



YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY
NOORDWES UNIVERSITEIT

NARRATIVE DECONSTRUCTION OF GENDER DISCOURSES WITHIN RELATIONSHIPS

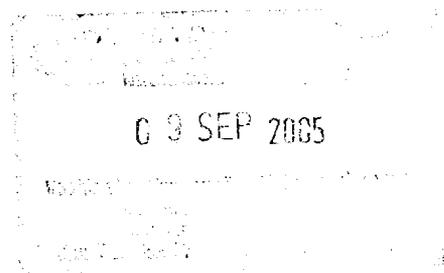
E. Erasmus

**Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Magister Artium in Sociology with specialisation in Marriage and Family Counselling
in the Subject Group Sociology in the School of Behavioural Sciences at the Vaal
Triangle Campus of the North West University**

Supervisor: Mr. P.J.M. van Niekerk

Vanderbijlpark

November 2004



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A study such as this cannot be successful without the assistance of various people. I would therefore like to take the opportunity to extend my gratitude towards those people who contributed to the development of this study.

- Above all I would like to thank the Lord for the courage he gave me to work on this script.
- I would like to thank my supervisor, Mr P.J.M van Niekerk for his assistance. Without his continual support, time, creative insights, this work would have been lacking in many ways.
- Husband, Coert, and my family for the time they gave me to work on this script.
- Special thanks to the personnel of Ferdinand Postma Library, and Administration personnel at the Vaal Triangle Campus of the North West University for all their help whenever I needed them.
- Family and friends for their continuous support, my “family” at work who always had a good word of encouragement.

TO MOTHER

OPSOMMING

TITEL: NARRATIEWE DEKONSTRUKSIE VAN GESLAGSDISKOERSE

Die doel van hierdie studie behels 'n oorweging van die potensiaal inherent in 'n postmodernistiese, narratiewe benadering met betrekking tot verhoudings. Die diskoers van dieselfde wees/gelykheid word gedekonstrueer en 'n alternatiewe diskoers van verskille word voorgestel.

In hierdie studie word die diskoers van dieselfde wees/gelykheid gedekonstrueer en gebruik gemaak van die **albei/en** posisie, nie om hierdie diskoers te diskwalifiseer nie maar om 'n alternatief naamlik die diskoers van verskillend wees voor te stel. In hierdie verband word die metafoor “tandem fietsry” gebruik om die aard van die huidige diskoers van verhoudings voor te stel.

•
Hierdie diskoers suggereer dat verhoudings soos die tandem fietsry kan wees: dit kan 'n wonderlike rit deur die lewe wees. Daar is berge, afdraendes, opdraendes, winde van voor en agter, sonsondergange en wilde blomme om te geniet. Daar is makliker tye, daar is moeilike tye.

In hierdie studie poog die outeur om die diskoers van verskillend wees voor te stel as alternatief in verhoudings deur gebruik te maak van 'n studie vanaf die brein tot by die sosialisering prosesse en verskeie kommunikasie metodes. Daar is ook gebruik gemaak van John Gray se gevallestudies in sy video om verskille tussen individue te beklemtoon en die potensiaal en kreatiwiteit wat daarmee gepaard gaan na vore te laat tree. Dit bevestig die moontlikhede wat bestaan indien die diskoers van verskille as alternatief gebruik word teenoor die diskoers van dieselfde wees/gelykheid. Dit het vir die outeur die geleentheid gebied om op nuwe moontlikhede binne verhoudings te fokus.

Die studie het ook 'n verskeidenheid van navorsings moontlikhede na vore laat tree wat nuwe geleenthede skep vir ander navorsers om te ontdek. Die kulturele ingebedheid van diskoerse is 'n ryk bron van inligting wat verhoudings kreatief kan beïnvloed. Die biologiese verskille plaas die klem daarop dat elke individu uniek is en daarom 'n magdom potensiaal saam met hom bring na die verhouding toe. Dit sou nuwe geleenthede na vore laat tree om met nuwe oë na verhoudings te kyk.

Hiermee wil die outeur afsluit en hoop dat die studie 'n klein bydrae kon maak om verhoudings moontlik in 'n nuwe lig te sien.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OPSOMMING.....	3
CHAPTER 1:.....	12
NARRATIVE DECONSTRUCTION OF GENDER DISCOURSES	12
WITHIN RELATIONSHIPS.	12
1.1. INTRODUCTION.....	12
1.2. FOCUS.....	12
1.3. OVERALL OBJECTIVE:.....	14
1.3.1 Sub-objectives.....	14
1.3.2 Broad overview of the chapters to follow:	15
1.4. IMPORTANT TERMS AND CONCEPTS	17
1.5. CONCLUSION	18
CHAPTER 2	19
BIOLOGICAL AND BRAIN ORIGINS OF GENDER DIFFERENCES	19
2.1 BACKGROUND: THE BIRTH OF DIFFERENCE.....	19
2.2 THE BRAIN.....	20
2.2.1 FIGURE 1: Central Nervous System (Bates, 1995:491)	21
2.2.2 FIGURE 2: Left lateral view of the brain (Bates, 1995:492)	22
2.2.3 FIGURE 3: Coronal Section of the brain (Bates, 1995:492).....	23
2.3. THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE BRAIN	23
2.3.1 The Forebrain:.....	23
2.3.1.1. The Hemispheres.....	23
• 2.3.3 FIGURE 4: The Limbic System (Nevid et al , 1995:141)	24
2.4 The Cerebral Fissures.....	25
2.4.1 The longitudinal cerebral fissure.....	25
2.4.2. Lobes of the Cerebrum.....	26
2.4.3. Functions of the Cerebrum	26
2.5. THE INTEGRATED BRAIN.....	27
The processing of information in the brain.....	27
Table 1: FUNCTIONS OF THE TWO BRAIN HEMISPHERES.....	28
2.6 DIFFERENT BRAINS, DIFFERENT REALITIES ?.....	32
2.7 HORMONAL DIFFERENCES.....	35
2.7.1 Gender and Heredity	35
2.7.1.1. Chromosomal Gender.....	35
2.7.1.2 FIGURE 6: Human Cells (Crooks & Baur, 1999:44).....	36
.....	36
2.7.1.3 FIGURE 7: Hormonal Sex Determination (Moir & Jessel, 1992:23)	37
.....	37
2.7.1.4 FIGURE 8: Normal Genetics and sex determination (Moir & Jessel, 1992:22)	38
2.7.1.5 Hormones and Their Interaction with Chromosomes.....	38
2.7.1.6. Sex Hormones and Development	38
2.7.1.7 Hormones and Behaviour	39
2.7.1.8 Female Hormones and Cycles	40
2.7.1.9. Male Hormones and Cycles.....	41
2.8 THE BRAINS COME OF AGE.....	41
2.9. CONCLUSION	44
CHAPTER 3	46

SOCIALIZATION	46
3. INTRODUCTION.....	46
3.1 WHAT IS SOCIALIZATION?.....	46
3.2 SOCIALIZATION AND DEVELOPMEN.....	47
3.2.1 Becoming Part of The Social World.....	47
3.3 UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS	48
3.3.1 Sigmund Freud: The Elements of Personality	48
3.3.2 Jean Piaget: Cognitive Development.....	50
3.3.2.1 The Sensorimotor Stage.....	51
3.3.2.2 The Preoperational Stage.....	51
3.3.2.3 The Concrete Operational Stage	52
3.3.3 Lawrence Kohlberg: Moral Development	53
3.3.4 Carol Gilligan: The Gender Factor	54
3.3.5 George Herbert Mead: The Social Self.....	54
3.3.5.1 Developing a Notion of the Self	55
3.3.5.2 Social Roles and Self-Identity	56
3.3.6 Erik Erikson: Identity crises.....	57
3.3.6.1 Trust versus Mistrust (infancy).....	57
3.3.6.2 Autonomy versus Doubt.....	58
3.3.6.3 Initiative versus Guilt (preschool years).....	58
3.3.6.4 Industry versus Inferiority (school age).....	58
3.3.6.5 Identity versus Role Confusion (adolescence).....	59
3.3.6.6 Intimacy versus Isolation (young adulthood)	59
Table 3.3.6.7.....	59
3.3.7 Developmental theories of Socialization	62
3.3.7.1 Cognitive Development Theory.....	62
3.3.7.2 Social Learning Theory	63
3.4 EARLY SOCIALIZATION INTO SEX ROLES	65
3.4.1 Emotional Development	66
3.4.3 Parents and Children.....	67
3.4.5 Children's Stimulation of Parents	67
3.4.6 Parent's Expectations of Children	68
3.4.7 Parent's Treatment of Boys and Girls	68
3.4.8 Parents as Models for Children	69
3.4.9 Adolescence.....	70
3.4.10 Adulthood.....	72
3.5 AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION.....	73
3.5.2 Schools.....	74
3.5.3 Peer groups.....	74
3.5.4 The Mass Media	75
3.6 Traditional Gender Roles	76
3.6.1 Role Expectations for Males	76
3.6.2 Problems with the Male Role	77
3.6.3 Pressure to Succeed.....	77
3.6.4 The Inexpressive Male.....	78
3.6.5 Sexual Problems	78
3.6.6 Role Expectations for Females.....	79
3.6.7 Problems with the Female Role	79
3.6.8 Diminished Aspirations	80
3.6.9 The Housewife Syndrome.....	81
3.6.10 Ambivalence about Sexuality.....	81
3.7 CONCLUSION.....	82
CHAPTER 4.....	83
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	83

4. INTRODUCTION.....	83
In the previous chapter the author focused on socialisation and all its components and the impact thereof on individuals in relationships.	83
4.1 MODERNISM TO POSTMODERNISM – PARADIGM SHIFT.....	83
4.1.1 Introduction.....	83
4.1.2 Postmodernism in Historical Perspective.....	84
4.1.2 Postmodernity: <i>Fin de mill'enaire</i> and the future.....	86
4.1.4 Deconstruction and the Role of Language.....	89
4.1.5 The Role of the Individual.....	90
4.1.6 First-Order versus Second-Order Cybernetics.....	91
4.1.7 Postmodernism and Cybernetics.....	93
4.1.8 Second-Order Cybernetics.....	94
4.2 EPISTEMOLOGY.....	97
4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH.....	99
4.3.1 Introduction and background.....	99
4.3.2 The History of Qualitative Research.....	100
4.3.3 Description, design and advantages of qualitative research.....	100
4.3.4 The research methods used for this study.....	101
4.3.4.1 The Interview.....	102
4.3.4.2 Group Interviewing.....	103
4.3.4.3 Validity and Reliability of qualitative research.....	104
4.4 CONCLUSION.....	106
CHAPTER 5.....	107
THEORIES.....	107
5. INTRODUCTION.....	107
5.1 SYSTEM THEORY.....	108
5.1.1 Recursion.....	109
5.1.2 Feedback.....	110
*5.1.3 Morphostasis/Morphogenesis.....	110
5.1.4 Rules and Boundaries.....	111
5.1.5 Openness and closeness.....	111
5.1.6 Entropy/Negentropy.....	112
5.1.7 Equifinality/Equipotentiality.....	113
5.1.8 Communication and Information Processing.....	113
5.1.9 Congruent and Incongruent Communication.....	114
5.1.10 Avoiding Communication Traps.....	115
5.1.11 Relationship and Wholeness.....	115
5.1.11.1 Triangles.....	116
5.1.11.2 Relationship Style.....	116
5.2 SYSTEM THEORY AND CYBERNETICS.....	117
5.2.1 Cybernetics of Cybernetics.....	117
5.2.2 Wholeness and Self-Reference.....	118
5.2.3 Openness and Closeness.....	119
5.2.4 Autopoiesis.....	119
5.2.5 Structural Determinism.....	120
5.2.6 Structural Coupling and Non-purposeful Drift.....	120
5.2.7 Epistemology of Participation.....	121
5.2.8 Reality as a Multiverse.....	122
5.3 SOCIAL-CONSTRUCTIONISM.....	123
5.3.1 Introduction.....	123
5.3.2 What is social-constructionism?.....	124
5.3.2 Conclusion.....	127
5.4 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION DISCOURSE.....	128

5.4.1	What is a discourse?	128
5.4.2	Language and meaning as discourse	130
5.5	DISCOURSE: DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN SEXES	132
5.5.1	Discourse and Identity	132
5.5.1.1	Sensitivity and the Gender Discourse	134
5.5.1.2	Women's and men's movement	135
5.5.1.3	Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory	136
5.5.2	Discourse, social structure and social practices	138
5.5.3	Power discourse	140
5.5.4	Discourse, Power and Identity	141
5.5.5	Discourse of Similarity/Equality	144
5.6	NARRATIVE FOCUS	145
5.6.1	Introduction	145
5.6.2	What is the Narrative Approach?	145
5.6.3	Story	146
5.6.4	Dominant stories	147
5.6.5	Externalization of the problem	148
5.6.6	Unique Outcomes	150
5.6.6.1	Historical Unique Outcomes	151
5.6.6.2	Current Unique Outcomes	151
5.6.6.3	Future Unique Outcomes	152
5.6.6.4	Unique Outcomes and Imagination	152
5.7	DECONSTRUCTION	153
5.8	THE CULTURAL CONTEXT	154
5.9	CONCLUSION	155
CHAPTER 6	.....	158
COMMUNICATION	.....	158
6. INTRODUCTION	.....	158
6.1 COMMUNICATION	.....	159
6.1.1 Communicator 1: Sender/Receiver	.....	159
6.1.2 Messages	.....	159
6.1.3 Channels	.....	160
6.1.4 Interference	.....	161
6.1.5 Communicator 2: Receiver/Sender	.....	161
6.2 WHAT IS EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	.....	163
6.3 TALKING: GET STARTED	.....	165
6.3.1 Talking About Talking	.....	165
6.3.2 Listening and Feedback	.....	165
6.3.3 Being an active Listener	.....	166
6.3.4 Maintain Eye Contact	.....	166
6.3.5 Provide Feedback	.....	167
6.3.6 Support Your Partner's Communication Efforts	.....	167
6.3.7 Express Unconditional Positive Regard	.....	167
6.3.8 Use Paraphrasing	.....	168
6.4 SUMMARY	.....	168
6.5 EXPRESSIVE VERSUS INSTRUMENTAL	.....	169
COMMUNICATION STYL	.....	169
6.5.1 Expressiveness: Pros and Cons	.....	169
6.5.2 Instrumentality: Pros and Cons	.....	171
6.5.3 The problem of different wavelengths	.....	171
6.6 IMPROVING COMMUNICATION	.....	172
Table 6.7 THE SELF-SUMMARIZING SYNDROME	.....	173
6.8 REFLEXIVE CONVERSATION BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS AND MARRIED COUPLES	.....	175

6.8.1	INTERVIEWING AND INTRODUCTION OF THE SIX	
	COUPLES.....	175
6.8.1.1	COUPLE ONE	175
6.8.1.2	COUPLE TWO.....	176
6.8.1.3	COUPLE THREE.....	177
6.8.1.4	COUPLE FOUR.....	177
6.8.1.5	COUPLE FIVE.....	178
6.8.1.6	COUPLE SIX	179
6.9	COMMUNICATION IN SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR.....	180
6.9.1	THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN RELATIONSHIP	
	DEVELOPMENT	180
6.9.2.1	Socialization and Sexual Communication	181
6.9.2.2	Language and Sexual Communication	182
6.9.2.3	Gender-Based Communication Styles.....	183
6.10	NON VERBAL SEXUAL COMMUNICATION.....	184
6.10.1	Facial Expression	185
6.10.2	Interpersonal Distance.....	186
6.10.3	Touching	186
6.10.4	Sounds	187
6.10.5	Impasses	187
6.10.6	Dating couples	188
6.10.7	Newlyweds	189
6.10.8	Married couples	189
6.10.9	Anxieties about Sexual Communication	190
6.11	COUPLES DISCUSSING THEIR FEELINGS ABOUT SEX AND ROMANCE.....	191
6.12	ROMANCE:.....	192
6.13	DISCOVERING YOUR PARTNER'S NEEDS	195
6.13.1	Asking Questions.....	196
6.13.1.1	Yes-or-No Questions	196
6.13.1.2	Open-Ended Questions	197
6.13.2	Comparing Notes	198
6.13.3	Giving Permission	199
6.13.4	Self-Disclosure.....	199
	Table 6.13.5 - REASONS WHY HUSBANDS AND WIVES AVOID	
	SELF-DISCLOSING TO EACH OTHER	201
6.14	LEARNING TO MAKE REQUESTS	201
6.14.1	Taking Responsibility for Our Own Pleasure	202
6.14.2	Making Requests Specific.....	203
6.14.3	Giving and Receiving.....	203
6.15	THE DAILY GRIND.....	206
6.15.1	Eating together	206
6.15.2	Coming from work.....	208
6.15.3	Men in conversation.....	209
6.15.4	Women in conversation	210
6.15.5	Couples in conversation about the daily grind.....	210
6.16	CAN FIGHTING BE GOOD FOR A RELATIONSHIP.....	211
	Table 6.16.1 THE FIGHT EFFECTS PROFILE.....	211
6.17	SOCIAL POWER IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS	214
6.17.1	POWER AS A SOCIAL EXCHANGE PROCESS	214
6.17.1.1	The Bases of Power.....	214
6.17.1.2	Naturalistic arguments for male dominance.....	215
6.17.2	THE PROCESS OF POWER.....	218
6.17.2.1	Language and touch.....	218
6.17.2.2	Styles of power	219

6.17.2.3	The Outcome of Power	221
Table	(1) IMPLEMENTATION POWER VERSUS ORCHESTRATION	221
6.17.2.4	Female dominance: A taboo?.....	222
6.18	POWER AND PERSONALITY	223
6.18.1	POWER AND UNDERSTANDING	224
6.19	COPING WITH STRESS	225
6.19.1	Women’s talk	226
6.19.2	Men’s talk	226
6.19.3	Bruce and Diane	227
6.20	CONFLICT AND DISSOLUTION IN SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS	229
6.20.1	STRUCRURAL FACTORS IN CONFLICT AND DISSOLUTION	229
6.20.1.1	Gender Differences	230
6.20.1.2	As Time Goes By.....	231
6.20.1.3	When Two Become Three or More: Effects of Children on Marital Satisfaction	232
6.20.1.4	Role Strain: Who Does What?.....	233
6.20.2	THE PROCESS OF CONFLICT AND DISSOLUTION	234
6.20.2.1	Attributions: A General Scenario.....	234
6.20.2.2	Attributions: Differences between Happy and Unhappy Couples	235
6.20.2.3	Volatility: A Problem and an Opportunity.....	235
6.20.3	ARGUING	236
6.20.3.1	Couples sharing about emotion and arguing.....	236
6.20.3.2	Scenario	237
6.20.3.3	Scenario with Pat’s birthday:	238
6.20.3.4	Men in conversation.....	239
6.21	THE GROUP COMING TOGETHER TO DISCUSS WITH THE AUTHOR SOME OF THE SCENARIOS IN THE RELATIONSHIP	239
6.21.2	COPING WITH STRESS	240
6.21.3	ARGUING – AUTHOR OF VIDEO	242
6.21.4	ROMANCE	243
6.21.4.1	The group in discussion with the author of video	244
6.21.5	ONE MONTH LATER – AFTER THE WORKSHOP	248
6.21.5.1	Comment on the workshop	248
6.21.5.2	Coming together	249
6.21.5.3	Women coming together.....	250
6.21.5.4	Men coming together	251
6.21.5.5	Scenario in Yves and Mari’s house.....	251
6.21.5.6	Women coming together.....	252
6.21.5.7	Scenario – Pat coming home.....	254
6.21.5.8	Scenario – Arthur and Sandy’s Home.....	254
6.21.5.9	Scenario - at Fran and Mike’s home	255
6.21.5.10	Men in conversation about sex and listening	255
6.21.5.11	Cathy and Pat	256
6.21.5.12	Arthur and Sandy	256
6.21.5.13	Bob and Sandy	256
6.22	Five months later.....	257
6.22.1	Bruce and Diane	257
6.22.2	Arthur and Sandy	257
6.22.3	Bob and Sandra	257
6.22.4	Yves and Mari	258
6.22.5	Mike and Fran	258
6.22.5	Pat and Cathy	258
6.23	CONCLUSION	259
CHAPTER 7	.....	260

INTEGRATION AND REFLECTION	260
7. INTRODUCTION.....	260
7.1 THE HISTORY OF DISCOURSE OF SIMILARITIES/EQUALITY	260
7.2 DECONSTRUCTION OF THE DISCOURSES OF SIMILARITY/ EQUALITY.....	263
7.2.1 Introduction	263
7.2.2 Biological: Gender and Heredity	264
7.2.2.1 Chromosomal Gender:	264
7.2.3 Socialization into Sex Roles	265
7.2.4 Social Power in Relationships	267
7.2.5 Changing the Rules	270
7.2.6 Is there A Silver Lining?	271
7.3 GOING TANDEM.....	272
7.4 CONCLUSION	277
CHAPTER 8.....	278
CONCLUSION, EVALUATION AND SUMMARY	278
8.1 INTRODUCTION.....	278
8.2 SUMMARY	278
8.3. EVALUATION OF OBJECTIVES	281
8.4. REFLECTION ON THE STUDY.....	282
8.5. POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	282
8.6. CONCLUSION	283
BIBLIOGRAPHY	287

CHAPTER 1:

NARRATIVE DECONSTRUCTION OF GENDER DISCOURSES WITHIN RELATIONSHIPS.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves to give an introduction to the main aims of this research. As such, this chapter will commence with a discussion on various discourses in society, which have a constitutive or shaping effect on the personal discourses and lives of people. People however do not necessarily live in a reflective and self-reflective way within these discourses, but in a narrative way.

1.2. FOCUS

Sociology makes an important distinction between sex and gender. **Sex** refers to the physical and biological differences between men and women (Tischler,1996:319). **Gender** refers to the social, psychological, and cultural attributions of masculinity and feminity that are based on biological distinctions (Tischler, 1996:319). Ideas about masculinity and feminity are culturally based and are an important factor in shaping people's self images and social identities.

Gender-role socialization is a lifelong process whereby people learn the values, attitudes, motivations, and behaviour considered appropriate to each sex by their culture. In our society, research indicates that parents respond differentially to male and female infants right from the beginning. As a result of differential socialization, core gender identity is established by age two or three. During adolescence, boys are

generally encouraged to pursue roles that will prepare them for occupations, whereas girls are encouraged to develop behaviour patterns designed to attract a suitable mate. These discourses that form our identity are intimately tied to the structures and practices that are lived out in society from day to day. If we accept that “men”, relative to “women” are different, then we can say prevailing discourses of “different” serve to uphold this power of “different” discourse (Jackson, 1993:30).

We should be aware of coming to the conclusion that prevailing discourses are ensured their dominant position for eternity, or that other competing discourses cannot complete a successful “takeover bid”. For example, this century has seen a gradual emergence of alternative discourses of feminism, (who demand equality between men and women) which are gaining more and more ground. What can be said of women, or how they can be portrayed in stories, images, is undergoing change, and these changes go hand in hand with changes in the way society is organized (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:394).

Discussing similarities and differences between the sexes is fraught with difficulties, as in the past, differences have often been used to justify discrimination against women. Biological differences, physical differences, hormonal differences, spatial abilities are used to justify differences between the two sexes. With this background Feminists became concerned about sex differences, which started in the 1960s and 1970s and was based on a shared recognition that women were oppressed. They started the question of why men should dominate women: How are women and men constituted as separate genders? (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:41-81, Burr, 1998:53 and Crooks & Baur, 1999:99).

In the early 1980's a development in France sought to 'deconstruct' gender categories, to reveal the ways in which they have been culturally constructed. Feminists associated with this tendency identify themselves as postmodernists. Feminist theories have been powerful in deconstructing the masculine bias and power relationships. The search for a feminist jurisprudence has, to a large extent, been

engendered by the equality/difference problem, which will be discussed in chapter 5 (Burr, 1998:54:55, de Beauvoir, 1949:282, Bonvillain, 1995:13).

Feminism which strives for **equality**, and on the other hand sex roles and socialization that emphasize the **difference** between men and women and the emphasis on socialization which may detract from a perspective that shows us that societies initiate and perpetuate the kind of socialization that they want (Jackson, 1993:31).

The researcher is of the opinion that the social constructivist theory, which is derived from a postmodernistic point of view has many promising implications for alternative approaches to deal with changes in gender roles, expectations and assumptions, and gender discourses. Equality as well as Difference have been constructed as mutually exclusive. Hence it appears impossible to apply one principle in one set of circumstances and the other in another set, which by the author will then make use of the **both/and** stance.

1.3. OVERALL OBJECTIVE:

To deconstruct the discourses of gender (difference/equality), which is embedded within the postmodernistic concept.

1.3.1 Sub-objectives

- 1.3.1.1. To elaborate on a discourse of differences
- 1.3.1.2. To elaborate on a discourse of similarities
- 1.3.1.3. To deconstruct the discourse of similarities within the social construction framework.

1.3.2 Broad overview of the chapters to follow:

1.3.2.1.1 **Chapter 2**, This chapter includes an exposition of the integrated brain profile. Some theorists believe that male and female brains may be organized differently. This chapter also features a new application on the parts of the brain (cerebrum), which is responsible for the most complex mental activities. Recent attention has focused on the significance of the hypothalamus, cerebrum and how they interact during various stages of development.

Biological explanations of gender differences have also focused on the possible role of hormones. Prenatal hormonal influences and postnatal factors might elicit the behaviour in a higher proportion of one sex than the other. It can be seen that prenatal factors set the stage for the development of later gender identity and gender role.

- *“As we learn to stop underestimating the power of a hormone, we can also learn more about ourselves, the opposite sex, and our interactions. And just as we must sometimes “agree not to disagree”, perhaps we must perhaps also “understand not to understand” (Moir and Jessel, 1992:42-45).*

1.3.2.2. **Chapter 3**, introduces the reader to the early socialization into gender roles. The infant years are the crucial years for development, when patterns of personality and behaviour are established. These early years are also critical in establishing beliefs about appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour. The infant, toddler, and young child are socialized into, or taught, appropriate sex-role norms and behaviours. Other means of socialization, such as television, or books, convey much more direct messages about appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour. Parents and

school contribute both subtle and overt messages about the correct way to act as a boy or as a girl.

1.3.2.1.2 In **chapter 4** attention was given to the research methodology that was used in this script. The author made use of the postmodern, narrative, social constructionist worldview. Perhaps the most important feature of a worldview that informs narrative is a certain attitude about reality.

Postmodernists believe that there are limits on the ability of human beings to measure and describe the universe in an absolute way. They choose to look at specific details more often than generalizations, difference rather than similarity.

1.3.2.4.1 In **chapter 5** the researcher will focus on theories: system perspectives, and discourse sensitivity to address the issue of difference/similarities in gender. Social constructionism, which represents an epistemological shift that opened the field for a Narrative approach. As Gergen (1985a:266) puts it: Social construction discourse is mainly concerned with “the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world in which they live”.

People live and understand their living through socially constructed narrative realities that give meaning and understanding to their experiences. Our stories are embedded in a network of reciprocally influencing narratives.

1.3.2.4.2 **Chapter 6** introduce the reader to a case study of 6 couples with their own “story”, in gender socialization (video John Gray). This chapter reflects on the discussions in chapter 3 regarding gender roles and expectations and on chapter 5 in which, differences/similarities, and narratives are discussed.

The video is combined with a discussion on the process of male/female relationship communication. The chapter then examines how we perceive ourselves, the influence of role-models, as well as elements of communication and language, which may suggest gender differences.

Various aspects of communication are looked at with special attention given to two-person communication from the most formal to the most intimate. This chapter discusses intimacy and power within the framework of John Gray scenarios.

1.3.2.4.3 Following this, a section will then be included as **chapter 7**, where an integration and reflection will be outlined in this chapter. This chapter will introduce the reader to the concept of the “deconstruction of similarities”.

1.3.2.4.4 **Chapter 8** will be the final chapter and conclusion in which the main ideas (outlined in this study) will be discussed. This chapter will also point out possibilities for future research.

1.4. IMPORTANT TERMS AND CONCEPTS

This section aims to clarify a few important terms and concepts that will be utilized in this script. Other terms that are relevant are explained within the text.

Discourse: This term is used primarily in two senses: (i) to refer to a systematic, coherent set of images, metaphors that construct an object in a particular way, and (ii) to refer to the actual spoken inter changes between two people (Burr, 1998:184).

Deconstruction: The analysis of a piece of text to reveal the discourses and systems of oppositions operating within it.

The researcher is aware of the fact that alternative definitions for the above two terms exist. However, the above stated definitions are deemed to be representative of the way in which these terms will be used in this work (Nicholson, 1995:24).

Epistemology: The philosophy of knowledge; the study of the nature of knowledge and the methods of obtaining it (Burr, 1998:185).

Ontology: The study of being and existence. The attempt to discover the fundamental categories of what exists (Burr, 1998:185).

Postmodernism: The rejection of ‘grand narratives’ in theory and the replacement of a search for truth with a celebration of the multiplicity of (equal valid) perspectives (Burr, 1998:185).

Text: Anything, which can be ‘read’ for meaning. As well as written material, this potentially includes pictorial images, clothes, buildings, food, consumer goods and so on (Burr, 1998:185).

Feminists: Branch of the early women’s movement that favoured independence from any political organization. Informally used to refer to women who are in favour of equal rights for women (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:418).

Gender Identity: (also sex identity). The sex (gender) one believes oneself to be (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:418).

Sex Role: Behaviour, “masculine” or “feminine”, prescribed by the culture for a particular sex in addition to the personality traits expected of that sex (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:420).

Gender-role socialization: The lifelong process whereby people learn the values, (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:341).

1.5. CONCLUSION

This thesis attempts to bring forth the gender discourses and to emphasise these discourses. It also focuses on feminism that strives for equality and thus stresses the fact that everybody is similar/equal, in order to bring out the differences between man and women as a new discourse.

The author therefore starts in Chapter 2 with the differences in biological views, hormones, male and female brain (sex brain), which plays a major role in both sexes

CHAPTER 2

BIOLOGICAL AND BRAIN ORIGINS OF GENDER DIFFERENCES

In the previous chapter an introduction was made to the main objectives of the study. In this chapter the author attempts to shed some light on gender differences in terms of right/left brain specialization and biological factors. Men and women are better at the skills that are controlled by specific areas of the brain – but different areas of the brain are focused on different things. This means that the male and female pattern of brain organisation has advantages and disadvantages for both sexes.

The biological perspective assumes that males and females are significantly different from birth and that the resulting differences can be explained largely by biological factors, which have also focused on the possible role of hormones.

2.1 BACKGROUND: THE BIRTH OF DIFFERENCE

We should understand the general structure of the human brain, and then see how precise areas of the brain are different in men and women.

The earliest clues to how the brain works came from examining the behaviour of people with brain damage. Different areas of the brain control specific functions. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

The early knowledge of which areas controlled which functions came mostly from the laboratory of the battlefield. The war game is almost exclusively a male pursuit. The specific study of the female brain is comparatively recent (Moir and Jessel, 1992:38-43).

The first indications that this finding was the case came nearly thirty years ago. In the Bethesda research centre, the psychologist Herbert Landsell discovered that men and women, when damaged in the same area of the brain, were affected differently. Tests

were done on epileptics which included skills like language and spatial IQ tests. Numerous studies have confirmed the earlier findings:

- The men with right-side brain damage did badly in tests relating to spatial skills, yet the relative performance of similarly brain-damaged women was scarcely affected.
- Men with left-side damage lost much of their command of language, but women with damage in the same area retained most of theirs.
- In women language and spatial skills are controlled by centres in both sides of the brain, as well as verbal and visual abilities.
- In men skills are much more specifically located. Men's brains are more specialised. The left side of the male brain is almost exclusively set aside for the control of verbal abilities, the right side for the visual abilities (Moir and Jessel, 1992:38-43).

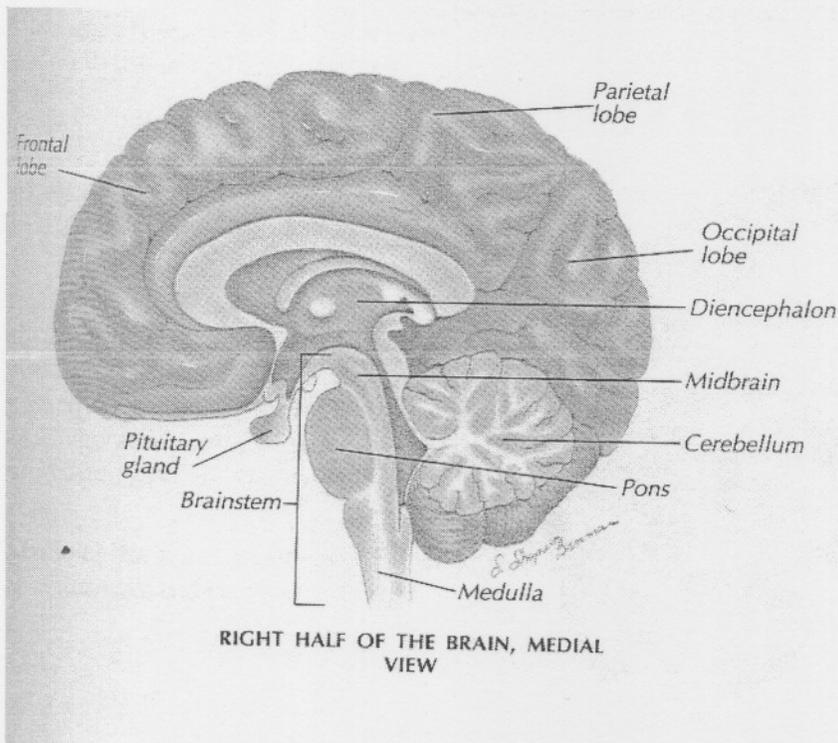
The difference in the layout of the average male or female brain is found to have a direct effect on the way men and women differ in their ways of thinking.

•

2.2 THE BRAIN

The brain is the largest and most complex mass of nervous tissue in the body. It is contained in the cranial cavity and comprises five distinct connected parts: the cerebrum, the midbrain, the cerebellum, the pons, and the medulla oblongata (Miller & Leavell, 1972:201).

2.2.1 FIGURE 1: Central Nervous System (Bates, 1995:491)

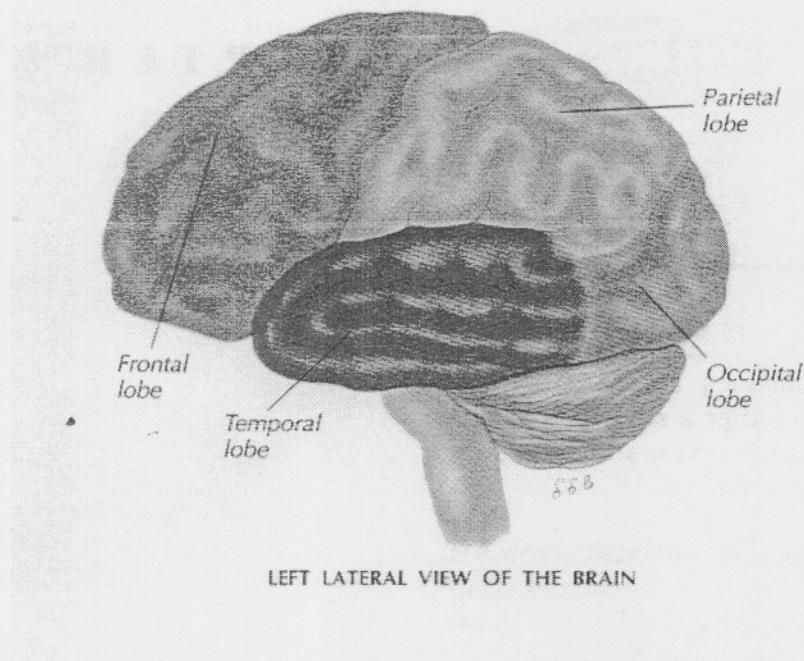


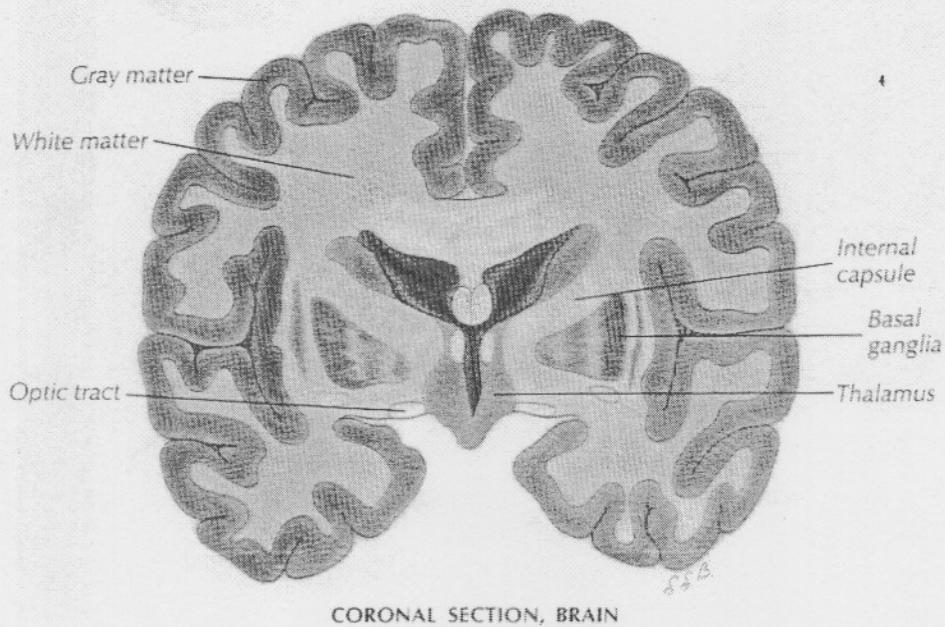
The adult male brain weighs approximately 1,380 gm, and **the female brain**, about 1,250g. The weight of the brain is an indication of growth, which in early life depends upon the enlargement of the cells and their processes. The brain grows rapidly up to the fifth year with very little or no growth occurring after the age of 20. In advanced age the brain gradually loses weight owing to dehydration and death of cells (Nevid et al, 1995:141).

Development of the brain is not only a matter of growth but also a matter of forming new functional pathways, i.e., new synapses and a permanent modification of the synapses that are functionally active during various forms of activity.

In the brain as in other parts of the nervous system, nerve impulses are transmitted at the synapse from one neuron to another by chemical transmission (Nevid et al, 1995:141-142).

2.2.2 FIGURE 2: Left lateral view of the brain (Bates, 1995:492)





2.2.3 FIGURE 3: Coronal Section of the brain (Bates, 1995:492)

2.3. THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE BRAIN

Male and female brains may be organized differently. The human brain is divided into two halves. The cerebral hemispheres are the right and left halves of the cerebrum, which is the convoluted outer layer of the brain. The largest and most complicated part of the human brain, the cerebrum is responsible for most complex mental activities.

2.3.1 The Forebrain:

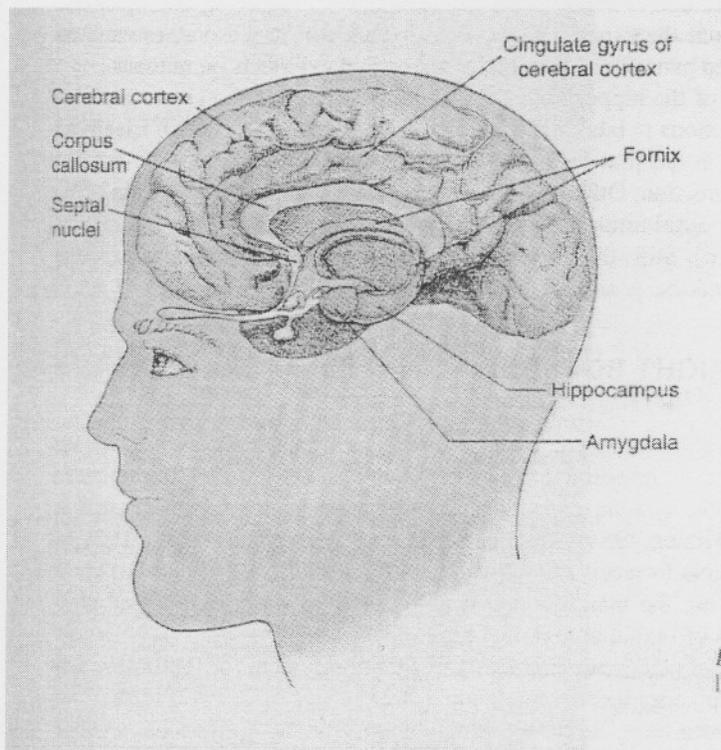
2.3.1.1. The Hemispheres.

The cerebrum is by far the largest part of the brain. It is egg shaped and fills the whole of the upper portion of the skull. The entire surface, both upper and lower, is composed of layers of gray matter and is called the cortex. The bulk of the white matter in the interior of

the cerebrum consists of small fibres running in three principal directions (Miller & Leavell, 1972:203).

- from above downward – *projection fibres*, connecting the cerebrum with other parts of the brain and spinal cord
- from the front backward – *association fibres*, connecting gyri (or convolutions) on the same side of the cerebrum; and
- from side to side – *commissural fibres*, connecting the right and left sides of the cerebrum. The fibres link the different parts of the brain together and connect the brain with the spinal cord (Nevid et al, 1995:141).

2.3.3 FIGURE 4: The Limbic System (Nevid et al , 1995:141)



2.4 The Cerebral Fissures

2.4.1 The longitudinal cerebral fissure

The cerebral hemispheres are separated by a deep vertical longitudinal fissure. The separation is complete in front and behind, but in the middle portion it extends to the corpus callosum, a wide band of commissural fibres, which unite the two hemispheres. In the posterior region, the cerebrum overlaps the thalamus, midbrain, and cerebellum. A process of the dura mater (a dense membrane of fibrous connective tissue containing a great many blood vessels) extends down into this fissure and separates the two cerebral hemispheres (Miller & Leavell, 1972:205). M.C de Lacoste suspected she would find a significant difference in callosum size between men and women with research and she did. Her research was the first study of the human corpus callosum showing a possible anatomical basis for sexual differences in intellect, skills, and behaviour. The mind's big "telephone" cable, connecting hundreds of millions of neurons between the two hemispheres.

The other is the hypothalamus, the master controller for the integration of many basic behavioural patterns – from temperature regulation and appetite to sex drives – involving brain and endocrine functions. Neuroendocrine research also strongly indicates that nervous system differences begin as sex hormones bathe the developing foetus in the womb (Guyton & Hall, 1996:753).

One of the most exciting advances in sex research was the discovery that foetal hormones not only control the development of the foetus's sex organs but may also affect development of parts of the brain and pituitary gland. Research with human brains is beginning to demonstrate differences between the number and location of nerve synapses in the hypothalamuses of male and female brains (Guyton & Hall, 1996:754, Weiten & Lloyd, 1981:305 and Kelly, 1996:119).

There is some research evidence to support the contentions that such differences could lead to different behaviour patterns later in life.

2.4.2. Lobes of the Cerebrum

The longitudinal fissure divides the cerebrum into two hemispheres, and the transverse fissure divides the cerebrum from the cerebellum. The three remaining fissures, assisted by certain arbitrary lines, divide each hemisphere into five lobes. These lobes derive their names from the bones of the cranium under which they lie. They are known as: (1) *frontal lobe*, (2) *parietal lobe*, (3) *temporal lobe*, (4) *occipital lobe*, and (5) the *insula (island of Reil)* (Bates, 1995:491).

2.4.3. Functions of the Cerebrum

In higher vertebrates, the cerebrum constitutes a larger proportion of the central nervous system. It is especially large in animals that are capable of profiting by experience. The areas that govern all our mental activities, reason, intelligence, will, and memory, are located in the cerebrum. This is the discriminating area of consciousness, the interpreter of sensations (correlation), the instigator and coordinator of voluntary acts, and it exerts strong control (both facilitatory and inhibitory) over many reflex actions. Laughing, weeping, micturition, defecation, and many other acts might be cited as examples of the latter (Guyton & Hall, 1996:753).

Consciousness and memory are two areas of cerebral activity which encompass much or all of its other more specific activities. The conscious brain is kept aware of environmental changes by way of afferent nerve impulses and responds appropriately. Memory and learning are activities of the cortex, although other cerebral areas are involved. For example, sensory impulses from the eye or ear are transmitted to the appropriate cortical areas, so that at a later date they may be recalled-for pleasure or interpretation and thought (Bates, 1995:491 and Maccoby and Jacklin, 1967:64).

2.5. THE INTEGRATED BRAIN

The processing of information in the brain

A person learns and processes information through his/her senses (e.g. eye, ear, touch receptors, ect.). Information from the **right side of the body is processed in the left brain hemisphere** (see Figure 1, page 21) and *vice versa*. All the information from the sense organs goes to the back of the brain, where it eventually through experience leads to perception.

The information from the back of the brain is then taken to the front part of the brain to eventually be “expressed”. This part of the brain acts as its executive and is responsible for the strategic aspects of action.

The corpus callosum makes the author think that there is more to it than that. This structure links the two halves, and serves as a communication bridge between them. It has been called the brain’s “telephone exchange”. A large link would serve to facilitate better communication between the hemispheres. It would allow you to make complete use of all of your faculties, regardless of where they were located. On the other hand, it might cause you to diffuse your abilities among too many things. This seems to be a better model of actual real-world behaviour (Guyton & Hall, 1996:753). Men are often highly focused, extremely creative, ambitious, driven, and fearless. In contrast, women are better at communication, collaboration, and holistic thinking. They ‘know’ the answer without having to think about it, or even being able to explain how they know (Weiten & Lloyd, 1981:304).

The left and right brain hemispheres have different functions, and as mentioned before, have input from the opposite side of the body. The functions of and the

information processed in the two halves of the brain is outlined in Figure 1 and Table 1 (Vermeulen, 1999:35-40).

Table 1: FUNCTIONS OF THE TWO BRAIN HEMISPHERES

LEFT OR LOGIC BRAIN	RIGHT OR HOLISTIC BRAIN
Logical-Analytic: Starts with Pieces first, works detail, decodes	Intuitive-Estimates: Sees the whole picture first, holistic, works with images encodes
Planning and structuring	Is fluid and spontaneous
Thinks sequential	Thinks simultaneously
Works with numbers, formulas, Lists	Remember faces, pictures, postures, voices
Parts of language	Language comprehension
Syntax, semantics	Image, emotion, meaning
Letters, sentences	Rhythm, flow, dialect
Numbers	Image, intuition
Language oriented	Oriented towards feelings and language
Prefers talking and writing	Prefers drawing and manipulation of Objects
Prefers multiple choice tests	Prefers open-ended questions

Discerns sharp perceptual and conceptual boundaries

Diffuse boundary perceptions

Sees distinct right and wrong

Flexible, more tolerant

Looks at differences

Looks at similarities

Future orientated, time

Oriented towards the “here and now”,

Conscious

no time sense

“Make it happen” attitude

“Let it happen” attitude

Responsive to structure of
The environment

Essentially self-acting

Controls Feelings and emotions

Free with feelings

Technique

Flow and movement

Sports: Hand/eye/foot
Placement

Sports: Flow and rhythm

Music: Notes, beat, tempo

Music: Passion, rhythm, image

Art: Media, tool use, how to

Art: Image, emotion, flow

Prefers hierarchical (ranked)
authority

Prefers participative authority

Conscious brain

Unconscious brain

(Vermeulen, 1999:35-38).

In about 50% of the population the 'left brain will be the "dominant" brain hemisphere (previous assumptions held that in 80% of the population is left (language/logic) brain dominant.

We perceive our world from two entirely different perspectives or points of view: either as a whole (through the right hemisphere) or one piece at a time (through our left or analytical hemisphere). Ideally, according to Vermeulen (in Vermeulen, 1999:37), both hemispheres should function together, and by doing so give us both an analytical and whole perspective of what we are experiencing through our senses or what we are busy doing.

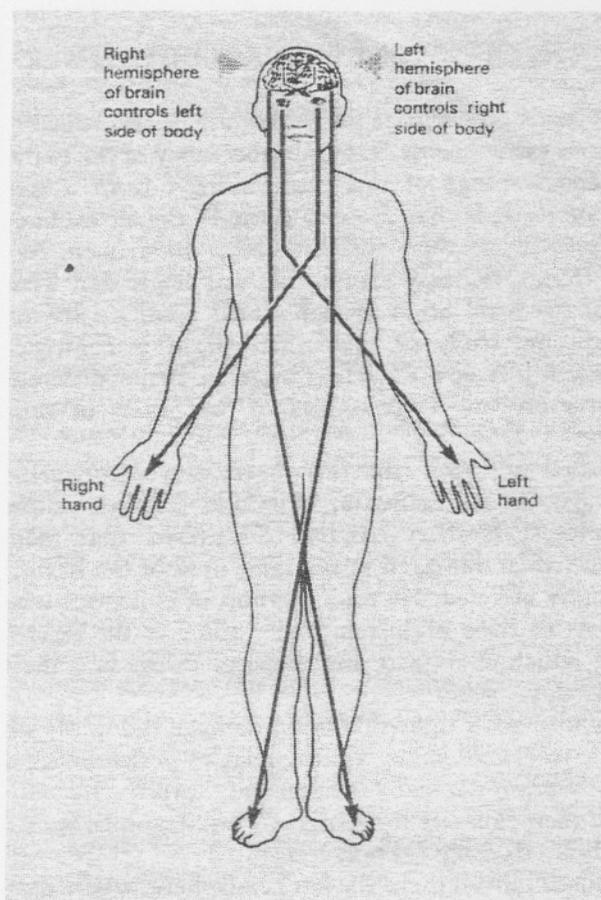
The left brain processes information and experiences into words and assists in developing understanding (Vermeulen, 1999:35-38).

