

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW - METHODOLOGICAL INDICATIONS FROM PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In Chapters 3 and 4, the literature on sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction is presented with a particular purpose in mind. The approach followed, and its underlying rationale, are also elaborated under appropriate headings. This approach facilitates the critical assessment of previous findings. This assessment is aimed at capitalising on the ~~contribution~~ that each study can make to the theoretical and methodological approach adopted for the present study. Another aspect that is highlighted throughout, is how variables and constructs have been applied. The result may sometimes be that a small element of a particular article is discussed somewhat arbitrarily under a particular heading to illustrate a point. Cross-references are provided in such cases to the relevant sections in which other aspects from the same article are covered. In addition, the literature reported on is sequenced chronologically as far as possible. This facilitates the recognition of follow-up work to previous studies. Such chronology is followed consistently, unless a specific line of argument spanned many years. In such cases, the discussion of an issue is first completed before returning to other documents that also appeared at that time. Additionally, more by accident than intent, through an unforeseen interruption during the course of the present study, a distinction is visible in Table 3.1 (see Annexure 3), and in some references to the information in the table, to publications and trends up to 1995, and those after that.

In the present study, due precautions were taken not to duplicate previous research in the field. For this reason, literature searches were undertaken in various databases to identify previous research and theoretical publications. These searches covered national and international databases. Databases kept by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) included *NEXUS* (formerly *NAVO*), and *URICA*, covering material in the HSRC library. Other databases were *SABINET*, *ERIC*, *SOCIOFILE*, and *SSCI* (the *Social Sciences Citations Index*). The latest update was made in September 2001 through an information consultant at the University of South Africa. The main criterion for the inclusion of references was that sources had to refer to either relationship satisfaction, or important facets of sex-role identity, or both. Relevant contributions are mainly cited in Chapters 2 to 4, respectively covering theoretical issues, methodological contributions, and empirical findings. The general conclusion is that previous research has not covered the problem, focused on in the current study, in sufficient depth. This point is argued in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4. The argument culminates in Chapter 5, which elaborates on the nature and extent of the research problem.

3.1 Introductory orientation

A procedure was devised early on to make sense of the large volume of literature, which could, or could not, sufficiently inform the present study. The first main problem was to map the area within which the complex array of variables operated. To facilitate this, the comprehensive theory of dyadic relationship outcomes, alluded to towards the end of Chapter 2, was conceived. At this point, it essentially is an extended conceptual framework to simplify decisions on whether variables, and findings covering them,

are relevant or not, and on where to discuss them. This theoretical model is presented in Figure 3.1. It portrays the hypothesised relationships between the relevant main and subsidiary variables of the present study. In terms of the definition by Kerlinger (1986, p. 9), also supported by Van der Merwe (1996, p. 280), theory refers to:

a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and prepositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena.

Because the proposed model, albeit with slight modifications, portrays these characteristics, and was able to support the empirical part of the research and the presentation of the findings, its acceptance as a helpful theory is proposed (see 10.1.2).

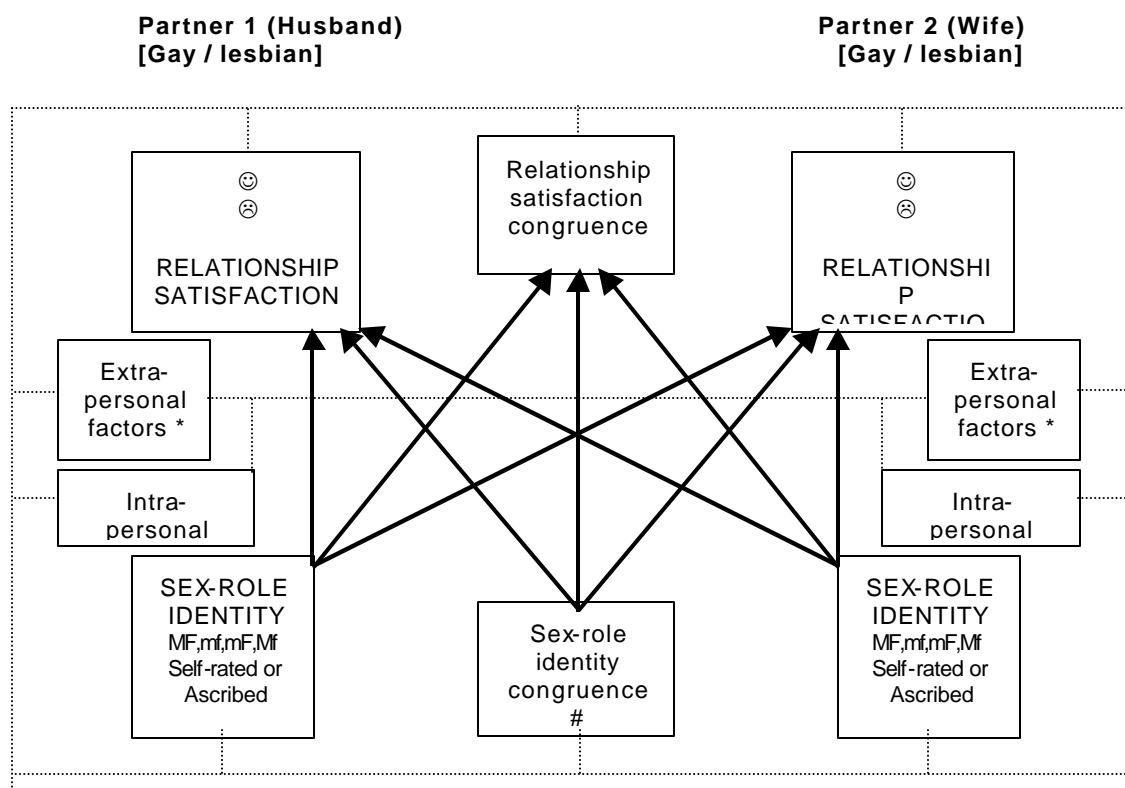


Figure 3.1: Hypothesised relationships between sex-role identity, relationship satisfaction and other variables

(Dyadic relationship outcomes theory)

* Consult Sections 4.2 and 4.3 respectively for particulars about the intra - and extra-personal factors considered

The whole of Figure 2.1 can be transposed onto this position

It became much easier to discuss the potentially relevant contributions to our knowledge, under the relevant sections of Chapter 3 and 4, after identifying and structuring the variables with the aid of Figure 3.1.

The following structure has been used for the presentation of the literature survey:

- Literature is cited to demonstrate how ~~methodological issues~~ have contributed to research findings on the correlation between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction (rest of Chapter 3, from 3.2).
- An overview is given of the most important ~~findings~~ linking the two main research variables, ~~sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction~~, to one another (Chapter 4.1).
- How ~~intra-personal factors~~ have ~~affected~~ research designs and culminated in the subsequent conclusions or findings (Chapter 4.2).
- The part played by ~~extra-personal factors~~ with reference to certain aspects of research designs and findings (Chapter 4.3).

Before addressing the issues of methodology, two further explanations about the presentation in Chapters 3 and 4 are warranted. In the first instance, when correlations between variables are referred to, the convention followed is to assume high scores on the variables mentioned. To illustrate, referring to a correlation between a husband's masculinity and the other spouse's anxiety, implies that the more masculine husbands are, the higher the anxiety of their wives. In cases where additional clarification is required, reference is made to positive or negative correlations, or high and low scores as such. (As defined in Chapter 2, sex-role identity type and sex-role identity trait are appropriately distinguished from each other, although sex-role identity type is mostly referred to.)

Second, an extended table (Table 3.1, presented as Annexure 3.1, because of its sheer size) was prepared to profile the empirical articles in the literature. This enabled an easy overview of research contributions in the field so far. This applies, in the first place, to findings pertaining to the methodological issues discussed in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 in the current chapter. It also underpins the selection and systematic analysis of the empirical findings as such, as reported in Chapter 4. In the latter case, extended versions of Figure 3.1 were also developed to inform the discussions (see Figures 4.1 to 4.3 in Chapter 4). Table 3.1 provides an overview or snapshot of the state of the art of relationship satisfaction research up to, and after, 1995. Entries into the table had to be limited at some point (articles published up to and including 2001) to make the complexities of presenting the relevant findings manageable. The 71 research reports dealt with from the first period, and the 89 reports from the second, are presented in alphabetical order in separate parts of the table.

In view of the structure followed in the current presentation, the most important issues contextualising the substantive content of the empirical findings, are discussed first. The process is one of drawing concentric circles ever closer around the studied and observed relationship between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction. Therefore, some of the more important conventions that researchers have adhered to in conducting such studies, are scrutinised in this chapter. These conventions can in general terms be referred to as the ~~methodological issues~~ surrounding the research on the relevant variables of the present study.

The choice of methodology influences the explanation of the relationships discovered between the research variables in a study. The following methodological issues are considered as a result:

- restricting samples and target populations to localised areas, or involving only (undergraduate) students;

- the absence of a true empirical basis because of using simulations or by only measuring attitudes in terms of future anticipated behaviours;
- bias pertaining to the specific conceptualisation of constructs and variables;
- certain theoretical points of departure or even the lack thereof;
- restricting studies to conventional marital relationships; and
- the practice of re-analysing dated data, knowing that improved methodologies were only developed later.

Attention is given to how these issues may potentially have influenced previous findings on relationship satisfaction.

The present researcher previously started addressing some of the methodological issues involved (Prinsloo, 1990). Some links are made in Section 2.3 between these previous research and findings, and the current study. It is also shown how specific recommendations and the call for certain adaptations are taken further. Many of the issues raised are expanded in the rest of this chapter, and the following chapters. The following issues related to the aims of the present study were identified and reported on at length by Prinsloo (1990):

- The theoretical basis underlying psychological gender. This involved an analysis of the thinking in the relevant major theoretical fields. They include psychoanalysis, social learning theory, cognitive development theory, attribution theories, gender-schema theory, as well as biological, genetic and neurological determinants of sex-role identity. Since an integrated, developmental perspective provided the best theoretical basis for understanding sex-role identity, the incorporation of stages of life and of life roles is considered crucial. Multivariate models acknowledging dynamic processes were considered most powerful in explaining the development of sex-role identity.
- The variety of existing measuring instruments of sex-role identity. These instruments were evaluated critically and their shortcomings were listed. The latter included the absence of measures to counter social desirability, inconsistent scoring procedures, various conceptualisation problems, insufficient standardisation procedures, the resulting absence of psychometric statistics, and cultural bias.
- The relationship between sex-role identity and other variables. The main focus here was on literature postulating some causal link between sex-role identity and variables such as sex, career roles, family roles and stages, marital roles, age, life stage, culture, morality, communication skills, adaptation to life, self-actualisation, assignment of responsibility, job and other performance, ego-functioning, aggression, interpersonal relationships, and mental health.
- The design of an adjective checklist type of questionnaire. The instrument was based on known instruments, but their weaknesses were avoided as far as possible. The result was a measuring instrument taking into account widely held sex-role stereotypes for males and females, and the social desirability of the characteristics for both males and females.
- A cross-cultural comparison of sex-role stereotypes. The stereotypes held in the South African sample could be compared with those in 25 other cultures. There was considerable overlap.
- General comments and recommendations pertaining to methodological issues. Many shortcomings of previous research and theory development were uncovered. These included

issues such as flawed sampling, the inconsistent handling of constructs, the absence of firm theoretical foundations, inappropriate or flimsy research designs, and poor operationalisation of variables.

