



Breaking down those four walls

**A study of the influences of education and employment on women's status,
autonomy and reproductive career through time**

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2005**

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Preface

After studying Human Geography for the past four years, I was ready to graduate. I had to begin thinking about an interesting matter for my master thesis. I thought and thought, but could only come up with demographic related topics. At that point in time, I strongly started to doubt my graduation in Cultural Geography. Of course, I almost was there, but I also had the option to study Demography for another two years and graduate with a theme that I was really interested in. After much thought, I decided to take that chance. Now, I can say that it was a good decision. I enjoyed studying in this small department and becoming more specialised than ever before. I learned much more about doing research, which I then could put to practise in India.

The subject of my thesis is related to women's status in India. I paid specific attention to the influence of higher education and employment in regards to the autonomy of a woman and her reproductive career. These factors have a big influence on the life of women; it makes them participate in the society rather than the household alone. This refers to the title '*Breaking down those four walls*'. This subject was a consequence of my interest in women's position in societies and also my curiosity of the influences of being female and being educated. After having done a 'literature study' and having a conversation with my supervisor, this topic came to be. Also during my fieldwork I was very much interested in every aspect of this topic. I learned so much about the Indian society by talking to the respondents. Along with that, living in a girls' hostel in Dharwad I was more involved with the lives of Indian PhD students. For me, being interested in other cultures, this was an amazing experience. I have already travelled a lot during my life, but was never able to learn so much about another culture before.

I was able to write this master thesis, because of the help of some important persons. First, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Dr. Inge Hutter for helping me write this thesis. I am thankful to her for her enormous enthusiasm about India and the field of Demography. While in Dharwad, I had some interesting conversations with the director of the Population Research Centre. Therefore, I would also like to thank Dr. Bargava. Prof. Khan, thanks again for 'saving me'. It took a long time for me to arrive in Dharwad for the first time. First of all, I arrived in Karwar because of my wrong pronunciation. After that, the busses struck, so I ended up on the road between Hubli and Dharwad. Prof. Khan picked me up and introduced me to Indian food. While staying in India, I lived in the Saraswati Ladies Hostel. I would like to express thanks to the girls who were my friends and who tried to make me feel more comfortable.

The people that I am most grateful to for giving me the opportunity to study and travel, financially and emotionally, are my parents. I also would like to remember my dear grandmother who supported me by calling before every exam to wish me luck. She always had let me know that she believed in me and stood behind me. Wilco, thanks for making my trip to India even better by visiting me. It was great to create all of those nice memories with you. Last but not least, I would like to thank my friends that made my student life amazing. I loved living in Groningen and having such a nice group of friends with whom I could have so many laughs. Thank you all!

Mirjam Klaassens, May 2005

Abstract

The main purpose of this master thesis is to broaden awareness of the influences of high educational attainment and employment on women's reproductive behaviour, autonomy and status in India. In-depth interviews of two age groups are conducted in Dharwad, a district capital in the state Karnataka situated in the South of India, in order to give the study a dynamic perspective.

The reproductive career of a woman consists of events such as menarche, marriage, first pregnancy, birth of children and menopause. Events mark transitions; its importance is indicated by the celebration of functions. This seemed to be the case of all the events of the respondents and their mothers, except for menarche. The transition itself was still celebrated with some rituals or a function *within the family*, but the ceremony was not held *in public*. The importance of the transition still exists but the 'social meaning' was postponed by keeping the menarche secret to the outside world in order to let the girl get some education first.

Estimates from in-depth interviews indicate the effect of education and employment on the number of children, although the completion of the educational career did not always seem to postpone the age of marriage. The combination of family and employment made the women prefer small families.

Knowledge autonomy seems to be visible in the lives of the women being interviewed as they experience the interaction and exposure to the outside world and the growth of knowledge and their understanding of society. Almost all of the respondents expressed to have a voice in matters; to have decision-making power. Most of them also expressed to be mobile and did not need to ask permission to leave the house, which is an indication of physical autonomy. Noticeable is that more 'younger' women had to ask permission. Data of the interviews indicate that almost all the women from both age groups required some economic autonomy and could spend their own income as they wish. However, they would discuss big purchases with their husbands.

The status of women increased mainly due their employment. The younger age group experienced most status in the period after marriage and the older age group at their present age, when their children are settled.