- It is now known that the left side of the brain deals predominantly with verbal abilities and the detailed orderly processing of information. That is, speaking, writing and reading are all largely under control of the left-hand side of the brain. Damage to the left side of the brain causes all sorts of problems related to language. The left side controls the logical, sequential thought processes. This leads to learned behaviour, forming of perception, attitudes and or habits. The more habits are repeated the more ingrained they become, and may eventually become part and parcel of our "natural" pattern of behaviour. So, for example over reliance on left brain functions lead to an excessive use of this part of the brain. This is when your ability to manage becomes constrained to certain attitudes/behaviour patterns, etc, which in turn may lead to poor interpersonal relationships and unnecessary stress.

The right brain makes a (brain) map of the words and images and then arranges it to form patterns. These patterns then becomes a perception and/or attitude.

The right side of the brain is the headquarters for the visual information. It deals with spatial relations. Persons with brain damage to the right-hand side often loses their sense of direction, unable even to find their way around their own home. The right side is responsible for taking in 'the big picture', basic shapes and patterns. It controls the abstract thought processes and some of our emotional responses (Moir & Jessel, 1992:41).

Approximately one half of the optic nerve fibres cross the opposite side of the head. The fibres from the temporal halves of each retina do not cross but continue on the same side. This allows for better depth perception. Refer figure 5.



2.5.1 FIGURE 5: Central Brain Geography (Moir & Jessel, 1992:41)

2.6 DIFFERENT BRAINS, DIFFERENT REALITIES ?

Perhaps one such “why” involves biological premises. The steroid hormones secreted by the gonads (mainly androgens in males and estrogens and progestins in females), for instance, are not restricted to the lower half of the body and are known to have divergent effects on the brains of the separate sexes. Although the male and female brain may appear identical structurally (except for the male’s being about 10% larger), morphological differences abound (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:305-306, Kelly, 1998:133).

The brain is organized by the presence or absence of androgens neonatally, long before it gets a chance to interact with its culture. The primary mechanism by which these steroids appear to influence neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, and behaviour is through the binding of intraneuronal nuclear receptors in target brain areas and altering neuronal genomic expression. The effects of steroid binding are realised in alterations in regional cell, growth, proliferation, which may then influence cell number, size, or packing density. Early migrational patterns, dendritic growth, and neuronal myelination may also be modified (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:306).

Neonatal testosterone also appears to be involved in the sexual differentiation of the cerebral cortex. Certain regions of the cortex are significantly thicker in the right hemisphere than in the left in males, whereas females showed a non-significant trend toward asymmetry in the opposite direction (Nevid *et al.* 1995:144).

According to Kristine Hoeldtke (2001:2) “researchers at the University of Pennsylvania Medical Centre have recently reported that women have a higher proportion of gray matter to cranial volume while men have a higher proportion of white matter (gray matter is where computation takes place, while white matter is responsible for communication between groups of cells in different areas of the brain).”

But how does all of this relate to behaviour and cognition? While there are no sex differences in general IQ on standardized tests of intelligence between men and woman, men differ from women, on average, in a number of more specific abilities. Men excel in spatial abilities, quantitative abilities, and feats of strength while women tend to outperform men on tasks involving verbal abilities, perceptual speed and accuracy, and fine motor skills. The male advantages here reflect more specialized skill while the female advantages are inherently more integrative. Also, the sexual difference in special ability do not appear in full force until puberty, raising the possibility that the hormonal characteristic of this stage may play some role in the ontogenesis of an individual (Weiten & Lloyd, 1981:305).

According to Kristine Hoeldtke (2001:5) “ *the right-brain/left-brain distinction may shed some light on personal relationships between the sexes.*” Although women have most commonly been deemed the more intuitive sex, it appears the opposite may be true. Since a man spends more time in his right brain, he may be more likely to sense a situation and take action intuitively. He responds immediately with sexual feeling towards sex objects, bypassing the planning or long decision-making process that a woman may engage in. If a woman says something that a man does not want to hear, he may not respond verbally, but spatially as he moves to the TV to watch a program. A woman, on the other hand, may have long debates in her head before she comes to a decision and takes action. Such internal thinking and deliberation are left brain activities .

According to Wilcox (2001:36) Women do not usually ‘think’ in the traditional sense (that is, as men do). Though quite capable of it, they can transcend simple logic. Instead, they feel. They have a sixth sense about things. They have ‘common sense’. They relate well to stories and narratives. Their knowledge is acquired more from the real world than from books”.

According to Wilcox (2001: 36) “men do seem to have more difficulty with feelings, one might conclude that they must not be in the right half of their brain after all. On the contrary, however, they often compensate for their feeling impediments by

replacing the uncomfortable feelings with other ones. Typical compensations are: they may feel sexual in situations that are not particularly sexual, they may resort to addictive behaviours as a distraction, or they may get angry in situations that might call for a different response.”

Men believe feelings are illogical, unpredictable, untrustworthy, and to be suppressed at all times. The exception is in matters of the heart. It is only here that they deem it appropriate, and allow themselves a rare luxury.

It is Kristine Hoeldtke's (2001: 5) opinion, that in a society where gender blurs are increasingly more accepted and even applauded, the fact that stereotypes still permeate civilization and instil “fact-of-life” foundations across cultures is, in and of itself, testimony for the reality of sex differences in cognitive and emotional functioning.

According to the very famous Kathryn Phillips (2001: 16) “ most people who have had any sort of interaction with the opposite sex whether it is in the sandbox or the wedding chapel, would agree that there are consistent differences in behaviour that the nurture proponents simply cannot account for. The concept of a sexually dimorphic brain, therefore, should not be feared but should instead be regarded as an invaluable revelation that may prevent us from dismissing our observations of other-sex behaviour as mere reflections of stupidity or “weirdness”. It is useful to recognize that we may, in essence, be experiencing different realities!”

How the brain may be sexually differentiated is one of the most intriguing questions of today. There is growing evidence that hormonal influences exerted by the gonads on the brain before and after birth play some role in determining certain “male-type” or “female-type” behaviours (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:306 and Kelly, 1998:115).

2.7 HORMONAL DIFFERENCES

The birth of difference:

Hormones:

A substance secreted by an endocrine gland that regulates various body functions.

(From Greek hormon, meaning “to stimulate” or “to excite”).

(Crooks & Baur, 1999:144).

As we learn to stop underestimating the power of a hormone, we can also learn more about ourselves, the opposite sex, and our interactions. And, just as we must sometimes “agree to disagree,” perhaps we must also be willing to “understand not to understand.”

2.7.1 Gender and Heredity

2.7.1.1. Chromosomal Gender

It is not until six or seven weeks after conception that the unborn baby “makes up its mind”, and the brain begins to take on a male or a female pattern. What happens, at that critical stage in the darkness of the womb, will determine the structure and organisation of the brain, and that, in turn, will decide the very nature of the mind. It is one of the most fascinating stories of life and creation, a story largely unknown, but now, at last, beginning to unfold in its entirety (Moir & Jessel, 1992:21).

When an embryo is conceived in the form of a fertilized egg cell, the ovum and the sperm each contribute twenty-three chromosomes, which align in twenty-three pairs in the fertilized egg. The ovum always contributes an X chromosome, and the sperm contributes either an X or a Y chromosome. It is the Y that determines the sex of the foetus.

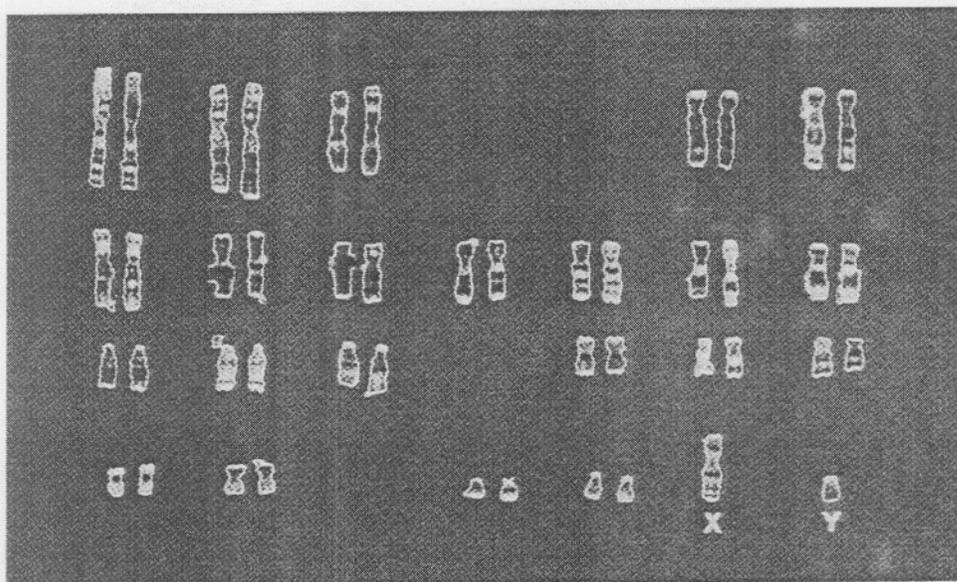
No matter how many X chromosomes are present, the foetus will be male if a Y is also present (Neethling, 1998:18).

The X chromosome is larger and contains more genetic material than the Y chromosome. The hardy, dominant X chromosome also seems to carry useful traits. Women have a greater resistance to illness and disease than men (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:306, Kelly, 1998:116-117).

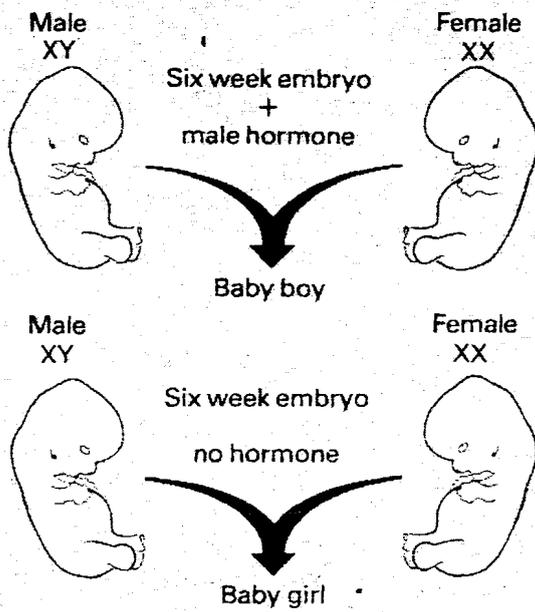
The genes, carrying the coded blueprint of our unique characteristics, make us either male or female. In every microscopic cell of our bodies, men and women are different from each other, because every fibre of our being has a different set of chromosomes within it, depending on whether we are male or female.

Studies have shown that male hormones are the crucial factor in determining the sex of a child. If a female foetus genetically XX, is exposed to male hormones, the baby is born looking like a normal male. If a male foetus, genetically XY, is deprived of male hormones, the baby is born looking like a normal female (Crooks & Baur, 1999:44).

2.7.1.2 FIGURE 6: Human Cells (Crooks & Baur, 1999:44)

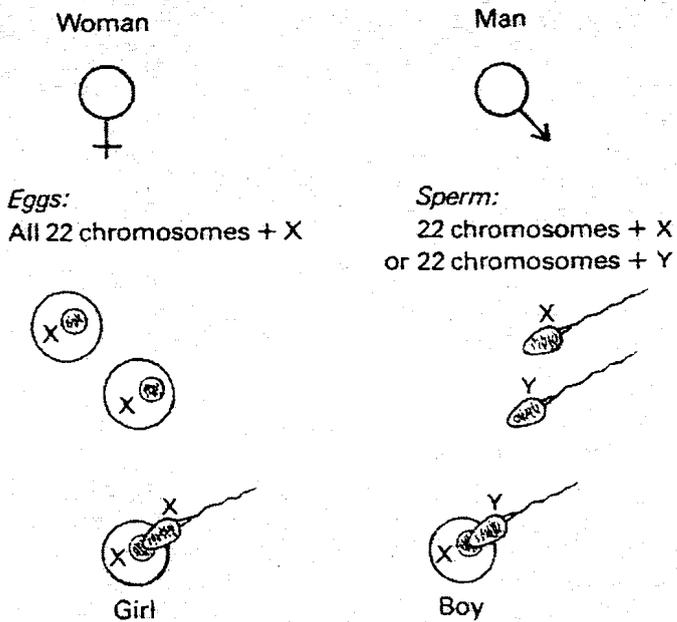


Hormonal sex determination



2.7.1.3 FIGURE 7: Hormonal Sex Determination (Moir & Jessel, 1992:23)

Normal genetics and sex determination



2.7.1.4 FIGURE 8: Normal Genetics and sex determination (Moir & Jessel, 1992:22)

2.7.1.5 Hormones and Their Interaction with Chromosomes

Chromosomes determine the sex of the foetus largely through their ability to form the testes or ovaries that produce the sex hormones. These internal sexual organs are usually formed between the sixth and tenth week in foetal development and afterward secrete an enzyme that helps synthesize appropriate hormones. Although both men and women possess some of all the sex hormones, the primary hormones for men are androgens, particularly testosterone, and for women, oestrogen and progesterone. The foetus will differentiate as a female unless the Y chromosome and a sufficient amount of androgen are present. Female foetuses produce large quantities of oestrogen in the gonads at around eight weeks (Crooks & Baur, 1999:46).

2.7.1.6. Sex Hormones and Development

Between the third and the eighth month of human foetal development, it is believed that sex hormones can enter the brain and affect areas like the hypothalamus. It is the hypothalamus that later determines the development and connections among the parts of the brain (Nevid et al. 1995:142).

It is believed that the “critical period” for humans is from the third to the eighth month of foetal development, as studies show a high concentration of hormones in the amniotic fluid of human foetuses during that time. Hormonal abnormalities may occur during this critical period.

Hormones have a dual effect on the brain. While the brain is developing in the womb, the hormones control the way the neural networks are laid out. Later on, at puberty, those hormones will revisit the brain to switch on the network they earlier created (Moir & Jessel, 1992:38).

2.7.1.7 Hormones and Behaviour

Hormones are probably more important than genes in governing sex-related behaviour. It is the massive doses of the male hormone testosterone, both during gestation and at puberty, that make a male brain different from a female brain (Moir & Jessel, 1992:45, Kelly, 1998:123-125).

The brain, it appears, is naturally inclined to be female. Unless it is bathed in testosterone at critical stages, the brain of a genetic male – someone with XY combination of chromosomes – will not develop male characteristics.

According to Anne Moir and David Jessel (1992:44), as an adult, even if he is anatomically male, a man may have a brain that remains female. In the female brain, some mental functions seem to be scattered around the hemispheres, whereas the male brain is specialized and compartmentalized. The parts of a woman's brain that handle speech and emotion are spread across both halves of the brain, whereas these capacities in a man are tucked into discreet locations. Moreover, the corpus callosum, which connects the right and left brains, is thicker and more highly developed in women. The two halves of their brains communicate better.

Although men and women do a lot of things similarly if not identically, they may be doing them with different parts of the brain. This could relate to differences in verbal and spatial skills, because they are controlled by the temporal and parietal lobes of the cortex, and these regions send their fibres through the isthmus. "If one part of a

package is different, there could be a domino effect. There must be other parts that are different as well.” (Moir & Jessel, 1992:45).

“The key: Different is different. What’s better, an apple or an orange?”

2.7.1.8 Female Hormones and Cycles

Over history, the menstrual cycle has caused strong cultural reaction. Many societies look upon the menstruating women with fear, thinking that she somehow has at this time evil or magical powers (Nevid et al., 1995:86-89).

More recently still, the personal physician of a president of the United States said that the “raging hormones” of women at this time of the month make them unfit for holding high governmental office. Culture still holds many negative ideas about the menses. Women call it “the curse,” several religions forbid husbands to have intercourse with a menstruating wife, and a whole list of symptoms is associated with the menstrual period and the days just before it begins. Among the commonly reported symptoms are water-retention, cramping, fatigue, irritability, anxiety, paranoia, and the likelihood of crying more easily.

Because the menstrual cycle is a cycle of hormone highs and lows, premenstrual symptoms are associated with the level of hormones in the body. Women have been asked to keep daily diaries of their moods or list all the symptoms they have encountered during the premenstrual days and have concluded that women have more elated, positive moods at mid-cycle, when oestrogen and progesterone are high, and depressed moods during the premenstrual days, when levels of progesterone and oestrogen fall dramatically (Nevid et al. 1995:86).

Gynaecology texts state that behavioural events affect the menstrual cycle, as in the case of stress delaying or precipitating it. Alice Rossi seems to confirm that behavioural events can affect the menstrual cycle. She found that the periods of a sexually experienced women seldom began on the weekend. In contrast, the periods

of inexperienced women began on the weekend more often than chance alone would have predicted (Nevid et al. (1995:86).

2.7.1.9. Male Hormones and Cycles

One experiment by a team of medical researchers at Stanford in 1975 examined the relationship between testosterone cycles and possible accompanying moods. Testosterone levels in twenty men were measured for sixty days, and the men filled out self-reports of moods every other day. The experiment found cycles in testosterone levels ranging from three to thirty days, for several of the men, the cycles were clustered around the twentieth- to twenty-second-day mark. The study found no correlation between hormone cycles and moods, however. Men do have cycles and moods, how much the two cycles interact and how much they are affected by other things like circadian, or time, cycles or environmental factors are still open questions. (Crooks & Baur, 1999:99).

The pattern is already taking its predetermined shape. Men, preoccupied with things, theories and power, women more concerned with people, morality and relationships.

With such different priorities, the potential for mutual misunderstanding is great; which is what makes the relationship between the sexes – subject of the next chapters – so fascinating and frustrating (according to the author).

2.8 THE BRAINS COME OF AGE

As children, the way the hormones set the minds of boys and girls apart put a certain distance between them. At adolescence, that distance becomes a chasm.

With the onset of puberty, the human mechanism is past the blueprint stage. Now the hormones take on their second role, fuelling, powering, and informing the brain and our subsequent behaviour as human beings. These are significant changes, determining divergent behaviour in males and females as well as influencing the respective skills and aptitudes of men and woman.

Before puberty, in spite of all those infant sexual differences girls and boys have the same kinds of hormones circulating at the same levels in their bodies. Once the hormone levels increase, however, the changes are dramatic. In girls, at around the age of eight the level of female hormone begins to rise. The body becomes more rounded, the breast swell, and at about the age of thirteen the menstrual cycle begins. The hormones of boys come on stream about two years later than girls, but they share with girls the psychological trauma of their physical change, as the voice wobbles down from its piping treble to a clumsy tenor, the hairline begins to recede, the testicles drop, and their sexual equipment, responding to conscious and unconscious, takes on a life of its own (Moir & Jessel, 1992:68-69).

No one denies the psychological impact of this biochemical process as we become men and women. What we can now understand, though, is that while the bodily changes alter the psyche, the biochemistry itself alters our behaviour, perceptions, emotions, and abilities. Hormones are mind chemicals. Acting on the brain, they tell the brain to change the body.

•
In the case of boys, the hormone principally involved is testosterone. It is the same substance which was responsible for organising their developing brains into a male pattern in the womb. Testosterone, an anabolic steroid, helps to build up the body, beefing up the capacity to store calcium, phosphorus and other elements vital to the repair and growth of muscle and bone. It helps to give the male teenager body ratio of 40 per cent protein to 15 per cent fat. In boys, puberty comes with a rush. The testosterone levels soar to twenty times their level. Boys develop many more red blood cells than is the case with girls, and, as the red cells carry energy-burning oxygen round the body, they can enjoy the advantage of physiological superiority in leading a more active and strenuous life (Nevid et al. 1995:144).

The principal female hormones are oestrogen and progesterone. They break down proteins and dietary fats, and redistribute the fat around the body. The girl will have a different ratio of bodily fat protein and fat – 23 per cent protein to 25 per cent fat.

The brain, has already been “pre-wired”, by the impact of the hormones which, in the womb, left “a lasting imprint on neural organisation”. That imprint means that the brain has been structured to respond to specific male or female hormones in puberty.

The hormonal flow is regulated by the hypothalamus. Briefly, it tells the pituitary gland to give instructions to open and close the valve for the sex hormones. In men, its job is to keep the hormone levels fairly constant. It operates like a thermostat, if the bloodstream is “hotting-up” with too much testosterone, the message goes out to “cool it”, and diminish the flow – called the “negative feedback”.

In women things are different. Operating on what is called “positive feedback”, the hypothalamus-pituitary command system sometimes seems to behave like a lunatic in charge of a flood barrier, when the water rises, instead of closing the gates he opens them wider. This leads to wide fluctuations in hormone concentrations in women – and sometimes great fluctuations in female behaviour (Moir & Jessel, 1992:68-86).

It is now accepted that regular changes in personality correlate with phases of the menstrual cycle, involving a swing in some women between “elevated positive moods and ‘elevated negative moods’”. Oestrogen specifically promotes the brain cells to be more active. During the first phase of the menstrual cycle, as oestrogen concentration mounts, the brain is more alert and is capable of absorbing a greater amount of information. The senses are heightened, whether they be sound, touch, taste or smell. This stage is associated with a sense of wellbeing and alertness, high feelings of self-esteem, enthusiasm, pleasure, and sexual arousal (Popenoe, 1995:285).

Progesterone, on the other hand, has an inhibitory effect. The brain becomes more sluggish, libido drops, and anxiety conspires with tiredness to produce depression. In the premenstrual state with less progesterone and oestrogen to calm the mood and feelings of well-being, behaviour can swing between hostility, and aggression.

The most obvious difference between boys and girls is male aggression, and it has an overwhelmingly biological rather than social cause. The level of the male hormone testosterone, soars during puberty, which is when the full forces of aggression come into play (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:302, Kelly, 1998:117).

The pursuit of power is overwhelming and universally a male trait. There is more to male dominance, assertion and aggression than the mere exercise of existing muscle-

power. To achieve the end of their ambition, males, if denied the resort to brute force, will use other means. Men are dominant, the argument goes, because women are less disposed to 'achieve' or 'dominate' because of the sexual role with which they are endowed: giving birth to children of itself leads to a greater emphasis on defensive, complaint, nurturative virtues. It was discovered that even those women who had no domestic ties tended to play the 'success' game with less dynamism and commitment than men (Moir & Jessel 1992:84-85).

Male hormones decline with age from about fifty, men 'mellowing with age' – they become less aggressive and assertive.

Women, however, experience a rapid and sudden decline in hormone levels around 45-50, when the menstrual cycle ends.

In old age, men and women increasingly resemble each other in behaviour, as the influence of the hormones fades away.

Anger and placidity, aggression and appeasement, sociability and individuality, dominance and compliance, obedience and assertiveness – taken together, these make up a fair amount of what we can call the personality. In each of these aspects of personality, marked measurable differences have been observed between girls and boys, men and women, which have an underlay in the wiring of the brain (Moir & Jessel 1992:86).

2.9. CONCLUSION

Recent years have brought us the means to build a new framework for understanding sex differences through two, independent and converging scientific advances. The first is the giant progress which has been made in understanding how the brain works, the second, the new discoveries about how, biologically and behaviourally, we are what we are – male or female.

Differences are stamped into males and females by the intercession of chemistry. For most of them, they are not absolute, different doses nudge our male minds towards some aspects of the female, our female minds into a degree of maleness. In all of us, the brain has been fashioned in a specific way which affects behaviour long before the influence of society's values, or the teenager's hormones, have come into play.

These writings cover issues that are central to contemporary gender sex and present a stimulating agenda for future discussion and research.

This will be followed by a section which aims to focus on the human being in the socialization process. If behaviour of men and women was mostly determined by biology and brain difference, then it is unlikely that it could change as dramatically as it has over the past decades. This observation leads most social scientists to believe that socialization plays as big a part in gender-role differences.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIALIZATION

3. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the statement was made that the right brain / left brain distinction and biological factors may shed some light on personal relationships between the sexes and the way they understand and communicate with each other.

Many theorists remain convinced to link gender differences to disparities in the way males and females are socialized (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:307).

The process of socialization is intimately connected with human biology, human beings remain in “infancy”, they are totally dependent on others for 15 to 25 percent of their total life span. Yet, it is the extended period of dependency that provides the time needed for learning cultural meanings and social skills, while creating lifelong social and emotional ties to others and to society as a whole. Socialization would not be necessary if human beings had strong *instincts*, or fixed, biologically inherited behaviour patterns.

Such instincts are absent in human beings and culture takes their place. Human beings must learn cultural patterns in order to survive and develop. This is the purpose of the process of socialization (Popenoe, 1995:114).

This chapter provides an exploration and some insight into the puzzle which is called the process of learning roles, and expectations in society, the positive self-development through social contact, and behavioural differences between the sexes. Parent’s attitudes towards gender roles and the way they relate and communicate with each other, influence many aspects of their children’s lives.

3.1 WHAT IS SOCIALIZATION?

Socialization is essential for the survival of and development of the individual but

also for the survival and effective operation of society. Socialization begins when we are helpless infants, totally dependant upon others for food and protection as well as physical and emotional contact (Curran, 1977:37).

Socialization includes a variety of aspects; including how children come to learn what it means to be “good” whether there is a God, what “democracy” means, and what friends are. One experience we all have in common is **gender socialization**, the process of learning the roles and expectations associated with our sex group. At a personal level, different expectations are learnt regarding the “proper” behaviour of men and women in dating, courtship, marriage, and child rearing (Stockard, 1997:72-82).

Socialization occurs through role modelling, instruction, conditioning and innovation. In practice, these modes are usually blended (Wallace & Wallace, 1989:101)

Throughout this chapter we will focus on this aspect of how we develop in childhood and how socialization continues throughout our lives and how it may reflect both on our social environment, the social structure in which we live and our social actions.

•
Socialization has diverse and important consequences for individuals and for society. It provides the individual with social identity and makes possible the creation of a social “self“, becoming the focal point.

3.2 SOCIALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT

3.2.1 Becoming Part of The Social World

Humans are totally dependant on others at birth and remain so for many years as they learn about their social world. At the same time, all infants have certain biological capabilities that enable them to develop socially. At birth they appear to be somehow “ready” to respond to other people, to make eye contact, and to imitate facial and hand movements. Babies’ development cannot be speeded up by their parents. The experience that children have and the nature of their interactions with others depend a lot on their age and maturation or developmental level (Stockard, 1997:75).

All of us have certain personality traits that probably are related to our neurological makeup, but the ways in which we deal with and present these characteristics to others are very much influenced by the experiences we have as we grow up - by our socialization process (Macionis, 1995:141).

Gender socialization provides a good illustration of the interaction of biological and environmental influences. Males and females obviously differ in their biological characteristics, with different sex organs at birth and different body shapes, hormonal secretions, hair patterns, and voice characteristics in adulthood. They also differ in their growth patterns and susceptibility to a wide variety of physical conditions. In order to develop normally, children need to be taught the culture of their society - to be socialized into the world of social relations and symbols that are the foundation of the human experience (Tischler, 1996:109).

As an individual's life situation changes, his or her role changes. The changes say from wife to mother to working woman, create a need in each instance for socialization in new roles to take place.

Socialization in adulthood is more concerned with learning overt norms and behaviours than is the socialization of childhood, which is concerned primarily with regulating antisocial behaviour (Wallace & Wallace, 1989:83).

3.3 UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS

Socialization is a highly complex process. The following sections highlight the work of some pioneers in the field of human development who made important contributions to our understanding.

3.3.1 Sigmund Freud: The Elements of Personality

Sigmund Freud lived in Vienna at a time when most Europeans thought human behaviour was biologically fixed. Many aspects of this work bear directly on

understanding socialization.

Basic Human Needs

Freud contended that biology plays an important part in personality development. For Freud, what is instinctive comprises of is two general human needs or drives. First, he claimed, humans must have a basic need for bonding, which he described as the life instinct. Second, opposing this need, he asserted that people also have an aggressive drive, which he called the death instinct. Freud postulated that these opposing forces generate tension in the personality. It is this interplay of forces – (much of which is unconscious) that forms the foundation of the human drama (Macionis, 1995:129).

Freud's Model of Personality

Freud incorporated both basic drives and the influence of society into a broader model of personality with three parts: Id, ego, and superego. The **id** represents *the human being's basic drives*, which are unconscious and demand immediate satisfaction. Rooted in our biology, the id is present at birth, making newborn a bundle of needs that demands attention, touching, and food. But society opposes such a self-centred orientation, so the id's desires inevitably encounter resistance. This cultural opposition suggests why one of the first words a child learns is “no” (Tischler, 1996:114).

To avoid frustration, the child learns to approach the world realistically. This accomplishment forms the second component of the personality, the **ego** which is a *person's conscious efforts to balance innate pleasure-seeking drives with the demands of society*. The ego arises as we gain awareness of our distinct existence; it develops as we face up to the fact that we cannot have everything that we want (Popenoe, 1995:120-121).

Finally, the human personality develops the **superego** which is *the presence of culture within the individual*. In this overlay of personality, we can see *why* we cannot have

everything we want. The superego consists of the internalized values and norms of our culture and takes the form of conscience. First expressed as the recognition of parental control, the superego eventually matures as the child learns that parental control is itself a reflection of something broader: the moral demands of the larger culture.

A child first encounters the world as a bewildering array of physical sensations and need satisfactions. With gradual development of the superego, however, the child's comprehension extends beyond pleasure and pain to the moral concepts of right and wrong. Initially a child can feel good only in the physical sense. Later a child feels good for behaving in culturally appropriate ways and feels bad (the experience of guilt) for failing to do so (Light & Keller & Calhoun, 1989:117).

In a well-adjusted personality, the ego successfully manages the opposing of the id and the superego. If conflicts are not successfully resolved, personality disorders result. Freud held childhood to be the critical period in the formation of an individual's personality because conflict initiated during this early stage of life is *an unconscious source of later personality problems*.

According to Freud, people must be coerced into looking beyond themselves. Often the competing demands are resolved through compromise, so that basic needs are redirected into socially approved forms. This process, which Freud named *sublimation*, transforms fundamentally selfish drives into socially acceptable activities. Sexual urges, for example, may lead to marriage, and aggression can be released through sports. People internalize social norms and childhood experiences have lasting importance throughout the process of socialization (Macionis, 1995:130).

3.3.2 Jean Piaget: Cognitive Development

Much of his work centred on human *cognition* - how people think and understand. Piaget identified four stages of cognitive development, each a product of biological maturation and increasing social experience. Piaget asserted that each stage of development, from infancy through adolescence, a certain type of mental operation

marks all of the child's activities and gives a structure to the child's knowledge. He believed that although some children may go through the stages faster than others, all children must go through all the stages in the same sequence (Curran, 1977:40):

Learning is an *active process*, according to Piaget. In order to learn, children must take knowledge into themselves and process it. Piaget believed that the development of children's mental processes proceeds through the following stages (Popenoe, 1995:122).

3.3.2.1 The Sensorimotor Stage

Piaget noted that the first step in human development is the **sensorimotor stage**, *the level of human development in which individuals experience the world only through sensory contact*. This stage corresponds roughly to the first two years of life; the infant explores the world by touching, looking, sucking, and listening.

Children gain skills at imitating the actions or sounds of others during the sensorimotor stage, but they have no comprehension of symbols. Very young children reason only in the limited sense of direct physical experience (Macionis, 1995:130 and Stockard, 1997:80).

3.3.2.2 The Preoperational Stage

The second plateau in Piaget's account of development is the **preoperational stage**, *the level of human development in which individuals first use language and other symbols*. At about age two, children begin to engage the world mentally, thinking about things they cannot see directly. As they begin to attach meaning to the world, they learn to distinguish between ideas and objective reality. At this age, children realize that their dreams are not real, and they appreciate the element of fantasy in fairy tales. During this preoperational stage, children still have a very egocentric view of the world. They perceive the world only from their own vantage point and have yet to learn that a situation may appear different to another person (Stockard,1997:80).

3.3.2.3 The Concrete Operational Stage

According to Piaget's model, the **concrete operational stages**, *the level of development at which individuals first perceive causal connections in their surroundings*. At this point, typically between seven and eleven, children begin to understand how and why things happen, which yields far greater ability to manipulate their environment.

Boys and girls at this level can attach more than one symbol to a particular event or object. A final development during the concrete operational stage is transcending earlier egocentrism so that children can imagine themselves in the position of another person (Macionis, 1995:130).

3.3.2.3 The Formal Operational Stage

The fourth level in Piaget's model is the **formal operational stage**, *the level of human development at which individuals use highly abstract thought to imagine alternatives to reality*. By about the age of twelve, children begin to reason using abstract qualities rather than thinking only of concrete situations. At this point, a child has gained the marvellous human quality of imagination, which frees them from the immediate bounds of their lives.

If Freud envisioned humanity torn by the opposing forces of biology and society, Piaget believed the human mind to be active and creative, so that children soon learn to shape their social world. Piaget's contribution to understanding socialization is showing that this capacity unfolds gradually as the result of biological maturation and the gaining of social experience (Popenoe, 1995:122).

They become capable of understanding hypothetical situations and abstract lines of reasoning (Stockard, 1997:81).

In global perspective, there is some question as to whether people in every culture progress through Piaget's stages and do so in the same time frame. Living in a society

that changes very slowly is likely to inhibit the ability to imagine alternatives to reality.

Even in our society, as many as 30 percent of thirty-year-olds apparently do not reach the formal operational stage at all (Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971:1065).

This finding again underscores the importance of social experience in the development of personality. Regardless of biological maturity, people who are not exposed to highly creative and imaginative thinking are less likely to develop this capacity in themselves.

3.3.3 Lawrence Kohlberg: Moral Development

Kohlberg has extended Piaget's work to the issue of moral reasoning, that is, the ways in which individuals come to judge situations as right or wrong. Kohlberg argues that moral development occurs in stages (Macionis, 1995:131).

Young children who experience the world in terms of pain and pleasure (Piaget's sensorimotor stage) are at the *preconventional* level of moral development. At this early stage, in other words, "rightness" amounts to "what serves my needs" or "what feels good to me."

Kohlberg suggested that the most important element in children's developing gender roles is their belief that they are male or female and that their sex cannot change, they then try to figure out what kinds of behaviours and actions are appropriate to their own sex. Because of the relative simplicity of their thought processes, however, some of these behaviours are exaggerated far beyond what really exists in the adult world (Stockard, 1997:81).

The *conventional* level of moral development, Kohlberg's second stage, begins to appear among teenagers (corresponding to Piaget's last, formal operational stage). At this point, young people are less selfcentered in their moral reasoning, defining right and wrong in terms of what pleases parents and what is consistent with broader

cultural norms. Individuals at this stage also try to assess intention as well as simply observing what others do in reaching moral judgments.

A final stage of moral development, the *postconventional* level, moves individuals beyond the specific norms of their society to ponder more abstract ethical principles. At this level, people can philosophically reflect on the meaning of liberty, freedom, or justice, individuals are now capable of actively criticizing their own society and of arguing, for instance, that which is traditional or legal may still not be right (Macionis, 1995:132).

The greatest problem with Kohlber's research, is that his subjects were only boys, generalizing the results of his male subjects to all of humanity (Wallace & Wallace, 1989:83).

3.3.4 Carol Gilligan: The Gender Factor

Gilligan, set out systematically to compare the moral development of females and males. Her conclusion is that females and males tend to have a different process of moral reasoning. Males, she contends, have *justice perspective*, relying on formal rules or appealing to abstract principles to reach judgments about right and wrong.

Worth noting is the fact that rule-based male reasoning, according to Kohlberg's analysis, is morally superior to person-based female thinking. Gilligan's point is that we must be careful not to set up male standards as the norms by which we evaluate everyone. She reminds us that the impersonal application of rules has long dominated men's lives in the workplace. Concern for attachments, by contrast, has been relevant to women's lives as wives, mothers, and caregivers (Macionis, 1995:132).

3.3.5 George Herbert Mead: The Social Self

Mead's central concept is the **self**, *a dimension of personality composed of an individual's self-awareness and self-image*. The self is inseparable from society, a connection explained in a series of steps (Macionis, 1995:133).

First Mead asserted, *self emerges from social experience*. The self is not part of the body, and it does not exist at birth. Mead rejected the position that personality is guided by biological drives (as asserted by Freud) or biological maturation (as Piaget claimed). For Mead, self develops *only* through social experience.

Social Experience is the exchange of symbols. Using words, a smile, people create meaning, which is a distinctively human experience.

To understand someone's intention, you must imagine the situation from that person's point of view. Using symbols, we can imaginatively place ourselves in another person's shoes and thus see ourselves as that person does. This capacity allows us to anticipate how others will respond to us even before we act. Social interaction, then, involves seeing ourselves as others see us - a process that Mead termed *taking the role of the other* (Popenoe, 1995:119).

3.3.5.1 Developing a Notion of the Self

- (a) **Aspects of the self** - We initiate behaviours (in our mind as “I” and “me” in dialogue), as we think about these behaviours and we think about their possible actions, these thoughts then lead us to perhaps change these actions or to continue with them. As we talk to ourselves we mentally assume the role of other people - this is called **reflexive behaviour** (Curran, 1977:40).

Mead stressed that even thinking is social experience. Our thoughts are partly creative (representing the I), but in thought we also become objects to ourselves (representing the me) as we imagine how others will respond to our ideas (Macionis, 1995:135-136 and Wallace & Wallace, 1989:81).

Children only gradually develop the ability to engage in reflexive behaviour.

First they go into the play stage, where they “play at”, or assume various roles one at a time. They may copy their parents playing roles (Stockard, 1997:84).

As children grow older, they enter the **game stage**, and begin to understand how using their parents for role models. More generally you “play the game” all the time, as you consider what others might be thinking as you plan your own behaviours. You only develop the ability to do this when you get older and more able to understand the complexities of both you and other’s roles. As children interact more they develop a notion of the **generalized other**, a conception of the expectations and norms that all people have, not just the individuals with whom they interact. This more generalized view is the basis of the “me” (Macionis, 1995:136).

When norms that are also held by others, are accepted, the process of **internalisation** has taken place - when you engage in behaviour without fearing punishment or expecting rewards for doing so. Moreover, these standards become an aspect of what we think of as “the self” (Stockard, 1997:84).

3.3.5.2 Social Roles and Self-Identity

From our interactions with others and our internal conversations with ourselves, we gradually develop a **self-identity**, a set of categories we use to define ourselves. We may think our identity is private and unique but our views of ourselves reflect our relationships to other people. Our self-identity reflects our role relationships with other people. A way to look at **self-concept** is to study the thoughts and feelings that individuals have about themselves. The way to test that is so ask “Who Am I?” - people will identify three different categories - *role identities, personal qualities, and self evaluations* (Popenoe, 1995:119).

As we have seen, one of the first elements of children’s developing sense of self is their view of themselves as either male or female. This aspect of the self is referred to as **gender identity**. Gender identity apparently develops by the time that children begin to talk. As children acquire a gender identity, they also

develop a **gender schema**, a cognitive framework that they use to organize information around them as relevant to one sex or the other - and that helps them understand the world in gender-typed ways (Stockard, 1997:85 & Tischler, 1996:109).

The self is not the end of socialization. Mead claimed that socialization continues as long as we have social experience, so that changing circumstances can reshape who we are. The self may change, for example, with divorce, disability, or unexpected wealth. Mead also maintained that we direct our own lives, acting back on society and thereby playing a large part in our own socialization (Macionis, 1993:136).

3.3.6 Erik Erikson: Identity crises

According to Erikson each stage of development is defined by an “identity crises”. A stable self-identity results from the positive resolution of these identity crises, which are widely thought to encapsulate many of the basic concerns of life in modern societies. A summary of Erikson’s six identity crises follows:

3.3.6.1 Trust versus Mistrust (infancy)

The infant whose needs are adequately met develops trust, a sense that the world is a safe place. If care is not consistent or adequate, or if the infant feels rejected, a basic mistrust is fostered that will be carried through to later stages of development. Trust can change into mistrust, and vice versa, as one moves through life (Popenoe, 1995:121).

3.3.6.2 Autonomy versus Doubt

Autonomy (sense of independence) emerges during the second stage, as a result of the child's developing motor and mental skills. If parents recognize their young children's needs to do what they are capable of doing – at their own pace, children develop a sense that they are able to control their impulses, themselves, and their surroundings. When parents are impatient and do for children what the children could do for themselves, they reinforce this sense of doubt. Children who leave this stage feeling more shame and doubt than autonomy will have trouble achieving autonomy in adolescence and childhood (Popenoe, 1995:122).

3.3.6.3 Initiative versus Guilt (preschool years)

By the time they enter this stage, children can control their bodies. They now begin new motor activities, as well as language and fantasy activities. If children are made to feel that their actions are bad, their questions a nuisance, and their play silly, they may develop a strong and lasting sense of guilt (Popenoe, 1995:121).

3.3.6.4 Industry versus Inferiority (school age)

This stage encompasses the elementary school years. During this period, children want to know how things are made, how they work, and what they do. When adults encourage children in their efforts, to make, do, or build practical things, allow them to finish their projects, and praise them for the results, the children's sense of industry is enhanced. But parents fail to do so, encourage a sense of inferiority (Popenoe, 1995:121).

3.3.6.5 Identity versus Role Confusion (adolescence)

When children move into adolescence, their bodies change. Adolescents develop new ways of looking at and thinking about the world. Childhood roles such as daughter, son, friends, and student are joined by new ones: boyfriend, girlfriend, and many more.

These new roles must somehow be smoothly combined with the old to promote a strong self-identity. Young people who have mastered the earlier stages and reach adolescence with a strong sense of trust, autonomy, initiative, and industry have a better chance of gaining a strong sense of self-identity and avoiding feelings of role confusion than those who have not (Wallace & Wallace, 1989:83).

3.3.6.6 Intimacy versus Isolation (young adulthood)

This stage includes courtship and early family life. When Erikson spoke of intimacy, he meant the ability to share with and care about another person without fear of losing one's sense of self-identity. If a person cannot be intimate, he or she will live with a sense of isolation. The ability to be intimate depends greatly on the strength of one's self-identity (Popenoe, 1995:121).

Table 3.3.6.7

A Comparison of Four Developmental Theories

Piaget's Intellectual Stages	Erikson's Personality stages	Kohlberg's Moral (all male subjects)	Gilligan's Moral stage
Age 1 (1) Sensory-motor (Learning that our body is separate	(1) Basic trust versus mistrust (develop ability to trust	(1) Moral decisions based on fear of punishment	(1) Moral deci- sions based on fear of

	from the environ- ment)	that others are sensitive to our needs)		punishment
2		(2) Autonomy versus shame and doubt (develop ability to make choices for ourselves).		
3			(2) The idea of reward is taken into account	(2)The idea of re- wards is ta- ken into ac- count
4	(2) Preoperational (learning to communicate through symbols)	(3) Initiative versus guilt (develop ability to initiate activities	(3) Immediate punishment and rewards not necessary	(3) Immediate punishment and rewards not necessary
7	(3) Concrete opera- tions (learn to think in physi- cal terms).	(4) Industry versus inferiority (de- velop the ability To reason and play by rules).	(4) Strict adherence to rules	(4) Strict adhe- rence to rules
12		(5) Identity versus role confusion (develop the abi- lity to combine our knowledge of ourselves into a coherent sense of	(5) Recognition that conventional rules may come into con- flict with a higher sense of right and wrong (not ac- hieved by all).	(5) Recognition that conven- tional rules may come into conflict with a higher Sense of right and wrong
16	(4) Formal operations (learn to manipula- te abstract systems of thoughts such as			

math and logic)

18	(6) Intimacy versus isolation (develop ability to risk developing an intimate relationship)	(6) Universal principles of justice, human rights, and human dignity guide decisions (not achieved by all)	(6) The principle of protecting relationships and people (the care approach) guides decisions of women whereas the principle of guides decisions of men
25	(7) Generativity versus stagnation (develop the ability to become concerned with the outside world).		
65	(8) Ego integrity versus despair (develop the ability to be satisfied with our lives)		

(Wallace & Wallace, 1989:82).

Kohlberg's six-stage model suggests that people cannot skip a stage, they progress from stage to stage, and cannot understand a higher level of thinking if they are more than one stage away from it.

Piaget, theory suggests that people pass through four major intellectual stages, from the first two years of life to adolescence. Piaget believes that contact is necessary for advancing through the stages, and that the content varies from culture to culture.

Gilligan, questioned his assumption because his research was done entirely on males and states that women may have different criteria by which they make moral decisions. Gilligan suggests that women define moral problems as problems in protecting relationships and people, what she terms the "care approach". In contrast, men are taught to compete with one another an "get ahead" in the world, which causes

them to value an individual's rights – the “justice approach”.

Gilligan agrees that women more often try to find a compromise position in Kohlberg's stated moral dilemmas. These developmental theories are compared in Table 3.3.6.7 (Popenoe, 1995:121).

3.3.7 Developmental theories of Socialization

3.3.7.1 Cognitive Development Theory

Kohlberg's theory proposes that gender identity and sex-role behaviour are acquired in stages.

The stages in cognitive development theory roughly correspond to the age of the child, although children differ in their progress through each stage. From about birth to three, the child differentiates the sexes according to external cues or differences in observed behaviour like cooking or mowing the lawn (Persell, 1990:101).

At about three, the child begins to label himself or herself as a particular sex. In keeping with a strong value of self, this is seen as good. Thus, at this stage one's sex and its activities are preferred because the self is valued.

In the period from about four to six, children acquire the knowledge that gender cannot be changed. They achieve this knowledge at about the same time that they learn certain facts about the constancy of objects.

Stereotypes and behaviour around the stereotypes become very important at this stage. Children want to imitate adults who are like themselves and also who are seen as being powerful and competent. After about eight, children stop imitating adults in general and then selectively only model themselves after skills or other things they see as relative to their own competence (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:104).

At a later stage in the brain's development for both boys and girls, the logical or cognitive centres begin to develop. At this stage of development, billions of neuroconnectors are made to the cognitive or thinking parts of the brain. Again we see this development reflected in common male and female tendencies.

When a woman is upset, her first tendency is to talk about it, then as she continues to talk, her cognitive abilities set in and she can think about what she is saying and feeling and this *sort it out*. She starts out in the feeling part of the brain, then she travels to the communication part, and from there she goes to the thinking portion. This is her most natural route because this is the order in which her skills developed. Gradually, over time, she develops the ability to feel, talk, and think at the same time.

For a man, his process of dealing with feelings is different because his skills developed in another order. First his feeling centre develops, next his action centre, and then his thinking. When he is upset, his first tendency is to do something about it. Action leads him to clearer thinking. Gradually, over time, he develops the ability to feel, act, and think at the same time (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:104).

Because of these very significant differences in the way our brains develop, men and women behave and communicate very differently. Men use communication primarily as another tool to express their thinking in order to achieve some goal or solve a problem. Women use communication for this reason as well, but they also depend on communication as a way to connect with their feelings and as a way to clarify their thinking. Communication has a much greater significance for a woman (Gray (a), 1992:206-244, Kelly, 1998, 133).

In similar way, action is more significant to men. Action is like a pump that activates the thinking part of a man's brain. Like men, women use action as a way to solve problems, but for men it is much more. Action is the most significant way for a man to find mental clarity and to express his feelings for someone (Gray (a), 1992:206-244).

3.3.7.2 Social Learning Theory

In this theory, imitation and reward and punishment for correct and incorrect behaviour play very important roles. The young child is told that he is a boy or she is a girl and is treated in ways parents think are appropriate for dealing with that

particular gender. A father may come home from work and say “How’s my big boy today?” and toss the infant son into the air. Conversely, he may come home and say, “how’s my sweet little girl?” to his infant daughter while tickling her under the chin. The child thus usually learns to think of himself or herself as a boy or a girl, he or she identifies others who are similarly called boys and girls and notes how they are alike (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:102).

The young child learns the behaviour of both sexes by such observation but is much more likely to imitate the behaviour of his or her own sex. Thus, a little girl may be more likely to dress up in her mother’s high heels in imitation of her mother (in whom she sees similarity), but she could, if pushed, imitate her father puffing on a cigar. The child not only imitates because the behaviour is associated with the appropriate sex, but because he or she is reinforced or rewarded for sex-appropriate behaviour. Thus, the little girl who dresses up in mother’s high heels may be told that she is “cute and quite a little female”, but the little boy who tries the same thing is not likely to get approval. He may even be told directly that “boys don’t do that and go outside and play (Weiten & Lloyd< 1994:313-316, Kelly, 1998:134).