At the end of the analysis, implications were teased out and recommendations made for future research in the field of sex-role identity. These mainly focused on equitably dealing with culture, developing more appropriate measuring techniques, and applying new knowledge in therapy and other fields of psychological application.

Before discussing specific methodological issues under their relevant headings, a telling example will suffice to explain the real potential of methodology to influence research findings. Langis *et al.* (1991) suggested that the kind of model implicitly tested by selecting specific statistical techniques could determine the outcome of a study. For example, the researchers doubted a particular assumption, often held up to that point, and based on many findings. This assumption is that femininity is a consistent predictor of marital adjustment. They referred specifically to the studies by Antill (1983), Baucom and Aiken (1984), and Kurdek and Schmitt (1986). These are all cited elsewhere in the present study (cf. 2.3.1, 3.2.1, 4.2.4, and 4.3.6). Langis and the team applied polynomial multiple regression analyses to their data to test six different conceptual models of the relation between sex roles and marital satisfaction. The models were the following:

- The masculinity model, postulating that the principal effects of masculinity in an individual would be statistically significant. Thus, the more an individual was inclined to be aggressive, competitive and individualistic, for example, the greater marital satisfaction would be.
- The femininity model, postulating that the principal effects of femininity in an individual would be statistically significant. Thus, the more an individual was tender, sensitive and warm, for example, the greater marital satisfaction would be.
- The sex-typed model, postulating that the principal effects of masculinity and femininity would be statistically significant only when appropriate in terms of sex. Thus, males would experience statistically greater marital satisfaction than women when they adopted masculine sex roles, and females in comparison with men, when they adopted feminine sex roles.
- The additive androgyny model, postulating that the principal effects of the combination of masculinity and femininity would be statistically significant. Thus, both masculinity and femininity would contribute in a positive and distinct manner to enhanced marital satisfaction. In other words, the more an individual perceived himself/herself at the same time as tender, competitive, sensitive, individualistic, warm, and aggressive, for example, the more he/she would express a high degree of conjugal satisfaction.
- The interactive androgyny model, postulating that the interaction between masculinity and femininity would enhance marital satisfaction, and not the additive effect of the two.
- The curvilinear model, which is rather a series of models (M^2 , F^2 , $M^2 \times F^2$, sex $\times M^2$, sex $\times F^2$), postulating a non-linear effect on marital satisfaction. The test in this case was whether there would be an optimal point beyond which masculinity and femininity could become dysfunctional.

Langis and colleagues' analyses showed the superiority of the additive androgyny model. The other models were not confirmed. The main effects of masculinity or femininity did not lead to greater

satisfaction for either sex. This applied in an absolute sense and in terms of sex-typed, appropriate matching of sex roles. Also, it was not the interaction between masculinity and femininity, which contributed to satisfaction. Finally, there was also no optimal level beyond which masculinity and femininity became dysfunctional. Thus, neither the curvilinear trends of exponential increase of relationship satisfaction with masculinity, or with femininity, nor the interaction effects between curvilinear trends (exponential increase of relationship satisfaction with masculinity and sex, with femininity and sex, and with masculinity and femininity simultaneously), were upheld. The main methodological criticisms were against the use of dichotomous scoring and simple analyses of correlations.

Langis, Sabourin, Lussier and Mathieu (1994) also reported on the same issues in a later article. In addition, they reported on some analyses on the influence of both self-rated and partners' ascribed sex-role identities on relationship satisfaction. They found that men's marital satisfaction was related to their own self-rated levels of masculinity and femininity, their wives' self-rated femininity, as well as an optimal level of ascribed masculinity perceived in their wives. For women, marital satisfaction correlated with their own self-rated levels of femininity, the self-rated masculinity of their husbands, as well as an optimal level of ascribed femininity perceived in their husbands. Under 4.2.5, similar research done by Lamke *et al.* (1994) is reported on.

To conclude, it is evident that methodological choices can influence one's conclusions about the relationship between research variables. The abovementioned case illustrates the previous statement in terms of the way in which questionnaire responses were scored, and of the type of statistical analysis applied to the data. The task remains to systematically investigate the influence of some further pertinent methodological issues on the interpretation of research findings. The various issues listed hereafter under Sections 3.2 and 3.3 have been gleaned from literature.

3.2 Sampling issues

The next four sub-sections (3.2.1 to 3.2.4) have the discussion of sampling in common. This is not surprising. It is a main element of research methodology, comprising important decisions by researchers about which respondents to involve. This aspect is crucial in determining how widely the responses or behaviour observed among the respondents, constituting a sample, would apply to much wider populations. Consequently, previous research practices pertaining to sampling in the present field need to be critically examined. One has to prevent systematic error variance from influencing future research findings, which could easily be deemed valid for behaviour in general among people.

Analysis of the literature on sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction in terms of the methodological issue of sampling reveals interesting trends. Of the 71 articles covering empirical studies up to the end of 1995, presented in Table 3.1 (cf. Annexure 3.1), 63 % did not explicitly report sample size (see Column J). The corresponding figure for the 89 studies after 1995 was only 2 %. This could either be a sign that the general quality of research reporting has been increasing of late, or that sampling as such has been emphasised more. In about 36 % of the cases where sample size was reported, and

showing a slight decrease in occurrence over time, fewer than 150 respondents were involved. True probability sampling was done only in exceptional cases, all hailing from US national surveys (Column K). As many as 7 261 and 4 587 respondents, respectively, participated in the two largest studies (Call & Heaton, 1997; Fowers, 1991). The other six relevant studies were the ones by Amato and Rogers (1999); Johnson and Booth (1998); Lueptow, Guss and Hyden (1989); Lye and Biblarz (1993); Myers and Booth (1996), and Pleck, Sonenstein and Ku (1993). Care should be exercised not to assume that all the supposed gains in knowledge apply equally strongly to entire populations of countries, continents, or cultural groupings.

The discussion now focuses more specifically on the first of four issues influenced by pertinent sampling decisions. It is again helpful to follow the analyses by consulting Table 3.1, especially the information documented in Column G, and even Columns B to D.

3.2.1 Findings of studies involving conventional dyads (i.e., marital relationships)

Column G gives an indication of the number of studies that only focused on conventional dyadic relationships within wedlock, *vis-à-vis* studies expanding this model. The figure remained above 80 % throughout. Up to 1995, an isolated few studies (7 % in both cases) addressed intimate relationship issues in the pre-marital phase (Bailey, Hendrick & Hendrick, 1987; Ganong & Coleman, 1987; Lamke *et al.*, 1994; Pleck *et al.*, 1993; Siavelis & Lamke, 1992), or investigated non-marital, non-heterosexual intimate relationships (Berger, 1990; Cardell *et al.*, 1981; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986; Peters & Cantrell, 1993; Schreurs, 1993a). After that, both the corresponding percentages increased. Pre-marital couples comprised 15 % of the samples, while non-marital, non-heterosexual respondents participated in 12 % of the studies. (Table 3.1 can be consulted for the names of the relevant authors).

A vast majority of the 133 studies (out of 160), that investigated heterosexual intimate relationships, had conventional foci. A noteworthy early exception is the study by Dixon (1985), who studied bi-sexual relationships, thus including extra-marital homosexual affairs in addition to conventional heterosexual marital relationships. Only two pre-1996 studies involved divorced respondents (Lueptow *et al.*, 1989; MacDonald, Ebert & Mason, 1987). In 10 % of the pre-1996 studies, cohabiting heterosexual relationships were (also) focused on (Table 3.1 can be consulted for the names of these authors). Since 1995, an increase is evident in the 17 % of cases, where (mostly also) cohabiting relationships, in addition to marital ones, were studied.

Sharing a less conventional approach, Kurdek's (1997) core argument for insisting that researchers include non-heterosexual couples, was that one should be able to assess whether or not findings were common to diverse types of couples. The study by Moore, McCabe and Brink (2001) is another good example of non-conventional sampling designed to compare dyadic adjustment between marital, cohabiting and pre-marital partners and couples (dyads) in as far as their happiness might be

influenced by communication factors (cf. Sections 4.2.5 and 4.3.1 for more details about these findings).

In the remainder of this section, some “typical” findings from empirical studies on sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction among conventional, married couples are cited. This is done to highlight the customary replication of variables, designs and findings, and to allow contrasting them with more exceptional approaches, such as those already introduced in Section 2.3, where findings from studies covering non-marital dyadic relations are referred to. The bulk of the empirical findings from studies of conventional marital dyadic relationships, however, are discussed under Sections 4.1 to 4.3.

A consequence of the contrast made here, is that seemingly regular and typical outcomes could just as easily be construed as unique and even superficial. Until properly investigated, findings, such as those reported below, covering marital relationships, cannot be generalised automatically to non-marital dyadic relationships, even though empirical evidence has regularly supported the former group of findings so far.

Essentially, the present study's interest is in whether sex-role identity combinations exist between dyadic partners that predispose them either towards or against relationship satisfaction. Antill (1983, p. 145) proposed that both ~~similarity~~ (“birds of a feather flock together”) and ~~complementarity~~¹ (“opposites attract”) in sex-role identity combinations could be associated with the happiness of partners in marital relationships. The findings strongly supported the importance of femininity for relationship satisfaction. Both husbands' and wives' happiness was positively related to their spouse's femininity. Where both partners scored high on femininity (androgyny included), couples were much happier than couples in which at least one partner scored low on femininity. While similarity of both masculinity and femininity between partners was associated with happiness, the complementarity hypothesis was not confirmed, however. These findings beg the question whether or not the same hypothetical structures (similarity and complementarity) would meaningfully underpin studies among non-heterosexual dyads.

A related and well-researched issue is the one of sex-role identity congruence. It is mainly concerned with how much the sex-role identity overlap of partners correlates with (i.e., jointly predicts) relationship satisfaction. Bowen and Orthner (1983) studied the issue of congruence (called “congruency” by them) from the viewpoint of sex-role preference / attitude as predictor of marital quality. (Section 4.2.3 elaborates more on the part played by attitudes in determining relationship satisfaction.) ~~Traditional husband and modern wife~~ couples experienced the lowest marital quality. The marital quality of ~~modern husband and traditional wife~~ couples did not differ significantly from that of couples with ~~congruent~~ sex-role preferences (modern-modern and traditional-traditional). The hypothesis that couples with incongruent sex-role attitudes would report lower marital quality, was thus supported only partially. Would such classifications still make sense in present-day same-sex relationships?