Beside the family type and age, also education and employment influence women's autonomy. It provides knowledge, confidence to interact with the world and an income, which give them decision-making power, mobility and economic independence. Data of the interviews indicates the growth of confidence and courage of the respondents as a result of their high educational attainment and employment. These concepts can be placed in the conceptual model, as an intervening variable between education/employment and autonomy. It influences especially the interaction with people (knowledge autonomy) and the physical autonomy. The lives of the respondents' mothers mainly took place within the four walls of the house, while an increased confidence and autonomy *broke down those four walls* of the respondents.

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1 Introduction

In many societies of the world, the roles of women are defined in terms of being wives and mothers, because it is believed that this is destiny and mission of women (Saxena 1995). If she is not a wife or a mother she will be seen as a 'loose woman' or she may be a nun, who is married to God (Vohra and Sen 1985). The duty of wives to their husband is described in many scriptures, and can be seen as a representation of the position of the wife.

The husband is the wife's religion, the wife's sole business, the wife's all-in-all. The wife should meditate on her husband as Brahma. For her, all pilgrimages should be concentrated on her husband's feet. The command of a husband is as obligatory as a precept of the holy books. When the husband is pleased, Brahma is pleased. The husband is her honour, the giver of her happiness, the bestower of fortune, righteousness and heaven (Vohra and Sen 1985, p.99).

Traditional values supported a subordinated and dependent position of the woman in the relationship between men and women. Values of a modern society are towards equality, independence and individuality. A change in the status of women can be the result of modernisation (Mohini 1976). The study of the status of women is interesting for demographers, because it is seen as an important factor in the process of demographic transition, especially in the process of fertility decline (Bhargava and Saxena 1987). The *purpose* of this study is to try to untangle the network of relationships of women's education, employment, age, status, autonomy and her reproductive behaviour. Here, this reproductive behaviour is of our main concern.

The study population consists of women who are high educated, employed, married and have at least one child. In this qualitative research, in-depth interviews are conducted to collect data. This is a semi-structured interview method, which involves a predefined range of questions but is flexible enough to focus on new topics or expand relevant issues (Payne 1999). These questions are not only related to the conceptions and experiences of the study population, but also related to their perceptions of their daughter's and mother's life.

All this is studied, across generations in the town Dharwad, situated in the state Karnataka, in the South West of India, using the life course perspective. Generations are studied by creating two age groups: one at the beginning and one at the end of the reproductive career. The life course perspective explains that a person's present behaviour has to be understood within the context of past behaviour in earlier stages of their life course. The life course perspective exists of particular careers that women follow. A career is "the chain of stable and transition periods pertaining to a given domain" (Willekens 1989, p.8). Within careers, life events like the birth of a child occur. The reproductive career and reproductive events are of importance in this study, because the reproductive behaviour is of our concern. The reproductive career starts with menarche and ends with menopause. To get more knowledge of the reproductive behaviour, the reproductive career will be examined. Therefore, the first research question will be:

- *What is the reproductive career of women in India?*

The life course exists of different careers which are interrelated (Hutter 1998). The educational and job career can affect the reproductive career of a woman, if she decides to

wait to get married in order to finish her education or find a job first. The influence of education on fertility varies greatly. In recent years, education of women mainly results in lower fertility (Jejeebhoy 1995). Not much is written regarding the influence of women's employment on her reproductive career. In order to get more insight of these influences on the reproductive career, the second research question is formed.

- *How do education and employment influence the reproductive career of women in India, according to the women themselves?*

According to Jejeebhoy (1995) women's autonomy is important for demographic change. Women's autonomy means that women are in control of their own lives and have a voice in matters affecting themselves and their families. To examine the autonomy in women's life the third research questions will be:

- *What is the autonomy of women in India?*

It is not only essential to examine the degree of autonomy, but it is also important to know the factors that influence it. The factors of influence vary from her education, employment to her age and change through time. Therefore, the autonomy should be seen in the life course perspective. To get more knowledge about the effect of different factors on autonomy, the fourth research question is:

- *How do education, employment and age influence autonomy of women in India through their life course?*

According to Jejeebhoy (1998), status can be seen as prestige or esteem accorded. Several events in the reproductive career are considered to be important in a woman's life. Marriage and the birth of children, especially sons, will change a woman's status and her social relations (Van der Velden 1991). In spite of this, supporters of improving women's status have emphasised that education is the most significant instrument to change women's position in society (Vohra 1985). Jena (1993) stated that the economic position of women is related with their status, not only in her own perspective, but also in the opinion of others. Also Devi (1982) explains that the status of a woman in the family has changed for the better due to her employment. Research of the United Nations (1993) shows that age is a much more important determinant of women's status than education. In order to know how these different factors influence women's status, the fifth research question is formed.