By reaction to their own behaviour, by seeing how others are treated, and by imitation of the behaviour of other models, children learn sexually appropriate behaviour. They learn to generalize this behaviour to other situations as well. They do not have to experience the behaviour personally to know whether it is appropriate or not for their own sex: the young boy knows that for a man to dress in women’s clothes and walk down the street is not appropriate behaviour, even though women may wear the equivalent of men’s clothes in public (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:102).

Children learn what they live. Do childhood attachments, however, serve as models for intimate relationships in adulthood?

Proponents of continuity argue that a person’s emotional development during childhood serves as a template which both structures and increasingly restricts future affective functioning. Are individuals who are successfully married in long-term

relationships the products of happy homes whose current adult functioning is the repetition of earlier family of origin experiences? (Jo-Brothers, 1992:13).

*

*If happily married spouses were raised in environments which were less than optimal where and how did they learn to form mutually satisfying attachments?
Parents are the primary models for young children and the primary reinforcers of sexual appropriate behaviour.*

Attitudes also influence the kind of sexual experiences people find satisfying and the conditions that elicit an interest in having sex. Some of the strongest differences in sexual attitudes are associated with gender. Men are more likely than women to enjoy sex without intimacy, women prefer sexual activities to be part of a psychologically intimate relationship (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:89-104).

•
Men and women differ in the sexual roles with which they are comfortable. Consistent with traditional gender stereotypes, men are more likely than women to be comfortable in a proactive role, where they exercise control by making the decision to initiate sexual activity.

Women are more likely to be comfortable in a reactive role, where they exercise control by accepting or refusing another's sexual initiative (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:106).

3.4 EARLY SOCIALIZATION INTO SEX ROLES

The infant years are the crucial years for development, when patterns of personality and behaviour are established. These early years are also critical in establishing beliefs about appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour (Wallace & Wallace, 1989:83).

Learning sex-role norms and behaviour is a complex process. The infant, toddler, and young child is socialized into, or taught, appropriate sex-role beliefs and action in many ways. The combined force of beliefs and behaviour is very strong. The young child has no previous knowledge to bring to bear in evaluating what he or she hears and sees. The tendency, therefore, is to accept the values that are set forth.

Children *are* socialized into male and female roles during this period (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:89).

According to the author it is crucial to be aware of what values a child is learning. How and why do parents consciously or unconsciously influence the sex-role beliefs and behaviour that their children develop?

Socialization begins the moment parents first hold their babies. This human contact is the first step in a long process through which babies learn to see themselves as distinct individuals, to build social relationships, to develop moral concepts, to learn language, and much more. During the first few months of their children's lives, parents try to satisfy the most basic biological needs of their children. But the very actions that are required to meet these biological needs respond to the infant's emotional needs as well (Popenoe, 1995:116).

When babies are nursed or held against their parent's body while being bottle-fed, they receive three necessities of life: warmth, food and human contact.

According to the author, although less tangible than warmth and food, **human contact** is no less important for development and even survival. Both bodily contact and interaction with others is a basic need for human beings. **It is the deprivation of contact that causes depression, a greater susceptibility to developing diseases and the inability of learning to give and receive.**

3.4.1 Emotional Development

By about 3 months of age, infants can recognize specific human faces, such as those of their parents. In order to develop into emotional healthy adults, at this stage babies must begin to send and receive strong emotional messages. At first, body and facial

movements send these messages nonverbally.

Newborns seem to experience only four emotions: pleasure, surprise, disgust, and distress. The capacity for joy makes its appearance after 6 to 8 weeks, anger after 3 to 4 months, sadness and fear after 8 to 9 months.

At 12 to 18 months, children are sufficiently aware of the outside world to feel affection for their mothers or for anyone who plays a maternal role. Shame, pride, and guilt enter the child's behavioural "repertoire" at 18 months, 2 years, and 3 to 4 years from birth, respectively. Not until children reach 5 or 6 years of age do they begin to display what can be thought of as truly social emotions, such as insecurity, humility, confidence, and envy. The more complex emotions, such as romantic passion do not arise until adolescence (Popenoe, 1995:117).

3.4.2 The Child's Own Body Image

As children grow older, they become further socialized into the patterns of response and behaviour considered appropriate to their gender. As the child's self-awareness increases, he or she begins to respond to the influences of other people and has a distinct self-concept that includes a sense of being a girl or a boy. The child gradually becomes aware of its sexual body, its male or female sex organs, and identifies them as part of her or his sexual nature (Popenoe, 1995:118, Kelly, 1998:125).

3.4.3 Parents and Children

Parents are the earliest and probably the major influence on the sex-role socialization of young children. The emotional content of their interaction with their children gives their input great significance (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:89).

3.4.5 Children's Stimulation of Parents

Parents may treat their children differently because boys and girls seem to stimulate their parents differently. Little girls seem to stimulate their parents to talk more to

them because they use the small muscles around their mouths more often. Parents may think the baby is smiling and thus vocalize more to her. Conversely, boys may stimulate their parents to pay more attention to them because of their somewhat higher activity level. Some evidence indicates that male infants tend to sleep less and are more irritable than female infants, thus they are held and soothed more (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:89).

3.4.6 Parent's Expectations of Children

Another reason that parents may react differently to boys and girls is because they have different expectations for the sexes. Parents describe boys as rough at play, noisy, able to defend themselves, physically active, competitive, and enjoying mechanical things. Girls are described as more likely to be helpful around the house, neat, clean, quiet, reserved, sensitive to the feelings of others, well mannered, and easily upset and frightened (Light & Keller & Calhoun, 1989:338).

There seems to be some difference in the sex stereotyping done by fathers and mothers. Richmond-Abbott (1983:90), found that fathers stereotyped more than mothers in all cases. Fathers stereotyped more than mothers in all cases. In addition, the fathers of boys stereotyped the most, and the mothers of both boys and girls were more traditional than mothers of only girls. In general, parents seemed to specify more traditional traits for their sons than for their daughters.

3.4.7 Parent's Treatment of Boys and Girls

In general, fathers are reported to roughhouse with boys and to be more gentle with girls. Parents also openly encourage sex-stereotyped behaviour in their children. According to Weiten & Lloyd (1994:309), as infants become toddlers, parental interaction with them continues to be sex differentiated. Both parents sometimes emphasized achievement for boys and urged them to control their emotions. Both parents characterized their relationship to their daughters as having more warmth and

physical closeness. They believed the daughters to be more truthful, and they showed a reluctance to punish them. They discouraged rough-and-tumble play for girls and doll play for boys. They were more likely to reward girls for dependant behaviour, although girls had more freedom to do cross-sex things. Parents also tend to let girls be more dependant, and boys more independent.

Boys are specifically told by their fathers that “big boys don’t cry”, and many fathers refrain from hugs and intimate physical contact with their sons as they get older.

Fathers are particularly likely to discourage feminine behaviour in their boys. Fathers obviously like the feminine-typed behaviour in their girls and reinforce their daughters for it (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:309).

As children get older, parents may also attempt to teach actual sex-appropriate skills. A father may throw a ball with his son, and a mother may teach her daughter how to sew or to bake cookies. While some cross-sex behaviour may be taught-for example, the boy to cook or the girl to fish-it is unlikely that it is stressed unless the father is looking for a substitute son in his daughter or the mother for a substitute daughter in her son (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:91).

3.4.8 Parents as Models for Children

Children learn from their parents by seeing what their parents do. Nothing may be said directly, but children pick up many important messages by watching. If the mother is the one to always do the cooking, the implication is that this is women’s work. If the father is always the one to climb on the roof to clean the leaves out of the gutters, children soon learn that this is a man’s job. It is significant that in households where the mother works outside the home, the children have less stereotyped sex-role perceptions. This modelling of sex-role stereotypes by parents can be very subtle (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:93).

The author can think of one home where both father and mother worked outside the home and shared the housework, but a daughter had picked up the idea that men were

better drivers because the father always drove the car if the couple went out in the evening.

Richmond-Abbott (1983:93) stipulates that, “ we see that parents may engage in actions that, for a number of reasons, influence their children’s sex roles. Parents may be stimulated by the boy or girl baby to behave in a specific way, they may have expectations of boys and girls that cause differential treatment, they may consciously or unconsciously attempt to teach a child appropriate sex-role behaviour, or they may model sex-role behaviour for the child to imitate”. **Any kind of parental action is a strong influence.** It is combined with the other influences of childhood to make this a crucial period in forming sex roles.

All these physical, emotional, social, and cognitive accomplishments prepare the child to move on to the next stage: Adolescence.

3.4.9 Adolescence

Socialization does not end at a particular age, it continues throughout life. As we mature, we take on new statuses and roles (Macionis, 1995:142).

Adolescence is a sensitive time. Bodies and minds are changing dramatically, and in conjunction with this the adolescent needs to develop new skills and roles prescribed by society, in other words there is a lot to be learnt in order to adapt.

More so with children, adolescents can adopt the viewpoints of others and carefully examine their own personalities. Their worldviews, however, are still highly subjective - that is, based on their own immediate experiences and feelings. They frequently become overly concerned that others are judging their behaviour. They tend to fluctuate between egotism (constant, excessive reference to oneself in speaking or writing) on the one hand and low self-esteem on the other (Popenoe, 1995:130).

Adolescence is the time when people develop the ability to think abstractly. It is also the time when most people develop a sense of humour. Apparently, as the power to understand increases, so does the ability to appreciate humour.

Much adolescent socialization takes the form of **anticipatory socialization:** a

process of social learning that is directed toward playing future roles. While anticipatory socialization spans the entire life cycle, it is especially visible in adolescence as teenagers “rehearse” their future roles of spouses (by dating), parents (by baby-sitting), and employees (by working part-time jobs) (Macionis, 1995:142).

Most adolescents are still financially dependant on their families at a time when they are growing more independent in other ways. This can cause a powerful and troublesome conflict of feelings. Because of the importance of a college education in the job market, many young people remain in the pre adult stage until their mid 20’s (Macionis, 1995:142).

If males are to function successfully in designated adult roles, they must achieve a sense of identity, become independent of their family, and decide upon an occupation. These developmental tasks are usually achieved during adolescence and young adulthood. For most boys, the question of “what to be” begins with work and the job, and he is likely to define himself and to be identified by occupation.

Adolescent girls are pressured to give up so called masculine characteristics and behaviour that were acceptable in childhood, especially those involving autonomy and achievement in “masculine” areas. They are encouraged to focus on social skills instead.

It can also delay the development of an independent sense of identity. Traditional female norms dictate that a woman should build her identity around her roles as wife and mother rather than a career, as men are expected to do. The girl cannot take the initiative in realizing these roles she must be chosen as a mate, not do the choosing (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:341-346).

Hence gender-role expectations may delay the development of an independent sense of self (identity achievement) until adult roles are assumed.

The culturally created incompatibilities between femininity and achievement create psychological conflicts for adolescent girls and adult women (Popenoe, 1994:130).

3.4.10 Adulthood

By the time adulthood is reached, what is sometimes called **primary socialization** - the basic preparation for the various roles of adult life that takes place during the early years - has been completed. People who have reached adulthood normally have developed images of the self, both real and ideal, some commitment to the norms and values of the society, a certain degree of self-control, and a willingness to subordinate some personal desires to society's rules. But adults' personalities have not become totally fixed. Indeed there is a growing body of evidence that personalities continue to grow and change throughout adulthood. Many new social roles (such as husband, wife, father, and mother) must be learned in adulthood. For these reasons, socialization continues throughout life (Macionis, 1995:144).

Adult socialization differs from childhood socialization in several major respects. Adults are more motivated than children and are able to choose roles of their own free will. They may, if they want, change religions or marital status or jobs, or they may return to school. Adult socialization also involves the redefinition or re-creation of a current role when the content of the role changes. Rather than "role taking", the adult becomes involved in "role making". A good example of a change in role content is the new definition of the role of wife. In the past, wives were expected to care for their homes and families, to help their husbands find peace and contentment, and to undertake few, if any, duties outside the home. This role is now under heavy criticism, and a major restructuring of the wife's role is well underway (Refer, 5.5.2, page 138).

Each time a person enters a social network, he/she holds a **social status**, a term to describe the positions that we hold within the social structure. Attached to every social status are **social roles**, or expectations, obligations, and norms that are associated with a particular position in a social network. A social status is a position that you occupy; a social role is the behaviours associated with a status. Thus throughout our lives we occupy social statuses and we learn the social roles associated with these statuses. Socialization involves learning the role behaviours that are associated with our positions in social networks (Popenoe, 1995:131).

When you learn new roles, then you are the target of socialization. The source of your learning is called the agents of socialization.

3.5 AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION

A wide variety of persons, groups, and institutions are involved in the process of socialization. The most important and influential of these groups are called **agents of socialization**. The main agents of socialization are the family, school, peer groups, and the mass media. These agents will be discussed shortly to state their importance of these agents on socialization, which is a life long process (Popenoe, 1995:125).

People are affected at least in some small way by every social experience they have. *These experiences can influence their performance in later life.*

3.5.1 The Family

The family is the most important agent of socialization. The family represents a child's entire social world, until the onset of schooling, and it remains central to social experiences throughout the child's life. Within countless family activities, parents teach their children various values, attitudes, and prejudices about themselves and others. Children learn continuously from the kind of environment that adults create. Whatever children learn to think of themselves, stems largely from this environment.

The family is ideally suited in many ways to the task of socialization. Physical contact, verbal stimulation, and responsiveness from others have all been shown to be crucial function of relationships later in life, because in these relationships you learn what it is like to be loved by others and how to love others in return (Macionis, 1995:136).

3.5.2 Schools

Family life is based on personal relationships. The first major agent outside the family involved in socializing children has historically been the school. Throughout schooling, children are taught both the skills and attitudes they need in society and the heritage of their culture.

The social roles children learn at school are orientated more toward the wider society than those learnt at home. The teacher tells them what is expected of them as students, and as members of their community. For the first time the child is evaluated in a systematic way in comparison with others. Socialization at school emphasizes conformity to impersonal rules and authority, an adjustment basic to successful functioning in society. At home, children learn to obey their parents, at school children learn to obey “the rules” (Wallace & Wallace, 1989:89).

3.5.3 Peer groups

This term refers to a group of people who have roughly equal social status and are usually of similar ages, members don't have to be friends. Peer groups, in childhood are largely formed by accident, later in life choice is involved.

At the age of 7, years one's peer group are generally consists of the members of one's class at school, children who live in the neighbourhood and are of the same age. Adults select their peer group more on the basis of common interests and activities and similar incomes, occupations, or social positions.

Peer groups influence socialization more and more with every passing year of childhood, especially in adolescence, as they help find teenagers their place in a society of equals (Popenoe, 1995:126).

Peer groups offer individuals valuable experience in forging social relationships on their own and developing a sense of themselves apart from their families. Teens may discuss topics in groups that may not be shared by adults. The importance of peer groups typically peaks during adolescence, as young people begin to break away from their families and think of themselves as responsible adults. It is during this stage of life that young people often display anxious conformity to peers because this new

identity and sense of belonging eases some of the apprehension provoked by breaking away from the family (Macionis, 1995:138).

Even during adolescence, children remain strongly influenced by their families, as opposed to their peers.

3.5.4 The Mass Media

Mass media may have an enormous effect on people's attitudes and behaviour. For this reason they are an important component of the socialization process. Mass media (those means of communication that reach and influence large numbers of people, especially newspapers, magazines, television, and radio) especially television programming excites great controversy. Mostly each home today has at least one television set. Television gives children a great deal of information about real and imaginary worlds and about human behaviour. But children are not adults and can easily misinterpret what they see and hear (Popenoe, 1995:127).

In some respects, children's programs reinforce the values taught by other socializing agents, but ideas learned from television may also conflict with those at home and in school (Popenoe, 1995:127-129).

In the average household the TV plays a big role with many hours of TV viewing. Children model their behaviour after that of the people around them. It may be that children who are already inclined to aggressiveness prefer to watch violent television shows (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:310).

This may also be applicable to adults. It is not as though adults will run out and do these crimes, but they are more likely to harbour these thoughts.

Television is yet another source of gender-role socialization. Television shows have traditionally depicted men and women in highly stereotypic ways. Women have typically been portrayed as loving mothers and dedicated homemakers; men have been given dynamic, exciting roles as cool, competent leaders. When scriptwriters finally give a heroic role to a woman, they often have men come to her aid at the last

minute. Even the commercials on TV contribute to gender-role socialization. Women are shown worrying about the ring around their husband's collars, how shiny "their" dishes are, how white "their" laundry is (Macionis, 1995:138).

Given these facts, it should come as no surprise that children who watch TV frequently have been found to hold more stereotyped beliefs about gender than children who watch less TV. Children who watch a great deal of educational TV, in contrast, tend to be less traditional about gender roles than other children. This difference is probably formed because many children's shows on educational TV systematically try to promote non-traditional gender roles. Thus there appears to be a clear link between media content and the acquisition of gender roles and stereotypes. As we will see in Chapter 6, once stereotypes are learned they are difficult to change. Moreover, as long as TV continues to present gender-stereotyped programs and commercials, it perpetuates these beliefs - not only in children but also in adults (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:310).

3.6 Traditional Gender Roles

The social norms that characterize traditional gender roles are based on the assumptions that all men have basically the same traits, that the traits of one sex differ from the traits of the other sex and that masculine traits are more highly valued.

3.6.1 Role Expectations for Males

According to James Doyle & Paludi (1991:313), there are five key elements characterized the traditional male role.

- 1 *The antifeminine element.* "Real men" shouldn't act in a way that might be perceived as feminine. As Robert Brannon (1976) puts it, "No sissy stuff."
- 2 *The success element.* To prove masculinity, men need to beat out other men at sports and at work. Having a high-status job, driving an expensive car, and making lots of money are aspects of this element.

- 3 *The aggressive element.* Men are expected to fight for what they believe is right and to defend themselves aggressively against threats. Aggression may take the form of verbal or physical force, even violence.
- 4 *The sexual element.* “Real men” should be the initiators and controllers of sexual activity.
- 5 *The self-reliant element.* Being “in control” and remaining cool and calm under pressure are aspects of this element.

Males in a society that favour “masculine” modes of behaviour grow up with the expectations that they’ll have control over their lives in ways that females still do not have. A man will “decide” what kind of work he wants to do. He will seek out a woman who meets his expectations of what he wants in a partner and ask her to share her life with him, and if they have children, he’ll assume that she will have the major responsibility for caring for them. But the male role also has problems.

3.6.2 Problems with the Male Role

Only women suffer from a narrow gender role a common misconception. There are probably two reasons for this misconception. Firstly, the negative aspects of the traditional role for women are more obvious than those associated with the man’s role. Secondly, as noted in Chapter 5, the women’s movement stimulated concern about the costs of the female role during the 1950s and 1960s (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:314).

3.6.3 Pressure to Succeed

Whereas many women are trained to be inhibited about pursuing success outside the home, most men are socialized to believe that job success is everything. They are encouraged to be highly competitive and are taught that a man’s masculinity is measured by the size of his paycheck. Men’s obsession with success also creates problems for women. For instance, it contributes to economic discrimination against women. Many men want to “keep women in their place” because their self-esteem is

threatened when a woman earns more than they do. Men's emphasis on success also makes it more likely that they will spend long hours on the job and thus will have fewer hours to spend at home. (Refer 6.6.3)* This situation decreases the amount of time families can spend together and increases the amount of time wives spend on housework and child care (Doyle & Paludi, 1991:314).

3.6.4 The Inexpressive Male

Most boys are trained to believe that men should be strong, tough, cool, and detached. Males are socialized in a way that leads many of them to work overtime at hiding their feelings. Public displays of tender emotions are especially taboo.

The difference is that many men cover up their emotions. Their reticence is unfortunate on two counts. Firstly, it makes it difficult for men to express feelings of affection for their loved ones. Many men can barely bring themselves to stammer through "I love you." Secondly, as we will see in chapter 6, there are some risks inherent in bottling up emotions. Suppressed emotions contribute to many stress-related disorders (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:314).

3.6.5 Sexual Problems

Gender-role expectations for boys have remained relatively stable over the years. However, it appears that aspects of the male role may be undergoing some changes. According to Joseph Pleck (1981a), who has written extensively on this issue, in the *traditional male role*, masculinity is validated by individual physical strength, aggressiveness, and emotional inexpressiveness. In the *modern male role*, masculinity is validated by economic achievement, organizational power, emotional control (even over anger), and emotional sensitivity and self-expression, but only with women.

The traditional role persists along with the new expectations, so some men may experience role inconsistencies. Pleck (1976) explains: "Where childhood socialization valued physical strength and athletic ability and taught boys to shun girls, adulthood confronts males with expectations for intellectual and social skills and

for the capacity to relate to females as work peers and emotional intimates. According to the men's movement (Refer 5.5.1.2, page 135), they suggest that many men are feeling uncomfortably constrained by their traditional gender role (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:315).

3.6.6 Role Expectations for Females

The traditional female role consists of two major expectations

- * *The marriage mandate.* "Real women" attain adult status when they get married. In marriage, women are expected to be responsible for housework and cooking.
- * *The motherhood mandate.* The imperative role of the female role is to have children. A woman should at least have two children, at least one of must be a son. Moreover, it is important that she be a "good mother".

Both the motherhood and marriage mandate fuel the intense focus on heterosexual success among women. The resulting emphasis on dating and marriage causes most women to feel ambivalent about a career, less they drive away a prospective mate who might be threatened by high-achieving women (Doyle & Paludi, 1991:315).

If gender-role expectations continue to change so that women have a wider variety of lifestyle options and career opportunities, more women will be faced with the inherent conflict between family responsibilities and career.

It is unlikely, however, that large numbers of women will invest much of their identity in development in occupational success unless and until subsidized child-care programs or the willingness of fathers to take equal responsibility for childrearing and household tasks lightens the burden of role overload.

3.6.7 Problems with the Female Role

Concerns first became prominent with the advent of the feminist movement, which generated some compelling analyses of the problems associated with the traditional

female role (Refer Chapter 5).

3.6.8 Diminished Aspirations

A reason that women experience more conflict regarding achievement than men do is that gender-role expectations and societal institutions have not kept pace with the reality of women's lives (Millet 1970:316).

Traditional gender roles dictate that husbands go to work and wives stay home and take care of the house and children. Today, however, 60% of married women with children under the age of 6 work outside of the home. This gap between roles and reality ensures that women who want to "have it all" experience burdens and conflicts that can weaken a strong investment in a career. Men experience relatively little competition among the roles of worker, spouse, and parent. They typically have major day-to-day responsibilities in only one role (worker), which is also a high-status role. Women, on the other hand, traditionally have day-to-day responsibilities as both spouse and parent; and when they decide to take a job, they have major responsibilities in all three areas. These facts of life require women to make choices among lifestyles that men need not make (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:316).

Women typically select one of three lifestyle choices: marriage/family only, career only, or a combination of the two. Each of these choices provides certain rewards, and each brings its own problems. Women who choose the traditional pattern may later regret not having been successful in a job. Women who opt for a career over marriage may suffer from negative stereotypes associated with this choice. Women who try to have it all will experience considerable conflict in meeting the often incompatible demands of multiple roles. If a woman is in an egalitarian marriage (one in which the husband assumes equal responsibility for child care and housework), combining a career and family becomes more feasible. Still, if a woman has a serious investment in her career, finding a supportive mate may be difficult. In trying to juggle these role incompatibilities, many women lower their aspirations or make unhappy compromises that men can avoid (Horner, 1972:316).

3.6.9 The Housewife Syndrome

The *Housewife syndrome* encompasses the frustration experienced by many (certainly not all) women whose sole identity is that of housewife. There is evidence that full-time housewives are less happy, more discouraged, and more self-doubting than single or married employed women. Housewives tend to feel less in control of their environment than married career women do. Furthermore, according to Wade (1990:317) several studies have shown that full-time housewives have poorer psychological adjustment than either employed husbands (who have the best) or employed wives (who are intermediate).

Why is staying at home hazardous to many women's health? Why isn't it beneficial to be out of the rat race? Two key aspects of the housewife role stand out as major contributors to the problem. The first is the housewife's relative isolation from supportive adults. Years ago housewives were more likely to be part of a supportive social network consisting of other housewives and relatives living nearby. Today, in our more mobile society, fewer people live near their relatives or in close-knit neighbourhoods. Also, housewives have fewer opportunities for companionship during the day because the majority of wives work outside the home. Thus many housewives spend their days in a social desert, yearning for adult conversation (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:317).

The second problem is the lack of status and recognition for child and housework. "Women's work", especially that in the home, simply isn't highly valued. Because their work is taken for granted, housewives get relatively little overt appreciation. Moreover, childcare and housework are tasks that are never really finished, so it is difficult to experience a sense of accomplishment (Porter, 1985:317).

3.6.10 Ambivalence about Sexuality

Both women and men may have sexual problems that stem in part from their gender-role socialization. For many women the problem is that they have difficulty enjoying

sex. Why? For one thing, girls are encouraged to focus on romance, rather than boys who focus directly on getting sexual experience. Also, more girls than boys are * brought up in ways that generate guilt, shame, and fears about sex. These negative emotions stem in part from fear for pregnancy, rape, incest can also contribute to the development of negative feelings about sex (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:318).

Hence many women approach sex with emotional baggage that men are less likely to carry, they are likely to have ambivalent feelings about sex instead of the largely positive feelings that most men have (Hyde, 1981:318).

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter served to suggest that Socialization demonstrates the power of society to shape our thoughts, feelings, and actions. *Yet, as free humans, we also have the capacity to turn our back on society, and, in so doing, shape ourselves and our world.*

Socialization continues throughout the course of life as we move from childhood to adulthood and undergo associated role transitions.

Gender-role expectations are taught and reinforced through socialization from the moment of birth onward. Two mechanisms are primarily responsible: differential treatment and identification with role models.

Consequently, an important question is how we may move beyond traditional gender role?

Individual awareness of the limitations of sex-role stereotypes has taken place in many areas, and attempts are being made to change socialization and individual behaviour. Many of these attempts are being stymied because the institutional structure perpetuates a different value system

The next chapter will focus on the research methodology and the epistemology of the author.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the author focused on socialisation and all its components and the impact thereof on individuals in relationships.

In chapter 4 the author intends to explain her epistemological frame of reference which is embedded in a Postmodernistic approach. Postmodernists choose to look at specific contextualized details more often than grand generalization, *difference rather than similarity* (Gergen:1992:6).

The shift toward postmodern thought evolved when cybernetics, constructivism and social constructionism were becoming dominant discourses and were challenging the single meaning of reality so that these alternative methodologies within psychology provided evidence of a postmodern turn in the culture of society (Gergen, 1992:8).

4.1 MODERNISM TO POSTMODERNISM – PARADIGM SHIFT

4.1.1 Introduction

Postmodernism questions the modernist belief in an independently existing subject matter (Gergen, 1992:10), and that our language about the world operates as a mirror and reflection of reality. It challenges the idea that there are internal systems of symbols or rules and that a subject matter has universal properties. This assumption ignores the historical circumstances of the inquiry.

Postmodernism questions methodology and the supremacy of scientific thinking as the means to truth and views them as misleading devices that serve as truth warrants. Postmodernism accepts “randomness, incoherence, and paradox, (as apposed to positivist paradigms which are designed to exclude these factors) thus creating a distance from the seemingly fixed language of established meanings and fosters scepticism about the fixed nature of reality (Hare-Mustin and Mareck, 1988:462).

The weakness in modernistic thinking is considered to be the claim of an ‘inner essence’, which is inherent in psychoanalytic theory, and the presumption that we can determine ‘what truly is’. From a social constructionist perspective then, the self and the concept of ‘truth’ or reality is a manifestation of human interchange, constructed in our communication and relationship systems and organized through narrative (Burr, 1998:11).

4.1.2 Postmodernism in Historical Perspective

Gergen (1991:19) has categorized the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the period which saw the flowering of romanticism, a perspective which ‘lays central stress on unseen, even sacred forces’, that dwell deep within the person, forces that give life and relationships their significance. The language of passion, purpose, depth, and personal significance was used to speak of heroism, genius, inspiration, and love. Moral values and a sense of ultimate purpose to life characterized a worldview which continues today to influence our descriptions of people and their behaviour.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century modernistic thought upstaged the romanticist perspective. This was a more practical view in which truth was to be sought through “systematic observation” (Gergen, 1991:29). Continuous progress toward a greater goal achieved by scientific means characterized the “*grand narrative*” of society, and the search for the essential, irreducible essence.

There are still those, of course, who long for the “good old days” of romanticism although there is also much to be said for the newer world of modernism.

According to Gergen (1991:47):

“Many lament the loss of the romanticist languages of the person”. However, it is possible to appreciate the allure of the modernist replacement. In many ways modernism is both more optimistic and more democratic. The romantic individual was forever a mystery –the vital essence quixotic and out of reach. The modernist self, by contrast, is knowable, present in the here and now, just slightly below the surface of his actions. He is not likely to be transported by sudden inspiration, be smitten by some great passion, or give way to a rush of suicidal urges. Rather, he is reliable and trustworthy. His word today is good tomorrow and the next. The modernist self is not likely to have his reason clouded by intense emotional dramas; his reasons guide his actions and his voice is clear and honest. With proper moulding, and the help of science we create the future of our dreams”.

•

In the **modern** era we have learned to rely on the power of science and the knowledge of objective experts who supposedly possess the truth about a reality which is out there, and which can be presented accurately and understood via reliable data.

In the most recent era, referred to as that of **postmodernism**, the belief in the possibility of objective knowledge and absolute truth is being undermined on many fronts. Instead, we find the notion that ours is a reality that is inevitably subjective and that we do indeed dwell in a multiverse, which is constructed through the act of observation. Facts are being replaced by perspectives and with this shift comes a challenge to the power and privilege previously attributed to the possessors of “knowledge” (Lement, 1997:xiii).

4.1.2 Postmodernity: *Fin de mill'enaire* and the future

"Well. It wasn't an excursion. It was the end of the world."

Timothy Findley, *Not wanted on the Voyage*

Various authors have described the term "postmodern" as being controversial and ambiguous (Kvale 1992); difficult to pin down and (Lowe 1991); having a wide variety of uses.

The epistemological shift from modernistic to postmodernistic discourse came about due to controversies arising out of the modernistic discourse.

Anderson (1991a:27) provides the following summary of the nature of modernism and postmodernism and furnishes a brief account of their main differences.

"The emergence of a postmodern narrative in the human sciences challenged the modernist perspective of seeing and thinking about the world and our experiences in it. The modernist view is that knowledge is objective and fixed, and the knower and knowledge are independent – presupposing universal truths and objective reality. Postmodernism refers not to an era, but to a different, discontinuous theoretical direction: Knowledge is socially constructed and generative, and knowledge and the knower are interdependent – presupposing the interrelationship of context, culture, language, experience, and understanding. Postmodernism offers alternatives to many of the long-held modernism-based assumptions and enshrined traditions of psychotherapy theory and practice, including problems and symptoms as dysfunction, language as representational, the therapist as the knower and curer, the client as an independent object, the notions of a core self and a reflective mind, and the education of therapists". Similar ideas are expressed by Doherty (1991: 40-41), Mclean (1997: 9-13) and Freedman & Combs (1994: 19-25).

Parry & Doan (1994:2) started off by saying “**Once upon a time, everything was understood through stories. Stories were always called upon to make things understandable.**”

Stories always dealt with the “why” questions. The answers they gave did not have to be literally true, they only had to satisfy people’s curiosity by providing an answer, less for the mind than for the soul. For the soul they were true, but probably no one bothered to ask whether that truth was factual or “merely” metaphorical. That question came much later. Most of the first questions were about origins: “Why is there something and not nothing?”, “Who made the world, and why”?

According to Parry & Doan (1994:2), the creation stories of other people, by contrast, sometimes appear to have an unusual quality to them. All such stories have in common, however serious or unpredictable, a quality of sufficiency. They give an answer to one of the bit “why” questions in a way that most fully accounts for the implications of the questions through images that make life meaningful within that culture. In other words, it is the **meaningfulness** of the answers given, rather than their factual **truthfulness**, that gives them their credibility. The hearers of the story believed that it was true because it was meaningful, rather than it was meaningful because it was true.

The pursuit of truth over meaning as humankind’s highest achievement probably began with Plato. This represents the introduction into the world of what the psychologist Jerome Bruner (1986(a): 14) has described as the “paradigmatic” as opposed to the “narrative” mode of cognition. Bruner identifies these as nothing less than “two” modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought. Each provides distinct ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality. The two (though complementary) are irreducible to one another.

A de-legitimised, postmodern world is a place without any single claim to a truth universally respected, and a growing realization that no single story sums up the

meaning of life. It is also a place in which so much is happening to so many so fast that no story or theory is sufficient to correspond fully to its subject matter. In some ways, the latter realization is an even greater shock to our way of understanding than is the loss of a sense of a single truth (Bruner, 1986(a):15).

Postmodern discourse emerged in reaction to the modernist ideas of committedness to the use of a language of objectivity, empirical observation, reductionism, and presentationalism, as well as truth as facts and knowledge that can be verified. Knowledge from a postmodern perspective is viewed as a social construction constituted in language. Lowe (1991:45) therefore suggests a postmodern sticker that reads: “*No essences, only discourses*”. As previously stated, discourses refer to “*systematic and institutionalised ways of speaking/writing or otherwise making sense through the use of language*” (Lowe 1991:45). These discourses constitute knowledge, with the effect that knowledge cannot be viewed as representative of some external reality, but as the social construction of a reality.

In the most recent era (the postmodernism), the belief in the possibility of objective knowledge and absolute truth is being undermined on many fronts. Facts are being replaced by perspectives and with this shift comes a challenge to the power and privilege attributed to “knowledge”. Clients must be understood as possessing equally valid perspectives and there is no “transcendent criterion of the correct” (Gergen, 1991:111). The most significant aspect (regarding the shift from the modernist paradigm which assumes “that knowledge can be “founded upon”, or “grounded in” absolute truth... is “about” something external to the knower, and can present itself objectively to the knower”), is this shift from a belief in facts to an awareness of perspectives and the degree to which the attention is now focused on discourse and the role of language.

4.1.4 Deconstruction and the Role of Language

In the postmodern era the role of language has moved to centre stage. That is, “Discourse has become a central concept, not only in postmodern thought, but in the general sphere of contemporary social and cultural theory”(Lowe, 1991:4). In philosophy it was Wittgenstein (1963) who proposed that it is social practice rather than a referential base by means of which language acquires meaning and Foucault who explored the power of discourse, or culturally embedded bodies of language, to expand or oppress (Gergen, 1994: 413). Similar explorations in the fields of sociology, communication theory, and psychology have characterized a large segment of intellectual inquiry for the past twenty years. The outcome of such inquiry is a warning against reifying the language of a community as true for anyone other than the members of that community and a focus on the limitations of local languages in terms of what they exclude.

The postmodernists understands language as the means by which individuals come to know their world and in their knowing simultaneously construct their world. During this process, the idea of minds and objects as separate phenomena is *deconstructed*. According to Gergen (1991:107), “rather we urged to consider that if we can only know reality via our perceptions, then that which we perceive is a function of our mental process, or mind, and the two are inseparable. We experience and express our knowing through a system of language which has a separate existence. Accordingly, “Social constructionist inquiry is principally concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live” (Gergen (b), 1985:266).

Each person is born into and assimilates pre-existing forms of language in a culturally created linguistic system. In the process of socialization we learn to speak in accepted ways and simultaneously to adopt the shared values and ideology of our language system. Our words express the conventions, the symbols, the metaphors of our

particular group and we cannot speak in a language separate from that of our community:

The terms in which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people. From the constructionist position the process of understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship. In this light, inquiry is invited into the historical and cultural bases of various forms of world construction. (Gergen (b), 1985:267).

For the postmodernist, the goal is to deconstruct “facts” by delineating the assumptions, values, and ideologies upon which they rest and to consider ourselves and our constructions about life and living with scepticism and even perhaps humour.

The postmodernist must also recognize that the self is not an isolated, autonomous being but rather that it is constructed in relationships: “In the postmodern world, selves may become the manifestations of relationships, *thus placing relationships in the central position occupied by the individual self* (Gergen, 1991: 147).

4.1.5 The Role of the Individual

According to Gergen (1991:251), in the postmodern era, “the individual is viewed as a participant in multiple relationships, with “the problem” only a problem because of the way it is constructed in certain of these relations.” Both the “self” and the “problems” which an individual may be experiencing take shape and have meaning only in the context of specific relationships and are expressed through the language of the concealed domain within which these relationships occur.

Consistent with postmodernist thinking, we must acknowledge the argument that “our most private thoughts and emotions are not actually our own. We think in terms of languages and images which we did not invent, but which were given to us by society. We should also note that given the importance of each individual’s perception from a social constructionist perspective, the self, though differently defined, gains in significance. Constructivist models, with their emphasis on differing individual perspectives of reality, have led to models of therapy that have underscored the importance of conversation, of co-construction of problems and proposed solutions, of respect for individual differences (Watts, 1972:268).

The postmodern paradigm shift in therapy evolved within a process in which cybernetics, especially second order cybernetics, constructivism and social constructionist theory became dominant discourses. These discourses will now be attended to.

4.1.6 First-Order versus Second-Order Cybernetics

General systems theory Von Bertalanffy (in Sluzki 1985:26) and Wiener’s cybernetic theory (Sluzki 1985) both developed as a reaction to the increased specialization and fragmentation in science. Wiener (in Sluzki 1985:26) defined cybernetics “the science of communication and control in man and machine”, thus focussing on the interaction processes in systems. In *first order* cybernetics the observer does not form part of the observed.

Of central importance is language, which is understood to be a socially constructed system and which, through dominant and privileged discourses, empowers some and oppresses others. As the impact of this perspective has been experienced among family therapists, debates have ensued regarding the appropriateness of therapy at a first-order, pragmatic level versus a second-order approach or a combination of the two.

Making reference to Varela's (Maturana & Varela, 1980: 36), distinction between the first-order, control model and second-order model of living systems, Hoffmann (1985:398), predicts a shift in the future to approaches consistent with the latter model, and thus having the following characteristics:

1. *An "observing system" stance and inclusion of the therapist's own context.*
- 2. *A collaborative rather than a hierarchical structure.*
3. *Goals that emphasize setting a context for change, not specifying a change.*
4. *Ways to guard against too much instrumentality.*
5. *A "circular" assessment of the problem.*
6. *A non-pejorative, non-judgmental view.*

According to Hoffman, second-order approaches that are more constructivist in nature, would enable the therapist to unhook from the position of power and control.

To speak in terms of either-or, is inconsistent with the systemic/cybernetic perspective. Systemic "purists" find operating with a second-order mind to be a more

respectful and appropriate choice. Constructionist perspective is consistent with the worldview of cybernetics.

4.1.7 Postmodernism and Cybernetics

It is the conclusion of Anderson and Goolishian (1990:161), that the issues around the use of power, intervention, and change are implicit in a cybernetic epistemology, which rest on an assumption of mechanical control. They prefer a “post-cybernetic” interest in human meaning, narrative and “story” to make up for what they perceive as the inability of cybernetics to understand humans in their cultural and relational context or to describe them relative to their ability to make meaning and act accordingly.

Hoffman (1990:22), has stated that she, along with Anderson and Goolishian, believes that the systemic cybernetic paradigm has run its course, “a preference for a mutually influenced process between consultant and inquirer” and opts for an “ethic of participation”.

To them the idea of control is inconsistent with the perspective of cybernetics of cybernetics within which influence is understood to be mutual and responsibility is seen as a shared or bilateral process. Ethic of participation and the epistemology of participation define very similar stances. An understanding of context requires an exploration of individual perceptions and meanings, as well as a consideration of the ecology of ideas and the larger social system within which relationships are embedded. Their focus is relational. They understand that all behaviour has communication value and that communication and information processing are basic systemic processes.

During the seventies and eighties an *ecosystemic* or *second-order* cybernetics evolved within the field of therapy. Therapists became aware of the broader ecology or “patterns which connect” (Bateson 1979:20). Recursiveness of processes, self-

reference of the therapist, meta-position, the punctuation of reality and dialectic processes became part of this new language. Second-order cybernetics will now be attended to.

4.1.8 Second-Order Cybernetics

Sluzki (1985) explains the development of the field of cybernetics, distinguishing between first and second order cybernetics as *observed systems* (first order) and *observing systems* (second order). According to Sluzki, first order cybernetics is based on the assumption that the system under observation is detached from the observer. He also distinguishes between a first and second wave in first order cybernetics. The first wave focused on the way in which systems maintain organization, while the second wave focused on how systems change their organization. Second order, or new cybernetics includes the observer's role in constructing the reality observed. Keeney (1983:73) uses the concept *cybernetics of cybernetics* and Sluzki (1985:26) the concept *second order cybernetics*.

It has been said that in the postmodern era, therapy practices must be discourse sensitive, both to ongoing conversation and to culturally established forms of speaking. Therapists thus focus in a self-critical manner upon the use of language and its impact.

The goal is more humane and has led to the development of a more socially and politically sensitive understanding of families and of therapy as they becomes aware of those discourses which are and are not "privileged."

The active involvement of the observer implies that the observer is responsible for his/her description because it is her/his construction, and can therefore not be accepted as the mere reflection of an objective external reality. In this sense a person

is a cognitively autonomous being, and as Von Foerster (1984(a):306) maintains: “Autonomy implies responsibility: if I am the only one who decides how I act then I am responsible for my action”. Keeney (1983:82 & 208) also emphasizes the responsibility of the observer and the importance of ethical considerations:

Cybernetics of cybernetics.....provides us with a view of self-reference and an ethical consideration for how we participate in the construction and maintenance of our experiential universe.

Tom Andersen (in Becvar & Becvar, 1996:95), made the following observation: “What I myself found important, but extremely difficult, to do was to try to listen to what clients say instead of making up meanings about what they say. Just listen to what they say”. Thus the focus returns to the level of process.

At the level of process, we must observe *what* is going on and *how* we are behaving. The therapists must consistently ask themselves whether or not they believe that they offer truth to their clients and they must guard against the seduction of certainty. They must consider whether or not they are behaving in a manner that is consistent with what it is they say they believe and avoid portraying themselves as experts. Therapists must also avoid pathologizing language and must be sensitive to the impact of discourse at many levels. Therapists must be aware of the larger social context and its influence on both their clients and themselves. They must consider what they are communicating, both by what they say and by what they don't say, what they do and what they don't do. Therapist must be respectful of their clients, of their stories, and of the meanings which their stories have for them. Finally, they must recognize the limits of what they know. For the reality created by social constructionism and postmodernism is that there is no reality that they can know for sure. Or, in the words of Watzlawick (1984:326):

“What reality is constructed by constructivism itself? Is a fundamentally wrong question. But also we see that this mistake had to be committed in order to reveal itself as a mistake. Constructivism does not create or explain any reality “out there”; it shows the subjective, rather, it shows that the subject-object split, that source of myriads of “realities” does not exist, that the apparent separation of the world into pairs of opposites is constructed by the subject, and that paradox opens the way into autonomy.”

When one understands that one is a cybernetic epistemologist, one realizes that one is always participating in the construction of a world of experience, including therapeutic realities. The view of a participatory universe again suggests that ethics, rather than objectivity, underlies science and knowledge, and for this purpose, marriage counselling. There is no such thing as an observer-free description of a situation which can be objectively assessed and evaluated. Instead what one knows, leads to a construction and what one constructs, leads to knowing. One’s knowing is recycled in the constant (re) construction of a world (Becvar & Becvar, 1996:82).

•

The shift from first to second order cybernetics involves the possibility of the simultaneous existence of multiple distinctions drawn by a participant observer. Acceptance of this state of affairs, that is a multitude of ideas co-exist at any given moment in time, implies forfeiting all certainties by the researcher as well as clinician (Dell 1986:233). It is probably the above idea that secured a constructivist epistemology, in terms of which knowledge is taken to be a computation of reality (Becvar & Becvar, 1996:82).

4.2 EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology and ontology are sub divisions of philosophy which study the structure, methods, and validity of knowledge (Parker, 1992:86).

According to White (in White and Epston, 1990:78), “it is generally accepted that what we know of the world, we know only through our experience of it; our experience of the world is all that we have, and this is all that we can know”.

Roux, (1996:4), summarizes epistemology as follows:

- “dit gaan om die vraag *hoe* `n mens dink, waarneem en besluit, en *wat* die mens dink, waarneem en besluit.....Die *hoe* en die *wat* van kennis staan in rekursiewe relasie tot mekaar. Die aannames ten opsigte van *hoe* gemeet word, beïnvloed *wat* gemeet word, terwyl *wat* gemeet word weer die *hoe* daarvan beïnvloed”.

Parker (1992:86), has attempted to come up with some conception of a “reality outside of the text” that still allows a constructionist position. He suggests that we think of “things’ (of all kinds, including, trees, water, bad temper etc.), as being endowed with one of three ‘object statuses’: ontological, epistemological and moral/political.

According to Becvar & Becvar (1996:xxii);, in philosophy, epistemology refers to the study of how we know what we know, or how we can make valid knowledge claims based on a particular theoretical framework.

Epistemology may also be used as a synonym for one’s personal framework or interpretive system. In this case, the term refers to the belief system according to

which each of us operates in every aspect of life. Although we rarely are aware of it, we each have internalised a set of theories that enable us to give order and predictability to our lives. They are the means by which each of us constructs our personal reality. These theories were learned in our families of origin, in school, and from other experiences that have been particularly meaningful to us. Each of our personal theories rests on some basic assumptions about how we believe the world is or will be (Mouton & Marais, 1990:15).

In the ontological realm (ontology is the study of the nature of things or of existence) are objects which form the material basis for thought – without bodies and brains, thought would not be possible, and the physical and organisational properties of our environment give us something to ‘think about’. These things then, are taken by Parker to exist independently of human thought processes and language. However, we cannot ever have direct knowledge of them, even though the things themselves make thought possible, because thought necessarily involves a constructive process, i.e. giving meaning to things. The things we have knowledge of therefore have a different object status – “epistemological” status (epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge). Things in the epistemology sphere have ‘entered discourse’, they are the things we have given meaning to and talk about (Parker, 1992:86).

The concept of postmodernism rests on an epistemological foundation and that therefore this study needs to take cognisance of this fact when implementing a specific research methodology. We turn now to a brief discussion of qualitative approach to research.

4.3.1 Introduction and background

Qualitative research can be perceived in different ways. One way is to see it as a current approach researchers and therapists have incorporated to study psychotherapy and change. Another way is to see qualitative research as a longstanding method clinical researchers and researching clinicians have used to describe and explain therapeutic processes and outcomes. From the “newly arrived perspective”, qualitative research is understood as a group of methods borrowed from the social sciences and humanities. They have been brought into psychology, sociology, and marital and family therapy over the last three decades to provide naturalistic, descriptive, discovery-oriented, interpretive and quantitative informing inquires. From the “since the beginning point-of-view”, qualitative research is synonymous with the “case-by-case way of knowing” central to most therapists everyday practice and understanding of therapy, clients, and themselves (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:18).

•

In general, qualitative studies are discovery oriented. They are less concerned with quantification and instead “explore the meanings, variations and perceptual experiences of phenomena”. Qualitative research has no pre packaged designs. Instead, qualitative researchers use a variety of methods, procedures, and analysis techniques “to create unique, question-specific designs that evolve throughout the research process”.

The researcher’s aim is to use qualitative research as the traditional period associated with the positivist paradigm. Qualitative research is multi method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subjects matter. The qualitative researcher will study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of it, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:17).

4.3.2 The History of Qualitative Research

Qualitative Research is an old and well established methodology in Anthropology (ethnographic methods), Sociology (ethnomethodology), Folklore (narrative, myth, and ritual), Linguistic (sociolinguistics), and in English (rhetoric, hermeneutics, deconstruction). The philosophical roots bridge phenomenology, critical theory, poststructuralism, and postmodernism.

Throughout the history of qualitative research, investigators have always defined their work in terms of hopes and values, “religious faiths, occupational and professional ideologies”. Qualitative research (like all research) has always been judged on the “standard of whether the work communicates or “says” something to us”, based on how we conceptualise our reality and our images of the world. *Epistemology* is the word that has historically defined these standards of evaluation.

The postmodern challenge emerged in the mid-1980s. It questioned the assumptions that had organized the earlier history, in each of its colonializing moment. Qualitative research that crosses the “postmodern divide” requires “abandoning all established and preconceived values, theories, perspectives and prejudices as resources for ethnographic study.” In this new era the qualitative researcher does more than observe history, he or she is part in it (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:20).

4.3.3 Description, design and advantages of qualitative research

Mason (1996:4) elaborates on qualitative research as follows: “Although I am keen to emphasize the rich variety of qualitative research strategies and techniques, I think it is useful nevertheless to look for some common elements, so that we can develop a sense of what is qualitative about qualitative research. However I wish to go no further than identifying a loose working definition which says what qualitative research is.

