

CHAPTER 4

LITERATURE REVIEW: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS FROM PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The focus in this chapter is on the empirical content of studies reflected in the literature on sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction. Findings are clustered under selected headings to enable a critical assessment of the contribution made by previous studies to the present study. It also becomes clear how different variables have previously been used. Cross-references, the chronology of articles, and conventions in referring to correlations, are treated as in Chapter 3. With regard to trends over time, some observations are made, where relevant, to findings before 1996 and since 1996. The demonstration in Chapter 3 of how methodological issues have influenced the interpretation of the role played by sex-role identity in determining relationship satisfaction, is now extended. The following sections are devoted to the stated aspects of the discussion:

- In Section 4.1, the comprehensive theory of dyadic relationship outcomes, developed as Figure 3.1, is applied further. This time the "empty shell" of Figure 3.1 is filled with the numbers of findings covering the relevant links between the independent and dependent variables of the present study.
- Section 4.2 indicates how intra-personal factors have affected research designs and culminated in the subsequent conclusions or findings.
- Section 4.3 focuses on how extra-personal factors determined certain aspects of research designs and findings.

Figures 4.1 to 4.3, linked respectively to Sections 4.1 to 4.3, indicate only the relevant numbers of significant findings gleaned from the various studies, while the contents of those findings are fully documented in the text that follows on the figures. The sequence of the textual presentation is partly linked to the schematic structure.

By comprehensively documenting previous findings, in the way introduced, valuable lessons are derived giving direction with regard to the content, nature and novel contributions of the present study.

4.1 Main findings on sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction

The information in Columns B to D of Table 3.1 (cf. Annexure 3.1) reveals the extent to which previous research has covered the two main research variables of the present study. As explained under Section 3.3.2, the codes ("●", and "■") in the right-hand side of Column C respectively indicate the studies either researching sex-role identity or relationship satisfaction, or neither of the two (only a very few). Such studies contribute incomplete knowledge about the relationship between the two research variables under investigation. The trend appears to reveal a dramatic decrease in research interest in the link between the two variables, as shown by the average of almost 70 % of the studies not covering both variables. This figure rose sharply from the almost 40 % before 1996, to the above 90 % since then.

The accomplishments of each study are further qualified by inspecting the rest of the information in any given row. The row information details, for example, how sampling was done, the research instruments that were used, and other aspects such as the emphasis on nuisance variables. Very few studies then remain that used research designs and methodology similar to those being used in or informative to the present study. This situation is confirmed, for instance, by noting how seldom same-sex (non-heterosexual) couples were sampled. In most cases, findings cannot be generalised to dyadic relationships beyond the conventional heterosexual relationships that were studied. Only four studies show overlap that is potentially directly relevant to the present research. In two of them, very few respondents were used (Cardell *et al.*, 1981; Peters & Cantrell, 1993), with the second one only having studied female partners. In the third study also covering same-sex relationships (Norton, 1995), in addition to involving a fairly small sample ($n=62$), only very little statistical analysis was done or reported in detail, thus reducing its contribution and value further. This leaves only one study (Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986) that is directly comparable and generated knowledge overlapping fully with the present study.

In conclusion, the research profile described above confirms the need for more knowledge about the topic.

Notwithstanding the lack of direct comparability between the reviewed findings and the present study, the former were still very useful. Replicated relationship patterns suggest confidence in the consistency of some of their outcomes. Figure 4.1 and the rest of the text in this section present and structure the various significant findings on the relationship between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction. Frequency and content are both addressed. The theory of dyadic relationship outcomes developed earlier (Figure 3.1) is now applied further.

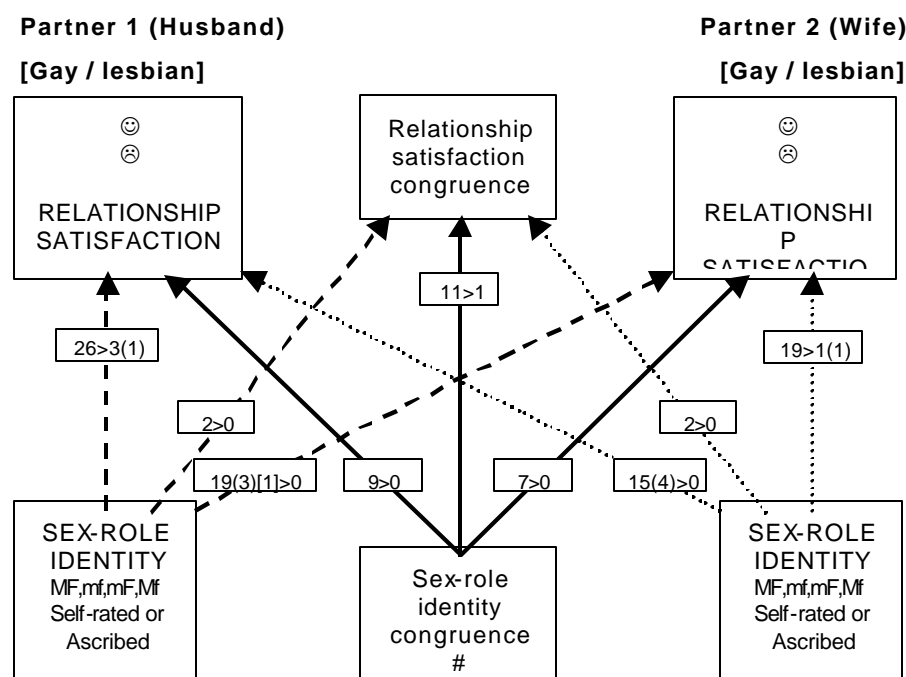


Figure 4.1: Schematic representation of the frequency* of research findings on the relationship between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction (dyadic relationship outcomes theory)

* The numbers of significant findings observed for any given link up to and since 1995 are presented respectively before and after the relevant symbol (>) indicating a consistent decline in trend. Numbers in round brackets refer to findings based on ascribed sex-role identity. The number in square brackets refers to a single study involving lesbian couples.
 # The whole of Figure 2.1 can be transposed onto this position

Figure 4.1 may seem complex at first glance. However, it is in fact presented to simplify understanding the text in the rest of this section. For example, by following the set of broken lines from the square depicting husbands' (Partner 1) sex-role identity (bottom left) towards the three relationship satisfaction cells at the top (for Partner 1, Partner 2 and the congruence patterns among both), indications are found along the way about how often (significant) correlations have occurred in the empirical studies reported on for the given link. These studies and findings are discussed under Section 4.1.1. The same process (along dotted lines) can be repeated from the square for wives' (Partner 2) sex-role identity (bottom right). The discussion follows under Section 4.1.2. The last sequence (cf. Section 4.1.3) follows the solid lines from sex-role identity congruence (bottom centre) to the relationship satisfaction cells at the top. After these, the same patterns are investigated, but in terms of ascribed sex-role identity (4.1.4) and same-sex dyads (4.1.5). At the relevant places, reference is made to trends in the number of studies up to and after 1995, reflecting the growing lack of interest in studying the link between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction. Although some energy has been put into studies of same-sex couples (cf. the increased focus on intra- and interpersonal variables in this regard, related under Sections 4.2 and 4.3), same-sex dyads have not really received any research attention in as far as the link between partners' sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction is concerned. This situation provides another argument in favour of the potential value and contribution of the present study.

4.1.1 Influence of ~~husbands'~~ sex-role identity on personal and spousal relationship satisfaction

In this section, the investigation focuses on determining whether certain sex-role identity types (on their own, or relative to other sex-role identity types) among ~~husbands~~ have been consistently related to their personal relationship satisfaction, that of their spouses, and/or the satisfaction pattern in the dyad / marriage.

- Influence of husbands' sex-role identity on their ~~personal~~ relationship satisfaction

From the studies by Cooper, Chassin and Zeiss (1985), Fuhrmann (1989), Murstein and Williams (1983) and Peterson *et al.* (1989), it is clear that ~~androgyny~~ among husbands correlated significantly with their personal experience of relationship satisfaction. Taken on its own, this sex-role identity type performed much the same as masculinity and femininity. In the studies of Aube *et al.* (1995), Baucom and Aiken (1984), Cardell *et al.* (1981), Juni and Grimm (1993), Langis *et al.* (1991) and Langis *et al.* (1994), ~~masculine~~ husbands experienced relationship satisfaction or good dyadic adjustment, whereas in the studies of Aube *et al.* (1995), Baucom and Aiken (1984), Harrington-Hill (1992), Juni and Grimm (1993), Langis *et al.* (1994), and Meyer (1997), feminine husbands experienced high marital satisfaction or quality. Femininity also correlated with fear of intimacy in the study of Ryles (1995). Interestingly

enough, the effects that masculinity and femininity had on personal relationship satisfaction were greater for feminine husbands than for feminine wives, and for masculine husbands as compared to feminine wives (Murstein & Williams, 1983). An ~~undifferentiated~~ sex-role identity type predicted the absence of relationship satisfaction for husbands (Peterson *et al.*, 1989).

Siavelis and Lamke (1992) reported that the ~~simultaneous~~ presence of an ~~instrumental~~ and an ~~expressive~~ sex-role orientation in husbands, which is not that different from androgyny, correlated with their personal relationship satisfaction. According to the typology of Parsons and Bales (Kelly & Worell, 1977), instrumental characteristics refer to an individual's inclination to favour cognitive, goal-directed and self-oriented attitudes and behaviour, while expressive characteristics include affective, supporting and other-oriented inclinations. The former was also termed agentic, and the latter communal, by Bakan (Kelly & Worell, 1977).

~~Androgyny~~ predicted relationship satisfaction significantly ~~better than~~ an ~~undifferentiated~~ sex-role identity type according to the findings of Davidson and Sollie (1987), Parmelee (1987), Peterson *et al.* (1989) and Rosenzweig and Dailey (1989), and ~~than masculinity~~ (Murstein and Williams, 1983). However, there was no consensus on the relative roles of masculinity and femininity. Baucom and Aiken (1984), Murstein and Williams (1983), Parmelee (1987) and Peterson *et al.* (1989) reported that ~~feminine~~ husbands ~~more~~ often experienced relationship satisfaction ~~than masculine~~ ones, while Murstein and Williams (1983) reported the ~~opposite~~. According to the findings of Davidson and Sollie (1987), Parmelee (1987), Peterson *et al.* (1989) and Rosenzweig and Dailey (1989) ~~masculine~~ husbands (and ~~also feminine~~ husbands, as reported by Parmelee, 1987) experienced ~~higher~~ relationship satisfaction ~~than undifferentiated~~ husbands. ~~Undifferentiated~~ men experienced the ~~lowest~~ levels of marital adjustment in infertile couples (Edelman & Connolly, 1996).

On their own, androgyny, masculinity and femininity have all been linked to high relationship satisfaction, with the opposite the case for an undifferentiated sex-role identity type. Relative to each other, androgyny consistently outperformed the other sex-role identity types, while an undifferentiated sex-role identity type have consistently performed worst. No consistent pattern has applied regarding the relative contribution of masculinity *vis-à-vis* femininity.

- Influence of husbands' sex-role identity on their ~~wives'~~ relationship satisfaction

Husbands' ~~androgyny~~ (Cooper *et al.*, 1985; Murstein & Williams, 1983; Peterson *et al.*, 1989), masculinity (Langis *et al.*, 1994; Obstfeld *et al.*, 1985; Peterson *et al.*, 1989) and femininity (Antill, 1983; Bradbury, Campbell & Fincham, 1995; Peterson *et al.*, 1989) were all found to correlate significantly with their wives' relationship satisfaction. However, Bradbury *et al.* (1995) also reported that ~~masculinity~~ in husbands correlated with ~~low~~ relationship satisfaction in their wives.

In comparison with other sex-role identity types, various influences were detected. Husbands' ~~androgyny better~~ predicted wives' relationship satisfaction ~~than~~ husbands' ~~femininity~~ (Cooper *et al.*, 1985). So did their ~~androgyny~~ in comparison with their ~~masculinity~~ (Davidson & Sollie, 1987), and their ~~femininity~~ in comparison with their ~~masculinity~~ (Antill, 1983; Peterson *et al.*, 1989). Cooper *et al.* (1985),

Davidson and Sollie (1987) and Peterson *et al.* (1989) reported that ~~androgyny~~ in husbands predicted wives' relationship satisfaction better than husbands' undifferentiated sex-role identity type. Cooper *et al.* (1985) and Davidson and Sollie (1987) reported that ~~masculine~~ husbands would ~~more~~ often be married to satisfied wives than ~~undifferentiated~~ husbands.

On their own, androgyny, masculinity and femininity have all been linked to high relationship satisfaction, with the opposite also once the case for masculinity. Relative to each other, androgyny consistently outperformed the other sex-role identity types, while an undifferentiated sex-role identity type have consistently performed worst. Femininity, in this case, better predicted marital satisfaction compared to masculinity.

- Influence of husbands' sex-role identity on the simultaneous outcome of ~~both~~ husbands' and wives' relationship satisfaction

Only two studies reported the simultaneous presence of significant correlations between husbands' sex-role identity type and high relationship satisfaction scores among both themselves and their wives. In the case of Peterson *et al.* (1989), ~~masculinity~~ among husbands (in intact marriages, *vis-à-vis* troubled marriages) was associated with both spouses' satisfaction. In the case of Li and Caldwell (1987), it was androgyny among husbands (in egalitarian marriages, as compared to traditional ones), which was associated with satisfaction.

Androgyny and masculinity were the only two sex-role identity types that once each, albeit in very specific comparisons, predicted the simultaneous satisfaction of both spouses.

4.1.2 Influence of ~~wives'~~ sex-role identity on personal and spousal relationship satisfaction

In this section, the investigation focuses on determining whether certain sex-role identity types (on their own, or relative to other sex-role identity types) among ~~wives~~ have been consistently related to their personal relationship satisfaction, that of their spouses, and/or the satisfaction pattern in the dyad / marriage.

- Influence of wives' sex-role identity on their ~~personal~~ relationship satisfaction

~~Femininity~~ in wives correlated significantly with their personal experience of relationship satisfaction, according to Baucom and Aiken (1984), Bradbury *et al.* (1995), Cardell *et al.* (1981), Harrington-Hill (1992), Langis *et al.* (1994) and Meyer (1997). Femininity also correlated with fear of intimacy in the study of Ryles (1995). As reported by Agarwal and Srivastava (1989), Cooper *et al.* (1985), Fuhrmann (1989) and Peterson *et al.* (1989), an ~~androgynous~~ sex-role identity type went with wives' personal relationship satisfaction. ~~Masculinity~~ did so according to Aube *et al.* (1995), Baucom and Aiken (1984) and Langis *et al.* (1994). The relative effects that masculinity and femininity had on personal relationship satisfaction in husbands and wives have been referred to earlier (Murstein & Williams, 1983). (The effects were greater for feminine husbands than for feminine wives, and for masculine

husbands than for feminine wives.) Also for wives their personal ~~undifferentiated~~ sex-role identity type predicted the absence of relationship satisfaction (Peterson *et al.*, 1989).

Apt and Hurlbert (1993) reported that a ~~traditional~~ sex-role orientation in wives, or their preference for a masculine-husband feminine-wife relationship, correlated with their personal relationship satisfaction.

~~Androgyny~~ predicted relationship satisfaction significantly ~~better compared with~~ an ~~undifferentiated~~ sex-role identity type (Davidson & Sollie, 1987; Peterson *et al.*, 1989; Rosenzweig & Dailey, 1989), and ~~compared with femininity~~ (Murstein & Williams, 1983). Regarding the relative roles of masculinity and femininity, Baucom and Aiken (1984), Edelman and Connolly (1996) and Murstein and Williams (1983) reported ~~feminine~~ wives as ~~more~~ often experiencing relationship satisfaction ~~than masculine~~ ones. (The second study only involved infertile couples.) According to the report by Davidson and Sollie (1987), ~~feminine~~ wives experienced higher relationship satisfaction ~~than undifferentiated~~ wives.

On their own, as with husbands, wives' androgyny, masculinity and femininity have all been linked to high relationship satisfaction, with the opposite the case for an undifferentiated sex-role identity type. Relative to each other, androgyny consistently outperformed masculinity. In other studies, femininity outperformed masculinity, and also once an undifferentiated sex-role identity type.

- Influence of wives' sex-role identity on their ~~husbands'~~ relationship satisfaction

Wives' ~~androgyny~~ (Antill, 1983; Cooper *et al.*, 1985; Peterson *et al.*, 1989) and ~~femininity~~ (Antill, 1983; Bradbury *et al.*, 1995; Peterson *et al.*, 1989) were found to correlate significantly with their husbands' relationship satisfaction. However, it was also reported that ~~masculinity~~ among wives correlated with high relationship satisfaction among their husbands (Bradbury *et al.*, 1995; Langis *et al.*, 1994; Parmelee, 1987; Peterson *et al.*, 1989).

Relative to other sex-role identity types, various influences were detected. Wives' ~~androgyny better~~ predicted their husbands' relationship satisfaction ~~in comparison with~~ wives' ~~femininity~~ (Cooper *et al.*, 1985). So did their ~~femininity in comparison with~~ their ~~masculinity~~ (Murstein & Williams, 1983). All other sex-role identity types in wives, i.e. ~~androgyny~~ (Cooper *et al.*, 1985), ~~femininity~~ (Davidson & Sollie, 1987), and masculinity (Antill, 1983), were reported to predict husbands' relationship satisfaction better ~~than wives' undifferentiated~~ sex-role identity type.

On their own, as in the case of husbands and their spouses, wives' androgyny, masculinity and femininity have all been linked to high spousal relationship satisfaction. Relative to each other, androgyny outperformed femininity, femininity outperformed masculinity, and all of the previous outperformed an undifferentiated sex-role identity type.

- Influence of wives' sex-role identity on the simultaneous outcome of ~~both~~ husbands' and wives' relationship satisfaction

Three studies (Cooper *et al.*, 1985; Li & Caldwell, 1987; Peterson *et al.*, 1989) reported that both husbands and wives simultaneously experienced high relationship satisfaction when certain sex-role

identity types were present in wives. In the third study, ~~masculinity~~ among wives (in intact marriages, *vis-à-vis* troubled marriages) was associated with both spouses' satisfaction. In the other two studies, it was ~~androgyny~~ among wives that was associated with satisfaction. In the second study cited, this effect was found when comparing wives in egalitarian marriages with wives in traditional ones. Couples where females scored higher on ~~expressive~~ traits (femininity) than the males, reported greater adjustment (Aube & Koestner, 1995).

Androgyny, masculinity and femininity (by implication) in isolated cases, and sometimes under very specific conditions, predicted the simultaneous satisfaction of both spouses.

4.1.3 Influence of ~~(in)congruence~~ between husbands' and wives' sex-role identity on relationship satisfaction

The next link to investigate is the joint effect of spousal sex-role identity type on relationship satisfaction. Some significant correlations have been reported in the literature.

- Influence of (in)congruence of sex-role identity on ~~husbands'~~ relationship satisfaction

According to the findings of Peterson *et al.* (1989) and Zammichieli, Gilroy and Sherman (1988), simultaneous ~~androgyny~~ in both spouses led to greater relationship satisfaction among husbands. When the spouses shared an ~~undifferentiated~~ sex-role identity type (Peterson *et al.*, 1989), husbands experienced ~~dissatisfaction~~ in their relationship.

Husbands in ~~androgynous~~ couples also experienced significantly ~~greater~~ relationship satisfaction compared to those in ~~undifferentiated~~ couples (Davidson & Sollie, 1987), as did those in ~~masculine~~ and ~~feminine~~ couples respectively in relation to ~~undifferentiated~~ ones (Davidson & Sollie, 1987).

~~Husbands' relationship satisfaction~~ was also ~~greater~~ when ~~husbands~~ with a preference for ~~modern~~ sex-role relations were married to ~~wives~~ with a preference for ~~traditional~~ sex-role relations (Bowen, 1989b). A final effect observed was that when spouses ~~shared~~ the preference for an ~~egalitarian~~ relationship, the relationship ~~satisfaction~~ experienced by the ~~husband~~ was ~~greater than~~ when the ~~husband~~ preferred a ~~modern~~ and the ~~wife~~ a ~~traditional~~ relationship (Shachar, 1991).

Apt and Hurlbert (1993) reported reduced relationship satisfaction, i.e., ~~dissatisfaction~~, ~~for husbands~~ when ~~husbands'~~ preference for ~~traditional~~ sex-role relationships was ~~greater than~~ that of their ~~wives~~.

On its own, androgyny among both spouses has been linked to high relationship satisfaction for husbands, with the opposite the case for an undifferentiated sex-role identity type. Relative to an undifferentiated sex-role identity type, androgyny, masculinity and femininity predicted husbands' marital satisfaction.

- Influence of (in)congruence of sex-role identity on wives' relationship satisfaction

~~Androgyny~~ in both spouses led to greater relationship satisfaction also among wives (Peterson *et al.*, 1989; Zammichieli *et al.*, 1988). This pattern was repeated when both spouses preferred egalitarian relationships (Ray, 1990; Rogler & Procidano, 1989). When the spouses shared an ~~undifferentiated~~ sex-role identity type, wives (and husbands) experienced (similar) ~~dissatisfaction~~ in their relationship (Peterson *et al.*, 1989).

~~Androgynous~~ couples also experienced significantly ~~greater~~ relationship satisfaction than ~~undifferentiated~~ couples (Davidson & Sollie, 1987).

Apt and Hurlbert (1993) reported reduced relationship satisfaction, i.e., ~~dissatisfaction~~, for wives when wives' preference for ~~non-traditional~~ sex-role relationships was ~~greater than~~ that of their ~~husbands~~.

Wives' relationship satisfaction was also greater when ~~husbands'~~ preference for ~~egalitarian~~ sex-role relations were ~~stronger than~~ their ~~wives'~~ preference for ~~traditional~~ sex-role relations (Li & Caldwell, 1987).

It has to be noted that the reported effects (for husbands and wives) in the case of the research by Juni and Grimm (1994) were valid only for selected sub-scales of relationship satisfaction, and not for relationship satisfaction as a whole. In general, ~~undifferentiated~~ couples were most ~~dissatisfied~~, while ~~androgynous~~ ones were most ~~satisfied~~. However, in an isolated case (with regard to wives' sex-role orientation), the satisfaction within ~~sex-role congruent~~ couples was highest (Bowen & Orthner, 1983).

On its own, and as for husbands, androgyny among both spouses has been linked to high relationship satisfaction for wives, with the opposite the case for an undifferentiated sex-role identity type. However, sex-role identity congruence as such also once correlated with wives' relationship satisfaction. Relative to an undifferentiated sex-role identity type, only androgyny predicted wives' marital satisfaction.

- Influence of (in)congruent sex-role identities on the simultaneous outcome of ~~both~~ husbands' and wives' relationship satisfaction

Femininity in both spouses (Antill, 1983), as well as masculinity among both (Langis *et al.*, 1991), correlated significantly with the simultaneous presence of relationship satisfaction among both husbands and wives. However, Davidson and Sollie (1987), Peterson *et al.* (1989) and Zammichieli *et al.* (1988) reported this effect when both spouses were ~~androgynous~~.

In four studies (Antill, 1983; Baucom & Aiken, 1984; Parmelee, 1987; Peterson *et al.*, 1989), the effect on the simultaneous relationship satisfaction of both spouses was ~~greater~~ when both had a ~~feminine~~ sex-role identity type in comparison with when they both had a ~~masculine~~ identity type. The ~~greater~~ effect of simultaneous ~~femininity~~ was also shown with respect to simultaneous ~~androgyny~~ (Antill, 1983;

Murstein & Williams, 1983), and also to a simultaneous ~~undifferentiated~~ sex-role identity type (Zammichieli *et al.*, 1988).

~~Androgynous~~ couples (both spouses androgynous) were also ~~more~~ satisfied ~~compared to~~ couples in which partners both had ~~sex-typed~~ sex-role identity types (masculine husbands and feminine wives), or compared to couples with ~~incongruent~~ sex-role identity types (i.e., not having the same sex-role identity type), according to Zammichieli *et al.* (1988). ~~Congruent~~ sex-role identity types were associated with relationship satisfaction in both partners ~~more~~ often compared to ~~incongruent~~ sex-role identity types (Cooper *et al.*, 1985).

The correlation between spouses' relationship satisfaction was ~~higher~~ when ~~both~~ spouses had a ~~feminine~~ sex-role identity type, ~~compared to~~ the separate effects of ~~husbands' femininity~~ on ~~wives'~~ relationship satisfaction, or ~~wives' femininity~~ on ~~husbands'~~ relationship satisfaction. However, the correlation between the ~~husbands' femininity~~ and ~~wives'~~ relationship ~~satisfaction~~ was ~~greater than~~ that between ~~wives' femininity~~ and their ~~husbands'~~ relationship ~~satisfaction~~ (Antill, 1983).

