboratory experiments were criticised as well for simplifying reality through methods stripping it of its contexts and the complexity characterising real life. The result was findings of an a-historical and a-cultural nature.

The task undertaken by feminist research, as alternative to conventional wisdom, was to highlight the need for new descriptions and understanding of women's lives, as well as to provide the concepts (and conceptual frameworks), hitherto lacking, with which to do that. This task was characterised by a shift in focus from the content of research (i.e., "research on women") to its purpose ("research for women") (p. 11).

In terms of theory and methodology, feminist research was less explicit and successful in repairing the situation. Often, efforts only succeeded in pointing out on what phenomena theory should be based (e.g., inseparability from experience), or how theory should be generated (inseparability from method). Essentially, a broader definition of theory was demanded, emphasising the relativity and arbitrary nature of (all) truth(s). Matters that came to be emphasised, were:

- the social construction of meaning (negotiating own creation through dialogue);
- social change (freeing women from subordination); and
- giving priority to female experience (and building theory on that).

Operationally, the aforementioned theoretical shift demanded the following new emphases:

- a reflexive and self-reflective quality to research (self as source);
- a relationship of equal status between researcher and researched (collaboration, dialogue, and inter-subjectivity of meaning, with its moral and policy implications); and
- conscious subjectivity (i.e., not a total swing away from value-free objectivity to subjectivism).
Evidently and expectedly, these developments had many implications for how the subsequent processes of gaining epistemological recognition by academia would evolve. Issues such as redefining knowledge and knowledge making, and the classification of disciplines (organisation across disciplinary boundaries) were central.

Various viewpoints were also offered in terms of establishing who may do feminist research. Viewpoints ranged from an unqualified "anyone interested", to "only those (men and women) who had developed a conscious awareness of feminism" (and thus were capable of moving outside the androcentric definition of society), to "only women", as only they could possess a feminist consciousness. The latter position was taken first by Stanley and Wise in 1983 (still according to Wilkinson, 1986b).

An interesting phenomenon also observed at the time, was that feminist research was often oblivious to antecedent and parallel thinking in the academic world, or, at least, unwilling to acknowledge its existence, for whatever reasons. However, it has to be recognised that parallel trends of thinking can develop in isolation when the time is ripe for them. Such trends will reflect corresponding characteristics arising from their reaction to similar circumstances in current theory, method and ideology.

Wilkinson’s contributions strongly shaped the debate on, and conceptualisation of, important aspects of the theoretical framework of the present study. Herrmann and Stewart (1994), at a much later stage, essentially still recognised the distinction between feminism, as the history of ideas or knowledge production, and the Women’s Movement. Whereas the latter was a social movement with a strong political agenda, the former took on a more rigorous, formalised debate within an “academic” setting. Soon other nuances also came to light. These are addressed mostly in Section 2.2.3. Be it is it may, Herrmann and Stewart already started referring to post-structuralism, post-colonialism and post-modernism as the new dominant theoretical discourses.

Reinharz (1992) accepted many types of research by various academics, including males, as feminist. She did not adhere to the absolute and central tenet of the British sociologist, Liz Stanley, who insisted that only research by women can be accepted as feminist research. Nor did she concur with the claim by Mary Daly that men can support feminism, but not be feminists. Reinharz started by reviewing the variety of methodologies that had come to be associated with feminist research and feminism. Based on this review, she proposed the following meta-inductive definition of feminist methodology (p. 240):

1. Feminism is a perspective, not a research method.
2. Feminists use a multiplicity of research methods.
3. Feminist research involves an ongoing criticism of non-feminist scholarship.
4. Feminist research is guided by feminist theory.
5. Feminist research may be trans-disciplinary.
6. Feminist research aims to create social change.
7. Feminist research strives to represent human diversity.
8. Feminist research frequently includes the researcher as a person.
9. Feminist research frequently attempts to develop special relations with the people studied (in interactive research).
10. Feminist research frequently defines a special relation with the reader.

Reinharz also mentioned some scholars’ (including Alice Walker) preference for the term "womanist". She further acknowledged that many criticisms were levelled at the inappropriate use of terms, for example from the side of scholars such as bell hooks (sic – the pseudonym of a prominent feminist researcher).

Scholars on the African continent have also joined the debate recently. Mannathoko (1992) regarded feminism as a broad term for a variety of conceptions of the relations between men and women in society. Feminists question and challenge the origins of oppressive gender relations. Feminism addresses the oppression by/through male-dominated institutions, values and social practices. Women’s studies, according to Mannathoko, can be considered as a body of knowledge that analyses the condition of women in society. When it also attempts to change women’s condition in society, it is known as feminist studies.

**Three major kinds of feminism were distinguished.** They are liberal, radical and Marxist feminism.

**Liberal feminism** has a long history, dating back as far as the 18th century. It has questioned the damaging and discriminatory viewpoints about women. Its main focus has been on liberating women from their dependency on men, and providing them with equality (of opportunities and participation). This has been sought mainly through legal reforms and the increase of women’s participation in politics. Educational opportunities have also been an important issue. It has been criticised, though, for not challenging the structural inequities prevailing in societies. The latter has been closely tied with the domain of power relations.

**Radical feminism**, as a breakaway group from Marxist feminism, located women’s oppression in the social institution of gender. A full-scale onslaught was launched against male-dominated society. Men were considered the enemy. They demanded radical transformation of the oppressive gender relations. Radical feminism, by putting sexuality and reproduction and patriarchy at the centre of the political arena, sought to change women’s political consciousness, and, in so doing, empower them.

**Marxist feminism** attempted to apply dialectical materialism to its analysis of the sources of gender oppression. Women’s oppression had its source in social class, race and ethnicity. The attempt at isolating gender from social class was challenged. Capitalism, imperialism and sexism were considered inseparable. The liberation of women was therefore linked to liberation of oppressive social-class relations. Participation of women in the public sphere was used as a good strategy for achieving their goals. One of the main issues to be addressed, was solving the role of women as merely part of the reproduction of the labour force to sustain capitalism (and even colonialism).

**More recently, additional specific forms of feminism have emerged.** Mbilinyi (1992) discussed a few of them. **Nationalist feminism** emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as a form of resistance against
imperial and European / white domination in Africanist feminist studies. Women's contribution to anti-colonial struggles has been a central topic in this type of feminism. However, the unfortunate outcome of this form of feminism often was continued support of the pre-feminism status quo. This happened because African tradition was idealised, which lead to a homogenisation of the concept of African culture, and resulted in the failure to see the interconnections among gender, class, ethnic and imperial relations in each unique country.

Post-structuralist feminism argued that women were differentiated, and not homogeneous. They were divided across all variables such as class, race, nationality, gender identity, marital status, age and individual psychology. Each woman also had multiple identities over time and at any one time. This precluded labelling any feminist impetus into sterile passivity, by communicating the need for a unitary movement and consensus. Post-structuralists would argue that everything was uncertain, that everything was discourse.

Critical third-world feminism combined elements of Marxist, nationalist and post-structuralist feminism. It focused on gender, imperialism, class and race / ethnicity. It was located within the neo-colonial nations of the world. Again a strong anti-imperial voice was made heard. It tended to be multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional. Economic, political, cultural and psychological issues were linked. Gender was constructed as well as deconstructed in different discourses. The "Women-in-Development (WID) theory and methodology" (p. 47) was hailed as a particularly good exponent of this kind of feminism. Its main tenet was that women, especially in the developing world, were oppressed, because they had been left out of development. The solution was to integrate them into development. The concept originated during the UN Women's Decade of 1975-1985.