- * Grounded in a philosophical position which is broadly ‘interpretivist’ in the sense that it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced or produced. Whilst different versions of qualitative research might understand or approach these elements in different ways (for example, focussing on social meanings, or interpretations, or practices, or discourses, or processes, or constructions) all will see at least some of these as meaningful elements in a complex – possibly multi-layered – social world.

- * Based on methods of data generated which are flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data are produced (rather than rigidly standardized of structure, or removed from ‘real life’ or ‘natural’ social context, as in some forms of experimental method).

- * Based on methods of analysis and explanation building which involve understanding of complexity, detail and context. Qualitative research aims to produce rounded understanding on the basis of rich, contextual detailed data. There is more emphasis on ‘holistic’ forms of analysis and explanation in this sense, than on charting surface patterns, trends and correlations (Mason, 1996:10).

4.3.4 The research methods used for this study

The constructionist (and constructivist) position tells us that the socially situated researcher creates, through interaction, the realities that constitute the places where empirical materials are collected and analysed. In such sites, the interpretive practices

of qualitative research are implemented. The Interview and Observational Method will be discussed now:

4.3.4.1 The Interview

The interview is a conversation, the art of asking questions and listening. It is not a neutral tool, for the interviewer creates the reality of the interview situation. In this situation answers are given. Thus the interview produces situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes. This method is influenced by the personal characteristics of the interviewer, including race, class, ethnicity, and gender (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:22).

If all the problems of question wording could be traced to a single source, their common origin would probably prove to be in taking too much for granted.

S. Payne, *The Art of Asking Questions*, 1951

Interviewing has a wide variety of forms and a multiplicity of uses.

The most common type of interviewing is individual, face-to-face verbal interchange, but it can also take the form of face-to-face group interviewing, mailed or self-administered questionnaires, and telephone surveys. Interviewing can be structured, semi structured or unstructured. It can be used for therapeutic reasons. It can be used for the purpose of measurement or its scope can be the understanding of an individual or a group perspective.

For the purpose of this research project we will use the group interview (Denzin & Lincoln,1998:47).

4.3.4.2 Group Interviewing

Group interviewing is a new approach that can be implemented in a structured, semistructured, or unstructured format. In this research program the group interview, systematic questioning of several individuals simultaneously in formal or informal settings were used. The use of the group interview is not meant to replace individual interviewing, but it is an option that deserves consideration because it can provide another level of data gathering or a perspective on the research problem not available through individual interviews (Walker,1985:5).

The group interview is essentially a qualitative data gathering technique that finds the interviewer directing the interaction and inquiry in a very structured or very unstructured manner, depending on the interview's purpose.

The skills required of a group interviewer are not significantly different from those needed by an interviewer of individuals. The interviewer must be flexible, objective, empathic, persuasive, a good listener. The group can present some unusual problems. The interviewer however, does need certain specific skills. Firstly, the interviewer must keep one person or a small coalition of persons from dominating the group; secondly, he or she must encourage respondents to participate, and third, he or she must obtain responses from the entire group to ensure the fullest possible coverage of the topic.

The group interview has the advantages of being inexpensive, data rich, flexible, stimulating to respondents, recall aiding, and cumulative and elaborative, over and above individual responses. This type of interview is not, however, without problems. The emerging group culture may interfere with individual expression, the group may

be dominated by one person, the group format makes it difficult to research sensitive topics, “groupthink” is a possible outcome. Group interview is a viable option for qualitative research and relevant for this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:54-55 & Leedy, 1993:192).

4.3.4.3 Validity and Reliability of qualitative research

With any type of measurement, two considerations are very important. *Validity* and *Reliability*. *Validity* is concerned with the soundness, the effectiveness of the measuring instrument. *Reliability* deals with accuracy.

For the purpose of this research, the researcher will concentrate on *Validity* in Qualitative Research.

Postmodernism argues that “the character of qualitative research implies that there can be no criteria for judging its products” (Hammersley, 1992:58). This argument contends that every idea of assessing qualitative research is antithetical to the nature of this research and the world it attempts to study. This position doubts all criteria and privileges none, although those who work within it favour criteria like those adopted by some poststructuralists.

Validity is seen as a process shaped by culture, ideology, gender, language, and so on. During the 1960s and 1970s there was a more pointed critique and analysis of ethnography (qualitative method), *a reflexive turn in qualitative research*. One meaning of *reflexivity* is that the scientific observer is part and parcel of the setting, context, and culture he or she is trying to understand and represent. After the reflexive turn, increasing numbers of qualitative researchers began to appreciate what this meant for the validity of ethnographic or qualitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:127).

The traditional criteria of methodological adequacy and validity were formulated and essentially “owned” by positivism, the philosophical, theoretical, and methodological perspective that has justified the use of quantitative methods in the social science for most of the twentieth century. Positivism seeks the development of universalistic laws, whereby actual or real events in the world are explained in a deductive fashion by universal laws that assert definite and unproblematic relationships. Through the use of techniques that produce the numerical data presumed to reflect true measures of objective categories, the positivists opt for sense-directed data, giving the “empirical science” its meaning. The perspective includes the common assertion that “reliability”, or the stability of methods and findings, is an indicator of “validity”, or the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:129-130).

Positivism answered the validity question in terms of reliability. Reliable (repeatable, generalizable) methods and findings were valid ones. What has changed is the purpose of research, and what those standards for assessing the purpose might be. Research is no longer coupled with knowledge, but has been given multiple choices. Depending on one’s choice, research is defined accordingly (Kotze, 1992:12).

It is also within the spirit of qualitative research to see the data and interpretations as valid only under the unique conditions of a particular project at a particular time and place. It is more likely to be discovery-oriented inquiry rather than hypothesis-testing research. Qualitative research may or may not be self-conscious – it may “combat dominance and push toward thoroughgoing change in the practices of the social formation”, and it may raise questions about the results of professional discourses about such things as mental illness, marriage and family dysfunction, gender and racial issues. This is its strength, which necessarily reveals its liability relative to traditional quantitative research (Kotze, 1992:14).

Hammersley’s (1992:69), view remains cogent: “An account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorize”.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter Postmodernism was discussed as it will form the basis for the point of departure within the author's epistemology. Adopting a postmodern, narrative, social constructionist worldview offers useful ideas about how power, knowledge, and 'truth' are negotiated in families.

First order cybernetics is based on the assumption that the system under observation is detached from the observer. Second order includes the observer's role in constructing the reality observed. The observation of an observer thus refers to him/herself and is a reflection of his/her construction of realities.

Qualitative research, is carried out in ways that are sensitive to the nature of human and cultural social contexts, and is commonly guided by the ethic to remain loyal or true to the phenomena under study, rather than to any particular set of methodological techniques or principles.

In coming years, the volume of qualitative research will rise and its relevancy for clinical work will also increase. In all of its shapes, qualitative research will continue to help the stakeholders in clinical work – the researchers, the therapists, and the clients, to describe, to interpret, and to discover their understanding of the patterns which make a difference in this process of change.

The following chapter will be devoted to an exploration of the various theories, socials construction discourse and the Narrative approach which dominates the landscape of family therapy and which is a perfect expression of the postmodern focus.

CHAPTER 5

THEORIES

5. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the author focused on Research methods and the epistemology of the researcher and the study. In this chapter the author will focus on the theories relevant to this study.

A systems perspective forms a foundation for an introduction to therapy. Every society has its own stock of substantive narratives, which represent typical human behaviour patterns known and understood within that society or social group. This is the form in which social knowledge is acquired and stored, and which provides the framework for understanding particular stories presented to us in discourse (Parry & Doãn, 1994:46).

Discourse sensitivity will enable the therapist to help the couples in a way that validates their own cultural ways of constituting their lives.

To address the topic of sensitivity, dominant issues of difference and uniqueness as they utilised within context need to be taken into consideration. In this regard the discourses on cultural and gender sensitivity are included in this chapter. A distinction can be drawn between differences and equality of gender.

Social constructionism represents an epistemological shift that has opened the field to narrative. Social construction grows out of human dialogue. Through the process of language and discourse, we shape our beliefs. The above mentioned will be discussed in this chapter.

5.1 SYSTEM THEORY

A system may be defined as a “set of interacting units with relationships among them”, Day *et al.* (1995:94), or as “sets of elements standing in interaction”. There are different systems. In each case there are components that have some common properties. These components interact with one another so that each influences and in turn is influenced by other component parts, together producing a whole – a system – that is larger than the sum of its interdependent parts. A system is characterized by *wholeness* or unity and must take into account the ongoing interactions between parts. All systems are organized and strive to maintain some kind of balance or **homeostasis**. A system may reach the same final state from different initial conditions and in different manners; this is the concept of **equifinality**. The family qualifies as such a system, Day *et al.*, (1995:95).

Any system, exists as part of a larger system, or suprasystem, and has smaller subsystems. Thus, a family is a system and is also a part of the system of all families. Similarly, subsystems of siblings and parental relationships exist within the larger system of the family.

The rules according to which a system operates are comprised of the characteristic relationship patterns within the system. These rules express the values of the system as well as the roles appropriate to behaviour within the system. A system’s rules are what distinguishes it from other systems, and therefore rules may be said to form the boundaries of a system (Becvar & Becvar, 1996: 67).

Kotze (1987 : 2) summarizes the family as a system as follows:

“n Gesin bestaan uit verskillende lede wat in verhouding tot mekaar staan, maar ook in wisselwerking met omgewingsfaktore (eksterne faktore) verkeer.”

Noller and Fitzpatrick (1993 : 40) propose the following ideas as presenting the system:

“Die mees grondliggende aanname van die sisteemteorie is volgens Noller & Fitzpatrick (1993 : 40) dat die geheel meer is as net die som van die dele waaruit dit saamgestel is. Dus kan die geheel van `n spesifieke verskynsel nie verstaan word vanuit die bestudering van slegs die dele waaruit dit saamgestel is nie. Die organisasie van die dele en die interaksie tussen die dele moet ook in ag geneem word.

In die lig daarvan dat die gesin as n sisteem beskou kan word, kan die gesin verder in terme van enkele ander eienskappe van n sisteem beskryf word:

Die sisteem as `n eenheid: `n Sisteem is nie bloot net die som van die dele nie. Dit is `n eenheid waarin die verskillende dele of subsisteme op so `n wyse met mekaar verband hou dat een subsisteem nie kan verander sonder dat dit `n invloed op die ander subsisteme, sowel as die sisteem as geheel uitoefen nie. Dit beteken dat `n gesinsisteem (of ekosisteem) slegs verstaan kan word as die wyse waarop die lede of subsisteme (of komponente) daarvan met mekaar in wisselwerking tree, in berekening gebring word.”

5.1.1 Recursion

We see people and events in the context of mutual interaction and mutual influence. We look at their relationships and how each interacts with and influences the other. Thus, from a systems perspective, meaning is derived from the relation between individuals and elements as each defines the other (Becvar & Becvar,1996:63).

As Bateson, (1970:362), states: “Any person or agency that influences a complex interactive system thereby becomes a part of that system, and no part can ever control the whole. Each of us, therefore, shares in the destiny of the other and we understand ourselves as members of a constantly conjoined universe”.

Given this recursive perspective, we see every system influencing and being influenced by every other system and every individual influencing and being influenced by every other individual. We understand ourselves as being members of a world community, and we see patterns of connection at every level of the system.

We are brought to the awareness that “a unilineal focus on part of a system will disrupt and fractionate the balanced diversity of an ecosystem” (Keeney, 1983:126).

5.1.2 Feedback

Feedback into the system (positive or negative) refers to information about past behaviour which is fed back into the system. These concepts do not encompass value judgments. Rather they refer to the impact of the behaviour upon the system and the response of the system to that behaviour. The goodness or badness of a feedback process can only be evaluated relative to context.

Thus, *good* and *bad* are relative terms in system theory and can only be decided within a particular context that defines them one way or the other. They are descriptors of processes in a given system at a particular time (Becvar & Becvar, 1996:64-65).

In either case, whether in a functional or dysfunctional manner, the stability of the system is maintained in the context of both negative and positive feedback processes.

5.1.3 Morphostasis/Morphogenesis

A system’s ability to remain stable in the context of change and to change in the context of stability are defined as morphostasis and morphogenesis (Becvar & Becvar, 1996:66).

Morphostasis – describes a system’s tendency toward stability, a state of dynamic equilibrium.

Morphogenesis – refers to the system-enhancing behaviour that allows for growth, creativity, innovation, and change, all of which are characteristic of functional systems (Becvar & Becvar, 1996:66).

In healthy systems an appropriate balance will be maintained between the two. The rules of the system will allow for a change in the rules of the system when such changes are in order.

5.1.4 Rules and Boundaries

The rules according to which a system operates are comprised of the characteristic relationship patterns within the system. These rules express the values as well as the roles of that system. Systems can have their own rules and may be said to form the boundaries of a system.

The concept of boundary also implies the notion of a hierarchy of systems. Any system, exist as part of a larger system, or suprasystem and has smaller subsystems that constitute or form a suprasystem. The concept of boundary connotes the separateness of a system from a larger system and yet belongingness to that suprasystem (Becvar & Becvar, 1996:67).

5.1.5 Openness and closeness

The extent to which a system permits the input of new information into the system refers to the openness or closeness of that system (Becvar & Becvar, 1996:68).

All living systems are open to some extent, so openness and closeness refer to a matter of degree. An appropriate balance between the two is desirable for healthy functioning. When a system and its identity are threatened by a context very different from its own, closeness would be the more viable option if that identity were to be

maintained. For example if a particular religious group finds itself in a minority within the larger cultural system. In order for that group to maintain its uniqueness, information and input that could lead to change within the system may need to be screened out, thus the boundaries being more closed than open to new information.

Kotze (1987:3) elaborate on this:

“die gesin as sisteem in verhouding staan tot die omgewing, of die breëre sisteme wat die konteks vorm waarbinne dit funksioneer. Tussen die gesin en die omgewing vind daar ook wedersydse beïnvloeding plaas, dus kan die gesin as ‘n oop sisteem beskryf word. Die bestendige homeostatische toestand waarheen ‘n oop sisteem neig, is egter nie vooraf vasgelê nie. Dit is dus nie vir ‘n mens moontlik om nie ‘n invloed op sy omgewing te hê nie en is dit ook nie moontlik om nie vanuit die omgewing beïnvloed te word nie. Dit beteken dus dat die mens in ‘n wederkerige beïnvloedingsverhouding tot sy omgewing staan.”

5.1.6 Entropy/Negentropy

If a balance between openness and closeness is appropriate, being too open or too close will probably be dysfunctional. In either extreme the system may be said to be in a state of entropy, or is tending to maximum disorder. By allowing in either too much information or not enough information, the identity and the survival of the system are threatened. The system can also tend to maximum order – the system is then in a state of negentropy, or negative entropy. The system is allowing in information and permitting change as appropriate into the system, while screening out information and avoiding changes that would threaten the survival of the system (Becvar & Becvar, 1996:68).

5.1.7 Equifinality/Equipotentiality

Whatever the particular balance between morphogenesis and morphostasis, openness and closeness, or entropy and negentropy, all systems can be described according to the concept of equifinality. Regardless where one begins, the end will be the same. Literally meaning equal ending, *equifinality* is “the tendency towards a characteristic final state from different initial states and in different ways based upon dynamic interaction in a open system attaining a steady state” (Becvar & Becvar, 1996:69).

People in relationships tend to develop habitual ways of behaving and communicating with one another.

The notion of *equipotentiality* reminds us that different end states may be arrived at from the same initial conditions. This concept of equifinality directs our attention to the level of process and to a focus on what is going on. Our concern is with the here-and-now, with the ongoing interaction in a system rather than with the origins of these characteristic patterns and processes. This shift in emphasis from the why to the what, from the past to the here-and-now, is one of the major differences between the individual psychology and systems theory perspectives (Becvar & Becvar, 1996:69).

5.1.8 Communication and Information Processing

People in relationships tend to develop habitual ways of behaving and communicating with one another. We refer to these habits and characteristic processes as redundant patterns of interaction, systems are comprised of patterns and these patterns do repeat themselves.

Becvar & Becvar (1996:70-72) defines communication and information processing as:

- Principle 1: One cannot not behave
- Principle 2: One cannot not communicate
- Principle 3: The meaning of a given behaviour is not the *true* meaning of the behaviour; it is, however, the personal truth for the person who has given it a particular meaning.

We may talk about communication occurring in three different modes: the verbal, the non-verbal and the context. The combination of the nonverbal mode and the context is called the analog. The verbal or digital mode refers to the spoken word, or the report aspect of the message (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:165).

Whenever relationship is the central issue of communication, we find that digital (verbal) language is almost meaningless. The non-verbal mode is the command aspect of the message. It refers to voice tone, inflection, gestures, facial expressions, and so forth, and tells how a message is to be received (Becvar & Becvar, 1996: 70-73).

As we shall see in later chapters and with the workshops held by John Gray (chapter 6), it is therefore the relationship-defining mode of communication in that it defines the intent of the sender of the message. For example, the words “I love you” said, on the one hand, in a gruff tone with clenched fists, and on the other hand, gently while delivering a bouquet of flowers, make statements about two different kinds of relationships. The context even further modifies the meaning of a message.

5.1.9 Congruent and Incongruent Communication

We therefore have two levels of communication: the content, referring to the digital portion, and the process, referring to the analog. When these two levels match, the members of a relationship have a pretty good idea where they stand with each other, they are sending and receiving straight, or congruent, messages. When the two levels do not match, however, problems may arise. The recipient of the message “I love you” will not respond to the gruff tone but will rather retort with something like “Why are you mad at me?” (Becvar & Becvar, 1996: 71-72).

5.1.10 Avoiding Communication Traps

Becvar & Becvar (1996:72) elaborate on this when he says that:

To avoid communication traps, the “safer alternative is to respond to the words, to the content of the message, rather than to the analog, or the process. Playing the ball into the other’s court. By simply choosing to reply, “I love you” and to respond to such a manner, you are not participating in allowing the other to insert a negative comment into the relationship via an incongruent message”.

In their discussion on ways of communication Becvar & Becvar (1996:72) give the following example: “Talk about the way of communication – “I get the message that your words are saying one thing while your voice, tone, and body seem to be saying something else. Could you clarify this for me?” There needs to be a rule that says that this kind of communication is acceptable in the relationship. Otherwise, such a response may be greeted by anger or defensiveness for which you are at least in part responsible”.

Another trap involves mind reading. Members become sensitive to each other’s analog and to unspoken definitions of their mutual interaction. However, each member of a relationship still perceives things in a unique way, and mind reading simply is not possible. Everyone receives messages differently (Brehm, 1992:213).

Communication and information processing are the heart of the matter from a systems perspective. Information flow – within, into, and out of, is the basic process of social systems. How we communicate, how information is shared and handled, provides a key to understanding more completely the notion of relationship and wholeness.

5.1.11 Relationship and Wholeness

Two individuals relating together are not independent, they mutually influence one another. The perspective is relational and the focus is on the context. As the size of a

family or system increases, the complexity of the system increases. The addition of new members now has the possibility of a triangle.

5.1.11.1 Triangles

According to Bowen (1976:76), the triangle may be “the smallest stable relationship system”. When a problem arises, a triangle will inevitably emerge as one or the other member of the relationship draws a third person into the situation.

Bowen’s family theory is not fundamentally about families, but about life. Important constructs are differentiation, emotional system, multigenerational transmission, and emotional triangle. In Bowen’s thinking, making the nuclear family the unit of observation is only a way station in that outward migration of perspective. Focus on the family is a way to maintain a direction that leads toward understanding the more encompassing natural systems that families mirror.

5.1.11.2 Relationship Style

Different relationship styles have been identified:

Complementary relationships are characterized by a high frequency of opposite kinds of behaviour, for example as discussed in chapter six: aggressiveness on the part of one is maintained by passivity on the part of the other, and vice versa.

In symmetrical relationships the exchange involves a high frequency of similar kinds of behaviour. In this case, the more she screams, the more he screams back and so forth (Becvar & Becvar,1996:73-74).

In parallel relationships, both complementary and symmetrical exchanges occur, members alternate in the one-up and one-down position. Role flexibility exists within the relationship, and both members are able to accept responsibility as appropriate.

Given wholeness and interdependence as characteristic aspects of a system, a change on one part will have an impact on the whole. It is possible to work with one member of a family to facilitate a change in the larger context. It was the fact that in the case of a long standing problem the family tends to organize itself around the problem. Treating the problem in isolation, fails to acknowledge the systemic idea that a problem is a symptom of system dysfunction and that a lasting solution requires a change in the larger context.

According to the systems theory it is often useful for family therapists to operate at the level of simple cybernetics, i.e. remaining outside the family as observers who think of a system, or family, who also includes them in system level and defines them as a part of the context (Becvar & Becvar, 1996:73-75).

5.2 SYSTEM THEORY AND CYBERNETICS

Sluzki (1985:26) defines cybernetics as: “The science of communication and control in man and machine.”

5.2.1 Cybernetics of Cybernetics

Cybernetics moves us up to a higher level of systems thinking. On this higher level of abstraction, the observer becomes part of, or a participant in, that which is observed. Everything that is going on is entirely self-referential: “whatever you see reflects your properties” (Becvar & Becvar, 1996:75).

There is no reference to an outside environment, the boundary is unbroken and the system is closed.

At this level we speak of negative feedback. At the level of cybernetics of cybernetics, the focus shifts from a behavioural analysis based on inputs and outputs with an emphasis on the environment to a analysis that emphasizes the internal structure of the system and the mutual connectedness of the observer and the observed (Varela, 1976:30).

5.2.2 Wholeness and Self-Reference

Keeney (1983:142) elaborate on this when he says that:

“Pattern organized through physical and mental processes is the primordial idea that gave birth to cybernetics. Distinctions based on the persons own frames of reference, and reality are punctuated according to these epistemological premises”. A new paradigm in science, according to which one seeks an overall theory to include machines and organisms; the theory would clearly involve the ideas of information, control and feedback.”

In other words, people create their own reality, which “is a domain specified by the operations of the observer” (Maturana 1978:55).

Based on their own epistemological premises. Their reality is paradoxical in the sense that it cannot be known as true in an absolute way, and their truth exists only as a factor chosen to punctuate reality at the level of cybernetics.

According to Varela and Johnson (1976:27), humans can define themselves as both subject and object but cannot get outside themselves to observe the process of defining themselves. To understand the autonomy of a system precludes reference to an outside and can only be described through reference itself. Autonomy refers to the highest order of feedback processes of a system, and the range of stability maintained is that of the organization of the whole. At this level, systems have identity as

particular unities – as cells, organisms, individuals, families, animal populations and economic systems.

5.2.3 Openness and Closeness

A network of dynamic processes whose effects do not leave that network specifies the identity of the system as this level. Neither possibility denies the other. Each view is both legitimate and flawed, and each is a function of the level at which we choose to punctuate our experience, the systemic reality we wish to create.

Autonomous systems are interactive and changes may occur at this level. Such changes involve structure. Interactions of systems at the level of autonomy must be referred to as perturbations rather than as inputs. As used systemically, structure refers to the relations between the parts, as well as the identity of the parts, that constitute the whole.

Two systems have the same organization if the relations that define them as unities are the same, regardless of how these relations are obtained, and two systems that have the same organization may have different structures (Maturana, 1974:467).

•

As long as we have individuals operating according to some kind of generational hierarchy in support of the mutual welfare of all and the individual development of each, we may define that unity as a family. The identity of a system is determined by its organization and remains unchanged as long as this remains unchanged, regardless of whether the system is static or dynamic and regardless of whether the structure of the system changes or not (Maturana, 1974:467-468).

5.2.4 Autopoiesis

According to Maturana (1987:46-47), the most striking feature of an autopoietic system (the way the parts relate, rather than the nature, that generates a unity with particular properties by means of which we define that unity), is that it pulls itself up and becomes distinct from its environment through its own dynamics, in such a way that both become inseparable. A boundary is necessary in order to be able to

distinguish a family from the larger context as well as the relationship between family members. The boundary does not cause the family nor does the family cause the boundary. Each requires the other and both are part of the unitary process of autopoiesis. There is no separation between the producer and the product, the system does what it does (Becvar & Becvar, 1996:78).

The doing and being of an autopoietic unity are inseparable and therefore we can only talk about negative feedback, which refers to the systems maintenance behaviour. To describe positive feedback is to look at change in isolation rather than in the context of the larger autonomous system. In the larger context the system operates itself.

5.2.5 Structural Determinism

Systems are structurally determined. The system itself determines the range of structural variations acceptable without loss of identity. The system is limited, by virtue of its structure, to what it can and cannot do. The environment does not determine what a system does. Thus, “we can think of the continually changing environment continually opening up further possible habitats for species to evolve through their internal pressures, their ‘curiosity’, and their vast richness of possibilities” (Hayward, 1984:134).

5.2.6 Structural Coupling and Non-purposeful Drift

What a system does is always correct. Only from the perspective of an observer can we define the action of a system as an error. Systems do exist in a medium that includes other systems and observers. According to the concept structural coupling organisms survive by fitting with one another and with other aspects of their context, and will die if these are insufficient (Varela and Johnson, 1976:28).

Life of a system is a process of non purposeful drift within a medium. There may be continual interactions, both internally and externally and constant change, such

interactions are not determined and will continue until the time of disintegration, which can occur any time. Change occurs in response to a change in a context for whose creation both systems are responsible.

Therapists in system theory do not change systems or treat families. Rather, they change their behaviour, examine the impact of this new behaviour in terms of reactions to it, and then react to reactions in an ongoing modification process. Feedback has been established and a change in context has occurred (Maturana, 1978:45-46).

5.2.7 Epistemology of Participation

Structural coupling has an enormous effect about how we think about reality. We “create new and different ways to coordinate our actions with one another”. The observer and the observed are bound up with each other and that objectivity is impossible. We refer to this as an epistemology of participation. Specially, whether we are attempting to question, describe, or attribute meaning, these are all interactive processes involving perturbation and compensation within a context (Maturana, 1974:469).

A problem is a question. A question is a perturbation that the questioned system must compensate for by generating a conduct that satisfied certain criteria specified in the same domain as the perturbation. Therefore, to solve a problem is to answer a question in the same domain in which it is asked (Maturana, 1974:470).

Understanding is possible only from the perspective of the subject who is doing the questioning, describing, or explaining.

5.2.8 Reality as a Multiverse

As living systems we operate in consensual domains generated through structural coupling in the context of a common language. First-order consensual domains are those we study. Second-order consensual domains are those of which we are a part. What we do as observers is operate as though we were external to a situation and observe it (first-order) and ourselves (second-order) observing. Therefore, we literally create the world in which we live by living it (Maturana, 1987:61).

Each person lives in and creates reality in a slightly different manner based on our own unique combinations of heredity, experiences and perceptions. For each of us this reality is both true and equally valid.

According to Maturana (1974:36), the significance of this view, as we move from simple cybernetics to cybernetics of cybernetics, is as follows:

“Systems theory first enables us to recognize that all the different views presented by the different members of a family had some validity. But systems theory implied that these were different views of the same system. There is no one way which the system is; that there is no absolute, objective family. For each member there is a different family, and that each of these is absolutely valid”.

Perception now becomes a process of construction, we invent the environment in which we live as we perceive/construct it. We create our reality, our world, by assimilating and accommodating input. It is exceedingly important to understand the assumptions according to which we perceive reality (Maturana, 1994:37).

The idea of self-reference becomes important when including the observer in his/her observations. The environment as we perceive it is our invention. Self-reference indicates that what an observer describes, has to be understood when taking into

account the observer himself. The observations of an observer thus refer to him/herself and are a reflection of his/her construction of realities.

Our brains make the images that we think we "perceive" (Bateson, 1979:38).

The observer is responsible for his/her description because it is her/his construction, and can therefore not be accepted as the mere reflection of an objective external reality. Keeney (1983:82 & 208) also emphasizes the responsibility of the observer and the importance of ethical considerations.

Cybernetics of cybernetics...provides us with a view of self-reference and an ethical consideration for how we participate in the construction and maintenance of our experiential universe (Refer 4.2.8).

Cybernetics and general systems theory offers the foundation on which to build a new treatment modality. A system perspective offers a unique way of conceptualizing behaviour as the clinician moves from an individual level of analysis to the family level.

System theory is almost similar to **social constructionism**, as the term means different things to different people and is also a way of thinking about the world, as will be illustrated in the following discussions.

5.3 SOCIAL-CONSTRUCTIONISM

5.3.1 Introduction

Social constructionism represents an epistemological shift that has opened the field to narrative and solution-focused models of therapy. As the shift contains subtle but significant differences in viewing family therapy, social constructionism may

complement systems theory and offer new possibilities for assessment and intervention with families.

5.3.2 What is social-constructionism?

The focus that was placed by second order cybernetics on the importance of taking into account the observer, brings the question of epistemology to the fore.

The epistemological issues that became important include questions on the biology of cognition and the relationship between knowledge and the object thereof. It was especially the attempts by Maturana and Varela, to shed light on this issue received a lot of attention.

According to the social-constructionist discourse, knowledge cannot be considered as being objectively verifiable. Knowledge is seen as being socially constructed through the medium of language. As such, one cannot reach a position where a claim can be made of having discovered the ultimate truth. As knowledge and understanding is constructed within the context of language and as this process is situated in the social domain, knowledge cannot be an objective reflection of reality. (Gergen, 1985 (a): 266; Monk, et al., 1996: 34; Genot, 1996: 51; Roux, 1996; 6; Kotze 1992; Berger & Luckmann, 1987: 15).

The observations of an observer are determined by the observer's own neurological processes that enable him to know. His knowledge thus depends on his own structure. Outside realities are viewed as perturbations:

What states of neural activity are triggered by the different perturbations is determined in each person by his or her individual structure and not by the features of the perturbing agent.....Our experience is moored to our structure in a binding way....When we examine more closely how we get to know this world, we invariably find that we cannot separate our history of actions – biological and social – from how this world appears to us (Maturana & Varela, 1987:22-23).

The terms “social constructionism and social constructivist” will be used interchangeably.

Social constructionism is almost similar to system theory, as the term means **different things to different people** and is also a way of thinking about the world. A common thread running through social constructionist concepts is that meaning or knowledge is constructed through social interaction.

Gergen (1985:3) summarizes the social constructivist position as follows:

“Social constructionism is principally concerned with elucidating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world in which they live”.

Gergen (1985(b):3) proposes the following four ideas as representing of most social constructionist:

1. “The world can be understood in a variety of ways; an absolute reality does not exist. Instead, reality may vary from individual to individual, from culture to culture”.
2. “People interact and actively construct their understanding of the world. Reality is a social product. What was politically correct twenty years ago may be offensive today”.
3. “Specific understandings are popular or dominate a given field because they are useful. Families today became the focus of treatment, expanding treatment options”.
4. “These socially constructed understandings directly influence the ways individuals perceive and respond to their environments. Consequently, the

beliefs I hold about myself and the world around me directly impact my behaviour”.

Kotze (1992:10) summarizes the social constructivist position as follows:

“Wetenskap en kennis as die vrugte van wetenskaplike arbeid is dus in die taaldomein gelee en is as sodanig betekenis wat sosiaal in taal geskep word. Dit is nie weergawes van die werklikheid nie, maar eerder sosiale konstrukte oor die werklikheid.”

As a newer epistemology, social constructionism is concerned with how people understand the world around them, what meaning they create to explain the world, and how these meanings are constructed.

Although not directly referenced in these assumptions, implied in each is the power of language. Social construction grows out of human dialogue. Through the process of language and discourse, we shape our beliefs. In therapy, therefore, language and the conversational process are of particular importance (Freedman and Combs, 1994:27).

Human beings are seen as active shapers of their environment, using their perceptions to “construct” their view of the world.

These ideas challenge the notion that human beliefs, ideas or practices reflect any inherent or objective truth about human nature.

Instead, “a central tenet of the postmodern worldview in which we base our approach to therapy is that beliefs, laws, social customs, habits of dress and diet – all the things that make up the psychological fabric of ‘reality’ – arise through social interaction over time. In other words, people, together, construct their realities as they live them.” (Freedman and Combs, 1994:23).

The social-constructionist perspective invites us to consider the social origins of taken for granted assumptions. It directs us to question the fundamental propositions

underlying descriptions of persons. It also directs our attention to the social, moral, political, and economic institutions that sustain and are supported by current assumptions about human nature (Gergen, 1985:267-268). A very central aspect of this mini-dissertation involves the questioning of current assumptions, discourses, realities, truths, and 'rules' for the appropriate responses of couples in relationships. A later section will build upon the ideas outlined in this chapter to indicate the ways in which most of the ideas, beliefs, truths and realities, are social constructions rather than reflections of any absolute truth conditions.

Varela (1976:245) explains this, emphasizing that objective truth cannot exist, that knowledge is relative and that our actions are thus ethically important:

The knowledge of knowledge compels. It compels us to adopt an attitude of permanent vigilance against the temptation of certainty. It compels us to recognize that certainty is not a proof of truth. It compels us to realize that the world everyone sees is not *the* world but *a* world which we bring forth with others. It compels us to see that the world will be different only if we live differently. It compels us because when we know that we know, we cannot deny (to ourselves or to others) that we know.

5.3.2 Conclusion

The constructionist approach can be viewed as a postmodern discourse, as it is an epistemological shift away from objective knowledge and ultimate truth, to the acceptance of multiple realities and diversity of realities and meanings. It was developed from a biological and individualistic perspective. In Social Psychology and Anthropology another constructivist approach was developed, namely social discourse. Attention will be given to sensitivity and the gender discourse, feminist movements, women's and men's movements which play an important role in the gender discourse and will only be discussed briefly.

5.4 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION DISCOURSE

5.4.1 What is a discourse?

According to Burr (1998:48), “a discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events. It refers to a particular picture that is painted of an event (or person or class of persons), a particular way of representing it or them in a certain light. A multitude of alternative versions of events is potentially available through language, this means that, surrounding any one object, event, person, there may be a variety of different discourses, each with a different story to tell about the object in question, a different way of representing it to the world”.

Social construction discourse is more than just a new social paradigm. It is a way of understanding the phenomenon of knowledge itself. As Gergen (1985:266) puts it: “The study of social process could become generic for understanding the nature of knowledge itself”. Social construction discourse is mainly concerned with “elucidating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world in which they live”.

Social construction discourse is an attempt to approach knowledge from the perspective of the social processes through which it is created. Social construction theorists see ideas, concepts and memories being so-constructed within social interchanges and “mediated through language” (Hoffman 1990:8).

Knowledge is thus not viewed as the objective reflection or representation of an external reality, but as the social construction of people in their attempt to live together within this world. Knowledge is negotiated meaning within the context of linguistic interaction. Knowledge does not consist in “static systems of forms, cognitive structures, or frameworks” (Anderson , 1991a:22, Gergen, 1985).

Gergen (1985:266) explains as follows:

“Social constructionism views discourse about the world not as a reflection or map of the world but as an artifact of communal interchange”. In this sense science is no longer a reflection of the world, but a reflection of the social processes through which it is constructed. By viewing knowledge as social phenomenon, social construction discourse avoids or bridges the dualism between idealism and realism.

According to the social-constructivistic discourse, knowledge cannot be considered as being objectively verifiable. Knowledge is seen as being socially constructed through the medium of language. As such, one cannot reach a position where a claim can be made of having discovered the ultimate truth. As knowledge and understanding is constructed within the context of language and as this process is situated in the social domain, knowledge cannot be an objective reflection of reality. (Gergen 1985:269-270; Hoffman 1990:3).

According to Kotze (1992: 64,65): “ sosiale-konstruksieteorie is ‘n poging om kennis te belig vanuit die prosesse waardeur dit by mense tot stand kom. Dit raak dus die status van kennis as sosiale-konstruksie van mense eerder as ‘n objektiewe weerspieeling van ‘n eksterne werklikheid. Die mens se kennis en idees oor die wêreld word dus as sosiale skeppings beskou”.

According to Gergen (1985:266) “Social constructionism views discourse about the world not as a reflection or map of the world but as an artifact of communal interchange.”

Social construction discourse is an attempt to approach knowledge from the perspective of the social processes through which it is created. Knowledge is thus not viewed as the objective reflection or representation of an external reality, but as the social construction of people in their attempt to live together within this world. The social-constructivistic theory provides us with a radically new picture of human

reality as amorphous and ever changing. From this perspective, meaning can no longer be objectively measured or established (Worden, 1999:9 ; McNamee & Gergen(b), 1992:7-9).

Misunderstanding is more likely than understanding, for the very reason that language does not carry meaning, but brings forth meaning. The relationship between meaning and language is of importance.

The social construction of knowledge emphasizes the importance of language as social phenomenon, through which individuals as relational beings, live (Gergen, 1985:227).

5.4.2 Language and meaning as discourse

A dominant discourse within the social construction discourse is on knowledge, language and the way in which meaning is constructed through conversations. This will now be discussed.

Both the constructivist and social construction approaches emphasize the importance of language. For constructivists, language merely perturbs the other person to build up conceptual structures which to him/her seem compatible with words and actions of the speaker. Maturana and Varela (1987 : 82) used the term “*linguaging*” to explain the linguistic domain in which structural coupling between human beings comes about.

Language is more than just a way of connecting people. People exist in language. The expression, “*to be in language*” is used to explain that it is a dynamic, social operation and not a simple linguistic activity. Meaning and understanding come about in language. Language does not exist in a pre-determined code for linking inner psychological events to outer events in social life. In this context, understanding does not mean that we ever understand the person. On the contrary, through dialogue we

are able to understand only that which the other person is saying (Anderson & Goolishian 1988:377 & McNaMee & Gergen, 1992:7-9).

Language itself provides us with a way of structuring our experience of ourselves and the world, and that the concepts we use do not pre-date language but are made possible by it (Sapir, 1947:14), states that language determines thought and that if there is no way to express a particular concept in a language, then that concept just cannot be used by people who speak that language.

The relation between meaning and language is best described by Anderson and Goolishian (1988:378): “Meaning and understanding do not exist prior to the utterances of language, but come into being within language”.

Eagleton (1983:60) states that meaning is “not simply something expressed or reflected in language: it is actually produced by it....we can only have the meaning and experience in the first place because we have a language to have them in.” Andersen (1993:304) puts it this way: “We are *in* language that brings us a general knowledge (prejudice) that both limits and makes possible what we understand.

Language thus constitutes meaning. Life is experienced within language and how we experience is given meaning to within the parameters of our language. The language we grow up and live in within a specific culture, specifies or constitutes the experience we have.

From a social construction viewpoint the focus is not on the individual person but on the social interaction in which language is generated, sustained and abandoned (Gergen & Gergen 1991: 64). From this point of view “people live, and understand

their living, through socially constructed narrative realities that give meaning and organization to their experience” (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992:26).

The point is that numerous discourses surround any object and each strives to represent or “construct” it in a different way. Each discourse brings different aspects into focus, raises different issues for consideration, and has different implications for what we should do.

5.5 DISCOURSE: DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN SEXES

5.5.1 Discourse and Identity

Our Identity arises out of interaction with other people and is based on language. We can now say that our identity is constructed out of the discourses culturally available to us, and which we draw upon in our communications with other people (Burr, 1998:52-53).

People’s identities are achieved by a subtle interweaving of many different ‘threads’. There is the ‘thread’ of age (there may be a child, a young adult or very old), that of class (depending on their occupation, income and level of education), ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and so on. All these are woven together to produce the fabric of a person’s identity. Each of these components is ‘constructed’ through the discourses that are present in our culture – the discourses of age, of gender, of education, of sexuality and so on. We are the end-product, the combination, of the particular ‘versions’ of these things that are available to us (Burr, 1998:52-54).

Different components have implications for each other. The discourses of age for example, represent people at various stages of life in different ways. Old age is often associated with loss (of personal competencies such as memory and motor skills, of status and power), decline and an absence of “development”. Alternative discourses of old age can paint a picture of wisdom, respect and serenity. Similarly, youth is

variously represented as the time of progress, development and change, a period of identity crises, or a period of danger and non-conformity.

For each 'thread' of our identity, there are a limited number of discourses on offer out of which we might fashion ourselves.

According to Burr (1998:52), the discourses of sexuality on offer in our present day society offer a restricted menu for the manufacture of sexual identity. Given the representations of sexuality that are culturally available to us (lesbian and gay sexualities, and hetero sexuality), like normal and perverted, we have no choice but to fashion our identity out of them. Our sexual activities (or lack of them), can have no form of representation to ourselves or to the people around us other than in the form of these discourses, and so we must inevitably adopt the identity of "straight" or pervert, or hetro - or homosexual: the representations or discourses of sexuality available within our language leave us with very few other alternatives.

The discourses of '*science*' and of '*gender*' are also good examples of this. Science and masculinity pose few problems for each other. Science is thought of as logical, objective and value-free. Masculinity embodies rationality and an ability to keep one's emotions out of one's reasoning. The man who becomes a scientist can expect few identity problems. But for women there is a potential area of conflict or confusion. Prevailing discourses of femininity speak of emotionality, illogicality and intuitiveness – not the stuff of science. Women who want to do science are faced with the problem of how they can bring off their identity without appearing to be either "not a proper woman" or "a bad scientist" (Burr, 1998:53).

For each of us, then, a multitude of discourses are constantly at work constructing and producing our identity. Our identity therefore originates not from inside the person, but from the social realm, where people swim in a sea of language and other signs, a

sea that is invisible to us because it is the very medium of our existence as social beings (Burr, 1998:53).

Although identities are not fixed or determined by some essential nature, this does not mean to say that they have been arbitrarily or randomly fashioned. To say that identities are socially constructed through discourse does not mean to say that those identities are accidental. It is at this point that a poststructuralist social constructionism brings to bear a political analysis of the construction of our social world, including personal identity (Burr, 1998:54).

Changes in gender roles, expectations and assumptions, together with changing theories regarding men, women, resulted in gender sensitivity.

5.5.1.1 Sensitivity and the Gender Discourse

Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1988:455) divide existing gender theories into two categories: alpha bias theories, exaggerating differences between gender, and beta bias, which stress the similarities or equality of men and women. Cultural feminism is a movement within feminism that encourages women's culture, emphasizes women's qualities, as well as values and accentuates differences between the genders. One such a study accentuating the differences between genders is that of Gilligan (1982:29).

Gilligan (1982:29) investigated the moral development of men and women and stresses the perception that masculinity is defined through separation and threatened by intimacy, while femininity is defined through attachment and is threatened by separation. The moral development of men and women differs, for males tend to mediate "impersonally through systems of logic and law" while females tend to mediate "personally through communication in relationship"

Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1988:36) note that those in power rule, discipline, control and rationally those without power advocate relatedness and compassion. The differences named by Gilligan (1982:30) are thus accounted for by an individual's position in the social hierarchy, because in the situation between mother and children

where the mother advocates the rules and discipline, the children appeal for sympathy and understanding.

The beta bias theories occur in systems approaches, the strategic (Haley 1976: 14) and the structural (Minuchin 1974: 88) therapies. Females are placed in the same hierarchical position as the male, but do not have comparable power and resources in the family (Hare-Mustin & Marecek 1988: 456). Equal treatment may overlook inequality between husband and wife. In psychology the concept of androgyny were also used to address the gender issue, by emphasizing both male and female characteristics from the different voices of men and women, but the masculine qualities were more highly valued (Gilligan, 1982:31).

The women's and men's movements play an important role in the gender discourse and will now be discussed briefly.

5.5.1.2 Women's and men's movement

The women's and men's movement accentuate the need for different theories and practices regarding gender. The women's movement is seen to either have opened up space for the men's movement to develop, or is blamed for demanding changed perceptions of men and their identity. Men are expected to be less aggressive, more communicative and definitely more sensitive in the post-feminist period (Walters 1993: 62).

The women's movements tried to point out that the "problematic" aspects of 'masculine' and 'feminine' are socially constructed and place power, privilege and resources primarily in the hands of men" (McGrath 1992:8).

Some gender discourses result in the dichotomy of an **either/or** debate as is evident in the Walters (1993: 62) versus Bly (1993: 7) discourse. Bly (1993:18) shows how, within men's movement, they are confronted with the shame for aggressive practices by men. According to Walters (1993:84) some practices within the men's movement were, however, seen by feminists as mother-blaming, without taking into account the

difficult roles of females and the disparity of power that exist between males and females.

Regarding the gender discourse, Hare-Mustin & Marecek (1988:74) concludes:

“Instead of looking for solutions to the basic problems of gender, we have looked for problems which correspond to the solution we have available. Since we do not have a solution to the problem of the disadvantaged status of women, we have ignored the problem and defined it as a non-problem”.

As a type of postmodern philosophy, feminist theory reveals and contributes to the growing uncertainty about the appropriate grounding and methods for explaining and interpreting human experience (Light, Keller and Calhoun, 1989:333).

• **5.5.1.3 Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory**

Women: equal or different

Demanding equality, as women, seems to be an erroneous expression of a real issue. Demanding to be equal presupposes a term of comparison. The exploitation of women is based upon sexual differences, and can only be resolved through sexual difference. Certain tendencies of the day, certain feminist are demanding the neutralization of sex (Jackson, 1993:23).

The ambiguity of the term “feminist” sums up the whole situation. What does “feminist” mean? Feminist is formed with the word “femme”, “women”, and means: someone who fights for women. For many it means someone who fights for women as a class and for the disappearance of this class. For many others it means someone who fights for women and her defence – for the myth, then, and its re-enforcement (de Beauvoir, 1949:282).

It is their historical task, and only theirs, to define what they call oppression in materialistic terms, to make it evident that women are a class, which is to say that the category “women” as well as the category “men” are political and economic categories, not eternal ones. Their fight aims to suppress men as a class, not through a genocidal, but a political struggle. Once the class “men” disappears, “women” as a class will disappear as well, for there are no slaves without masters. Their task, it seems, is to always thoroughly dissociate “women” (the class within which they fight) and “women”, the myth. For “woman” does not exist for them: it is only an imaginary formation, while “women” is the product of a social relationship (Lamanna & Riedman, 1997:72-74).

Furthermore, they have to destroy the myth inside and outside themselves. “Women’ is not each one of them, but the political and ideological formation which negates ‘women’ (the product of a relation of exploitation). ‘Women’ is there to confuse them, to hide the reality ‘women’. In order to be aware of being a class and to become a class they first have to kill the myth of ‘women’ including its most seductive aspects (Jackson, 1993:24; de Beauvoir, 1949:282 and Bonvillain, 1995:13).

Both the ‘different and deficient’ and ‘different but equally valid’ approaches, then, are problematic politically: They result in maintaining inequality. However, they are also inadequate as descriptive theories. There is a growing body of evidence disconfirming the difference view. For example, the consensual belief that women are cooperative, employing speaker orientated speech behaviour has not gained support (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:324-325).

The alternative to the difference hypothesis, then, stresses the similarity between the sexes. To show that women’s and men’s linguistic behaviour is much more alike than different, Weiten & Lloyd, (1994:324-325), examined the effect of social context on people’s behaviour. They focused on symmetric talk between friends of both sexes. They found no difference in amount and use of these hedges between women and men.

In a similar vein, Crawford (1996:17), proposes to view language as ‘a set of strategies for negotiating the social landscape, an action oriented medium’. This

constructionist view, conceptualizes gender as a system of social relations operating at the individual, social structural levels.

It is not the intention of this work to involve itself in the extended debate that centres on the issues of feminism. Thus, for the purpose of this work, the above definition is considered as being sufficient in delineating the major differences between the two modes of thought.

5.5.2 Discourse, social structure and social practices

The discourses that form our identity have implications for what we can do and what we should do. Prevailing discourses of femininity often construct women as, say, nurturing, close to nature, emotional, negatively affected by their hormones, empathic and vulnerable, as discussed in chapter three.

From this it is only a short step to the recommendations that women are particularly able to care for young children, and that they should do so, that they are unsuited to careers in top management or positions of responsibility, and that they should avoid potentially dangerous activities such as walking home alone at night or hitch-hiking (Burr, 1998:54-55).

Prevailing discourses of “the individual” paint a picture of human beings as separate, disconnected units ‘naturally’ differing from each other in terms of their motivation, talents, intelligence, determination and so on, so that, within a market economy, competitiveness and ambition secure the survival of the fittest according to their natural abilities (Burr 1998:54).

Why do these particular versions of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ and the ‘individual’ enjoy such widespread popularity and acceptance? Why do some versions or ways of representing people or events appear as ‘truth’ and others as ‘fiction’?

Discourses are not simply abstract ideas, ways of talking about and representing things that, as it were, float like balloons far above the real world. Discourses are intimately connected to the way that society is organised and run. In our society we have institutions such as the law, education, marriage and the family, and the church. These things give shape and substance to the daily lives of each of us. They offer us social positions and statuses. They give work, marries them, educates them (Burr, 1998:45).

The discourses that form our identity are intimately tied to the structures and practices that are lived out in society day to day, and it is in the interest of relatively powerful groups that some discourses and not others receive the stamp of 'truth'. If we accept that men, relative to women, are still in a more powerful position in society, then we can say that prevailing discourses of femininity serve to uphold this power inequality (Burr, 1998:55).