In two cases (Bowen, 1989b; Bowen and Orthner, 1983) the marriages between ~~husbands~~ with a traditional sex-role preference and wives with a modern one were found to be unsatisfactory/unhappy.

Altrocchi (1988) only involved happily married couples. He compared the effect that ~~traditional~~ *vis-à-vis* ~~companionship~~ arrangements had on their relationship satisfaction. It was found that the two arrangements (perhaps best thought of here as very broad proxies for sex-role identity congruence) essentially comprised two different routes to satisfaction. Qualitative analyses revealed that companionship couples worked harder (read: more actively or consciously) on their relationships than traditional couples.

Identical androgyny, masculinity and femininity all correlated from time to time with the simultaneous marital satisfaction of both spouses. Relative to all other sex-role identity type pairings, namely androgynous, masculine and undifferentiated, feminine couples experienced the highest relationship satisfaction. The same applied to androgynous compared to sex-typed couples, androgynous compared to incongruent couples, and sex-role identity congruent compared to incongruent couples.

Some trends were evident within and across the sex-role identity type and relationship satisfaction patterns or configurations reported above. Irrespective of being the husband or wife, the greater contribution of androgyny, masculinity and femininity, each taken on its own, with regard to own, spousal and joint relationship satisfaction is clear. So is the relative part played by androgyny, and sometimes also masculinity and femininity, compared to that of an undifferentiated sex-role identity type, regarding relationship satisfaction. However, some unique links also became clear. An especially salient one is the relative or additional importance (compared to masculinity, in particular) of wives' femininity for their own, their spouses' and the couples' joint relationship satisfaction. In terms of sex-role identity type and relationship satisfaction (in)congruence, the greater relationship satisfaction of androgynous pairs, on their own and relative to undifferentiated couples, is particularly salient. Sex-role identity congruence between spouses sometimes on its own predicted greater relationship satisfaction for husbands and wives (separately), but also with regard to three main sex-role identity type (in)congruence and relationship satisfaction (in)congruence configurations, being the following: androgynous couples were happier (both spouses simultaneously) than sex-role identity

type incongruent ones; androgynous couples were happier than sex-typed couples; and sex-role identity type congruent couples were happier than incongruent ones.

The findings reported thus far all pertain to self-ratings of sex-role identity. A few researchers also tested the effect of ascribed or perceived sex-role identity. The findings from this research are reported next.

4.1.4 Some findings regarding ascribed sex-role identity

Perceived sex-role identity was included as variable in seven empirical studies. This number appears to be declining over time, as the most recent study hails from 1995 (Aube *et al.*, 1995). More detail about this study and the other six in which the link was studied between the relationship satisfaction experienced by an individual, and the sex-role identity type that the same individual ascribed to his/her partner, appear in Column C of Table 3.1 (Gerber, 1987; Gerber, 1991; Gerber & Balkin, 1977; Lamke *et al.*, 1994; Langis *et al.*, 94; Siavelis & Lamke, 1992). In all six of these studies, the researchers focused on heterosexual relationships, but only one (Langis *et al.*, 1994) covered conventional marital relationships. Two of the other studies were on pre-marital relationships (Lamke *et al.*, 1994; Siavelis & Lamke, 1992), while the remaining three were simulation studies (Gerber, 1987; Gerber, 1991; Gerber & Balkin, 1977). Some significant correlations were documented.

~~Both husbands and wives~~ experienced significantly greater relationship ~~satisfaction~~ when they ascribed a ~~feminine~~ sex-role identity type to their spouses (Lamke *et al.*, 1994; Langis *et al.*, 1994). In the latter study, it was found that there was an optimal level of femininity at which relationship satisfaction was at its highest. It was also reported that husbands' relationship satisfaction was greater when their wives were perceived to have degrees of ~~masculinity~~ above a certain minimum level. In the former study, wives' perception of the simultaneous presence of both an instrumental and an expressive sex-role approach also correlated significantly with their (the wives') personal relationship satisfaction. However, husbands' perception of the presence of only an ~~expressive~~ sex-role preference in their spouses correlated significantly with their (the husbands') personal satisfaction.

The ~~correlation between self-rated and ascribed sex-role identity types~~ was researched in a single case (Langis *et al.*, 1994). For both husbands and wives, self-rated and ascribed femininity correlated highly. However, there was also a weak correlation between self-rated masculinity and ascribed femininity among husbands. This may be explained in terms of husbands' evaluation of their general ability to be a satisfactory partner to their wives as achieved through masculinity, while their wives perceive the same thing, but as being shown through desired feminine characteristics.

Aube *et al.* (1995) investigated the link between masculine and feminine sex-role identity traits, and both self-reported and ~~ascribed (partner-rated) dyadic functioning~~ in the only study of this kind. Their finding that ~~masculinity~~ was associated with a systematic over-estimation of relationship quality may be suspect, because they considered a partner's rating of the experience of relationship quality more important than an individual's personal self-reported rating. Especially in the absence of a dyadic

analysis, this is problematic, as each partner's relationship outcome was analysed independently of the dyadic configuration or congruence of dyadic outcomes between partners. Correlations of just below 0,60 were found between self- and partner-rated dyadic measures.

Only ascribed femininity among spouses was linked with some consistency to personal relationship satisfaction, although the evidence for this is based on very few studies.

4.1.5 The influence of ~~non-heterosexual~~ partners' sex-role identity

The next aspect reported, is how well the multitude of findings reflecting a link between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction between spouses in marital relationships were or could be replicated for partners in non-heterosexual intimate relationships.

Earlier in this section (4.1), reference is made to only four studies that focused on relevant core aspects of non-heterosexual relationships. They are the studies by Cardell *et al.* (1981), Kurdek and Schmitt (1986), Peters and Cantrell (1993), and Norton (1995). Only one incidence was found where sex-role identity type significantly correlated with relationship satisfaction (Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986). ~~Femininity~~ among lesbians predicted relationship satisfaction for their partners. (Additional findings from this study were that: lesbian partners had higher masculinity scores than married partners; married and lesbian partners had higher femininity scores than gay or cohabiting partners; gay (male) partners were less likely to be androgynous than cohabiting or lesbian partners; and cohabiting partners had the lowest relationship satisfaction scores relative to the other groups.) The study by Norton (1995) did not cover the relationship between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction, but only the link between intimacy and the two variables just mentioned, as reported in Section 4.2 (under 4.2.5).

Because so few studies have involved same-sex couples, selected additional findings, albeit with less strong relevance, are briefly cited. Greenfield and Thelen (1997), while validating a scale for the assessment of fear of intimacy, found that lesbians reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction than gay males.

Weingourt (1998) compared the relationship satisfaction experienced by women in heterosexual and homosexual relationships, both for women who had been abused in childhood and for women who had not been. Although a greater proportion of abused women, compared to non-abused women, experienced dissatisfaction, the difference was not significant. However, significantly more heterosexual women who had been abused in childhood reported dissatisfaction, compared to abused homosexual women. This finding suggested caution in generalising findings obtained through research involving heterosexual women to homosexual women. However, it has to be noted that the findings were only based on the responses of 15 abused homosexual women and 31 abused heterosexual women, resulting in chi-square cells with as few as two respondents. Also Zak and McDonald (1997) compared relationship satisfaction between lesbian and heterosexual women, but found no significant difference.

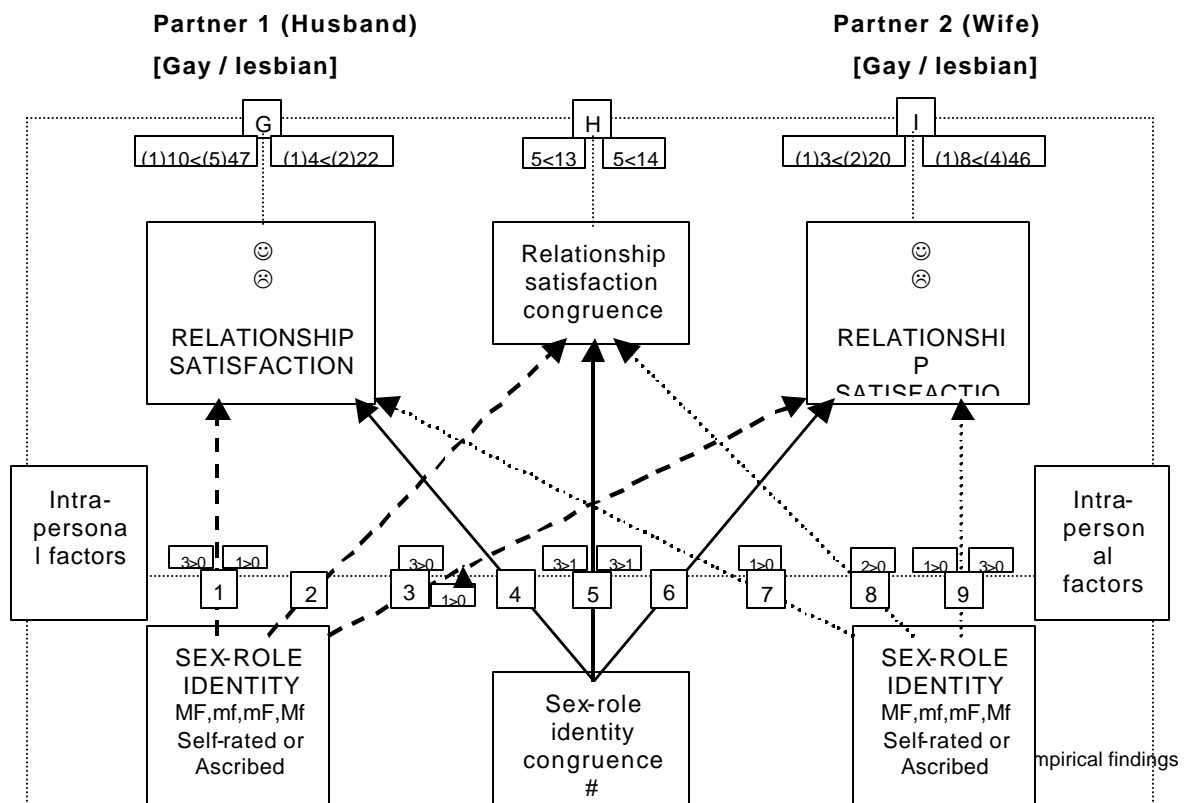
A single finding suggests that femininity may predict relationship satisfaction in lesbian dyads. The

absolute paucity of any conclusive findings in this regard, is a firm indication of the need for extending research focusing on conventional dyads to non-heterosexual intimate relationships.

The next part of the literature review explores the contributions made on the impact of intra- (Section 4.2) and extra-personal (Section 4.3) factors on sex-role identity, or relationship satisfaction, or, as moderators, on the relationship between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction. Table 3.1 remains helpful in tracing specific references, beyond the explicit citations in the text in Sections 4.1 to 4.3.

4.2 Intra-personal factors

Many studies have isolated the important part played by intra-personal factors in determining relationship satisfaction. For the purposes of the present study, intra-personal factors comprise those internal characteristics and related dynamics rooted in the consciousness of the individuals in a dyad. The capacities covered by this definition include individuals' existence and functioning with regard to temperament, personality, attitude, volition, affect, cognition, perception and communication style. When two individuals, each unique in terms of the set of characteristics just mentioned, interact in a dyadic relationship, this dynamic interaction can also be described in terms of inter-personal process. Bradbury *et al.* (2000) used this term to refer to problem-solving, conflict-management, communication, violence, cognition, affect and social support, all of which are covered here under Section 4.2. The relevant research literature has been explored to establish how intra-personal factors have impacted on relationship satisfaction, and more specifically, the link between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction. Some reference is also made to the link between intra-personal factors and sex-role identity. Figure 4.2 schematically depicts the various relevant links that are elaborated upon further afterwards.



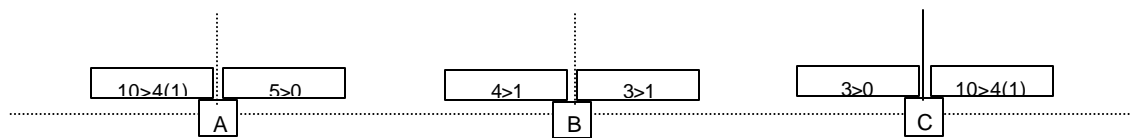


Figure 4.2: Schematic representation of the frequency and domain of findings on the relationship between intra-personal factors, sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction

* As before, the numbers of significant findings observed for any given link up to and since 1995 are presented respectively before and after the relevant symbol (> or <) indicating the nature of the trend. Numbers in round brackets this time refer to findings involving same-sex couples. In addition, letters (A to C, and G to I) and numbers (1 to 9) are used to identify every link, for ease of cross-referencing, where necessary, in the discussions to follow. **(An arrow is used in the text to indicate the direction of the assumed causal links, where applicable.)**

The whole of Figure 2.1 can be transposed onto this position

Because of the many potential interfaces between intra-personal factors and the main variables of the present study, two stages are used in reporting the research findings. Under each sub-section (4.2.1 to 4.2.6, sequenced according to Column H from Table 3.1), a brief summary of statistically significant core findings is first provided to give an idea of the consistency with which some observations have been made in the past. The conceptual structure, developed earlier (Figure 3.1) as the comprehensive ~~theory of dyadic relationship outcomes~~, has been used throughout to order and evaluate significant findings. Thereafter, contributions are grouped and discussed in terms of salient themes, especially with a view to uncover the relation between the contents of findings and their relevant (and proposed) theoretical underpinnings.

It is evident from Figure 4.2 that the number of studies involving the link between intra-personal factors and relationship satisfaction has dramatically increased after 1995. However, the number of all other studies has decreased. An exception could be studies involving same-sex participants and covering the link between sex-role identity and intra-personal factors, although the recent figures remain small.

The proportion of researchers who included intra-personal variables in their research designs is clear from Column H of Table 3.1. Intra-personal constructs were not considered in just below 30 % of the studies. This figure reflects a gradual decrease from the 40 % of corresponding studies up to 1995 to the 17 % since then.

Melson (1987) made out a strong case for including intra-personal variables. In addition, she not only gave prominence to extra-personal factors (cf. Section 4.3), but also placed the relative influence of the intra- and extra-personal variables within a firm theoretical context (cf. also Sections 1.4 and 2.2). This is clear from Melson's book-review article titled *The balancing act*, in which she refers to a book published in 1984 by Janet Askham under the title *Identity and stability in marriage*. The contributions made by two theoretical models are integrated and used to analyse the pertinent dynamics revealed by research on marital relationships. On the one hand, spouses try to ~~promote marital stability~~ by engaging in conducive attitudes and behaviours. On the other hand, they attempt to ~~enhance personal identity development~~. The foregoing implies that satisfied couples manage to achieve a balance

between the stability- and identity-maintaining components of their relationship. Askham's qualitative analyses of 20 in-depth interviews provided her with firm support for the applicability and value of this theoretical approach. Her findings serve to underscore the importance of further reflecting on the intra-personal factors dealt with hereafter.

4.2.1 Cognitive functioning

When the present study was conceptualised, it was hypothesised that links between partners' cognitive processes and relationship satisfaction may exist. This could take two possible forms. On the one hand, complex qualitative patterns or the dynamics of cognitive functioning could be associated with relationship satisfaction. On the other hand, a more direct, quantitative measure of intelligence, such as mental alertness, could have a bearing upon relationship satisfaction. The percentage of studies that referred to cognitive issues (see Column H from Table 3.1) remained low at 5 %, and appears to be increasing slowly over time. Some of the recent studies only contributed marginally to the greater understanding of the present topic under study. One such study is the one by Byrne and Arias (1997), who may have referred to cognitive effects, in as far as ~~attributions of causality~~ and responsibility for marital problems may be perceived as cognitive factors, although communication factors and conflict handling were its central features (also cf. Section 4.2.5).

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~cognitive functioning~~ and the link between ~~relationship satisfaction~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~.

In cases where both spouses held modern, rather than traditional, ~~beliefs~~, and both husbands and wives perceived high personal reward levels for that, both spouses in a couple were more satisfied (Martin, 1985) [Intersects $\rightarrow 5$ and $5 \leftarrow$ in Figure 4.2].¹

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~cognitive functioning~~ and ~~relationship satisfaction~~.

Husbands' and wives' own relationship satisfaction was greater respectively when the following personal cognitive attributes were present or dynamics applied [$\rightarrow G$ & $I \leftarrow$]:

- relationship-focused standards (~~belief~~ in closeness and egalitarianism) (Gordon, Baucom, Epstein, Burnett & Rankin, 1999);
- efficacy expectations (correlated with marital satisfaction 18 months later), although the former were negatively related to ~~attributions~~ (to spouses) of the cause of conflict and responsibility for resolving it (Fincham *et al.*, 2000);
- low ~~negative attributions~~ of partner behaviour (Fincham *et al.*, 2000); and
- use of "we" in ~~stories~~ about their marriages, picturing their spouses as responsive, and relating pleasant imagined interactions (Honeycutt, 1999).

¹ In the remainder of Section 4.2, intersecting points from Figure 4.2 are cited only in the format of "[$\rightarrow N$]".

In the following cases, cognitive aspects among wives correlated with their husbands' relationship satisfaction [G←]:

- high cognitive abilities and ~~intelligence~~ (Yogev, 1987); and
- the use of "we" in ~~stories~~ about their marriages (Honeycutt, 1999).

❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between cognitive functioning and sex-role identity

No findings were reported.

❖ Discussion of themes and theoretical underpinnings

4.2.1.1 Cognitive complexity (qualitative patterns)

Martin (1985) studied the impact of sex-role orientation on the relationship between equity, equality and reward level, as predictor variables, and marital satisfaction. Only ~~reward level~~ was significantly related to marital satisfaction. Reward level was treated as a cognitive construct, meaning that individuals engaged in conscious, mental weighing of potential contributing factors to the relationship satisfaction. Individual reward levels were more important for relationship satisfaction than equity and equality. Spouses would therefore not keep account of whether inputs (of effort) and outcomes (of benefits) were evenly distributed between them, but rather considered whether they personally felt satisfied with the relationship or not. Interestingly, sex-role orientation, measured as modern and traditional, did not have a significant impact. The resource types (factors) considered were love, status, services, goods, money, information, and sexuality. (The study by Reynolds *et al.* (1995), referred to under Section 4.2.6, dealt with the same variables, but from the point of view of perception, and reached very similar findings.)

Zammichieli *et al.* (1988) applied cognitive balance theory in their research on sex-role orientation and marital satisfaction. This theory posits that individuals with similar values (traditional *vis-à-vis* non-traditional sex-roles) would be more attracted to their partners and be more satisfied with their relationships. Although androgyny in both spouses was an important predictor of marital satisfaction, congruent sex-role orientations were not. Thus, findings did not confirm the theoretical expectations. The researchers concluded that it may be more important to behave effectively in each situation by being adaptable and flexible than to have common values and goals.

From the vantage point of ~~cognition and oral history~~, and based on the content and nature of the stories that spouses told about (difficulties in) their relationships (in informal clinical interviews), Honeycutt (1999) studied and predicted marital satisfaction. He found that spouses' use of "we" (instead of "I" and "you") in their stories predicted happiness, and pictured partners as responsive to each other.

It is often difficult to distinguish between cognitive factors (or processes), personality, communication and perceptions. For example, locus of control, self-esteem, understanding and resolving conflict, and

anticipations for improving a relationship, all become enmeshed. The way in which Fincham *et al.* (2000) treated attributions of causality and efficacy expectations, deserves mention here. They contributed to theory development by explaining how efficacy expectations (conflict prompts any spouse to engage in the cognitive process of asking what went wrong, and to reach some idea about the behaviours required to resolve the conflict) mediate the relation between spouses' ~~attributions~~ ~~(explanations)~~ and marital quality. These efficacy expectations were understood partly from the side of ~~attribution theory~~ (as related to motivation), and the attributional reformulation of ~~learned helplessness~~. The researchers investigated various interactions through structural equation modelling. Their findings revealed that efficacy expectations were positively related to marital satisfaction. Because their study was also longitudinal, it confirmed that the attributions predicted future satisfaction, and not the other way round. (More detailed references to their findings appear towards the beginning of Section 4.2.1.)

The findings of Gordon *et al.* (1999), covering the way in which cognitions about marital ~~standards~~ moderated the link between communication patterns and marital adjustment, can be found under Section 4.2.5.

4.2.1.2 Intelligence (quantitative strength)

Researchers have only once (studied and) confirmed the link between high cognitive abilities or ~~intelligence~~ (among wives) and relationship satisfaction (among their husbands) (Yogev, 1987).

This sub-section revealed that researchers seldom linked cognitive variables and relationship satisfaction. The few documented findings suggest that respondents used cognitive processes to calculate and improve their chances of achieving relationship satisfaction, often through communication processes. Modern beliefs about sex roles, and the positive weighing of behaviours and perceived dyadic reward levels, were the most prominent features linked to relationship satisfaction.

4.2.2 Emotional / affective functioning

Although this variable was initially not covered extensively in pre-1996 studies, with it featuring in not even 10 % of them, it has received more attention lately, from almost a quarter of the researchers, bringing the overall statistic for inclusion to almost 17 % (cf. Table 3.1, Column H). With this trend also came a much greater interest in the empirical link between emotions and relationship satisfaction. Research on the concept of affective self-disclosure is referenced under Section 4.2.5, covering the influence of communication patterns.

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~emotional functioning~~ and the link between relationship satisfaction and sex-role identity

When both spouses were able to express their emotions, irrespective of their sex-role identity type, both of them achieved high relationship satisfaction scores (Juni & Grimm, 1993) [$\rightarrow 5$ & $5 \leftarrow$]. In addition, it

was found in the same study that masculine husbands with a low ability to express their emotions experienced reduced relationship satisfaction (Juni & Grimm, 1993) [$\rightarrow 1$].

❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between emotional functioning and relationship satisfaction

The following personal affective attributes or dynamics among husbands and wives respectively correlated with their personal relationship satisfaction [$\rightarrow G$ & $I \leftarrow$]:

- the provision of emotional (Stevens, Kiger & Riley, 2001) and general support to their spouses (male or female partners) in handling stress, as well as the similar support that they anticipated receiving from them (Bodenmann, 1995);
- positive affect (positively) and sadness, which was also called negative affect or affective constraint (negatively) (Geist & Gilbert, 1996; Robins, Caspi & Moffitt, 2000). Watson *et al.* (2000) confirmed this finding for both dating and marital couples. Also Oppenheim, Wamboldt, Gavin, Renouf and Emde (1996) reported a similar finding for emotional coherence and expressivity found in couple narratives;
- expression of feelings (Teichner & Farnden-Lyster, 1997); and
- intimacy (emotional, social, sexual, intellectual and recreational) (Greeff & Malherbe, 2001).

The correlation between some aspects of emotional functioning and personal relationship satisfaction was unique to wives / female partners, and included the following [$I \leftarrow$]:

- emotional health (Wilson, Larson, McCulloch & Stone, 1997); and
- negative emotionality (negatively) and positive emotionality (positively) (Robins *et al.*, 2000).

The following affective attributes or dynamics among husbands' and wives' (or male and female partners) respectively correlated with their spouses' / partners' relationship satisfaction [$\rightarrow I$ & $G \leftarrow$]:

- the emotional and general support that their spouses (partners) provided to them in handling stress, as well as the extent to which the latter communicated that they themselves were in stress (Bodenmann, 1995); and
- sadness or negative affect (negatively) (Geist & Gilbert, 1996; Robins *et al.*, 2000; Watson *et al.*, 2000).

The correlation found by Geist and Gilbert (1996) between wives' positive affect and their husbands' marital satisfaction was also unique to this set of partners [$G \leftarrow$].

Positive feelings by either husbands or wives about wives' career lives, even in the presence of negative attitudes towards some aspects of the relationship and family roles, correlated with the simultaneous experience of marital satisfaction by both spouses (Ray, 1990; Van Yperen & Buunk, 1991) [$\rightarrow H$ & $H \leftarrow$].

A lack of de-escalation of low-intensity negative wife affect by husbands predicted divorce [$\rightarrow H$], while a lack of de-escalation of high-intensity negative husband affect by wives predicted divorce (Gottman *et*

al., 1998) [H←]. Gottman *et al.* (1998) also found that ~~positive affect in conflict~~ among wives also predicted marital stability and happiness [H←].

❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~emotional functioning~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

~~Positive affect~~ and ~~masculine traits~~ were found to correlate significantly in both spouses / partners (Aube *et al.*, 1995) [→A & C←]. The degree of ~~affection desired and expressed~~ correlated with ~~femininity~~ only for wives / female partners (Johnson & Brems, 1989) [C←].