Still within the African and Southern African context, Meena (1992a) also argued that mainstream scholarship suffered from male bias. This bias limited the understanding of the contribution of socio-economic and political processes to the under-development of the region. A call to achieve some serious deconstruction was made as a result. This included acknowledgement of the role of feminist theory and methodologies in ensuring that women participate in the production of knowledge and the management of their societies.

Meena (1992b) pointed out how liberal feminists from the Western Feminist Movement employed distorted anthropological knowledge of Africa to advance their own cause. The result was hostility towards feminism, which became stigmatised in Africa. Another outcome was that feminism almost suffered the same fate as all other objects of decolonialisation.

It is evident from the previous few paragraphs how "African" feminism for a while took on a very unique identity. This was embedded in the decolonialisation taking place across Africa. At this point in time, Africa’s scholars are starting to participate in the global debates on feminism, which is bound to result in new levels of academic and intellectual understanding, parallel to the ongoing political and socio-economic emancipation of Africa.
Harding (1992) echoed much of the thinking recorded above about feminist research. However, her work is at a more fundamental level and is rooted in the philosophy of science as such. She is a well-known scholar in the field. Her visit to South Africa in 1993 afforded an opportunity for sharing thoughts between her and local scholars. Harding argued that neutrality in science is impossible. The previous male supremacy (and claims to truth, objectivity and neutrality) in the practice of science brought along its own politicisation and relativities. It was left to feminist and post-colonial critics to unmask the inability of neutral objectivism to recognise the andro-centric, Euro-centric, and racist assumptions underlying many of the most widely accepted scientific claims. The resulting epistemological relativism (also held by feminist theory) claimed that different people or cultures have different standards for determining what counts as knowledge. Harding argues for the replacement of objectivity by "strong objectivity" (p. 580). Strong objectivity aims at detecting social assumptions that enter research when scientific problems are identified and conceptualised, and when hypotheses about them are formulated. Furthermore, it also detects when social assumptions are shared by observers designated as legitimate ones. This, in turn, fosters an adherence to collective objectives, typically in the research bureaucracy, instead of attending to individual interests in society, formerly the researched. Also, it detects when institutions and conceptual schemes in disciplines are structured in absolutist terms. In the preferred thinking outlined above, the objective is not to refer to the search for (absolute or more) truth, but to make "less false" claims. This rests upon the notion of relativised relativity and absolutism.

An even more detailed exposition of feminist epistemology, and further explication of the above, was given by Harding (1991) previously. She reflected on the functions and role of feminist theories of knowledge. Essentially, feminist epistemology concerns itself with distinctively epistemological issues such as challenging the conceptual framework of dominant Anglo-American epistemology. It mainly targets the moral, political and metaphysical assumptions made by it. Two feminist epistemologies have gained prominence. They are feminist empiricism, and feminist standpoint theory.

**Feminist empiricism** holds that researchers can eliminate biases within their own disciplines by stricter adherence to the existing methodological norms of scientific enquiry. In addition, this opens up the opportunity for more women and feminists to join the research process and effect the desired differences from within. These differences include changing pre-feminist, conservative science practices and creating a new radical future.

**Feminist standpoint theory** exhorts feminist researchers to use the distinctive features of women's situation as resources. They include women's cultural position, social values and political agendas. The objective is to produce empirically more accurate descriptions and theoretically richer explanations. Scholars hailed by Harding as prominent researchers who based their work on feminist standpoint theory, include Hilary Rose, Dorothy Smith, Nancy Hartsock, and Jane Flax (in the earlier phases of her work). This strand of feminist research focuses on gender differences to gain a scientific advantage. A particularly valuable set of differences are the differences between men's and women's situations. Recognising the following differences decreases the chances of arriving at partial and distorted representations of reality:
• women’s roles and activities are unique (even the resulting different personality structures, emotions and reasoning), and much could be learned from that equal, and non-inferior, perspective (standpoint);
• women are valuable “strangers” (p. 124) to the (design of the current) social order and production of knowledge;
• oppressed women have fewer interests in (and less to lose from) ignorance about the social order, and fewer reasons to invest in maintaining or justifying the status quo;
• women’s perspective is situated on the other side of the “battle of the sexes” (p. 126) raging on a daily basis (cf. the winner tells the tale dictum);
• women’s perspectives are from everyday life, and not from reigning activities in dominant groups;
• women mediate ideological dualisms (for example, nature vis-à-vis culture), while men tend to absolutise; and
• women (researchers) are “outsiders within” (p. 131), working on / from both sides.

Harding underscored that the listed distinctions were not based on mere biological differences, or for the purposes of entering into a competitive relationship. Rather, they were complementary to existing perspectives.

She also urged scholars to avoid choosing between the two epistemological strategies outlined above, because they were locked in dialogue. Each boasts convincing continuity with certain valuable elements from the past or the current context.

In addition to the two main epistemologies, there also exists feminist post-modernism. This has developed largely in opposition to both science and epistemology-centered philosophy.

Minas (1993) provided an account of how still other circumstances had shaped the conceptualisation of feminist studies. She taught a course in the Philosophy of Women at the University of Waterloo since 1973. It formed part of a first-year course in philosophy and women’s studies. Gradually, that changed into a course on the Philosophy of Women and Men. Minas’s original intention was to teach a course in feminism. This would be characterised by a cluster of positions focusing on the oppression of women. However, student response steered the course to become one on gender issues. Gender issues were defined as issues in human life where gender is a factor. This reflected much of what Wilkinson (1986a) also subscribed to (cf. earlier in this section). The result of the development history of Minas’s teaching was a collection of essays, published (edited) by her in 1993, and reflecting the discussion themes growing from her teaching context. As such, it also came to serve as a textbook.

Feminism is seen (by Minas) as a moral position, while gender allowed for the discussion of many of the issues, even as raised from a male perspective. This did not discount the fact that contributions in feminism could be made by men too. The main gender themes covered by the essays collected into this work, were oppression, physical appearances, language, the workplace, sport, love, relationships, bonds, sex and sexuality, rape and sexual harassment, prostitution, contraception and abortion, reproduction, raising children, and old age.
The mere fact of belonging to a specific gender, confronts people with choices that have to be made keeping the former fact in mind. These choices occur in many contexts of people's lives, such as close relationships, marrying, having children, and careers. Also, these choices are not confined to the private lives of individuals, but are placed in the realm of the reciprocal perspectives people have of each other. Built on the outcomes of these choices, individuals learn what is expected from them. Such expectations determine behaviour, which often is more exacting for one gender than for the other. This is the basis of sexism. The usual result is men being favoured systematically more than women. Feminism is considered to be the movement that has brought this matter to public attention.

Amplifying and modifying a definition given by Christine Overall, feminism is accepted by Minas to be:

- a commitment to understanding women's own perceptions of their situations (and even helping them to articulate those, as they may have become muted through oppressive elements);
- an awareness of women's oppression (essentially being patriarchy);
- an explanation of the origins and continuation of patriarchy; and
- a directedness towards social change (the political aspect with the objective to end patriarchy).

In defining feminism, Minas seemed to subtly indicate a preference towards women as agents of action. This can be deduced from how Minas followed Overall's view that only women can be true feminists (pp. 6-7).