“We should be aware of coming to the conclusion that prevailing discourses are ensured their dominant position for eternity, due to their dominant position or that other competing discourses cannot complete a successful 'takeover bid'. This century has seen a gradual emergence of alternative discourses of femininity, and more recently of masculinity, which are gaining more ground. What can be said of women or men, or how they can be portrayed in stories, images and so on, is undergoing change, and these changes go hand in hand with changes in the way society is organised – paid work (and therefore a degree of financial independence) is available to more women than it was a century ago, and the traditional 'nuclear' family is no longer the predominant household form” (Burr, 1998:56).

We have adhered to the suggestion that all the 'objects' of our consciousness, including our 'self', our notion of what it means to be a person, and our own identity, are constructed through language, and that it is discourses as coherent systems of representation that produce these things for us. As Parker (1992:5), puts it, “A strong form of the argument would be that discourses allow us to see things that are not

‘really’ there, and that once an object has been elaborated in a discourse it is difficult not to refer to it as if it were real”.

The discourses we employ often have political implications that we should investigate if we are interested in changing ourselves or the world we live in.

5.5.3 Power discourse

The relationship between power and discourse has received a great deal of attention from writers within a poststructuralist tradition in recent years and one of the most influential figures is that of the French philosopher Foucault.

Understanding of the relationship between knowledge and power is the notion that knowledge increases a person’s power.

The work of Foucault plays an important role in the discourse on power (power relations) and family therapy in the work of family therapists in the social construction discourse (Freedman and Combs, 1996:37).

• In a dialogue Foucault in (Gordon 1980:141) explained that “power is ‘always already there’ and that one is never ‘outside’ it”. He also stressed the fact that never to be outside of power does not mean that one is trapped and condemned to defeat. Foucault in (Gordon 1980:142) continued to suggest the following:

- “Power is co-extensive with the social body, there are no spaces of primal liberty between the meshes of its network”;
- “Relations of power are interwoven with other kinds of relations (production, kinship, family, sexuality) for which they play a conditioning as well as a conditioned role at the same time”;
- “These relations don’t take the sole form of prohibition and punishment, but are of multiple forms”;

- “Power relations, do ‘serve’ because it is capable of being utilized in strategies”;
- “One should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination with “dominators” on one side and “dominated” on the other, but a multiform production of relations of power and resistance. Because power is seen as relational, resistance exists in the same place as power, is multiple and can be integrated in multiform strategies”.

Power and power relations can be seen in everyday interactions, techniques and practices, such as the hierarching of individuals in relation to one another (Parker 1989). Parker (1989:63) also discussed how power plays a role in the way the “self” is constructed as the subject and object of discourse.

Conversational power is seen in the processes that privileges certain kinds of talk; “talking procedures” and certain “talkers” while marginalizing others.

•

5.5.4 Discourse, Power and Identity

Discourses offer a framework to people against which they may understand their own experience and behaviour and that of others, and can be seen to be tied to social structures and practices in a way which masks the power relations operating in society.

The discourse of ‘romantic’ love is one, which we are subjected to. We are surrounded by film and TV images of true love, young love, adulterous love, love at first sight. Singers sing of it, magazines publish letters about it, and all of us at some time have asked ourselves the question whether we are ‘in’ it, ever have been or ever will be. As a way of formatting our thoughts, emotions and behaviour, the discourse of romantic love must surely be one of the most prevalent in modern society (Burr 1998:72).

What are the images and assumptions of this discourse? What does it say? Firstly, it represents itself as a 'natural' feature of human nature, and one that has a function in bonding. Love appears as the emotional cement, which strengthens the sexual relationship between men and women. If we really love someone, it means that we care about her or him and her or his welfare, and that we to some extent bear responsibility for that welfare. It also means that sexual services can be expected to form part of the relationship, and that these are freely given. Secondly, love is the foundation for marriage and family life, and marriage is seen as the appropriate and natural culmination of a romantic alliance. "Falling in love" is therefore seen as the precursor to a 'caring' sexual relationship (marriage) in which men and women take responsibility for each other's welfare and that of their family.

As discourses 'romantic love', 'marriage' and 'the family' may be seen as ways of talking about our lives, ways of constructing them, living them and representing them to ourselves that mask inequitable social arrangements. We may be entering into forms of life which are not necessarily in our own interest, but are in the interests of relatively powerful groups in society, because the discourses available for framing our experience obtain our consent (Burr, 1998:73).

From a classic Marxist view, marriage and the family play a crucial role in the maintenance of capitalist economy. It is vital that men, as workers, are able to appear each day in the marketplace ready to sell their labour power. They need to be fed and clothed, to have their health attended to and to be relieved of other family responsibilities like taking children to school or to the dentist and doing shopping. Women therefore play a central role both in this daily 'reproduction' of labour force, and in its renewal from generation to generation in the form of children who will in their turn become workers. But it is also vital that women provide these services free of charge. If women did not marry, have children and provide their caring and sexual services free of charge, these things (cooking, laundering, child care and so on) would have to be paid for, via the wage packet, by employers. The idea of the 'family wage'

serves further to legitimate women's position as provider of free services to their husbands and families. But if you were to ask a selection of men and women why they think people get married and what they think marriage is about, it is unlike that these ideas would feature in their accounts. The discourse of 'romantic love' serves to re-cast this economic arrangement into a narrative of a mutually beneficial, caring relationship freely entered into for personal, emotional reasons. Men and women get married because they love each other, and women care for their husbands and families because they love them (Burr, 1998:71-78).

We have here two accounts, two different constructions, with conflicting stories to tell about marriage and the family – the 'romantic love/marriage/family' group of discourses and the 'Marxist discourse' and it is the former 'version' of events that is understood as 'common sense'. In Foucault's terms, the power which is exercised through these discourses (in persuading women to give away their services willingly, and in persuading men that the money they receive in their wage packet is a fair exchange for the work they have done) is so successful because of the extent to which it has been possible to obscure its operation by the discourses of love, marriage and family life.

Discourses are not monolithic. They do not interlock neatly with each other, cleanly sealing off all possible cracks and weaknesses. There are weak points, places where they may be attacked, and points to remember about the nature of discourses is that they are always implicitly being contested by other discourses. This is Foucault's point about power and resistance always operating together. Where there is power there is also resistance. And this is the key to the possibilities for social and personal change to be found within the social constructionist perspective (Burr, 1998:71-78).

5.5.5 Discourse of Similarity/Equality

The discourse of “similarity” is central to our present social and economic organisation, and as such it is a rich source of material for those who wish to use it to represent themselves in an unique way, similarity extends well beyond attitudes (Taylor & Peplau & Sears, 1994:284-287).

Demanding equality, as an individual, seems to be an erroneous expression of a real issue. Demanding to be equal presupposes a term of comparison.

Equal to what? What do women want to be equal to? Men? A wage? A public position? Equal to what?

The central thesis of feminism is that since patriarchal times women have in general been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men, a position comparable in many respects with that of racial minorities in spite of the fact that women constitute numerically at least half of the human race, and further that this secondary standing is not imposed of necessity by natural “feminine” characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of men. This, has resulted in the general failure of women to take a place of human dignity as free and independent existents, associated with men on a plane of intellectual and professional equality, a condition that not only has limited their achievement in many fields but also have a vitiating effect on the sexual relations between men and women (Jackson, 1993:21).

With reference to the above mentioned and all the discussions about similarities a discourse was established that all individuals are equal. With this in mind the author wants to deconstruct this discourse of similarities and focus on a **both/and**, rather on an **either/or** approach. That will result in a opportunity to put forth the discourse of differences as an alternative, not a replacement of similarity.

The argument in this study will allow the researcher to elaborate on differences between men and women as an alternative discourse.

The discourse of similarity was constructed in a social setting as to be the answer to all problems between men and women through culture, language and stories. That became the acceptable discourse even today. But, if one focuses on the biological imprinted differences between men and women one becomes aware that there might be a different view and understanding also evident in the society about another discourse in existence, that of difference (Stockard, 1997:75).

That gives the author the opportunity to put into place the alternative discourse of difference in her study and to deconstruct the discourse of similarity (Jackson, 1993:22).

Because discourse is constructed in social settings and understood through language and stories it will be relevant to focus on the Narrative theory in order to understand the power of stories.

This statement underlines narrative as another social construction discourse, which will be discussed now in the next section.

5.6. NARRATIVE FOCUS

5.6.1 Introduction

This section will endeavour to describe the central assumptions of the narrative approach, with a brief outline of understanding human experience and relationships. Such an understanding is essential in comprehending the specific techniques for dealing with the ways people understand and act in relationships which are discussed in a later chapter.

5.6.2 What is the Narrative Approach?

According to Parry & Doan (1994:45) "Narrative is a scheme by which humans give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions. Narrative meaning functions to give form to the understanding of a purpose to life and to join everyday actions and events into episodic units. It provides a framework for understanding the

past events of one's life and for planning the future actions. It is the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful."

Anderson (1997:109), elaborates on this by saying "in the telling and retelling not only do new stories emerge, but a person changes in relationship to them: the narrative self changes".

This will be followed by a brief outline of the structure and format of the Narrative Approach.

5.6.3 Story

Michael White and David Epston (1990), two co-authors for narrative therapy, pioneered the concept of a narrative (or story) approach to therapy.

Epston *et al.* (1990:97) defines stories as follows:

"...a story can be defined as a unit of meaning that provides a frame for lived experience. It is through these stories that lived experience is interpreted. We enter into stories; we are entered into stories by others; and we live our lives through these stories."

We organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative – stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing so. We dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative (MacIntyre, 1981:211).

Sluzki (1992:219) further emphasizes this point:

"To begin with, stories – narrative structures – are self regulated, semantic systems that contain a plot (what), characters (who) and setting (where and when). These narrative components, in turn, are held together, regulated by, and in turn regulating the moral order (meaning or overall theme) of the story,

effectively sealing off alternative interpretations. Each given story is, in turn, imbedded in a complex network of reciprocally influencing narratives. Individuals, families and larger collectives inhabit this system of multiple stories and organize their lives around making decisions in accordance with the dominant narratives.”

The lives of humans consist out of conversation, which can be seen as stories or narratives. Stories have a beginning (or a history), a present and a future, then the interpretation of current events is as much future-shaped as it is past-determined. Like any story, conversation is held together by the patterns involved.

In striving to make sense of life, persons face the task of arranging their experiences of events across the time in such a way as to arrive at a coherent account of themselves and the world around them...this account can be referred to as a story or self-narrative. The success of this storying of experience provides persons with a sense of continuity and meaning in their lives, and this is relied upon for the ordering of daily lives and for the interpretation of further experiences (White & Epston, 1990: 10-11; Genot, 1996: 48).

5.6.4 Dominant stories

The stories that persons have about their lives determine both the ascription of meaning to experience and the selection of those aspects of experience, that are to be given expression, these stories are constitutive or shaping of person's lives. The lives and relationships of persons evolve as they live through or perform these stories. These stories could become so dominant that the person experiences the story as a problem. This dominant story shapes their lives and relationships.

Bruner (1986a:143) further emphasizes:

“Narrative structures organize and give meaning to experience, but there are always feelings and lived experience not fully encompassed by dominant story”.

5.6.5 Externalization of the problem

“Externalizing” is an approach to encourage the persons to objectify and, at times to personify the problems that they experience as oppressive. In this process, the problem becomes a separate entity and thus external to the person or relationships that was ascribed as the problem (White & Epston, 1990:38).

White (1995:23) elaborate on this when he say that:

“externalising conversation...make it possible for persons to experience an identity that is distinct or separate from the problem. The problem is to an extent disempowered, as it no longer speaks to persons of the truth about who they are as people, or about the very nature of their relationships. This opens new possibilities for action. In the evolution of the externalising conversations, persons continue to revise their relationship with their problems.

The externalisation of the problem saturated story can be initiated by encouraging the externalisation of the problem and then by mapping the problem’s influence in the person’s life and relationship. This is begun by asking the person how *the problem* has been affecting their lives and their relationships. By achieving this separation from the problem saturated description of life, persons are more able to identify unique outcomes. Externalizing the problem, avoids the unhelpful and oppressing practices of blaming the person by “implying or asserting that he/she has bad or pathological intentions or traits” (White, 1995:23).

Parry & Doan (1994:52) further emphasizes this point:

“problem externalisation involves talking about *problems* as problems rather than *people* as problems”.

White & Epston (1990: 40) elaborates further by saying that the persons or couples will stand a greater chance to become an agent, not a client. They are more positive

rather than depressed. They work hard on their relationships to the problem and talked about and with the problem (White & Epston, 1990:40).

White & Epston (1990:39-40) found the externalisation of the problem to be helpful to persons in their struggle with problems. He concluded that, among other things, this practice:

- “Decreases unproductive conflict between persons, including those disputes over who is responsible for the problem”.
- “Undermines the sense of failure that has developed for many persons in response to the continuing existence of the problem despite their attempts to resolve it”;
- “Paves the way for persons to cooperate with each other to unite in a struggle against the problem, and to escape its influence in their lives and relationships”.
- “Opens up new possibilities for persons to take actions to retrieve their lives and relationships from the problem and its influence”.
- “Frees persons to take a lighter more effective, and less stressed approach to “deadly serious problems”;
- “Presents options for dialogue, rather than monologue, about the problem”.

Within the context of the practices associated with the externalising of problems, neither the person, nor the relationship between persons is the problem. Rather, the problem becomes the problem, and then the person’s relationship with the problem becomes the problem.

The externalising of the problem enables persons to separate from the dominant stories that have been shaping their lives and relationships. In doing so, persons are able to identify previously neglected but vital aspects of lived experience – aspects that could not have been predicted from a reading of the dominant story. White & Epston (1990:12) referred to these aspects of experience as “unique outcomes”.

5.6.6 Unique Outcomes

As unique outcomes are identified, persons can be encouraged to engage in performances of new meaning in relation to these. Success with this requires that the unique outcome be plotted into an alternative story about the person's life. White & Epston (1990:41) referred to this alternative story as a "unique account" and have developed an approach to questioning that encourage persons to locate, generate, or recurrent alternative stories that will "make sense" of the unique outcomes.

This is so because their existence could not have been predicted by a reading of the dominant story. Unique outcomes can include any event, feelings, intentions, thoughts, actions, that cannot be accommodated by the dominant story. The existence of these unique outcomes imply that when life narratives carry hurtful meanings or seem to offer only pleasant choices, they can be changed by highlighting different, previously un-storied events or by taking new meaning from already storied events, thereby constructing new narratives. In narrative therapy, unique outcomes are utilized as the building blocks of alternative, and more preferred narratives (Compare Freedman and Combs, 1994:40; White & Epston, 1990: 14-16).

Unique outcomes or alternative stories (White 1991) are also present in people's lives and these are elicited by *landscape of action* questions. *Landscape of action* questions encourage a person to situate the unique outcomes in sequences of events across time according to "particular plots" (White 1991:30). *Landscape of action* questions accentuate the recent and more distant history of the unique outcomes. *Landscape of consciousness* questions encourage a person to reflect on the meaning of the unique outcomes identified through the *landscape of action* questions. *Landscape of consciousness* questions assist the clients to accentuate their preferred beliefs and intentions, various relationships – and personal qualities, that might have been marginalized by the dominant story of their lives.

When unique outcomes are identified, persons can be invited to ascribe meaning to them. The identification of unique outcomes can be facilitated by the externalisation of the dominant “problem saturated story”. A variety of unique outcomes can be identified and will be discussed now.

5.6.6.1 Historical Unique Outcomes

Unique outcomes can be identified through a historical review of the person’s influence in relation to the problem. Here persons can be encouraged to recall “facts” or events that contradict the problem’s effects in their lives and in their relationship. Although such events are experienced by the persons concerned at the time of their occurrence, the problem-saturated stories of their lives usually rule out the attribution of new meanings to such experiences. These historical unique outcomes can facilitate performances of new meanings in the present, new meanings that enable persons to reach back and to revise their personal and relationship histories (White & Epston, 1990:56).

5.6.6.2 Current Unique Outcomes

According to White & Epston (1990:60-61) some unique outcomes present themselves in the course of the session. These are usually brought to the person’s attention by the therapist’s curiosity about them and by her/his invitations to such persons to render them sensible. The immediacy of these current unique outcomes is highly compelling, and they are directly available to persons for the performance of new meanings.

5.6.6.3 Future Unique Outcomes

Unique outcomes can have a future location. These can be identified in a review of a person's intentions or plans to escape the influence of the problem or through an investigation of their hopes of freeing their lives and relationships from certain problems (White & Epston 1990:60-61).

5.6.6.4 Unique Outcomes and Imagination

Imagination plays a very significant part in the practices of externalizing the problem, both for the therapist and for those persons who have sought therapy. This is particularly important in the facilitating of conditions for the identification of unique outcomes and for the performance of meaning in relation to them. It is important that the therapist imagines what could possibly be significant to the person seeking help and not be blinded by his/her own criteria of what would signify new developments in her/his life and relationships.

It is never the size of the step that a person takes that counts, but its direction (White & Epston, 1990:61).

As the therapist gains knowledge of person's habitual and predictable responses to events surrounding the problem, he or she can imagine what sort of response might constitute a unique and unexpected outcome. This enhances the therapists receptivity to "news of difference" and, in turn, assists him/ her to recruit the imagination of those persons who seek therapy.

The identification of unique outcomes and the performance of new meanings around these help persons to identify their resistance to the effects of the problem or its requirements. Considering the relation of dependence between the problem and its effects, it follows that, if persons refuse to cooperate with the requirements of the problem, then they are undermining it, refusing to submit to the effects of the problem renders the problem less effective. Thus, in the process of performing new meaning around unique outcomes, persons revise their relationship with the problem. The

description of this revised relationship contrasts markedly with the description of the relationship between the problem and persons initially derived from mapping of the influence of the problem. If people become more aware of this shift in their relationship with the problem, it enhanced the exploration of new possibilities (White & Epston, 1990:63-64).

The emphasis on unique outcomes in a Narrative Focus also accentuates deconstruction, as an important conversational action in therapy.

5.7 DECONSTRUCTION

Deconstruction is a way to overcome the dilemma of undoing the dominant story and installing in its place a new unique narrative within his/her own story.

Chang and Philips (1993:100) quoted Anderson and Goolishian's definitions:

Deconstruction is to "take apart the interpretive assumptions of a system of meaning that you are examining (so that) you reveal the assumption on which the model is based. As these are revealed, you open space for alternative understanding".

White (1991:27) focuses on the following definition of deconstruction: 'According to my rather loose definition, deconstruction has to do with procedures that subvert taken-for-granted realities and practices: those so-called 'truths' that are split off from the context of the production; those disembodied ways of speaking that hide their biases and prejudices; and those familiar practices of self and of relationship that are subjugating of person's lives'.

Feminist theories have been powerful in deconstructing the masculine bias and power relations in objective theory. Feminist theorists deconstructed theories of reason, knowledge and the *self*. They revealed the gender and power relations underlying these theories (Flax 1990:16).

Deconstruction takes place when a person is listening to his/her own story. He/She is not the passive receiver of a story, but is constructing his/her own story. According to social construction, interaction is taking place. The person is now examining and listening to his/her own story, as these are revealed he/she is now opening space for new alternative understanding.

Within the context of these practice, a review of this form of deconstruction will help us to understand the practice of deconstructing in culture.

5.8 THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

White (1991:65) writes that cultural stories determine the shapes of our individual life narratives. People make sense of their lives through stories, both the cultural narratives they are born into and the personal narratives they construct in relation to the cultural narratives. In any culture, certain narratives will come to be dominant over other narratives. Whatever culture people belong to, its narratives have influenced them to ascribe certain meanings to particular events and to treat others as relatively meaningless.

Retellings are what culture is all about. Some events get “storied” others don’t. Narrative is about retelling and reliving of stories. As people retell their stories, they often notice that they have already experienced participating in an alternative story. Stories may have endings, but stories are never over (Bruner 1986a:22-25).

When our stories, or the stories we are situated in, or the stories of our culture do not give us a sense of agency, a feeling that we can not do, what we want or feel, we will likely describe our lives as being problematic in some way (Bruner 1986a:22-26).

Andersen (1991:31) echoes this statement:

“In therapy we meet people whose problems can be thought of as emanating from social narratives and self-definitions or self-stories that do not yield an effective agency for the task defined”.

It follows from this that people might be situated in certain positions by societal discourses that they do not find helpful or enabling. As will be suggested later, this may be a significant contributing factor to the experience of misunderstandings in relationships.

Considering the reasons for which people might seek therapy, the desired outcome in any therapeutic endeavour will therefore entail that a new narrative is generated or resurrected, one that encompasses a more preferred account of self, one that gives clients back their sense of agency (Nicholson, 1955:23).

These ideas are very pertinent as this work centres on the deconstruction of a central cultural discourse on relationships and proposes an alternative that might in some instances prove to assist them to deal with communication and other problems in relationships.

The assumptions implicit within the narrative approach to counselling offer many promising new possibilities for relationships - freeing clients from oppressing cultural assumptions and empowering them to become active agents in charge of their own lives.

5.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of many of the voices and events that shaped the emergence of systems theory. Individuals and systems mutually have an influence on each other. With social constructionism and the postmodern era has come greater acceptance of higher order awareness, or of an epistemology that has a conscious awareness of itself. Such awareness has led to an examination of the totalising discourses that organize our society.

Narrative plays a central role in every individual's life and therefore it was essential to give attention in this chapter to the narrative theory and the process of narrative.

The following chapter will consequently be devoted to an exploration of the six couple's **narratives**. Their knowledge gained through their "lived experience", how they organized their stock of lived experiences and what they did with these experiences in their relationships to give it meaning and to make sense out of it.

Each remembered event constitutes a story, which together with our other stories constitutes a life narrative, and, experientially speaking, our life narrative is our life.

A central assumption of narrative theory is that we cannot fit in all of our lived experiences in our self-narratives. The structuring of a narrative requires recourse to a selective process in which we prune, from our experience those events that do not fit with the dominant evolving stories that others and we have about us.

•

Some of our stories go untold, and are never "told" or expressed. People give meaning to their lives and relationships by storying their experiences. Some of these stories are full of gaps which persons must fill in order to perform their story (White & Epston 1990:13).

Apart from dominant stories of our lives, there are always sub-stories. Life is multi-storied, not single-storied. Persons may have many experiences of life that are not readily intelligible through the dominant stories or the sub-stories in their lives. It's the sub-stories of themselves, and also these aspects of experience that stand outside of the dominant stories and the sub-stories, that really provide a point of entry for re-authoring work (White,1995:27)

“If we accept that persons organize and give meaning to their experience through the storying of experience, and that in the performance of these stories they express selected aspects of their lived experience, then it follows that these stories are constitutive – shaping of lives and relationships” (White & Epston, 1990:12).

White & Epston (1990:13), call this the re-authoring process. To assist a person in re-authoring his own life, the alternative stories are accentuated in order to increase the constitutive effects of these in the person’s life, and to marginalize the dominant problem discourse.

In considering therapy as a context for the re-authoring of lives and relationships, White (1995: 35), has proposed ‘therapy of literary merit’. As alternative stories become available to be performed, other neglected aspects of the person’s experience can be expressed. The re-storying of experience necessitates the active involvement of persons in the reorganization of their experience. This context brings forth new choices for persons regarding the authoring of themselves, others, and their relationships.

CHAPTER 6

COMMUNICATION

Intimate relationships differ widely in how they begin. Some people fall madly, passionately in love the first time they meet. Others begin as friends, only to end up as lovers. Friendships can get started in the course of one briefly shared experience, or they can grow out of years of daily interaction. But, no matter how they begin, all relationships change over time – sometimes for better, sometimes for worse.

6. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we focus on relationship development in communication, and communication in Sexual Behaviour. The aim of this study is to highlight the discourse of difference between couples (men and women). The video by John Gray (author of the book *Men are from Mars and Women from Venus*) has been used as a case study by the author, to demonstrate alternative discourses as opposed to discourses of similarities (Gray, 1992(b) video).

Thus, as people communicate, they expect more than a simple exchange of verbal and nonverbal information, each person conveys messages that tell how he or she perceives the other and their relationship, and each expects to receive similar responses. The author will illustrate this through examples of brief exchanges between husband and wife, using clips out of the video from John Gray.

At each stage in a relationship, communication plays a different role. During the early stages, it is aimed at learning about the other person so that decisions concerning the relationship can be made – whether to form a relationship, what subjects are open for discussion, how close or intimate the relationship should be. After this phase, communication is used to maintain, develop, and enhance the relationship as well as to negotiate differences that will increase the satisfaction derived from it.

6.1 COMMUNICATION

Communication is a crucial factor in the development of all aspects of a relationship. Good communication can promote relationship satisfaction and endurance, while communication problems can contribute to dissatisfaction and the break up of a relationship. Communication has been broadly defined as “*the sharing of experience*”, human communication is *the process of creating meaning between two or more people*”(Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:164).

6.1.1 Communicator 1: Sender/Receiver

This Communicator is trying to transmit a message. Both people are simultaneously sending and receiving all the time. Mental capacities are of central importance. Communicator 1’s senses are continually bombarded by a wealth of stimuli from both inside and outside the body. All that he or she knows and experiences – whether of the physical or social world – comes initially through the senses. We call these raw data input – *all the stimuli, both past and present, that give us our information about the world* (Tubbs & Moss, 1994:8).

6.1.2 Messages

Four types of messages are possible: (1) intentional verbal, (2) unintentional verbal, (3) intentional nonverbal, (4) unintentional nonverbal. Most messages contain two or more types of stimuli and they often overlap.

- * **Verbal messages** - A verbal message is any type of spoken communication that uses one or more words. Most of the communicative stimuli we are

conscious of fall within the category of **intentional verbal** messages, these are the conscious attempts we make to communicate with others through speech.

- * **Unintentional verbal messages** are the things we say without meaning to – both verbal and nonverbal – are unconsciously motivated.

- * **Nonverbal messages** – They include all the nonverbal aspects of our behaviour: facial expression, posture, tone of voice, hand movements, manner of dress. They are all the messages we transmit without words or over and above the words we use (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:165).

- * **Intentional nonverbal messages**, the nonverbal messages we want to transmit. We rely exclusively on nonverbal messages to reinforce verbal messages.

- * **Unintentional nonverbal messages**, are all those nonverbal aspects of our behaviour transmitted without our control (Moll, 1979:8-9).

6.1.3 Channels

The channels of face-to-face communication are the sensory organs. Although all five senses may receive the stimuli, you rely almost exclusively on three. Hearing, sight, and touch. In less formal contexts of communication we rarely think about communication channels. Usually, a person becomes aware of them only when one or more are cut off or when some sort of interference is present (Tubbs & Moss, 1994:14).

6.1.4 Interference

After initiating a message, the sender almost always assumes that it has been received. The sender is puzzled or annoyed if he or she is misinterpreted or gets no response. The sender may even have taken pains to make the message very clear. “Isn’t that enough?” the sender asks. In effect he or she wants to know what went wrong between the transmission and reception of the message (refer 6.5.3, page 171).

Interference, or **noise** – that is *anything that distorts the information transmitted to the receiver or distracts him or her from receiving it.*

Interference can exist in the context of the communication, in the channel, in the communicator who sends the message, or in the one who receives it. Some interference will always be present in human communication (Tubbs & Moss, 1994:14).

6.1.5 Communicator 2: Receiver/Sender

Traditionally, emphasis has been given to the communicator as message sender, but equally important to any viable model of human communication is an analysis of the communicator a receiver. For most communication, visual perception will be an essential aspect of message reception. Another critical aspect of message reception is listening.

* **Listening** and hearing are far from synonymous. When communicator 2 (the receiver/sender) listens, four different interrelated processes will be involved: Attention, hearing, understanding, and remembering. The person’s uniqueness as a human being ensures that his or her attempts to communicate will be very different than others – cultural, physiological and psychological.

* **Feedback** – *the return to you of behaviour you have generated.*

More recently, Knapp (1984:11) has observed :

“Many times we talk about our relationships with people as if we had no *relation* or connection to them – as if our behaviour had nothing to do with what the other did. In actuality, however, we have a lot more to do with our partner’s responses than we may wish to acknowledge. The reason we often fail to acknowledge this interdependence is that it means we have accepted more of the responsibility for our communication problems. It is much easier to describe your partner’s behaviour as independent of your own – “He never listens to me”; “She is never serious with me”; “He doesn’t tell me the truth.” Acknowledging interdependence forces you to ask yourself what you do to elicit such responses and what you can do to get the responses you desire. Communicators who recognize their interdependence also recognize that communication problems are the result of mutual contribution” (refer 6.12, page 192).

- **Time** – Dance (1967:295) sums up time as follows:

“At any and all times, the communication is like a helix: while moving forward, at the same time coming back upon itself and being affected by its past behaviour. The communication process, like the helix, is constantly moving forward and yet is always to some degree dependant upon the past, which informs the present and the future”.

Participants in the communication process can never return to the point at which they started. The relationship must undergo change as a result of each interaction.

One author Conner (1993:14) has written that an overwhelming majority of those recently surveyed indicate that the pace of life seems to be changing at a more rapid rate than ever before. Thus, the pressures of too much to do in too little time would also appear to be influencing both the quantity and the quality of modern-day communication.

6.2 WHAT IS EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication is effective *when the stimulus as it was initiated and intended by the sender, or source, corresponds closely with the stimulus as it is perceived and responded to by the receiver (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:164-165).*

In communication, we may try to bring about one or more of several possible outcomes. We shall discuss five of them here:

* **Understanding**

Understanding refers primarily to *accurate reception of the content of the intended stimulus*. In this sense, a communicator is said to be effective if the receiver has an accurate understanding of the message the communicator has tried to convey.

* **Pleasure**

Not all communication has as its goal the transmission of a specific message. The degree to which we find communication pleasurable is closely related to our feelings about those with whom we are interacting. Many of our brief exchanges with others “Hi”, “How are you?” – have this purpose (Schein, 1987:77).

* **Attitude Influence**

Attitude Influence is a basic part of daily living. In many situations we are interested in influencing a person’s attitude as well as in having him or her understand what we are saying. The process of changing and reformulating attitudes, or **attitude influence**, goes on throughout our lives. In determining how successful your attempts to communicate have been, you can still fail to change a person’s attitude but still get that person to understand your point of view (Tubbs & Moss, 1994:23).

* **Improved Relationships**

It is commonly believed that if a person can select the right words, prepare his or her message ahead of time, and state it precisely, perfect communication will be ensured. Total effectiveness requires a positive and trusting psychological climate. When a human relationship is clouded by mistrust, numerous opportunities arise for distorting or discrediting even the most skilfully constructed messages (Tubbs & Moss, 1994:23).

Primary failures in communication occur when the content of the message is not accurately understood. By contrast, secondary failures are disturbances in human relationships that result from misunderstandings. They stem from the frustration, anger, or confusion (sometimes all three) caused by the initial failure to understand. Because such failures tend to polarize the communicators involved, they are difficult to resolve. By acknowledging that the initial misunderstandings are a common occurrence in daily communication, we may be able to tolerate them better and avoid or at least minimize their damaging effect on interpersonal relationships (Gray (a), 1992:40-41).

Still another kind of understanding can have a profound effect on human relationships: understanding another person's motivations. At times each of us communicates not to convey information or to change someone's attitude but simply to be "understood" in this second sense. The better the relationship between people, the more likely it is that other outcomes of effective communication in the fullest sense will occur (Tubbs & Moss, 1994:24).

* **Action**

There are instances, however, when action is an essential determinant of the success of a communicative act. Eliciting action on the part of another person is probably the communication outcome most difficult to produce. In the first place it seems easier to get someone to understand your message than it is to get the person to agree with it. It seems easier to get the person to agree – than to get the person to act on it. (Some

behaviours are induced through coercion, social pressure, or role prescriptions and do not necessarily require prior attitude change. Voluntary actions, however, usually follow rather than precede attitude changes.) If you are trying to promote action on the part of the receiver, you increase your chances of getting the desired response if you can (1) facilitate understanding of your request, (2) secure agreement that the request is legitimate, and (3) maintain a comfortable relationship with the receiver. The desired action does not follow automatically, but is more likely to follow if these intermediate objectives have been accomplished (Tubbs & Moss, 1994:24).

6.3 TALKING: GET STARTED

6.3.1 Talking About Talking

When people feel uneasy about a topic, often the best place to start is by talking about talking. Discussing *why* it is hard to talk can be a good place to begin. Each partner has individual reasons, and understanding those reasons can help set a relationship on a solid foundation. It may be helpful to move gradually into the arena of communication by directing the initial discussion to non-threatening, less personal topics (such as birth control, and so forth). Later as mutual comfort increases, they may be able to talk about more personal feelings and concerns.

Articles and books dealing with the topic may provide the stimulus for personal conversation (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:216).

6.3.2 Listening and Feedback

Communication, sexual or otherwise, is most successful when it is two-sided, involving both an effective communicator and an active listener.

6.3.3 Being an active Listener

Some people are *passive* listeners. They may stare blankly into space as their companion talks, perhaps grunting “uh-huh” now and then. Such responses may make us think that the person is indifferent, even when this is not the case, and we may soon grow tired of trying to share important thoughts with someone who does not seem to be receptive (refer 6.19.3, page 227).

When I talk to my husband about anything really important, he just stares at me with a blank expression. It is like I am talking to a piece of stone. I think he hears the message, at least sometimes; but rarely shows any response. Sometimes I feel like shaking him and screaming, “Are you still alive?” Needless to say, I don’t try communicating with him very much anymore (refer 6.19.2, page 226).

Being an active listener means actively communicating that you are both listening to and genuinely interested in what your partner is saying. You may communicate this through attentive body language, appropriate and sympathetic facial expressions, nodding your head, asking questions (Could you give me an example?”), or making brief comments (“I see your point”). Nevid *et al.* (1995:233-234).

6.3.4 Maintain Eye Contact

Maintaining eye contact is one of the most vital aspects of good face-to-face communication. Our eyes are wondrously expressive of feelings. When people maintain eye contact whilst we are sharing important thoughts or feelings with them, the message is clear: They care about what we have to say. When we fail to maintain eye contact, we deny our partners valuable feedback about how we are perceived their messages (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:168).

6.3.5 Provide Feedback

The purpose of communication is to provide a message that has some impact on the listener. However, a message's impact may not always be the same as its intent, for communication can be (and often is) misunderstood. Besides clarifying how you have perceived your partner's comments, such verbal feedback reinforces that you are actively listening (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:218).

A comment such as "What are your thoughts about what I have just said?", may encourage feedback that can help you determine the impact of your message on your partner.

6.3.6 Support Your Partner's Communication Efforts

Many of us can feel vulnerable when communicating important messages to our partners. Support for our efforts can help alleviate our fears and anxieties and can encourage us to continue building the communication skills so important for a viable relationship.

Think how good it can feel, after struggling to voice an important concern, to have a partner say, "I'm glad you told me how you really feel." Or "Thanks for caring enough to tell me what was on your mind." Such supportive comments can help foster mutual empathy, while ensuring that we will continue to communicate our thoughts and feelings candidly (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:219).

6.3.7 Express Unconditional Positive Regard

In personal relationships, it means conveying to our partners the sense that we will continue to value and care for them regardless of what they do or say. Unconditional positive regard may encourage a person to talk about even the most embarrassing or painful concerns.

6.3.8 Use Paraphrasing

This involves a listener summarizing, in his or her own words, the speaker's message.

He: "It would be nice if you could be a little gentler. Do you know what I mean?"

She: "I think so – you want me to be less aggressive".

He: "That's not quite what I mean. I mean that when we make love, I would like you to touch me very lightly. I am so sensitive right before I come that anything more feels too rough".

She: "Oh! I always thought you liked it when I'm sort of rough. I'm sorry I misunderstood. I'll try to be more gentle".

If the paraphrase is not satisfactory, the speaker can try to express the message again in different words. The listener can try to paraphrase again. Several attempts may be necessary to clear discrepancies between the speaker's intent and the listener's interpretation. As time goes by, a couple typically finds that the need to use this approach diminishes as listening skills improve (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:219).

6.4 SUMMARY

We have viewed human communication as the process of creating a meaning between two people. After a brief discussion of each of the communication contexts, we turned to an examination of what constitutes effective communication. It was established that communication is effective to the degree that the message as it is intended by the sender corresponds with the message as it is perceived and responded to by the receiver. We saw that effectiveness is closely linked with intention and that in communicating; we usually want to bring about one or more of several possible outcomes.

6.5 EXPRESSIVE VERSUS INSTRUMENTAL COMMUNICATION STYL

Women tend to be more and men to be less emotional in their social interactions. On the average, women express their own emotions more readily and seem more sensitive to the emotions of others. In contrast, men tend to be more concerned with reaching objective, practical goals for themselves and for others. This difference between the sexes occurs in a large number of cultures (Bonvillain, 1995:171).

The same communication style can be evaluated favourably or unfavourably. A highly expressive, emotional style can be seen as warm and responsive or as hysterical and flighty. An instrumental, practical style can be seen as steady and calm or as cold and unresponsive (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:326-327).

6.5.1 Expressiveness: Pros and Cons

According to Brehm (1992:214), there is considerable evidence that women are more socially sensitive than men. In terms of nonverbal communication, women are better than men at reading nonverbal cues and are superior as senders of clear, communicative nonverbal messages to others.

Women are also more attentive listeners, are more skilful in consoling those in distress, and think more about relationships issues than do men. Women may more readily empathize with another person's feelings, though the evidence for this gender difference is not entirely consistent (Bate, 1988:37-46).

It is also the case, however, that women are more likely to display strong negative affect during conflict. Women may use psychologically coercive tactics more than men (attempting to force the partner to comply by power plays, guilt or verbal attack) and be more likely to reject efforts at reconciliation (refer 6.21.3, page 242).

The findings that women are more demanding than men during conflict may reflect women's desire for more changes in the relationship. In terms of the relationship between verbal and nonverbal behaviour, it appears that women are more likely to send double messages. Such double messages can be very confusing to the other person and make it difficult to know how to respond ().

Unfortunately a major factor of the human condition is that one's capacity for loving is cut off from awareness and expression through fear and the pain of life. People respond to emotional fears with a primal reality, but emotional losses are more confusing and stressful to a developing ego than the direct fear of a known physical threat. All fear is the direct or indirect anxiety of the loss of love. The fear in turn causes insecurity, doubt, mistrust, hopelessness, pain, resentment, anguish and despair. Transformation of the fear into pure love and acceptance is necessary to begin loving. According to Seidler (1992:16) that in relationships men find it difficult to experience directly and so to share their emotions with their partners. Men frequently feel that they should be able to manage things by themselves and that it is a sign of weakness to need others.

People seek love from others and believe in error that their appreciation and gratitude can open the heart to experience true loving of other. People seek human love in an effort to tap the love energy locked within them. Most relationships become so bound with expectations that true loving is not achieved-the primal fear of loss while risking intimacy interfering with that possibility. If the relationship can achieve enough to stay, one can succeed in opening the channel of love from within and the experience of loving another can begin. As this loving expands, one gradually experiences divine as well as human love. Increased divine love increases human love in turn. This process continues until one attains again the capacity for pure love (Brehm, 1992:214).

6.5.2 Instrumentality: Pros and Cons

Although women may usually be more socially sensitive, they do not necessarily help others more than men do. It depends on the kind of help that is needed. When a female stranger needs assistance in a situation where there may be some degree of physical danger involved, men are more likely to try to help than are women. Husbands are also more likely to stay calm and problem-orientated when discussing areas of conflict with their wives, and make more efforts to find a compromise solution. When taken to extremes, however, a “cool”, calm, and collected” approach to conflict can become cold, emotionally withdrawn, and unresponsive to the other’s concerns. Men’s lack of emotional responsiveness has been noted by numerous investigators and may play a central role in marital dissatisfaction (Gray (a), 1992:63).

6.5.3 The problem of different wavelengths.

The discussion of the differences between an expressive and an instrumental style indicates that neither has cornered the market on virtue. There are good aspects, and bad ones, to both. The real problem, it seems, is that men and women tend to exhibit different styles, a tendency that may intensify during conflict (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:187).

As with all gender differences in social behaviour, this tendency is not absolute. Some women will be more instrumental than some men, and some men will be more expressive than some women. On average, men and women can easily get trapped on different wavelengths and have serious difficulty communicating with each other (refer 6.20.3, page 236). When she is always saying “Warm up” and he is always saying “Calm down,” it is hard for them to get together (Brehm, 1992:215).

6.6 IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

Communication patterns of couples in distressed marriages were compared to couples that have satisfying and happy marriages. The following patterns were observed.

- * *Getting problems out into the open (agenda building for a discussion).*

This is an important phase of the discussion process. For distressed couples it is characterized by a lot of “cross-complaining”; The husband may say he does not like the way his wife spends money on clothes, the wife may say she does not like the way the husband spends money on stereo equipment. In contrast, satisfied couples make complaints but also recognize the validity of the other person’s feelings and point of view (refer 6.20.3.2, page 237).

- * *Negotiating an agreement.*

Distressed couples offer each other counterproposals. Satisfied couples engage in “contrasting”. They indicate some acceptance of the partner’s proposal as well as making one of their own. Satisfied couples attempt to find compromise solutions, distressed couples seem locked into win-or-lose battles.

- * *Mind reading*

Mind reading refers to those times when, instead of asking, we tell another person why he or she did something, it is just so easy for partners in an established relationship to think they know more about each other than they actually do. All, couples seem to be engaged in mind reading. But distressed couples mind read in an emotionally negative way, they are critical and hostile (refer 6.19.3, page 227). Satisfied couples mind read with more neutral or positive affect, not accusing each other of bad motives (Brehm, 1992:213).

* *Metacommunication*

According to Tubbs & Moss (1994:94) Metacommunication is communicating about communication. For example, when a person says "I don't think we're getting anywhere in this discussion", that person has made a metacommunicational statement. Asking, "Why did you say that?" is a metacommunicational question. Distressed and satisfied couples differed in their frequency of metacommunications. For distressed couples metacommunication was all-absorbing and difficult to get beyond, they have a tendency to focus more on relationship issues (who is going to do what when) than on the task they were supposed to work on. Thus, distressed couples have difficulty in cooperation and coordination. They are so busy trying to figure out what each person should do, and making sure that no one "gets away" with anything, that they fail to get much else accomplished. In contrast, satisfied couples would make a metacommunication and then go easily on to something else (refer 6.15, page 206).

* *Self-summarizing*

Self-summarising means that a person keeps summarizing what he or she has said. It is not communicative; it is repetitious and ignores the other person. Individuals in distressed marriages make many more self-summarizing statements than do individuals in satisfied marriages. Nevid et al. (1995:232-235).

Table 6.7 THE SELF-SUMMARIZING SYNDROME

EARLY STAGES OF THE SYNDROME

Both partners feel hurt and not listened to

"You never hear what I say. I think you just don't care what I say".

Neither feels that the other sees his or her point of view

"You never try to understand how I feel about this".

Conversation keeps drifting "off beam".

"You never do what I ask. Just like your mother never does what I ask her to, and you always take your mother's side."

So the conversation never stays on one problem long enough to resolve it
“I thought we were talking about how I spend too much money. Now we’re talking about my mother. We’ve been through all this before, and we never get anywhere.

Mind reading occurs

“You got drunk at the party just to make me mad, just to get back at me for yesterday”.

As does “kitchen sinking.” Where everything but the kitchen sink gets dragged into the argument.

“It’s not only your carelessness, it’s the way you never check with me about anything, those friends you hang out with, your lousy attitude about what goes on in this house.”

MIDDLE STAGES OF THE SYNDROME

• *Yes butting*

“Yes, I could try to do that, but I’m sure it wouldn’t work”.

Cross-complaining

“I hate the way you let dishes pile up in the sink.”

“I hate the way *you* leave *your* clothes on the floor.”

Conversations end without resolution of the problem

“There’s no point in fighting about this again. We just can’t get anywhere on it”.

Interruptions are frequent

“I think that what we should...”

“Now, what we really should do is what I said before”.

Frustration is enormous

“Sometimes I get so mad about all this, I think I could just explode”.

(Brehm, 1992:233)

LATER STAGES OF THE SYNDROME

The “standoff” occurs: Each person thinks it will be absolutely disastrous if he or she “gives in”

“I will not give in to you on this. I always give in to you. You’re destroying me.”

Quarrels become more and more violent

“Don’t you dare hit me!”

And when not fighting, there is only heavy silence...

(Brehm, 1992:223)

The process of communication is filled with subtleties and opportunities for misinterpretations. It is not surprising, then, that human communication may sometimes be fraught with complications and misunderstandings. Point 6.8 illustrates how good communication takes a committed effort from everyone involved.

6.8 REFLEXIVE CONVERSATION BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS AND MARRIED COUPLES.

6.8.1 INTERVIEWING AND INTRODUCTION OF THE SIX COUPLES.

6.8.1.1 Couple one

Arthur – manager of leather factory.

Sandy - Not working.

Married – 18years.

Kids – one.

Sandy “I try to get some things out of him – let’s talk about it – it is like pulling teeth – it is very, very difficult”.

Arthur “I think we have peace and communication”.

Sandy “I wish we could talk more about my feelings and his feelings”.

Arthur “Do you love me”?

Sandy “Yes”.

Arthur “O.K”.

6.8.1.2 COUPLE TWO

•

Bruce – Own investment managing firm.

Diane - Full time mommy.

Married – 26 years.

Kids – three.

Bruce “My wife would call me and say – “it is six o’clock – where are you” – and I would think AAAA! - I need another hour, and sometimes you would stare at the walls...”

Diane “It is also easy to feel submissive, in these roles, for a man who works and women who stays home, and I resent that because I don’t think it is very respectful”.

6.8.1.3 COUPLE THREE

Yves – Civil Engineer.

Mari - Attorney.

Kids – One.

Married – 6 years.

Yves “My surname is Peche – it is French. My background says there is not such a thing as divorce. I will do anything to make my marriage work”.

Mari “If we in this relationship work hard, we will be somewhere in between”.

.

.

6.8.1.4 COUPLE FOUR

Mike – Salesman in big company.

Fran - teacher in primary school.

Married – 4 years.

Kids – one – 17 months old.

Mike “We have got a 17month old son who is up every morning at seven. I don’t know how to sleep late anymore”.

Fran “I get very angry a lot of times. I can ask him 4-5 times to do something and he just doesn’t do it, and I really feel he is neglecting me – like I am a second class citizen – like I don’t matter. I do a lot; I work hard just as he does”.

Mike "My work is harder, I feel it is harder than yours Fran!"
Fran "That is an egotistical statement".
Mike "Not necessarily – even thou you teach, you do get home at three – I still have three more hours left at my job".
Fran "You spend an entire day with 27 children pulling at your leg and see how much patients you have left by 3 o'clock".
Mike "You at least come home at three and take a rest".
Fran "I come home and take care of the child".
Mike "Yes you do".
Fran "Every woman can relate to me".

6.8.1.5 COUPLE FIVE

Pat – Working far from home – very busy traffic – own business.

Cathy - Working three days a week.

Married - 14 years.

Kids - 3 children.

Pat "Tonight there was an 8 mile backup with a couple of accidents; I am not good at calling".
Cathy "My husband uses the excuse that he is not good at communication is that really going to make it O.K?" "That is crap!"
Pat "The fact that I should have called you, but I really didn't want to have to deal with the rap of shit that I would have received had I called you". "I guess that I do it subconsciously".

6.8.1.6 COUPLE SIX

Bob – Office worker.

Sandra – Staying at home.

Married – 12 years.

Kids – Two.

Sandra “He wants me to make time for him and I cannot because I am tired”.

Bob “It is always beautiful when it is new but after so many years – it is never there – the connection”.

Sandra “We live separate lives in this house – he lives his life and I live my life, and we occasionally meet in the kitchen and the bedroom”.

Bob “I would never want to live for somebody else who is better – because there is nobody who is better”. “ In our situation there is a lot to work on – I don’t know how to do it”. “I can’t read a book how to do it...”

Communication is effective when the message the sender intends to convey is the message that is actually received. To promote a positive interpersonal climate, it helps to show empathy, treat people as equals, withhold judgment, strive for honesty, and express opinions tentatively. Consider the listener’s frame of reference, use an assertive communication style, be specific and concrete, avoid loaded words, and keep verbal and non-verbal messages consistent (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:189).

Another area of interest in communication is Sexual Behaviour, which can contribute greatly to the satisfaction of an intimate relationship: the way people express their feelings and convey their needs and desires to sexual partners. We consider the reasons why such attempts are sometimes unsuccessful, we also explore some ways to enhance this important aspect of our sexual lives.

6.9 COMMUNICATION IN SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

Love does not take you off balance

- Virginia Satir, July 12, 1968

This is a section about sexual communication: the way people express their feelings and convey their needs and desires to sexual partners.

The difficulty men and women have in talking to each other is widely recognized. Almost every man and every woman has at some point despaired of ever “getting through” to the opposite sex.