❖ Discussion of themes and theoretical underpinnings

Griffin (1983) documented significant relationships between ~~affective self-disclosure~~, ~~emotional maturity~~ and ~~symmetry of emotional responsiveness~~, and marital satisfaction. The report was based on a literature survey, and not on empirical research.

Bodenmann (1995) uniquely linked the functioning of ~~emotions~~, ~~communication~~, and conflict or stress management, by jointly studying (through a one-year longitudinal project) the effects that support, the anticipation of support, and communication about stress and support, had on partners' dyadic satisfaction.

James and Hunsley (1995) departed from the ~~circumplex model~~ of marital and family systems in their research. This model posits that moderate amounts of ~~cohesion~~ and adaptability are optimal for the functioning of couples. Cohesion refers to the sense of togetherness or emotional bonding in families or between partners (cf. Section 4.2.4 about adaptability). The findings, however, confirmed that there was a linear relationship (instead of curvilinear) between individual partners' cohesion and their personal relationship satisfaction.

Edelmann and Connolly (1996) found that a masculine sex-role identity type correlated with low anxiety scores and an undifferentiated sex-role identity type with high ~~anxiety~~ scores among infertile males in distressed couples.

In addition to the relationship between proximal (affect and cognition) and distal factors (personality) during ~~conflict resolution~~, Geist and Gilbert (1996) also investigated the part played by ~~affect~~ in relation to marital satisfaction. Sadness (negative affect) correlated negatively with personal and spousal marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives. Positive affect, though, correlated with both spouses' marital satisfaction only in the case of wives, while husbands' positive affect only correlated with their personal marital satisfaction.

The ~~expression of feelings~~ was positively associated with marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives (Teichner & Farnden-Lyster, 1997). Also Oppenheim *et al.* (1996) found that ~~emotional coherence and expressivity~~ in couple narratives correlated with each partner's relationship satisfaction.

Participating partners / spouses had to evaluate, three years after the birth of their child, the emotions they had experienced at the time.

Emotional health was associated with marital satisfaction for wives only (Wilson *et al.*, 1997).

Feeney, Noller and Roberts (1998) based their research on attachment theory (attributed to Bowlby). This theory explains how infants emotionally bond with their caregivers in response to the mental models they build about themselves and others. The researchers proposed that the link between attachment style and relationship satisfaction in later years was mediated by affect. Attachment style was operationalised in terms of two dimensions. They were: discomfort with closeness (belief that partners were not trustworthy); and anxiety over relationships (fear of abandonment, or belief that one was unworthy or unlovable). A strong link was also assumed between attachment style and the regulation of negative affect, which threatened relationships. Style of attachment and intensity of affect would also appear to function independently in influencing relationship satisfaction. There also appeared to be some evidence that, for husbands, not being comfortable with closeness was the more crucial dimension, while for wives, it was anxiety over relationships. Earlier theories posed that emotion came into play in situations where organised action was interrupted. The interpretation of the interruption would determine the nature of the emotion evoked. Other proponents later added that the content and nature of a partner's general emotional experience (mood) also moderated personal and ascribed affect in the partner. The dynamics would differ depending on whether agreement or conflict was experienced. More advanced forms of these theoretical frameworks were also used to investigate reciprocity in affective communication (cf. Section 4.2.5).

Ridge and Feeney (1998) expanded on the work just referred to in the previous paragraph, by involving **gay-and lesbian** respondents in another study. This time, attachment styles were conceptualised within a different typology. Using the two dimensions of working models of self and of others, which could be positive or negative, the following four attachment styles were formed:

- secure individuals (positive models of self and others, leading to comfort with both intimacy and autonomy);
- pre-occupied individuals (positive models of others, but negative models of self, leading to extreme needs for closeness and approval);
- fearful individuals (negative models of self and others, leading to avoidance of closeness, feeling unworthy, and fearing rejection); and
- dismissing individuals (negative models of others, but positive models of self, leading to an emphasis on self-worth through self-reliance).

Only secure attachment correlated with relationship satisfaction.

Personal negative affectivity correlated with low relationship / marital satisfaction of self and of partners, and positive affectivity with high satisfaction, for both dating and married couples (Watson *et al.*, 2000).

~~Emotion work~~, or the attempt by partners to build a close relationship through, *inter alia*, positive initiatives, good communication, conflict avoidance and the acknowledgement of constructive contributions, correlated with own relationship satisfaction among partners (Stevens *et al.*, 2001).

Although it can become problematic to conceptualise the experience of ~~intimacy~~ as different from relationship satisfaction itself, some elements of emotional experience could perhaps be separated from it. Greeff and Malherbe (2001) found that intimacy (emotional, social, sexual, intellectual and recreational) mostly correlated with marital satisfaction for husbands and wives.

Rutter and Schwartz (1996) suggested that relationship satisfaction in **same-sex relationships** was predicted differently for lesbian and gay couples. Women would be happier because of high levels of ~~emotional intimacy~~, an equitable ~~power~~ balance and high ~~self-esteem~~. Men would be happier because of the absence of conflict, high appreciation, stability, and cooperation. Compared to any other type of couple, lesbian couples would also most likely achieve the highest levels of satisfaction.

~~Communication~~, as emotional disclosure, would also be more salient among lesbian couples, even as a conflict reduction strategy. Among men in male couples, communication could often be used towards achieving power and control through intellectual debate.

Schreurs and Buunk (1996) studied similar themes in an empirical study involving only **lesbian couples**. They found significant correlations between personal scores on intimacy, autonomy, emotional dependency and equity, and relationship satisfaction. Partners' intimacy and equity scores were the only ones correlating with personal relationship satisfaction. (Equity signified the degree to which a respondent perceived investments and profits in the relationship to be equal. Emotional dependency referred to the extent to which respondents felt dependent on partners for obtaining rewards, and the absence of rewards outside the relationship.)

The findings reviewed above suggest the importance of emotion as a construct in co-determining relationship satisfaction. The common factors that have surfaced as potential contributors to relationship satisfaction, are: the ability to express emotions; experiencing and pursuing positive emotions, and avoiding negative emotions; being comfortable with intimacy, especially in same-sex relationships; and low levels of anxiety.

4.2.3 Attitudes and volition

Attitudes were studied in just over 20 % of the cases, with a mildly decreasing trend in evidence, as recorded in Table 3.1, Column H. Nevertheless, of all the intra-personal factors that researchers included during the pre-1996 period, it obtained the highest percentage, which strongly suggests that the attitudes of partners may contribute in important ways to relationship outcomes. Because attitudes lie at the basis of motivation and behavioural intentions, such an observation is important. Even sex-role identity may be perceived as a special case of behaviour determined by attitudes or motivations. Such a tenet further supports the present study's objectives aimed at ascertaining the role of sex-role attitudes, and particularly attitudes towards close relationships. However, the contribution of attitudes cannot be separated from a sound theoretical framework. Such an appropriate theoretical framework is

being refined through the various sub-sections in this chapter, in particular this one (4.2.3), and the next one (4.2.4) on personality factors. More comprehensive information on the theoretical framework is found under Sections 1.4 and 2.2, and the appropriate parts of Chapters 3 and 4.

This sub-section covers attitudes and motivations or intentions directly related to close relationships. The core question is whether or not positive or negative attitudes have a significant effect on the link between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction, or either of the two. The part played by specific attitudes, for example those of spouses towards female employment, is discussed at more appropriate places, such as under Section 4.2.6.

❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between attitudes and the link between relationship satisfaction and sex-role identity

In traditional couples (masculine or instrumental males, and feminine or expressive females), higher dyadic adjustment was recorded when women had much more positive attitudes towards traditionally female-valued behaviours than the men (Aube & Koestner, 1995) [$\rightarrow 5$ & $5 \leftarrow$].

❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between attitudes and relationship satisfaction

For both husbands and wives (male and female partners), the following attitudinal aspects correlated with personal relationship satisfaction [$\rightarrow G$ & $I \leftarrow$]:

- favourable attitudes towards divorce (negatively) (Amato & Rogers, 1999);
- similarity of partners' attitudes towards women (Aube & Koestner, 1995); and
- positive attitudes towards passionate, physical/emotional love and altruistic love (positively), and favourable attitudes towards playful, non-committed love (negatively) (Montgomery & Sorell, 1997; Sokolski & Hendrick, 1999).

The activity of or attitude towards passing (being gay or lesbian, but faking as heterosexual) influenced personal as well as partners' relationship satisfaction negatively, irrespective of whether the passer or the partner was gay or lesbian (Berger, 1990) [$\rightarrow G$ & $I \leftarrow$; $\rightarrow I$ & $G \leftarrow$].

However, in many cases, apparently related to spouses' different preferences for traditional (conservative) and modern (liberal) relationship arrangements, different or contradictory findings were evident. Husbands' (male partners') attitudes determined their personal relationship satisfaction in the following ways [$\rightarrow G$]:

- harbouring a positive attitude towards traditional relationships sometimes went with reduced relationship satisfaction and in other instances with increased relationship satisfaction (Lye & Biblarz, 1993);
- liberal attitudes were found to go with higher relationship satisfaction (Shachar, 1991); and
- the simultaneous presence of liberal attitudes among husbands and conservative attitudes among their wives led to higher husband relationship satisfaction (Shachar, 1991).

In parallel, wives' (female partners') attitudes determined their personal relationship satisfaction in the following ways [$I \leftarrow$]:

- a positive ~~attitude towards non-traditional~~ relationships (Lueptow *et al.*, 1989; McHale & Crouter, 1992), as well as towards egalitarian relationships (Lye & Biblarz, 1993), essentially also non-traditional or more modern, went with reduced relationship satisfaction;
- a positive ~~attitude towards sex~~ correlated with higher relationship satisfaction (Bailey *et al.*, 1987); and
- wives with ~~traditional attitudes~~ towards relationships experienced more satisfaction, especially when their partners spent more time on household tasks (Stevens *et al.*, 2001).

Different attitudes among men and women co-varied with spousal relationship satisfaction in the following ways:

- a positive attitude among wives towards simultaneous ~~liberal~~ sex roles for husbands and ~~conservative~~ sex roles for themselves led to higher husband relationship satisfaction (Shachar, 1991) [$G \leftarrow$]; and
- ~~liberal~~ attitudes among husbands went with higher relationship satisfaction for wives (Shachar, 1991) [$\rightarrow I$].

With regard to the correlation between partners' attitudes and the simultaneous occurrence of relationship satisfaction in both, the following factors were reported [$\rightarrow H$ & $H \leftarrow$]:

- ~~incongruent~~ attitudes towards the relationship (negatively) (Chassin, Zeiss, Cooper & Reaven, 1985); and
- similarity between partners' ~~attitudes towards women~~ (Aube & Koestner, 1995).

❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~attitudes~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

With regard to the links between the attitudes of men and women, and their personal sex-role identity dynamics, as well as those of their partners / spouses, the following inconsistent or unique findings became evident:

- for ~~men~~, a positive attitude towards ~~love~~ was negatively related to ~~masculinity~~ (Bailey *et al.*, 1987) [$\rightarrow A$];
- ~~masculine males~~ (sex-typed against non-typed) held stronger attitudes in favour of ~~gender rules~~ than males with any other sex-role identity type (Frale, 1989) [$\rightarrow A$];
- for women, a positive attitude towards love was related to their femininity (Bailey *et al.*, 1987) [$C \leftarrow$];
- again for ~~women~~, a positive attitude towards a personal ~~career life~~ correlated with ~~androgyny~~ (Shukla & Kapoor, 1990) [$C \leftarrow$];
- ~~feminine females~~ (sex-typed against non-typed) held stronger attitudes in favour of ~~gender rules~~ than females with any other sex-role identity type (Frale, 1989) [$C \leftarrow$];
- a positive attitude towards ~~love~~ among ~~wives~~ correlated negatively with a ~~masculine~~ sex-role identity type among ~~husbands~~ (Bailey *et al.*, 1987) [$A \leftarrow$]; and
- ~~husbands'~~ positive attitude towards ~~love~~ correlated with a ~~feminine~~ sex-role identity type among ~~wives~~ (Bailey *et al.*, 1987) [$\rightarrow C$].

With regard to the correlation between partners' attitudes and the simultaneous occurrence of certain sex-role identity dynamics, it was reported that the simultaneous presence of ~~sex-appropriate~~ or sex-typed attitudes among partners towards gender behaviour was linked to ~~traditional configurations~~ within couples (sex-typed partners in terms of sex-role identity) (Aube & Koestner, 1995) [$\rightarrow B \& B \leftarrow$].

❖ Discussion of themes and theoretical underpinnings

The findings reported by Bailey *et al.* (1987) on the relationship between gender-role orientation and aspects such as ~~love attitudes, sexual attitudes~~ and self-esteem, are reported more fully under Section 3.2.4.

Lueptow *et al.* (1989) studied ~~attitudes towards roles in marriage~~ (including sex roles) in relation to marital happiness. Growing evidence that ~~non-traditional~~ attitudes were negatively related to marital happiness, motivated their study. Seemingly, many years of change towards ~~egalitarian~~ roles had not changed attitudes. ~~Modern~~ or non-traditional women, in particular, were still pioneers in many roles, for example in careers. As a result, they were subject to intense conflict. In addition, such women often had less constraints and ties to home and family. Else, they had access to other support systems and rewards, and tended not to be bound to marriage. The three researchers tested hypotheses and models similar to those tested by Li and Caldwell (1987), and Bowen and Orthner (1983) (cf. 3.2.1, 3.2.3, and 3.3.2 for more detail on this work, especially on power and the accommodation of partners' needs). Lueptow and colleagues tested another hypothesis, namely whether or not non-traditional women in incongruent marriages would suffer more dissatisfaction than traditional men in those relationships. In this case, the sex-role attitudes of wives were anticipated to be more influential in determining happiness and satisfaction than the attitudes of their husbands. Women's sex-role ideology correlated negatively with marital happiness. The relationship was consistent, but weak. The correlation was strongest for women constrained in marriage, i.e. those who felt that they should not opt for divorce, but wanted to. Non-traditional women were more likely to be divorced already. Ideological discrepancies between spouses, such as the above, have the potential to increase stress and conflict in marriage dramatically.

VanYperen and Buunk (1991) derived two hypotheses from the ~~social comparison theory~~ developed by Festinger in 1954. The first held that ~~egalitarian attitudes~~ towards marriage would be linked to relationship satisfaction. The latter was calculated as the input-output benefit ratio for each spouse. This first case was termed relational comparison. A second case, namely referential comparison, could also apply. Accordingly, partners with traditional sex-role beliefs would experience greater satisfaction in comparison with similar-sex partners from other marriages. The reference group, against which equity is determined, was therefore different in each case. Furthermore, feelings of uncertainty would drive the need for social comparison. Uncertainty originates in dilemmas of overload, of social sanction or norms, or of identity (e.g., role certainty). These dilemmas were hypothesised to be most prevalent in egalitarian relationships, especially among women, because of the pioneering status that then still largely applied to this kind of arrangement.

The hypotheses were confirmed in most cases, and more often for women compared to men. Dissatisfaction levels were highest for women in egalitarian relationships. The authors considered it highly conceivable that the above dynamics would start changing soon. This would be valid specifically in terms of the reduction of egalitarians' feelings of uncertainty. The reason proposed was that more egalitarian role models were becoming available, both within and outside relationships. This would also concur with greater career fulfilment among women, with their growing success in management positions, and with husbands' increasing insight into this.

Basow (1992) also considered the match between the expectations (attitudes) of husbands and wives regarding proper ~~sex-role behaviour~~ as critical for marital satisfaction. Most mismatches arose when husbands were far more ~~traditional~~ than their wives. Conflict or dissatisfaction would easily develop when wives became more career-oriented and earned higher incomes compared to their spouses.

Lye and Biblarz (1993) found that when husbands and wives both held ~~non-traditional attitudes~~ toward family life, they were less satisfied compared to those having traditional attitudes. In addition, men and women who held attitudes diverging from those of their spouses, were also less satisfied with their marriages. Interestingly enough, the actual gender roles observed had no effect on the impact of the attitudes.

Pleck *et al.* (1993) studied the effect of ~~masculinity ideology~~ on adolescent male heterosexual relationships. Masculinity ideology refers to respondents' belief (attitudes) that males should adhere to culturally defined ~~traditional~~ standards for male behaviour. The study therefore adhered to the so-called normative perspective, instead of the usual trait perspective. Respondents, who had had more sexual partners, reported that their relationships were less intimate. They rated emotional commitment as unimportant. Emotional commitment was operationalised as the measurement of socially desirable attitudes towards the male gender role, within a social-constructionist approach to gender, as the internalisation of society's definition of masculinity.

Because of the relevance of the complex attitudes and behaviours surrounding ~~passing~~, it is briefly mentioned here again. This phenomenon is referred to in more detail under Section 2.3.1 (cf. the work of Berger (1990) in this regard). Passing refers to **homosexuals'** behaviour of pretending to be heterosexual when they fear criticism or rejection because of their homosexuality. Although many situational factors determine whether or not an individual will employ passing, the potentially very large influence of such behaviour on the quality of **same-sex** relationships is obvious. In terms of broader society, not to pass (or, "coming out of the closet") is a form of deviance. It also is a courageous act of choosing to open oneself to stigmatisation and discrediting. The magnitude of the stigmatisation depends on the attitudes prevailing in a specific culture or society. The choice to pass or not generates high levels of tension. Passing, on the other hand, and in terms of the close relationship, could be experienced as an act of cowardice and lack of commitment to the relationship. This in itself, as well as how the relevant individuals have to negotiate when (not) to disclose personal information, can create tension, which can potentially undermine relationship satisfaction. Passing apparently

becomes more prevalent with higher occupational rank and social mobility. Such individuals have more to lose. The main source of psychological distress among homosexuals may be this continuous worry about exposure and anticipated discrimination. Obviously this also influences the quality of intimate, personal relationships.

The research done by Aube and Koestner (1995), with its advantages of being both longitudinal (retest after 15 months) and of studying dyads as such, revisited the similarity-complementarity debate. It revealed that where partners tended to select each other on the basis of ~~complementarity of role attitudes~~ within traditional sex-role identity type pairings, it led to higher dyadic adjustment, especially where attitudes towards feminine behaviours were stronger for the women compared to the men.

Montgomery and Sorell (1997) studied attitudes towards various ~~types of love~~, also across different family stages. As indicated earlier in this sub-section, positive attitudes towards passionate, physical / emotional love and altruistic love were related to relationship satisfaction, but favourable attitudes towards playful, non-committed love were related negatively. However, the study included many non-couples (cf. Section 3.2.2). Sokolski and Hendrick (1999) replicated the finding about the correlation between positive attitudes towards love and relationship satisfaction.

Amato and Rogers (1999) researched the link between ~~attitudes towards divorce~~ and marital quality. Two hypotheses were formulated. Both were firmly rooted in theory. Based on ~~exchange theory~~, it was predicted that individual partners who adopted favourable attitudes towards divorce, would experience reduced marital quality. Exchange theory posits that individuals maximise self-interest by weighing up the relevant benefits and costs against each other. Few rewards from a relationship, few barriers to ending it, and the perception of good alternatives to it, all increase the likelihood of becoming unhappy with and leaving a relationship. Based on ~~cognitive dissonance theory~~, it was predicted that partners who experienced decline in happiness, would adopt more favourable attitudes towards divorce. Cognitive dissonance theory posits that when people experience dissonance (a clash) between attitudes and behaviour or events, their attitudes are changed and made congruent with their (intended) behaviour to resolve the dissonance. The two researchers established, by means of structural equation modelling, that causation moved in the direction of marital quality from attitudes, thus favouring the first position stated above. (Reference is made under Section 4.2.6 to how Ruvalo and Veroff (1997) linked exchange theory, other theories and perceptions to marital satisfaction.)

Cramer and Westergren (1999) studied social changes to attitudes towards gender roles in a unique way. Above and beyond the limitations of involving a small sample of undergraduate students in a simulation study (also cf. Sections 3.2.4 and 3.3.1), the *Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)* was used along with the *BSRI* to assess gender identity. This was done using a technique based on psychoanalytic theory whereby deprivation stories (starting off positively and ending negatively) are ascribed to femininity / females, and enhancement stories (starting off negatively and ending positively) are ascribed to masculinity / males. The assumed influence of social attitudes on gender identity was studied by comparing respondents' two sets of *TAT* stories, completed before and after been given bogus feedback on their *BSRI* profiles. However, no changes were observed.

The most pertinent finding involves the influence of attitudes towards traditional and non-traditional roles. Although egalitarian attitudes have greatly increased over the last two decades, traditional preferences have remained in vogue. Non-traditional attitudes have still been associated most with relationship dissonance. Partly as an outcome of this situation, relationship satisfaction is greater when husbands or male partners are the more liberal ones, relative to the women. The inverse also applied, namely that conservative or traditional attitudes among men and modern or liberal ones among women were associated with greater dissatisfaction. A second conclusion could be that congruent sex-role attitudes between partners or spouses were associated with satisfaction, while incongruence correlated with dissatisfaction. Third, permissive, *vis-à-vis* conservative attitudes (or values) towards divorce or separation, predicted low relationship satisfaction and commitment.

4.2.4 Personality and temperament

Exactly 25 % of the studies reviewed, with a slight increase in trend evident over time, covered personality factors and their influence on sex-role identity and / or relationship satisfaction (cf. Table 3.1, Column H). Mention is made in the first paragraph of the previous sub-section of the part played by personality variables. This topic is now continued. In a certain sense, sex-role identity is a personality trait, or at least partly that. Literature has been scrutinised for findings demonstrating the relationship between personality variables and relationship satisfaction. The resulting knowledge should be carefully considered in the further refinement of theoretical frameworks against which to study the part also played by sex-role identity.

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between personality variables and the link between ~~relationship satisfaction~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

Three findings are pertinent. A well-developed ~~ego-strength~~ among wives, irrespective of their sex-role identity, correlated with relationship satisfaction in both spouses (Agarwal & Srivastava, 1989) [8←]. High ~~self-esteem~~ among husbands also correlated positively with their wives' relationship satisfaction in cases where the wives also had high masculinity sex-role identity type scores (MacDonald *et al.*, 1987) [→9]. High ~~self-esteem~~ among wives correlated with their husbands' satisfaction, especially when the husbands also achieved high masculinity and femininity trait (i.e. androgyny as sex-role identity type) scores (MacDonald *et al.*, 1987) [1←].

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between personality variables and ~~relationship satisfaction~~

The following personality characteristics correlated with personal satisfaction for each of the two spouses (or partners) [→G & I←]:

- ~~acceptable~~ levels of ~~personality functioning~~ in terms of Erikson's epigenetic model (Harrington-Hill, 1992);
- being ~~pleasant~~ and ~~dominant~~ (Blum & Mehrabian, 1999);
- ~~self-esteem~~ and ~~depression~~ (negatively) (Sacco & Phares, 2001); and

- an ~~internal locus of control~~ (Camp & Ganong, 1997).

In the following cases, unique links for men and women were evident between personality factors and relationship satisfaction:

- For husbands or men only [$\rightarrow G$], the variables were ~~self-actualisation~~ and ~~empathy~~ (Rowan *et al.*, 1995), and ~~neuroticism~~ (negatively) (Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Kurdek, 1997 – for marital commitment). Bouchard, Lussier and Sabourin (1999) found that neuroticism determined half of the variance in males' personal relationship satisfaction, and ~~openness~~, ~~agreeableness~~ and ~~conscientiousness~~ the rest. In regard to the latter two variables, and for dating couples, Watson *et al.* (2000) confirmed the link.
- For wives or women only [$I \leftarrow$], the variables were ~~unpleasantness~~, ~~submissiveness~~ and ~~depression~~ (all negatively) (Blum & Mehrabian, 1999), and ~~extraversion~~ (Watson *et al.*, 2000). Bouchard *et al.* (1999), and also Watson *et al.* (2000), found that ~~neuroticism~~ correlated negatively with women's relationship satisfaction, and over and above the effect of that, only ~~agreeableness~~ explained some unique additional variation. The studies by Geist and Gilbert (1996) and by Kurdek (1997) supported the finding on neuroticism in as far as its negative link with marital commitment went.

The following personality characteristics correlated with their spouses' satisfaction for each of the two partners [$\rightarrow I$ & $G \leftarrow$]:

- ~~satisfaction with the spouse's personality~~ (Pléchaty *et al.*, 1996);
- wives' ~~pleasantness~~ and ~~dominance~~ (Blum & Mehrabian, 1999); and
- ~~internal locus of control~~ (Camp & Ganong, 1997).