On about the same issue, Li and Caldwell (1987) acted on a suggestion in 1983 by Peplau, who had proposed that the specific patterns of marriage that couples adopted were of less importance for marital satisfaction than the ~~agreement~~ or disagreement between spouses on a particular pattern. The ensuing research also took into account the work by Bowen and Orthner (1983). Of specific concern

was the latter's finding that the ~~direction of incongruence~~ determined the degree of dissatisfaction, and not only the magnitude or mere fact of incongruence. However, Li and Caldwell also tested whether the research findings of Bowen and Orthner may have been an artefact of their research design. Median cut-off scores were used to classify husbands and wives as traditional or modern, with reference to their own gender group. The researchers suspected that the application of median cut-off scores for sex-role attitude resulted in a different classification of wives compared to husbands. This occurred because women's sex-role attitudes tend to be more egalitarian than men's. As a consequence, egalitarian husband-traditional wife couples may differ less than the scores would imply, and definitely far less than traditional husband-egalitarian wife couples. The incongruence index, so to speak, may therefore have been misleading. Further methodological criticisms were against converting continuous variables into categorical ones, and averaging husband and wife marital satisfaction scores, which may have resulted in the specific findings. (These issues are elaborated on further in Section 3.3.2.)

Thus, the Li and Caldwell study set out to examine the relationship between marital sex-role incongruence and marital adjustment. Specific emphasis was placed on evaluating the influence of both the magnitude (presence) of incongruence and the direction of the incongruence on marital adjustment. Direction of incongruence referred to establishing which spouse's sex-role preference scores were higher *vis-à-vis* the scores of the other spouse on variables such as masculinity/femininity, and traditional/egalitarian. A multiple regression approach was used, instead of comparing group means. Li and Caldwell assessed the extent of spouses' agreement with statements about the proper roles of husbands and wives. The researchers derived an index of marital sex-role incongruence by subtracting spouses' sex-role egalitarianism scores from each other's.

The findings supported the hypothesis that both the magnitude and the direction of sex-role incongruence related to marital satisfaction. This implies that the more egalitarian the sex-role orientation of husbands was *vis-à-vis* that of their wives, the higher the marital adjustment scores of both spouses. Stating the opposite, the more wives' orientation was egalitarian compared to their husbands, the more negative the impact on marital satisfaction. Differences were significant for both husbands and wives. This was found when techniques of analysis were used which differed from those of the Bowen and Orthner study. Replicating Bowen and Orthner's techniques, Li and Caldwell found significance only for husbands.

Li and Caldwell presented a plausible explanation for the findings by considering the role/dynamics of social power and the accommodation thereof by spouses. When husbands were egalitarian, they tended to be more accommodating by being willing to relinquish some of the power associated with the traditional roles of husbands, whereas traditional wives tended to be more accommodating because of being less likely to want to alter the existing power relationship. The inverse was not found to apply at all.

Bowen (1989a) responded to Li and Caldwell, after which Caldwell and Li (1989) also published a follow-up article. The two later articles are reported on in 3.3.2, because they were almost exclusively

¹ Respectively referred to as identical and non-identical sex-role identity types (or traits) in the present study.

methodological critiques of research designs, scoring practices, theoretical underpinnings, and the nature of variables, for example assumptions of linearity.

Bowen (1989b) eventually re-examined the hypothesis that both the magnitude and direction of incongruence of sex-role preference among spouses would be related to their reported level of marital quality. They re-analysed parts of the same dataset used in the Bowen and Orthner (1983) study, but deliberately replicated the analysis strategy used by Li and Caldwell (1987). However, first they examined the nature of the bi-variate relationship between sex-role congruence and marital quality by using descriptive and diagnostic procedures. This was done to test the appropriateness of using multiple regression analyses to test specific hypotheses. One finding was that husbands with modern sex-role preferences relative to their wives, experienced greater marital quality. In the case of wives, similar linearity was not demonstrated in terms of sex-role congruence and marital quality. The relationship appeared more quadratic (inverted U-shape). Marital quality was lowest in the case of congruent sex-role preferences between spouses. The level of marital quality was greatest for wives with husbands more modern than themselves. However, sex-role congruence accounted for only 3 % of the variance in marital quality. This suggests low predictability of marital quality from knowledge about the magnitude and direction of sex-role congruence between spouses. Therefore, the researchers concluded that parametric statistics may be inappropriate for testing the relationship between the abovementioned variables.

The increasingly complex links between hypotheses, statistical procedures, variables, designs, and even changed social and power relations at the turn of the millennium, deepen the question about the continued relevance of current findings for same-sex and other non-conventional dyadic relationships.

Various findings gradually amplified some of the abovementioned patterns, while others brought different or new information to light. Although Baucom and Aiken (1984) mainly focused on couples' responses to behavioural marital therapy, they also studied the relationship between sex-role identity type and marital satisfaction. Femininity and masculinity, in that order and for both spouses, correlated significantly with marital satisfaction. The low incidence of androgynous subjects among couples in therapy suggested a positive correlation between androgyny and marital satisfaction. Conversely, among couples not in therapy, there were more androgynous individuals (both husbands and wives) than individuals with any other sex-role identity type. In response to therapy, increases in masculinity, femininity, and androgyny predicted heightened marital satisfaction. Wives' level of femininity in particular, and both spouses' masculinity and femininity levels were indicative of success. The latter set of findings suggests that the ability to express these sex-role qualities more fully is associated with marital happiness.

Agarwal and Srivastava (1989) pointed out the dichotomy between the demands of traditional, institutionalised forms of marriage in India, and marriage within the newly emerging companionship model. Women especially were disadvantaged by the changes. It happened because they were often still expected to adhere to traditional roles even within more enlightened contexts. The maladjustments

and frustrations accompanying this situation will expectedly become more complex should extra-marital dyadic relationships be taken into account as well.

Peterson, Baucom, Elliott and Farr (1989) contrasted samples of maritally distressed couples and non-clinic couples from Texas and North Carolina in terms of the relationship between sex-role identity type and marital adjustment. Their findings also suggested that femininity and masculinity were both associated with positive marital adjustment, although the former to a slightly higher degree. This applied to both husbands' and wives' sex-role identity type, and satisfaction. One can understand the importance of femininity for adjustment in terms of femininity's relation to nurturance, interpersonal sensitivity, and adaptive communication skills. The importance of masculinity lies in the instrumental skills considered valuable for the more pragmatic demands of marriage. Whilst androgyny also proved to be highly desirable, undifferentiated sex-role identity was related to distress. The researchers always calculated satisfaction scores separately for each partner. The study focused on the satisfaction of each individual as a function of the sex-role identity type of the spouse. A combined relationship satisfaction score was not calculated.

Although restricted to marital relationships, the study (by Baucom and colleagues) was also unique in expanding the sample size to enable coverage of all 16 possible sex-role identity type combinations (cf. 2.3 for details of these). A 4x4 Pearson chi-square test of association revealed no significant differences regarding the matching of partners by sex-role identity type. The scope of the study was also expanded to distressed couples presenting for treatment. A 2x4x4 chi-square analysis revealed that the occurrence of androgynous-androgynous sex-role identity type pairings was significant among non-clinic couples. Their relative absence was significant among distressed couples. The inverse was true for undifferentiated-undifferentiated couples. In each of the six pairs involving at least one androgynous partner, a greater percentage came from non-clinic couples. Table 3.2 shows these findings in a bit more detail.

Table 3.2: Marital adjustment scores of both spouses for 16 sex-role identity type configurations*

		Females(f)			
		Androgynous	Masculine	Feminine	Undifferentiated
Androgynous	m	0,984	0,339	0,226	-0,093
	f	0,978	0,150	0,043	-0,139
Masculine	m	0,130	-0,114	0,461	-0,693
	f	0,230	0,135	0,093	-0,560
Feminine	m	0,642	0,263	0,555	-0,290
	f	0,799	0,158	0,517	-0,476
Undifferentiated	m	0,468	-0,574	-0,474	-0,607
	f	0,800	-0,465	-0,288	-0,716

* Adapted from Table III by Peterson *et al.* (1989, p. 781)

Juni and Grimm (1993) found that individuals achieving high scores on femininity also scored low on marital dissatisfaction. Similar negative correlations between sex-role identity and marital dissatisfaction sub-scales were found more often for femininity than for masculinity. Masculinity correlated with low

marital dissatisfaction more often for men than for women. Further inspection of the specific sub-scale analyses revealed a few interesting findings. Affective communication problems were fewer with femininity. Sexual dissatisfaction was lowest in masculine women and feminine men. Scores on child-rearing conflict were lower with femininity.

Over the last half of the previous decade, researchers seem to have embarked upon more longitudinal studies in an attempt to clarify the direction of causality between sex-role identity type and marital (relationship) satisfaction. Doubt was increasingly cast on the assumption that androgyny safeguards against relationship problems. The opposite could also apply, namely that distress in relationships may cause certain changes in psychological functioning among partners, for example in terms of their sex-role behaviour.

Aube and Koestner (1995) focused on both ~~longitudinal~~ (15 months) and dyadic effects. The latter was achieved by mostly treating the couple as unit of analysis. In addition, they revitalised the similarity-complementarity hypothesis. (Their findings are reported in more detail under 4.1.2 and 4.2.3.) Myers and Booth (1996) used national (American) 12-year longitudinal data to study retirement and marital quality. (Cf. 4.3.3 and 4.3.7 for more detail about their findings.)

Acitelli, Douvan and Veroff (1997) made a firm effort to compare relationship satisfaction ~~longitudinally~~ between the first and third years of young marriages. They attempted to enhance academics' and counsellors' understanding of how couples' early perceptions about and handling of ~~conflict~~ management laid the foundation for relationships. (Cf. 4.2.3 and 4.2.6 for more detail about their findings.)

Fincham, Harold and Gano-Phillips (2000) also conducted sophisticated longitudinal research (cf. Chapter 4, at Section 4.2.1.1, for more detail about their work).

Bradbury *et al.* (2000) reviewed work done on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction during the decade of the 1990s. They concluded that more large-scale longitudinal research was required. It should link marital processes with socio-cultural contexts, be more dis-confirmatory than confirmatory, and guide preventive, clinical and policy-level interventions.