6.9.1 THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Sexual communication can contribute greatly to the satisfaction of an intimate relationship. According to the author, partners who never talk about the sexual

aspects of their relationship may be denying themselves an opportunity to increase their closeness and pleasure through learning about each other's needs and desires.

According to Crooks and Baur (1999:212) the basis for effective sexual communication is **mutual empathy** - the underlying knowledge that each partner in a relationship cares for the other and knows that the care is reciprocated.

6.9.2 REASONS WHY SEXUAL COMMUNICATION IS DIFFICULT

Some of the most important reasons why sexual communication is difficult lie in our socialization, the language available for talking about sex, and the fears many people have about self-expression.

•

6.9.2.1 Socialization and Sexual Communication

The way we were reared as children often contributes to later difficulties in talking about sexual needs. Learning to cover our genitals, to think that eliminative functions are “dirty”, or to hide self-pleasuring for fear of adverse reaction all may contribute to a sense of shame and discomfort with the sexual areas and functions of our bodies. Not talking about sex at home deprives a young child of one valuable source of a vocabulary for talking about sex later in life. The lack of communication may also convey the implicit message that sex is not an acceptable topic for conversation.

Children acquire communication skills most effectively when they are provided with models of verbal interaction followed by the opportunity to express their own thoughts in an accepting atmosphere. None of these elements are typically available in a home where people simply do not talk about sex (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:212).

6.9.2.2 Language and Sexual Communication

Another obstacle to effective communication is the lack of a suitable language of sex. By the time we are grown up and eager to communicate sexual needs and feelings, many of us do not know how to go about it. The very words we have learned to describe sex may have become associated with negative rather than positive emotions.

People have learned to snicker over taboo sex words or to use them in an angry, aggressive, or insulting manner. Consequently, it can be very uncomfortable to use those same words to describe an activity with someone for whom we really care (Crooks & Baur, 1999:213).

Thus when we want to begin engaging in sexual communication, we may find ourselves struggling to find the right language for this most intimate kind of dialogue. The range of words commonly used to describe genital anatomy gives some indication of our society's mixed messages about sexuality. Our language lacks a comfortable sexual vocabulary (Tubbs & Moss, 1994:92, Bate, 1988:87).

Within the context of our culture, it is very natural-or at least common-to feel shy or embarrassed when talking about sexuality with friends and lovers. What is the best word or phrase to describe how two people interact together in explicitly sexual ways? When the context of our discussion focuses more on the physical aspects of sexual interactions, we use the terms *sexual activity* and *sexual play*, which we consider both broad and neutral. When the focus is more on the emotional and spiritual aspects of sexual interactions, we use the terms *sexual intimacy*, *sexual sharing*, and *lovemaking* to emphasize the larger emotional and intellectual relationship between the participants (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:213).

The context and tone in which sexual terms are used may create totally different meaning and reactions.

According to the author, it is a wonderful time to develop intimacy while learning about each other's needs and preferences. It is a particularly good way to discover what words are mutually acceptable Nevid et al. (1995:232).

6.9.2.3 Gender-Based Communication Styles

A factor that can hinder communication between partners is the difference in women's and men's styles of relating to other people. Men and women have different communication goals. Men use language to convey information, to achieve status in a group, to challenge others, and to prevent being pushed around. Men often enter into conversations concerned about who is one-up and who is one-down. From this perspective, communication becomes something of a contest to avoid being put in a one-down position. A man operating within this framework might be expected to be overly sensitive about asking for advice or for suggestions about how to respond in a particular situation (sexual or otherwise), being told to do something, or engaging in any other behaviour that even resembles being in a one-down or pushed-around position (Gray (a), 1992:84).

In contrast, Crooks & Baur (1999:214), maintains that women use language to achieve and share intimacy, to promote closeness, and to prevent others from pushing them away. Women are not typically socialized to use language as a defensive weapon to avoid being dominated or controlled. Rather, their concern is often to use dialogue as a way to get close to another person – and as a way to judge how close to or distant from a valued partner they are.

A woman's goal in talking about her concerns is often to foster a sense of sharing and rapport to achieve the feeling that "I am not alone." She wants a response that says, "I understand: I have been there too" – a reaction that puts both communicators on equal footing, allowing intimacy to be built around equality. Whereas a woman may only be looking for understanding or a willingness to talk openly about a concern, her male partner is often likely to respond with advice or solutions. This response on the

part of the man frames him “as more knowledgeable, more reasonable, more in control-in a word, one-up (refer 6,21,2, page 240), and this contributes to the distancing effect (Tannen, 1990:53).

Women may minimize this relationship-eroding influence by clearly telling their male partners that, when dealing with intimacy or emotional troubles, they do not want to hear quickly offered solutions. Instead they would prefer that their partner listen to their concerns and be willing to openly discuss and share viewpoints about problems on an equal footing.

Tannen (1990:53), stresses that the first step in improving communication is understanding and accepting that there are gender differences in communication styles; it is not a question of one style being more right or wrong than the other.

6.10 NON VERBAL SEXUAL COMMUNICATION

*I like my body when it is with your body.
It is so quite new a thing.
Muscles better and nerves more.
I like your body. I like what it does,
I like its hows. I like to feel the spine
Of your body and its bones, and the trembling
-firm-smoothness and which I will
again and again and again
kiss, I like kissing this and that for you,
I like, slowly stroking the, shocking fuzz
Of your electric fur, and what-is-it comes
Over parting flesh.....And eyes big love-crumbs,
And possibly I like the thrill
Of under me you so quite new*

e.e. cummings

What we say to each other is only part of the communication process. How we say it – with a smile, or a shrug, or a frown, or a glare – can be just as important, sometimes more. We frequently convey our emotions through nonverbal means of communication, and our emotional meaning can have a greater impact than the meaning of our words (Baron, 1994:42).

Sexual communication is not confined exclusively to words. In this section, we direct our attention to four important components of nonverbal sexual communication: facial expression, interpersonal distance, touching, and sounds (Brehm, 1992:215).

6.10.1 Facial Expression

Facial expressions often communicate the feelings a person is experiencing. Although there is certainly variation in people's expressions, most of us have learned to identify particular emotions from facial expressions.

Looking at our lover's faces during sexual activity often gives us quick reading of their level of pleasure. Facial expressions can also provide helpful cues when talking over sexual concerns with a partner. If a lover's face reflects anger, anxiety, or some other disruptive emotion, it might be wise to deal with this emotion immediately ("I can tell you are angry. Can we talk about it"). Conversely, a face that shows interest, enthusiasm, or appreciation can encourage us to continue expressing a particular feeling or concern. It is also a good idea to be aware of the nonverbal messages you are giving when your partner is sharing thoughts or feelings with you. Sometimes we may inadvertently shut down potentially helpful dialogue by tightening our jaws or frowning at an inappropriate time (Crooks & Baur, 1999:235, Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:167).

6.10.2 Interpersonal Distance

This idea suggests that we tend to maintain differing degrees of interpersonal distance between the people and ourselves we have contact with, depending on the nature of our relationship (actual or desired). The intimate space to which we admit close friends and lovers is far less restrictive the distance we maintain between ourselves and people we do not know or like.

When someone attempts to decrease interpersonal distance, it is generally interpreted as a nonverbal sign that she or he is attracted to the other person or would like more intimate contact. Conversely, if someone withdraws when another person moves close, this action can usually be interpreted as a lack of interest or a gentle kind of rejection.

Lovers, whose interpersonal distance is generally at a minimum, can use these cues to signal desire for intimacy. When your lover moves in close, making his or her body available for your touches or caresses, the message of wanting physical intimacy (not necessarily sex) is quite apparent. Similarly, when he or she curls up on the other side of the bed, it may be a way of saying, “Please don’t come too close tonight” (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:235).

6.10.3 Touching

Touch is a powerful vehicle for nonverbal sexual communication between lovers. Hands can convey special messages. Reaching out and drawing your partner closer can indicate your readiness for more intimate contact. In early stages of a developing relationship, touch can also be used to express a desire to become closer (Byrne, 1994:48).

A gentle touch, lovingly administered to the partner, does wonders in bringing them together after they have exchanged angry words. Touching is a way of re-establishing connection.

6.10.4 Sounds

Many people, though by no means all, like making and hearing sounds during sexual activity. Some individuals find increased breathing, moans, and orgasmic cries to be extremely arousing. Also, such sounds can be helpful indicators of how a partner is responding to lovemaking. Some people find the absence of sounds to be quite frustrating.

Some people make a conscious effort to suppress spontaneous noises during sex play. In doing so, they deprive themselves of a potentially powerful and enjoyable form of nonverbal sexual communication. Not uncommonly, their deliberate silence also hinders their partner's sexual arousal (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:236).

6.10.5 Impasses

Candid communication between caring, supportive partners often leads to changes that are mutually gratifying. However, even an ample supply of openness, support, and understanding cannot assure a meeting of the minds on all issues. Couples may reach impasses. Your partner may simply not want to try a new coital position. Perhaps the two cannot agree about shared sex play or new positions. Continued discussions may be helpful. However, it is self-deceiving to assume that talk, even the most open and compassionate, will always lead to desired changes.

Sometimes people cannot and will not change, often for justifiable reasons. Granting the right to refuse something they consider objectionable to someone close to them is an important ingredient in a relationship characterized by mutual respect.

Failure to reach a solution to an impasse is not necessarily cause for despair. At least the couple has openly discussed a sensitive issue. Possibly, they have also increased their understanding of each other and the level of intimacy between them. In the event that unresolved impasses threaten to erode a relationship, professional counselling may be desirable Nevid *et al.* (1995:239).

Like so many other aspects of intimate relationships, these connections depend a great deal on what kind of relationship we examine. As relationships endure, various aspects of nonverbal communication change. We can see these changes by tracing the path of nonverbal communication from dating relationships to newlyweds to established marriages.

6.10.6 Dating couples

A study by Dreyer in Brehm (1992:216) examined nonverbal communication and relationship satisfaction among undergraduate dating couples.

These investigators found that dating partners did *not* do better than independent judges at reading the nonverbal messages sent by their partners. Increased psychological involvement in the relationship was *not* associated with greater sensitivity to one another's nonverbal cues. However, it was found that women who were quite good in general at reading other people's nonverbal messages, had male partners who expressed more love for them. Dreyer in Brehm (1992:216) concluded that a man's love for his dating partner does not reflect her specific ability to read his nonverbal communications, but is enhanced if the woman is generally sensitive to nonverbal cues.

6.10.7 Newlyweds

In contrast to dating couples, newlyweds were better able than judges to read each other's nonverbal messages. The nonverbal skills of the female continued to be an important element in the relationship. On the sending side, it was found that wives who were in general good senders of nonverbal communications had husbands who expressed relatively few marital complaints. On the receiving side, wives who were especially skilled in decoding their husband's poorly expressed nonverbal messages had husbands with relatively few marital complaints, and also had fewer marital complaints themselves (Brehm, 1992:217, Bate, 1988:55).

It seems, then, that it is fairly easy for outside observers to tell how a relationship is going just by observing such simple things as how people sit and how often they look at each other. One wonders if the partners in the relationship are also able to read these signs of affection or discontent.

Physical orientation towards the partners in couples was observed:

- * Agreeing couples sat closer at each other than disagreeing couples.
- * Agreeing couples looked at each other more often and longer than disagreeing couples.
- * Agreeing couples turned toward each other more.
- * Agreeing couples sat with their legs in more open, sprawled positions

6.10.8 Married couples

Distressed marital couples send fewer positive and more negative nonverbal signals than do happy marital couples. When discussing topics that create conflict within the marriage, distressed wives engage in more reciprocity-in response to both positive and

negative nonverbal messages-than do distressed husbands. Couples in which the wife reciprocates negatively, affect but the husband doesn't are particularly likely to experience a decline in marital satisfaction over time. This lack of symmetry in nonverbal reciprocity creates a corresponding lack of symmetry in control over the interaction. When the wife engages in greater reciprocity of nonverbal cues of emotion than the husband, then the husband's feelings determine the tone of the interaction. The wife just keeps things going in the direction he initiates (Brehms, 1992:219).

6.10.9 Anxieties about Sexual Communication

Beyond the handicaps imposed by socialization and language limitations, difficulties in sexual communications for some people may also be rooted in anxieties about exposing themselves. Any sexual communication involves a certain amount of risk: By talking, people place themselves in a position vulnerable to judgment, criticism, and even rejection. Trust may be an important factor in determining the extent to which a couple would risk openly expressing their sexual needs.

Even when a climate of goodwill prevails, however, it still may be difficult to establish a satisfying pattern of sexual dialogue. In such circumstances, a couple may be frustrated in their efforts to resolve their communication problems strictly on their own. Instead, they should seek professional counselling.

Outlined above are some reasons why many people find it difficult to engage in meaningful and effective sexual communication. Despite these difficulties, communication is an important part of sexual sharing, just as it is an important part of many other aspects of a relationship.

How does one begin communicating about sex? The primary cause of sexual problems is inadequate communication. An essential key to a full and satisfying sexual relationship is to know how to communicate effectively with your partner. What it does mean is that you care enough about yourself, your partner, and the

relationship you share to put some effort and energy into communication, as seen illustrated in point 6.11.

6.11 COUPLES DISCUSSING THEIR FEELINGS ABOUT SEX AND ROMANCE.

Mike “I am a typical male – always right at the drop of a hat to jump into bed and to make love to her”.

Fran “To him - he could have sex every night”.

Mike “Sex before Matthew – was great of course – we had sex a lot – but now we are too tired – let’s say four times a month, sometimes twice a night to make up for the whole month”.

Diane “It can take a toll on your sexuality when you have children – not for some – but I think for the vast majority of women it is a period of time where there is adjustment”. “I don’t know I haven’t personally come out of that period – just half of the period – I would make love to him so that he could be satisfied and that is fine with me – and then afterwards he would ask, “was that really good” – and then I just say “do you really want me to tell?” “ I hate that question!”

Bruce “My wife and I are really passionate about each other, it is just that the sex part of it is sort of taking a secondary role – I know the passion is there”.

Pat “I don’t think sex for women is the same as for men!” “ It is less physical –it is more emotional”.

Mari “When we first married I was the one all over the place – in the kitchen, on the table, knock everything over – jump on the counter and he doesn’t seem to remember those things”.

Sandy “How do you get the passion back?”

Mari “I need to be paid attention to – I don’t like the switch thing – you ignore me all day, but at night time you rediscover me”.

Sandra “I say that the brain is the most important sex organ and he laughed at me when I said that”.

Bob “Romance is so important to them – it is like from number one to number ten – screwing around with the numbers – and it is like being a man one, two – ten”. “You know what I am saying – then they will like going – What happened to number three and four?” “And he is going like what is the difference – you don’t understand”.

6.12 ROMANCE:

Cathy “O! Romance – romance is a good word – but not in our marriage”.

Sandra “I don’t need romance all the time, I don’t need to be wined and dined all the time”.

Bob “So what you are saying is you getting plenty of it – you are getting enough”.

Sandra “That is not what I am saying”.

Bruce “What is romantic?” “I would say it is looking at my wife and she is melting like a marshmallow: - Do I tell her that – I don’t know, I think there is a sort of silence between us”.

Diane “I can’t remember the last time you said I love you”.

Bruce “Right! So why is it so terrible?”

Diane “O! It is like why should Bruce waste time –he is very efficient with you – I love you too”.

Cathy "It is like when I say to him on the phone I love you – He will say me too".

Pat "Maybe she is not confident enough or maybe she had these feelings and I wouldn't have to be so reassuring about my love for her".

Arthur "She wants more affection than I could supply for her as saying you know-I love you all the time – if you say it once in a while I think it is twice as affective as saying it all the time".

Bob "I see the guy with his wife, and how he treats her – open the door, puts her jacket on, honey this... Sweetheart that...this "cookey, wookey" stuff". "I mean this guy is making me throw up all over myself in two seconds if he says another thing like this". "Then I notice this something they have". "I just say there is something to it".

Sandy "I never get flowers anymore because he says once you ask you never get – if you don't ask you get".

Arthur "I don't understand the value of flowers, flowers die – to me it doesn't do anything – to her – she lets me have it for not getting her flowers".

Sandy "Even when I gave birth to Maddy I didn't get flowers".

Arthur "Wow!" "You hit me with this stuff now!"

Sandy "Giving birth to your child isn't an occasion to give flowers?"

Arthur "O!" "On a birthday".

Sandy "Did I get flowers on my birthday last year?" "Did I?"

Yves "I like to buy her things – like for my wife a 1996 Explorer" – she said – "O! Is that mine – I love it!" – "it lasted for one week".

Mari "He thinks that being romantic is a big present – for example, for Valentines Day a car – and I thinking just taking me to central park on a carriage drive would have been better – and he said- than a car?" She said – "Yes Yves, I just think once you are married the definition of romance just chances".

Sandy “Every red light we were kissing – every red light we were holding hands”. “We were holding hands all the time and now to hold his hand is like to clip his nails or something”.

Bob “Let’s face it – when you are courting (that is the word you use), you are only doing what you feel the other person would want you to do – without putting in to much as possible without looking like a total smuck”.

Sandra “Call it false advertising”. “You present yourself in your dating years like a super sensitive caring person, and then the courtship ends”.

Yves “This weekend is going to be a tough one – it is our anniversary”.

6.12.1 Home scenario

Yves brought some roses. Mari received them with a kiss went into the kitchen counting them – six roses. He asked: “What are you doing – counting them”? – She – “I only count the beautiful roses you gave me” – He – “Is that not enough”? She – “I didn’t say that”.

Mari “When we go out for our anniversary I also have high expectations that he is going to act different and then he acts the same old way”.

Yves “What do I do wrong?”

Mari “O.K – for you to understand what I am talking about – I want you to be corny”.

Yves “That is very hard”.

Mari “I just told you what I want”.

Yves “I know exactly what you want and that is not easy”.

Mari "When we got married you didn't have problems of being that way".

Mari "I know you love me – I know – but I wish you would show it in my language". "I think for Yves to feel loved he needs romance every night".

Yves "The same way that I can deal with the lack of lovemaking – that is the same way with the lack of kissing from my part".

Mari "Is it different?"

Yves "Like in once every two months".

Mari "No, I would say twice a month".

Yves "I came to a point that is was so bad, I use to have a calendar next to my bed".

Sandy "I don't think we have a problem with that".

Arthur "O!" "You have a problem!"

Sandy "I do not have a problem!" "What do you mean – I have a problem?" "I have a problem for you?" "Please tell me Arthur!" "Well we do a little once a week thing – sometimes more – sometimes less – and I also said Arthur didn't we just do it the other night or something – then he would say – no!" "It have been weeks!"

Arthur "And then say – O!" "Then I have to work a little bit on it".

Sandy "So once we get going everything is happy – the outcome is always very happy – right?"

Arthur "Always happy".

Sandy "Arthur please tell me".

Arthur "I am always happy!"

6.13 DISCOVERING YOUR PARTNER'S NEEDS

*From you I receive,
To you I give,
Together we share,
From this we live.*

Discovering what is pleasurable to your partner is an important part of sexual intimacy. Many couples want to know each other's preferences but are uncertain how to find out (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:220).

6.13.1 Asking Questions

One of the best ways to discover your partner's needs is simply to *ask*. However, there are several ways of asking: Some can be helpful, whereas others may be ineffective or even counterproductive. Questions can be reviewed as follows:

6.13.1.1 Yes-or-No Questions

- Was it good for you?
- • Do you like oral sex?
- Was I gentle enough?
- Did you come?
- Do you like it when I stimulate you this way?
- Do you like being on the bottom?
- Is it okay if we don't make love tonight?
- Am I a good lover?

Yes-or-No Questions gives the couple little opportunity to discuss the issue. In a world where sexual communication is often difficult under the best of circumstances, the asker may get no more than the specific information requested. Open-ended questions or questions that allow the respondent to state a preference, can make it easier for your partner to give accurate replies (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:221).

6.13.1.2 Open-Ended Questions

This approach places virtually no restrictions on possible answers.

- What gives you the most pleasure when we make love?
- What things about our sexual relationship would you like us to change?
- Where do you like to be touched?
- What sexual positions do you like?
- What is the easiest or most enjoyable way for you to reach orgasm?
- What are your feelings about oral sex?

The advantage of open-ended questions is that they allow the partner freedom to share any feelings or information she or he thinks is relevant. One possible drawback of the open-ended approach is that the partner may not know where to begin when asked such general questions. Consider the partner being asked something like “What aspects of our lovemaking do you like best?” Some people might welcome the unstructured nature of this question, but others might find it difficult to respond to such a broad query, particularly if they are not accustomed to openly discussing sex. In this case, a more structured approach may have a better chance of encouraging talk (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:220).

- Would you like the light on when we make love, or should we turn it off?
- Am I being gentle enough, or am I being too gentle?
- Is this the way you want to be touched, or should we experiment with a different kind of caress?
- Would you try something different, or should we stop and just hold each other?
- Would you like to talk now, or would you prefer we wait for another time?

People often appreciate the opportunity to consider a few alternatives. The either-or questions also show the concern for the partner’s pleasure. These kind of questions

may encourage a response at a time when a more open-ended question might be overwhelming. However, either/or questions can still be somewhat restrictive. There is always the possibility that the partner will not like either of the choices the other partner offers. In this case, he or she can state another alternative that is preferable (Crooks & Baur, 1999:221).

6.13.2 Comparing Notes

While planning an evening out many couples consider it natural to discuss each other's preferences: "Would you like to go to a concert, or would you rather go to the movies?" "How close do you like to sit?" "Do you prefer vegetarian, Italian, or meat and potatoes"? Afterwards they may candidly evaluate the evening's events: Yet many of the same couples never think of sharing thoughts about mutual sexual enjoyment (Gray (a), 1992:220).

People do engage in this type of sexual dialogue. Some people feel comfortable discussing sexual preferences with a new lover before progressing to lovemaking. They may talk about what areas of their bodies are most responsive, how they like to be touched, what intercourse positions are particularly desirable, the easiest or most satisfying way to reach orgasm, time and location preferences, special turn-ons and turn-offs, and a variety of other likes and dislikes (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:223).

The appeal of this open, frank approach is that it allows a couple to focus on particularly pleasurable activities rather than discovering them by slow trial-and-error. Couples may also find it helpful to discuss their feelings after having sex. They may offer reactions about what was good and what could be better. They may use this time to reinforce the things they found particularly satisfying in their partner's lovemaking ("I loved the way you touched me on the insides of my thighs"). A mutual feedback session can be extremely informative; it can also contribute to a deeper intimacy between two people (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:223).

6.13.3 Giving Permission

Discovering the partner's needs can be made immeasurably easier by giving permission. Basically, this means providing encouragement and reassurance. One partner tells the other that it is okay to talk about certain specific feelings or needs-in fact, that he or she would really like to know how the other feels about the subject.

He: I'm not sure how you like me to touch you when we make love.

She: Any way you want to is good

He: Well, I want to know what you like best, and you can help me by saying what feels good while I touch you.

Many of us have had experiences where we have felt rebuffed in our efforts to communicate our needs to others. It is no wonder people often remain silent even when they want to share personal feelings. Giving and receiving permission to express needs freely can contribute to the exchange of valuable information (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:224).

6.13.4 Self-Disclosure

On the average, women self-disclose more than men, it was found that gender differences in self-disclosure were greater on the following items:

Female self-disclosed more than males about:

- Feelings toward parents
- Feelings toward closest friends
- Feelings towards classes
- The things in life I am most afraid of
- My accomplishments.

Males self-disclosed more than females about:

- My political views
- The things about myself that I am most proud of
- The things I like most about my partner

Females, then, tend to disclose material that is personal and feeling orientated and that may involve negative emotions. Males on the other hand, disclose more readily when the information is factual and relatively neutral or positive in emotional tone. Often, while the women are discussing love, the men are talking about sports (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:224; Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:173-177).

Men and women also differ on the reasons why they *avoid* self-disclosure. When married couples were asked why they disclosed to each other, husbands and wives gave similar answers. When they were asked why they did *not* disclose to each other, husbands' and wives' responses differed greatly (Bate, 1988:186).

Direct questions often put people on the spot. If the topic has strong emotional overtones, it may be very difficult to reply – no matter how thoughtfully the question has been phrased. It is the content, not the communication technique that causes the problem. Personal disclosures require some give-and-take. It is much easier to share feelings about strongly emotional topics when a partner is willing to make similar disclosures. Many people might be concerned about the potentially negative effects of revealing such highly personal thoughts (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:223):

Table 6.13.5 - REASONS WHY HUSBANDS AND WIVES AVOID SELF-DISCLOSING TO EACH OTHER

Endorsing reasons	Wives	Husbands
Doesn't want to burden or worry spouse	48.4	18.3
Spouse unresponsive to my problems	22.6	9.8
Compartmentalizes home and work	0.0	25.4
Spouse lacks knowledge relevant to problems	0.0	19.7
Prefers to solve own problems	9.7	7.0
Own problems are trivial	9.7	1.4
Prefers not to replay to negative experiences	6.4	8.4
Disclosure will lead to <i>negative interaction with</i>		
Spouse	0.0	4.2
Spouse is physically inaccessible	0.0	1.4

(Crooks & Bauer, 1999:224)

6.14 LEARNING TO MAKE REQUESTS

Many lovers seem to assume that their partners know (perhaps by intuition) just what they need. People who approach sex with this attitude are not taking full responsibility for their own pleasure. If sexual encounters are not satisfactory, it may be convenient to blame a partner-“You don't care about my needs”-when one's own reluctance to express needs may be the problem. Expecting partners to somehow know what is wanted without telling them places a heavy burden on them. Many people think that they “shouldn't have to ask.” But in fact, asking a partner to do something can be an affirmative, responsible action that is helpful to both people (Gray (a), 1994:272).

6.14.1 Taking Responsibility for Our Own Pleasure

When two people are really in harmony with each other, you don't have to talk about your sexual wants. You each sense and respond to the other's desires. Talking just tends to spoil these magical moments.

This situation only exists in fantasyland and not in reality. People are not mind readers, and intuition leaves much to be desired as a substitute for genuine communication. A person who expects another to know his or her needs by intuition is saying, "It's not my business to let you know my needs, but it is yours to know what they are"; and by inference, "If my needs are not fulfilled, it is your fault, not mine." This is a potentially destructive approach that may lead to blaming, misunderstanding, and unsatisfying sex (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:225).

In a similar vein, some people may take too much responsibility for their partner's sexual pleasure. Such a person says, in effect, "It is my job to satisfy you sexually. I will make all the decisions and assume responsibility for your pleasure." A person so intent on figuring out and fulfilling a partner's needs may find that his or her needs are largely overlooked. Such a take-charge attitude undermines a partner's inclination to assume responsibility for her or his own satisfaction (Nevid et al. 1995:236).

Deciding to assume responsibility for our own satisfaction is an important step. Just as important are the methods we select for expressing our needs. The way a request is made has a decided effect on the reaction it draws. Suggestions are listed below.

6.14.2 Making Requests Specific

The more specific a request, the more likely it is to be understood and heeded. Lovers often ask for changes in the sexual aspects of their relationships in the vaguest language.

When we are upset, disappointed, frustrated, or angry it is difficult to communicate lovingly. When negative emotions come up, we tend momentarily to lose our loving feeling of trust, caring, understanding, acceptance, appreciation, and respect. At such times, even with best intentions, talking turns into fighting. In the heat of the moment, we do not remember how to communicate in a way that works for our partner or for us (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:225; Nevid et al.1995:236).

According to Gray (a) (1992:29) at times like these, women unknowingly tend to blame men and make them feel guilty for their actions. Instead of remembering that her partner is doing the best he can, a woman could assume the worst and sound critical and resentful. When she feels a surge of negative feelings, it is especially difficult for a woman to speak in a trusting, accepting, and appreciative way. She doesn't realize how negative and hurtful her attitude is to her partner (refer 6.15.2, page 208).

When men become upset, they tend to become judgmental of woman and women's feelings. Instead of remembering that his partner is vulnerable and sensitive, a man may forget her needs and sound mean and uncaring. When he feels a surge of negative feelings, it is especially difficult for him to speak in a caring, understanding, her (Crooks & Bauer, 1999:281), (refer 6.15.5, page 210).

6.14.3 Giving and Receiving

Men are wired to give their all to work, then come home and receive. To a great extent women are built to give and receive at the same time. They love to give but need to be fuelled simultaneously when they give without receiving, they tend to give more and eventually feel overwhelmed, empty, and resentful (Crooks & Baur,

1999:226).

It follows that a woman who spends her day in a competitive, masculine workplace does not get the emotional support she would if she were in a more feminine, nurturing environment. She gives and gives at her job but doesn't receive validation and support. She comes home burned out, but instead of relaxing, she continues to give. This is an important difference between men and women. When a man is tired he will generally have a strong tendency to forget his problems and rest and relax (refer 6.15.2, page 208).

If he is not getting the support he needs, then he will tend to stop giving more, he will take time for himself (refer 6.21.1, page 239).

On the other hand, when a woman feels unsupported, she feels responsible for doing more and begins to think of or worry about all the problems she doesn't have the energy to solve, the more difficult it is for her to relax, and put off the chores that just can't be done (Gray (a), 1993:59-91).

Scott and Sally

Scott works full-time to support his family, while Sally, his wife, works, part time, while trying to be a mother and homemaker. When Scott returns home, he seems to ignore her. Then, at dinner she distances herself from him, he doesn't understand

When asked about her feelings, she says, *"I resent that he doesn't even offer to help me. He sits on the couch while I do everything for him."*

Scott says, *"I sit on the couch to relax from my day. If I ask her about her day, all I hear is that she does too much and that I should do more. I need to relax when I get home. I don't need another boss. If she is doing too much, then she should just do less"*

Sally says, *"And you think I don't need to relax from my day? I can't relax. Someone has to make dinner, clean house, and take care of these kids. Why can't you do more or at least value what I do?"*

Like many couples, Sally resents the fact that her partner doesn't offer his help, while Scott is turned off because he gets the message that what he has done is not enough for her. On the one hand, she wants to feel, cared for, and supported, while on the other hand, he wants to feel acknowledged and appreciated for his work with the recognition that he earned the right to relax in his home (refer 6.21.1, page 239).

Men and women can learn new skills of communication that require very little from men and do a lot for woman.

He Mistakenly Says:

She Hear

He Says: "If you are going to complain about it, then just don't do it".

She hears: "You are being too negative. Anybody else would be able to do it, but you can't".

*He means: "I care about you, and I don't want you to do what you don't want to do".
"You already do so much, you deserve to relax more".*

She hears: "A loving person would be happy to give more".

He says: "If you don't want to do it, then don't".

She hears: "A loving person would be happy to give more".

He means: "You already give so much, I don't expect you to do more".

She thinks: "He thinks that I am selfish and that I am not entitled to relax and give to myself".

He says: "You don't have to do so much".

She hears: "What you're doing is unnecessary and a waste of time."

He means: "What you do is

She thinks: "If he doesn't value

*already so supportive that I
don't expect you to do
more".*

*what I do, I will never get
the support I need in return".*

(Gray (a),

1993:58)

Understanding the differences: Of what men really want does not imply that a woman doesn't care about her partner's happiness as well. Certainly, when a woman loves a man, she wants him to also be happy.

As discussed in 6.15, a man can be stressed out from a day at work, but if his partner is happy with him, he feels fulfilled. When he senses her appreciation for his labour, his stress level dissipates, her happiness is like a shower that washes away the stressful grime of his day, however, when an exhausted women returns home to a happy man, he doesn't make her day. It's great that he appreciates her hard work to help support the family, but it doesn't in the least diminish her unease. She needs to communicate and feel some nurturing support before she can begin to appreciate him (Gray (a), 1992:59-91).

6.15 THE DAILY GRIND

6.15.1 Eating together

Mari "Shall I stop eating honey, and listen?"

Yves "Yes, I think you should".

Yves "I love you".

Mari "I know that". "You can love someone by saying it but on a daily basis you have to show me, and how else can you show me in a home setting other than help me". "Are you trying to help me?"

Yves "Yes" – Yves busy ironing.
Mari "On a scale one to ten".
Yves "Yes on a score one to ten: What did I get?"
Mari "Two".
Yves "Oh no!"
Mari "You asked me Yves – that is how I feel".
Yves "I have been sweeping and washing this floor – who has been doing it?"
Mari "Yes, but I have to beg you".
Yves "That feels great – it is like she is doing everything and I don't do anything, which sometimes does get to me because I think I do a lot".

Mike "I would say it is done 50/50".
Fran "I would say it 75% me and 25% him".
Mike "Sorry to hear that Fran". "You really feel that?"
Fran "Yes, I do!"
Fran "Who takes Matthew to school in the morning?"
Mike "You, but..."
Fran "Who looks after Matthew?"
Mike "You do – but why?"
Fran "Who takes care after Matthew when he is sick?"
Mike "Both of us".
Fran "No Mike, who takes care of him, who buys him his diapers?"
Mike "Both of us".
Fran "Who buys his diapers Mike?" "When was the last time?"
Mike "When was the last time ... hmmm".
Fran "Think very carefully".
Mike "I think four weeks ago was the last time".
Fran "No – not four weeks ago!"

Cathy "I picked up the kids from school – one point, cooked – one point, cleaned the chandelier – three points – because I asked you three months ago to clean it for me".

Mike “You know I put down work as twenty points”.

Cathy “But I work three days too – why is my work of lesser value than yours?”

Mike “I earn more”.

Cathy “ Oh! Oh!”

Mike “I view myself as the primary breadwinner, that level of stress, I think, is much greater for me than it is for you!” “I feel like I am on a treadmill- and the treadmill is going faster and faster and there is a point one of these days that I am going to run out of gas and I am going to fall of that damn treadmill or have a heart attack”.

6.15.2 Coming from work

Sandy “When Arthur comes home I ask him to do some things for me and he will just say: “Sandy I just came home, I need a break”.

“Look what he is doing: sitting in a chair, watching T.V – while I am doing washing – when will I get my break?”

Arthur “It is tough for me to do the laundry”.

Sandy “He thinks because I stay home with Maddy I don’t work all day”.

Mike “When I get up in the morning, chores have to be done right away”. “Whether I like it or not I have to do it – it will turn into a little bit of an argument between us but it gets done – you agree?”

Fran “By then my day is ruined because I am already aggravated – but on the other hand...”

Mike “It makes me feel that I am back in my mother’s house – where you live under your mothers rules, and it makes it difficult and it makes me aggressive then you tend to put it off – it is like a child resisting authority”.

Mari To Yves –“ if you put the babies socks and pyjamas on I will be glad – I am dead on my feet”.

Yves “I am also tired”.

Mari “Then I can spend some quality time with you”.

Yves “OOOOOOOO!”

Mari “When I usually say that he will do it immediately but I can’t abuse it because if I don’t deliver it doesn’t work”.

Diane “I try to motivate my husband to do more by telling him he has to”.

Sandy “He thinks that because I stay home with Maddy I am not working then he will say – you are the one that chose to do it”. “Look I am not saying I don’t like it – I love it – look you complain about your job sometimes – I can say a little something”.

Cathy “They don’t think it is a job!”

Fran “When you say something you are a nag and a nooch, and I wouldn’t nag and nooch if you just do!”

Cathy “I would say if you happened to have a day doing this, tomorrow you can sit around doing what you want – watching T.V, and read the paper all day”.

Mari “The husband can have an entire day where he can sit around and watch T.V – NO WAY!” “ I will not allow this”.

Cathy “It is usually for a big thing you know, like painting the ceiling”.

6.15.3 Men in conversation

Bruce “My wife tries to motivate me to do what she wants by withholding sex”.

Yves “Yes she does”.

6.15.4 Women in conversation

Mari “If my husband would do more; I would do more to entertain him, like having sex at night”.

Diane “It is like a reward”.

Mari “It is not a reward – I just can’t do it”. “He is not willing to give up his relaxation”.

6.15.5 Couples in conversation about the daily grind

Yves “You do it only when you want and when I do it I get criticized – I clean up the bathroom floor and what do you do – sweeping all over it with your fingers and if there is one hair...”

Mari “I like raising the cleaning to a certain level”.

Yves “Oh!” “I am sorry!”

Mari “Yves, what is the issue?”

Yves “I do a lot for you – what do you do for me?”

Mike “If you miss a spot here – or if you didn’t do the back part of the house first when you were supposed to do the front part – no matter what I do it still isn’t done right”.

Mari “He think when he does something he is wonderful – it is like he wants to beat himself on the chest”. “I have to pat him on the shoulder and I have to be affectionate to him for something and I can’t do it”. “I haven’t got it in me to do it because it is your responsibility to do it and it has to be one”.

Cathy “One of your favourite things to do is just to go to the other room – reading a paper – chaos can go on around you – it doesn’t bother you as long as you...”

Pat “But it doesn’t bother me”.

Cathy “Exactly!”

Pat “Why?” “But that bothers you and for some reason you want it to bother me to”. “Why would you want me to come upset and disturbed?”

Cathy “I want you to help me”.

Pat “No – I want you to chill out”.

6.16 CAN FIGHTING BE GOOD FOR A RELATIONSHIP

Conflict is inevitable in an intimate relationship. Most couples probably still feel that it would be better not to have the unpleasantness of quarrels, disagreement, and arguments. But perhaps this negative view of conflict is mistaken. An increasing number of social scientists are coming to believe that conflict is an essential aspect of *promoting* intimacy. According to this perspective, it is the handling of conflict – not its absence – that allows relationships to grow and prosper (Brehm, 1992:226).

Table 6.16.1 THE FIGHT EFFECTS PROFILE

Each individual scores each fight from his or her point of view. In a good fight, both partners win. That is, both partners have considerably more positive outcomes than negative ones.

Category	Positive Outcome	Negative Outcome
Hurt	Person feels less hurt, weak, or offended.	Person feels more hurt, weak, or offended.
Information	Person gains more information about relationship or partner's feelings.	Person learns nothing new.

Resolution	Open conflict has made it more likely that the issue will be resolved.	Possibility of a solution is now less likely.
Control	Person has gained more mutually acceptable influence over the partner's behaviour.	Person now has less mutually acceptable influence over the partner.
Fear	Fear of fighting and/or the partner is reduced.	Fear has increased.
Trust	Person has more confidence that the partner will deal with him or her "in good faith, with good will, and with positive regard".	Person has less confidence in partner's goodwill.
Revenge	Intentions to take revenge are not stimulated by the fight.	Intentions to take revenge are stimulated by the fight
Reconciliation	Person makes active efforts to undo any harm he or she has caused and welcomes similar efforts by the partner.	Person does not attempt or encourage reconciliation.
Centricity	Person feels he or she is more central to the other's concern and interest.	Person feels he or she "counts less" with partner.
Self-Count	Person feels better about himself or herself: More	Person feels worse about himself or herself.

confidence, more self-esteem.

Catharsis	Person feels cleared of tension and aggression.	Person feels at least as much tension and aggression as before the fight.
Cohesion-Affection	Closeness with and attraction to the partner has increased.	Closeness with and attraction to the partner has decreased.

(Brehm, 1992:226)

Bach and Wyden in Brehm (1992:226) believe that there is no acceptable substitute for making every effort to have a “good fight” when disagreements arise. The available alternatives, they contend, are much worse. “Bad fighting” is one of these unacceptable alternatives. Here, the partners go at each other, with no holds barred. The result of bad fights can range from psychological distress to severe physical injury or even death.

Another alternative to having a good fight is to avoid fighting altogether. If there are no disagreements, fight avoidance seems reasonable. It is, however, unlikely that individuals involved in an intimate relationship, particularly those who live together, could have a lasting partnership without any disagreements. More often, fight avoidance serves to look over problems and avoid serious issues in the relationship that couples are afraid to confront. At best, such avoidance tactics can create a relatively comfortable, though, perhaps, increasingly superficial, relationship. At worst, the partners collect “gunnysacks” of unresolved complaints that at some point burst open with explosive rage (Bate, 1988:197).

To fight fair and have a “good” fight, requires strong self-discipline and genuine caring about the other person. But the outcome is worth the effort. Instead of being

seen as a dreadful problem, conflict can be seen as a challenging opportunity – the chance to learn about both partner and self, the possibility for the relationship to grow in strength and intimacy. Bad fights can produce psychological and, sometimes, physical damage to the participants. At this stage couples are not connected or empathic with each other. Neither knows how powerful the other sees them. Men who are not abusive usually are not aware that women are inhibited and frightened by their physical power. Patterns of verbal communication can serve to maintain and enhance the more powerful position of a person in the relationship (Brehm, 1992:228).

6.17 SOCIAL POWER IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Social power is the ability to influence the behaviour of others and to resist their influence on us. It affects all relationships-between friends as well as lovers, at work as well as in the family, in superficial as well as close encounters.

6.17.1 POWER AS A SOCIAL EXCHANGE PROCESS

•

6.17.1.1 The Bases of Power

Power is based on the control of valuable resources. If A possesses something B wants, B will be motivated to comply with A's wishes in order to secure the resource from A. Thus, A will have power over B (Brehm, 1992:230).

First, the person possessing resources does not have to possess the desired resources directly, it is enough if he or she controls access to them. Resource power can only exist if the other person values the resource, and the amount of power should directly reflect the amount of the other person's desire.

The availability of alternative sources of desired resources is also a critical factor.

A person's relationship alternatives affect commitment to an existing relationship. Individuals with few alternatives outside the existing relationship will tend to be more committed to that relationship than those with many alternatives. Without the prospect of other options, people are more *dependant* on what they already have.

Dependency depends on a person's own alternatives. A person's power is affected by the other person's options (Brehm, 1992:231).

In a relationship between just two people, power and dependency are *inversely* related: the less dependency, the more power. Differences in available alternatives have been cited as one possible explanation for why husbands in most societies have more power than wives. Employment outside the home allows men to develop alternative sources of desired resources, women who do not work outside their homes have considerably fewer such opportunities. Women with young children are particularly likely to be dependant on their husbands both financially and, often, socially. Not only can alternatives affect power, but also power can affect alternatives. It is possible for high-power individuals to prevent people with low power from developing alternative sources of the resources they desire. For instance, an economically more powerful husband can insist that his wife does not pursue career and thereby maintain the existing power structure in their relationship. There is some evidence, for example, that a husband's achievements serve to set a ceiling on his wife's accomplishments, ensuring that she is unlikely to surpass him (Bate, 1988:38).

6.17.1.2 Naturalistic arguments for male dominance

In the past the idea that a husband ought to have the power in the marital relationship was entrenched. The wife (and children) took the husband's (father's), name and status and, within broad limits, was subject to his discipline. The husband's wants, wishes or preferences usually took precedence over those of his wife and children.

He had the power and the privileged position within the family. He was ultimately responsible for making important family decisions such as where they would live, the kind of lifestyle they would have, the friends they would or would not have, and so on. No one would deny that such an unequal power relationship predominated in the past; indeed, it appears to persist in many marriages today. The question arises: how, if at all, is this to be justified? (Brehm, 1992:232).

Brehm (1992:235), writes: “But for her sex, a woman is a man; she has the same organs, the same needs, the same faculties”. But her “sex” for Rousseau in Brehm (1992:233) is not a mere contingency, rather, it determines the entire nature and role of the subject. Thus he says that a female ought to have a different education, moral values, roles in society, and functions in the domestic household should be different from those assigned to a male. Rousseau adds that she is specially made “by nature” for man’s delight! As a result she is to be trained to be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to make his life pleasant and happy, these are the duties of woman for all time, and this is what she should be taught while she is young. Thus the difference between a man and a woman requires that a wife be subordinate to her husband.

Aristotle in Brehm (1992:232) claims that a woman is not a fully rational being when compared with a man. He also suggests that the virtues are different in a woman: temperance, fortitude, and justice are not the same in a man as in a woman; a man’s fortitude is shown in ruling, a woman’s in obeying”. It appears, to Aristotle, that this shows why the male ought to have the power in the marital relationship.

Rousseau in Brehm (1992:233) claims that although there is no consistent differences in the average scores of males and females on IQ tests the results if analysed according to the type of ability involved, consistent differences between the sexes are found - “females have greater verbal ability than males, while males outperform females on tests of visual-spatial ability and arithmetic reasoning.

We could suggest an explanation for this difference along socio-biological lines. In the long hunter-gatherer period men needed superior spatial skills to throw weapons at moving targets, women needed (verbal) skills for success at making allies within the tribe, manipulating men into helping her.

Over the very long stretch of evolutionary time, male and female brains became hard-wired to respond in ways consistent with these gender-related tasks so that, in our day, boys tend to have developed their latent perception to a greater extent while girls tend to be more fluent speakers and to have better verbal memories. People have been socialised into accepting particular stereotypes in which men have the more dominant role. In their working lives, men generally tend to have more opportunities, more resources, more status and more power than women and these expectations may accompany them into the marital relationship. In other words, the power that men possess in their lives outside the home gives them certain advantages within the home (refer 6.15.1, page 206).

Just as children are presented with a more or less consistent picture of how they are expected to behave when adults, men and women are similarly subject to social pressure of various kinds to make them behave in stereotypical ways. Thus it has often been impossible for the sexes to trespass on what has been regarded as the other's territory (Brehm, 1992:235),(refer 6.19, page 225).

• We may conclude that there is considerable empirical evidence (physiological, psychological and sociological), explaining the strong tendency towards male dominance. Does this justify the commonly held view that husbands ought to have the power in the traditional marriage?

The superior physical strength of males in comparison with females is not universal. The empirical data represents only an average. Some wives are stronger, taller, or broader, than their husbands. Not all men conform to the expectations of the masculine stereotype – one cannot deride a weak man on the grounds that he ought to be stronger than his wife in order to have the power in the marriage and claim that men should have the power because they are physically stronger. If all men were stronger there would be nothing to deride (Brehm, 1992:236).

We should note that no differences existing, can explain more than a small number of the roles that males and females typically perform within the traditional household.

6.17.2 THE PROCESS OF POWER

The second face of power is the process by which it is expressed. The kinds of behaviour that can be used to get our way with others seem almost infinite. Some people use physical violence, others plead. Sometimes power is exercised by talking more than anyone else, at other times, the one who is silent is exerting his or her will most effectively. Although general rules about the process of power are hard to come by, it does appear that the way we get our way is affected by the resources we possess as well as by culturally determined norms about how we should behave (Brehm, 1992:237).

Love, like any other resource, must be valued to be effective in creating power. Our love, then, is only powerful when the other person loves us. As described by Scott Spencer (1980) in his novel *Endless Love*, when *their* love dies so does *our* power.

•

There had been a time when Rose had felt she could protect her position in the marriageby simply (and it was simple) withholding her love. But now that her love was no longer sought there was no advantage to be gained in rationing it. It was clear that the power she once had was not real power – it had been bestowed upon her, assigned. It had all depended on Arthur's wanting her, depended on his vulnerability to every nuance of rejection. He had, she realized now. Chosen her weapon for her. He had given her a sword that only he could sharpen (Spencer, 1980:66-67).

6.17.2.1 Language and touch

Our use of language may be one of the most subtle and pervasive processes of power. How we talk to another person may be strongly influenced by the balance of power between us (Brehm, 1992:237).

Verbal communication can serve to maintain and enhance the more powerful position of males in heterosexual interactions. Language patterns of same-sex couples (male and female) were compared with those of opposite –sex couples. Same-sex couples, conversational structure was much the same regardless of whether two males or two females were talking (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994:172).

Cross-sex couples, however, displayed a distinctive gender-based pattern. First, males interrupted their partners much more often than their female partners interrupted. Interrupting someone is usually associated with having greater social power. Secondly, females were more silent than males. Females were getting “cut off at the pass” during these conversations. The cut offs could be explicit or implicit. That is, when a women would make a statement, the man might interrupt her before she was through, or he might let her finish but then give her a minimum response (“um”). These cut offs may have contributed to the greater silence among women. What’s the point in talking if he isn’t interested? (refer, 6.19, page 225).

Henley in Brehm (1992:238) maintained that men touch women more than vice versa and that this difference reflects the use of touch as an expression of higher status and greater power. Males seems to touch females more often as opposed to females touching males. Touch can, of course, be intrusive or demeaning, and it can serve to reinforce dominance over the person being touched. But it can also act as a signal of interest in sexual activities, and can function as a gesture of solidarity, indicating warmth and concern for the person being touched. An adequate understanding of the meaning of touch requires an appreciation of the context in which it occurs.

6.17.2.2 Styles of power

Like verbal interactions, styles of power may reflect gender differences. Johnson in Brehm (1992:239) has proposed that women are particularly likely to use personal power (e.g., appeals to affection and/or sexuality), (refer 6.15.3 & 6.15.4 page 209-

210), and manipulative power (e.g., appeals based on helplessness). According to Johnson, men are more likely to use direct forms of power (e.g., coercion, authority) as well as personal power based on competence (e.g., expertise, information).

Styles of power among heterosexual couples have also been investigated (Falbo & Peplau, in Brehm, 1992:239). Subjects in this study were male and female, they all responded to instructions to describe, "How I get my partner to do what I want." Falbo and Peplau found that two dimensions characterized most of their subject's replies.

The first dimension involved direct power styles (e.g., asking, telling, talking) versus indirect styles (e.g., hinting, being nice, pouting). The second dimension was that of bilateral styles (e.g., attempting persuasion, bargaining) versus unilateral ones (e.g., withdrawing, just letting each person do what he or she wants).