[Although Bem's contribution about gender schemas would fit in at this point, had one more strictly adhered to a chronological presentation of theory development, it is presented later (cf. Section 2.2.2 below). This is done to afford more salience to notions very central to the current study.]

Lobel's (1994) research (cf. also Section 4.2.6) alerted scholars to the fact that theory as yet could not support all empirical findings. She studied individuals' perceptions of sex-role identity and sex-role stereotypes in terms of the affective, motivational, and cognitive judgements they make. Lobel found that cognitive responses did not vary with sex-role identity, while affective responses did. This finding cast doubt on the interpretation and applicability of Bem's gender schema theory, and also Markus's self schema theory. The reason was that all subgroups functioned in a "schematic way" (p. 385). Lobel therefore concluded that the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) measured self-attribution of characteristics, and not schematicity, as theory maintained.

However, the opposite was also verified recently. Van Strien (1994) was able to demonstrate that a sex-role inventory could measure theory-driven gender-schematic processing by individuals well. The BSRI was again used. The validity of determining and interpreting sex-role identity profiles with one instrument (the BSRI) was also verified by using another, being the Groninger Androgyny Scale (GRAS). Although the empirical findings again followed theoretical frameworks and predictions in this case, researchers will always have to acknowledge that theory is never finite.

In a book-review article, Cockburn (1994) portrayed Rose's attempt to argue that a feminist transformation of the sciences is occurring within some of the parameters set by postmodernism.
Feminists seeking to understand science are allowed to avoid the seemingly forced choice between materialism and relativism. At the basis of this lies a "softer" definition of objectivity, according to which all individuals' own "situated" knowledge is equally valid. Distortions of knowledge are expected mostly in the perspectives of the powerful (institutionalised practice of science, for example).

Coming to the end of this sub-section, and in anticipation of a more final application to the present study of the lessons learnt by reviewing feminist and other theoretical positions, a few observations can be made. In considering which methodological aspects and empirical findings to include or exclude in the literature review in the next two chapters, and thereafter how to make the many difficult decisions about the scope of the study in terms of formulating its research problem and hypotheses, selecting and operationalising its variables, and finalising the research design, an awareness was always maintained as to the complexities of studying gender issues. As a result of being sensitised to the many issues at stake with regard to feminist research, the importance of remaining self-critical was constantly borne in mind. In addition, the researcher strived to remain self-reflective. The way in which the theoretical framework of the current study is structured in Section 2.3 to incorporate as many as possible of the dimensions and variables that could prove to be significant, will testify to the success or otherwise of this effort.

2.2.2 Bem's theory of gender schematicity

The broader theoretical framework pertaining to feminist research, and by implication also to the present study, would not be complete without a review of Bem's (1993) most recent thinking on the conceptual roots of the field of study. Over a period of about 20 years, Bem's thinking underwent a significant shift from a more individualistic explanation of sex-role issues towards a more culturally focused one. She explained how she initially focused almost exclusively on the concept of androgyny. She soon discovered that the same concept that seemed to challenge the traditional categories of masculinity and femininity actually reproduced the gender polarisation it sought to undercut. This she ascribed to the fact that it focused too much on the individual's being masculine or feminine, instead of on the culture's creation of the concepts in the first place. Thus, by the turn of the 1970s into the 1980s, she departed from this conceptualisation towards a second phase of theorising.

She then subscribed to the concept of **gender schematicity**. This enabled her to argue that masculinity and femininity merely were the constructions of a cultural schema (or lens) that polarised gender. Bem (1985) also explained these schemata as "a cognitive structure, a network of associations that organizes and guides an individual’s perception" (p. 187). As a result, sex-typing is someone’s "readiness to process information on the basis of the sex-linked associations that constitute the gender schema".

By the early 1990s, Bem developed a more complete theoretical position on the concept of gender polarisation (Bem, 1993). She introduced the notion of gender "lenses", which could explain the oppression of women and sexual minorities (by rich, white males in positions of power). Three gender lenses were supposedly embedded in the culture: gender polarisation, androcentrism, and biological
essentialism. They formed the foundation stones for a theory explaining how biology, culture and the individual psyche systematically reproduced male power within a given historical context. In addition, they served the purpose of organising the multidisciplinary knowledge of feminist scholars, and the intellectual and political debates that feminism had generated.

The lens of androcentrism describes how culture, society and individual thinking perpetuate male-centeredness. It is reflected in perceptions or beliefs that men are inherently superior to women, or that males are the neutral standard or norm (human), and females the sex-specific deviation. Bem illustrated the functioning of this phenomenon by revealing how it operated in Judeo-Christian theology, ancient Greek philosophy, Freudian psychoanalytic theory, and the history of American equal rights law.

The lens of gender polarisation explains how the perception that women and men are fundamentally different came into being. It further narrates how this perception became superimposed on or served as organising principle for all social life (for example, roles, experience, habits, and the expression of emotion). Explaining the functioning of this lens also unmasks deficiencies in scholarly work itself. One of them is the gender-polarising effects of the woman-centred strain of feminism. Another is the ways in which certain disciplines have given scientific and medical legitimacy to heterosexuality, and posed the requirement that the sex of the body always matched the gender of the psyche. Gender polarisation operates in two ways. It not only defines mutually exclusive scripts for being male and female, but also defines any person or behaviour that deviates from these scripts as problematic. This could be tagged unnatural or immoral, from a religious viewpoint, or biologically anomalous or psychologically pathological, scientifically speaking.

The lens of biological essentialism rationalises the previous two. It does this by deeming them to be the natural consequences of the intrinsic biological natures of women and men, essentially determined through evolution (the scientific equivalent of creation). Bio-historical and bio-social variants, in addition, gradually tried to soften the harshness of direct essentialism.

By applying the abovementioned theoretical positions to the psychological functioning of the individual, Bem (1993, p. 4) outlined her so-called "enculturated lens" theory of individual gender formation. The theory explains enculturation, or "how androcentric and gender-polarizing social practices transfer the lenses of gender from the culture to the individual". Through self-perception and self-construction, the individual who has internalised the culture's gender lenses, produces a gendered personality and body, and androcentric heterosexuality. Individuals who do not become conventionally gendered, construct a gender-subversive identity.

On this foundation, Bem then built the rationale for pragmatic actions to be undertaken to rid society of gender polarisation. It must be noted that Bem granted that she based her theory on observations from American, Western, male-dominated societies. But, she argued, if this can be considered biased, it is based on a very wide collection of societies fulfilling those characteristics anyway.

Where the present study applies the concept of androgyny, and the variables of masculinity and femininity, it does so with the meanings in mind that Bem attached to them, as just described.
2.2.3 Contribution of other theoretical frameworks

It is appropriate at this point to acknowledge the further integration, or at least re-organisation, of theoretical perspectives, that has picked up momentum since the 1990s, hence the inclusion of a number of additional references to more specific theoretical and methodological schools of thought relevant to gender research.

Risman and Schwartz (1989) approached gender in intimate relationships (not necessarily implying more than friendship) from a sociological perspective. They held an essentially life-cycle perspective of gender. So did the other authors in their collection of edited contributions. Risman and Schwartz were interested in the micro-structural elements of gender. Accordingly, gender could never be considered accomplished once and for all, but was seen as an ongoing process. Moreover, it was constructed and evolved within the circumstances of everyday life. Men and women were thus not created all at once, be it only at birth, or during childhood socialisation, but were continually changing throughout the life cycle. The editors did not confine themselves to the study of women. Instead, they believed that certain qualities, such as intimacy, were present in both men and women. Intimacy was based on friendship and other structured close relationships, such as family bonds, or being colleagues at work. Classical structuralism explains phenomena in view of the relationships between various historical economic forces and social institutions. As a specific case of this macro-level approach, Risman and Schwartz utilised a micro-structuralist explanation in gender studies. It emphasised the belief that situational interaction is necessarily an important component in explaining interpersonal relations.