Fowers, Montel and Olson (1996) studied the predictive power of ~~pre-marital relationship type~~ and quality on eventual marital satisfaction through a longitudinal design. As their analyses and findings mostly involved aspects of communication and conflict resolution, and perhaps also personality and affect, the specific findings are reported in Chapter 4. Of relevance for methodology in this chapter, is the fact that the three researchers analysed the criterion data at the level of dyads, two to three years after the prediction data had been collected, albeit only for conventional marriages. The design determined that couples intending to get married soon were classified at the outset into the following four couple types (with both spouses sharing any given classification outcome):

- vitalised, comprising high overall satisfaction, comfort with affective communication, financial, parenting and religious matters, and a preference for an egalitarian role pattern;

- harmonious, comprising moderate relationship quality, comfort with the partner's personality, habits, friends and family, as well as sharing feelings and conflict resolution, slightly unrealistic views of marriage, and an indication that religion was not important;
- traditional, comprising moderate dissatisfaction with interpersonal areas of the relationship, some discomfort with the partner's personality, habits, friends and family, as well as sharing feelings and conflict resolution, some strengths and realism in decision making and future planning, and an indication that religion was important; and
- conflicted, comprising distress on all of the constructs mentioned above.

As hypothesised, most vitalised couples ended up in satisfied marriages, while conflicted couples were most likely to have cancelled their weddings or asked for a divorce within the follow-up period. The more dyadic process-oriented harmonious couples were slightly happier than the more structure-oriented traditional couples. Although many advances were being made at this stage in terms of approaches to research on marital satisfaction, predictive studies of this kind were still largely absent with regard to same-sex intimate relationships.

More sophisticated methodology and analysis also developed through the research of Karney and Bradbury (1997). They raised the important issue of the role played by ~~initial levels of satisfaction~~ and the rate of change in satisfaction over time. They also questioned the value of cross-sectional data above longitudinal studies in revealing causal patterns. In addition, many data-analysis techniques, such as correlations and multiple regression, when executed using the mean scores of groups, did not describe how individuals and individual marriages were changing over a trajectory of time. As a result, the two researchers set out to test a number of hypothetical trajectories and the factors most likely determining them. According to the *disillusionment hypothesis*, spouses starting off from high levels of satisfaction were bound to suffer greater declines in satisfaction by virtue of their initial unrealistic expectations. In contrast, by virtue of their higher motivation, positive beliefs and early success, the *maintenance hypothesis* could predict much less decline for such marriages. Only multi-wave, longitudinal designs could evaluate these phenomena properly. This had to be done mainly through growth-curve analysis, making use of both within- and between-subjects comparisons. Whether or not trajectories would end in dissolution of a marriage, was another important issue. Both low levels of satisfaction at the outset and rapid decline in satisfaction could lead to this fate. A *moderating* relationship could be the case, where declines in satisfaction are especially predictive of dissolution if initial satisfaction had been low. In a *mediating* relationship, lower initial satisfaction levels would predict dissolution because of its association with declining satisfaction over time. Combined with the preceding hypotheses, the research would also investigate the relative and simultaneous roles of *intra-personal* and *inter-personal* perspectives. [Also Kurdek (1997) campaigned strongly for pursuing this route.] The intra-personal perspective predicted a dominant influence on the satisfaction level and/or trajectory for constructs such as neuroticism (when interaction was controlled), while the inter-personal one favoured interaction behaviours (when neuroticism was controlled). Having studied 60 newlywed couples for four years over eight waves of observation, various findings were made. Neuroticism and behaviour were unrelated, and neither correlated with marital dissolution. All the hypotheses received some support at some point by using different modelling techniques. The most consistent support was for a linear (gradual decline in satisfaction over time), rather than a curvilinear (satisfaction starting off

high, declining and then recovering somewhat) trajectory. These rather inconclusive findings can most probably, by own admission of the researchers, be attributed to a too small sample. (Cf. Section 4.2.5 for the findings on neuroticism and communication or interaction). Also, the question as to what the study and its approach imply for same-sex relationships, remains unanswered.

Risman and Johnson-Sumerford (1998) brought about two further innovations into research, although they still limited themselves to the study of marital couples. First, they used a completely qualitative methodology (15 intensive case studies) to investigate the nature of shared paid and family work in a set of unique marriages. Second, these marriages could be described as post-gender, implying that the couples consciously did not adhere to gender-based divisions of home and paid work. Because marital satisfaction was not given much prominence in their research, and was also conceptualised quite differently than in the present quantitative study, their findings cannot be compared further. However, they do steer present research towards expanded approaches.

The selection of findings presented above typifies the current status of knowledge about the relationship between sex-role identity and marital satisfaction. However, what is also clear is that these findings cannot uncritically be applied to non-marital relationships. The various masculinity and femininity configurations, linked from time to time to marital satisfaction, also have to be investigated beyond conventional marriage.

3.2.2 Findings of studies involving only one partner of the dyad

Relationship (dis)satisfaction by definition unfolds as the result of the dyadic interaction between two partners. In conventional terms, the dyadic activity occurs within the domain of marriage. It is doubtful whether science benefits optimally from research only focusing on one partner in such dyads. This may hold not only for marital relationships, but essentially for all intimate relationships, including those between same-sex partners. The reason is that there is an intricate interplay throughout between actions and reactions among partners. Only observing one spouse, is like listening to just one side of a conversation, or watching only one opponent in a sport contest. Rabinowitz and Sechzer (1993) criticised single-sex designs because of their tendency towards gender bias in the operationalisation of variables. So did Kurdek (1997). His core argument was that one needed information on mediating variables that could identify plausible mechanisms interactively influencing relationship outcomes. A few studies are highlighted in this sub-section to emphasise the limitations, and strengths, for that matter, of studies of this kind.

In Table 3.1, the data found in Columns B, C and D indicate the extent to which researchers focused on only one sex (or partner in a heterosexual dyad). This practice was followed in fewer than 15 % of the studies, and actually declined much over time. Whereas earlier studies of this kind predominantly involved wives, a more balanced distribution of spouses, or male and female partners, was the case more recently, although the number of studies covering sex-role identity as variable decreased dramatically. Two recent studies each involved only husbands (Aube, Norcliffe, Craig & Koestner, 1995; Myers & Booth, 1996), or only wives (Weingourt, 1998; Zak & McDonald, 1997). It has to be noted that about 20 % of the post-1995 studies also involved non-couples, implying that only one

partner from the marital or cohabiting relationships participated in these studies. Over time (before and after 1995), studies involving same-sex couples, as well as only one partner from such couples, both increased. Earlier on, Schreurs (1993a) studied only the one partner from lesbian couples. More recently, of the nine studies involving same-sex couples, in four (Jordan & Deluty, 2000; Schreurs & Buunk, 1996; Weingourt, 1998; Zak & McDonald, 1997) only one lesbian partner, and in one (Burgoyne, 2001) only one gay partner participated each time. Some typical features of and findings from such studies are now briefly related.

James and Hunsley (1995) involved only one partner from heterosexual married or cohabiting couples in their research. In Sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.4 their study is referred to in more detail, because of the unique ways in which they investigated the relationship (linear *vis-à-vis* curvilinear) between adaptability and cohesion, on the one hand, and relationship satisfaction, on the other hand. Reynolds, Remer and Johnson (1995) also involved either husbands or wives. Their study was pioneering, though, in the sense that it involved a sample of 60- to 90-year olds (cf. Section 4.2.6 for more detail on their findings). Also Mitchell and Gee (1996) researched non-couples. Their study is referred to again at Section 4.3.6. Pléchaty, Couturier, Côté, Roy, Massicotte and Freeston (1996) did the same (cf. Sections 4.2.4, 4.3.2 and 4.3.6). So did Montgomery and Sorell (1997) (cf. Section 4.2.3).

Although Bograd and Spilka (1996) involved equal numbers of husbands and wives in their study, these individuals were not married to each other. The respondents only comprised the first-time remarried partners from married couples. Their spouses were not included in the study. The importance of self-disclosure for own relationship satisfaction was reiterated, nevertheless.

Myers and Booth (1996) involved either the husband or the wife in their research on the effect of husbands' retirement on marital quality. Their findings are reported in Section 4.3.7. So did Bereczkei and Csanaky (1996) in their study on the evolutionary motives behind marital success and reproduction. Their core findings are reported in Section 4.3.2.

Johnson and Booth (1998) applied a novel design in their research to discern between dyadic and individual factors that could influence marital satisfaction. They did a 12-year longitudinal study involving spouses across successive marriages. Their findings strongly pointed towards the conclusion that marital quality was determined more by the dyadic relationship environment, i.e., every unique dyad established, and the new interactions formed there, than by individual characteristics, such as a stable personality. In other words, in the latter instance there was covariance of marital quality ratings between and within marriages. In the former case, the between-marriages covariance was lower. This was not to say, though, that individual characteristics were not also to an extent malleable by marriage itself. As a result, the complexity of how various factors could influence marital (dyadic) relationships, should be borne in mind.

It has to be noted that, in large national samples (USA), factors in marriage were often studied only from the viewpoint of whichever spouse got drawn into the sample, such as was the case in the study by

Amato and Rogers (1999). This completely rules out the study of dyads, and as a result focuses on one spouse only.

Also Cramer (2000) involved only a small group (n=95) of non-couples (65 female and 30 male undergraduate students) in their research on the link between relationship satisfaction and conflict style. The respondents could consider their current dating relationships, a past romantic relationship, or even a relationship with a current closest friend. Cramer also warned that their cross-sectional design could not address issues of causality. Nonetheless, it was clear that relationship satisfaction was significantly negatively related to frequency of conflict, negative conflict style, and unresolved conflict. Even when controlling for frequency of conflict, the relationship with negative conflict style and unresolved conflict remained. When controlling for negative conflict style, the relation with unresolved conflict remained as well. The inverse link did too.

3.2.2.1 Only wives / females in sample

A typical occurrence in wives-only samples is to concentrate on ~~sexual satisfaction~~ among the female respondents (Jayne, 1982). Jayne did, however, acknowledge that too often only the physical dimension received attention. The psychological, emotional or subjective dimensions of relationship satisfaction should definitely not be neglected.

Also Frank, Downard and Lang (1986) researched and considered the importance of sex-role identity type only in terms of the sexual satisfaction of women. Sexual satisfaction was defined as (or even concluded to be) the "complex result of both effective physical and psychological stimulation with positive evaluations of the experience" (p. 10). The three researchers hypothesised that masculine and androgynous women would be more likely to attain sexual satisfaction. Making self-enhancing attributions could enhance their chances of doing so. This would happen through their ascribing satisfying sexual experiences to their own ability or effort, while at the same time attributing unsatisfying experiences to external causes. The hypothesis received only minimal support. A plausible explanation for this lack of evidence could be that the researchers lost sight of the dyadic focus. Alternatively, they may have carried conceptual bias into their research design by anticipating patterns they knew to be valid for men. They further concluded that women attributed sexual satisfaction to the quality of their relationship, their own involvement, and their partner's involvement. The generalisability of the abovementioned findings to general dyadic relationships is doubtful. It should also be noted that a small sample of 155, a low return rate of just more than half, and the involvement of volunteers or interested participants, may have skewed the findings further.