- *What is the influence of education, employment, age and reproductive career on the status of women in India through the life course?*

The life events in the life course perspective are universal, but are situated in the context (Hutter 1998). Therefore, the sixth research question will be:

- *How does the social context influence this all?*

The content of this thesis is as follows. In chapter 2 the focus is on the theories and secondary literature which are adopted in the present study. The first theory, the social theory of Coleman (1990), deals with the interaction between the macro and micro level. It concentrates on the influence of the context on the individual background and behaviour of the individual. The life course perspective is the second theory adopted in this study and is described earlier

in this chapter. The theories and the secondary literature are used to provide a framework, in which the network of relationships of women's education, employment, age, status, autonomy and her reproductive behaviour is formed. Here, the reproductive behaviour is of our main concern. A conceptual model is formed (section 2.4) by linking the theories and the secondary literature in order to answer the research questions. The conceptual model can be seen as the foundation of this research. Chapter 3 deals with the methodology which is applied in this study. It is an important aspect of the research, because in this part it is explained how the research is done. In the beginning of this chapter, the research questions are explained in more detail. Further, it provides information about data collection, in depth interviews, selection of respondents and reflections on the research process. In chapter 4, background information regarding the context and the study population is given. This is needed to place the study population within its wider context in order to understand the reproductive behaviour of the respondents in a better way. In chapter 5 and 6 the reproductive career, which starts with menarche and ends with menopause, will be looked at. The importance of the reproductive events and the social transitions are studied. Chapter 7 deals with the factors that influence the autonomy and status of women. In the last chapter the conclusions, which are the answers of the research questions, are described.

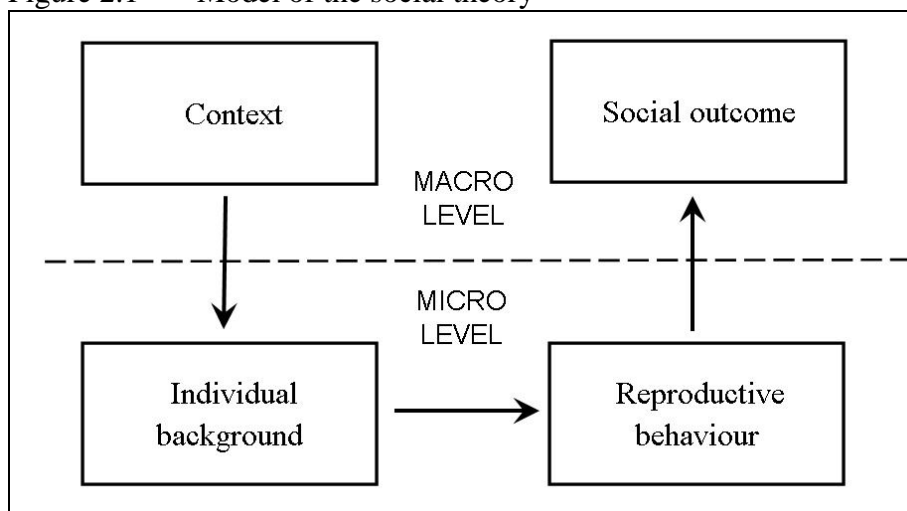
2 Theory

In this chapter the focus is on theories and secondary literature which are adopted in the present study. They are used to provide a theoretical framework, in order to answer the research question. First, the social theory of Coleman (1990) will be described in section 2.1. Second, the life course perspective is introduced in section 2.2. After that, secondary literature is given in 2.3 to provide more information regarding the concepts and its relationships. Finally, the conceptual model which is used in this study is shown in section 2.4, which is formed by linking the theories and the secondary literature. The conceptual model can be seen as the foundation of this research. The whole research is ‘build’ on this foundation, that is why the whole research process can traced back to this origin.