The two scholars relied on three main sociological traditions. They were symbolic interaction theory, status expectations theory, and network theory. Symbolic interaction theory posits that situational factors influence behaviour over and above individual factors such as training or biological predisposition. Status expectations theory posits that the expectations of individuals differ, based on the status ranking of the group to which they belong. This remains true even when status is irrelevant to the task at hand. The previous two theories suggest that actual social relations mould behaviour, which might otherwise be explained or motivated by (gendered, in this case) personality traits. Network theory integrates the analysis of interaction and social status by studying how people exist and function in social networks.

In conclusion, the two editors claimed to have integrated elements from the abovementioned three theoretical positions. This put them in a stronger position for explaining the continued existence of gendered behaviour in intimate relationships. Previously held individualist concepts of men and women particularly failed in this regard. Risman and Schwartz thereby challenged the idea of the overwhelming influence of sex-role socialisation on gender and intimacy. In terms of their (sociological) micro-structural approach, gender can be discussed (and explained) better as a sociological, rather than a psychological, phenomenon. Explanations and theories have been based too much on clarifying women's and men's roles in terms of each sex's biological or psychological disposition. The predominant models were all criticised for being individualist. This meant that they rested on a theory
of relatively inflexible personalities. This dominant paradigm (according to Risman and Schwartz, who obviously have not acquainted themselves with the latest developments regarding androgyny - they still only knew about Bem's publications up to 1976!), posited that by adulthood men and women had developed sex-typed personalities quite different from one another. The difference was judged (very sweepingly) to be that (all) women (inevitably) have become nurturant, person-oriented and child-centred, while men have become competitive and work-oriented. Once formed, such core personality traits were considered to influence behaviour throughout life. "All research within this tradition shares the central presumption that internalized psychological motivation is a more salient explanation for gendered behavior than immediate social relations" (p. 2). Essentially, therefore, they did not claim to be feminist in their point of departure.

The editors believed that they had proposed a better explanation of how male and female roles were truly constructed. Especially missing previously, according to them, was the micro-structural element of re-creation of men and women during the life-cycle (including adult life experiences) by the opportunities available and through interactions with others.

In a sense, the two editors fell into the same trap they had wanted to avoid, namely canonising a single explanatory complex above all others. Micro-structurally (sociologically) speaking, men and women would exhibit exactly the same behaviour given the same expectations and positions in society. Their position is that biology and psychology (i.e., the so-called individualist theories subscribing to internalised personality traits) are becoming relatively unimportant in contemporary Western societies. Having said all this, the editors themselves provided a footnote alerting their readership that they do not suggest that stable personality characteristics do not exist, but only that they are not the primary determinants of gendered behaviour (a storm in a teacup?). In many senses, the previous sociological explanation did not surpass what had already been formulated from a psychological perspective as long before as in 1968. Reference can be made to the long-accepted life-stage development perspective of Neugarten (Gerdes, 1988), for instance. Another point of criticism may be valid, though, namely that both the sociological and psychological viewpoints presented above may have lacked proper consideration of the dynamics of dyadic interaction.

Many of the structuralist explanations mentioned thus far were also endorsed by Kimmel (1989).

Although Buss and Malamuth (1996) were of the opinion that researchers mainly approached gender (conflict) studies through the perspective of either feminism or evolutionary psychology, the picture is more nuanced, as is indicated soon hereafter. For the two authors, evolutionary psychology is more a scientific discipline concerned with describing what exists. Feminism, while also descriptive and explanatory, also has a social and political agenda, hence being concerned with what ought to exist.

Archer (1996) preferred to view the two main contenders as social role theory and evolutionary psychology. The former mainly operates in the arena of decisions on the division of labour between the sexes, based on each sex’s preferred patterns of behaviour (agentic vs. communal – see 2.2.1). As a result, expectations become sex differences through learning (or being socialised into) sex-typed
skills and beliefs, and the appropriate role behaviours. The second theoretical position holds much more deep-rooted, almost Darwinian survival strategies, linked to sexual selection and reproduction, responsible for differences between the sexes. Archer argued that evolutionary psychology better explained many new phenomena, supposedly addressed for some by the emancipation struggle, and cited women’s continued selection of high-status and -power partners as example, even though women had achieved levels of status and power (and income levels, and access to resources) that obviated the social need for that. Males’ age-related differences in aggression levels served as another example. Archer proposed that accepting gendered socialisation as a co-evolutionary process made the most sense in attempts to bring the two positions closer together. Socialisation is therefore not something new or separate from human nature, but evolved along with the rest of the relevant human dispositions.

The theoretical basis described in the previous paragraph, is essentially also the one followed by Botwin, Buss and Shackelford (1997). The main difference is that the social-theoretical aspect was studied from the vantage point of assortative mating. This position holds that likes attract likes. In a later study, Shackelford and Buss (2000) again used an evolutionary perspective. This time, they assumed that cost-infliction and benefits, after being gauged over vast periods of evolutionary time, became the entities monitored by certain psychological mechanisms, such as (the evaluation of) constructs now assessed through the five-factor model of personality. For instance, they assumed that spouses low on agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness would all inflict high costs on their partners, and not be selected as frequently. Another mechanism would be to detect and discourage infidelity (cf. Section 4.2.4 for more detail on their findings).

Bereczkei and Csanaky (1996) also studied marital success from an (almost Darwinian) evolutionary perspective. With survival of the fittest in marital combinations in mind, they demonstrated that males preferred females younger than themselves, and females males higher educated than themselves. Both situations were supposed to create optimal reproduction rates by fostering healthy, safe and secure living conditions for that.

Gergen and Davis (1997) set out to provide their “readers a vision of how a social constructionist approach could enhance gender studies” (p. xii). According to them, one advantage of this approach (or perhaps rather these approaches, as a collection of related orientations), is that while one can never claim that any theoretical framework is ultimately true, one does not have to discard any theoretical framework forever either. Another issue, already alluded to in Chapter 1, is that male academics and authors should also participate in studies, unless one wants them to have “naturalized” status, thus remaining unconstructed, by virtue of the fact that only women authors and researchers would otherwise be the socially constructed gender.

Davis and Gergen (1997) presented some of the core characteristics of the social constructionist approach. In addition to the fact that it questioned what had previously been accepted as scientific truth about men and women, it focused strongly on language. A deliberate attempt was being made hence to listen to the words constructed by every participant uttering them from each one’s unique
circumstances (context). Attention was also being given increasingly to the context and assumptions of listeners / readers. The de-contextualisation often brought about by an overly empiricist approach was, as a result, held in check. Sandra Harding, with her Feminist Standpoint Position, is cited as a good example of how important the relation between the researcher and the researched is with regard to the knowledge-gathering activity. The following five tenets are deemed central to the social constructionist position (pp. 5-7):

- “‘facts’ are dependent upon the language communities that have created and sustained them”;
- “(p)eople generate their truth from languages available to them”;
- “any type of description of the nature of reality is dependent upon the historical and cultural location of that description”;
- “there are no universal ethical principles, but … they are constituted within so-called ‘language games’ and sustained by discrete social communities” (as cited from a contribution by Elam in 1994); and
- “any claims to reality can be viewed with scepticism”.