Adding a further limitation to already constrained samples results in a multiplier effect. This often occurred in those cases where only women were studied. Whenever another unique sub-population is selected, the effect becomes exponential. The reason is that with the addition of every next restriction, the overlap with the target population is at least halved. Some studies are referenced next to illustrate this point.

The sample used in the research by Johnson and Brems (1989) on sex-role orientation only comprised 140 female college students (cf. also 4.2.4).

A study reported by Rogler and Procidano (1989) was unique in that it covered ~~consecutive~~ ~~generations~~. The researchers focused on the effect of intergenerational change on wives' marital satisfaction in Puerto Rican families. This had profound implications for the prevalence of egalitarian relationships, as the move was towards more egalitarian spouse relations. The study was particularly meaningful, as Puerto Rican families are known for their marital role segregation. By contrast, younger generations got exposed to city life, mainly in New York. A general relationship was found between egalitarian spouse roles and the marital satisfaction of the wives for both mothers and daughters. This outcome was observable even with egalitarian relationships being far less common in the first generation (i.e., among the mothers), suggesting at least two important research issues. First, under circumstances of cultural pressure, change occurs very rapidly, even to sex-role perceptions and values. Second, in studies like the one discussed here, the effects of the dyadic interaction with and influence of male partners / spouses, remain largely unknown.

Wyatt and Lyons-Rowe (1990) also attempted to test the theoretical boundaries of sex-role and relationship research in culturally unique contexts. However, their choice also brought about certain restrictions. Their research only covered the ~~sexual satisfaction~~ of African American women in heterosexual relationships as a function of their sex-role identity (sex roles). In a very general sense, they found that women experiencing equal power and status to communicate freely, tended to experience greater sexual satisfaction. Such communication patterns also corresponded with more egalitarian attitudes. Sexual satisfaction was operationalised as acceptable levels of sexual responsiveness, expression, and interest / enthusiasm.

Women ~~married to older men~~ participated in the study of Nelson (1991). They were only 34 in number, and all were white middle- and upper middle-class. Findings failed to confirm the predicted correlation between an androgynous sex-role identity type, pro-feminist sex-role attitudes, or male-dominated occupational status among women, and marital satisfaction.

Apt and Hurlbert (1993) compared a rather small sample of ~~abused~~ and non-abused women in ~~distressed marriages~~. The abused women reported significantly lower levels of compatibility in their marriages. The researchers tested a model for predicting the probability of relationship dissatisfaction. Low levels of intimacy and compatibility were associated with unhappiness. However, the technique applied to measure compatibility (*Affectionate Partners Test*, or *APT*) was developed specifically for their research, and had not been validated psychometrically to any acceptable degree. The association between (in)compatibility and sex-role identity was not studied either.

Etaugh (1993) summarised the findings of a number of previous studies on relationship satisfaction. These, however, were selected to include only women's experiences or situations.

Zak and McDonald (1997) involved only the female partner or one of two lesbian partners in their research on the difference between lesbian and heterosexual couples' relationship satisfaction.

Weingourt (1998) only studied women's relationship satisfaction, albeit as one of the partners in either heterosexual or homosexual relationships.

The argument confirmed by referencing the abovementioned studies is that theory building or validation cannot gain much from findings based on too severely restricted research designs. This is considered an important issue at times when theory on gender relations is rather flimsy.

3.2.2.2 Only husbands / males in sample

None of the very few studies only involving male respondents produced findings informing the possible link between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction, or, for that matter, either of the two variables. Although the studies by Dixon (1985) and Pleck *et al.* (1993) only involved men, they focused at most on intimacy and sexual satisfaction. This raises the question whether a "male psychology" bias has still been prevalent. Its predominance could explain why the norm group's behaviour has not been studied, while the "deviant" group's has been. It may, as a result, also explain the peculiar predominance of studies with female subjects over those with male subjects in the field of relationship satisfaction.

In conclusion, all findings from single-sex studies are inconclusive in so far as generalisation to the other sex goes. Over and above this, they neglect a more complete dyadic focus. Therefore, they cannot inform relationship outcomes in terms of the congruence of relationship satisfaction between both partners.

3.2.3 Findings based on geographically and otherwise restricted samples

Another factor limiting the generalisation of findings is the practice of employing samples that are geographically confined in some sense. Examples of this are recruiting respondents from very localised geographical areas, and studying very unique cultures. The practice of involving student populations is also closely related to this. It is documented on its own in the next section (3.2.4). A few studies have been selected to illustrate the effects of the use of narrowly confined sub-populations. Samples that are too idiosyncratic cannot support findings that are valid beyond the sub-populations from which they are derived.

Inspection of the data reported in Column K of Table 3.1 reveals that slightly more than 70 % of the empirical research reported, have predominantly involved respondents from American society. The trend over time reflects a slight decrease, as more researchers from other continents have become interested in research on sex-role identity and / or relationship satisfaction during the more recent years. This high figure in itself is not necessarily a problem. It can be argued that the American population is sufficiently varied and representative to use as a laboratory and to apply their findings also to other so-called "Western" countries, including Europe. A more fundamental problem exists in

trying to benefit from observations made when only involving Mormons, Texans, white Americans, residents from South-California, New York, Rhode Island or Chicago, and African-American citizens from Los Angeles. A typical example is the study of Burr (1967), who involved 116 couples from the city of St. Paul, Minnesota. Even acknowledging the use of more or less random sampling (of the inhabitants of the city), strictly speaking the findings are only valid for the 134 300 citizens living in the unique city at the time of the research.

The study of Acitelli *et al.* (1997) is one of very few that compared aspects of relationship satisfaction between (American) blacks and whites. Interestingly, when black wives understood their husbands by focusing on constructive behaviours during conflict, it correlated with both their own and their husbands' relationship satisfaction. For white wives, the same understanding was negatively related to their own and their husbands' relationship satisfaction. In the absence of explanations by the researchers, one can only speculate about the reasons for this observation, but perhaps the extended preceding period of history in which black Americans had to negotiate and bargain for every concession or right, and the complacency with which white Americans, predominantly male, could generally accept their supremacy without expecting or tolerating much resistance, could have something to do with it.

Sussman and Alexander's (1999) research covered the influence of religiosity and ethnicity on marital satisfaction for 85 Jewish-Christian couples. No predictors could be related to spouses' marital satisfaction.

The few examples of empirical work provided so far indicate the nature of some of the sub-populations studied. Each of them has specific idiosyncrasies that cast doubt on the subsequent wider generalisation of findings. The reason is that very specific kinds of bias are built into research designs in this way. Only in a few cases were national samples used, or other sufficient measures employed to minimise error variance.

A brief reference to the ~~non-American~~ sub-samples adds yet more complexity to the picture. Each of them also reflects unique sources of potential bias. Up to 1995, those studies involved respondents (number of studies between brackets) from: Australia (three), India (three), the Netherlands (three), Montreal (two), Alaska (one), Puerto Rico (one), and Israel (one). In no instance was a truly multi-cultural comparative study undertaken. Two studies involved subjects from only military environments. In two cases, no information was given on the sampling area. After 1995, non-American studies involved samples from Hungary (one), Canada (ten), Germany (three), Switzerland (two), England (three), Belgium (three), South Africa (three), Australia (three), Israel (one), the Netherlands (one), and Japan (one). This distribution testifies to a swift increase in research participants studying relationship satisfaction. Doubt existed in two or three cases about the identity of the sample, which was not stated, but could be guessed from other clues.

Three studies deserve specific mention. The first, by Hendrix (1997), is a truly cross-cultural study of marital quality and equality across 186 societies. Although the second, by Stack and Eshleman (1998), did not cover marital or relationship satisfaction directly, the researchers compared marital status and

general life satisfaction or happiness, and related demographic variables, for 18 000 adults across 17 nations (1981 to 1983 data from the World Values Study Group). It has to be acknowledged that the nations were predominantly European, with only Japan, Australia, Iceland, Canada and America, predominantly Western, outside Europe. Being married was much more closely linked to life satisfaction than was cohabitation. Cohabitants also had higher satisfaction levels than single persons. There were no sex differences. However, life satisfaction was more a function of positive financial and health factors, than of marital status, although being married contributed much to the improvement of partners' financial and health positions. The third study is the one of Williams, Satterwhite and Best (1999), who revisited their earlier work on pan-cultural sex-role stereotypes among 25 nations.

A final few references are made below to studies that give a more complete sense of the spread of factors potentially limiting the extent to which the research findings can be generalised.

Although Bahr and Day (1978) had drawn their sample randomly from telephone directories, and involved about 540 couples from the ~~Salt Lake City~~ metropolitan area, this localisation was unfortunate. It resulted in 75 % of the respondents being members of the ~~Mormon religion~~. A similar restriction occurred in the sample used by Condie and Doan (1978) in their study. Of the 168 ~~Utah~~ couples involved, 76,3 % belonged to the Mormon religion. These samples could be significantly atypical and biased towards conventional and even conservative values, thus prejudicing the findings.

The study of Agarwal and Srivastava (1989) only involved 300 ~~women from India~~. The studies of Shachar (1991) and Shukla and Kapoor (1990) respectively involved respondents from ~~Israel~~ and ~~India~~. The more detailed findings of these studies are reported on in the next chapter, respectively under 4.3.5 and 4.2.5. The Rogler and Procidano (1989) study already mentioned (3.2.2.1), covered ~~Puerto Rican~~ families only. Because societies, such as those mentioned, have often adhered to cultural and religious values and tenets quite different from those reigning in Western societies, which up to now comprised the bulk of samples in the field, it may be difficult to draw conclusions about findings, without cross-cultural benchmarking.

Although using a large probability sample of 928 couples, Bowen (1989b) selected respondents from a ~~military environment~~ only. At least one spouse from each couple was in the U.S. Air Force, stationed either in the USA, or in Asia or Europe. In about 60 % of the cases (couples), the husband was enlisted. However, for just more than half the couples, both spouses were employed by the Air Force. Characteristics specific to the sample, such as hierarchical structures of seniority and authority, certain temperaments being self-selected because of the kind of work done, and the influence of violence or training to operate under circumstances of violence, may have rendered the findings very unique. These may obviate valid generalisation to wider populations. Bowen and Orthner (1983) used part of the same sample for their study, namely the 331 couples based in the USA and Europe.

Another study took place in a military context. That was the one by Apt and Hurlbert (1993). They involved a small sample of 120 women from the military's referral system to family therapy.

Pleck *et al.* (1993) focused on the assessment of the impact of adolescent males' masculinity on heterosexual relationships. In cases such as this, limiting the spread of respondents in terms of age may also restrict the generalisability of findings severely.

Bereczkei and Csanaky's (1996) study involved a very large ~~Hungarian~~ sample of over 1 800 respondents. Their findings are reported in Section 4.3.2.