In the following cases, largely similar links for men and women were evident between their personality factors and their partners' relationship satisfaction [$\rightarrow I$ & $G \leftarrow$]: ~~low emotional stability~~ (negatively), ~~intellect-openness~~, ~~agreeableness~~, and ~~conscientiousness~~ (Botwin *et al.*, 1997; Kosek, 1996; Shackelford & Buss, 2000); ~~ascribed neuroticism~~ (negatively) and ~~extraversion~~ (Kosek, 1996); ~~neuroticism~~ (negatively) (Bouchard *et al.*, 1999; and, additionally among women, also Geist & Gilbert, 1996; Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Watson *et al.*, 2000); and ~~positive emotionality~~ and ~~constraint~~ (Robins *et al.*, 2000). Only two further ~~exceptions~~ occurred. The first is that intellect-openness also once correlated negatively with relationship satisfaction (Botwin *et al.*, 1997). The other exception is that ~~self-esteem~~ only among women correlated with their partners' satisfaction (MacDonald *et al.*, 1987) [$G \leftarrow$].

The simultaneous experience of relationship satisfaction by both partners / spouses correlated with the following personality factors among both [$\rightarrow H$ & $H \leftarrow$]:

- ~~self-esteem~~ (higher in intact / non-divorced couples) (MacDonald *et al.*, 1987);
- ~~internal locus of control~~ (relative to any other combination of external and internal loci of control, with the exception of "internal" husbands and "external" wives, where the husbands were also highly satisfied) (Camp & Ganong, 1997); and
- ~~extraversion~~ and ~~openness~~ to experience (Nemeczek & Olson, 1996).

❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~personality~~ variables and ~~sex-role identity~~

The following correlations between personal sex-role identity and personality variables were reported:

- ~~self-esteem~~ and ~~masculinity~~ (positively) and ~~self-esteem~~ and ~~femininity~~ (negatively) for both males and females (Bradbury *et al.*, 1995) [$\rightarrow A$ & $C \leftarrow$], and for males only (Bailey *et al.*, 1987) [$\rightarrow A$];
- for females only [$C \leftarrow$], ~~self-esteem~~ and ~~femininity~~ (contradicting the previous finding partly) (MacDonald *et al.*, 1987), ~~aggression~~ and ~~masculinity~~ (Gerber, 1991), and the extent of preferred ~~control~~, ~~sociability~~ and ~~empathy~~, and ~~masculinity~~ (Johnson & Brems, 1989); and
- for males only (in infertile couples), ~~anxiety~~ (negatively) and ~~masculinity~~, relative to other sex-role identity types, with an ~~undifferentiated~~ sex-role identity type highest (positively) (Edelmann & Connolly, 1996).

With regard to partners' personal personality variables and their spouses' sex-role identities, correlations were reported between ~~self-esteem~~ for men and ~~masculinity~~ among their spouses (Bailey *et al.*, 1987) [$\rightarrow C$], and for women and their spouses (Bradbury *et al.*, 1995) [$A \leftarrow$].

Higher correlations, similar for the two partners [$\rightarrow B$ & $B \leftarrow$], between the listed personality factors and sex-role identity orientations, were reported between:

- self-esteem and androgyny, relative to an undifferentiated sex-role identity type; androgyny, relative to a ~~feminine~~ sex-role identity type; and ~~masculinity~~, relative to ~~femininity~~ (Bailey *et al.*, 1987; Manheim, 1990); and
- ~~anxiety~~ and an ~~undifferentiated~~ sex-role identity type, relative to ~~androgyny~~ and ~~masculinity~~; and ~~femininity~~, relative to ~~androgyny~~ and ~~masculinity~~ (Manheim, 1990).

When male partners scored high on ~~extraversion~~, ~~conscientiousness~~, ~~emotional stability~~ and ~~openness-to-experience~~, both spouses / partners were more likely to be ~~masculine~~ than ~~feminine~~, while the inverse applied to ~~agreeableness~~ [$\rightarrow B$] (Williams *et al.*, 1999).

❖ Discussion of themes and theoretical underpinnings

Antill (1983) tested a theory proposed many years before, in 1954, by Winch. Winch argued that ~~opposite personalities~~ attract each other. Antill, however, did not restrict himself to studying just the ~~complementarity~~ of personality needs, as his forerunners had in mind. He expanded his research to include relationship adjustment. The dominance-submissiveness and nurturance-receptivity dimensions were paired with masculinity and femininity to provide a stronger rationale for the research. Thus males (masculinity) and females (femininity) could reasonably be expected to complement each other. The findings, however, corroborated the considerable evidence against such a ~~complementarity theory~~.

Griffin's (1983) literature survey revealed that happily married individuals often displayed certain ~~personality traits~~. Such individuals were friendly, adept at fostering personal relations, cooperative, capable, loving and understanding. Unhappy or dissatisfied husbands often perceived their wives as immature, egocentric, suggestible, demanding, nervous and naïve. Unhappy or dissatisfied wives perceived their husbands to be aggressive, hostile, impulsive, unemotional and insensitive. Wives'

marital satisfaction was much more related to their husbands' personality scores than the inverse. Griffin's own empirical study revealed more traits. Happily married individuals were outgoing, emotionally stable, tender-minded, trusting, conscientious, practical, and optimistic. They were not tense, withdrawn, non-assertive, suspicious, awkward socially, apprehensive, and happy-go-lucky. Dissatisfied spouses revealed traits such as being pessimistic, moody, non-assertive, reserved, and suspicious. They were not imaginative and tender-minded.

The study of MacDonald *et al.* (1987) linked marital status to sex-role identity and ~~self-esteem~~. Marital status as such, i.e. being divorced or within an intact marriage, obviously could be an indicator of relationship satisfaction. The length of the period of divorce was associated with shifts towards greater masculine, but not androgynous, personality traits for both sexes. Intact marriages were characterised by higher self-esteem and greater masculinity for both sexes, and also greater femininity for women. Masculinity and femininity both contributed to women's self-esteem, while only masculinity was associated with higher self-esteem for males. Self-esteem measures differed between undifferentiated and androgynous, feminine and androgynous, and feminine and masculine respondents, with the latter partner in the pair scoring higher in each case (Manheim, 1990).

In addition to the notion of attachment theory, and its influence on relationship satisfaction, as discussed under Section 4.2.2, certain aspects of ~~models of self~~, such as self-concept and self-doubt, for instance, could also play an important role, as proposed by Murray *et al.* (2001). According to them, such self-models influenced individuals' perceptions of love - not only their own, but also those of their partners. Negativity about oneself thus would lead to a lack of confidence (or perceiving it as illogical) that a partner would care about that person. Such large under-valuations of the quality of relationships may actually jeopardise those relationships in the end. This dynamic could also be described as a mis-calibration of perceptions of partners' love, or also the creation of a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy.

~~Depression~~ correlated negatively, and ~~self-esteem~~ positively, with personal marital satisfaction (Sacco & Phares, 2001). Within the boundaries of ~~self-verification theory~~, and well-aligned with the theoretical position and findings of Murray *et al.* (2001), reported in the previous paragraph, Sacco and Phares found that positive perceptions (also cf. Section 4.2.6) of spousal personality and other characteristics correlated with personal marital satisfaction. Self-verification theory proposes that self-confirming evaluations are sought, attended to and believed, because they provide coherence between intra-psychic and inter-personal factors, such as depression and self-esteem, and perceptions of others and their behaviour towards the self. Sacco and Phares adapted this theoretical position into a self-esteem enhancement model better able to explain the finer nuances between the variables concerned.

In their study, Agarwal and Srivastava (1989) connected ~~ego maturity~~ and ~~interpersonal sensitivity~~ with androgyny. The research was done among Indian women in marital relationships. Ego development, however, did not correlate significantly with marital harmony. Androgyny correlated significantly with non-problem marriages entered into within a more egalitarian model.

The findings of Johnson and Brems (1989) only indirectly contribute to the present study. The reason is that they studied the relationship between sex-role identity and interpersonal functioning in general. Intimate dyadic relationships may act as a specific case of general relationships. Therefore, it may be advisable to take note of their main findings. Femininity significantly predicted ~~expressed and desired affection~~. Masculinity significantly predicted ~~expressed control, desired control~~ (inversely), ~~sociability~~ and ~~empathy~~. It seems as if a large number of interpersonal behaviours may be predictable from knowledge about the sex-role identity of individuals.

Manheim (1990) studied the relationship between sex-role orientation and ~~psychological well-being~~. She also analysed the relationship between sex-role identity and sexual satisfaction, but found no significant correlation. Also Hyde and Frost (1993) focused attention on the part played by gender-role identity in psychological well-being or mental health. They based their opinion on meta-analyses made of research findings by Bassoff and Glass in 1982. These meta-analyses were based on 26 studies. It was revealed that individuals exhibiting certain gender-identity types significantly outperformed others in achieving high mental health ratings when some paired analyses were made. These were: masculine males out-performed feminine males; androgynous males out-performed feminine males; androgynous females out-performed feminine females; and masculine females out-performed feminine females. The researchers concluded that the data did not support the notion that psychological androgyny promoted mental health. Rather, there was a strong, positive relationship between masculinity and mental health (as also reported by Gerdes, 1988). This applied across gender, sample selectivity, and type of sex-role measure. These and other findings suggest that when individuals with congruent personalities enter into dyadic relationships, satisfaction may be predictable to a larger extent.

Another case in which traits were linked to marital outcomes, is the research reported on by Gerber (1991). The methodological restrictions of this study are referred to under 3.2.4 and 3.3.1. Gerber researched the hypothesis that power (~~dominance~~) relationships between spouses modify the way in which the constructs of agency (masculinity) and communion (femininity) operate. From this, violence in marriages can also be explained. Differences in perceived power between the spouses are of specific importance. Marital roles *per se* are also said to determine the way in which personality traits are perceived to be absent or present. Violence usually takes place to establish or maintain power. In a way, Gerber studied the mechanisms of stereotyping, i.e. what outsiders perceived the personalities of the abuser and the victim to be, rather than investigating the influence of personality variables on couples' state of misfortune (unhappiness). The findings "provided support for the hypothesis that gender stereotyping on the positive traits is due to the power-related role that is implicitly assigned to each sex" (p. 449). When assigned the same role, men and women were perceived in similar ways.

Blum and Mehrabian (1999) used the *PAD* (~~Pleasantness-Arousal-Dominance~~) model and temperament scale to assess temperament and relate it to the marital happiness of individual spouses. The instrument has the following three scales: P (+P and -P), for pleasant and unpleasant temperament; A (+A and -A), for arousable and unarousable temperament; and D (+D and -D), for dominant and submissive temperament. The findings related in a theory-consistent way to those achieved using any of the other known personality measures.

Harrington-Hill (1992) studied sex-role identity and solving development crises as potential predictors of marital satisfaction. Development crises were conceptualised in terms of Erikson's theory of the epigenetic development of personality. Dyadic satisfaction was significantly related to femininity only.

James and Hunsley (1995) hypothesised that moderate amounts of cohesion and adaptability were optimal for the functioning of couples. Adaptability refers to the extent to which families / partners (cf. Section 4.2.2 about cohesion) were flexible to alter roles and respond to the demands of their social context. The research findings were somewhat contradictory. For certain analyses (two fairly different samples were also involved), there was a linear relationship between individual partners' adaptability and their own relationship satisfaction, while for other a curvilinear pattern was found.

Self-actualisation and empathy correlated with personal marital satisfaction only for men (Rowan *et al.*, 1995).

~~Satisfaction with the spouse's personality~~ correlated with personal relationship satisfaction, according to Pléchaty *et al.* (1996). They also found that convergence existed between participants' perceptions of past and present relationship satisfaction scores only when present satisfaction was high.

Locus of control was the focus of the study of Camp and Ganong (1997). They tested two hypotheses. The similarity hypothesis stated that spouses with similar loci of control would be more satisfied with their marriage than those with dissimilar orientations. The results did not support it. The internality hypothesis stated that couples in which both partners had internal locus-of-control orientations would be more satisfied than other couples. This was confirmed. However, the internality of a partner was more important to his/her personal satisfaction compared to the effect that the spouse's internal locus of control had on the concerned partner's satisfaction. This finding implies that dyadic effects can mask even stronger individual effects, as Burleson and Denton (1997) also warned. Therefore, both have to be investigated.

Wilson (1997) reviewed the contribution that ~~Eysenck's N-E-P factors~~ (*Neuroticism, Extraversion and Psychoticism*) were reputed to have on marital satisfaction. Mention is made of the fact that almost none of the studies using Eysenck's instruments considered the interaction between the personality scores of husbands and wives. Thus, their contribution is limited. Be it as it is, the consistent picture seems to be that husbands' extraversion was associated with greater satisfaction in both partners. Wives' scores were immaterial. Then also, neuroticism correlated negatively with satisfaction for both husbands and wives. Neuroticism among wives was responsible for the larger effect. In line with the previous findings, Karney and Bradbury (1997) also found that both spouses' neuroticism was negatively related to both spouses' marital satisfaction. The correlation was significant only for husbands' marital satisfaction. (Also cf. Section 3.2.1 for a discussion of important methodological considerations underpinning the latter study.)

Botwin *et al.* (1997) studied the effect that individuals' personality traits, conceptualised on the basis of the five-factor model, had on their spouses' marital satisfaction. Bouchard *et al.* (1999), using the same model of personality, studied the correlation between personal and partners' personality traits on relationship satisfaction, both within marriage and in cohabiting relationships. They also referred to a key study by Kelly and Conley in 1987 among 300 couples over a 50-year longitudinal period, in which it was found that neuroticism in particular had been an important determinant in both spouses' marital adjustment. Also Kosek (1996) used this model, but with the difference that ascribed measures of the traits were related to spousal marital satisfaction (for example, wives' neuroticism, as ascribed to them by their husbands, were related to husbands' satisfaction). In addition to neuroticism, all the remaining factors (extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness) correlated with husbands' and wives' satisfaction. Shackelford and Buss (2000) also reported a positive association between marital satisfaction among husbands and wives and their spouses' agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness, even though all the marriages studied were below one year in duration. However, Nemechek and Olson (1996) concentrated only on dyadic patterns in their study, and found that both spouses experienced higher marital adjustment when both had high scores on extraversion and openness to experience. In a similar design to that of Bouchard *et al.* referred to above, Watson *et al.* (2000) studied the effect of self-rated and ascribed personality on personal and partner relationship / marital satisfaction for both dating and married couples. Ascribed (partner-rated) personality evaluation did not contribute any unique information above self-rated evaluations. Watson *et al.* found that females' neuroticism was linked to their personal and their partners' dissatisfaction. In dating couples, conscientiousness and agreeableness were linked to personal satisfaction for both sexes. In married couples, this was the case for extraversion.

Williams *et al.* (1999) related the five-factor model also to ~~sex-role stereotypes~~. The masculinity stereotype correlated more with extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience compared to the femininity stereotype, while the inverse was true for agreeableness. Male and female respondents made highly similar ratings throughout.

Also Kurdek (1997) found a strong link between ~~neuroticism~~ and relationship dynamics (also cf. Section 2.1.6 and the discussion under Section 4.2.5). The central finding was that both personal and partner neuroticism was equally linked to low personal relationship commitment. Low commitment comprised unfavourable perceptions about the costs invested in the relationship, the rewards received, deviations from an ideal standard, the existence of attractive alternatives, and barriers against leaving the relationship.

As already mentioned under Section 2.1.6, Kurdek (1997, 1998) also involved **non-heterosexual** couples. However, his findings, important as they were, do not directly contribute to the present study, because of the way in which relationship commitment was conceptualised. He nevertheless related ~~neuroticism~~ and ~~conflict resolution~~ (problem solving) to relationship dynamics in substantive and unique ways in two earlier studies (cf. Sections 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 for further references to these studies). Although Kurdek (2001) also surveyed intra-personal variables in a third study, he did not relate them to relationship

satisfaction. However, he found that heterosexual-parent couples had low levels of relationship satisfaction, and lesbian couples high levels, compared to heterosexual-nonparent couples.

Greenfield and Thelen (1997), while validating a scale for the assessment of fear of intimacy, found that **gay males'** trait anxiety levels also correlated with their personal relationship satisfaction. As a result of more intensive analyses, the apparent significant link between fear of intimacy and relationship satisfaction disappeared after controlling for anxiety (dealt with more as a personality factor in the latter instance). For **lesbian** partners, there was a negative link between fear of intimacy and relationship satisfaction, even after partialling out anxiety.

Robins *et al.* (2000) investigated the link between emotionality (positive and negative) and control, and relationship satisfaction, by testing six models. These comprised:

- actor effects, whereby personal personality was linked to personal satisfaction;
- partner effects, whereby the one partner's personality was linked to the other's satisfaction;
- gender specificity, whereby men's personality would have different effects than women's personality;
- additive effects, whereby each partner's personality would contribute uniquely to satisfaction;
- synergy, whereby a synergistic reaction would exist between men's and women's personality; and
- similarity, whereby greater personality similarity between partners would predict higher satisfaction levels.

Actor and partner effects were found to occur within a mere additive model. Negative emotionality correlated negatively with relationship satisfaction across a wide range of partner configurations. Men's personality was linked more often to women's relationship satisfaction.

This section strongly suggests that some personality profiles may be isolated and linked to relationship satisfaction. These would include the positive role of self-esteem and ego-strength, an internal locus of control, extraversion, and openness to experience, as well as the negative role of neuroticism and depression, although caution has to be exercised not to make unwarranted conclusions about the direction of causality. It also appears as if cross-typing regarding sex-roles may be desirable, i.e., for males to exhibit good measures of femininity, and for females, of masculinity. Based on the foregoing discussion, personality variables should be built into research designs and their theoretical foundations, to contribute better to psychological knowledge.

4.2.5 Communication styles and patterns

Just over 30 % of the studies reviewed, involved communication as variable (cf. Table 3.1, Column H). This percentage appears to be increasing dramatically. Relative to the other intra-personal variables considered, this factor achieved the highest coverage in studies since 1995. This trend signals a growing recognition that communication dynamics lie at the heart of relationships. Conflict resolution is included in the discussion. It can be intuitively accepted that communication skill would enhance relationship satisfaction. In this sub-section, it is sometimes difficult to constrain communication style to a purely intra-personal variable. As a result, some inter-personal dimensions often come to the fore.

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between communication styles and the link between relationship satisfaction and sex-role identity

The following unique findings were reported regarding the correlation between personal communication factors, sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction:

- among men / husbands [$\rightarrow 1$], good communication styles, irrespective of sex-role identity type, and in comparison with respondents from the same sex-role identity type (Juni & Grimm, 1993, 1994); and femininity, together with poor communication styles (negatively) (Sayers & Baucom, 1991); and
- among women / wives [$9 \leftarrow$], communication skill and masculinity (Sayers & Baucom, 1991); and negative reciprocity (returning negative communication with negative communication) with femininity, because of the enhanced conflict potential (negatively) (Bradbury *et al.*, 1995; Sayers & Baucom, 1991).

For both husbands and wives [$\rightarrow 5$ & $5 \leftarrow$], decision-making and communication difficulties in traditional-husband modern-wife couples spelled significantly more serious relationship problems (Voelz, 1985).

The following similar correlations, but applicable to other-partner configurations, were also recorded:

- effective communication by wives and their husbands' relationship satisfaction, for any sex-role identity type among the latter (Antill & Cotton, 1987) [$1 \leftarrow$];
- husbands' / men's communication style and sex-role identity type and their wives' satisfaction [$\rightarrow 3$], good communication style, irrespective of sex-role identity type, and in comparison with respondents from the same sex-role identity type (Juni & Grimm, 1993, 1994); communication style (negatively) and femininity (Sayers & Baucom, 1991);
- for husbands (Sayers & Baucom, 1991) [$\rightarrow 3$] and wives (Antill & Cotton, 1987) [$7 \leftarrow$], personal communication style and masculinity, and spousal marital satisfaction;
- wives' communication skill and personal relationship satisfaction, irrespective of husbands' sex-role identity type (Antill & Cotton, 1987) [$3 \leftarrow$]; and
- feminine wives' communication skill with simultaneous relationship satisfaction in both spouses (Sayers & Baucom, 1991) [$8 \leftarrow$].

❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between communication styles and relationship satisfaction

Correlations between personal communication factors and personal relationship satisfaction for both husbands and wives (male and female partners) were regularly documented in the following cases [$\rightarrow G$ & $1 \leftarrow$]:

- expressive, supportive communication and interaction (Antill & Cotton, 1987; Sprecher *et al.*, 1995), with the link among males not so strong as among females;
- communication skill (for and between pre-marital, cohabiting and married couples, with conflict resolution and feelings often included) (Antill & Cotton, 1987; Fowers *et al.*, 1996; Moore *et al.*, 2001);
- amount of communication, but only for certain topics, as reported under Section 4.2.5 (Richmond, 1995);
- problem-focused coping attempts (positively) and avoidance, confrontation (men only) and denial (men only) (negatively) (Bouchard, Sabourin, Lussier, Wright & Richer, 1998);

- ~~collaborative~~ (positively) and ~~competing~~ (Greeff & De Bruyne, 2000) and ~~negative² conflict-~~ management styles (negatively) (Hojjat, 2000);
- in first remarriages, ~~self-disclosure~~ (intentionality, positiveness and honesty) (Bograd & Spilka, 1996) (intentionality was only important in the late-life remarriage group, while positiveness was only important in the mid-life remarriage group); and perceived (only men) spousal self-disclosure and personal self-disclosure (Greeff & Le Roux, 1998; and for the latter finding, Sokolski & Hendrick, 1999); and
- ~~openness~~ about potentially conflicting issues and ~~avoidance of difficult topics~~ (secrecy), and ~~suspicion~~ that partners kept information to themselves (negatively) (Finkenauer & Hazam, 2000).

The following unique links were reported between personal communication factors and relationship satisfaction:

- for husbands [$G \rightarrow$], in ~~understanding the communication process~~ (Burleson & Denton, 1997); and
- for wives [$I \leftarrow$], in their ~~ability to predict the impact of their communication~~ on their husbands (albeit only in distressed marriages) (Burleson & Denton, 1997); in ~~attributing the responsibility~~ (high) for negative behaviour or conditions in the marriage to their spouses, thus moderating the link between the wives' relationship satisfaction (low) and violence (high) against their husbands (Byrne & Arias, 1997); and in that the correlation between communication (constructive conflict resolution) and marital satisfaction was greater for wives with relationship-focused standards than for wives with less relationship-focused standards (Gordon *et al.*, 1999).

The following aspects (cf. above) also applied to the correlation between personal communication factors and spousal / partners' relationship satisfaction [$G \leftarrow$ and/or $\rightarrow I$]: for both partners, amount of communication, self-disclosure, collaborative conflict management, and denial; for men only, communication skill, problem-focused coping skill, confrontational style, ability to predict the effect of their communication, and competing conflict management style; and for women only, avoidance, accommodating conflict-management style, and ability to understand their partners' messages and the communicative situation.

Couples' simultaneous experience of relationship satisfaction correlated with the following (largely consistent with known trends) communication factors or patterns among both partners [$\rightarrow H$ and $H \leftarrow$]:

- communication skill (Antill & Cotton, 1987; Fowers *et al.*, 1996), also in non-distressed couples (Burleson & Denton, 1997);
- amount of communication (Richmond, 1995);
- husbands' marital satisfaction was more often affected by how wives resolved conflict compared to the influence on wives' marital satisfaction of how husbands resolved conflict (Kurdek, 1995) (cf. Section 4.2.5 for the details about this interaction);
- husbands' negative interaction was linked more closely to lower marital satisfaction scores for wives compared to wives' negative interaction with regard to husbands' marital satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 1997); and

² Active or passive strategies in the case of men, but only active in the case of women

- communication avoidance and withdrawal (negatively) (Bodenmann *et al.*, 1997; Bodenmann, Kaiser, Hahlweg & Fehm-Wolfsdorf, 1998).

Relational maintenance behaviours (including positive, disclosing and assuring communication) by wives correlated significantly with simultaneous marital satisfaction among spouses (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999) [H<].

❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~communication styles~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

The following correlations, similar for men and women [$\rightarrow A$ & $C \leftarrow$] were documented between personal communication factors and sex-role identity type:

- ~~communication skill~~ and ~~femininity~~, ~~masculinity~~ (men only), and ~~androgyny~~ (Antill & Cotton, 1987; Ganong & Coleman, 1987);
- ~~expressive communication~~ competence and ~~femininity~~ (Juni & Grimm, 1993);
- ~~instrumental communication~~ competence and ~~masculinity~~ (Juni & Grimm, 1993); and
- for monogamous couples, ~~intimacy~~ (including positive, intimate communication and conflict resolution) and ~~androgyny~~, more so compared to masculinity (Norton, 1995).