2.1 The social theory of Coleman

The social theory of Coleman (1990) is used to explain social systems. Noticeable are the macro and micro level constituting the model. Taking a multi-level approach is acknowledged by many social scientists, among them many demographers (De Bruijn 1998). Lindenberg (1986 cited in De Bruijn 1998) uses the term macro to refer to concepts as “society, social systems or macro level phenomena, whereas micro pertains to individual action and interaction between people, and to choice, emotions, thoughts or motivation” (p.16). The micro level is used to understand events at the macro level. Through research at the micro level it is possible to understand different concepts at the macro level and thus reality (De Bruijn 1998). The social theory consists of different concepts: context, individual background, individual behaviour and social outcome (see figure 2.1). These concepts will be outlined in the following sections.

Figure 2.1 Model of the social theory



Source: Coleman (1990)

2.1.1 Context

Coleman (1990) considers the context as an important determinant of individual behaviour. There is an interdependency of the individual and the context in which he or she lives. The context determines individual behaviour, because individuals derive (incomplete) information from the context (Den Draak 1998). The context is a multi-level concept (Willekens 1992; De Bruijn 1993) and includes an economic, social and cultural context. The context has a close relationship with the concept of institutions and can be seen as an arrangement of social

institutions. De Bruijn (1998) defines institutions as: “information-containing bodies, made-up of more or less coherent sets of rules that influence behaviour in different ways” (p.181). By these institutions, society trains its members to play their expected roles according to its own rules and regulation (Saxena 1995). Societal rules can be defined as “the set of expected behaviours and responsibilities, which vary according to sex, race, ethnicity and social class. Of these, sex is almost universally the most basic social category” (Saxena 1995, p.47). Vohra and Sen (1985) stated that history is the evidence that women remain sufferer, because of so called traditions, customs created and made by the society dominated by men. In these societies, women are raised in an amazingly different way compared to men. They are brought up to take up their distinctly defined roles in the society. In many societies of the world, the roles of women are defined in terms of being wives and mothers because it is believed that this is destiny and mission of women (Saxena 1995). The roles according to rules in society and regulations are carried out by constraints. North (1994) made a distinction between formal and informal ones. Formal constraints are rules, laws and constitutions. Informal constraints are norms of behaviour, conventions and self-imposed codes of conduct. Violations of these constraints may result in sanctions, ‘either by an external authority or self-imposed’ (Hutter 1996, p.9). These constraints define the structure of society. De Bruijn (1998) explains that “although behaviour is influenced by the social context through restrictions (physical, financial, legal, et cetera) [...] the choice process itself is determined by the information that people acknowledge in their social environment” (p.22). That is why every individual perspective of the institutional context can be different. In other words, individuals have a subjective way of looking at their context, from which they derive information and on which they act. De Bruijn (1998) also argues that if many people read their social environment differently and changes their behaviour (micro level), social institutions and rules will change. This can lead to big changes in society and its population at the macro level (social outcome).

2.1.2 Individual background

The social theory describes the effect of individual background characteristics on individual behaviour. Also Hutter (1998) explained that different behaviour of individuals can be ‘explained’ by differences in background characteristics. For example, the different number of children women have, can be ‘explained’ by different educational attainments (Hutter 1998). The inclusion of individual characteristics in the explanation of different reproductive behaviour is of quite recent origin. Many earlier studies used family characteristics as determinants for reproductive behaviour, but these analyses indicate differences between groups and do not capture the individual differentials (Jeffery and Basu 1996).

2.1.3 Individual behaviour

The interaction between the context and the individual is not only of oppressive nature. For example, in a patriarchal system, men hold power in all the important institutions. This however does not imply that women are powerless or without rights. An unequal system can only exist with the participation of the oppressed, some of whom derive some benefits from it (Bhasin 1994). The problem is not that women are absolutely excluded from power or prestige in patriarch, but it is with the framework itself, which is determined by men (Bhasin 1994). Lerner cited in Bhasin (1994) describes a telling point:

Men and women live on a stage, on which they act out their assigned roles, equal in importance. The play cannot go on without both kinds of performers. Neither of them contributes more or less to the whole; neither is marginal or dispensable. But the stage set is conceived, painted, defined by men. Men have written the play, have directed the

show, interpreted the meanings of action. They have assigned themselves the most interesting, most heroic parts, giving women the supporting roles (p.15).

The context offers opportunities, but women should also take them and thereby challenge institutions, traditions and customs (Devi 1982, p.133). If women take these opportunities and use the available facilities, depends on differences in background characteristics of these individuals.