Although only marginally relevant to the selection and conceptualisation of variables and methodology in the present study, the work of Hendrix (1997) deserves mention for its novel way of attempting ~~cross-cultural~~ research using ~~qualitative~~ data. Hendrix used ethnographic data collected in 1969 in 186 pre-industrial societies for a range of general sociological purposes. By uniquely recoding some of the variables, he was able to investigate the link between quality and equality in marriage. Because of the nature of the data, both (sex-)role functioning and relationship quality were conceptualised in unique ways. The former focused more on role-sharing or role-differentiation, as it occurred within each specific society. Role equality was measured as the extent to which child-rearing behaviours, food production, food preparation, and related activities were segregated by sex. Marital quality was derived from the extent of sharing intimate situations, such as sleeping, taking meals and having leisure together, as well as fathers' attendance of childbirth. It was found that marital quality was greater cross-culturally when:

- male aggression was absent;
- women had more power in family groups;
- men did not fear women; and
- creation myths ascribed power to women.

Hendrix concluded that marital quality was more a function of role-sharing than equality (the latter especially in the sense of who had the highest power in sexual relationships). Therefore, sexual equality did not guarantee marriages of higher quality. Hendrix also referred to four theoretical perspectives against which equality and quality could be studied. According to these four positions, marital quality:

- was determined mainly by the expressive dimension whereby spouses' companionship, physical affection, and empathy combined to form highly subordinate (property), partly subordinate (complementary), senior-junior (partnership) or equal (egalitarian) relationships, according to who held most power; or
- could be seen, as in functionalist theory, as how compatibility and affection were brought about by role differentiation; or
- from an exchange perspective, could be viewed as a function of the relative shortage of women (i.e., being plentiful or scarce, which, in terms of political-economic and dyadic interactions, meant that power belonged to men when they were outnumbered by women, and to women when the inverse was true); or
- could be compared to the pet-master relationship where dominance and affection co-existed.

Greeff and De Bruyne (2000) made use of geographically and ethnically limited (~~Western Cape, black~~) respondents. Greeff and Le Roux (1998) involved institutionally restricted (~~military~~) couples. Greeff

and Malherbe (2001) involved only Afrikaans-speaking, Protestant participants from one suburb in Cape Town. All the samples were quite small.

To summarise, studies such as the ones just cited may be valuable as case studies and their findings are relevant to specific target groups. In the context of the present research the value of the findings in verifying the comprehensive theoretical underpinnings required for complex circumstances across time and many variables, still has to be explored and confirmed satisfactorily.

3.2.4 Findings based on the responses given by student samples

The use of student samples is a consistent and predominant feature in research reports. Research evaluators are in unison about the potential of this practice to jeopardise the quality of research findings. Many characteristics are likely to be associated with being a student. Included are aspects such as having above-average mental abilities, being young, not having been exposed to a wide spread of life roles, often living close to a residential university, and adhering to specific, often short-term and hedonistic sets of values.

Table 3.1 (Column J) provides evidence of the prevalence of this phenomenon in empirical studies in the field. Of the 160 studies reported in the table, just below 24 % involved student respondents. The statistic has been declining slightly over time. Taken at face value, the figure does not seem to be disturbingly high. However, when one considers that the research theme covers phenomena that typically occur in adult life, that is, after adolescence, the figure becomes more significant. A feature of sound research in the field would be to cover relationships over several or different life-stages, as this would safeguard against generalising findings on the basis of studies involving respondents from only one, early life-stage, such as the one in which students mostly find themselves.

If the practice of student sampling occurs as widely as is sometimes suggested, psychological knowledge as we know it may even be the psychology of students. However, assuming that not all students study at residential universities immediately on leaving school, although this may well apply in a majority of cases, some diversity in terms of age range and life circumstances may actually exist too. In defence of the practice of involving students, it could be said that researchers most likely react to the difficulties associated with finding willing adult subjects, and merely capitalise on the convenience of working with student samples, without malicious intent to rig their findings. The studies selectively cited below provide an illustration of how student sampling may have determined themes and influenced findings in the field of relationship satisfaction and sex-role identity. It has to be noted that not all the studies that have made use of student samples are reported on in this section. Some such studies are included in other sections or chapters where more prominent issues are addressed. A special case of this would be the next section (3.3.1), used for reporting on research designs featuring simulations. This has been the only recourse in cases where researchers engaged students on the topic of relationship satisfaction, because a majority of the students would not be involved in longer term dyadic (mostly marital) relationships themselves as yet.

Voelz (1985) ~~simulated couples' decision-making behaviour~~ by asking 80 undergraduate students to solve some decision-making problems. The students had been paired beforehand into heterosexual couples on the basis of their scores on a gender-role preference evaluation. It is doubtful whether such a strategy would provide useful findings in terms of dyadic behaviour in marriage. In Sections 3.3.1 and 4.2.5 some further details on the findings of the study are reported.

The link between sex-role socialisation and the broader construct of ~~expression of familial love~~, was researched by Ganong and Coleman (1987). In many senses, their findings are irrelevant to the present study. Not only do they not overlap well with the two main variables of the present study, but again the researchers involved 141 undergraduate students. However, the findings suggest a very valuable hypothesis. It is that androgynous persons may have a higher capacity than any other sex-role identity type subgroup to give and receive love behaviours and feelings. This predicts enhanced relationship satisfaction. Interestingly enough, there were no significant differences between the satisfaction scores of masculine sex-typed and feminine sex-typed respondents, or of males and females. Thus, there was also no support for a strict sex-role socialisation argument explaining emotional expression.

Another study sampling only college students was that of Bailey *et al.* (1987). They involved Caucasian, middle-class, Protestant, 20- to 21-year old students. The researchers focused on the link between sex, gender role, ~~love, sexual attitudes and self-esteem~~. However, some analyses also provided information on the relationship between sex-role identity and difficulties in ~~romantic relationships~~. The findings suggested that sex-stereotyped (student) couples experienced relationship problems because of discrepancies between their love and sexual attitudes. This outcome was explained further by noting that sex as such correlated with sex-role identity type. Thus, males mostly had a masculine and females mostly a feminine sex-role identity type. As a result, the findings made sense when taking into account that the masculine men were more inclined towards game playing, whilst the feminine women were inclined towards dependence and communion in love. Male and female sex-typed respondents understood the meaning and role of love and sexuality within their relationships very differently. Androgynous respondents, however, were more loving than sex-typed persons.

Frale (1989) did not research relations or relationship satisfaction at all, and even though she only involved a student sample, one particular contribution by her is of importance for the present study. She concluded that some sex-role inventories did measure more than expressiveness and instrumentality, because a connection was found between sex-role ideology (attitudes) and sex-role identity. She established that sex-typed individuals (masculine males and feminine females) held stronger attitudes in favour of gender rules than individuals with any other sex-role identity type. Would this apply later in life too, is the question.

Gerber (1991) involved 96 undergraduate student ~~volunteers~~. This renders the findings suspect in more than one sense. The study is described in more detail under Section 4.2.4. Another methodological constraint of this study is discussed in the next section (3.3.1). Two earlier studies in which Gerber had participated, suffered from the same restrictions. Gerber (1987) previously used 120

undergraduate student volunteers. The same applies in the case of the 168 introductory psychology student volunteers who participated in the study by Gerber and Balkin (1977).

In the study mentioned last above, a deeper concern is raised about sampling. It is the phenomenon that many of the students involved in studies have actually been ~~undergraduate psychology students~~. This trend has been prominent in the post-1995 work in particular. From the remaining review of findings below, this fact, among others, is clear.

Ryles (1995) involved 210 students. The study is mentioned because it is one of a very few recent ones that made use of the *BSRI*, although, on the relationship satisfaction side, it is less relevant to the present research, for two reasons. First, it only studied fear of intimacy, which is a very limited part of relationship dynamics. Second, it did not really include intimate dyadic relationships. Also Street, Kimmel and Kromrey (1995) did not study relationships. They did, however, research the consistency of gender-role perceptions among a sample of 3 300 students from a metropolitan university in Florida. Their findings were unique, and are reported under Section 7.2.2.3. Sugihara and Katsurada (1999) involved 265 Japanese students in research on the *BSRI*, again without studying relationship satisfaction (also cf. Section 7.2.2.1).

Aube *et al.* (1995) also involved a very small student sample ($n = 28$ couples), leading to a low average age (21,5 years) and relationships of very short average duration (21,6 months).

Also some of the respondents involved by Rowan, Compton and Rust (1995), and Noller, Feeney and Ward (1997) were students and introductory psychology students respectively. Most of the respondents from the study by Sprecher, Metts, Burleson, Hatfield and Thompson (1995) were undergraduate or graduate university students too. The respondents in the study by Zak and McDonald (1997) were also college students.

The study by Holt and Ellis (1998) involved a not so typical student population. The 138 psychology students' average age of 25 years and age range of 18 to 52, both signify that they more resembled broader society than the typical undergraduate class. The fact that they came from a Southern university may, in turn, have rendered their views slightly more conservative than those of the broader American society members. The successful replication of Bem's *BSRI* findings also testified to the integrity of the sample.

In the study of Keelan, Dion and Dion (1998), also referred to under Section 3.3.1, 99 introductory psychology students participated. The study of Cramer and Westergren (1999), discussed under Section 4.2.3, involved 60 students, assumed to be American. Married graduate-school students participated in the study reported by Sokolski and Hendrick (1999) (cf. Sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.5 for their findings.) Also the study by Williams *et al.* (1999), dealing with sex-role stereotypes (and discussed under Section 4.2.4), involved only students. The study by Cramer (2000), discussed under Section 3.2.2, involved only 95 British undergraduate students. Introductory psychology students in dating couples participated in the study by Murray, Holmes, Griffin, Bellavia and Rose (2001).

Introductory psychology students in dating couples also participated in the study of Meeks, Hendrick and Hendrick (1998). They found that among men there was a stronger relation between altruistic love (attitudes) and relationship satisfaction than among women. Relationship satisfaction also correlated with own and perceived partner self-disclosure levels. Own and perceived partner integrative conflict-resolution tactics correlated positively and avoidance tactics negatively with relationship satisfaction. Communication competence was also related to relationship satisfaction. Overall, an attitude of positive love was the strongest predictor by far. Also Watson, Hubbard and Wiese (2000) involved undergraduate psychology students in some of the sub-samples they drew. To their credit, their research was designed to compare relationship satisfaction among dating and marital couples in as far as the influence of personality traits and affectivity was concerned. (Their findings are reported in more detail under Sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.4.)

Hoffman and Borders (2001) also involved 273 women and 98 men undergraduate students from a South-Eastern American university in her work. They were all human sciences students, mostly Caucasian, and included an unknown number of athletes. The idiosyncratic nature of such a sample could have a large influence on findings, particularly in research on the validity of constructs. (Cf. a further discussion of this study under Section 7.2.2.1.)