Gavey (1997), in turn, linked feminist post-structuralism to discourse analysis in her work. According to her, post-structuralism, being trans-disciplinary, refers to a “loose collection of theoretical positions influenced by … post-Saussurean linguistics, Marxism (particularly Althusser’s theory of ideology), psychoanalysis (especially Lacan’s reworkings), feminism, the ‘new French feminists’ (Kristeva, Cixous, Irigaray) and the work of Derrida, Barthes, and Foucault” (p. 50). After Weedon (her predecessor by about 10 years), she describes feminist post-structuralism as a way of producing knowledge by using post-structuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change. Post-structuralist theory also rejects the possibility of absolute truth and objectivity. Its greatest disadvantages or potential problems lie in its anti-humanism or decentring of the person, its conceptual complexity, and its relativism.

Gergen (1997) also made a brief reference to post-modernism as such. In a sense, how it questioned causality, determinism, egalitarianism, humanism, liberal democracy, necessity, objectivity, rationality, responsibility and truth, was all that feminism could hope for, and at the same time despise. The good about feminism thus comprised its problematisation of the existence of gender relations. It even appeared as if some counter-balancing of thoughts started emerging in a theoretical position that could be called empiricist social constructivism, taking the best from both worlds. Without being overly metaphysical, they would set out proving social constructionist theory with data.

In a broader sense, some researchers, such as Wilkie, Ferree and Ratcliff (1998), based their studies on an integration of what they called gender theory and equity theory. According to this point of departure, gender theory would predict that the division of roles in marriages and families would not be a “rational reflection of resources and time demands, but (rather) a set of socially constructed boundaries delineating gender” (p. 578). Equity theory would imply subjective perceptions of fairness, specifically with reference to the comparison of the ratios between reward and contribution between spouses (distributive justice). In addition, it posited that perceived equity in rewards would spell satisfaction, while under- or over-reward respectively would be linked to anger and guilt. The three
researchers applied the mentioned theoretical framework to paid and domestic work. Reports of their findings can be found at Sections 4.2.6, 4.3.5 and 4.3.6.

References were also made to social identity theory in relation to gender studies. The former refers to the way in which part of an individual’s self-concept hinges on knowing that a person belongs to a group, adhering to its values, and harbouring positive feelings towards it. Cameron and Lalonde (2001) argued that sex-role ideology (one’s sense of or beliefs about sex-appropriate rights, roles and privileges) played a role in individual’s social identification, especially in determining whether or not they “belong to” groups or accept collective identities. From this point of departure, the researchers studied individuals’ adherence to traditional, non-traditional or feminist self-identifications. They found that for self-identified non-traditional and feminist women, gender stood more in the centre of cognition than for traditional women, and was related more strongly with gender-related ideology. For traditional men, in-group ties and affect were stronger than for non-traditional men. However, men generally identified much less with gender-related ideology than women. Gender served as a stronger identity marker for women than for men.

Linking feminist psychology to many of the theoretical positions stated above, Bohan (1997) concluded that the debate about gender centred around two perspectives. On the one hand, ”(e)ssentialist views construe gender as resident within the individual, a quality or trait describing one’s personality, cognitive process, moral judgement, etc.” (p. 32). As a result, fundamental, internal, persistent qualities possessed by individuals are at stake, divorced (somewhat) from on-going experience and interaction with the daily socio-political contexts of life. On the other hand, “the constructionist argument is that gender is not a trait of individuals at all, but simply a construct that identifies particular transactions that are understood to be appropriate to one sex” (p. 33). As a result, gender exists in those interactions that are socially construed as gendered. Relations and morals also belong to interactions, and not individuals, and are in essence not connected to sex. Describing transactions as masculine or feminine is socially agreed on in the very process of participating in that transaction.

The abovementioned broader theoretical positions underlined the importance of collecting data in the current study on as many as possible additional variables. In Chapter 7, where the research instruments are discussed, it becomes evident how this requirement was met, later enabling exploratory analyses of many of the proposed theoretical links between constructs.

In conclusion, two main facts are evident from this section. On the one hand, theoretical positions on feminist and gender research have developed strongly and dynamically over the last decade or two. On the other hand, the field of study essentially is still in a state of flux, and new developments still occur at present. This situation implies that many new and specific issues and findings still need to be related to theory. The inverse also applies. Many theoretical aspects still require empirical exploration. In a way, the present study attempts doing both. In the next section (2.3), the objective is to structure as many as possible of the more specific issues pertaining to the functioning of sex-role identity in dyadic relationships according to the broader theoretical frameworks just presented. These theoretical positions and frameworks are therefore honed and formulated in a way that will support the scientific investigation of the topic of the present study. Having made the boundaries and course of the research somewhat more explicit, a thorough
review of the literature on methodological issues and empirical findings then follows (in Chapters 3 and 4). This clearer theoretical position and outlines, as well as the content of the literature survey, then serve as the basis for formulating the scope, problem, aim, objectives and design of the empirical research part of this study (from Chapter 5 onwards). In this effort, the relevance of existing theory is tested, and theory is further refined.

2.3 Refining the immediate theoretical frameworks

The purpose of the next section is twofold. In the first place, and in preparation of appropriately dealing with the second purpose described below, as well as the broader review of the literature in the next two chapters, an argument is made for a more inclusive approach than that followed in the bulk of research to date, namely by extending studies to beyond marital relationships and satisfaction. To this effect, literature is reviewed to map the present state of the art, and to gain an idea about the frequency, nature and findings of studies having covered relationship satisfaction from viewpoints other than conventional marriage (2.3.1). Both theoretical and empirical publications are referred to. A detailed review of empirical aspects such as measuring instruments, sampling, statistical techniques, and nuisance variables are dealt with only from Chapter 3 and 4 onwards.

Then, in the second place (2.3.2), the theoretical frameworks on feminist and gender research reviewed above (2.2) are expanded into an appropriate new theoretical basis in support of the current study. This would help accommodate future research carried out from a more comprehensive perspective. The discussions and arguments in this section culminate in a general summary (under 2.4) of the areas that require particular further attention through research. The elements of this summary are made explicit in detail in Chapters 5 and 6. In Chapters 3 and 4, the focus is on reviewing the research identified in the literature with a view to extracting indications about the scope and content of the present study. Of paramount importance is how researchers incorporated independent, dependent and moderator variables into their theoretical frameworks and research designs.

2.3.1 Research on relationship satisfaction outside formal marriage

In comparison with the wide range of previous work on marital relationships, relatively few studies have been undertaken on relationship satisfaction among gays and lesbians\(^1\). The almost exclusive focus on marital relationships has inevitably led to some narrowness of perspective. This becomes clearer as one inspects the findings from the research on marital and non-marital heterosexual close relationships. Some indications also crystallise as to how relevant theory could be expanded to accommodate such relationships.

Cardell, Finn and Marecek (1981) were among the first researchers to test the relationship between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction outside conventional heterosexual dyads. Their small

\(^1\) Adhering to terminology found in virtually all public promotional communications by the “homosexual” community themselves, the terms “gay” and “lesbian” are used for reasons of simplicity throughout the rest of this thesis when respectively referring to male same-sex homosexual and female same-sex homosexual partners and couples.
sample severely restricted the generalisability of the findings. Sex-role identity scores tended to correlate with “appropriate” sex-typed sex-role behaviour for the heterosexual couples. This could be expected because these couples chose to enter into more conventional, sex-typed relationships. However, no corresponding link existed for the homosexual and bisexual couples. Relationship satisfaction did not correlate with sex-role identity scores.