2.1.4 Social outcome

The last concept of the social theory is the social outcome. This outcome at the macro level is the result of individual behaviour at the micro level. At the macro level, changes in individual behaviour are not immediately visible. Many people should change their behaviour before it is visible at the macro level. Collective behaviour of individuals can be seen as a sign of a larger change in society. This concept will not be dealt within this study.

2.2 Life Course Perspective

In this study the life course perspective is adopted. This perspective explains that a person's present behaviour has to be understood within the context of past behaviour in earlier stages of the life course. According to Runyan (1984), the life course can be defined as "the sequence of events and experiences in a life from birth until death and the chain of personal states and encountered situations which influence and are influenced by this sequence of events" (p.82). Hutter (1998) defines states as stages of development like: infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. The life course perspective exists of particular careers that women follow. A career is "the chain of stable and transition periods pertaining to a given domain" (Willekens 1989, p.8). Careers can be associated with individual characteristics of a person that changes over the life time (Willekens 1989). Examples of careers are educational careers and job careers. Within these careers, life events occur. The birth of a child is an event in the reproductive career or getting employed is an event in the job career. These different careers are interrelated. The educational career can affect the reproductive career of a woman, if she decides to wait to get married in order to finish her education first. Also in the life course perspective, the context plays an important role. The life events are universal, but are situated in the context (Hutter 1998).

2.3 Secondary literature

In this chapter, the literature study is used to get more insight in the network of relationships. First the reproductive career of Indian women is described, because reproduction behaviour is central in this study. After this, the context is of our concern as it affects all the relationships. The intervening variables, status and autonomy follow as well as the influences of some background characteristics on these concepts. Finally, the reproductive behaviour and the way it is influenced are described.

2.3.1 Reproductive career

The reproductive career starts with the onset of menarche and ends with menopause. Traditional the reproductive events are celebrated with a ceremony, because they are considered to be important in a woman's life. The first ceremony is conducted with the onset of menstruation. The second celebration is the wedding ceremony. Third, during the first pregnancy another ceremony is held (Hutter 1994). In this section, the events of the reproductive career will be described. Followed by several background characteristics which influence the reproductive career.

The reproductive career starts with menarche. “Traditionally, in Indian society menarche indicates maturity” (Hutter 1998, p.83). The Kannada word for menarche (*dodakke*), which literally means ‘becoming big, grow up’, illustrate this (Hutter 1998). Menarche often is celebrated as a ‘rite de passage’, which indicates a major change in the life course. This celebration marks the transition from one stage to another (Hutter *et. al.* 2002). During the ceremony special food and care are provided to the girl who reaches menarche. For the first five days after the onset of the first menstruation, the custom of pollution and separation is applied. This means that the girl sits apart from the rest of the family for a few days and is not permitted to attend school. The duration of staying at home depends on the social economic position of the family. Along with this social transition, George (1994) reports changes which take place after menarche; the clothing style of the girls shift to ankle length skirts and saris. The behaviour of girls is expected to change. The playing of physical games is refrained and the elders encourage the girls to stay at home (Hutter 1998). The event of menarche is close related to marriage. Janssen (2000) stated that menarche indicates that a girl is ready for marriage. In general, however, the period between menarche and marriage is nowadays longer (and still increases) due to female education and participation of women in the labour force (Audinarayana 1994).

In India, most women get married at some stage in life as marriage is universal in the Indian context (Reddy and Sumongala 1998). The marriage arrangements vary across communities in south India, but most often the bride and her natal family keep close contact after marriage. This is in contrast with the almost complete separation of daughters from their parents in north India. In the south, women frequently marry within their own villages and have their own social network, which is called village endogamy. Desai (1994) claims that village endogamy may help increase women’s power within the household. Three different types of marriages exist: arranged marriages, love marriages and consanguineous marriages. An arranged marriage is arranged by the parents. In contrast with a love marriage, the selection of a suitable husband is not necessary based on love nor is courtship used to test the relationship. It is believed that love develops as a part of marriage (Jena 1993). An arranged marriage is seen as an establishment between two families, rather than between two individuals. The major decisions about the selection of the future bridegroom are made by the (head of the) family. Sometimes, the women have a voice in the arrangements, but their actual contributions are small. This way, she and her future spouse hardly meet. The life of a woman changed from the marriage onwards. Now she belongs to the family of her husband and lives with him and his family. This implicates adjustments to her family-in-law, and especially the relationship with her mother-in-law can be sensitive (Hutter 1998). Besides village endogamy, the marriages predominantly take place within the caste (sub)-group. The most important selection criteria of the future husband seems to be the economic and social status (Hutter 1994).