Comparisons were first made on the basis of sexual orientation and gender. It was found that people who reported having greater power in the relationship also reported greater use of a bilateral power style. Greater satisfaction was associated with greater use of a direct power style. Men are more likely to use styles stereotypically defined as "masculine" (such as using reason, being assertive, claiming superior knowledge) and that women are more likely to use styles stereotypically defined as "feminine" (such as compromising, being a nuisance, using flattery). Men, they propose, are free to adjust the tactic they employ to the circumstances they face, calling upon whatever approach seems most likely to work. Women, it is argued, are more constrained by social norms, and they restrict their power tactics to those seen as socially acceptable for females (Bates, 1988:191).

6.17.2.3 The Outcome of Power

There is however, a difference between “implementation” power and “orchestration” power. The person with orchestration power decides who will decide, the person with implementation power simply carries out delegated power. Where power is delegated, it can be recalled.

Table (1) IMPLEMENTATION POWER VERSUS ORCHESTRATION

	Husband Dominated	Egalitarian	Wife Dominated
Financial	37%	18%	45%
Social	12	60	28
Child rearing	2	40	58
Major decisions (e.g., changing jobs or residences)	48	50	2

Authority in the Home

Husband-dominated	54%
Egalitarian	39
Wife-dominated	7

(Brehm, 1992:243)

6.17.2.4 Female dominance: A taboo?

Even today, female dominance in a heterosexual relationship is less acceptable *to both parties* than is male dominance. Although both men and women enjoy the benefits of having power and control, they are more comfortable when the balance of power in their relationship is tilted in the male direction rather than when it is titled in the female direction.

The socially prescribed roles of a male initiator and a female responder seem widespread in sexual, or at least potentially sexual, heterosexual interactions (Folkes in Brehm (1992:244). The man is taking the initiative and the female's making the response: The male proposes, the female disposes-as the saying goes. Although depictions of sexual initiation and dominance by females can be found in some pornographic materials, it appears that the appeal of the fantasy does not often translate into a desire for the reality.

Men self-disclose more than women in initial encounters with the opposite sex. In these encounters, self-disclosure is a means of taking the initiative. Since men are expected to be active, dominant, and forceful, they are perceived as being more attractive when they display these characteristics than when they do not. Both men and women seem more comfortable when the man is masterful and the lady is in distress than when these roles are reversed. Even physical characteristics may reflect a preference for male dominance. Among heterosexual couples, the man is typically older than the woman, and most men prefer dating shorter women, while most women prefer dating taller men (Shepperd & Strathman in Brehm, 1992:245).

It seems, then, reasonable to propose that the way in which men and women respond to female dominance is a highly sensitive measure of the degree of gender equality in a society. So long as female dominance is less acceptable than male dominance, true equality has not been achieved.

6.18 POWER AND PERSONALITY

Veroff & Veroff (1972:279-291) measured the need for power, they concluded that this need reflected concerns about weakness, feeling weak and insecure, a person desires power in order to gain strength and security. They found, for example, that for men, increased education was associated with a decreasing need for power, whereas for women, it was associated with an increasing need for power. Single women had the highest need for power. According to the Veroffs, this pattern of results is determined by two factors. First, women who are single violate the cultural norm that places high value on marriage for women. Second, women who have more education are likely to be competing against men in “a man’s world” and may feel that being female is a handicap situation. Both factors would undermine feelings of security and, from the Veroff’s perspective, result in an increased need for power.

The second effort on the need for power has been conducted by Winter in Brehm (1992:246). Winter’s measure of the need for power is designed to reflect an interest in strong, vigorous action, a desire to produce strong emotional effects in others, and a concern about reputation and position. It is possible to suggest, of course, that these are exactly the interests, desires, and concerns that would be felt by someone who also felt insecure. Winter’s major example of a person strong in the need for power is the literary figure of Don Juan, who used the sexual conquest of women to prove his manhood and flaunt his power. For men, a high need for power was associated with low relationship satisfaction (both their own and that of their partners), low love for their partners, and a high number of anticipated problems in the relationship. Among women, need for power affected only the number of anticipated problems. In addition, men high in need for power were more likely than other men to indicate being interested in someone else, and they reported having had a larger number of previous relationships.

The author is of meaning that it is important not to overemphasize the difference between men and women in their need for power. Amongst both sexes, the need for power varies – with some individuals having a strong need and others a weak one.

Winter has suggested that these differences are not a matter of gender per se, but rather a reflection of the different socialization practices applied to males and females. According to this perspective, girls receive more training in behaving in a responsible manner than do boys. This training, says Winter, prompts women with a high need for power to channel this need into socially responsible actions, while men express their need for power in both socially responsible *and* socially irresponsible ways (Brehm, 1992:260).

6.18.1 POWER AND UNDERSTANDING

Whoever (male or female) has less power will need to understand whoever (male or female) has more power. Since, however, it is usually assumed that, on the average, men have more power than women, the typical prediction is that women's understanding of their male partner will have a stronger association with relationship satisfaction than will men's understanding of their female partner (Brehm, 1992:261).

Loving is the purpose of life. One is born being pure love rather than learning love, the rejection of this love creates a lifelong striving to retain the state of loving bliss – loving for the joy and awe of loving. Love is the natural human state. Beauty and ideas may touch a person deeply to open up the innate love within. One appreciates beauty which releases the loving energy, rather than loving beauty. Many positive experiences and emotions may unlock one's capacity for love and thus begin the path of achieving the purpose of life (Brehm, 1992:262).

The drive for power is the result of an absence of love. It is an ego distortion with the purpose being to obtain love, not to love.

Jo-Brothers (1992:39) describes greed as the fear that one will not obtain sufficient love, so one tries to get as much as possible before it is withdrawn. This, as an adult ego, is so insecure that it believes power will convince others to love it. We are loved

for being, not for achieving. We all love someone or something. It may be that our love is arising and fading with the passage of the sun through the sky. It may be that our love is constant, enduring like the stars through the years.

The passion of our love may be like a flickering candle or burn with the intensity of a conflagration. Our love may be for a person or power, an idea or beauty, pleasure or physical well-being. With some people the presence of their love is obvious. With others its presence is indirectly noted much as the presence of a subterranean river is revealed by the life it makes possible on the surface (Jo-Brothers, 1992:39).

The process of power refers to the way that power is expressed. Our use of language may be a subtle means of expressing power. Conflict between partners can present itself in various ways involving words, actions, and feelings. The clash of incompatible goals can be resolved in a peaceful, loving manner – or in a hostile, antagonistic fashion as discussed in 6.19.

6.19 COPING WITH STRESS

- Yves “This is the one place where I come where my wife doesn’t come – this is my special chair”.
- Bob “After work you come home and this is the place where you want to chill out – everybody following you – kids – you go to the bedroom, they go too – you go to the T.V room – after you they go – I got my own special room – “His own room” – “The man haters club” – This room is very special, when I put something down, I know where it is”.
- Pat “When I was younger my Dad had one of the bedrooms all to himself – I thought what a wonderful idea – it was off limits for the kids”.
- Pat “he went to the garage – a space he didn’t use –
- Cathy “This could be a perfect space you now if you want it!” “Well go do it!” “these are you’re areas – the garage, the working bench”.

- Pat “Well thank you – thank you – I think a lot of guys stay out of the house and pursue other goals because they don’t have a place to be – that space is what all men ultimately seek – it is a sense of freedom”.
- Bruce “I run because I do know that it is solitary time for me, at some point you had enough off it all – I need my space”.
- Arthur “Sunday’s my clock is set from five to one, that is when I start watching sport”.
- Fran “I can fall down and break my neck – but when the giants are on he will still be watching the giants (football) – it doesn’t matter what game is on, the T.V doesn’t go off”.

6.19.1 Women’s talk

- Sandy “It is just a stupid game – it is just a box”.
- Mari “I turn it off in the middle of a game and I spread myself in front of the T.V – I mean how can he just throw me away?”
- Arthur “When I have a problem – (at night time after the children go to sleep), and there is a sitcom I want to watch – I bet you my wife will just come in and say – I want to talk to you”.

6.19.2 Men’s talk

- Bob “When I talk to my wife – maybe for an hour or so – I think it was the day I asked her to marry me” – then I will ask – “What do you want to talk about” – and she will say - “us”. “Your reaction is then – pick up the paper and read the paper”.
- Mike “Lets talk about us – I mean I don’t even know what to say”.

Mari “You know if I have to give Yves a grade as a listener I will give him a negative”. “I pour my heart out, I pour my soul out, - all you have to do is listen – or you hear me and you don’t want to listen”. “I want to tell him what my impressions are, what my feelings are”.

6.19.3 Bruce and Diane

Diane “Sometimes he will say:” “Can you get to the point” – “and I want to tell you the whole thing”.

Bruce “But Diane you have not edited your statement enough!”

Diane “When I bring it forward for you it is a problem!”

Bruce “Yes, but bring it to a point”. “I mean to sit here for an hour and a half listening to it – listen when *you* start to tell a story – I get the kids in the car – I have to get the kids in the car...”

Bruce “I have to hear every minute detail – and then I have to ask – what is it that you have to tell me”?

Diane “You decide what is important – what I am about to say before I even said it”. “That is like insulting!”

Bruce “I think insulting is a really harsh word”.

Diane “It is not up to you to determine the word because I am the one with the feeling”.

Bruce “My wife will talk about a lot of things, which I have absolutely no interest in, which I consider to be irrelevant to the big picture”. “What is the point!” “We could do something else!”

Mike Coming from home, picking up the baby, saying hello.

Fran “I had a stressful day today and I wants to tell somebody what my day was like or at least somebody to ask me – “how was your day today honey?” – “just be nice, just ask!”

Sandy "We had this conversation before – if he could only ask me about my day".

Arthur "What could you possibly tell me about your day that I have to sit down and listen to you for twenty minutes?"

Sandy "Arthur you should really ask me my feelings, was I upset?"

Arthur "I thought you would flip if I asked you your feelings?"

Sandy "I would love it!"

Arthur "I saw the "no" light when I am listening what she is going to say before she even said it".

Sandy "Well it is a sad day for a married couple, because you can just know what I am thinking".

Cathy "My husband says he is listening but he is really often out in space – I will stop and ask him – What did I just say – and he gets all nervous and nine out of ten times he hasn't an idea".

Fran "He didn't hear me – he has selective hearing".

Mike "I am sorry; sometimes I didn't hear what she is saying".

Sandra "I can stop in a middle of a sentence and say my hair dryer blew yesterday morning, and he will not say anything because he wasn't listening".

Bob "I will start listening and then say – O.K, and by the time she is not halfway there I am just like – forget this!"

Sandra "And that is when your feelings get hurt, I would say – I don't need your advice, I just need you to listen". "He would say, well, then don't bother me with your problems and after twelve years of marriage I just realize there is certain things that you just don't get from Bob".

Arthur "I want to offer my help, that is really what I like, I like that, and I get a sense that she needed me and I was there for her – but just by listening I don't understand how that can help – that is beyond me".

Mike "If it is about something important and I know it is really important to her – I will listen".

Fran "It is selective – obviously this isn't important so I wouldn't listen to this today – I just feel you don't care what I have to say, so why should I care what you have to say?"

The author is of the opinion that in all marriages, relationships of commitment have high potential for conflict. One reason is that in intimate relationships people may reveal or risk more of themselves and thus experience more interdependence with a partner than would be the case of human connections. Nowadays married couples seem to have high expectations for comfort, understanding, and continued sexual sharing with one another. Disappointment in any of these areas can bring resentment, active conflict, or termination of the relationship. For men and women today the potential for conflict is increased as they deal with a variety of stresses related to gender.

Conflict is an unavoidable feature of interpersonal interaction. Learning to deal constructively with it is an important aspect of effective communication.

6.20 CONFLICT AND DISSOLUTION IN SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Conflict is the process in which the parties struggle against one another for a commonly prized object (Wallace & Wallace, 1989:66).

6.20.1 STRUCTURAL FACTORS IN CONFLICT AND DISSOLUTION

There are some structural factors that appear to be more directly connected with how people think and feel about their relationships (Brehm, 1992:293).

6.20.1.1 Gender Differences

Men and women appear to differ in their perception of problems in the relationship. In general, women report more problems in their heterosexual relationships than do men. Moreover, there is some evidence that the degree of female dissatisfaction with a relationship is a better predictor than male's unhappiness of whether the relationship will end (Bates, 1988:196).

This seems to indicate that women are more sensitive to and aware of relational problems than men are. Another possibility, however, is that men and women come to relationships with different expectations and desires concerning those relationships and that, on average, heterosexual relationships work better to fulfil the expectations and desires of men than those of women (Brehm, 1992:294).

Consistent with this line of reasoning, there are gender differences in the *specific* type of problems. For example, although divorcing men and women are equally likely to cite communication problems as a cause of divorce, women emphasize basic unhappiness and incompatibility more than men do. It is also possible that some behaviours, particularly sexual behaviours, are more upsetting depending on the gender of those involved. Sexual withholding by a woman is especially upsetting to a male partner, while sexual aggression by a man is especially upsetting to a female partner. In addition, men appear more likely than women to blame the end of a relationship on their partner's sexual involvement with another person.

Regardless of these differences in men's and women's awareness of and likely responses to relational problems, it does appear that women are more likely than men to initiate the termination of a relationship. Marital separation and divorce are initiated more often by wives than by husbands (Brehm, 1992:295, refer, 6.20.3.3, page 238).

What does it mean when someone files for divorce or walks out the door? Goode in Brehm (1992:295) who also found that women were more likely than men to ask for a

divorce, believed that men actually wanted the divorce more and behaved in ways that drove their wives to ask for it. Most break ups probably involve a whole series of such interactions, with each partner sometimes asking for change and other times being asked to change. People spend much time and energy after a break up trying to develop an understanding of what happened and who was to blame.

6.20.1.2 As Time Goes By

Although we seldom notice the effects of the passage of time on a relationship while time is passing, we can often look back and realize how important a role time played in what happened. Presumably, knowing each other for a longer time allows people to arrive at better arrangements that can more easily be endured – and part of getting to know each other involves perceiving the negative, undesirable qualities of a partner once the intensity of early romance has diminished.

Time actually spent with the partner is also important. Marini in Brehm (1992:296) found that both the amount of time spent together and the number of pleasurable activities done together were positively correlated with the happiness of married couples. Spending time together (either by doing something together or just by being together), increases happiness, *and* happiness with the marriage increases the desire to spend time together – if parents do not have time available to spend with each other, their chances for marital success may be reduced.

Two major positions have been taken in regard to the effects of time on intimate relationships in the life cycle of marriage and the family. According to Pineo in Brehm (1992:297) there is a possibility of a linear decline in marital satisfaction. This decline comes about because of two basic processes in relationship development. First, there is the inevitable fading of the romantic “high” of the courtship before marriage. Second, Pineo suggests that when people marry, it is because they have obtained a “good fit” between themselves. If this is the “best fit” that these two individuals can manage, then any changes that occur in either one of them will reduce the compatibility of their relationship. Since people do change, at least to some

extent, as they grow older, the odds would seem high that what went so well together at 22 will no longer fit quite so well at 40.

According to Burr (1998:29-37) after an initial decline during the earlier years of marriage, marital satisfaction may begin to increase. This U-shaped pattern appears to be closely associated with the arrival and departure of children, with marital satisfaction declining as children are born and grow up, but then increasing as the children mature and leave home.

Some married couples may experience no decline at all, other couples will ditch out in divorce the first year of marriage. Marital problems, however, can be low in the early years of marriage, increase with the arrival of children, and then decline when the children leave home. The important point is that the positive and negative aspects of married life should be considered as a relatively independent process that can develop differently over time.

6.20.1.3 When Two Become Three or More: Effects of Children on Marital Satisfaction

There might be something about having children around that makes a satisfying relationship between the couple more difficult to sustain. There are, however, three important qualifications to this general conclusion. First, the negative effects of children are restricted to marital *satisfaction*. In terms of *duration* of the marriage, married couples with children stay together longer than those without children. Second, the reduction in marital satisfaction associated with having children seems to be stronger for wives than for husbands. Third, the quality of life is an important moderating factor. Having children is associated with *severe* decline in marital satisfaction only among women who are already having a hard time managing the demands on their time and energy (refer 6.11, page 191). Low-income mothers employed full-time, furthermore, when children are wanted and parent-child relationships are of good quality, negative effects of having children on parental well-being are much less likely. Hoffman and Manis in Brehm (1992:299) highlight the

early years of parenthood, when everything (joys *and* frustrations) is more intense. Regardless of their age, it does appear that having a large number of children is likely to increase the negative effect on marital satisfaction, once the children leave home, marital satisfaction may increase for many couples.

6.20.1.4 Role Strain: Who Does What?

In every social organization, there are roles. Although the roles of husband and wife have changed over time and differ across socio-economic class, the traditional, middle-class roles in Western industrialized nations were well defined. The husband's role was to earn money outside the home and act as an authority figure inside the home, the wife's role was to take care of the home, raise the children, and maintain appropriate social contacts (Brehm, 1992:300).

Many women today are employed, the majority are in the work force. This change is most dramatic for women with children. In 1970, only 30 percent of women with children under the age of six were employed outside the home, by 1987, 57 percent were employed. Among women with children under the age of one, only 24 percent were employed in 1970, while 51 percent were employed by 1987. In 1989 cover story entitled "Onward Women!" Time magazine noted that 68 percent of women with children under the age of 18 were employed (Time Magazine).

It is estimated that by the year 2000, 81 percent of women aged 25 to 64 will be in the work force. When both spouses work, the fundamental basis for the traditional division of labour between the provider husband and the caretaker wife disappears (Brehm, 1992:300).

According to Richmond-Abbott (1983:343) while the basis for the traditional division of labour no longer exists, the traditional division of household labour continues. Despite their increasing participation in the work force outside the home, women still perform much more of the housework and child care than do men. This pattern does not appear to reflect factors other than gender (Refer 6.15.1, page 206).

Women's employment, time availability, resources, conscious ideology, and power do not account for why wives still do the bulk of family work. More than any other factor, gender accounts for the amount and allocation of housework and childcare (Thompson & Walker, 1989: 857).

It seems likely that all these developments are associated with considerable *role strain*-disagreements about who should perform various tasks and make various decisions-for both spouses (Gray (a), 1992:261-262). Wives who expect their husbands to be more involved in housework and childcare are unhappy if these expectations are not satisfied and may experience a decline in marital satisfaction. Husbands who participate more in household labour than they expected to, or least feel pressured by their wives to do so, may find the stresses of home spilling over into their performance at work. This is a major cause of marital conflict and dissolution (refer 6.21.5.5, page 251).

•

6.20.2 THE PROCESS OF CONFLICT AND DISSOLUTION

6.20.2.1 Attributions: A General Scenario

People are more active in their search for explanations during more pleasant, peaceful interactions. During conflict, people will tend to take a benign view of the causes of their own behaviour, easily finding excuses for what they do. Although conflict may start as a dispute about facts, it can readily turn into an attributional conflict over motives. Because of the actor-observer bias, partners will often disagree about each other's motives. The actor will view his or her behaviour as situationally caused while regarding the partner's behaviour as produced by the partner's enduring personal characteristics (Brehm, 1992:304).

6.20.2.2 Attributions: Differences between Happy and Unhappy Couples

Despite these general trends in attributional behaviour during conflict, there are major differences in the pattern of attributions exhibited by happy as compared with unhappy couples.

Happy couples make relationships-enhancing casual attributions: emphasizing the good by making internal, stable, and global attributions for positive behaviour by the partner and discounting the bad by making external, unstable and specific attributions for negative behaviour by the partner. Unhappy couples make distress-maintaining causal attributions, which are the mirror image of those made by happy couples.

Attributions of responsibility (indicating a person's accountability for an event) also differ depending on the state of the relationship. Unhappy couples are more likely than happy ones to regard the partner as selfishly motivated and behaving with negative intentions. There is some evidence that distress-maintaining attributions can precede, and perhaps make a causal contribution to, marital dissatisfaction. Although marital dissatisfaction is associated with depression, the connection between marital dissatisfaction and distress-maintaining attributions occurs among both depressed and non depressed individuals (Brehm, 1992:305).

6.20.2.3 Volatility: A Problem and an Opportunity

Distressed couples appear highly volatile in their emotional reactions: emitting a flurry of positive and negative behaviours in response to a negative behaviour in response to a negative behaviour by the spouse, increasing in overall satisfaction with the relationship in response to positive daily events and decreasing in response to negative daily events. In contrast, happy couples seem more stable, less affected by the partner's behaviour. Although volatility can produce emotional blowups, the presence of positive emotional responses may contribute to improvement of the relationship (Brehm, 1992:305).

Often when couples disagree their discussions can turn into arguments and then without much warning into battles. Suddenly they stop talking in a loving manner and automatically begin hurting each other: blaming, complaining, accusing, demanding, resenting, and doubting. Point 6.20.3 – 6.20.3.4, illustrates the different roles men and women play in fights. Women are often “emotional managers” and males often want to avoid conflict with their partners, and may become defensive and withdraw (Gray (a), 1992:206).

6.20.3 ARGUING

6.20.3.1 Couples sharing about emotion and arguing

Bob “She got very emotional – so emotional at a party to a point that she started to cry”.

Sandra “You didn’t respond”.

Bob “I don’t believe that what she said...”

Sandra “Bob that doesn’t matter, the fact that your wife was there – you didn’t respond”.

Bob “What did you want me to say?”

Sandra “Not anything – you know what – just a hand on the arm – don’t let anybody get you down”.

Bob “It is hard – specially if you know that it is bull!”

Mike “It is not that big of an issue but you will turn it into an issue”.

Fran “But that is your opinion – you will always say that my feelings are invalid”.

Cathy “When I am upset about something I am over sensitive, that is always the good one, and I shouldn’t be that upset and it really gets me

because once in a while he really does gets me to be upset – you know – fully unconditionally”.

Yves “I am married to an attorney, who is a prosecutor, so I never win a fight and if I win one it changes”.

6.20.3.2 Scenario

Yves “You know I get a lot of trouble with my car”.

Mari “We are not buying a new car”.

Yves “Who said we are buying a new car – I am exchanging it!” “O.K – I am not going to give a penny more than what it is going to cost me”.

Mari “Let me tell you something!”

Yves “Let me tell *you* something!”

Mari “No!” “You always want to buy a new car. Your car is two years old”.

Yves “Two years an four months and 614 miles on it”.

Mari “What kind of a car?”

Yves “BMW”.

Mari “You think you are funny – you think I am an idiot”!

Yves “I am not funny, I am serious”.

Mari “You are trying to buy a new car, we just bought a new house, for Pete’s sake!”

Yves “It is not a new car”.

Mari “You just said I spend too much money Christmas time”.

Mike “When we fight I will go into another room – to avoid the argument – then I will go into the bathroom – shut the bathroom door – turn on the shower and she will keep going and she will try to push buttons with me and I know she is doing so I will just say nothing”.

Bob “You freak out when you are cross”.

Sandra “I think we go in cycles and I tend to blow, but you cannot win an argument with Bob so you just reach a point where you just blow – just to release your own valve and then you just get on with your life”.

Pat “You don’t like to talk about things rationally very often, your strengths are over bearing, you shut down”.

6.20.3.3 Scenario with Pat’s birthday:

Remote camera:

Cathy “The incident we had the other night with my husband’s birthday – you know – he is going to come home early – I already knew at the back of my mind that he is going to blow it: So 5 o’ clock the phone should ring – we didn’t even eat dinner until 6 o’clock”.

• “He didn’t even call not even when he was beyond his normal time – and then he was at home by 8 o’clock – the kids go to bed by 8:30 – I thought that was a problem”.

Phone rang – There was a communication problem, he didn’t understand what the big deal is, why did he have to come home early.

Children waiting for Pat: “Daddy come – open your presents”.

“Happy birthday!”

Cathy “Wait!” “let him take his coat off”.

Candles were blown on cake – picture taken.

They had a major fight!!!!

Cathy “You know you are so rude, it is unbelievable – why didn’t you call!”

“Don’t you think it is so rude to do to somebody including me!”

Pat "Yes!"

Cathy "You have no respect for me, you continue to do this!"

The children were screaming and playing and wanted to give Pat his present.

Cathy "Put that down!" " We have been planning on this party all day long".
"Now I have every right to leave you Pat!" " I am sick and tired of you pulling this crap on me..."

Pat She said a couple of times – "I am just going to move out and get my own place, and I begged her and begged her and told her I would make whatever changes I needed to change our relationship and I didn't understand what it was I needed to do in order to effect that".

6.20.3.4 Men in conversation

Pat "Have anyone ever experienced your wife just coming into the room
• and switching off the TV in the middle of a football game?"

Men "Yes!" "Absolutely".

6.21 THE GROUP COMING TOGETHER TO DISCUSS WITH THE AUTHOR SOME OF THE SCENARIOS IN THE RELATIONSHIP.

6.21.1 The daily grind

AUTHOR OF VIDEO:

Men come from work – now where does he head – O.K – I left my work – I did my work – now I get my reward ... heading for his chair in the T.V room, sitting down.

Women – when woman comes from work she can't just relax – this has to be done, and that has to be done... and the next symptom is ... I can't do it all! – and immediately when she can't cope with stress and when she is tired, what is she planning on doing?

What she does is she finds a heavy box that needs to be moved – she gets it and moves it around with lots of sound effects before him resting in his chair – no effect over there.

Women don't want to boss around, they don't want to ask you to do things – if you want to do it, then do it. All women have little antennas, and they just thinkwhat do you need, and when you come to the men, they can't figure out what is going on – you are giving and giving and he is watching T.V still.

Women must realize this: for men to feel, it stimulates them more than sex, is to feel they make a difference in your life. It is about making you happy and the greatest gift you can give the men is to let them know when he does these things by taking the time to acknowledge these things – O! John you did the trash – thanks.

6.21.2 COPING WITH STRESS

AUTHOR OF VIDEO:

When is the biggest conflict between men and women: Men get close – men pull away – and when he pulls away, wants to go for his drive or watch T.V, she is wondering why doesn't he want to spend time with me, doesn't he care about me, doesn't he love me? You must start to realize that anything a woman considers a

waste of time, for a man it is fun. Anything which is fun for a man is one of the most potent therapeutic tools for him to cope with the stress off his life.

Whenever men have stress they go to their cave – (their own place) this is their territory, nobody can tell him what to do. The problem is women don't understand it is healthy and normal for men to do this and this is what they need to do. Then you punish him for going into the cave. Don't take it personally, if you don't go in he will come out – it gets lonely out there.

What helps women cope with stress – if a woman comes home and tells you in great detail everything which is stressing her out, then you must feel great compassion for her. “If I can remember and share with somebody who loves me all that went on in my day and then miraculously then I can let go of it” – and then you say – “How was your day, what happened? She – “O nothing, nothing” – and he thinks – great! I'll go back and watch T.V

In translation language when the women says –“ nothing”- it means “something” – and she means O! Nothing is the matter – unless you really care, then you will stand here and ask me questions, if – “I feel ignored I feel neglected, I am not special and man you are going to suffer.

One of the biggest mistakes men make, when women get upset, it is the first thing they do, they explain to her why she shouldn't be upset. All she hears is you telling her she is wrong for being disappointed. “You are telling me that I am being angry here”. “You are telling me that I shouldn't be feeling what I am feeling. And that is the biggest mistake men make.

The real test for men is, when women for example say: “Well what do I do?” That is when men say “well I don't know” – she keeps telling, she will go on and on, women don't want men to solve the problem, the fact is if men don't have a valid solution validate, then it is an unsolvable problem. He needs to get the message so that he can make a difference, because in their mind they are doing nothing. As you begin to understand women, you understand you are doing the most important thing women

want us to do today, what they need men most for is to need them, to help them cope with the stress that make them so independent and the way to do that is communication.

6.21.3 ARGUING – AUTHOR OF VIDEO

If we don't understand the opposite sex we start to feel powerless, and when we feel powerless we start feeling and behaving like children.

Time out is the most important – Time out and the come back and make up, and men instinctively have a time out mechanism, if the argument is not working they just walk away, and what do women do, they bite him back – “you are leaving, I know that you are leaving, you don't love me do you?” – and she bites him back and the talking just makes it worse.

•

A mistake men could make is to forever fight with their wives. Women must learn, don't persuade him, let him go off, he will come back – cool off.

Men don't understand their wives when they say they are sorry – Isn't that enough – and she said: “when you say you are sorry you don't feel bad enough when you say it”. So what do you say to her? “Honey I can understand why you are upset with me, the truth is I was very inconsiderate, I overreacted, I really got mad at you and I am sorry, I was really mean, I love you!”

Sometimes that doesn't even work, then you know – resentment flu has taken over. That is what men must know, you can do everything right, but if resentment flu has taken over, she does not have the ability to love you at that time, and what keeps her from feeling that feeling is stress. “I am overwhelmed, exhausted, I am giving and

giving and giving and what do men do when somebody got the flu – saying O.K, you rest more, let me do some things for you. The problem is when women feel resentful, they don't want men to be successful. Women don't want to be swept off their feet that easily – men have to pay for it. The greatest gift you can give women is to continuously give them what they need when they have nothing to give back. That is how women grow in their love.

6.21.4 ROMANCE

AUTHOR OF VIDEO IN CONVERSATION WITH GROUP - DISCUSSING ROMANCE IN RELATIONSHIPS

Women so often say to their husbands “you are not romantic anymore, there is no romance in our relationship” and you have to realize this man goes: “what is she talking about, what does she mean, I will have sex with her”

•

Yes, romance is something that allows a woman to enjoy great sex, and what is that romance? – when you will do anything for a woman that she appreciates, without her having to ask.

It does not work for a woman to say, will you go and buy me flowers? – he goes and buys and what happens, he brings them home, - “so what, I had to ask for it, it doesn't count”.

Anytime that you as a man show that you care, you pay attention – you know a woman's need, you show that you care, that is all that wins her over.

Every time you touch a women you get a point. Everyday a woman needs to be touched ten times in a non-sexual way. Women thrive on affection, it is the little things that count.

6.21.4.1 The group in discussion with the author of video

Group asking individual questions – author helps by asking group members to role-play the questions and answers

- Cathy Asking the author: “Could you convince my husband that it is a man’s thing to take the trash out, because I gave up with that in our household
- Pat I try to do the little things that you ask me to do I just don’t want to do the trash”.
- Author “O.K, I can understand this”.
- Pat “Honey, I can understand how important it is for you that I take out the trash, from now on I will take out the trash”.
- Author “This is where you have to look at things, woman”. “This man has just committed to do something that you want and your reaction is, yes but you did not do it in the right kind of voice”.
- Pat “It is a small step” “It is a first step, honey, how about that?”
- Author “That you have to know, never, ever challenge a man’s attitude, challenge his behaviour”.
- Bob “Women are like...they talk about the same mute point for thirty minutes”.
- Author “You just insulted all the women by saying that”.
- Bob “I am sorry”.
- Author “Excuse me?”
- Bob “I was very insensitive”.
- Author Men think “why are you telling me this, why are we going over it again and again, what is the point”? “What do you want me to do”? “The reason she is sharing it with you is that she is missing something in her life and what is she missing?”
- Pat “The emotion, the showing of affection”.
- Bob “I can’t imagine myself sitting and discussing why she is dragged out”.
- Author “Wait!” “This is what you have to understand about women”. “For a woman to enjoy she needs to realize the stress then she feels relieved”.

Author "Do you want passion and great sex?" "You have to endure suffering!" "Not all the time, it will end when you go the right way, but if you have that attitude it does not end". "What can you do?"

Pat "Just sympathise even if you don't understand or think what it could be".
"Fake it!"

Author "Fake it!" "That's right good technique, but when I mean fake it I mean talk from your head and not your gut reaction". "You follow that only when your mind says they make sense and your heart says that is the right thing to do".

Mari "I have this scenario when a woman has resentment flu and she is trying to cure the flu by telling her husband what he can do to help her getting over this flu and he doesn't hear or doesn't want to listen'.

Author 'In a women's language this is fine but the way he would understand this is "no matter what I do it doesn't work" "and maybe he doesn't want to make it work the way you should think he should make it work, and whenever you tell a man he should do it, you stepped over a boundary, and you are no longer lovers, you are no longer partners, you are a parent".

Bob "You are my mother".

Author "You are my mother and whenever you become my mother, one level down, is you just killed the romance". "You can't have passion from your side or from his side if you mother him".
"This is your style of it and to learn to communicate to him your needs in a non-mothering way but in a way that says, this is the man you married, I want you to tell her Yves": "I am the man you married and I want you to remember that I am a great guy". "I made a lot of mistakes in my relationships and I am learning...where is all this going..."

Author "She said that is the problem!" "See what happens to men after a while when he sees his wife is not happy".

Yves "You are happy".

Author "You're what?"

Mari "There you are, they are coming from different worlds". "Let me ask you a question". "Why would you say I made a lot of mistakes if your wife is so extremely happy?"

Yves "It is your workshop".

Author "Are you extremely happy?"

Mari "Sometimes yes!"

Author And Mari – "Yes because you can do the little things sometimes right".

Mari "My own response is you should concentrate on the big things but a lot of little things would make me happier".

Author "That is your wife talking, all women are like that, you cannot argue with that". "The little things mean more than the big things".

Yves "O.K".

Author "But you've got an attitude so they say: I did so much, I am a star, sweetheart for what you got!"

Yves "No! No!"

Mari "Yes!"

Author "I can tell you right now".

Mari "Yes! Yes! Thanks!"

Author "Hey, I am doing all this wonderful stuff, I should be appreciated, but you dance in one area". "You are not giving – for me to feel my love for you sweetheart, I need this attentiveness , I need empathy, when I am upset I don't need you to look at me like "what kind of a women would be this unhappy about trash if you got enough money to have trash". "Do you understand what I am saying?"

Mari "Yes!" " Absolutely".

Yves "This last thing we did not talk about, we didn't talk about sex".

Author "Always the bedroom comes, after outside the bedroom – that is step two".

Yves "O.K – that is something I would love to talk about – step two".
"I feel my house is sexless".

Author "It is important". "Sex is very important and it is very important for men and women can't respond, until they get heard". "I have been telling you".

Yves "O.K."

Author "You can't start the engine if you don't put gas in it and the gas is everything we have focused on tonight, the little things, the communication".

Author To Mari – "do you feel (when he is doing some of those things) you would feel more romantically inclined?"

Mari "Absolutely!" "And I told him that!"

Author "Don't tell him that, men never like that!"

Yves "There you go!"

Author You do it like this: "Absolutely honey, I sure would love to do it" – "like that, let him be the guy that did something".

Author to Mari – Tell him that: Mari – "O.K honey this is a step in the right direction and if you continue in that direction I would definitely feel more romantic".

Author To Mari – "and I am no longer going to punish you, you are out of jail". "Your sentence is over".

Mari "Well if you help me".

Author "No! No!" "Punishment has never rehabilitated anybody". "If you let a man off the hook and give him love".

Mari "See how happy he is". "He wants to be out of jail".

Author "That is right!"

Yves "O! NO!"

Author "Yes, every man does, you have to know this woman – see?"

Mari "I admit I was punishing him".

Author "Does he deserve to be punished?"

Mari "Sometimes".

Author "See, that is you missing the point". "If you punish him you will get nothing". "Punishment keeps men from learning to feel". "When you forgive a man he feels loved". "When a man feels loved he is more caring". "He corrects his behaviour in little steps but to correct his behaviour he does need understanding and that is what we are doing here".

6.21.5 ONE MONTH LATER – AFTER THE WORKSHOP

VISITING THE HOMES OF THE COUPLES TO SEE IF THERE IS ANY CHANGE IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP

6.21.5.1 Comment on the workshop

Sandra “Before the workshop I didn’t understand when Bob wanted to do his own thing, but now that I know men act different, I can understand him better”.

Bob “Men and women are different”.

Bruce “And once you come to that conclusion boy!” “It is not a problem after all you just have to move around it”.

Diane “Sometimes I get frustrated when I think I am just a person that gets exited when the garbage is taken out and as silly as it is, I just come back to the same conclusion – YES!”

Fran “He never wiped the table – only because you are here”. “I would say our relationship is 60/40”.

Mike “That is definitive an improvement from 75/25”.

Fran “My ideal situation will always be that it would be 50/50, and there is no reason why I cannot go for that goal”.

Yves “My wife gives me a list of things to do, clean your bathroom, clean the fish tank, do your dry cleaning – I will do that”.

Mari “I came home and this man cleaned the whole house – all the windows, vacuumed everything”. “That was a miracle”.

Yves “It is something I really longed to do, is to show my appreciation”. “It is tough when we are married for 6 years and we already have our song and dance going, now we have to learn new steps”.

Sandy “Sometimes he will say to me:” “Out of all the things I have done in the house what is the best thing I have done so far?”

Arthur “What is the best thing?”

Sandy “The shelf”.

Arthur “And the closet”.

Sandy “Yes, and the closet, but see what I mean he still wants the recognition and I just give it to him, I know he needs it”.

Pat “I am really taking the trash out which is standing in the middle of the floor, and I have never done it before”.

“Wiping the table is not something I do because I necessarily like it clean, but I don’t mind doing it”. “It took me five minutes to avoid two hours or half a days bitterness, these are the best five minutes I spend”.

“I usually try to do things like washing the dishes, she will acknowledge that, I don’t think she used to, she didn’t use to because I didn’t clean it”. “It is a demonstration of my caring for her, my love for her it is exactly that”. “I just never thought of it that way before”.

Sandy “I couldn’t believe he did the kitchen and T.V room, and asked the children to clean up after them”. “I was so impressed”. “I just thought what a great guy!”

6.21.5.2 Coming together

Yves “I find myself watching a lot less T.V than I use to”. “Is that just me?”

Mike “Did you give your wife the remote?”

Sandy "I guess the thing with the care is I use to take it personally when he is down in his room all the time, now I don't". "I have the whole house to myself, which is my cave – in fact I welcome it".

Bruce "If I go into my room and I want to withdraw, Diane is definitely more sensitive about that, she is not fighting for my attention".

Diane "I do not necessarily agree that, that is the way that one should be, I think it is rude and I try to be considerate because he probably needs it but I am not going to say that I accept it – his little weakness whenever he wants it". "No!" "It is my time, this is a marriage".

Diane "To Bruce – do you understand what I am saying?"

Bruce "No".

Diana "Well that's fine, that is your shortcoming, you are a human being".

Bruce "I don't think you should look at it as a shortcoming".

Diane "It is!"

Bruce "No!"

Diane "Come on honey, it is a T.V set".

Bruce "No – but you are not accepting the fact that there is a withdrawal".

•

6.21.5.3 Women coming together

Mari "I am just surprised at the fact that I have to keep it in and when he is ready I have to be ready too".

Sandy "We expect the men to work on the relationship but it seems that some of us don't want to work together". "That is what marriage is".

Diane "It still seems rude to me". "I don't get a cave".

Sandy "They some times have to listen to us when we want that and they work on the relationship".

Diane "That is what human beings should do when they are in love and they are married".

Mari "If you love me, I expect certain things from you". "You need to know what I like and try to do them because I think I know what you like and I would go out of my way to do what you like".

Sandy "You just said you know what his expectations are and you would do everything to please him, he wants to be in his cave and not to be bothered by you, and you are not doing that".

Diane "Whether it is turning on the T.V or running away, we can use this so that we can deal with this, so that I don't get so resentful but the reality is I still think it is wrong and it is not very nice".

6.21.5.4 Men coming together

Yves "I have been practising a lot and my wife has also but I think she has this resentment flu and she keep doing this but I am working on it".

•

6.21.5.5 Scenario in Yves and Mari's house

Yves "Who turned off the T.V set?"

Mari "I did!"

Yves "Why?"

Mari "Because people are here".

Yves "I am watching the news".

Mari "Who cares what you are watching, you did something this morning that annoys me". "Every time you have something to do you think you

are separated; apart from the rest of the family”. “You walked out of the door and I said Yves stop!”

Mari Telling Yves – “I chased you from this door and said I need your help, I need your help and you just walked out, and then you slammed the door on top of it”.

Yves “Mari stop chasing me”.

Mari “No! No! I am going to chase you, I want you to stop and get Yves ready”.

Yves “All right! All right!”

Mari “No don’t all right me Yves, you know that I am angry”.

Yves “Between you and me, I don’t know why you are so angry”.

Mari “You practice this relationship thing when its suits you, you are not consistent”.

Yves “Well I’ll tell you one thing, how was it the last three weeks?”

Mari “You helped a little bit”.

Yves “Excuse me! Excuse me!”

Mari “Just because you were good the last three weeks you can act up today?” “Don’t even try it all right!”.

Yves “I have tried many, many things, which she said – I love you”. “She acts tough, but she will hang in there”. “She is sweet, very sweet”. “I think I am trying very hard to practice”. “ Things will get better, not worse because we have something to carry us further not backwards”.

Mari “I am very demanding, maybe I am expecting too much of him to quickly”.

6.21.5.6 Women coming together

Diane “She (Mari) emotionally wrecks herself out, because she can not lighten up”.

Sandy “I think she is not trying”.

- Mari "You are probably right, I have to lighten up".
- Diane "You know the scary thing is even if you decide that he does not meet with your expectations and you throw him back in the pool, the next one you get is going to have his cave and is going to treat you exactly the same".
- Mari "We women have more important roles, we have more confidence, and whether you go to work or stay at home we view ourselves differently and that puts stress on a marriage, because right now we don't need them to be breadwinners necessarily". "So men don't really know how to feel important to us anymore and they have to recognise what makes them feel important, their sensitive side, their willingness to be emotional, to share their inner self with us".
- Bruce "Since the beginning of our relationship there is only been one issue, I wish you could communicate with my soul more and I don't think I fully understood the goal, and the goal was to take your relationship to a higher level where it is much more fun that you could originally imagine and then the means become worth while".
- Diane "I don't want someone just to put up with me because I have this little problem "I am a girl", but if that is how he is going to do it I think in the end that is O.K".
- Bob "In the past I was definitely the kind of person that wouldn't listen, let her know I wasn't listening, I couldn't care less, but now it is different".
- Sandra "We recently had the situation with a friend that upset me and he listened". "He didn't tell me what to do about it he just listened".
- Bob "To tell you the truth it made my life a lot easier". "I'll rather not get involved".
- Pat "There are about five things you have to do when you are listening".

“First, you have to learn to keep your mouth shut or say supportive things like yes, hmmm, you are right, that’s true”.

“You have to keep eye contact”.

“You also should remember not to say, well this is what you should do, or to watch T.V or to read a book, or to look off into space”.

“Those are a lot of things to remember and that is just one thing – listening”. “After a while it gets easier”. “At first it is not easy because we men are not use to do that”. “You are using muscles that you haven’t exercised”.

6.21.5.7 Scenario – Pat coming home

Pat “Unless I am there for her, she is going to feel she has to go somewhere else for it and I become nothing more than somebody who brings home a pay check and provides food on the table and clothes on the backs and I can’t let that happen”.

6.21.5.8 Scenario – Arthur and Sandy’s Home

Sandy “My vacation was a complete flop, my grandmother had a stroke, broke her shoulder”. “Maddy had an ear infection”. “She was throwing up all over the place”. “I called and he called me right back and he said I wish I could be there and hold you right now and put my arms around you”. “That made my whole day”.

Arthur “Her voice was like right away her trip wasn’t as bad as two seconds before I just said it”. “I told you how mush I missed you”.

Sandy “Yes, that was the other thing, that was really nice”. “It was great, it was wonderful”.

Arthur "And she never feels good after talking to me".

6.21.5.9 Scenario - at Fran and Mike's home

Mike "Empathy is big on my list when I feel it is appropriate". "I mean this is a bad issue right now".

Fran "I think it is a very good one".

Mike "I do try to listen".

Fran "The only thing we have a problem with right now and recently I was upset about it, is the way how we speak to each other". "His tolerance is very limited these days from work".

Mike "That is the spur of the moment and there are things said on both ends". "It is not just me". "It is tough to concentrate and not fight all the time".

Fran "Our son should not be hearing things like that".

6.21.5.10 Men in conversation about sex and listening

Bruce "What I learned from this whole experience is that if you make your wife happier, you are happier, and your sex life is happier and I think that is definitely true".

Mike "The sex will come with doing all those other things".

Bruce "I am more sensitive now to what I want and have to do to make sure that I am going to get a yes".

6.21.5.11 Cathy and Pat

Pat “Of course you got to get comfortable with the colouring in”. “I mean I am taught to sit here for ten or twenty minutes just kissing”.

Cathy “But you did that”.

Pat “But I know what I really want and it is not that and I know I am not going to get that unless I waste twenty minutes”.

6.21.5.12 Arthur and Sandy

Sandy “He comes to me and I just love it”. “He gives me a hug or just touches my arm”. “He is so giving!”

Arthur “I never knew that just such a little thing could probably set her off for the whole night, she is all smiling and happy”. “It works!” “And it is not that I feel I have to do this, I feel good about it to, it makes me feel good to see her happy”.

Arthur “So I practice to say I love you, I said it at least twice”.

Sandy “I remember once”.

Arthur “I am baby stepping my way to that”.

Sandy “He still hasn’t brought home flowers”.

Arthur “I am working on it getting flowers”.

Sandy “Are you growing them?”

Arthur “Yes!”

6.21.5.13 Bob and Sandy

Bob “It is actually very simple, find out what your partners needs are and address them to each other”. “It makes a whole lot of sense to me”.

6.22 Five months later

A party for the group to get them together after eight months to see how everybody was doing, if relationships were improving

6.22.1 Bruce and Diane

Bruce "The quality of our relationship has really picked up dramatically".
Diane "You know those silly little things they actually can prevent major stress, we have learned new steps".

6.22.2 Arthur and Sandy

Arthur "I help her out more with the baby which was a big concern of hers, and I do more around the house, but as far as the intimacy thing...it is a lot of work".
Arthur "Did I bring you flowers?"
Sandy "No flowers, my anniversary came by – no flowers!"
Arthur "No, but a few times..."
Sandy "The answer is no".
Arthur "No".

6.22.3 Bob and Sandra

Bob "I have learned definitely to appreciate Sandra a lot more, of course you look at other women but then you look at what you have and then

you say – no one is going to have what she has, no one, no one is going to do what she has done”.

6.22.4 Yves and Mari

Yves “I have seen myself doing that lots of more work around the house, pleasing her, I think she is happier”.

Mari “I think progress is being made, you understand a little bit more, if you try to”.

6.22.5 Mike and Fran

•

Mike “Actually we focused on the issues, it worked for a while but the longer the less, we start to get away from it”.

Fran “I feel that you slipped a bit lately”.

Mike “If you want to use the word slipped, it is O.K”.

6.22.5 Pat and Cathy

Cathy “I can tell by just looking at Pat that he is looking happy to come home instead of just saying O! I am home, what kind of hell is going to brake loose now!”

Pat “The lack of communication is not a problem anymore”. “I am more in love with Cathy than when we started this”. “I thought I had a perfect marriage but you can improve on everything!”

6.23 CONCLUSION

The author concluded with these case studies which highlighted the differences that to be successful in relationships, we must accept and understand the different seasons of love. Sometimes love flows easily and automatically, at other times it requires effort. Sometimes our hearts are full and at other times we are empty. We must not expect our partners to always be loving or even to remember how to be loving. We must also give ourselves this gift of understanding and not expect to remember everything we have learned about loving.

The process of learning requires not only hearing and applying but also forgetting and the remembering again.

For women and men the nature of intimate relationships has become increasingly complicated as individual’s own needs have shifted and as the contexts for their intimate communication have altered as well.

The author will elaborate in the following chapter about deconstructing the discourse of similarity/equality and as alternative propose the discourse of difference.

CHAPTER 7

INTEGRATION AND REFLECTION

7. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study was to deconstruct the discourse of similarity/equality and as an alternative, to propose the discourse of difference. The author will elaborate on the discourse of “similarity to equal” hence, it will not be possible to discuss all the similarities between the sexes. Certain aspects of discourse of similarity/equality will be highlighted by the author and discussed as the deconstruction of discourse of similarities/equality to discourse of difference.

7.1 THE HISTORY OF DISCOURSE OF SIMILARITIES/EQUALITY

•
The discourse of similarity was constructed in a social setting to be the answer to all problems between men and women through culture, language and stories. That became the acceptable discourse even today (de Beauvoir, 1949:22).

But it will be asked at once: how did all this begin? One of the consequences of the industrial revolution was the **entrance of women into productive labour**, and it was just here that the claims of the feminists emerged from the realm of theory and acquired an economic basis, while their opponents became more aggressive. Women were ordered back into their houses because of loss of landed property. Even in the working class the men endeavoured to restrain women’s liberation, because they began to see the women as dangerous competitors – the more so because they worked for lower wages (Bonvillain, 1995:148-177).

In an attempt to prove women's inferiority, they began to draw not only upon religion, but also upon **science – biology**, experimental, etc. At most they were willing to grant "equality in difference" to the *other sex* (de Beauvoir, 1949:23).