Dixon (1985) recruited 50 bisexual and 50 heterosexual male volunteers, all married, to study their relative performance in regard to sexual satisfaction and marital happiness. The study was born mainly from a need to know how bisexuality affected relationships. Only heterosexual respondents who regularly engaged in extramarital sex could participate. This control in terms of extramarital sex was required to optimise the effect of bisexuality on men’s marital happiness. These extramarital relations took place within the definition of “swinging”. Swinging refers to couples, who, with each other’s knowledge and consent, engaged in sexual activities with one or more other partners. Respondents were matched for age, length of current marriage, and socio-economic status. The heterosexual sample reported significantly greater marital happiness and satisfaction than the bisexual sample. However, both groups’ scores were fairly high. This implied that bisexuals were not necessarily unhappy. Potential explanations of the difference in satisfaction levels included higher levels of antipathy from society towards bisexual activity, the adverse reaction of the swinging community towards multiple sexuality, and the potentially more negative reaction of the spouses of bisexuals. Sex-role identity was not studied, however.

One of the most comprehensive early attempts to expand the theoretical boundaries of studies in the field was the one by Kurdek and Schmitt (1986). The two researchers referenced only two previous studies dealing with non-marital relationships of various kinds. Neither of these studies included sex-role identity. Kurdek and Schmitt researched relationship quality as reported by individual partners. They involved married and cohabitating heterosexual couples, as well as gay and lesbian dyads.

The two researchers focused on three dimensions of relationship quality. They were love for one’s partner, liking of one’s partner, and general relationship satisfaction. Love was operationalised to include affiliative / dependence needs, predisposition to help, exclusiveness, and absorption. Liking included favourable evaluation, respect, and perceived similarity. Relationship satisfaction evaluated the extent of agreement on matters important to dyadic functioning. It included satisfaction with demonstrated affection, sexual satisfaction, the degree of tension in the relationship, considering termination of the relationship, activities shared, and whether or not attitudes towards the relationship were favourable.

For each type of relationship, the researchers analysed the correlation between various factors and relationship satisfaction. These factors were the following:

- social factors, namely social support from family, and friends;
- interpersonal factors, namely investment in the relationship, and shared decision making; and
- psychological factors, namely relationship beliefs, sex-role self-concept, personal autonomy or dyadic attachment, interpersonal orientation, and psychological adjustment.
Cohabiting partners achieved the lowest scores on relationship satisfaction and love for their partner. Relationship satisfaction was highest for married partners. Lesbian partners achieved the highest masculinity scores, and lesbian and married partners were more feminine. Gay partners were least likely to be androgynous. Only cohabitating heterosexual partners revealed a significant correlation between general satisfaction scores and masculinity. Femininity correlated significantly with general relationship satisfaction for married heterosexual and for lesbian partners. Gay and lesbian partners revealed a significant correlation between partner love and liking, and general relationship satisfaction. Androgyny was significantly related only to general relationship satisfaction in cohabiting heterosexual partners.

The researchers indicated some limitations of their study. These included: the small sample; the low return rate of about 32%; analysis of the data of individual partners rather than of couples as units; the exclusion of non-monogamous couples, especially prevalent among gays; and the exclusion of stage of relationship as a predictor variable.

Blumstein and Schwartz (1989) evaluated a large sample of gay couples, lesbian couples, heterosexual marriages, and cohabitation relationships in their study. The study took place in the USA and was reported on already in 1983. The frequency of sexual intimacy decreased over time without exception for all the groups. Three intervals were used, namely: less than two years duration of relationship; 2 to 10 years; and 10 or more years. The frequencies of intercourse were highest for heterosexual couples. Then followed gay couples, and then lesbian ones. A plausible explanation for the difference between gays and lesbians is that culture tolerates more dominant behaviour among males, i.e. taking a leading role, leaving all-female couples in somewhat of a stalemate position. Also, non-monogamous episodes were consistently more numerous for males than for females. This was irrespective of whether the males were in marital, heterosexual cohabiting, or homosexual relationships. In addition, non-monogamy was by far more the rule than the exception among gay couples. This was attributed to the sub-population sharing a common norm in this regard. Frequency of sexual intimacy can in a very crude sense be a barometer of relationship satisfaction, although the latter was not studied per se. In addition, the kind of relationship established, especially in terms of each individual's own set of sanctions, expectations and traditions, acts as an important variable moderating the influence of sex-role identity. The latter was not studied either.

The attitudes of people towards a couple may influence the couple’s dyadic satisfaction. This has particular relevance for gay and lesbian relationships. Whitley (1987) showed the link between heterosexuals’ own traditional sex-role orientation and their higher degrees of negativity towards homosexuals. This may indirectly make things difficult for homosexual couples at the receiving end of these negative attitudes.

Berger (1990) is another of the few researchers who have recently investigated relationship satisfaction among homosexual couples. Although he did not study the influence of sex-role identity on relationship satisfaction, he dealt with the influence of social processes on relationships between same-sex couples.
Specifically, the social process of "passing" was studied. Passing refers to the phenomenon "by which gay men and lesbians present themselves to the world as heterosexuals" (p. 328). This could impact on relationship quality. Although passing was unrelated to self-reported love for one's partner, respondents were more likely to report satisfaction with their relationship when significant others in their lives knew that they were homosexual. The dynamics of self-devaluation potentially underpinning passing may also lead to low self-esteem. The latter can also very easily threaten relationship satisfaction. What is more, the passer can also start perceiving his / her partner as inferior. To be able to like someone with such personal shortcomings, one must have some serious deficiencies oneself. The findings of the research were almost identical for female and male couples.

Basow (1992) also focused attention on the outcomes of lesbian and gay relationships. She submitted that lesbian and gay male couples experienced more stress than heterosexual ones. Social ostracism and stigmatisation were mostly to blame. In addition, there was an absence of legal ties and frameworks to formalise relationships. However, because of fairly high levels of both attachment and autonomy, same-sex relationships were generally satisfactory. In addition, they also tended to be more expressive than heterosexual relationships. This predicted high satisfaction because of the presence of an androgynous or feminine sex-role identity in at least one partner, but often in both. Beyond this, the other factors determining relationship satisfaction were not much different from those in heterosexual relationships. They included: perceived attractiveness of the partner; a constructive attitude towards disagreements; receiving communal nurturance; not having appealing alternatives to being in the specific relationship; and shared decision making. Because of the abovementioned factors, and also power equality, or the absence of a large power differential, lesbian relationships were characterised by particularly high relationship satisfaction.

Another researcher who studied sex-role identity in relation to homosexuality was Burch (1993). However, her study only focused on gender identities in relation to lesbianism. She did not attend to relationship satisfaction in any detail. Criticism was levelled against psychoanalytic theory that posited masculine identity as the basis for lesbian development. She argued for a new conceptualisation. This would be that lesbian identity reflected a diversity / fluidity of unique representations and identifications. Also, lesbians rather tended to show androgynous sex-role identities, instead of the often assumed (high) masculinity with reduced femininity. It should be kept in mind that Burch did not want to subscribe completely to the dichotomising terminology in this regard. Instead, she preferred the new conceptualisation to be free of conventional role content or role playing. Giving this content to lesbian identity, especially freedom from convention, would enable more creativity and psychological expansiveness, also in intimate relations. This would supposedly happen because the definition of lesbianism would transcend the normative picture of heterosexual relationships. The fluidity would underpin the complementary way in which lesbian couples made use of a variety of interpersonal dynamics hypothesised to enhance the chances of relationship satisfaction. No empirical work was done in this case.