At the time of marriage, the custom is to give dowry. This means that the bride’s parents give gifts and cash to the family of the future husband at the time of marriage (Jena 1993). Desai (1994) describes it as an exchange of wealth for status. The size of the dowry depends on the socio-economic status of both the families. The dowry could exist of money and gold, but it may also contain luxury items such as watches. Dowries, which can be very large, take a considerable part of the savings from the girl’s family (Hutter 1994). The dowry system can be related with the so-called bride-burnings when huge amount of money and durable are involved. “Just married women catch fire ‘by accident’ and the husband’s family can proceed to another bride and another dowry” (Hutter 1998). According to Jena (1993) it is expected

that the process of modernisation would make people view the custom of dowry as an undesirable event in the marriage rituals.

After marriage, she becomes a member of her husband's family. Traditionally the education of a girl is not seen as a good investment, as the girl is viewed as only a temporary member of her natal family. Moreover, educating a girl can make the marriage preparation even difficult. According to the rule of hypergamy, a girl should marry a boy with a higher education. The dowry that should be paid by her parents to the bridegroom's family will increase (Hutter 1998).

While, the reproductive career starts with menarche, in practice the event of childbearing occurs to women in relatively stable sexual unions. In India, marriage marks the socially accepted start of the reproductive career. During her marriage, a woman is considered to be at risk of childbearing until menopause, the onset of permanent sterilisation or marital disruption. The births of children are important reproductive events (Hutter 1998). It proves women's fertility to her family-in-law (Hutter 1994) and it is seen as the fulfilment of the major purpose of her life (Van der Velden 1991).

The reproductive career ends with menopause or permanent sterility. At this time in the life course, women who gave birth to sons might achieve some more power. She is supposed not to have performed her 'duties' as a woman" (Hutter 1998, p.98). A woman who did not give birth can suffer social ostracism (Barnabas 1974).

2.3.2 Indian context

The position of females in the Indian society should be placed in a patriarchal or gender-stratified culture. Bhasin (1994) defines patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (p.5). He looks at patriarchy as a concept which explains women's subordination. This subordination is a result of unequal gender relations and by hierarchical relations in which males have authority in the family. Women have little say on their own lives (Jejeebhoy 1995). The influence of the context on individual reproductive behaviour can be demonstrated by looking at the fertility differences in the north and the south of India. These differences can be explained by the kinship system. In the north this is more gender-stratified and patriarchal than that in the south. The north is characterised by kinship structures similar to the Islamic countries of North Africa and the Middle East, with high levels of female seclusion and dependence (Jejeebhoy 1995). North Indian women are materially disadvantaged as a result of aspects of their kinship system. They also face more controls over their sexuality, through arranged marriages to strangers and norms of veiling and avoidance. They are more likely to share residence with their parents-in-law at greater distance from their natal home and are less likely to be involved in waged labour outside the home. Their property rights are also weaker than those of south Indian women. Bhasin (1994) concludes that north Indian women have more children than south Indian women as a result of all these forces. More of their children, particularly more of their daughters, die.

The family can be seen as an institution at the immediate social context in which people live. It is assumed that this 'context' plays a crucial role as most people gather information in their immediate environment rather than elsewhere. Besides that, easily accessible sources of information will sooner be consulted (Willekens 1990; Willekens 1992). The family is not a clear phenomenon. There are different kinds of families: nuclear, joint families and co-residing households (see section 3.2). As an outcome of the modernisation of society the joint

families are breaking up and getting replaced by nuclear or quasi-joint families. Jena (1993) expects, as the modernisation goes on, individuals, especially women, would prefer to establish independent nuclear homes rather than living in large families with many other family members. Also Caldwell (1976) expects a transition from joint families to the more 'Western' or nuclear families.

Families will change through time, because family types are time bound (Hutter 1998). A family which is now a nuclear family can become a joint family, when the son gets married. Again, a nuclear family is formed when the parents die. In other words, the type of family in which a female lives, changes through her life course. This is of importance to understand her background characteristics and her behaviour in time.

The family, especially the parents, have a great influence on the education of their daughter. This is partly explained by the education of the parents. Parental education is a powerful predictor of a girl's education, especially the schooling of the mother (Bledsoe 1999).