Some aspects of the women centred interpretation of similarities started off as differences. Bringing women into the rank as: "even though they had always been suppressed (which they saw as a dominant sexist discourse) they wanted to be treated as human beings, (similar with **nature**) as men".

The equality approach however, has argued that more could be gained for women as a whole if "difference" were ignored, and women were allowed to bring themselves "up" to the level of men in every aspect (Jackson, 1993:21).

Hence, within feminist theory a search for a defining theme of the whole or a feminist viewpoint may require the suppression of the important and discomfiting voices of persons with experiences unlike their own. Thus, the very search for a root or cause of **gender relations** (or more narrowly, male domination) may partially reflect a mode of thinking that is itself grounded in particular forms of gender (and/or other) relations in which domination is present (Bonvillian, 1995:171).

The exploitation of women is based upon sexual differences, and can only be resolved through **sexual differences**. They demand the neutralization of sex. These individuals insist upon – that *all* 'differences' must be attended to *equally*.

How may '**difference**' be conceptualised? The author wants to highlight the term 'different' – at the most general level 'difference' may be construed as a social relation constructed within systems of power underlying structures of class, gender and sexuality. At this level of abstraction they are concerned with the ways in which their social position is circumscribed by the broad parameters set by the social structures of a given society (Jackson, 1993:29).

Differences may also be conceptualised as experiential diversity. Here the focus is on the many and different manifestations of ideological and institutional practices in their everyday life. These everyday practices constitute the matrix against which they make and remake their group, as well as personal, histories. They need to make a

distinction between 'difference' as representations of the distinctiveness of their collective histories and 'difference' as personal experience, codified in an individual's biography. Although mutually interdependent, the two levels cannot be 'read off' from each other. Their personal experience arise out of mediated relationships. How they perceive and understand their experience may vary enormously (Jackson, 1993:30).

It is widely accepted that 'women' is not a unitary category. They opt for a unifying category. They re-evaluate their own position – in terms of class, sexuality – locates them within the systems of power to other men.

As a consequence of the major restructuring of the world economy, the dominance of multinational capital, the impact of the new communications revolution, and the profound political upheavals of recent times, they are witnessing global tendencies that are simultaneously complementary and contradictory. On the one hand, the ever-increasing globalization of cultural industries is leading to homogenisation of cultural industries of cultural consumption across trans-national boundaries. On the other hand, they are faced with the parallel tendency towards greater fragmentation, the resurgence of political and ethnic tradition, and the assertion of difference. Under such circumstances it is important to identify when 'difference' is being organized hierarchically rather than laterally (Jackson, 1993:31).

A distinction between 'difference' as a process of differentiation referring to the particularities of the social experience of a group, from that whereby 'difference' itself becomes the modality in which domination is expressed, is crucial for several reasons. Firstly it draws the attention to the fact that 'difference' need not invariably lead to divisions amongst groups of women. Secondly it reminds them that their experiences are not constituted solely within oppressions.

They encompass an immense range of emotional and social expressions. In this sense cultural diversity – as expressed, for example, in art, music, literature, science and technology, traditions of political and cultural struggle against domination, and different modes of human subjectivity – may be acknowledged and, depending upon the social perspectives within which these formations are embedded, affirmed and celebrated (Bate, 1988:15 and Jackson, 1993:33).

Human subjects are not fixed embodiments of their cultures. Since all cultures are internally differentiated and never static, though the pace of change may be variable, their subjectivities will be formed within the range of heterogeneous discursive practices available to them. That will offer the possibility for political change as they move from one subject position to another – from non-feminist to feminist position. A sense of themselves as located within heterogeneous discursive practices shows not only that they inhabit multiple and changing identities but that these identities are produced and reproduced within social relations of ‘race’, ‘gender’, class and sexuality. The degree to which they can work across their ‘differences’ depends on the conceptual framework and political perspectives from which they understand these ‘differences’. It is in the nature of their political commitments and perspectives that can provide the basis for effective coalition building (Jackson, 1993:32).

7.2 DECONSTRUCTION OF THE DISCOURSES OF SIMILARITY/ EQUALITY

-

7.2.1 Introduction

According to de Beauvoir’s (1949:9) book, since patriarchal times women have in general been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men, a position comparable in many respects with that of racial minorities in spite of the fact that women constitute numerically at least half of the human race, and further that this secondary standing is not imposed of necessity by natural ‘feminine’ characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of education and social tradition under the purposeful control of men. This, the author (de Beauvoir) maintains, has resulted in the general failure of women to take a place of human dignity as free and independent existents, associated with men on a plane of intellectual and professional equality.

The author will now elaborate on a few aspects of discourses of similarities/equality versus discourse of difference, hence it is not possible for this study to discuss everything in broad perspective.

7.2.2 Biological: Gender and Heredity

7.2.2.1 Chromosomal Gender:

Discourse of similarity/equality: -According to Moir & Jessel (1992), see paragraph 2.7.1.1, page 35, it is not until six or seven weeks after conception that the unborn baby “makes up its mind”, and the brain begins to take on a male or a female pattern.

Discourse of difference: - The genes, carrying the coded blueprint of our unique characteristics, make us either male or female. In every microscopic cell of our bodies, men and women are different from each other, because every fibre of our being has a different set of chromosomes within it, depending on whether we are male or female.

Studies have shown that male hormones are the crucial factor in determining the sex of a child. In a female foetus genetically XX, is exposed to male hormones, the baby is born looking like a normal male. If a male foetus, genetically XY, is deprived of male hormones, the baby is born looking like a normal female.

Discourse of similarity: - Although both men and women possess some of all the sex hormones (de Beauvoir, 1949:43).

Discourse of difference: - to confirm the above statement of difference: Primary hormones for men are androgens, particularly testosterone, and for women, oestrogen and progesterone. The foetus will differentiate as a female unless the Y chromosome and a sufficient amount of androgen are present. Female foetuses produce large quantities of oestrogen in the gonads at around eight weeks (refer 2.7.1.2, page 36, (Crooks & Baur, 1999:46).

Many theories about the development of the male and female brain are connected to the fact that the human brain has a right and left hemisphere, each of which processes

information in a slightly different fashion. In nearly all right-handed people and in about two-thirds of left-handers, the right hemisphere specializes in spatial or non-linguistic operations and in general, overall 'gestalts', or total pictures, when processing information. The left hemisphere specializes in logical, analytical analysis of information, with verbal labelling and taking into account details and time variables. The similarity of the different hemispheric modes of processing information to the slight different verbal and spatial skills of women and men has led the author to hypothesize that gender, through the medium of hormones, is related to slightly different development of the hemispheres of the brain in each sex (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:63), compare 2.7.1.3, page 37 - hormones have a dual effect on the brain. While the brain is developing in the womb, the hormones control the way the neural networks are laid out. Later on, at puberty, those hormones will revisit the brain to switch on the network they earlier created.

7.2.3 Socialization into Sex Roles

Discourse of similarity/equality: - One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as an *other*. As far as he exists in and for himself, the child would hardly be able to think for himself as sexually differentiated. The dramas of childhood unfold after the same fashion for nurslings of both sexes, but well before puberty even in early infancy the girl seems to be sexually determined, not because mysterious instincts directly doom her to passivity, maternity, it is because the influence of others upon the child is a factor almost from the start, and thus she is indoctrinated with her vocation from her earliest years. At puberty she cannot become 'grown up' without accepting her femininity; and she knows already that her sex condemns her to a mutilated and fixed existence (de Beauvoir, 1949:295-351).

The author wants to stress the fact to the reader that feminists don't deny the fact that there are differences in the upbringing of the sexes. They actually point out the fact

that if little girls were brought up from the first with the same demands and rewards, the same severity and the same freedom, as their brothers, taking part in the same studies and games they would look towards a free adult future, and not dominated by the male. The intervention of others in her destiny is fundamental: If this action took a different direction, it would produce a quite different result.

Woman are determined not by her hormones or by mysterious instincts, but by the manner in which her body and her relation to the world is modified through the action of people other than herself. The abyss that separates the adolescent boy and girl has been deliberately widened between them since earliest childhood. In later life, this difference becomes irrevocable (de Beauvoir, 1949:734-735).

Discourse of Difference: - In chapter 3, referred to 3.3.2.1, page 51, parents are the earliest and probably the major influence on the sex-role socialization of young children.

Another reason that parents may react differently to boys and girls is because they have different expectations for the sexes. Parents describe boys as rough at play, noisy, able to defend themselves, physically active, competitive, and enjoying mechanical things. Girls are described as more likely to be helpful around the house, neat, clean, quiet, reserved, sensitive to the feelings of others, well mannered, and easily upset and frightened.

There seems to be some difference in the sex stereotyping done by fathers and mothers. Fathers stereotyped more than mothers in all cases. In addition, the fathers of boys stereotyped the most, and the mothers of both boys and girls were more traditional than mothers of only girls. In general, parents seemed to specify more traditional traits for their sons than for their daughters (refer 3.3.2.3, page 52) (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:90).

In the period from about four to six, children acquire the knowledge that gender cannot be changed. They achieve this knowledge at about the same time that they learn certain facts about the constancy of objects.

Stereotypes and behaviour around the stereotypes become very important at this stage. Children want to imitate adults who are like themselves and also who are seen as being powerful and competent. After about eight, children stop imitating adults in

general and then selectively only model themselves after skills or other things they see as being relative to their own competence (refer 3.4.1, page 66), Richmond-Abbott, 1983:104).

The young child learns the behaviour of both sexes by such observation but is much more likely to imitate the behaviour of his or her own sex. Thus, a little girl may be more likely to dress up in her mother's high heels in imitation of her mother (in whom she sees similarity), but she could, if pushed, imitate her father puffing on a cigar. The child not only imitates because the behaviour is associated with the appropriate sex, but because he or she is reinforced or rewarded for sex-appropriate behaviour. Thus, the little girl who dresses up in mother's high heels may be told that she is "cute and quite a little female", but the little boy who tries the same thing is not likely to get approval. He may even be told directly that "boys don't do that and to go outside and play.

By reaction to their own behaviour, by seeing how others are treated, and by imitation of the behaviour of other models, children learn sexually appropriate behaviour. They learn to generalize this behaviour to other situations as well. They do not have to experience the behaviour personally to know whether it is appropriate or not for their own sex: the young boy knows that for a man to dress in women's clothes and walk down the street is not appropriate behaviour, even though women may wear the equivalent of men's clothes in public.

7.2.4 Social Power in Relationships

Equality, Power, and Resources

Discourse of similarity: - Feminists believe that equality of roles depends on equality of *power*, or the ability to achieve one's own desires in the face of opposition from others.

They define resources as anything you bring into the relationship, which can be, money, education, social status, jobs, roles in the marriage, and the like.

Regarding the influence of resources and ideology on power, Richmond-Abbott (1983:220), postulated that modern trends toward wives working and gaining resources and contemporary norms about more sharing of power meant that husband and wife were almost equal in power as they measured it.

The ideology of *power* may differ by social class in each culture. Women's difficulty in gaining power is still an ongoing process. Women have few resources that can match those of their husbands. While many women may be equal to their husbands in education, few exceed them by three years or more of education and few have equal occupational status. They have less legal protection and less chance to develop social status of their own (Richmond-Abbott, 1983:219-222, Giddens, 1989:175).

It is true, however, that wives today are likely to have more resources than in the past. They are likely to be closer in age to their husbands and are more likely to have equal education and greater incomes than they had in the past. Fifty percent of all wives now work outside the home, and they usually gain some power from contributing to family resources, especially when the family needs their income. Their work outside the home may also increase their status, their social skills, and even their attractiveness going to office. Their self-confidence is likely to increase and their need for approval and attention to decrease. They are more likely to have an attractive alternative to their marriage career, with the possibility of supporting themselves in a single life or cohabitation. The sum total of such changes indicates a trend toward equal roles in the family because husbands and wives will have similar work roles and similar resources (Giddens, 1989:176 and Bonvillian, 1995:152).

In a relationship between just two people, power and dependency are *inversely* related: the less dependency, the more power. Differences in available alternatives have been cited as one possible explanation for why husbands in most societies have more power than wives. Employment outside the home allows men to develop alternative sources of desired resources; women who do not work outside their homes have considerably fewer opportunities. Women with young children are particularly likely to be dependant on their husbands both financially and, often, socially. Not only can alternatives affect power, but power can also affect alternatives. It is possible for high-power individuals to prevent people with low power from

developing alternative sources of the resources they desire. For instance, an economically more powerful husband can insist that his wife does not pursue a career and thereby maintains the existing power structure in their relationship. There is some evidence, for example, that a husband's achievements serve to set a ceiling on his wife's accomplishments, ensuring that she is unlikely to surpass him (Brehm, 1992:232, Richmond-Abbott,1983:347, and Bate, 1988:169).

Discourse of difference: - In the past the idea that a husband ought to have the power in the marital relationship was entrenched. The wife (and children) took the husband's (father's), name and status and, within broad limits, were subject to his discipline. The husband's wants, wishes or preferences usually took precedence over those of his wife and children. He had the power and the privileged position within the family. He was ultimately responsible for making important family decisions such as where they would live, the kind of lifestyle they would have, the friends they would or would not have, and so on. Most would deny that such an unequal power relationship predominated in the past; indeed, it appears to persist in many marriages today (Brehm, 1992:232).

-

We could suggest an explanation for this difference along socio-biological lines. In the long hunter-gatherer period men needed superior spatial skills to throw weapons at moving targets, women needed (verbal) skills for success at making allies within the tribe, manipulating men into helping them (Bate, 1988:163-166).

Over the very long stretch of evolutionary time, male and female brains became hard-wired to respond in ways consistent with these gender-related tasks so that, in our day, boys tend to have developed their latent perception to a greater extent while girls tend to be more fluent speakers and to have better verbal memories. People have been socialised into accepting particular stereotypes in which men have the more dominant role. In their working lives, men generally tend to have more opportunities, more resources, more status and more power than women and these expectations may accompany them into the marital relationship. In other words, the power that men possess in their lives outside the home gives them certain advantages within the home.

7.2.5 Changing the Rules

Changing some of the structural aspects of the way we live would help some of the stresses and strains experienced by men and women committed to both their loved ones and their occupation. But even these changes would not solve all the problems created by the transition from a gender-based division of labour to egalitarian relationships (Brehm, 1992:406).

Take for example, the social paradox that, as power becomes more equal, sensitivity to unequal power increases. When there are huge differentials, most people accept them because they seem inevitable. But as the balance of power shifts, people who before had little power now begin to think of themselves as having freedom and rights, their vision of what they deserve expands (Bate, 1988:14).

The same analysis can be applied to heterosexual relationships today. As men and women move towards equality in the society and with each other, women, who have greater freedom now than ever before, are also more aware of areas where equality has not yet been established. Some men feel threatened by women's gains and may try to block their further progress. Many men, however, are supportive of women's efforts but may be puzzled by the paradox described here: As equality grows, demands for more equality increase. In intimate relationships the transition from unequal power to equality is a delicate moment. Tensions run high, people feel edgy and confused; the potential for conflict escalates. This association between increasing equality and increased potential for conflict was demonstrated in a study on dual-career (both spouses had full-time professional careers) and single-career (the wife was primarily a homemaker) marriages. Dual-career spouses perceived their contributions to the marriage as more equal than did single-career spouses (though, for both types of couples, the wife was viewed as making a greater contribution than the husband). The dual-career spouses also made more frequent attempts to influence each other than did the single-career spouses. Such influence attempts probably reflects the more equal status of the married partners, but they may also create a greater potential for conflict. Thus, it seems possible that heterosexual intimate

relationships will experience relatively high levels of conflict and instability as long as equality is coming closer but is not yet achieved (Brehm, 1992:406).

Strong differences in power not only reduce sensitivity to inequality, they also provide a script for how people should behave. Traditional gender roles (men go to work, while women stay at home, men are independent and assertive, while women are dependant and nurturing) told men and women what to do. So long as both parties complied with their assigned roles, conflict was reduced. But equality throws out the script (Bograd, 1991:58).

Men and women who do not subscribe to traditional gender roles have to figure out what to do. They have to consider their own and their partner's talents, interests, skills, and needs. Every relationship becomes a unique product, rather than being cloned from a master blueprint. Creating a unique product is a harder task, it is always more difficult to grow your own. And creating a unique relationship between two fully equal partners will always involve more conflict, as individual couples have to develop their own set of rules for reconciling their differences. Advanced relationship skills for women require traditional abilities, but with a new twist to ensure that they will get back what they need. Men must learn to use their ancient hunting skills of silently watching and waiting when listening to their mates (Gray (a), 1994:18).

7.2.6 Is there A Silver Lining?

Although there is an awareness and acceptance of the need for liberalization of sex roles in many parts of society, behavioural changes have been slow to develop. Whilst there may be 'ideological acceptance' of change in higher levels, the majority still hold conservative values.

Some gender discourses result in the dichotomy of an **either/or** or a **both/and** debate. Equality as well as Difference has been constructed as mutually exclusive. The author will focus on the **both/and** approach which will result in the opportunity to put

forth the discourse of difference as an alternative and not as replacement of the discourse of similarity/equality.

The author would like to propose the following metaphor of tandem bicycle riding (Jo Brothers, 1996:61), to illustrate commonly misunderstandings, that are commonly made, conflicts between men and women and how these differences can come between the sexes and prohibit mutually fulfilling loving relationships.

7.3 GOING TANDEM

The author (Paul Shearer in Jo Brothers, 1996: 61 - 65) compares relationships to tandem bicycle riding. He offers comparisons and similarities from his relationship experiences both on and off the bike.

Melinda and Paul are avid cyclists. Their rides often cover distances of 50 miles or more. A few years back they thought it would make their riding more enjoyable if they bought a tandem or as many people refer to them, a bicycle built for two. Their logic was that there would be less pressure between the two of them: she wouldn't be concerned about holding him back, and he wouldn't be resentful about having to hold back. They each could simply ride as hard as they like, and they would be together-how romantic.

After a few rides, a lot of fights, new concerns and resentments, they began to wonder if their idea was so wonderful after all. They began to see a strong correlation between their tandem riding skills and their relationship skills. What was lacking on their bike was lacking in their relationship, and they had to devise methods of communicating on the road so that they weren't fighting each other's pedal strokes or each other. They did this by devising a communication system. For example, to begin pedalling a verbal command is issued, "1-2-3 Ho". They use the same command to stop pedalling as well. Their riding has become quite enjoyable because they have a system. They don't have to try and read each other's minds.

Communication has been a key of their success, both on their tandem and in their relationship. As they become attuned to each other, another thing has happened, they

have become aware of other non-verbal cues and are willing to explore their meaning. After a long climb, or a difficult portion of a ride, he now can read Melinda's fatigue, explore it, and adjust accordingly. She has become attuned to his need to stand and stretch his back muscles and adjust accordingly. They have become partners on their ride and it is a lovely one indeed.

YOUR BUTT IS IN MY FACE

Still there are times when they don't get along. Disagreements are normal in any relationship, but on the tandem it can be precarious. He is the rider in front commonly called the "captain." Melinda rides in back as the "stoker." Her most common complaint, "Your butt is in my face." Obviously, can't be helped. There is after all not any other place she can put it. On cold days she suffocates from the lack there of. She doesn't have to worry about steering, shifting gears, watching for pot-holes, gravel, or various kinds of traffic. Then also she misses some of the scenery because of his derriere. The captain has more power, but also greater responsibility, the stoker less power, yet greater freedom. There are definite advantages and disadvantages for each position. For their rides to be enjoyable, it appears that it is imperative that each of them make enjoyable riding their goal, but as in their relationship, what is enjoyable for one is sometimes not enjoyable for the other. So, they negotiate, a compromise, and try to arrive at a single purpose which suits them both. This seems to work for them both on and off the bike.

In their relationship, they each hold the captain and stoker positions at different times. They sometimes find themselves blaming one another for making the ride less perfect. Most of the blaming occurs from the less empowered stoker. The captain is easiest to blame-the position has more power. Sometimes the power difference actually exists. Sometimes it only exists in their imagination. In either case, it appears most important for each of them to take responsibility for their part in the relationship and for their own enjoyment. If the power imbalance exists it is up to both of them to sort the problem out. In so doing the captain has to respect the stoker if there is to be harmony on the ride. The captain has to ensure that there is no misuse of power,

listen to, affirm, and value the stoker's needs and wants. Communication, respect, and feeling a sense of honour about your partner are keys to successful tandem riding.

Below are some common complaints heard from their tandem rides. They appear with relationship counterparts.

Your ass is showing

You are being a jerk, disrespectful, and difficult. You are not hearing me or respecting what I want. You are misusing your power.

You farted in my face

You have insulted me. Remember that you love me. You are being discourteous and a sloth. You have no manners.

•

You're such a man

You are so competitive, and this takes away my enjoyment of the ride. We have a long way to go. Slow down, you scare me. You always want control. You always want the last word.

You're such a woman

You are so weak. You are so irrational. I don't understand you. You always try to control and manipulate things your way.

If it weren't for you, I could rideclimb faster

If it weren't for you.....you name it.

You rock the bike too much....my butt hurts

I don't have any control back here

I feel powerless. You have all the money. You don't make enough money. You always have the last word. You never take my feelings into account.

Can't you stay in sync with me?

Can't you be with me now? Our schedules are so different. I want more time with you.

TANDEM TRUTH

•
The truth of the matter is that unless a tandem pair is greatly mismatched, they will ride faster together than if alone. The exception is on hills. He believes that is why many people get together in the first place. They find they can do more, have more, and in a sense, be faster with a tandem partner. Maybe, that is why couples bail out on hills. They get used to riding at a faster pace and when they bog down they have difficulty being patient with the slower more tedious pace.

When Paul and Melinda first started out, hills were a big problem. He liked to stand, and she liked to stay seated. This created a balancing act which they have learned to manage. In the beginning there was a lot of blaming of each other for the discomfort, lack of stability, and slow pace. They learned about climbing together and in the process learned to stay in process with one another, to accommodate their individual differences both on and off the bike. Accepting responsibility for their own part of the ride and its enjoyment appears to be important part of their success.

GOING SOLO

For Paul it is still nice to ride his own bike. He likes to feel the freedom of sprinting, standing, and relaxing whenever he feels like it. His relationship with Melinda is also like this, and so are all other relationships. Paul believes that you do have to ride solo before you are capable of going tandem. Each of us has a need to ride their own bikes and experience their solo-ness from time to time in order to appreciate riding tandem.

Realizing that he can ride solo gives him a choice. Knowing that he is still an individual gives him options to explore. Staying at the choice-point is important for successful riding whether tandem or solo. Knowing that his relationship is also a choice gives him freedom and responsibility.

Life can offer a wonderful ride. There are hills, descents, head-winds, tail-winds, sunsets, and wild flowers to enjoy. At the end of the day he feels challenged and alive. Relationships are similar. There are easy times, and hard climbs. They can challenge you, push you to and past any threshold of pain you thought possible. At the end of the day you can feel fatigued, energized, challenged, or defeated. Communicating your hopes, expectations, challenges, and disappointments with your tandem partner are key for success on your ride. What keeps him going at times is one simple reality that he found true, that for every uphill struggle there is a downhill. His attitude towards the very essence of the ride seems to impact his enjoyment of it. Make enjoyment of the moment, no matter what the moment is, your first priority, and you will find a way to process that moment so that you enjoy it. Enjoy the essence of the ride and you will enjoy where the ride takes you no matter how rough the road becomes. (Jo Brothers, 1992:61-65).

7.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter served to suggest and explore various alternative strategies for the discourse of difference to the discourse of similarities. Using the metaphor “tandem cycling” Jo Brothers (1992:61-65), proposed the wonderful ride a relationship can give you and the opportunities that all the differences bring to the table.

In the next chapter the author will attempt to summarize the dissertation and look at possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION, EVALUATION AND SUMMARY

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to evaluate the study and its findings and will highlight some of the strengths or positive outcomes and/or approaches that can be derived from the outcomes.

Relationships are just like dance partners, when a woman takes two steps back, the man can take two steps forward. When he takes two steps back, she can take two steps forward. This give-and-take is the basic rhythm of relationships.

8.2 SUMMARY

In this study the author's objective was to deconstruct the discourses of gender sensitivity (difference/equality) which is embedded in the postmodern, narrative, social constructionist worldview, which offers useful ideas about how power, knowledge, and 'truth' are negotiated in families.

The author made use of the **both/and** stance to not disqualify the discourse of similarity/equality, but to propose the discourse of difference as an alternative.

In **chapter one** the reasons for this study is highlighted. Objectives are compiled and important terms and concepts is discussed.

To elaborate on this, **chapter two** provides a brief explanation and overview of the brain. The anatomy of the brain is explained briefly and stipulated the two hemispheres in which right/left brain differences may shed some light in personal relationship differences between the sexes. The way the hormones set the minds of girls and boys apart is discussed, the brain is 'pre-wired' by the impact of the hormones and shows throughout the study how male and female behaviour diverges,

and how the hormones influence the respective skills and aptitudes of men and women.

Included in **chapter 3**, an exploration, and discussion of the process of socialization, which occurs through explicit instruction, conditioning, innovation and role modelling. The socialization process tends to be general rather than specific, calls forth automatic behaviours and responses, and persists through time.

Early relationships with parents are very important in later life because in these relationships with their parents children learn what it is like to be loved by others and how to love others in return. Children think about the world around them as they respond to things that parents and other agents of socialization do. Parents may be stimulated by the boy or girl baby to behave in a specific way, they may have special expectations of boys and girls that cause differential treatment, they may consciously or unconsciously attempt to teach a child appropriate sex-role behaviour, or they model sex-role behaviour for the child to imitate.

In **chapter 4**, attention was given to the research methodology which was used in this script. The author's research methodology was discussed from within the framework of a postmodernistic epistemology, which was followed by a more detailed look at the basic premises underlying qualitative research.

Postmodernism chooses to look at difference rather than similarity. Adopting a postmodern, narrative, social constructionist worldview offers valuable ideas on how power, knowledge, and 'truth' can be negotiated in families.

In **chapter 5**, focused on theories, every society has its own stock of substantive narratives, which represent typical human behaviour patterns known and understood in that society. System theory is almost similar to social constructionism, as the term implies "different things to different people", and is a way of thinking about the world. From a social construction viewpoint the author attempted to approach discourses of similarities/equality versus differences from the **both/and** stance. Social constructionism, represents an epistemological shift that opens the field to

narrative. According to the narrative approach, our stories are embedded in a network of reciprocally influencing narratives.

We organize our experiences and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative – stories, reasons for doing and not doing so. We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, hope, love, hate in narrative. In **chapter 6**, the author made use of a case study of 6 couples (video John Gray) with their own story of gender socialization. With this case study the author proposed an alternative to the discourse of similarity/equality in relationships. By continuing to recognize and explore their differences, the couples discovered new ways to improve their relationships.

Effective communication grows out of mutual commitment, shared understanding, mutual regard, avoidance of snap judgments, careful listening, empathy, genuineness, clear expression, viewing oneself positively, and appropriate confrontation.

Males and females are taught different patterns for communication as they grow up, and these differences show up in adult communication. Healthy sexual sharing in a relationship involves being comfortable with one's own sexual needs, not confusing romance and sex and avoiding sexual coercion.

According to Tannen (1990:152), men and women have different communication styles and goals. Women, speak and hear a language of intimacy and connection, whereas men speak and hear a language of status and independence. Men and women frequently misinterpret one another's words and gestures, which causes interpersonal conflict in intimate relationships.

The first step in improving communication lies in the understanding and acceptance that there are gender differences in communication styles. Once women and men come to understand these differences they are better able to put their problems of communication with the other sex in a manageable context, and are therefore often able to find solutions to difficulties or seemingly unresolvable problems or predicaments.

In **chapter 7**, the author proposed a metaphor of tandem bicycle riding to illustrate misunderstandings and how these differences can come between sexes and prohibit mutually fulfilling loving relationships. The metaphor was further expanded upon to illustrate discourses of similarity/equality versus discourses of difference serving as an illustration and/or alternative to unlock potential **because of differences**.

8.3. EVALUATION OF OBJECTIVES

With reference to the initial objectives the researcher came to the following conclusion in this study:

- The objective was met by deconstructing the discourse of similarity/equality by means of the **both/and** stance.
- The discourse of difference was extensively discussed in chapter 2,3,5 and 6, in order to deconstruct the discourse of similarity/equality.
- The author made use of the **both/and** stance, not to disqualify the discourse of similarity/equality but to propose it as an alternative.
- The theory of social constructionism as a framework for the understanding of discourses was discussed extensively in chapter 5, as this theory is crucial to the understanding of the study.

8.4. REFLECTION ON THE STUDY

For the author the study was an empowering experience, highlighted by the applicability of the following concepts:

- * Differences created unique individuals and if those differences are respected and acknowledged, unique possibilities are evident.
- The understanding of the construct of reality through language and stories created space for the understanding of similarities/equality as well as differences in terms of gender.
- Culture created the framework for understanding discourses and the effect thereof on individuals lives in relationships.
- Gender played a vital role and the socialization thereof impacted immensely on people's lives and the society.
- The socialization process created an opportunity for society to transmit its ideas and discourses to such an extent that people were sometimes not capable of distinguishing between their own ideas and those which had been entrenched by society.
- With the above in mind the researcher felt privileged to be part of such a unique and dynamic study. It created new possibilities to understand relationships in a new dynamic way and to unlock the unused potential of each individual in the total relationship.

8.5. POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This new possibility that was established through this study created opportunities for further study in the dynamics of relationships with the focus on the uniqueness of differences and the possibilities that was created in individuals lives.

There are still numerous untapped focus areas that could be explored as alternatives and also those that provide strength in peoples lives while in relationships. This could be seen as new research areas for further study.

Essentially, our traditional gender roles today are a carryover from our past. Once traditions are established, they have a way of perpetuating themselves. During the last century in Western society, these divisions started to change. No statistics in South Africa are available as yet.

The future is likely to bring even more dramatically changes in gender roles. We can see the beginning of these changes now.

•

8.6. CONCLUSION

Many stereotypes have developed around behavioural differences between the sexes. If sex-role change were to occur at individual level, men and women would have to socialize their children in a different manner.

All in all, gender differences do exist. Belief persists that there are dramatic changes between males and females. Social role theory and social constructionism provide some explanations for this phenomenon.

Biological explanations of gender differences have focused on brain organization and hormonal influences. Some experts still believe that socialization is more important than biology in producing behavioural disparities between the sexes.

Gender roles have always been an underlying factor in the division of labour. They are changing today, and they seem likely to continue to change. More women are entering the higher-status occupations, even for a lower rate. The boundaries of women at home, men at work, are becoming blurred. A major challenge for workers today is balancing work, family, and leisure activities in ways that are personally satisfying. Today men, as well as women can choose not to work, and the definitions of work would include domestic chores. Men and women today may even share domestic chores and child-care, although some studies show an increase in the participation of husband in household tasks when the wife works and other studies do not.

We do not have to rely on a dream about a kind of marriage that never existed; we can explore the potential of the non-traditional alternatives that are developing.

SEASONS OF LOVE

A relationship is like a garden. If it is to thrive, it must be watered regularly. Special care must be given, taking into account the seasons as well as any unpredictable weather. New seeds must be sown and weeds must be pulled. Similarly, to keep the magic of love alive we must understand its seasons and nurture love's special needs.

The Springtime of Love

Falling in love is like springtime. We feel as though we will be happy forever. We cannot imagine not loving our partner. It is a time of innocence. Love seems eternal. It is a magical time when everything seems perfect and works effortlessly. Our partner seems to be the perfect fit. We effortlessly dance together in harmony and rejoice in our good fortune.

The Summer of Love

Throughout the summer of love, we realize our partner is not as perfect as we thought, and we have to work on our relationship. Not only is our partner from another planet, but he or she is also a human who makes mistakes and is flawed in certain ways.

Frustration and disappointment arise; weeds need to be uprooted and plants need extra watering under the hot sun. It is no longer easy to give love and get the love we need. We discover that we are not always happy, and we do not always feel loving. It is not our picture of love.

Many couples at this point become disillusioned. They do not want to work on a relationship. They unrealistically expect it to be spring all the time. They blame their partners and give up. They do not realize that love is not always easy; sometimes it requires hard work under a hot sun. In the summer season of love, we need to nurture our partner's needs as well as ask for and get the love we need. It doesn't happen automatically.

•

The Autumn of Love

As a result of tending the garden during the summer, we get to harvest the results of our hard work. Fall has come. It is a golden time-rich and fulfilling. We experience a more mature love that accepts and understands our partner's imperfections as well as our own. It is a time of thanksgiving and sharing. Having worked hard during summer we can relax and enjoy the love we have created.

The Winter of Love

Then the weather changes again, and winter comes. During the cold, barren months of winter, all of nature pulls back within itself. It is a time of rest, reflection, and renewal. This is a time in relationships when we experience our own unresolved pain or our shadow self. It is when our lid comes off and our painful feelings emerge. It is a time of solitary growth when we need to look more to ourselves than to our partners for love and fulfilment. It is a time of healing. This is the time when men hibernate in their caves and women sink to the bottom of their wells.

After loving and healing ourselves through the dark winter of love, then spring inevitably returns. Once again we are blessed with the feelings of hope, love, and an abundance of possibilities. Based on the inner healing and soul searching of our wintery journey, we are then able to open our hearts and feel the springtime of love.

(Gray (a), 1992:283).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANDERSEN, T. 1993. **See, hear and be seen and heard.** In Friedman, S (ed) 1993. The new language of change. Guilford. New York.

ANDERSEN, T. (ed) 1991. The reflecting team. Dialogues and dialogues about the dialogues. New York:Norton.

ANDERSON, H. 1997. Conversation, language and possibilities – a postmodern approach to therapy. United States:Basic Books.

ANDERSON, H.D. 1991a. A Collaborative Language System Approach. Paper given at Narrative and Psychotherapy Conference, Houston, Texas.

ANDERSON, H.D. & GOOLISHIAN, H. 1988. Human systems as linguistic systems: Evolving ideas about the implications for theory and practice. In Family Process 27(4): p371-393.

ANDERSON, H. & GOOLISHIAN, H. 1990. Beyond cybernetics: Family Process, p157-163.

ANDERSON, H, & GOOLISHIAN, H. 1992. The client is the expert: A not knowing approach to therapy. In McNamee, S. & Gergen, K.J. (Eds.) 1992. Therapy as social construction. London:Sage Publications.

BARON, B.1994. Social Psychology. Understanding Human Interaction.Simon & Schuster, Inc. United States of America.

BARON, A, R & BYRNE, D. 1994. Social Psychology: Understanding Human Interaction. Allyn and Bacon. Massachusetts.

BATE, B. 1988. Communication and the sexes. New York. Harper & Row.

BATES.B. 1995. Physical Examination and History Taking. J.B. Lippincott Company. Philadelphia.

BATESON, G. 1970. An open letter to Anatol Rapoport. ETC: A Review of General Semantics, p359-363.

BATESON, G. 1979. Mind and Nature. New York: E.P. Dutton.

BECVAR, S.B, & BECVAR, R.J. 1996. Family Therapy. Allyn and Bacon. USA. p 62-83.

BERGER, P & LUCKMAN, T. 1987. The social construction of reality. Doubleday. New York.

BLY, R. 1993. Letters. In the Family Therapy Networker 17(4): p7-9.

BOGRAD, M. 1991. Feminist Approaches for Men in Family Therapy. Haworth Press. USA.

BONVILLAIN, N. 1995. Women and Men Cultural constructs of Gender. Prentice-Hall. New Jersey

BOWEN, M. 1976. Theory in the practice of psychotherapy. In P.J. Guerin (E.D.), Family Therapy: Theory and practice. Gardner Press. New York.

BREHM, S.S. 1992. Intimate Relationships. McGraw-Hill, Inc. USA.

BRUNER, E. 1986a. Ethnography as narrative. In V. Turner, & E. Bruner (Eds.), The anthropology of experience. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

BURR, V. 1998. An Introduction to Social Construcionism. TJ International Ltd, USA.

BYRNE, R.A. 1994. *Social Psychology, understanding human interaction*. Boston, Allyn and Bacon.

CHANG, J. & PHILLIPS, M. 1993. Michael White and Steve de Schazer: New directions in family therapy. In Gilligan, S and Price, R (eds) 1993. *Therapeutic conversations*. New York:Norton.

CONNEL, R.W. 1987. *Gender & Power*. Polity Press. UK.

CONNER, D. 1993. *Managing At The Speed of Change*. Random House. New York.

CROOKS, R. & BAUR, K. 1999. *Our Sexuality*. Brooks/Cole Publishing Company. United States of America.

CURRAN, JR. 1977. *Introductory Sociology*. McGraw-Hill, Inc. United States of America.

DANCE, F. 1967. "Toward a Theory of Human Communication," *Original Essays*. New York.

DAY, R.D. & GILBERT, K.R. & SETTLERS, B.H. & BURR, W.R. 1995. Brooks/Cole Publishing Company. USA.

DE BEAUVOIR, S. 1949. *The Second Sex*. Pan Books Ltd.London.

DELL, P.F. 1986. In defence of "lineal causality". *Family Process*,25, p233-235.

DENZIN, N.K. & LINCOLN, Y.S. 1998. *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. SAGE publication, Inc. USA.

DOHERTY, W.J. 1991. Family therapy goes postmodern. In the *Family Therapy Networker* 15(5): p36-42.

DOYLE, J.A. & PALUDI, M.A. 1991. Sex and Gender. Dubuque, IA: William C Brown.

EAGLETON, T. 1983. Literary theory. An introduction. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

FERRANTE, J. 1998. Sociology A Global Perspective. Wadsworth Publishing Company. United States of America.

FLAX, J. 1990. Postmodernism and gender relations in feminist theory. In Nicholson, L.J. (ed) 1990. Feminism/postmodernism. New York:Routledge.

FREEDMAN, J. & COMBS G. 1994. Narrative Therapy: The social construction of preferred realities. New York:Norton.

GENOT, S. 1996. Narrative theory, Post-modernism and the Self. Unpublished D. Litdissertation. Pretoria:UNISA.

GERGEN, KJ. 1985. The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. In American psychologist. 40: p266-275.

GERGEN, K.J. 1985 (b). Social Construction inquiry. Context and implications. Springer Report. New York.

GERGEN, K.J. 1991. The saturated self. Dilemmas of identity in conemporary life. USA:Basic Books.

GERGEN, K. 1992. The postmodern adventure. Family Therapy Networker, Nov./Dec., p52.

GERGEN, K. 1994. Exploring the postmodern: Persils or potentials? American Psychologist, 49(5), p412-416.

GERGEN, K.J. & GERGEN, M. 1991. Toward reflexive methodologies. In Steier F (ed) 1991. Research and reflexivity. London:Sage.

GIDDENS, A.1989. Sociology. Polity Press. Oxford.

GILLIGAN, C. 1982. In a different voice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

GORDON, C. 1980. Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977 by Michel Foucault. New York: Pantheon.

GRAY, J. 1992(a). Men are From Mars, Women Are from Venus. Harper Collins. New York.

GRAY, J. 1992(b). (Video). Men are From Mars, Women Are from Venus. Harper Collins. New York.

•

GUYTON, A.C. & HALL, J.E. 1996. Textbook of Medical Physiology. Library of Congress Cataloging. USA.

HALEY, J. 1976. Problem solving therapy. New York:Harper & Row.

HAMMERSLEY, M. 1992. What's wrong with ethnography? Methodological explorations. London: Routledge.

HARE-MUSTIN, R.T & MARECEK J. 1988. The meaning of difference: Gender Theory, postmodernism, and psychology. In American Psychologist 43: p455-464.

HAYWARD, J.H. 1984. Perceiving ordinary magic. New Science Library. Boston.

HOELDKTE, K. 2001. Different Brains, Different Realities? Beskikbaar op Internet: <http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/bb/neuro/neuro01/web2/Hoeldtke.htm>[07/18/2001].

HOFFMAN, L. 1985. Beyond power and control. Family Systems Medicine. 4 : p381 – 396.

HOFFMAN, L. 1990. Family Process. alities, p1-32.

HORNER, M.J. 1972. Toward an understanding of achievement related conflicts in women. *Journal of Social Issues*.

HYDE, J.S. 1981. How large are cognitive gender differences? *American Psychologist*.

JACKSON, S. 1993. Women's Studies. University Press, Cambridge, Great Britian.

JO BROTHERS, B. 1992. Equal Partnering, a Feminine perspective. Haworth Press. USA.

KEENY, B.P. 1983. Aesthetics of change. New York: Guilford.

KELLY, G.F. 1998. Sexuality today: the human perspective. Boston, Mass: McGraw-Hill.

KNAPP, M. 1984. Interpersonal Communication and Human Relationship. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Boston.

KOHLBERG, L. & GILLIGAN, C. 1971. The Adolescent as Philosopher: The Discovery of Self in a Postconventional World. *Daedalus*. Vol. 100:1065-86.

KOTZE, D.J. 1987. Sisteembenadering vir gesinsberading. Ongepubliseerde verslag.

KOTZE, D.J. 1992. Verantwoordelikheid as Antropologiese Essensie. Fakulteit Teologie Adeling B. Universiteit van Pretoria. (Verhandeling – M.A.)

KVALE, S (ed) 1992. psychology AND postmodernism. London: Sage.

LAMANNA, M.A. & RIEDMANN, A. 1997. Marriages and Families. Making choices in a Diverse Society. Wadsworth Publishing Company. United States of America.

LEEDY, P.D. 1993. Practical Research. Planning and Design. Macmillan Publishing Company. USA.

LEMENT, C. 1997. Postmodernism is Not What You Think. Blackwell Ltd. Malden, Massachusetts.

LIGHT, D. & KELLER, S. & CALHOUN, C. 1989. Sociology. Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data. New York.

LOWE, R. 1991. Postmodern themes and therapeutice practices: Notes towards the definition of "Family Therapy: Part2". Dulwich Center Newsletter, 3, p41-42.

MACCOBY, S. & JACKLIN, M. 1967. The Nature of Human Intelligence. McGraw-Hill. New York.

MacINTYRE, A. 1981. after virtue: A study in moral theory. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

MACIONIS, JJ. 1995. Sociology, Fifth Edition. Prentice-Hall, Inc. New Jersey.

MASON, J. 1996. Qualitative Researching. London: SAGE.

MATURANA, H, 1974. Cognitive Strategies. Cybernetics of cybernetics. University of Illinois. Urbana.

MATURANA, H. 1978. *Biology of language: The epistemology of reality*. Academic Press. New York.

MATURANA, H.R. 1987. *The tree of knowledge*. New Science Library. Boston.

MATURANA, H.R. & VARELA, F.J. 1987. *The tree of knowledge. The biological roots of human understanding*. Boston:Shambhala.

MATURANA, H. & VARELA, F. 1980. *Autopoiesis and cognition*. Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel.

McGRATH, F.W. 1992. Patriarchy and the men's movement. In the *Calgary Participator* 2(1): p8-9.

McLEAN, B.A. 1997. *Co-constructing narratives. A Postmodern approach to counselling*. Thesis submitted for Master of Education (Counselling) at University of Otago. New Zealand.

McNAMEE, S. & GERGEN, K.J. 1992. *Therapy as Social Construction*. SAGE Publications Ltd. London.

MILLER, A.M. & LEAVELL, L.C. 1972. *Anatomy and Physiology*. Macmillan Publishing Co, Inc. New York.

MILLET, K. 1970. *Sexual politics*. Garden City, NY:Doubleday.

MINUCHIN, S. 1974. *Families and family therapy*. Massachusetts:Harvard University Press.

MOIR, J. & JESSEL, D. 1992. *Brain Sex*. Reed Consumer Books. Great Britain.

MOLL, R.W. 1979. "Getting into College: An Admissions Man Says It Isn't So Hard," *The New York Times*.

MONK, G, WINSLADE, J & ETAL, D. 1996. Narrative Therapy in Practice. The archaeology of hope. Jossey – Bass Publishers. San Fransisco.

MOULTON, J. & MARAIS, H.C. 1990. Basiese Begrippe: metodologie van die geesteswetenskappe. RGN-Uitgewers. Pretoria.

NEETHLING, K. 1998. Carpe Diem. Durban.

NEVID, J.S. & FICHTER-RATUS, L & SPENCER A.R. 1995. Human Sexuality in a world of Diversity. Allyn & Bacon Company. U.S.A

NICHOLSON, S. 1995. The Narrative Dance: A practice map for White's therapy. In the Australian and New-Zeeland Journal of Family Therapy. 16: p23-28.

NOLLER, P. & FITZPATRICK, M.A. 1993. Communication in family relationships. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

PARKER, I. 1989. Discourse and power. London: SAGE

PARKER, I. 1992. Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology. London:Routledge.

PARRY, A. & DOAN, R.E. 1994. Story Re-Vision. Narrative Therapy in the Postmodern World. London:The Guilford Press.

PERSELL, H. 1990. Understanding Society. Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. New York.

PHILLIPS, K. 2001. Why can't A man be more like a women And Vice Verca. http://www.genderweb.org/general/why_cant.phtm[09/19/2001].

POPENOE, D. 1995. Sociology, Tenth Anniversary Edition. Prentice-Hall, Inc. New Jersey.

PORTER, S.A. 1985. What's a housewife worth? More than numbers show. Providence Evening Bulletin.

RICHMOND-ABBOTT, 1983. Masculine And Feminine, Sex Roles over the Life Cycle. Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data.

ROUX, J.P. 1996. Die ontwikkeling van 'n pastoraal-terapeutiese toerustingsprogram vir lidmate: 'n Narratiewe benadering. Unpublished Phd Dissertation. Bloemfontein: University of the Orange Free State.

SAPIR, E. 1947. Selected Writings in Language, Culture and Personality. University of California Press. Los Angeles.

SATIR, V. 1968. The Therapist' story. The Journal of Psychotherapy and the Family, 3(1), p 17 –25.

SCHEIN, E.D. 1978. Career Dynamics: Matching Individual and Organizational Needs.

SEIDLER, V.J. 1992. Men, sex, and relationships : writings from Achilles heel. London, New York, Routledge.

SLUZKI, C.A. 1985. A minimal map of cybernetics. In the Family Therapy Networker 9: p26.

SLUZKI, C.A. 1992. Transformations: A blue print for narrative changes in therapy. In Family Process 31: p217-230.

SPENCER, S. 1980. Endless love. Avon Books. New York.

STOCKARD,J. 1997. Sociology. Discovering Society. Wadsworth Company. United States of America.

STRAUSS, A. & CORBIN, J. 1990. Basics of Qualitative Research. SAGE Publications, Inc. USA.

TANNEN, D. 1990. You just don't understand: Women and Men in Conversation. Ballantine Books. New York.

TAYLOR, S.E & PEPLAY, S.E. & SEARS, L.A. 1994. Social Psychology. Prentice-Hall, Inc. New Jersey.

THOMPSON, L. & WALKER, A.J. 1989. Gender in families: Women and men in marriage, work, and parenthood. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51, p845-871.

TISCHLER, H.L. 1996. Introduction to Sociology. Rinehart and Winston, Inc. United States of America.

TUBBS, S.L. & MOSS, S. 1994. Human Communication. McGraw-Hill Book Co. Singapore.

VARELA, F.J. 1976. On observing natural systems. The CoEvolution Quarterly, Summer, p26-31.

VARELA, F.J. & JOHNSON, D. 1976. On observing natural systems. The CoEvolution Quarterly Summer, p26-31.

VERMEULEN, A. 1999. Right Brain, Left Brain? NEURO-LINK. Wapadrand, Pretoria.

VEROFF, J. & VEROFF, J.B. 1972. Reconsideration of a measure of power motivation. Psychological Bulletin, p78, 279-291.

VON FOERSTER, H. 1984(a). Observing systems. Second edition. Intersystem Publications. Seaside CA.

WADE, C. 1990. Learning to think critically: A handbook to accompany psychology. New York: HarperCollins.

WALKER, R. 1985. Applied Qualitative Research. Gower Publishing Company Ltd. England.

WALLACE, R.C. & WALLACE W.D. 1989. Sociology. Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data. United States of America.

WALTERS, M. 1993. The codependant Cinderella and Iron John. In Family Therapy Networker 17(2): p60-65.

WATTS, A. 1972. The Book. New York: Vintage Books.

WATZLAWICK, P. 1984. The invented reality. New York: W.W. Norton.

WEITEN, W. & LLOYD, M.A. 1994. Psychology applied to modern life. Wadsworth, Inc., Belmont, California.

WHITE, M. 1991. Deconstruction and therapy. Dulwich Centre Newsletter, p1, 27-38.

WHITE, M. 1995. Re-authoring lives. Adelaide: Dulwich Centre Publications.

WHITE, M. & EPSTON, D. 1990. Narrative Means To Therapeutic Ends. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

WILCOX, G. 2001. Men Live In The Left Brain. Beschikbaar op Internet: <http://webpages.charter.net/gwilcox/corpus-callosum.htm>[07/19/2001].

WORDEN, M. 1999. Family Therapy Basics. Cole Publishing Company. USA. p 8.