However, the correlations changed somewhat when personal communication factors and spousal / partners' sex-role identity type were investigated. For both men and women [$A \leftarrow$ & $\rightarrow C$], personal ~~communication skill~~ correlated negatively with partners' ~~masculinity~~ (Sayers & Baucom, 1991). Contradicting the previous finding somewhat, and for women only [$A \leftarrow$], their communication skill correlated positively with both ~~femininity~~ and ~~masculinity~~ among partners (Antill & Cotton, 1987). Furthermore, women's ~~ability and motivation to solve conflict~~ correlated with husbands' ~~femininity~~ scores (Williger, 1987).

Two patterns were reported regarding the simultaneous presence of sex-role identity types and communication factors between partners [$\rightarrow B$ & $B \leftarrow$], namely: ~~good communication~~ skill among husbands went with femininity among both spouses (Antill & Cotton, 1987); and the ability to ~~resolve conflict~~ was positively related to similar (identical) spousal sex-role identity traits, especially applicable when at least one spouse was either androgynous or feminine (Williger, 1987).

❖ Discussion of themes and theoretical underpinnings

A very early study in 1950 by Ort (Burr, 1967) revealed the very high correlation (-0,83) between ~~role conflict~~ and marital satisfaction. This figure suggests the importance of the variable for the present research. However, a more detailed analysis is required beyond merely accepting this seemingly obvious link.

In Burr's (1967) own study, he tested the hypothesis that marital role-behaviour discrepancy would be inversely related to marital satisfaction. Burr also explored the role of intra-personal (or psychological) and inter-personal (or social) variables in this regard. The ~~amount and direction of communication~~

were two of the aspects covered. The dependent variable was not the marital satisfaction of dyadic units, but only of each individual spouse. As expected, role discrepancy correlated significantly with marital satisfaction, with coefficients of -0,59 for men, and -0,65 for women. However, no direct correlations were found for communication patterns. Instead, the more indirect link between relationship satisfaction and role ~~tolerance~~, as the (non-)acceptance of certain levels of role conformity in spouses, was investigated. No such a link was found either. Role tolerance tended (more so for women) to correlate negatively only with role discrepancy. This finding assumes some level of negotiation through communication between spouses.

The amount of communication perceived (rated) by someone's partner correlated with marital satisfaction (Richmond, 1995). Generally speaking, this applied to personal, spousal and collective marital satisfaction. However, some limitations regarding ~~topics~~ existed. Communication about children and politics did not correlate with satisfaction. Communication about home life, couples' sexual relationship and vacations did, though, for both spouses. Communication about religion, work and friends did only for wives. Although no overall significant differences occurred between the sexes, two trends were evident. The link was linear for females (better communication – higher satisfaction), but marital satisfaction levelled off after some point. Also, the link was stronger for females than for males.

~~Ability to communicate effectively~~ correlated consistently with marital satisfaction in the studies that Corrales (1974) reviewed. Corrales himself found that open communication styles had a substantial impact on the marital satisfaction of both husbands and wives. This applied irrespective of the level of spousal agreement. For husbands, already high marital satisfaction was enhanced by spousal agreement. For wives, spousal agreement could also be an independent source of marital satisfaction. This occurred irrespective of the presence of open communication from husbands. The latter variable explained the highest amount of variance in marital satisfaction among all the variables studied by Corrales. The other variables were: family cycle; duration of being a childless couple; marital power structures; spousal agreement; and socio-economic status.

Also Griffin (1983) reported that open, relaxed, expressive, friendly and attentive communication styles were considered in the literature to correlate with marital satisfaction. His own study revealed a few more styles. When spouses' communication styles were perceived by their partners to be honest, understanding, expressing feelings, genuine, attentive, aware/perceptive, direct, pleasant, meaningful, stimulating/interesting, and clear, but not blaming, detached, ineffective, illogical, incomplete and placating, relationship satisfaction was high. Dissatisfaction was associated with communication styles that were secretive, lacking understanding, blaming, hiding feelings, inattentive, boring, hesitant/reluctant, detached, and harsh; but not involved, checking assumptions, clear, aware/perceptive, complete and meaningful.

The same general construct of ~~communication skill~~ (strong and positive engagement, intimacy and friendship) correlated with dyadic adjustment in pre-marital, cohabiting and married couples (Moore *et al.*, 2001). Sex differences were almost non-existent, while trends were slightly stronger in relationships of longer duration and among married couples.

Voelz's (1985) study is covered more fully under 3.2.4 and 3.3.1. The finding that gender-role disparity impacted on decision-making success, with possible negative consequences for relationship satisfaction, is noteworthy.

Antill and Cotton (1987) researched the relationship between the levels of self-disclosure among spouses and marital happiness. Relationship satisfaction was only indirectly linked to sex-role identity type. Femininity, among both husbands and wives, was closely related to disclosure levels. Therefore, androgynous and feminine individuals disclosed more than others. Marital happiness positively correlated with personal self-disclosure, as well as with spousal levels of disclosure, albeit to a lesser extent. Self-disclosure referred to verbally and voluntarily communicating any personal information about oneself to one's spouse. Bograd and Spilka (1996) (also cf. 3.2.2) and Sokolski and Hendrick (1999) confirmed the finding about the link between personal self-disclosure and marital happiness.

Self-disclosure again was the focus of a study by Greeff and Le Roux (1998), who undertook one of the few relevant South African studies. The largely expected findings are reported earlier in the present section.

Finkenauer and Hazam (2000) confirmed that contextual factors played a large part in determining how either secrecy or disclosure contributed to marital satisfaction. They found that openness about potentially conflicting issues and avoidance of difficult topics were both positively related to marital satisfaction, while suspicion that partners kept information to themselves, was negatively related to marital satisfaction.

The influence of intra-personal factors, such as affect, anxiety and self-disclosure, was investigated by Jordan and Deluty (2000) within **lesbian** relationships. Only the discrepancy in self-disclosure levels between partners were significantly linked (negatively) to relationship satisfaction.

Williger (1987) studied the relationship between sex-role identity and conflict resolution. She found that similarity of sex-role identity type was related positively to conflict resolution. Couples with at least one androgynous or one feminine spouse were also found to be better at conflict resolution. Although the specific sex-role identity type of spouses was more influential than similarity in predicting marital intimacy and adjustment, the same was not true for predicting conflict resolution.

Since 1995, more attention has been focused on intra-personal factors in **same-sex** relationships. Norton (1995) reported how intimacy (including positive, intimate communication and conflict resolution) correlated with androgyny more than with masculinity for heterosexual, **gay and lesbian** individuals from monogamous couples. For gay couples, higher intimacy was also associated directly with greater relationship satisfaction.

The research by Fowers *et al.* (1996) on the links between communication skills (conflict resolution and feelings) in the pre-marital phases of relationships and marital satisfaction (or the eventual marital

status / outcome) three years after getting married, is covered in more detail in Chapter 3 (Section 3.2.1).

Kurdek (1995) examined the connection between three aspects (styles) of spousal conflict resolution and personal and partners' marital satisfaction in a longitudinal study (spanning two years), in which the focus was on dyadic interactions. The conflict-resolution styles were conflict engagement (losing control), withdrawal (shutting down on reaching a limit), and compliance (giving in with little attempt at interaction). Prior to that, two theoretical positions had often been held. The first was the so-called ~~interdependence theory~~. According to it, the trade-off between perceived rewards and perceived costs determined the extent of relationship satisfaction. Second, ~~self-fulfilling prophecy theory~~ determined that an individual's attitudes shaped a psychological environment that elicited behaviour that would reinforce the very same attitudes. Because of the many contradictory and inconclusive findings of the past, Kurdek refined the conceptual frameworks to also investigate the effects of conflict-handling behaviours on marital satisfaction over time. Even inverse effects were investigated. Kurdek's findings, already cited at the appropriate places at the beginning of this sub-section, revealed a number of specific links. Husbands experienced low marital satisfaction when they frequently used withdrawal, while their wives simultaneously used conflict engagement, but infrequently used compliance and withdrawal. Wives experienced low marital satisfaction either when they frequently used compliance while their husbands used conflict engagement, or when they frequently used conflict engagement while their husbands used withdrawal. When investigating the link between conflict-resolution behaviours at the beginning of the longitudinal period and marital satisfaction levels at the end of it, more findings came to light. Husbands either experienced high marital satisfaction later when they earlier frequently used conflict engagement, while their wives infrequently used withdrawal, or when they frequently used compliance while their wives used withdrawal. The trend was similar for wives, albeit not significant (i.e., wives either experienced high marital satisfaction later when they earlier frequently used conflict engagement, while their husbands infrequently used withdrawal, or when they frequently used compliance while their husbands used withdrawal).

Kurdek (1997) later compared the same data on heterosexual couples to data on **gay and lesbian** couples. Earlier in this section and under Section 2.1.6, it is reported that conflict engagement was associated with low relationship commitment, i.e., it was positively related to experiencing high costs in the relationship and many attractive alternatives, and negatively to meeting an ideal standard. Conflict resolution styles were found to be much more important than neuroticism. In another longitudinal study, Kurdek (1998) also compared problem solving and relationship quality among and between gay, lesbian and heterosexual partners and couples. His findings were that gay and lesbian couples perceived themselves to have more autonomy and fewer barriers than heterosexual couples. Lesbian couples, in addition, experienced more intimacy and equality.

Bodenmann's (1995) handling of communication and conflict or ~~stress management~~ is referred to under 4.2.2, because of the way in which he linked these variables to emotional support to partners in times of stress. Their findings more or less confirm others already reported above.

Greeff and De Bruyne (2000) recently published the findings of another of the very few relevant studies so far undertaken in South Africa. They researched the link between conflict management styles and marital satisfaction based on the responses of 57 black, Afrikaans-speaking people (from Stellenbosch, i.e., so-called coloureds), in Stage IV of family development (according to Duvall's typology; cf. Section 4.3.6). A collaborative style was the most desirable. Where either or both spouses used a competing style, satisfaction was at its lowest. The researchers employed Thomas's model for styles of conflict management, published in 1976, whereby the following configurations were possible:

- individuals low in assertiveness and cooperativeness use an avoiding style;
- individuals low in assertiveness and high in cooperativeness use an accommodating style;
- individuals high in assertiveness and low in cooperativeness use a competing style;
- individuals intermediate in assertiveness and cooperativeness use a compromising style; and
- individuals high in assertiveness and cooperativeness use a collaborating style.

Shukla and Kapoor (1990) studied patterns with some implied relevance in terms of communication outcomes. They found that wives' employment status and androgyny enhanced their power basis in terms of ~~decision-making authority~~. However, this was less associated with marital satisfaction than was coming from husband-dominated or syncratic families. In syncratic families a balance of relative authority existed. In such cases the range of shared authority was equal to or greater than the combined ranges of sole husband and wife authority. This may effectively have led to a substantive number of autocratic decisions by males anyway. Autonomic families also experienced less satisfaction. In autonomic families there was also a balance of relative authority, but with the shared range less than the combined sole ranges of husband and wife. This pattern may have suggested a bit more autonomy for wives especially. The patterns seen above could be expected in a strongly patriarchal society, where the effects of traditional norms override the contribution of resources from partners.

Sayers and Baucom (1991) researched the conditions under which sex-role identity type (femininity and masculinity) and communication patterns could combine to cause marital distress. They focused on ~~negative reciprocity~~. Negative reciprocity is the greater than expected trend, relative to a previously established base rate, to respond to partners' negative communication with further negative communication. The two researchers investigated earlier suggestions that wives may determine the degree of negative reciprocity among distressed couples. They particularly tested the hypothesis that femininity may contribute to this behaviour. Communication was studied in the context of ~~problem-solving interactions~~. They found that wives' femininity was related to greater rates of negative behaviour among husbands and wives. In addition, their femininity was also associated with greater negative reciprocity among wives. Men's femininity was related only to their personal tendency to terminate fewer negative sequences of behaviour compared to their wives. Inversely, wives' masculinity was associated with shorter sequences of negative behaviour. Therefore, the findings suggested that a greater conflict-engaging style is associated more closely with high femininity than with sex *per se*. An obvious limitation of the study was the involvement of distressed couples without comparisons to the behaviour of non-distressed couples. (Also consult the findings of Gordon *et al.* (1999) reported later in this section.)

Katz, Boggiano and Silvern (1993) emphasised that gender differences in communication and relationship style often occurred in the domain of marital relationships. Wives were more able and motivated to engage in ~~emotionally expressive, self-disclosing~~ communication. In distressed marriages, husbands more often failed to notice or respond to their spouses' negative affect. This factor caused considerable distress and anger on the part of women, and ultimately contributed to an even more severely distressed marital relationship cycle.

Juni and Grimm (1993) found that femininity enhanced satisfaction in ~~affective communication~~, while masculinity enhanced satisfaction in ~~problem-solving~~ communication.

Juni and Grimm (1994) later researched the relationship between gender-role constellations and marital satisfaction. Gender-role constellations were determined by the presence/absence of gender-role congruence within the couple as unitary construct. The researchers used the following constellations: androgynous couples (both spouses androgynous); gender-role congruent couples (masculine husband and feminine wife); gender-role incongruent couples (masculine wife and feminine husband); and undifferentiated couples (both spouses undifferentiated). Among some significant relationships involving other variables, they found that husbands in gender-role congruent couples reported greater dissatisfaction in affective communication than those in androgynous couples. The researchers concluded that, when spouses had assigned gender roles in some conscious way, disarray in marriage could be prevented.

Gottman *et al.* (1998) studied the stability and satisfaction of marriages from the angle of the influence of ~~affective communication interaction patterns~~ among spouses. Although the study was longitudinal (six years) in its assessment of marital satisfaction and stability (divorce), interaction within conflict situations was mostly studied in simulated communication sessions. Nevertheless, it became clear that positive affect by either spouse during conflict was good for the marriage. So were husbands' efforts to de-escalate (or not reciprocate) low-intensity negative affect from the side of their wives, and wives' efforts to de-escalate (or not reciprocate) high-intensity negative affect from the side of their husbands. To the researchers' surprise, no confirmation at all could be found for the value of the much-hailed therapeutic technique of active listening. The core reason for this seemed to be not that it is a poor technique, but too artificial to be employed consistently by couples, or to be invoked in the heat of conflict.

Burgoyne (2001) researched the development of a scale for evaluating relationships among **same-sex couples**. Because of the way in which the samples were drawn, some factors could be related to relationship outcomes, operationalised as belonging or not belonging to a clinical population (i.e., couples in therapy). Burgoyne found that partners from ~~non-clinical~~ couples scored higher than those from ~~clinical~~ couples with regard to conflict resolution (the ease with which differences of opinion are solved), expressiveness (the degree of sharing thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and feelings), and affection (the degree to which feelings of emotional closeness are expressed).

Lamke *et al.* (1994) added a new dimension to research on relationship satisfaction. They studied the influence of both self-rated and perceived (by partner) sex-role identity type on relationship satisfaction. The dimensions of self-rated and ascribed sex-role identity type were also present in the study by Siavelis and Lamke (1992), referred to under Section 4.3.6. Lamke and her colleagues were particularly interested in the degree to which ~~instrumental and expressive competence~~ mediated the link between sex-role identity type and relationship satisfaction. The research team found that females' relationship satisfaction was determined by their own expressive competence and their perceptions of their partners as feminine. Interestingly enough, partners' perceived femininity was predicted well by self-rated femininity for both males and females. Males' relationship satisfaction was also determined by their own expressive competence and their perceptions of their partners as feminine. The researchers concluded that femininity indirectly influenced relationship satisfaction, while expressive competence (mainly emotional support and self-disclosure) and perceptions of partners' femininity directly promoted relationship satisfaction.

Byrne and Arias (1997) studied the effects that spouses' ~~attributions of causality and responsibility~~ for marital problems had on the link between marital satisfaction and the occurrence of ~~violence~~. A gender effect was evident, in that violence increased only among wives under conditions of low satisfaction and negative responsibility attributions.

Burleson and Denton (1997) argued that ~~conceptual~~ confusion reigned with regard to communication skill and its relation to marital satisfaction. Not only should communication behaviour, communication skill and motivation to communicate be separated, but also different skills be distinguished. The latter, in turn, could also relate in varying ways to relationship satisfaction of spouses, their partners, and the dyad as a unit. In response to often observing that the ~~communication skills-deficit model~~ (where it is the absence of communication skill that is presumed to lead to low relationship satisfaction) did not hold, they applied ~~communication theory~~ to derive four new sub-constructs. These were: communication effectiveness; perceptual accuracy; predictive accuracy; and interpersonal cognitive complexity; which respectively referred to: message production towards an intended effect; comprehending the intended message content; correctly anticipating the effect of the message on another; and the capacity to correctly assess the whole social situation. By using a cut-off score of 100 on the *DAS* to distinguish between distressed and non-distressed couples or spouses, the researchers found that communication skills and satisfaction correlated positively among non-distressed couples, but negatively among distressed couples.

Karney and Bradbury (1997) found that husbands' ~~negative interaction~~ led to lower marital satisfaction scores for wives compared to wives' negative communication for husbands. (Also cf. Section 3.2.1 for a discussion of important methodological considerations underpinning this study.)

The study by Bouchard *et al.* (1998) dealt with ~~coping strategies~~ and relationship satisfaction, and comprised many complex facets. Amongst others, these included four different coping strategies, concomitant comparisons between partners' relationship satisfaction levels through self-reported and partner-reported satisfaction levels and coping strategies, both a short-term (four months) and long-

term (18 months) cohort longitudinal design, and a comparison of the effects of alternative analysis strategies on the findings. All the details are not reported, as they were not central to the present study. However, it became evident that coping strategies employing active communication, focusing on problems, were conducive to greater relationship satisfaction, while denial and avoidance, and exceptionally confrontational approaches, were not. (The core findings are reported earlier in this section.)

~~Communication avoidance and withdrawal~~ correlated negatively with relationship satisfaction in the study by Bodenmann *et al.* (1998), which was undertaken to validate a new communication assessment instrument. Noteworthy is the fact that the research team analysed dyadic patterns. Therefore, mutual avoidance of communication led to unhappiness in both spouses. So did either partner's demand to communicate, while the spouse simultaneously withdrew from communication. These findings essentially confirmed findings released a year before by Bodenmann *et al.* (1997).

Weigel and Ballard-Reisch (1999) studied couple satisfaction (simultaneous marital satisfaction among spouses) from the perspective of ~~relational maintenance~~. The latter included positive interaction with one's partner in an uncritical and optimistic manner, disclosing one's desires for and opinions about the relationship, assuring each other of the value of the relationship, and sharing tasks that enhance the relationship. Only wives' maintenance behaviours significantly correlated with joint (dyadic) satisfaction.

~~Cognitions~~ about marital standards (i.e., the boundaries of, control over, and investment in marital processes and outcomes) may ~~moderate~~ the influence of ~~communication~~ patterns on marital adjustment, as studied and indicated by Gordon *et al.* (1999). They found that in the case of wives, the correlation between communication (constructive conflict resolution) and marital satisfaction was greater for wives with relationship-focused standards (belief in closeness and egalitarianism) compared to wives with less relationship-focused standards. Their research was driven by an attempt to refine the behavioural model of marital interaction, underpinning behavioural marital therapy, by accounting for communication behaviours in a more sophisticated way in association with important cognitive processes.

The research by Fincham *et al.* (2000) on ~~attributions and efficacy expectations~~, which also involve aspects of communication about conflict resolution, is covered in Section 4.2.1.1.

The quality and detail of the findings in the literature confirm that communication is a very important determinant of relationship satisfaction. Communication styles and patterns, including the ability to address conflict, operate at the interface between the lives of individuals. Where a long-term, intimate relationship is at stake, intensified dynamics can be expected. Future research also has to acknowledge that aspects of communication are imbedded in sex-role stereotypes and identity. Salient or frequent findings are briefly summarised next. Effective communication, sometimes irrespective of sex-role identity type, predicts relationship satisfaction. Included under effective communication are aspects such as the ability to share emotions or affect (often related to femininity), being problem-focused (often related to masculinity), self-disclosure, collaboration, knowledge of the communication process, enough communication, and steering away from avoidance, denial and withdrawal. Poor communication among feminine men predicts dissatisfaction for their partners. Good

communication among masculine men or women predicts satisfaction for their partners. Poor communication between traditional husbands/men and modern wives/women is severely detrimental to the relationship.

4.2.6 Perceptions and stereotypes

The last intra-personal factor that could be considered in regard to the design of the present study, is related to cognitive functioning (cf. 4.2.1). However, it was considered sufficiently prominent to deal with independently. It was included in about 14 % of the empirical studies reviewed in this chapter (cf. Table 3.1, Column H). The incidence of relevant studies has been increasing slightly over time.

Perceptions and stereotypes seem to have a profound influence on both the outcome of intimate relationships and research on that. It is assumed that it would be common for partners to make inferences about their relationships based on stereotypes. In essence, stereotypes are attributes cognitively ascribed to role incumbents. Such ascribing may be descriptive or prescriptive in nature. These processes could also influence relationship satisfaction. Not to be overlooked, is the fact that sex-role stereotyping is at the basis of sex-role identity measurement. Also in this case the cognitive processes underpinning the perception of personal and others' sex-role identity characteristics would play an important role.

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~perceptions~~ and the link between ~~relationship satisfaction~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

No findings were reported.

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~perceptions~~ and ~~relationship satisfaction~~

The following personal perceptions were found to correlate with personal relationship satisfaction for both husbands / male partners and wives / female partners [$\rightarrow G$ & $I \leftarrow$], unless noted otherwise:

- ~~rewards~~ received from their marriages were high, especially in comparison to equity and equality (for partners aged 60 to 90) (Reynolds *et al.*, 1995);
- ~~discrepancy~~ between ~~real and ideal partner perceptions~~ (negatively), and present and future (women only, one year later) marital satisfaction (Ruvolo & Veroff, 1997);
- ~~sense of personal autonomy~~ (for women only if the relatedness scores were high enough) and ~~relatedness~~ (togetherness) (Rankin-Esquer *et al.*, 1997);
- ~~empathy~~ in spouses (Wilkie *et al.*, 1998);
- ~~existence of love~~ for themselves, while evaluating their partners positively (as a result of sound self-esteem) (Murray *et al.*, 2001); and
- ~~appreciation for spousal personality~~ and other characteristics (Sacco & Phares, 2001).

A link unique to husbands [$\rightarrow G$] was also observed in the case of ~~perceptions about their wives' marital roles~~ when making comparisons between ideal and actual combinations of traditional *vis-à-vis* modern roles (Bollman *et al.*, 1997). Husbands were dissatisfied in particular when their wives held traditional

roles and the husbands desired them to have modern ones. When both the actual and ideal roles for wives were traditional, husbands' marital satisfaction was the highest. Two unique patterns were observed for wives / women [$I \leftarrow$]. Contradicting the finding of Reynolds *et al.* (1995), mentioned above, somewhat, perceptions of equity regarding the respective roles of spouses correlated with personal marital satisfaction (Huppé & Cyr, 1997). Wives' perception (understanding) of husbands' constructive or destructive conflict-handling acts was related to their personal marital well-being (Acitelli *et al.*, 1997). This understanding differed for black and white couples with regard to constructive acts. In the case of blacks, it was positively related to marital satisfaction, while for whites it was negatively related.

Some unique personal perceptions of each spouse were also found to correlate with their partners' satisfaction:

- in regard to wives' perceptions and their husbands' marital satisfaction [$G \leftarrow$], two of the findings just reported, namely that of Acitelli *et al.* (1997) on constructive or destructive conflict-handling acts, and that of Ruvolo and Veroff (1997), on real and ideal partner perceptions and future satisfaction, were replicated; and
- in regard to husbands' perceptions and their wives' marital satisfaction [$\rightarrow I$], husbands' perception of the fairness of domestic and paid job division uniquely had a significant effect on wives' marital satisfaction (Wilkie *et al.*, 1998), while the finding of Bollman *et al.* (1997) on traditional and modern roles, reported above, was replicated.

The two spouses or partners experienced simultaneous satisfaction [$\rightarrow H \& H \leftarrow$] when they both perceived congruence (agreement) to exist over spousal roles (Chassin *et al.*, 1985); but incongruence of the accuracy of partners' perceptions of each others' conflict management behaviours was negatively related to relationship satisfaction, while high mutual understanding between partners in this regard was related to more satisfying relationships (Hojjat, 2000).

❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between perceptions and sex-role identity

No findings were reported.

❖ Discussion of themes and theoretical underpinnings

Burr (1967) drew attention to an early study by Luckey in 1960, in which congruence between self-perceptions and the perceptions a mate held about his/her spouse correlated significantly with marital satisfaction.