2.3.3 Status

According to Jejeebhoy (1998), status can be seen as prestige or esteem accorded. Sipila (1975) defined the status of a woman as "a conjunction of the position she occupies -as a worker, student, wife, and mother- at any point of time, the prestige attached to these positions, as well as the consequential expected rights and duties" (Sipila 1975, cited in Bhargava and Savana 1987, p.71). Bhargava and Saxena (1987) believe that women's status can increase as a result of the extent of control that she has over her own life; in other words her autonomy (section 2.3.4).

The status of women and its possible connections with fertility can only be understood in its particular context. This is because indicators of female status tend to be heavily 'context dependent'. What indicates high status in one setting may indicate low status in another (Oppenheim 1984). The status of a woman and her relationships with other people vary over the life course and are defined within society. Status is ascribed to a woman and is defined within societies. "...what roles she [...] is expected to play, what actions are considered to be proper for her [...], what kind of relationships can she [...] establish, etc. are determined by the cultural meaning system and reinforced by norms and rules in the society" (Hutter 1998, p.12).

In many societies of the world, the roles of women are defined in terms of being wives and mothers. It is believed that this is destiny and mission of women (Saxena 1995). The status of married Indian women is therefore strongly determined by their reproductive role (Hutter 1998). The birth of children, especially sons, will change a woman's status, and her social relations. This is seen as the fulfilment of the major purpose of a woman's life, also by women themselves. She rises in the esteem of her in-laws. The birth of a son is a security in her old age; he continues the family line and he will bring his bride to the household in the future. As mother and mother-in-law she can come to a position of influence in the household (Van der Velden 1991).

Bhargava and Saxena (1987) claim that education and employment are the main keys to the improvement of the status of women. This is confirmed by supporters of improving women's status. They have emphasised that education is the most significant instrument to change women's position in society (Vohra 1985). It determines "aspirations, levels of technological skill, productivity, mobility, changing perceptions of the cost and values of human beings and

their contributions to the household and the national economy” (Mitra 1979, cited in Bhargava and Saxena 1987, p.71). The status of women is intimately connected with their economic position. This status is acquired by the rights, roles and opportunities that women gain by their participation in economic activities (United Nations 1975) Jena (1993) stated that the economic position of women is related with their status, not only in her own perspective, but also in the opinion of others. Also Devi (1982) explains that the status of a woman in the family has changed for the better due to her employment. Research of the United Nations (1993) shows that age is a much more important determinant of women’s status than education.

2.3.4 Autonomy

Jejeebhoy (1995) used the term ‘autonomy’ because the term ‘status of women’ received much criticism. Jejeebhoy argues that it is important that women are in control of their own lives and have a voice in matters affecting themselves and their families. This is important for their reproductive behaviour, rather than how much prestige or esteem they accorded. In this sense, the commonly used term ‘status of women’ is unclear, because its interpretation is highly subjective. It varies from region and it may be high even where women have little control over their lives. Jejeebhoy uses the term ‘autonomy’ to describe the extent to which women have control over their own lives. Autonomy is defined as “the ability... to obtain information and use it as the basis for making decisions about one’s private concerns and those of one’s intimates” (p.7). Jejeebhoy distincts five separate but interdependent aspects of autonomy that are suggested as important in the education-fertility relationship: knowledge, decision-making, physical, emotional, economic and social autonomy (Jejeebhoy 1995; Bledsoe 1999). Three out of these five aspects are mentioned by Bhargava and Saxena (1987) to have influence on women’s status. “Status can be derived from access to knowledge, economic resources and the degree of autonomy enjoyed in the process of decision making and choice” (United Nations 1975; Chhabra 1982 cited in Bhargava and Saxena 1987, p.71). Basu (1992) distincts three separate but interdependent components of women’s position. First, the extent of exposure to the outside world. Second, the extent of interaction with the outside world, and in particular, the extent of economic interaction. Third, the level of autonomy in decision-making within and outside the household. (Basu 1992, p.53).

The autonomy of a woman should be seen in the life course perspective, because it is influenced by several factors which change through time. The factors of influence vary from her role in the family to her education, employment and age, which will be described below.