In conclusion, although gender research had boomed since the early and middle 1980s, findings were still based disproportionately on white heterosexual college students (Basow, 1992). Basow reached this conclusion based on the authority of an impressive list of about 3 000 references. The discussion at the beginning of the present sub-section, on the prevalence of the use of student samples, to some extent confirms this concern, with about a quarter of the studies reviewed, following suit. This situation calls for circumspection by present-day researchers to ensure that their samples are representative.

3.3 Other methodological issues

The remaining sub-sections of this chapter more or less cover conceptual issues and choices that may influence the value and validity of one's research findings.

3.3.1 Findings based on non-empirical simulations assessing anticipated behaviours

A number of researchers studied aspects of relationship satisfaction and sex-role identity by means of hypothetical situations. Column G from Table 3.1 reveals that it occurred in 8 % of the cases, seemingly on the decline. An additional 11 % of the teams, although studying real-life dyads, only focused on pre-marital relationships. A growing trend is observable in this case. The core limitation in the latter case could be, as before, that different or varied life stages are not covered. As a result, such designs could have insufficient scientific value, or may not produce directly relevant knowledge about the implied constructs. Expectations and attitudes do not necessarily fit with real-life outcomes, especially not with future situations. Obviously, expectations can be studied in their own right, but in the context of the present study, they are inconclusive and mostly irrelevant. The overall figure of 19 % for the two types of hypothetical study, seems to be increasing slightly over time. Reference is made in the

rest of the sub-section to insights that could be valuable in illuminating relationship satisfaction and/or sex-role identity.

The study of Pursell, Banikiotes and Sebastian (1981) focused on the relationship between sex-role orientation and ~~marital roles~~. Only ~~ideal mates~~, i.e. fictitious ones, were considered. Androgynous subjects preferred egalitarian marriages. They also judged scenarios depicting such marriages as experiences of marital happiness. Stereotyped (sex-typed) subjects did not have any significant preference for either egalitarian or traditional marriage situations. Androgynous subjects depicted ideal mates as persons with an androgynous sex-role identity type. They also considered their chances of achieving happiness the greatest in such marriages, should they marry in future. The same was true for stereotyped subjects, although to a lesser degree. The effect was much more enhanced for female subjects than for male ones throughout. It has to be noted that this research in addition involved only undergraduate students (also see 3.2.4).

Voelz (1985) simulated couples' ~~decision-making behaviour~~. She paired undergraduate students into heterosexual couples on the basis of their scores on a gender-role preference test. Couples were classified as traditional, modern, or mixed in terms of the first two dimensions. The substitute couples had to achieve consensus on three decision-making tasks. One of these was a gender-related task. Traditional male - modern female couples had increased difficulty in reaching decision-making consensus. This resulted in decreased satisfaction with whatever degree of consensus reached in the end anyway. Other aspects of the findings of Voelz's study are reported under Sections 3.3.4 and 4.2.5.

McCann, Stewin and Short (1990) researched the relationship between ~~femininity~~ and expected satisfaction over Duvall's eight ~~stages of married life~~. These stages are discussed more fully under Section 4.3.6. The participants were 94 single, undergraduate students. The rationale for their unique study was to evaluate the discrepancies between expectations and reality later in life. This would serve as the basis for educational material preparing individuals for parental satisfaction. In general terms, findings on the expectation patterns supported the outcomes of research on real-life cases. This meant that the pattern associated with women (and partly with femininity, by implication), followed a U-shaped curve over family stages. The pattern for men showed a more linear decline. Femininity was associated significantly with expected satisfaction, while masculinity was not.

Another simulation study was the one of Gerber (1991). She described a number of hypothetical cases to students. A majority of the students were unmarried. The students had to ascribe perceived ~~personality traits~~ to spouses. This had to be done in the light of a specific role that was experimentally assigned to the characters in the stories. The study is referred to in a bit more detail under Section 4.2.4. In Gerber's (1987) earlier study, she requested students to rate the supposed contribution of stereotyped characteristics to the marital happiness of fictitious couples. No real-life replication or confirmation of this laboratory research followed afterwards. The second study, as well as the much earlier one by Gerber and Balkin (1977), is referred to in somewhat more detail under Section 4.2.6. In

the latter study, the researchers also provided simulated cases to test the functioning of sex-role stereotyping within and outside marital relationships.

Hassebrauck (1995) provided 100 male and female participants with descriptions of couples' relationships, and required them to evaluate the influence of certain features on relationship quality. Absent central features, as opposed to peripheral ones, affected the evaluations much more negatively. Present central features were not necessarily linked to more positive evaluations.

Gottman, Coan, Carrere and Swanson (1998) also made use of laboratory discussions of recalled conflict situations, thus observing ~~affect and communication patterns~~ in conflict situations among spouses. More can be found about this study under Section 4.2.5.

The study of Keelan *et al.* (1998) comprised non-couple students who had to produce responses, rated for self-disclosure level, to an assumed listener (an opposite-sex stranger *vis-à-vis* their current romantic partner). This simulation study seemed to suggest that self-disclosure levels should correlate with relationship satisfaction. (Also cf. a reference to the study under Section 3.2.4).

The study of Cramer and Westergren (1999), discussed further under Section 4.2.3, serve as an example of experimentally trying to establish whether or not ~~social attitudes~~ influence gender identity. This was achieved by comparing respondents' two sets of *Thematic Apperception Test* stories completed before and after been given bogus feedback on their *BSRI* profiles. As such, there is a risk that the findings will have no bearing upon social changes in the real world after some time has lapsed.

In conclusion, the value of studies that attempt to describe future conditions or dynamics within intimate relationships by only investigating the future perspectives or expectations of respondents, who are (as yet / still) outside that reality, is suspect, unless some form of longitudinal tracking is undertaken. Such studies risk being unable to create useful models or a well-conceived theoretical basis for understanding relationship satisfaction and sex-role identity.

3.3.2 Findings based on studies with a restricted conceptualisation of constructs and variables

Chapter 2 provides the backdrop to the present study, mainly by providing a thorough conceptual and theoretical basis. It also emphasises the importance of sufficient definitions of research constructs, properly operationalised variables, and appropriate measuring instruments. Constructs, variables, and measures are important because they are the elementary building blocks of a specific research design, and of research methodology, more generally. To follow a poor methodology is to jeopardise the value of a study.

The patterns evident in Columns B, C and D of Table 3.1 can be used to gauge the contribution made by previous empirical findings to the present study. Studies indicated with a "bullet" ("●" or "■") in Column C, have investigated either sex-role identity or relationship satisfaction ("●"), or neither ("■"). The latter studies (covering neither of the two core variables of the present study) comprise very few, but have nevertheless been included in some discussions because of the pertinent perspectives they

have brought. A dramatic increase over time is evident in the number of studies not covering both variables named. The overall figure of just below 70 % reflects figures of 39 % before 1996 and 92 % since then, respectively. It appears as if the interest of researchers have lately been shifting from sex-role identity to relationship satisfaction research.

Within the ambit of the present study, it is argued that some value is being lost through this trend. The most recent research has almost ceased to produce knowledge about the hypothesis of the present research, which proposes a strong link between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction. Salient findings from some of these studies are reported, because doing so provides the opportunity to identify and avoid previous methodological flaws and pitfalls, and to improve present methodology and conceptualisation.

Already more than three decades ago, Burr (1967) alerted his readers to the fact that conceptual chaos reigned in as far as the construct of relationship satisfaction was concerned. He pointed out how the concepts marital adjustment, satisfaction, happiness, integration, success, love, and functionality interchangeably designated apparently much the same conceptual idea. Researchers also measured this conceptual idea in many different ways. Then again, different researchers used the same concept for decidedly different constructs. This state of affairs made it almost impossible to compare the findings of different studies.

Obstfeld, Lupfer and Lupfer (1985) conducted research on the relationship between sex-role identity type and sexual satisfaction. They measured sex-role identity in different ways by using the *BSRI* three times in succession. This enabled them to generate scores for sex-role identity, sex-role expectations, and sex-role performance. They evaluated the mediating influence of the latter two constructs, and also congruence between two or more of the three variables as predictor of satisfaction. Contrary to the stated hypothesis, androgyny among subjects was not associated with sexual satisfaction. The findings suggested that sexual satisfaction was predicted best by the perception that the particular actor (spouse member) possessed significantly more masculinity than the average same-sex person. The inverse was true for dissatisfaction, where significantly higher femininity scores were evident. A possible explanation for this pattern is that masculinity often correlates with high self-esteem. The latter is closely linked with the perceived social desirability of masculinity. Sexual satisfaction, though, does not necessarily correlate with relationship satisfaction.

The next few paragraphs illustrate the effect of findings that link issues of conceptualisation (and even theory) and analysis techniques. As noted under Section 3.2.1, where other related aspects of work by the same authors are discussed, Bowen's (1989a) methodological critique of Li and Caldwell's (1987) work is dealt with in the present sub-section. According to Bowen, Li and Caldwell failed at the outset to consider simpler first-order effects of husband and wife sex-role preferences. For them, husband and wife sex-role preference difference scores served as independent variable. Marital quality was the dependent variable. Bowen especially criticised the treatment of the variables as being continuous when regression analyses were carried out. Bowen also argued that Li and Caldwell confused linear and non-linear effects by using difference scores. By doing this, the research methodology proposed

by Li and Caldwell could not replicate some of the earlier findings from the research done by Bowen and Orthner (1983).

Bowen and Orthner, by contrast, applied analysis of variance to their own data. They also considered the couple as unit of analysis, instead of treating each spouse's marital satisfaction separately (as Li and Caldwell did). As a result, Bowen considered the significant prediction of marital adjustment from difference scores for sex-role congruency between spouses, as executed by Li and Caldwell, suspect. Essentially, Bowen's criticism levelled against Li and Caldwell's methodology hinges on a few important issues. They are:

- No theoretical or empirical justification was provided for the choice of regression analysis.
- The original hypotheses formulated by Bowen and Orthner (that couples with congruent sex-role patterns would report higher marital quality) was never referred to. The "replication" study by Li and Caldwell did not in any way relate back to the findings it set out to test. It even failed to specify the direction of relationships in the formulated hypotheses.
- They failed to examine the assumptions of linearity, normality and constant variance underpinning regression analysis, which descriptive and diagnostic procedures, such as plot analysis, would have readily revealed.
- The high degree of correlation between the two sex-role congruence measures called for the examination of high collinearity (both being linear). This was not done.

The situation portrayed above led to errors in ~~interpretation and inference~~. In particular, Li and Caldwell's findings concerning wives were more an artefact of their analysis than supported fundamentally by their data. Therefore, their conclusion that sex-role congruence is a better predictor of marital adjustment for husbands than it is for wives, is also suspect. Finally, Li and Caldwell's sample was very small. It comprised only 67 couples, and was a sample of convenience. Bowen admonished future researchers to examine first-order effects first. They could then proceed to second-order effects, or interactions, should nothing meaningful be revealed. The latter should in any event only be done with due theoretical and empirical justification.