Gerber (1987) studied the correlation between the "satisfaction balance" and marital happiness. She defined the satisfaction balance as the ratio between the total number of feminine traits and the total number of masculine traits within a dyad. When feminine traits predominated, marriages were expected to be happier. This was not verified empirically. The foundations of Gerber's research can be found in the work of Gerber and Balkin (1977). They studied the influence of roles on the degree of sex-role stereotyping when observers rated hypothetical individuals. They provided participants with role

descriptions in terms of a partner in marriage *vis-à-vis* other unattached individuals. Their findings suggested that marriage facilitated, even required, spouses' conforming to stereotypes. This may in certain cases strongly influence marital satisfaction. The influence may be positive or negative, depending on the sex-role identity type match as further investigated by the present study.

Rosenzweig and Dailey (1989) distinguished between the perception of ~~global~~ sex-role identity and of ~~sex-role identity~~ in the ~~sexual~~ situation. Men and women who perceived themselves as androgynous in the sexual situation experienced the most sexual satisfaction and achieved the highest adjustment scores in the heterosexual dyadic relationship. In addition, both men and women with a feminine sex-role identity type in the sexual situation experienced significantly higher dyadic adjustment than the undifferentiated and masculine groups. The effects were stronger for men. No significant differences were found when using global sex-role identity type as the predictor. An interesting finding was that many individuals perceived themselves to be feminine in the sexual situation, irrespective of their global sex-role identity type. The finding was expected for females, but not for males. It also challenged the implicit assumption of sex-role invariability across life situations.

Lobel (1994) studied the influence of ~~social perception~~ on stereotyping in a sample of 251 Israeli pre-adolescent boys. She found that perceptions may be influenced by whether perceived individuals adhere to or violate stereotypes. The gender disposition, or sex-role identity type, for that matter, of the perceivers influenced their perceptions. This was true to the extent that feminine males liked and identified more with the feminine boy or target character in the stimulus material. Thus, in terms of affective and motivational judgements, the sex-role identity type of the perceiver made a significant difference to expectations. However, assigning traits to the target figure, i.e., engaging in cognitive stereotyping, did not vary in terms of the sex-role identity type of the observers. Lobel alerted researchers to the potential influence of the findings on the interpretation of Bem's gender schema theory and Markus's self schema theory. This issue is dealt with in more detail under Section 2.2.

The study by Kaslow and Robison (1996) probed married couples' opinions on / ~~perceptions of the factors that contributed~~ to marital satisfaction. The researchers also calculated spouses' dyadic adjustment scores (DAS). The result is not much more than a list of factors perceived to be important by happy couples, as well as the frequencies of spouses, on a range of demographic variables and other more incidental questions, without significance testing, who were satisfied, not satisfied, or in an intermediate category. Factors thus highlighted (more or less as an essential-ingredients list) were internal motivation to make marriages a success, good communication skills, flexibility, problem-solving skills, higher socio-economic status, good health, corresponding religious beliefs, mutual trust and respect, providing mutual support, loyalty and fidelity, and shared interests.

The study by Reynolds *et al.* (1995) investigated the same variables as those addressed in the study by Martin (1985). The latter is reported under Section 4.2.1.1, as it departed from a cognitive point of view. However, Reynolds *et al.* reached very similar findings, namely that perceived reward levels, more so than perceived equity and equality, were related to marital satisfaction.

Ruvolo and Veroff (1997) expanded the application of ~~exchange theory~~ to marital satisfaction to include “gap-theoretical explanations” (p. 225). This meant that they investigated the link between the ideal-real gap, or the ~~discrepancy between real and ideal partner perceptions~~, and marital satisfaction. Another version of this, which had given identical results before, but which the two researchers did not investigate, was the influence of the ~~expectation-reality gap~~ between perceptions. Ruvolo and Veroff’s findings revealed that both spouses’ discrepant perceptions correlated negatively with their personal present marital satisfaction. However, as part of their two-year longitudinal study, they also found that only wives’ discrepant perceptions were linked (negatively) to both their personal and their husbands’ future marital satisfaction levels.

Acitelli *et al.* (1997) concentrated on the effects of ~~inter-personal perceptions~~ between spouses in the early years of marriage on relationship satisfaction. They mainly departed from theories pertaining to social cognition to explain the effects of partners’ perceptual congruence, perceived similarity, and understanding, in the area of ~~conflict handling~~, on their personal and their spouses’ relationship satisfaction. When black wives understood their partners’ constructive conflict-management behaviours, they and their spouses were found to be happier. The inverse applied to white couples.

Hojjat (2000) studied topics very similar to those of Acitelli *et al.* (1997), as described in the previous paragraph. The typology that Hojjat chose to use, determined that both the valence (positive or negative) and activity (active or passive) of conflict management had to be accounted for. It resulted in four possible categories of conflict management, namely positive/active, positive/passive, negative/active and negative/passive. Negative strategies were found to correlate negatively with relationship satisfaction. Incongruence in understanding each others’ conflict management strategies seemed to be related to decreases in satisfaction, while higher understanding was related to greater satisfaction.

For both husbands and wives, ~~perceived empathy~~ in their spouses was related to personal marital satisfaction (Wilkie *et al.*, 1998). Under Section 2.2, it is described how the research team situated their study of the equitable division of domestic and paid work in the relevant theoretical frameworks.

Another study dealing with perceptions, was the one by Rankin-Esquer *et al.* (1997). Respondents’ ~~perceived sense of own autonomy and relatedness~~ (togetherness) were related to their marital satisfaction. However, for females, the link between autonomy and marital satisfaction was only observed in interaction with relatedness (i.e., when scores on the latter were high enough).

Bollman *et al.* (1997) used a combination of categories for ~~job status and family commitment~~, together with spouses’ perceptions of each other’s ~~ideal and actual role behaviours~~, to predict marital satisfaction. A traditional-to-modern continuum was created by considering the following five classes: (1) full-time homemaking (traditional); (2) home (marriage/family) and community activities balanced; (3) home and employment balanced with marriage/family a definite priority; (4) home and career sharing equal priority; and (5) career and home balanced with career receiving priority over marriage/family. Wives’ employment status was also distinguished as not, part-time and full-time employed. Interestingly

enough, only husbands' perceptions of (maternal) roles correlated with marital satisfaction (of both spouses).

Section 4.2.4 covers the interplay described by Murray *et al.* (2001) between personality factors and individual perceptions as far as their links with relationship satisfaction go. The same applies to the simultaneous study of depression, self-esteem, and perceptions about spousal personality and other characteristics, and their correlation with personal marital satisfaction, as described by Sacco and Phares (2001).

The findings reported in this sub-section suggest that relationship satisfaction is enhanced by certain perceptions. The main ones seem to be: congruence between real and ideal perceptions about spousal roles, and between partners or spouses about their respective roles; positive perceptions about the rewards and benefits experienced; and perceptions of being loved and receiving empathy. Realistic perception appears to foster mutual understanding and communication to the benefit of relationships.

4.2.7 Conclusion

Like many other personality characteristics, the sex-role identity type of an individual can be considered reasonably stable over time. It may thus seem that, in the correlation between sex-role identity type and intra-personal factors, sex-role identity type plays the primary part. In terms of causality, this perhaps suggests that a person's sex-role identity type may contribute to the selection of partners through evaluation of the desirability of certain intra-personal characteristics, or even by evoking some skills and behaviours, as reflected in the findings reported above. For example, feminine wives may select husbands who show love, and/or may enable their husbands to show love.

A fairly large similarity between husbands and wives with regard to the interaction between intra-personal characteristics and sex-role identity type is also prominent. Perhaps sex-role identity type, perceived as a personality factor itself, or as a combination of characteristics (traits), is closely related to other intra-personal constructs such as the ability to communicate emotions, high self-esteem, and even positive attitudes towards caring behaviour.

It can be noted that a number of potential sex-role identity-relationship satisfaction configurations (cf. Intersects 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8 in Figure 4.2) were not illuminated further by the review of findings pertaining to intra-personal factors. Even so, communication skill stands out as an important variable.

In this section (4.2), the research literature on the influence of intra-personal factors on relationship satisfaction and sex-role identity has been reviewed. It is apparent that this category of factors plays an important role in determining relationship outcomes. In any future research, including the present study, the part played by particular intra-personal variables, such as emotions, traditional or modern attitudes towards sex roles, personality traits such as self-esteem and neuroticism, communication style and skill, and (un)realistic perceptions, should be accounted for optimally in the research design. It has also been possible to schematically portray the main contributions discussed in this section in Figure 4.2, by expanding the theoretical framework proposed in Figure 3.1.

4.3 Extra-personal (biographic) factors

Variables from the wider context of dyadic relationships may also influence relationship satisfaction, sex-role identity, or the link between the two. Various researchers have isolated the role of such extra-personal factors. These factors are either physical or material in nature, or consist of sets of circumstances shaped by many external conditions. They overlap to some extent with what is designated conventionally as biographical variables. Included are age, sex, physical health status, family life cycle, developmental life stage, socio-economic status, family stage, job status, ethnicity, and educational qualifications.

In this section, extra-personal factors are dealt with in a similar way as intra-personal factors (cf. Section 4.2). This implies that the comprehensive ~~theory of dyadic relationship outcomes~~, developed earlier (Figure 3.1), is used as basis for discussing and evaluating the studies noted in Column I of Table 3.1. Figure 4.3 provides the expanded schematic presentation of the numbers of significant findings covering the many potential interfaces between extra-personal factors and the main variables of the present study. Following that, two stages are used in reporting the research findings. Under each subsection (4.3.1 to 4.3.7), the statistically significant core findings are first summarised to give an idea of the consistency with which some observations have been made in the past. Then, contributions are grouped and discussed in terms of salient themes, especially to emphasise the relation between the contents of findings and their relevant and proposed theoretical underpinnings.

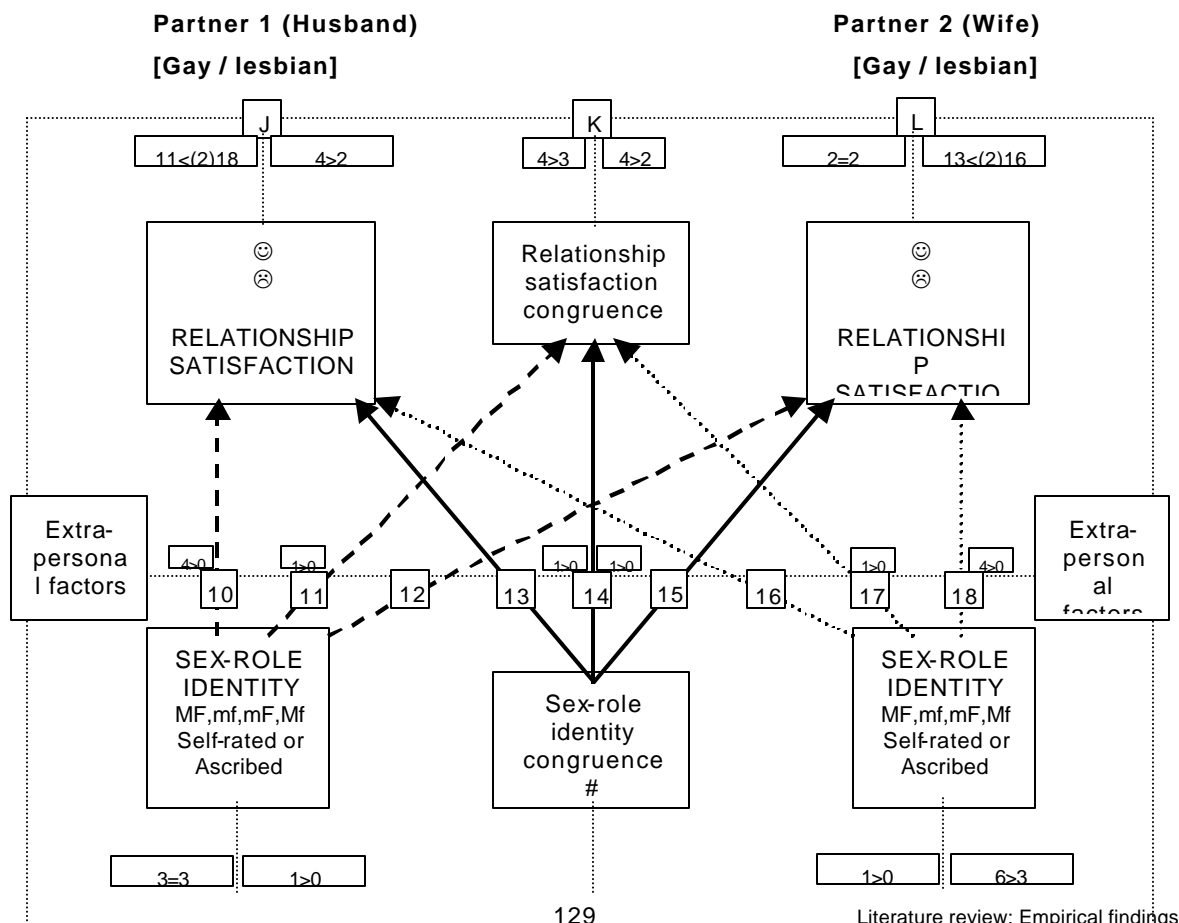




Figure 4.3: Schematic representation of the frequency and domain of findings on the relationship between extra-personal factors, sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction

* As before, the numbers of significant findings observed for any given link up to and since 1995 are presented respectively before and after the relevant symbol (>, = or <) indicating the nature of the trend. Numbers in round brackets again refer to findings involving same-sex couples. In addition, letters (J to L, and D to F) and numbers (10 to 18) are used to identify every link. In the discussion below, these unique numbers / letters, and an arrow to indicate the direction of the assumed causal links, are used to tie the various sets of findings to their correct positions in Figure 4.3.

The whole of Figure 2.1 can be transposed onto this position

Further confirmation for the inclusion of biographical information in the present study comes from the review done by Bradbury *et al.* (2000). They noted, and supported, the inclusion of contextual factors in research on marital satisfaction. Factors that should be researched, according to them, include employment status, family stage and status (including the presence and number of children), family background, educational level and religion, all serving as potential life stressors or developmental transitions. All of these aspects, and more, are therefore dealt with here in Section 4.3. As also indicated in Table 3.1, a limited number of studies did investigate religion and educational level as contributing factors. A study that treated religion almost as the main independent variable, was the one by Call and Heaton (1997). They found that church attendance by both spouses correlated with low risk for divorce. Beyond a few marginal notes like the present one, no further reports are given about religion.

Another typical example of how theory is properly taken as the basis of one's research, is found in the work of Strickland (1981). Although his main independent variable was treatment models for marital enrichment, he also tested the effect of variables such as sex, the age of participants, the duration of marriage, and family status / stage. Only age and duration of marriage significantly correlated with marital satisfaction. A more detailed report on the results of Strickland is given under 4.3.2 and 4.3.6.

From Table 3.1, Column I, the high frequency with which researchers included extra-personal variables in their research designs, is evident, namely just over 85 %. This figure has even been increasing over time, signalling growing coverage and/or documentation of biographical variables. However, it has to be acknowledged that this is a practice adhered to even in the most basic research designs. The most common application would be to include a standard range of biographical or demographical variables, to enable researchers to investigate inter-group similarities and differences through t-tests, comparisons of mean scores, and the like.

4.3.1 Biological sex

The role played by biological sex is central to the framework in Figure 4.3. Different combinations may have very different implications for relationship satisfaction. Compare, for example, being the male in a heterosexual relationship, or one of two females in a lesbian relationship. In a sense, the influence of biological sex is just below the surface in every study reported in this chapter, and elsewhere. Very few

studies explicitly and solely dealt with biological sex as the main independent variable, even though 60 % of them included it as variable (cf. Table 3.1, Column I). Although biological sex featured prominently in the study of Fowers (1991), it does not directly contribute to our understanding of sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction. Over time, one can also observe a vast increase of studies that included sex as variable. However, the complexity of interactions between biological sex and other variables has not been accounted for well in the cited research.

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~biological sex~~ and the link between ~~relationship satisfaction~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

No findings were reported.

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~biological sex~~ and ~~relationship satisfaction~~

With regard to the link between personal biological sex and personal relationship satisfaction [$\rightarrow J$ & $L \leftarrow$], ~~males~~ were often found to experience ~~greater~~ relationship satisfaction levels, while ~~females~~ experienced lower levels (Bouchard *et al.*, 1999; Chusmir & Koberg, 1987; Dillaway & Broman, 2001; Fowers, 1991). The finding applied irrespective of being black or white (Dillaway & Broman, 2001), and with specific reference to consensus scores (on the DAS) within cohabiting couples (for males only) (Moore *et al.*, 2001).

Dyadic analysis of personal biological sex and simultaneous marital satisfaction [$\rightarrow K$ & $K \leftarrow$] revealed that wives were less satisfied with their marriages than their husbands (Schumm, Webb & Bollman, 1998).

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~biological sex~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

~~Contradictory~~ findings were observed in regard to the correlation between personal biological sex and personal sex-role identity type [$\rightarrow D$ & $F \leftarrow$]. In some studies, sex did ~~not correlate~~ with sex-role identity type (Davidson & Sollie, 1987). In other studies, however, a significant proportion of ~~males~~ had a ~~masculine~~ sex-role identity type and ~~females~~ had a ~~feminine~~ sex-role identity type (Aube *et al.*, 1995; Cramer & Westergren, 1999; Langis *et al.*, 1994; Murstein & Williams, 1983). Men also scored significantly higher than women on instrumental traits, while women scored significantly higher than men on expressive traits (Aube & Koestner, 1995).

- ❖ Discussion of themes and theoretical underpinnings

Fowers (1991) explored a provocative thesis posited in 1972 by Jessie Bernard. She stated that ~~marriage was better for men than for women~~. According to Fowers's report, this statement generated a large volume of study and debate. However, previous research at the time had not succeeded in showing this to be true consistently, if at all. Fowers blamed the inconsistency of findings on poor

measurement. Single-item or uni-dimensional estimates of marital happiness were the main culprits. Fowers tried to rectify the situation by applying a multi-dimensional measure of marital quality. The findings confirmed that husbands experienced significantly higher levels of marital satisfaction when measured on a general scale. Husbands also achieved significantly higher scores on sub-scales measuring personality issues, communication, financial management, parenting, and family and friendship relationships. Wives achieved significantly higher scores on a sub-scale measuring equalitarian roles. In cases of marital distress, wives were more dissatisfied than husbands, particularly with regard to communication and equalitarian roles. The instrument is discussed in more detail under 7.2.1.4.

Schumm *et al.* (1998) essentially confirmed the core of the previous finding, by reporting that wives were less satisfied than husbands with their marriages. Two aspects made this finding unique. First, a national random American sample was used. Second, the researchers did their analyses both at individual and at couple level, in which case they calculated difference scores for marital satisfaction. Even controlling for the fact that spouses may have overheard each other's responses, did not change the finding.

Ridge and Feeney (1998) found that **lesbian** individuals reported greater relationship satisfaction than **gay** males. In addition, the finding, already reported under Section 4.2.2, that individuals experiencing secure attachment also gave higher ratings for their relationship satisfaction, was not unique for the gay and lesbian respondents, but also applied to heterosexual couples.

Three core findings became evident. In heterosexual relationships, male partners experienced greater individual and dyadic satisfaction compared to female partners. Lesbian individuals reported greater satisfaction than gay males. No consistent link was found between biological sex and sex-role identity type.

4.3.2 Age or developmental stage

Age can influence sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction in many ways. Personally, an advance in years contributes to more experience and greater self-knowledge. Interpersonally, it can bring boredom with one's partner, or an increased understanding between partners. Such factors can enhance or reduce the chances of relationship satisfaction. Also, age is not only a construct with a numeric value reflecting years of life. It is also an indicator of developmental stage, and even of classification within a specific cohort group. Therefore, an investigation of findings from previous research guides future treatment of this variable. Only 25 % of the studies reviewed (cf. Table 3.1) dealt with age as research variable. This percentage is slightly increasing.

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~age or developmental stage~~ and the link between ~~relationship satisfaction~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

No findings were reported.

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~age or developmental stage~~ and ~~relationship~~ satisfaction

For personal and spousal marital satisfaction [$\rightarrow J$, $J \leftarrow$, $\rightarrow L$ & $L \leftarrow$], the ~~age difference~~ (with husbands older) was larger for satisfied spouses than for unhappy spouses (Bereczkei & Csanaky, 1996). Personal marital satisfaction also increased with ~~age~~ for both husbands and wives [$\rightarrow J$ & $L \leftarrow$] (Pléchaty *et al.*, 1996; Ray, 1990). Only for husbands [$\rightarrow J$], ~~age at marriage~~ was related to marital satisfaction (Wilson *et al.*, 1997).

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~age or developmental stage~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

No findings were reported.

- ❖ Discussion of themes and theoretical underpinnings

As already mentioned, ~~age~~ as such correlated with relationship satisfaction (Pléchaty *et al.*, 1996). Only one significant finding in this regard, and pertaining to **non-heterosexual** couples, was reported. The older the respondents from **lesbian** couples were, the higher their relationship satisfaction was (Schreurs & Buunk, 1996). ~~Age at marriage~~ correlated with marital satisfaction for husbands only (Wilson *et al.*, 1997). The ~~age difference~~ between spouses, with husbands the older of the two, was larger for satisfied spouses than for unhappy spouses (Bereczkei & Csanaky, 1996).

Strickland (1981) found that couples ~~above~~ the age of ~~30~~ benefited most from marital enrichment. This was true even though older couples started enrichment with higher relationship satisfaction scores.

MacDonald *et al.* (1987, p. 290) explored the hypothesis that "from a developmental perspective, personality traits such as masculinity and femininity would not be expected to remain static within individuals throughout their life spans". They cited Neugarten in support of this. She posited something similar to Jungian ~~role reversal~~ during ~~middle years~~. However, the researchers' findings were contradictory and inconclusive.

Chusmir and Koberg (1987) studied the relationship between the ~~age~~ of an individual and ~~sex-role conflict~~. Sex-role conflict occurs when the behaviour expected from individuals by their partners is inconsistent with the individuals' personal perceptions and expectations. The mean sex-role conflict scores of both men and women in the age group 26 to 39 were significantly higher compared to those at age 40 and over. For women aged 25 and below, the scores were also significantly higher compared to those for women aged 40 and over. The findings suggest that it is more difficult for young adults to achieve relationship satisfaction than for older people. Women may suffer this at even younger ages. The data also substantiated the hypothesis that middle-aged respondents would experience more conflict or dissatisfaction. This was ascribed to their growing up in the heyday of the Feminist Movement during the 1960s. However, a plausible rival hypothesis is that conflict would be highest in

the age group with the highest responsibility for raising children. In addition, women scored significantly higher on sex-role conflict than men, regardless of age.

Age could have a moderating effect on the relation between sex-role orientation and relationship and job satisfaction. Blanchard-Fields and Friedt (1988) tested this assumption. Their findings suggested that age significantly moderated the relation between sex-role orientation and life satisfaction, as well as between masculinity and androgyny and job satisfaction. However, nothing significantly predicted relationship satisfaction.

Fuhrmann (1989) focused on the much-neglected period of later life (ages 55 to 86). He concentrated on the relation between androgyny and marital satisfaction. Fuhrman found that androgynous individuals, known for performing cross-sexed role behaviours, experienced greater marital happiness. Congruency of sex-role flexibility / androgyny between spouses led to even greater marital satisfaction. No comparisons were made with younger couples to test whether or not these patterns were unique.

Harrington-Hill (1992) attempted to predict marital satisfaction from sex-role identity and from skill at solving development crises in terms of Erikson's theory of epigenetic development of personality. The resolution of the identity and intimacy crises earlier in life was significantly related to dyadic satisfaction. The findings supported Erikson's theory that a personal sense of ego identity, as developed in the particular life stage, is a condition for a positive relationship with another individual. However, the link with age as variable was indirect. The reason for this is that personality factors and their development function more prominently in this case (also cf. 4.2.4).

Extreme caution has to be taken in interpreting the reported findings. Various factors may confound the issue. Large-scale historical conditions applicable to whole cohort groups may skew data. The risk is highest when using small, localised samples. In addition, other variables such as family stage (roles) or personality development may determine many of the outcomes masquerading as the results of the influence of age. (Family-stage factors are addressed under 4.3.6.) Then, also, there was the absence of sufficiently complex theoretical models integrating more variables into dynamically interactive relationships. Be it as it is, older respondents appeared to experience greater relationship satisfaction, and all the relevant partners experienced greater happiness the older the male partners were compared to the female partners.

4.3.3 Health status

Although it was assumed at the outset that health status was a severe stressor of relationships, and that this situation would result in the publication of some significant findings, very few studies have included this construct (according to Table 3.1, Column I). Of the four studies noted, the one by Radhika and Prakash (1987) was the earliest, but did not produce significant findings.

In the only relevant and significant contribution traced, Myers and Booth (1996) found that when wives reported poor health at the onset of their husbands' retirement, the couple experienced low marital quality [$\rightarrow K \& K \leftarrow$].