Schreurs (1993b) reviewed previous research on sexuality in lesbian couples. This was another non-empirical study. Note that she too did not attempt to find direct answers to the question on the
relationship between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction. She could only locate 20 articles documenting the findings of research conducted from 1977 to 1993. Some of the more consistent findings regarding lesbian sexuality are now briefly listed. Satisfactory sexuality for lesbians seems to be rooted in an emotional bond. This leads to lesbians' preference for the stability and long-term duration of monogamous relationships. It has very positive implications for relationship satisfaction. Gay men were the most permissive in this regard. (Under 4.2.2, the role of emotions in heterosexual relationships is discussed.) Lesbians, were often found to initiate sex less often. However, the mere frequency of sex did not influence relationship satisfaction. Lesbians also recalled their sexual relationships with female partners as more satisfying than those with men. Most lesbian couples favoured abandoning traditional roles. That is, they randomly switched between taking active or passive roles, a practice that led to greater relationship satisfaction. Lesbian couples were concluded to have more in common with heterosexual women than with gay men.

A comparative study by Schreurs (1993a) on sexuality and the importance of gender among lesbian and heterosexual pairs in essence confirmed the findings reported above. Emotional intimacy was rated more important than sexual intimacy among lesbian couples in comparison to heterosexual couples.

Winstead and Derlega (1993) acknowledged the need for studies on the relationship between sex-role identity and the nature of same-sex relationships. They attempted to provide an overview of research in the field of close relationships, including the influence of gender. To this end they devoted a special edition of the *Journal of Social Issues*. However, it did not provide much. The main reason was that an inadequate selection of articles was made. This also affected the authors' introductory article. As a review article, it remained unrepresentative of the many issues in this field. Nevertheless, a single article covering same-sex close relationships made a relevant contribution. Gay couples, compared to heterosexual ones, were found to be more likely to split household tasks to each partner's satisfaction and fulfilment. Not only did it imply a more equal division of tasks, but also more random changes to designated chores whenever circumstances dictated it or both felt it was time for breaking routine or boring arrangements.

Although Peters and Cantrell (1993) restricted themselves to the study of feminist women, they did involve equal numbers of heterosexual and lesbian women (39 each). One of the objectives of their research was to investigate the relationship between sex-role orientation, and sex-role conflict and satisfaction in intimate relationships. They also included daughter and work roles. The sex-role identities of the two groups did not differ. Lesbians reported significantly more inter-role conflict than heterosexuals between their roles as daughters and their roles in intimate relationships. The reason for this was the perceived disapproval by others, especially parents. The same held for conflict between job- and intimate-relationship roles. Lesbian and heterosexual women did not differ significantly in terms of satisfaction with intimate relationships.

Very few of the studies reported on above are actually more than review articles, or general theoretical reflection. Equally few cover sex-role identity or relationship satisfaction. Still fewer researched the
interaction between both variables. Where it took place or was reported on, inconsistent findings were the order of the day. From the above review of findings from research on non-marital relationships, the restrictions of a too narrow perspective on relationships are evident. What is more, is the disproportion between the number of studies on close relations within and outside of formal marriage, as can be seen from the discussions in Chapters 3 and 4.

In an attempt to avoid similarly restricted approaches, the present study now aims to broaden the research perspective. The seminal ideas given thus far are expanded into a more comprehensive theoretical model. The aim with the proposed model is to find a basis for research on all potential sex-role identity configurations (or combinations) within conventional and non-conventional close relationships, and their influence on relationship satisfaction.

2.3.2 Expansion of existing theoretical frameworks

After a first study (Prinsloo, 1990), the current author started to explore the implications and consequences of the initial findings (Prinsloo, 1992a). This action was considered important based on a particularly pertinent conclusion reached by Williams (1987), namely that relationships had to be considered in terms of sex-role identities, and not only in terms of biological sex. This implied that relationships had to be evaluated in terms of their homo-gender or hetero-gender natures. A homo-gender relationship would exist between two individuals who have identical sex-role identity traits and types, irrespective of their biological sex. A hetero-gender relationship would exist where both sex-role identity types and traits between the partners are not identical. In between would exist a number of so-called mixed combinations, where sex-role identity types between partners are not identical, although one sex-role identity trait would be identical, and the other not. The rationale behind this new conceptualisation is to create a theoretical framework better able to support the study of relationship satisfaction. (Also see Tables 2.1 and 2.2 in Section 2.1.7.)

Against this background, the main hypothesis is that relationship satisfaction is more closely linked to the fact that partners have identical sex-role identity types (or even only identical sex-role identity traits), than to the fact that a masculine male and a feminine female cohabit within a traditional role configuration, and within wedlock.

An important implication of this realisation is that the hitherto existing bias in society at large, and also among many academics and researchers towards mainly researching conventional marriage, has to be overcome. The new brief is to improve our understanding of the functioning of psychological gender in real-life situations of all kinds. The latter would include marriage and any other form of cohabitation, as well as family, career and general interpersonal relationships. Such a strategy carries the promise of freeing humankind from the restrictions of outdated expectations, and of producing greater life satisfaction. As a result, theory and practice have to be integrated in life-skills programmes, psycho-education, career counselling and sex, marital and family therapy.

Some preliminary, theoretical work has subsequently been done in the areas indicated. It led me to develop a model that links the sex-role identity types and traits of partners in close relationships to the degree of satisfaction experienced within both the dyadic relationship and by the partners as individuals. Dyadic relationship satisfaction may also be conceptualised as relationship "success".
Individual relationship satisfaction may be equated with "happiness" within the relationship. The conceptualisation of relationship satisfaction is dealt with in more detail at 2.1.6. The many possible configurations in terms of sex-role identity type and traits are provided next (Prinsloo, 1992b, pp. 291-294). In a sense, each configuration compared to any other one provides a hypothesis to be tested. This complete set of hypotheses may also undergo three iterations of testing - one each for the partners, and one for the dyad.

The quintessence of the proposed structural model is the link forged between the outcome of an intimate relationship and the sex-role identity type and traits of the individuals involved. Symbols are used to depict the various possible configurations.

Individuals can be described in terms of the two components (traits) of psychological gender constituting their sex-role identity type. The components or sex-role identity traits are masculinity and femininity. As part of the classification procedure, the symbols depicted in Table 2.3 are used for the two variables.

Table 2.3: Sex-role identity components or traits of psychological gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol used</th>
<th>Score of individual*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>low on masculinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>low on femininity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>high on masculinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>high on femininity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note that each particular individual can be described in terms of both psychological gender variables / traits.

The abovementioned scheme leads to the next set of symbols. They are represented in Table 2.4. Here the sex-role identity type of each individual, irrespective of his/her sex, is described by using the symbols derived in Table 2.3 for the two psychological gender variables, or sex-role identity traits.

Sixteen different relationship configurations can be based on these descriptions of individuals. Essentially, these configurations use each partner's sex-role identity type to describe the resulting relationship in terms of the degree of overlap between the partners' sex-role identity traits. The four sets of configurations presented in Tables 2.5 to 2.8 are possible.