Caldwell and Li (1989) responded to the criticisms by Bowen (1989a). They argued that a theoretical reason for their approach had been the unexpectedness of the finding of Bowen and Orthner (1983). The latter researchers found that some patterns of spousal incongruence or disagreement did not lead to diminished marital satisfaction. This applied to the traditional wife and modern husband combination. Furthermore, they wanted to extend the sample to non-military populations, and also avail themselves of newly developed measures of marital quality. The methodological criticisms were well taken. However, they refused to accept that their calculation of magnitude of incongruence or difference necessarily assumed non-linear relationships, which was the reason why such relationships were tested. In conclusion, Caldwell and Li acknowledged that the cause of most of the criticisms was their failure to make explicit their assumptions and assuming a sophisticated readership. Nevertheless, a debate like this was considered beneficial. It stimulated further research aimed at contributing to psychological theory, therapeutic practice and research methodology.

The abovementioned example clearly points out that researchers should seriously consider how best to conceptualise and measure their research variables. It is a prerequisite for research designs and research methodology that will be able to yield valid findings in a complex field. This appeal is confirmed by citing a few more recent examples.

The study by Kaslow and Robison (1996) remained at a very ~~elementary~~ level of conceptualisation and analysis by studying the frequency of perceptions about factors desirable for success in the marriage.

In some studies, such as the one by Byrne and Arias (1997), marital satisfaction was treated as independent variable, reducing the value of their findings for the present study (also cf. Section 4.2.1 and 4.2.5 for more information on the findings from this study).

In the study by Rankin-Esquer, Burnett, Baucom and Epstein (1997), the operationalisation of variables became quite ~~complicated~~. Respondents had to deduce the extent of their own autonomy and/or relatedness (togetherness) from their beliefs about spouses' contributions to their own sense of autonomy or relatedness, as perceived through their spouses' behaviour. In addition to this inexact conceptualisation, autonomy and relatedness were not distinguished well from relationship satisfaction itself. The few significant findings in this regard are reported in more detail in Section 4.2.6.

As indicated at Section 4.3, Dillaway and Broman (2001) argued for a more comprehensive treatment of ~~demographic variables~~ to establish their potential interaction with marital satisfaction.

In this sub-section, some illustrations have been provided of the impact that conceptual restrictions can have on research findings. The illustrations are drawn from recent literature reporting empirical research findings in the field under review. In a general way, studies have been reviewed in terms of the degree to which they have contributed knowledge about the relationship between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction.

3.3.3 Studies and findings underpinned by inadequate theoretical assumptions

The theoretical underpinnings of research are as basic to the soundness of its findings as are the conceptual issues referred to in the previous section. Inadequate or limited theoretical foundations will not support good research in a complex field of study. Even worse, it may fail to invite further research that challenges the boundaries of existing knowledge. Various aspects pertaining to the theoretical backdrop of the present study are dealt with more fully under Sections 1.4, 2.1.7, 2.2, and 2.3. However, selected references are cited in this section to illustrate the necessity to be ~~inclusive~~ with regard to the theoretical position one adopts for underpinning a thorough study of sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction.

Davidson and Sollie (1987) confirmed that androgynous and sex-typed individuals and their spouses experienced higher marital adjustment than undifferentiated individuals and their spouses. Couples where both spouses had an undifferentiated sex-role identity type reported the lowest level of marital satisfaction. Androgynous couples and sex-typed couples (masculine males and feminine females)

reported higher levels of satisfaction. Spouses' satisfaction was only partially related to the sex-role identity type of the partner. Wives of androgynous husbands reported the highest satisfaction. However, the researchers did not investigate dyadic interaction to the full. By this statement is meant that not all potential configurations in terms of sex-role identity type within and outside conventional marriage were tested. For instance, the influence of cross-typed sex-role identity types was not studied, nor non-heterosexual dyads, or sex-role identity congruency. Instead, the researchers relied on the more general theoretical perspective of **symbolic interaction**, according to which relationship success is mainly related to role-enactment capabilities, response to situational demands, and role-taking ability. In their conclusion, the researchers called for further research testing the reciprocal nature of the sex-role identity type and personal adjustment relationship between spouses, and the joint effect of the two variables on marital quality.

Although not directly studying relationship satisfaction, some of the outcomes of Forshaw and Shmukler's (1993) critique of the masculinity model have to be noted. On providing strong arguments against accepting that masculinity significantly predicts psychological well-being, two main considerations were proposed:

- a link between two variables does not necessarily imply **causality** in the hypothesised direction; and
- many **moderator variables** (as yet not investigated) may explain the seemingly consistent link between masculinity and psychological well-being.

Because many researchers have studied the relationship between androgyny *vis-à-vis* masculinity and relationship satisfaction, some caution is warranted. More sex-role identity type configurations could play a role.

Prinsloo (1990, 1992a) provided an overview of the theoretical context within which sex-role stereotypes and identity are presumably best assessed. A more extensive discussion of this is presented under Sections 2.2 and 2.3.

In summary, theoretical foundations have to be chosen circumspectly. They have to support comprehensive assessments of the interrelations between the main variables at stake. In the present case, they are sex-role identity (type and traits) and relationship satisfaction, and the many intra- and extra-personal factors potentially serving as moderating or nuisance variables. These aspects are all placed in perspective in Chapter 4.

3.3.4 Findings based on studies dating far back

Many large-scale trends shape the practice of science, research and the related professions. At present, issues such as globalisation, global change, and social transformation, among others, are prominent. It is not inconceivable that the Feminist Movement, that came to the fore just over three decades ago in America, was an important step towards today's mega-trends. How this most likely occurred, is by seeding the realisation that there are other worlds beyond that of male thinking and domination.

Similarly, a rapidly expanding realisation exists that other cultural positions, instead of only the Euro-

Western one, other types of dyadic, intimate relationships, instead of only marriage, and more complicated theoretical positions, instead of only those supporting a simplistic notion of maleness and femaleness, are possible. In Section 2.2, as well as in Prinsloo (1990), these matters are discussed more fully. It is evident from this that the field of gender studies has experienced exceptionally rapid development of theory. It has also benefited much from improved research skills and technology. The possibility has become real that some of the older findings could be outdated. However, it has to be noted that some very early research may not have become dated merely because it took place long ago. Certain classic, pioneering studies, ahead of their time, may still be very relevant today.

Therefore, even if Column A from Table 3.1 gives an idea of the spread in age of the 160 listed studies, one has to be careful about how this distribution is interpreted. The table shows that 41 of the studies carry date tags from the 1980s, and only 3 from the 1970s. Put differently, almost 75 % of the studies were published from 1988 onwards, with the bulk of them (about 64 % of the 160 articles) in the foregoing 10 years. Nineteen studies have been as recent as the years 2000 and 2001. The recent proliferation of research has the effect of reducing the relative proportion of pre-1990 studies to below a quarter. It also testifies to a still very active field of research. Two examples of research findings reported more than a decade ago have been selected at random to illustrate the kind of reservations that one may have to apply when interpreting the datedness of findings.

Burr (1967) endeavoured to bring about a conceptual reformulation in the field of marital satisfaction. New theory was proposed and partly tested. The study was valuable at the time. Of importance was the researcher's consideration of role expectations and role behaviour, and their influence on marital satisfaction. However, the findings have been overtaken by many conceptual and theoretical developments. The work of Bem since the 1970s, the widespread effects and profound implications of the Women's Liberation Movement, and drastic role changes, are examples.

An interesting finding by Murstein and Williams (1983) indicated that both husbands' and wives' marriage adjustment was determined only by the sex-role behaviour of husbands. Marital happiness correlated with husbands' androgyny, and to a lesser degree, with their femininity and masculinity. For wives, androgyny and sex-typed femininity (although to a lesser degree than for males), only correlated significantly with their own marital adjustment. The data suggested that women's courtship behaviour and marital adjustment were still at that stage highly dependent on men's behaviour and attitudes. In the light of many recent developments and role shifts, a revisit of these findings is called for, specifically to evaluate the relative contributions that current (the most recent) assumptions, and those held previously, made to findings, be they different or similar. Earlier assumptions hypothesised that androgyny, as well as sex-typed orientations in anticipation of traditional challenges, would predict marital adjustment best. There exists doubt whether or not this is still predominantly the case.

In closing, a related concern is noted. This entails the practice of researchers, without replication or historical reasons in mind, to use data, collected long before the publication of their work, for fairly recent publications. Bollman, Schumm, Jurich and Yoon (1997) did this with data collected in 1977/78, Johnson and Booth (1998) with data from 1980, and Ruvolo and Veroff (1997) with 1986 data. However, one should also be sensitive to the fact that secondary data analysis can be a very responsible and economic way to handle data. Williams *et al.* (1999) re-analysed a large 1982 data set

covering sex-role stereotypes from 25 nations in terms of the more recent five-factor conceptualisation of personality. Although making this link is plausible in itself, doubt remains about the desirability of trusting such dated data on stereotypes. (Cf. Section 4.2.4 for a report on their findings.) The main concern lies in the fact that a study may have been conceptualised and operationalised wholly differently, had it been done with today's knowledge about theoretical developments. Naïve findings may result from bringing to bear sophisticated, new understanding on old, rudimentary data, not intended to carry the burden of the former.

3.4 Conclusion

A number of pertinent methodological issues pertaining to research on sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction have been illustrated in this chapter. To conclude this chapter, a few observations are made concerning these issues.

Although each of the publications referred to so far contributed in its own important way to the body of scientific knowledge, a fairly selective approach was adopted by most of their authors by, in isolation, studying small parts of the field under investigation. It emerges that researchers have not tested in sufficient depth expanded theoretical frameworks that could apply to other than conventional marital relationships. They have predominantly studied females in single-sex studies. Also, sampling practices, such as the high incidence of undergraduate students, have often compromised the generalisability of findings. So too did localising samples to unusual or geographically restricted areas. Simulations, instead of true empirical studies of dyadic relationships, also could not contribute much to valid scientific knowledge.

Further, researchers seldom focused primarily on sex-role identity and/or relationship satisfaction. These constructs were often dealt with as moderator variables. Moreover, no systematic treatment of predictor and predicted variables was undertaken. This is evident from the inconsistent treatment of both sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction as independent and dependent variables respectively. In both cases, there has generally been a haphazard study of individual *vis-à-vis* dyadic influences and outcomes. These phenomena have also not been researched properly in cases where only individual scores have been considered, neglecting configurations or (in)congruence of phenomena among dyadic pairs. As a result, the contributions have not been able adequately to inform the more holistic approach adhered to in the present study. Therefore, the need for research based on comprehensive theory is highlighted.

Sufficient indications have been provided thus far to ensure that duplication is being avoided. Put differently, a particular scientific contribution is called for, and the current approach selected for the present study, aims to do so by paying close attention to the relevant theoretical, conceptual and methodological issues, as listed mainly in Chapters 2 and 3 so far.