4.3.4 Other factors such as ethnicity and educational level

The additional identification of a number of studies incorporating other variables, such as ~~religious~~ orientation (7 %), ethnicity (5 %), and especially educational level (18 %), suggests that they have to be incorporated more systematically in future studies. A few significant findings of some relevance were revealed.

With regard to the correlation between ~~race~~ and personal ~~relationship satisfaction~~ for male and female partners [→J & L←], ~~black~~ individuals were reportedly more satisfied than ~~white~~ individuals (Dillaway & Broman, 2001). In addition, black men were more dissatisfied than white men when they had to perform (many) household tasks [→J], while black women overall were more dissatisfied than white women [L←] (Dillaway & Broman, 2001). Wives experienced higher relationship satisfaction when their husbands' ethnic origins differed from their own, compared to couples where ethnicity was identical (Shachar, 1991).

A good example of a study appropriately investigating the effect of ~~race~~ on marital relationships is the one by Negy and Snyder (2000). They found that Mexican American couples showed higher distress levels compared to white American and inter-ethnic American couples. Among the latter group, acculturation levels of Mexican wives correlated with relationship distress (especially over finances and parenting) in both spouses.

According to Blum and Mehrabian (1999) and Wilkie *et al.* (1998), partners' ~~educational level~~ generally correlated with their personal and their spouses' ~~relationship satisfaction~~ [→J, J←, →L & L←]. Low educational qualifications among wives were associated with ~~masculinity~~ among their husbands [D←] (Parmelee, 1987).

The most consistent finding has been that educational level was linked to personal and spousal satisfaction.

4.3.5 Socio-economic status and other socio-cultural factors

The socio-economic position of partners or couples determines the socio-cultural niche in which they find themselves. It may govern various aspects of life such as access to education, services, physical living area, and generally speaking, openness to experience. All these constitute resources hypothetically available to partners to draw on to achieve relationship satisfaction. Researchers have studied some of these factors, and almost 16 % of the studies reviewed (Table 3.1, Column I) testified to this. Lately, researchers appear to have been losing interest in this construct.

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~socio-economic status~~ and the link between ~~relationship satisfaction~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

No findings were reported.

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~socio-economic status~~ and ~~relationship satisfaction~~

Contradictory findings were reported on the correlation between personal socio-economic status or income and personal relationship satisfaction [$\rightarrow J$ & $L \leftarrow$]. Partners with a ~~lower family income~~ were more satisfied than those with a higher income (Dillaway & Broman, 2001). Contradicting the previous finding, higher family income correlated with marital satisfaction (Wilkie *et al.*, 1998) (confirmed for women only by Bollman *et al.*, 1997).

The more spouses' ~~socio-economic status~~ differed (irrespective of the direction), the higher the husbands' relationship satisfaction levels became [$\rightarrow J$ & $J \leftarrow$] (Shachar, 1991).

❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~socio-economic status~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

A couple's total ~~income~~ was related to ~~masculinity~~ among wives [$\rightarrow D$ & $D \leftarrow$] (House, 1986).

❖ Discussion of themes and theoretical underpinnings

~~Family social standing~~ did not impact significantly on the relationship between sex-role attitude congruence and marital quality (Bowen & Orthner, 1983). The researchers derived family social standing from the seniority of rank of spouses / couples within a military context.

Lange, Hageman, Markus, Vriend and Hanewald (1990) studied the effect of ~~differences in socio-economic status~~ on marriages. The researchers also tried to establish which factors mediated a positive relationship in the case where women had higher career status than their husbands. Career prestige was taken as the indicator of socio-economic status. Only three careers were studied. Harmony in marriage was considered as the degree to which partners were able to solve common problems through interaction. The measurement of this somewhat restricted conceptualisation, however, correlated with a coefficient of 0,56 with the DAS of Spanier. The marital relationship was more problematic in the group where wives had the higher socio-economic status.

Shachar (1991) researched the effects of ~~socio-cultural factors~~ on the satisfaction of each spouse in a marital relationship. The model she used, enabled her to evaluate cross-effects. This implied that each spouse's unique attitudes towards permissiveness, bachelorhood, divorce, and gender equality could determine his/her degree of liberalism. These constructs were termed the exogenous variables. She further assumed that these exogenous variables would influence the endogenous variables particular to each spouse. The endogenous variables were desire to marry, the degree of homogamy between spouses, duration of courtship, premarital cohabitation, and pattern of spouse selection. Both these sets of variables could influence each spouse's experience of marital satisfaction. She found that the more liberal husbands' attitudes were, and the stronger their desire to marry, the greater the marital satisfaction of both spouses was. Men's satisfaction correlated the closest with personal liberal views along with wives' conservative views (cf. the "double standard" in the title of the article). Similarity in the religiosity of spouses, and the mere difference of their socio-economic status, regardless of the direction, also determined men's satisfaction. It seemed as if husbands desired a clearly defined social status, rather than to be uncomfortable with wives' aspirations towards equality. Differences in ethnic

origin correlated with wives' satisfaction. Interestingly enough, the practice of arranged marriages *vis-à-vis* autonomous choice did not correlate with marital satisfaction. They were therefore considered to be symmetric options. The same applied to pre-marital cohabitation, and even homogamy.

Basow (1992) conceded that marital satisfaction was mainly determined by factors involving the couple. He also proposed that ~~social support~~ from the people immediately close to the couple influenced satisfaction levels. This would be the case especially for wives. Spouses may in this manner be more able to fulfil their own and their partners' emotional and intimacy needs.

Although only a few studies on socio-economic status and relationship satisfaction produced relevant contributions, it is clear that potentially important influences have to be studied in future research. The contradictory nature of the influence of income or socio-economic status, warrants investigation. Low income may perhaps imply the absence of complexity and bring piece of mind, but also entail suffering and want. High income can bring about wealth and freedom from worry, but also carry high burdens and complexity. Masculinity among females may somehow enable couples to earn more, explaining one of the interesting findings.

4.3.6 Family stage (duration of relationship)

The relevance, for the present study, of findings on the influence of age (developmental stage) from the perspective of the individual was highlighted under 4.3.2. In the next two sub-sections, the importance of a developmental perspective for studies of relationship satisfaction is underscored further, this time more from the perspective of the couple. A high, though declining, percentage (36 %) of studies addressed this variable. The enlightening findings, discussed below, confirm academics' acknowledgement of the importance of this area.

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~family stage~~ and the link between ~~relationship satisfaction~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

A couple of significant correlations were reported between family-stage factors and ~~personal~~ relationship satisfaction [$\rightarrow 10$ & $18 \leftarrow$]. ~~Feminine~~ husbands and wives experienced less decrease in, and even some recovery of, relationship satisfaction as ~~family~~ stage progressed, compared to spouses with a non-feminine sex-role identity type (McCann *et al.*, 1990). The combination of a ~~traditional~~ sex-role identity type among ~~husbands~~, and having to live in a marriage characterised by an ~~egalitarian~~ sex-role arrangement, was linked to their reduced relationship satisfaction, a situation aggravated by having children of six years or older in the family, and by coming from lower socio-economic status levels [$\rightarrow 10$] (McHale & Crouter, 1992). In the same situation, the combination of ~~non-traditional~~ sex-role identity types among ~~wives~~, and having to live in a marriage characterised by ~~traditional~~ family roles, was linked to their reduced relationship satisfaction [$18 \leftarrow$].

Masculinity in husbands correlated with simultaneous relationship satisfaction for both spouses in intact marriages *vis-à-vis* ~~troubled~~ marriages [$\rightarrow 11$] (Peterson *et al.*, 1989).

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~family stage~~ and ~~relationship satisfaction~~

A majority of studies had a non-dyadic focus and, as a result, many correlations between family-stage factors and ~~personal~~ relationship satisfaction were reported. Consistency existed between men and women (husbands and wives) [$\rightarrow J$ & $L \leftarrow$] in experiencing the highest levels of relationship satisfaction during: the ~~pre-marital stage~~ (McCann *et al.*, 1990); the ~~first family stage~~, declining thereafter (Huppé & Cyr, 1997; Wilkie *et al.*, 1998); and ~~both the early and late stages~~ of marriage, contradicting the previous finding partly (Noller *et al.*, 1997).

Unique, and even contradictory, findings were reported regarding ~~men's~~ (husbands') relationship satisfaction [$\rightarrow J$], which correlated with:

- the ~~second family phase~~ (with children, but still under three years of age) (Condie & Doan, 1978);
- the ~~number of children~~ in a family (Antill, 1983; Harrington-Hill, 1992; Pléchaty *et al.*, 1996), especially ~~young children~~ (Wilkie *et al.*, 1998), and also ~~stepchildren~~ (all negatively) (Blum & Mehrabian, 1999);
- ~~emerging family stages~~ (negatively) (Condie & Doan, 1978; Harrington-Hill, 1992; McCann *et al.*, 1990); and
- how (acceptably to them) ~~household work~~ was divided between the spouses (Huppé & Cyr, 1997).

Contradictory or unique findings were reported regarding ~~women's~~ (wives') relationship satisfaction [$L \leftarrow$], which correlated with:

- ~~emerging family stages~~ (positively, according to Condie & Doan (1978) and Ray (1990), but negatively, according to Harrington-Hill (1992)); and
- the ~~number of children~~ (negatively) (Bollman *et al.*, 1997; Harrington-Hill, 1992; Pléchaty *et al.*, 1996), especially ~~young children~~ (Wilkie *et al.*, 1998).

Partners experienced the highest levels of simultaneous relationship satisfaction [$\rightarrow K$ & $K \leftarrow$] when the couple had been together for fewer than four years (indicative of ~~early family stage~~) (Lange *et al.*, 1990; Strickland, 1981); or had been married for fewer than 53 ~~months~~ (based on a median-split for the sample) (Teichner & Farnden-Lyster, 1997), compared to those married for longer. ~~Retirement~~ also benefited couples who experienced stable and satisfactory family-role situations (Myers & Booth, 1996).

❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~family stage~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

No findings were reported.

❖ Discussion of themes and theoretical underpinnings

Family stage may determine relationship outcomes in many ways. Family stage can be operationalised in terms of the mere duration of relationships. When the sex-role identity type of partners is also considered, the number and dynamics of potential correlations become daunting. During the many years of family life, subtle shifts may occur in sex-role identity. Because of these shifts, but also

because of many other factors, such as the presence and number of children, relationship satisfaction may be influenced in many intricate ways over time.

Condie and Doan (1978), and McCann *et al.* (1990) (cf. also 3.3.1), were some of the many researchers who adopted ~~Duvall's typology~~, developed in the middle 1960s. Duvall used the age of the oldest child as the criterion for describing family stage. The eight stages are:

- I - married couple without children;
 - II - childbearing couples, with the eldest children still younger than 36 months;
 - III - couples with preschool children, with the eldest of age three to six;
 - IV - couples with schoolchildren, with the eldest of age six to thirteen;
 - V - couples with teenagers, with the eldest of age 13 to 20;
 - VI - couples launching children, with the first to the last leaving home;
 - VII - middle-aged parents, from start of empty nest till retirement, included being grandparents;
- and
- VIII - ageing couples, with the husband beyond 65, from retirement until the death of both spouses.

Corrales (1974) cited the findings of longitudinal research on marital satisfaction across all family ~~stages~~. Marital satisfaction was lowest during the parental phases. This applied to both general scales of marital satisfaction and most sub-scales. In post-parental years, a gradual increase in satisfaction occurred. He used the eight stages of Duvall. Corrales personally found that as marital systems became more complex structurally, general marital satisfaction decreased. However, marital satisfaction increased with the duration of each particular stage. It took time to adapt to new roles. Also, spouses with only one child, living in family triads, were significantly more satisfied than multiple-member families. The doubling of dyads by growing from a three- to a four-person family brought intensive changes to the dynamics between parents. Husbands, in particular, were affected negatively while in the triadic-infancy category. Wives, though, suffered most in the multiple-toddler categories. Wives' satisfaction benefited by being gainfully employed. In general terms, sub-scale and aggregate scores of marital satisfaction did not differ significantly.

Family life cycle, indexed by the age of the oldest child as well, did not impact significantly on the relationship between sex-role attitude congruence and marital quality (Bowen and Orthner, 1983).

Huppé and Cyr (1997) found that marital satisfaction was highest in the early family stages, and declined thereafter (in dual-career couples). For wives, the ~~equity~~ of roles was more important, while for husbands it was satisfaction with the division of household chores. Couples married for fewer than 53 months (based on a median-split for the sample) experienced higher marital satisfaction than those married for longer (Teichner & Farnden-Lyster, 1997). Wilkie *et al.* (1998) also confirmed the first finding in this paragraph, albeit for wives only.

Noller *et al.* (1997) later observed that contradictory findings were becoming the order of the day, with at least three patterns visible with regard to relationship satisfaction over the family life cycle. Some

studies revealed a linear increase in satisfaction over time, others a linear decline, and still others a curvilinear pattern starting and ending higher than the middle phases. It was also thought that the latter finding more often occurred in cross-sectional studies, as opposed to longitudinal ones. This situation was also the case in their findings.

As Condie and Doan (1978) embarked on their research, they soon discovered that constructs, variables and measurement instruments posed enormous problems. These matters are addressed in Section 3.3.2. Many factors, therefore, may have caused the inconsistent findings of previous research. These factors could have been: the considerable variation in techniques of measurement; perceiving marital satisfaction as a unitary concept; and inconsistent comparisons involving anything from two to eight different family life-cycle stages. Sometimes a curvilinear trend (u-shaped curve) had been reported across the various life stages. Sometimes no change in marital satisfaction had occurred over time. In other cases there had been a general decline in satisfaction over time. A relative dearth of theoretical explanations was blamed for researchers' inability to come to terms with such anomalies. Condie and Doan hoped to clarify some of them. They did so by including measurements of ~~role rewards and role demands~~ in their research design, and also notions of ~~exchange theory~~ and micro-economics. As a result, ~~role profit~~ was defined as the difference between the rewards (satisfaction) and the demands (costs) accruing through performance in/at any specific role or stage.

Nine different familial and extra-familial roles were assessed across the family life stages. The role domains were: spouse, parent, income provider, homemaker, social and recreational activities, education, religion, community service, and membership in professional organisations. Following Duvall's taxonomy, Condie and Doan's findings suggested various kinds of relationship. In the spousal role, which is closest to a direct indicator of marital satisfaction, husbands and wives both found Stage II most rewarding. Husbands found Stage III the least rewarding. In the parental role, both spouses experienced substantial deterioration from Stage II to VIII. Husbands' rewards in the income-provider role remained quite stable throughout. However, those of wives declined rapidly from Stage I to III. The homemaking role was highly rewarding for women, but almost the inverse for men. The extra-familial roles throughout brought less rewards and also posed less demands. Generally speaking, those stages that provided the highest rewards were also the most demanding. As a nett result, they offered the lowest role profits, or the least satisfaction. For husbands, these were Stages II, IV and V, and for wives III, IV and V, - virtually the same. These findings substantiated the previously observed curvilinear trends.

Strickland (1981) studied length of marriage in very broad terms, and found no difference in satisfaction scores between those couples married for fewer than eight years, and those married for longer. The study of Lange *et al.* (1990) revealed that marriages of shorter duration (fewer than four years) showed higher levels of satisfaction.

Parmelee (1987) researched only the very ~~first phases of marriage~~. She investigated the influence of sex-role identity type on marital satisfaction and role performance. All respondents had been married

for less than a year at the time of recruitment. In general terms, the positive relationship between androgyny and relationship satisfaction for both spouses was again observed. Femininity played an additional role among husbands and masculinity among wives. Wives' sex-role identity type was not related to their husbands' relationship satisfaction, while those of husbands were to that of their wives. This finding gave rise to the hypothesis that it is less important for men to be married as such than to be attuned to their wives' personalities and behaviour. Wives, on the contrary, may respond to merely entering the family stage or status of being married, - i.e., to marriage in its structural form. The findings may also have shown women's more meticulous concerns beforehand in effecting a good match, and less concern afterwards about personality characteristics. It may have been the opposite for men. The absence of longitudinal, or at least multi-stage comparisons, in this case, renders the findings rather inconclusive.

Siavelis and Lamke (1992) studied the period of relationship development. This period includes casual dating, serious dating, and engagement. The researchers' goal was to establish the moderating effect of the relationship development period on the association between sex-role identity type and relationship satisfaction. They conceptualised sex-role identity type in terms of the two variables (traits): instrumentalness and expressiveness. For males, the factors significantly predicting relationship satisfaction (using multiple regression techniques) were: their own instrumentalness and expressiveness; their partners' perceived expressiveness; and the relationship stage. The latter explained the greatest amount of variance. For females, the factors significantly predicting relationship satisfaction were: their partners' perceived expressiveness and instrumentalness; and the relationship stage. Partners' perceived expressiveness and relationship stage explained equal amounts of variance. Partners' perceived expressiveness overall best predicted relationship satisfaction variance. The mutual expectations of nurturance and emotional support could thus be considered important

Antill (1983) found significant interaction effects between ~~femininity~~, family stage and relationship satisfaction. Earlier in marriage, the wife's femininity was more important to the quality of a relationship. Later, the husband's femininity was more important. The number of children in the family mediated this effect further. In families with one child or no children, the wife's femininity was more important to the happiness of the relationship compared to the husband's femininity. In families with two or more children, the husband's femininity was more important to the happiness of the relationship compared to the wife's femininity. In addition, in younger couples, or those with one child or no children, the simultaneous femininity of both spouses was associated more closely with happiness compared to cases where more children were present. A plausible explanation for the patterns revealed would be that in the later stages of marital life, the demands on the husband's nurturant role are at its highest. His positive achievement in this regard is associated with both spouses' happiness. Earlier in the relationship, spouses spend more time with each other and more often interact intimately.

Adherence to ~~modern sex-role norms~~ (preferences) showed a significant, negative correlation to the presence of ~~young children~~ (Schaninger & Buss, 1986). Sex-role norms also correlated positively with other factors such as wives' education level, occupational status and income (cf. 4.3.7), wives' mothers' occupation, and husbands' education level. In as far as certain configurations with regard to egalitarian

marital relationships and sex-role norms led to happiness, these factors could be seen to indirectly contribute to marital satisfaction.

McHale and Crouter (1992) focused on the role of incongruence between sex-role attitudes and family roles. They limited their study to couples with their ~~firstborn children of school age~~. As indicated in previous research (cf. above), the mentioned group was considered to be at high-risk for marital dissatisfaction. Also, wives' dissatisfaction was more predictable than husbands'. The main reason for this was the greater role discrepancies, or mismatch between attitudes and behaviours, that wives had to fight. Another reason was the greater likelihood of husbands to benefit from social exchanges because of more favourable power and resource differentials. (The findings also revealed that certain spouses experienced significantly more dissatisfaction when compared to both other women/men, and to their own spouses. It was true for wives with non-traditional sex-role identity types, but traditional family roles, and husbands with traditional sex-role identity types, but egalitarian family roles. Short-term longitudinal analyses revealed the persistence of these situations over a one-year period for men and a two-year period for women. In addition, spouses in the two risk groups consistently experienced a mismatch regarding their relative sex-role attitude profiles. This meant that wives in the women's risk group were more non-traditional than their husbands, and husbands in the men's risk group were more traditional than their wives.)

Etaugh (1993) reviewed various studies pertaining to women entering marriage. About 94 % of American women marry at some stage in their lives. Marital satisfaction typically was high for women in the early years of marriage. By middle age, women appeared to be less satisfied than their spouses. Marriage also appeared to be less beneficial to women than to men. This Etaugh deduced from the higher levels of mental health among married men, and unmarried women, compared to married women. This situation could be explained by: women losing more autonomy and independence than men in marriage; men more often having both families and jobs as sources of gratification; women being exposed more often to the monotonous chores of homemaking; and women being discriminated against in the workplace when employed outside the home.

Bradbury *et al.* (1995) reported on three studies that they claimed had been ~~longitudinal~~ in nature. Their research was premised on consensus between academics that poor conceptual frameworks underpinned research in the area. They especially criticised the lack of integration between inter-personal and intra-personal approaches. This issue is commented on more fully in Section 5.2. Bradbury and his colleagues pursued three research goals, which were the following (including references to their central findings):

- They examined the relationship between husbands' and wives' masculinity and femininity and longitudinal changes in their personal and their partners' marital satisfaction. They found that wives' satisfaction was affected detrimentally over time by their husbands' undesirable masculinity traits, and positively by their desirable masculinity traits. (Desirability and undesirability was a function of the way in which the *Extended Personal Attributes Questionnaire* was structured and scored.) Generally speaking, wives tended to become more satisfied with their husbands' higher masculinity and femininity scores.

- They examined further associations between sex-role identity traits and inter-personal behaviour, after controlling for marital satisfaction. Only husbands' femininity proved to be more likely to correlate with positive behaviours in terms of solving conflict. For both husbands and wives, masculinity correlated with being less positive after negative spousal behaviour.
- They established whether or not behaviour in marital interaction mediated any association between masculinity or femininity and change in satisfaction levels. Findings were inconclusive at best, with only little evidence for mediation. Sex-role variables and behaviour seemed to make unique contributions.

The main shortcomings of the study of Bradbury *et al.* (1995) were: that only masculinity and femininity were studied, excluding other sex-role identity traits and types such as androgyny; that only 32 couples were used in some of the studies; that the period of longitudinal study was as short as one year only; and that the research did not really in the end control for the effects of family stage.

Mitchell and Gee (1996) found that ~~children's return home~~ after apparently having left it finally before, had a large influence on marital satisfaction during the mid-life period. Unexpected or repeated returns led to marital dissatisfaction. This effect was particularly evident in remarriages in comparison to first marriages.

The mere ~~number of children~~ also correlated with marital satisfaction, albeit negatively (Pléchaty *et al.*, 1996). However, Wilkie *et al.* (1998) found this to apply only with regard to the presence of young children. The research by Blum and Mehrabian (1999) revealed that the ~~number of stepchildren~~ in marriages was particularly taxing for husbands. This finding is better understood when considering that the children concerned were from previous marriages by the wives, and also that men would most likely be less nurturant than women in general.

Gagnon, Hersen, Kabacoff and Van Hasselt (1999) identified a lack of studies covering ~~dissatisfaction among older adults~~. After they had completed an intensive review of previous research, they ascribed this situation to sampling bias that favoured the release of over-inflated positive reports. As a result, they focused on recent studies that had covered factors associated with dissatisfaction in long-term marriages. They found that older marriages did benefit from lower levels of conflict, more sources of mutual pleasure, especially after the cessation of responsibilities for rearing children, and higher levels of spousal support. What lead to marital discord, though, was heightened levels of depression among spouses.

Dillaway & Broman (2001) linked ~~job factors~~ and family and household issues when studying their effect on marital satisfaction. A more detailed discussion of that can be found under Section 4.3.7.

The findings reported in this section are partly consistent, and partly contradictory. A consistent finding has been the correlation between the number of children and relationship satisfaction. Linking this to the relatively low satisfaction levels during the middle phases of family life, further explains the curvilinear trend (u-shaped curve) across family stages. Also, husbands tended to experience greater dissatisfaction compared to wives during the child-rearing stages. Femininity mediated greater relationship satisfaction for females during the earlier family stages, while masculinity did so for males

during the later stages. However, linear trends in relationship satisfaction, describing either a steady increase or a decline over time, were also observed.

Many methodological and other limitations are also evident. Researchers have often studied specific stages in isolation, just one sex (e.g., wives), or only student samples. Inconsistencies were also prevalent in the conceptualisation and measurement of relationship satisfaction. These issues all require that more comprehensive theoretical foundations, as well as a definite life-stage developmental perspective, be used in future studies, a facet also emphasised by Reibstein (1988).

4.3.7 Career and job factors

The influence of career-life factors has been studied with almost the same earnest as that of family-stage factors (cf. Section 4.3.6). The percentage (27 %) of studies listed in Table 3.1 (Column I) in this regard, bears testimony to it, although a waning research interest in this construct is also clear. A common thread has been to analyse household roles in terms of a division of labour. This has enabled comparisons between the workloads of both spouses in both their career and family lives. Other aspects covered, were the mere fact of spouses being employed, the standing of jobs or professions, and career success. Again, it should be evident that only multi-stage, multi-dimensional research designs and models would be able to support thorough research.

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~career and job factors~~ and the link between ~~relationship satisfaction~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

Only House (1986) reported significant findings linking career arrangements to sex-role identity and the ~~simultaneous~~ marital satisfaction of both spouses [$\rightarrow 14$ & $14 \leftarrow$]. For ~~sex-typed~~ couples (masculine husband and feminine wife), single-career (one-provider) job arrangements (with the husband in paid employment), relative to dual-earner situations, correlated more with satisfaction. For ~~cross-sex-typed~~ couples (feminine husband and masculine wife), satisfaction levels were higher than for any other sex-role identity type configuration, ~~irrespective~~ of being dual- or single-career earners. In dual-provider families, and when wives scored low on femininity, both spouses achieved low relationship satisfaction scores.

- ❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~career and job factors~~ and ~~relationship satisfaction~~

In a majority of cases, male and female partners' personal ~~job satisfaction~~ levels (Blanchard-Fields & Friedt, 1988; Lange *et al.*, 1990; Ray, 1988; Ray 1990; Terry & Scott, 1987), and also their ~~occupational standing~~ or job status (Cooper *et al.*, 1985; Shukla & Kapoor, 1990), correlated with their ~~personal~~ relationship satisfaction [$\rightarrow J$ & $L \leftarrow$]. One exception was reported in that men's job success correlated negatively with their relationship satisfaction [$\rightarrow J$] (Terry & Scott, 1987). In addition, being in a dual-career situation correlated significantly with marital satisfaction for husbands [$\rightarrow J$], but being in a traditional, single-earner situation, correlated with marital dissatisfaction for wives [$L \leftarrow$] (Terry & Scott, 1987).

Husbands' and wives' occupational standing correlated with the marital satisfaction of their spouses as well [$J \leftarrow$ & $\rightarrow L$] (Cooper *et al.*, 1985; Yogeve, 1987). However, an exception was reported in the case of husbands' satisfaction [$J \leftarrow$], which decreased with their wives' higher job status (Bahr & Day, 1978; Lange *et al.*, 1990).

Husbands and wives experienced ~~simultaneous~~ lower marital satisfaction [$\rightarrow K$ & $K \leftarrow$] when husbands' ~~job standing~~ was the lower of the two spouses' job statuses (Lange *et al.*, 1990). When spouses showed involvement in each other's careers, both partners were more satisfied (Condie & Doan, 1978; Ray, 1990). When only husbands were actively involved in a career, their relationship satisfaction was greater compared to that of their wives (Terry & Scott, 1987).

❖ Findings pertaining to the relationship between ~~career and job factors~~ and ~~sex-role identity~~

~~Masculinity~~ among both husbands and wives correlated significantly with ~~husbands' job satisfaction~~ [$\rightarrow D$ & $F \leftarrow$] (Blanchard-Fields & Friedt, 1988).

❖ Discussion of themes and theoretical underpinnings

Following a definition phrased by Rapoport and Rapoport in 1971, Ray (1988) described the pursuit of "careers" as being personally involved in a highly salient position (profession), with a developmental sequence, and requiring a high degree of commitment.

Cancian (1989) argued that changes in the ~~social construction of society~~, sociologically speaking, largely determined relationship outcomes. Cancian's argument, albeit simplified, is provided below. The nineteenth-century transformation from agrarian to capitalist economies led to a separation between the domains of home and work. Many re-definitions of the interrelatedness of home and work followed. Although it had initially led to the feminisation of love, with women becoming responsible for homemaking and family, the split softened later. This meant that the ideals of marital love became more androgynous. This could partly have been the result of a dual-career culture since the time women had increasingly started joining the labour force. The essential dynamic was that men and women both derived their sex-role positions from macro-societal constructions. In this case, it implied over the longer term that both partners have taken responsibility for family income, family nurturance, and the mutual marital relationship. Both had to become adept at the strategies ensuring success and happiness in both the family and career environments. Both partners developed emotional expression, independence, emotional control, and success in the public sphere. All these added up to a larger focus on companionship, communication, and relationship satisfaction. This came to be termed "affective individualism" (p. 21). It developed from early beginnings in the 1920s to a firmly established phenomenon after the 1970s.

In an early study by Bahr and Day (1978), they researched the ~~effect of female employment~~ on marital satisfaction. Three alternative hypotheses were tested.

- The first was the ~~accumulation hypothesis~~. It postulated that employment of the wife would produce stress that would decrease marital satisfaction. This would happen mainly because of the violation of traditional roles and norms. The findings modestly supported this assumption.
- The second hypothesis was the ~~role congruence hypothesis~~, according to which employment status by itself could be considered unimportant. What would be crucial for happiness, would be whether or not the wife's behaviour was congruent with the attitudes held by both husband and wife, namely whether or not both wanted her to be gainfully employed. The findings were inconsistent for both males and females. When husbands were more in favour of female/wives' employment, both were more satisfied. However, the more strongly a wife favoured female employment, the lower the satisfaction of both husband and wife was. This applied even when husbands were prepared to switch roles.
- The third hypothesis was the ~~neutralisation hypothesis~~. It stated that marital satisfaction was independent of both female employment status and attitudes towards female employment. The many reasons for female employment would have the ability to neutralise the effect that any attitude or behaviour discrepancies might have had on relationship satisfaction. The researchers could not include the potential configurations of such anticipated extraneous neutralising factors in their research design. As a result, their conclusions were limited. However, they nevertheless favoured the chances of this hypothesis being most valuable.

The study cited was valuable in anticipating that many unique factors could determine relationship satisfaction.

According to Bowen and Orthner (1983), ~~wife employment status~~ did not impact significantly on the relationship between sex-role attitude congruence and marital quality. The researchers categorised wives in terms of employment status as being unemployed, employed part-time, or employed full-time.

Chassin *et al.* (1985) studied the relationship between ~~role perceptions, self-role congruence~~, and marital satisfaction. They focused on dual-earner couples with preschool children. Many restrictions in research design and sampling limited the wider generalisation of their findings. Nevertheless, congruence between self-concepts and role demands, termed self-role congruence, correlated with marital satisfaction. Spouses viewing themselves as either congruent or incongruent with the role of spouse achieved the highest marital satisfaction. In the first case, both spouses lived up to role expectations. In the second, both were assumed to be prepared to re-negotiate a-typical role expectations.

Interesting findings resulted from the study by Yogev (1987). She found that traditional ~~expectations regarding spousal career roles~~ were good predictors of marital satisfaction. For wives, marital satisfaction correlated with the superiority of husbands on all four the job-related variables tested. These were intelligence, competence, professional success, and income. For husbands, wives' inferiority on income and professional status, and superiority on intelligence, correlated with marital satisfaction. Thus, psychological superiority in the form of male dominance and psychological inferiority in the form of female submissiveness, by implication, appeared to enhance relationship satisfaction. Yogev hypothesised that the somewhat discrepant finding on female intelligence and male satisfaction

may have been a case of the wife enhancing the husband's ego. However, the exclusion of unemployed husbands, childless couples and couples with ill or handicapped family members from the sample, may have resulted in the favouring of traditional roles.

Hiller and Philliber (1986) studied the ~~division of labour in marriage~~. They investigated role expectations, role perceptions, and role performance with respect to childcare, housework, money management, and earning income. The researchers anticipated that expectations, and how they were perceived, could influence marital satisfaction indirectly by affecting role performance. They found that spouses were fairly accurate in perceiving their partner's expectations. Partners were correct about 50 % of the time. Husbands were more accurate than wives. Spouses also considered their own responsibilities for household duties to be more than what their partners perceived them to be. This holds the potential for causing much disharmony. Husbands' expectations correlated more closely with predicted role performance, which was indicative of strong traditional preferences. The research described here was considered important in the light of the prevalence of dual-earner marriages, at a time when many women were entering full-time careers.

Basow (1992) considered the influence of career factors on marital satisfaction from the perspective of division of labour. The taxonomy developed by him, was mainly based on women's employment status.

Career factors were considered of secondary importance compared to others such as: expectations between spouses; sex typing as such (which is the whole focus of the present study); communication styles (cf. Section 4.2.5); and social support. The four types of marriage that Basow identified, were:

- Type I: traditional marriage - the wife is not employed outside home, by choice, and responsible for housework and child care;
- Type II: the wife is employed outside home, by necessity, and still responsible for housework and child care;
- Type III: the wife is employed outside home, by choice, and still does most of the home chores; and
- Type IV: egalitarian marriage - both spouses are employed outside home, by choice, and share home chores.

In traditional marriages (**Type I**), both spouses' expectations were generally met. However, other factors could reduce the level of satisfaction, for example: the lower levels of satisfaction of the wife's emotional needs, and the husband's intellectual needs; the long hours of home duties of the wife; the dissimilarity between spouses' daily activities; the resulting compromises in terms of communication patterns; and the wife's preference or desire not to work outside home resulting in feelings of resentment and lack of fulfilment. **Type II** marriages led to the highest distress levels for both spouses. Both had many unfulfilled expectations. Wives experienced role overload, and husbands a sense of failure. In **Type III** marriages, distress for the wife was high, although lower than in the previous type. Psychologically speaking, the benefits for the husband were high. **Type IV** spouses experienced the lowest distress levels, although the effort required to overcome practical problems was large. Not only did work and personal stress increase, but also relationship satisfaction. Undergoing phases of transition from one to another of the types was particularly taxing.

Cooper *et al.* (1985) apparently based an article on the same data reported on by Chassin *et al.* (1985) further below. Individuals with a high occupational status, and their spouses, experienced greater marital satisfaction compared to individuals with a low occupational status, and their spouses. From a study already referred to under 4.3.6, Schaninger and Buss (1986) reported a correlation between adherence to modern sex-role norms and wives' occupational status and income.

House (1986) hypothesised that job status would have a moderating effect on the link between sex-role identity type and marital satisfaction. However, no simple relationship existed between the latter two variables. House did observe, though, that couples who were sex-typed fared better in single-provider marriages compared to dual-provider ones. Furthermore, cross-sex-typed couples (masculine females and feminine males) experienced greater marital satisfaction than other couple configurations in both single- and dual-provider marriages. This could be because of their greater flexibility in terms of role behaviour. Also, in both provider groups, husbands' masculinity correlated with their personal levels of marital satisfaction. This could be ascribed to enhanced self-concept functioning. The dual-provider group's satisfaction levels were significantly lower when the wives' femininity scores were low. This could be ascribed to the absence of important interpersonal skills.

The research team of Chassin *et al.* (1985) also highlighted the contradictory nature of previous findings pertaining to the ~~relative levels of satisfaction between dual-earner and single-earner couples~~. Some suggested increased, some decreased, and some no change in satisfaction levels. They pointed out that the use of simplistic research designs had been a regular shortcoming in such studies.

The ~~effect of dual careers~~ was analysed by Tribble (1987) in a review article. American statistics indicated that a majority of professional (career) women still did not marry, and that unmarried women advanced further in their careers. In addition, among couples with children, women's commitment to the children was often expected to be greater than their husbands' commitment, and greater than the women's commitment to their own careers. In the decade of the 1980s, more than half of adult American women were working. Also, in almost half the American families, both spouses pursued a career. Women were considered to choose this option against some serious odds, because of personal satisfactions. These were not solely financial, but also included self-expression, role-sharing, and companionship. On the debit side, many factors could cause difficulty for relationships. Such factors could be restricted job mobility, demands on personal time, role conflicts between family and job demands, and competition between husband and wife.

Although Radhika and Prakash's (1987) main objective was to evaluate the impact of dual careers on mental health, they also included a measure of marital satisfaction. They found that couples who experienced mental health problems also scored lower on marital satisfaction. Career success did not significantly influence marital satisfaction scores. Males and females also did not differ in this regard.

Terry and Scott (1987) doubted the validity of previous findings, based on traditional (i.e., more or less family-oriented) couples, for dual-career couples. They specifically referred to sex differences in predicting marital satisfaction. As a result, their own study revealed that among traditional couples

wives experienced higher dissatisfaction than husbands when the discrepancy between preferred and actual roles increased. In addition, and again more for wives compared to their husbands, positive evaluation of partner's performance of sex-typed roles correlated with marital satisfaction. To a certain extent the inverse was true for dual-career couples. There, spouses experienced more satisfaction when their partners were judged to be competent in opposite-sex-typed roles. This correlation was significant only for husbands. Also, job satisfaction correlated significantly with husbands' marital satisfaction, but not that of wives.

Ray (1988) explored factors related to marital satisfaction in dual-career couples. Women's marital satisfaction closely correlated with their own ~~job satisfaction~~. Husband's satisfaction closely correlated with their wives' ~~involvement~~ in their (men's) ~~careers~~. Spouses' marital satisfaction responses did not differ significantly. Generally speaking, marital and job satisfaction correlated substantively. The correlation was highly significant for wives, but just failed to reach significance for husbands. Correlates of women's marital satisfaction were: (high) job satisfaction; husbands providing career support; and being marriage-, rather than career-centered. Correlates of men's marital satisfaction were: active involvement by his spouse in his career; holding non-traditional sex-role attitudes; (high) job satisfaction; and a traditional division of chores. Dual-career couples experienced problems that were mostly related to stress, competition, role-conflict, childcare, and role overload.

Ray's (1990) later analysis of the same data used in 1988 focused on the couple, and not on the individual spouses. This time the interaction effects were studied. Congruent marital satisfaction was greater when equality and reciprocity existed in the relationships. In such cases, both spouses, among other things, were involved in each other's careers. Women who had embarked upon their careers prior to marriage experienced greater satisfaction compared to women who had not.

Hertz (1989) pointed out how ~~corporate~~ dual-career marriages inevitably developed into egalitarian ones. This was caused by the demands made by the two careers, with their specific implications for how roles, frames of reference, and experiences were shared. It subsequently led to an increase in the amount of shared ground in communication patterns. Some specific benefits accrued from this in terms of relationship satisfaction. Couples started experiencing relationship satisfaction much more at a companionship level. The latter depended upon the success of managing not only two careers, but essentially also marriage, as a third one.

Green and Russo (1993) emphasised the greater economic benefits in dual-income families. These economic advantages could improve mental health and well-being among spouses. By implication, the relationship would also be more satisfactory. This result is best explained in terms of the enhanced ability of families to purchase household assistance. This dynamic, however, could not be isolated from other important effects. The strains and satisfactions of women's employment for marital quality appeared to depend largely on a couple's attitudes toward the wife's employment. Perceived control over the choice was an important determinant. Where both partners displayed high levels of instrumental and expressive personality characteristics, higher levels of marital satisfaction and lower levels of conflict occurred. Wives' distress increased when she was the only one who favoured her

employment. In this situation, husbands did not suffer increased distress. Husbands became more distressed only when both spouses actually wanted the wife to stay at home. Sharing home responsibilities reduced these distress levels. When employed, wives experienced a sense of power to influence the relationship. This sense of power was associated with relationship satisfaction in both heterosexual and **lesbian** couples. In cases where husbands dominated decision making, and still achieved satisfactory outcomes, women were still satisfied with the relationship. This applied especially when partners, each from a relatively powerful position, agreed on how the responsibility for household tasks would be shared.

Betz (1993) discussed the role played by ~~career orientation~~ in relationship satisfaction from the theoretical context of the ~~role-conflict~~ approach. Before the 1960s, women delayed career decisions until after the "more important" ones regarding marriage and family had been taken and put into effect. During the 1960s, a gradual shift towards egalitarianism in marital roles became apparent. Women now started taking career and family decisions simultaneously, as did men. However, since the late 1970s and during the 1980s, a partial return took place to (what can be termed) the traditional and conservative position of the pre-1960 period. The unfortunate implication of this was overload for women. It comprised role conflict, as women now had to fulfil two complete roles. The inevitable result was a downscaling of career aspirations. In contrast, the renewed valuation of family involvement provided a strong rationale for men for achievement-related behaviour and career commitment.

~~Retirement~~ could influence marital quality in many ways. Myers and Booth (1996) investigated the effects of husbands' retirement. When husbands were the respondents, they only rated their personal marital quality. Wives, though, had to rate both their husbands' and the couple's satisfaction levels. (Under Section 3.2.2, mention is made about sample restrictions pertaining to this study.) Leaving very stressful jobs correlated with improved marital quality, whereas role-reversals, other negative family-role dynamics, and poor health (among wives), correlated with reduced marital quality.

Dillaway and Broman (2001) considered it important to use a comprehensive sociological framework of factors in their study of marital satisfaction. This enabled them to map the complex variations amongst ~~sociological (demographic) variables~~, and between these factors and marital satisfaction. They focused on both within- and between-group variation. A central objective of their study was to investigate the dynamics occurring within ~~dual-earner couples~~. In addition to an extensive literature review of previous findings, they mapped the role played by factors such as ~~race, class and gender~~ in this respect, within their so-called intersectional framework. The findings revealed that no significant differences in marital satisfaction could be linked to age, education level, employment status, household tasks, and gender attitudes (liberal and traditional). However, as reported at the appropriate places in this sub-section, gender, race and class did make important contributions.

Findings have often been inconclusive and even contradictory. A possible reason for this can be that the entry of women into full-time careers is a recent phenomenon, still in a state of flux. Levels of relationship satisfaction, pertaining to single- and dual-earner family arrangements, appear to be highly dependent upon whether traditional or modern expectations, values and preferences are held. Wives, in particular, experienced dissatisfaction when modern arrangements (dual-career situations)
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actually prevailed, but spouses held traditional attitudes or preferences. The role overload experienced by the women is the most likely cause of distress in such situations. Getting the division of chores wrong, led to dissatisfaction. Positive correlations between job satisfaction and relationship satisfaction (personal or spousal) were often reported. Occupational status similarly correlated with relationship satisfaction.

To conclude this subsection, it is reiterated that researchers have published prolifically on career roles as such. In doing so, many of them have covered issues pertaining to relationship satisfaction. However, there has been a paucity of studies addressing the joint effect of careers and sex-role identity. The most prevalent studies have been those on attitudes and expectations about careers and career roles, especially for wives. Another popular theme has been comparisons between single- and dual-career families or marriages. It is concluded that the moderating influence of career factors on the relationship between sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction has to be well accounted for in future research.

4.3.8 Conclusion

Two main sets of extra-personal circumstances, namely family stage and job/career factors, have featured prominently in the findings reviewed in Section 4.3.

Pertaining to the first, family stage as such, and the presence and number of children appear to influence relationship satisfaction. Younger spouses or dyadic partners without children, or with fewer children, are more likely to experience high satisfaction levels. However, contradictory patterns have also been documented, such as a linear decline, or increase, and a curvilinear path for satisfaction over life stages. In addition, women, compared to men, experience greater relationship satisfaction: with progress in family stage and number of children; in the last family stages; and when ethnic differences exist between partners. In the second instance, higher job status and job satisfaction have been widely conducive to relationship satisfaction.

It is also clear that a complex association exists between conventional *vis-à-vis* non-traditional sex-role identity type configurations and relationship satisfaction outcome patterns. Traditional arrangements have fewer benefits for wives, and even sometimes for husbands, while modern/egalitarian ones are linked to higher mutual relationship satisfaction in more instances. The more problematic career roles of wives, and their more adaptable response repertoire in the family situation, specifically their greater responsibility for, and skill in, inter-personal relations, especially with children, may explain these differences. Other than the effects mentioned, trends were largely similar for male and female partners regarding the influence of extra-personal factors.

Biological sex and personal sex-role identity type were not often related. This corroborates the theoretical position that an individual has equal access to the psychological characteristics associated with any sex-role identity type.

Some potential sex-role identity-relationship satisfaction configurations (cf. Intersects 10-13 and 15-18 in Figure 4.3) have again not been illuminated further by the review of findings pertaining to extra-personal factors. Even so, family -stage, and perhaps also job / career factors, stood out as important variables.

In this section (4.3), the research literature on the influence of extra-personal factors on relationship satisfaction and sex-role identity has been reviewed. Also this category of factors has played an important role in determining relationship outcomes. Future research, including the present study, has to incorporate the part played by particular extra-personal variables, such as biological sex, age, educational level, socio-economic status, family income, family stage, the presence and number of children, and career and job factors, in the research design. The relevant contributions have also been portrayed schematically in Figure 4.3, in expansion of the theoretical framework proposed in Figure 3.1.

4.4 Summary and conclusion

A few comments are made in summary to conclude not only this chapter, but also in a sense Chapters 1 to 4, as the main body of the literature review at the base of the present study. The central conclusions are numbered and printed in boldface to make them stand out.

~~Generally~~ speaking, this chapter's overview of empirical findings shows that many inconsistencies, contradictions and gaps remain in the body of knowledge of the present field of study. The main gap is that **(1) mainly heterosexual relationships, within the context of marriage, have been studied.**

As a result, research has not accounted for the many other intimate, dyadic relationships outside conventional marriage. The many new circumstances and conditions, applying to this part of life, have been largely ignored.

In profiling the findings on the two ~~main variables~~ (Section 4.1) of the present study (sex-role identity and relationship satisfaction), and the relationship between them, when it was addressed, **(2) most findings covered the non-dyadic link between personal sex-role identity type and relationship satisfaction.** In addition, **(3) some early efforts were made to investigate the matter of congruence between the sex-role identity types of partners and the resulting links with relationship satisfaction.** **(4) Androgyny clearly does not have the edge over either masculinity or femininity regarding correlation with relationship satisfaction.** Neither is the relative role of masculinity and femininity a simple one, in the light of the inconsistent patterns documented. What seems to be consistent, though, is the strong association between an **undifferentiated** sex-role identity type and dissatisfaction. **(5) In terms of sex-role identity type congruence, it seems as if wives are more satisfied when husbands adhere to more modern or egalitarian identities or attitudes than their wives.** Sex-role identity type congruence in itself does not consistently appear to be better for relationship satisfaction, but depends on the agreed preferences for egalitarian *vis-à-vis* traditional arrangements between partners.

(6) The impression is sometimes gained that researchers tend only to study either sex-role identity or relationship satisfaction, instead of integrating them. The outcome is that contributions to knowledge of relationship satisfaction are limited. Another gap is the **(7) absence of information on the link between self-rated and ascribed sex-role identity.**

The influence of intra-personal factors (Section 4.2) on sex-role identity, relationship satisfaction, and the relationship between them, has been studied to varying degrees. **(8) The link between intra-personal factors and relationship satisfaction (personal and spousal) was studied increasingly often.** The initial high interest in the link between intra-personal factors and **sex-role identity**, seems to be waning. However, **congruence** between partners, and even cross-partner influences from husband to wife and *vice versa*, have not been researched often. The observed effects for husbands and wives are fairly equivalent. However, some contradictions still remain between many of the findings. **(9) There are very few studies on intra-personal factors within non-heterosexual relationships.** It has also been noted that **(10) the utmost care has to be taken in deriving causal relationships between variables from mere correlations.** Without repeating the detail from Section 4.2, **(11) it seems important for relationship satisfaction that couples: be skilled at communication, especially positively dealing with emotions; have modern (or egalitarian) attitudes towards their relationships; display strong ego-functioning; and have low scores on neuroticism.**

The coverage of extra-personal factors (Section 4.3) and their influence on sex-role identity, relationship satisfaction, and the relationship between the two, is much thinner, compared to the intra-personal factors. **(12) Intra-personal factors have been linked most often to personal relationship satisfaction. (13) More gaps appear to exist concerning the congruence and cross-partner influences between husbands and wives. (14) There is an almost complete absence of studies on homosexual relationships, and (15) contradictory findings are again present. (16) Husbands still often seem to benefit more, compared to wives, in terms of the outcomes related to extra-personal factors in dyadic relationships. Wives function more in the domain of family and household, while husbands are more closely tied to job and career aspects. Otherwise, (17) the dynamics operate fairly equivalently for partners. (18) Causality still remains a complex issue.** Without repeating material from Section 4.3, **(19) factors in two areas, namely career and family roles, seem to be important in determining relationship satisfaction.** Both have the potential to be a severe burden to partners, unless mutual support is pledged between them. Modern (or egalitarian) attitudes again seem to be one of the better safeguards.

(20) The relationship between intra- and extra-personal factors among husbands and wives falls outside the focus of the present study. However, based on the findings reported in this chapter, the following **broad observations** seem warranted:

- greater links exist for women between biological sex and personality factors compared to husbands;
- there is a reduced effectiveness in communication as family stages increase in complexity, for both husbands and wives; and

- among wives, a negative correlation exists between effective communication and age (as if they became tired of trying to make contact with their husbands, or gained increasing access to soul-mates outside their marriages).

The next task is to formulate the research problem based on what has been argued and reported in the first four chapters. As a result, the observations made during the theoretical, methodological and empirical overviews have determined the focus of the study. Chapter 5, as a summary or overview, spells out the implications of previous research findings by defining the nature and extent of the research problem. The approach followed in the present study in addressing the research problem, is detailed further in Chapters 6 and 7, where the research aims (objectives and hypotheses), and operationalisation of the research variables, respectively, are addressed.

In anticipation of the subsequent discussions, it does not seem imprudent to suggest that substantive progress has been made in developing a useful theoretical framework, which so far has proven able to carry a growing understanding of relationship satisfaction and its associated variables.

Clearly, the main point to acknowledge is the continued bias towards studying relationships only within the conventional context of marriages. It has become time to expand conceptual and theoretical frameworks to include other, less conventional, frameworks.