Table 2.4: Symbols for four possible sex-role identity types that individuals can hold

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol used</th>
<th>Sex-role identity type of individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MF</td>
<td>androgynous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mf</td>
<td>undifferentiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mf</td>
<td>masculine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mF</td>
<td>feminine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5: Homo-gender sex-role identity relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination number</th>
<th>Sex-role identity type of: Partner 1</th>
<th>Partner 2</th>
<th>Psychological gender and sex-role identity trait comparisons*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mf</td>
<td>Mf</td>
<td>M-M, f-f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>mF</td>
<td>mF</td>
<td>m-m, F-F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conceptualisation and theoretical framework

Table 2.6: Hetero-gender sex-role identity relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination number</th>
<th>Sex-role identity type of:</th>
<th>Partner 1</th>
<th>Partner 2</th>
<th>Psychological gender and sex-role identity trait comparisons*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>mF</td>
<td>Mf</td>
<td>m-M, F-f</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Mf</td>
<td>mf</td>
<td>M-m, f-F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>mf</td>
<td>M-m, F-f</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>mf</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>m-M, F-F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Portraying potential accord or discord of sex-role identity types (and traits)

Table 2.7: Mixed sex-role identity relationships: homo-gender masculinity and hetero-gender femininity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination number</th>
<th>Sex-role identity type of:</th>
<th>Partner 1</th>
<th>Partner 2</th>
<th>Psychological gender and sex-role identity trait comparisons*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>Mf</td>
<td>M-M, F-f</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii</td>
<td>mf</td>
<td>Mf</td>
<td>m-m, f-F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>mf</td>
<td>M-M, f-F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv</td>
<td>mF</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>m-m, F-F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Portraying potential acceptance or non-acceptance of sex-role identity types (and traits)

Table 2.8: Mixed sex-role identity relationships: homo-gender femininity and hetero-gender masculinity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination number</th>
<th>Sex-role identity type of:</th>
<th>Partner 1</th>
<th>Partner 2</th>
<th>Psychological gender and sex-role identity trait comparisons*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>mF</td>
<td>M-m, F-F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>mf</td>
<td>Mf</td>
<td>m-M, F-F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>mfF</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>M-M, F-F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Mf</td>
<td>mf</td>
<td>M-m, F-f</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Portraying potential acceptance or non-acceptance of different masculinity and potential accord or discord of identical femininity

At this point, Tables 2.1 and 2.2 (depicted at 2.1.7) are again relevant in explaining the dynamics underlying the link between relationship satisfaction and whether or not sex-role identity traits and types are identical or different between partners within each sex-role identity configuration.

These potential configurations in dyadic relationships are presented next as Figure 2.2. The figure serves as a summary to illustrate the possible configurations when individuals, each with a unique sex-role identity type, enter into relationships.
Prinsloo (1992b) recommended that practitioners, educators and researchers use the structural or theoretical framework, as presented above in Figure 2.2, in their work. The framework holds promise for work in preventive, curative and academic contexts. In the present study, the proposed model is used as a vehicle to test whether or not certain sex-role identity matches are riskier than others with a view to predicting or anticipating happiness, success or satisfaction. Once it is known how certain matches influence relationship outcomes, it could be updated and called the relationship satisfaction congruence theory.

At this point in time, an extension of the model also underpins indications of the numerous variables (dependent, independent and external) that have to be accounted for, as well as the potential relations between these variables. In the format to be proposed and which is used in Chapters 3 and 4, this second model or framework is refined and expanded. It could later be termed the dyadic relationship outcomes theory.

2.4 Some indications of the nature and extent of the research problem

By now, the first tentative indication of the nature and extent of the research problem addressed in this study has become evident. The particular aspect referred to is the hitherto insufficient theoretical and conceptual basis from which to conduct research in this field. The field of study involves intimate dyadic relations and relationship satisfaction, and also the direct gender-related issues concerning sex-role identity. Consequently, much attention has been given to the exploration and clarification of the concepts and theoretical assumptions underlying study in the field. This inevitably led to a more thorough exploration of current thinking in the field of feminist research. [Further characteristics of the research problem, beyond the theoretical and conceptual levels, namely the methodological and empirical aspects, are addressed hereafter in Chapters 3 and 4.]

Langis, Mathieu and Sabourin (1991, pp. 73-74) pointedly summarised some of the problems pertaining to sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction concepts and theory. It is evident how poor theoretical
foundations influence the methodological research aspects. A free translation is given of parts of their article in French:

Our empirical research did not support the interactive androgyne, sex-typed or curvilinear models of influence on marital satisfaction. These apparently worthless results call for follow-up studies. In actual fact, in the field of conjugal psychology the validity of these models has not been rigorously tested. Polynomial regression analysis is an adequate method for verifying the principal hypotheses of the researchers who postulate a relationship between sex roles and marital adaptation. It allows demonstration of the principal effects of masculinity and femininity, interactional and curvilinear effects between these variables, and interaction between the quadratic effects. In future research this strategy should be used more regularly. However, the establishment of an interactive, even causal, relation between masculinity, femininity and marital satisfaction requires longitudinal research. Such studies are necessary to determine if sex-role identity really constitute an etiological factor in marital distress. Also, masculinity and femininity only explain a low percentage of the variances in the marital satisfaction rates. Therefore, future research will need to use samples of couples seen in clinics. Adding perturbed couples will serve to enhance the deviances between the scores obtained with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The theoretical probability of observing stronger relationships between the phenomena under investigation would increase. In fact, the limited variance in marital satisfaction levels is a factor that may have contributed to our obtaining weak regression coefficients.

The factors mostly studied and assumed to determine the outcome of close personal relationships, fall within the domains of the intra-personal or of the extra-personal. This is overwhelmingly clear from Chapters 3 and 4. The implication of this state of affairs is that almost all research is approached from the viewpoint of individual partners. Two approaches abound. The first is to study the influence of factors rooted in the temperament or personality of either individual in the dyad. The second is to focus on circumstantial or demographic variables, which are mainly circumstances produced by one or the other external factor/influence. As a result the interpersonal aspect is not properly taken into account. This implies that the resultant dyadic relationships are not given sufficient attention, neither in their theoretical foundations, nor in their practical outcomes.

Studying the link between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction does not only pertain to a very central facet of every person's life. It also touches upon people's functioning in contexts potentially influencing many other people. Two such contexts are named. The first is the world of work. An individual's job performance and his/her fulfilment in a close relationship are often inextricably linked. Malfunctioning in one context could substantively affect performance in the other. Second, with regard to parenthood, not only within couples, but also in the general (extra-familial) sense of being role models, the effect that one generation has on the next is assumed to be vast. Thus, more knowledge about such central phenomena promises considerable benefits. Not least of these is making theory work to address ignorance, dilemmas and malfunctions.

The indeterminate nature of previous findings also seems to enlarge the extent of the research problem. There are many facets to the phenomena under study. Each researcher tackles some selected aspect from his/her chosen perspective. Hence no overall picture emerges and information
and theory remain quite fragmented. Some consolidation is thus required. It is also necessary to assess the bearing of previous work on current issues and under new circumstances. This calls for a comprehensive, integrated approach directed at discriminating the wood from the trees again. Subsequently, more specific unresolved issues can again be addressed. This would take place within a more holistic perspective, and with the benefit of reconfirmed or expanded theoretical foundations.