A close look at the place of women in the family is crucial for understanding the possibilities they have to exercise power (Van der Velden 1991). In other words, the family has an important role in determining women’s autonomy. Individual characteristics, as education and employment of a woman, do not necessarily make her more autonomous in the family environment, unless she also receives more general social support (Karkal and Irudaya Rajan 1989). Individual background characteristics may contribute to greater female autonomy; it is a two-way process. For example, if the family accepts that the girl gets schooling or has a job, is directly linked to the family’s attitudes towards female autonomy (Jeffery and Basu 1996). Caldwell *et al.* (1985) stated that the degree of gender stratification in families appears to limit or condition the impact of education on women’s decision-making authority. The degree of women’s autonomy also depends on the degree of male dominance in the family conditions. All this shows an interdependence between the context at the micro level and the individual background characteristics and her autonomy. The type of family in which a woman grows up also defines her autonomy. According to Devi (1982), it would be

reasonable to think of a greater possibility for equal decision making in the nuclear families than in the extended or joint families (Devi 1982). If the wife grows up in a nuclear family, she will be more accustomed to an equalitarian relation between husband and wife. Likely, the relationship between her husband and she will therefore be more equal (Jena 1993).

Women's education has different influences on the five aspects of autonomy, which will be described below. *Knowledge autonomy* is acquired by education. By schooling, it is expected that students obtain a deeper understanding of several subjects, like literacy, numeracy and skills over language. Besides this, education has powerful indirect effects on values and outlooks. These are not necessarily a result from the curriculum itself, but from attending school and interacting with teachers and peers. The changes in values and outlooks include a wider world view, greater reasoning powers, a reliance on scientific explanations for everyday phenomena, a greater sense of alternative lifestyles and opportunities rather than a narrow outlook constrained by limits of the family or village (Jeebhoy 1995). In addition, education moves women from a reliance on others for gaining knowledge and new ideas to greater self-reliance and, correspondingly, to a greater questioning of traditional authority figures (Caldwell 1982). Better educated women have more skills in expressing ideas and asking questions (Kritz and Gurak 1989).

Education is expected to increase women's *decision-making autonomy* within the home. Compared to uneducated young women, who rarely have a say in decision-making, educated women are more confident of their ability to make decisions and more likely to insist on participating in family decisions (Jeebhoy 1995; Bledsoe 1999). Educated women are also more likely to challenge their mothers-in-law and their mother-in-law is much less likely to oppose such challenges. This challenge is illustrated by a research in southern India, where gender relations are more egalitarian than in the north. It seemed that young educated women were much more likely to say: 'In my house, it is my rule' (Caldwell *et al.* 1985). The mother-in-law opposes such challenges as a result of her recognition that an unhappy educated daughter may have the power to draw their son's loyalty away from them, emotionally or by insisting on setting up a separate household. Thus, they give as many decisions to their daughter-in-law as is necessary for keeping the family unit (Jeebhoy 1995).

Evidence to support the positive relationship between education and decision-making autonomy within the home is incomplete. Although the relationship does occur, it varies by the degree of gender stratification of the context and family, the woman's age and the kind of decision. The degree of gender stratification in the family appears to limit the impact of education on women's decision-making authority. It also conditions the extent to which age or stage of the life cycle affects the decision-making autonomy of women, irrespective of education. In sum, the degree of gender stratification in the context in which a woman lives, determines the education a woman needs to take decisions and the importance of those decisions (Caldwell *et al.* 1985). Jeebhoy (1995) explains that evidence suggested that, although education improves women's autonomy, the degree of male dominance in the family conditions the degree of her decision-making autonomy (Jeebhoy 1995).

An aspect of the autonomy of women is her *physical autonomy*. Traditionally women did not go outside the family or home without the company of at least a boy (Devi 1982). It is observed that modernisation increases women's social activities and her interaction with others has grown to a bigger extent (Jena 1993). Education has two consequences for the *physical autonomy* of women. First, educated women in highly gender-stratified settings are

expected to have more freedom of movement. Second, better educated women are expected to have more self-confidence in dealing with the outside world and in using available services (Jejeebhoy 1995).

The contribution of education to women's *economic and social autonomy* can perhaps be seen as most important. But this aspect is very much related with the relation between employment and autonomy, which will be described more detailed in the next section. Educated females are expected to have greater economic self-reliance, also in their old age. Evidence from India suggests that educated women rely on their own resources in old age, either replacing or, more likely, supporting the help of their sons (United Nations 1993). If a woman is not economically free and self-earning, she will have to depend on her husband or someone else (Luthra 1976, p.5), which will influence her autonomy (Luthra *et al.* in Devi 1982).

Much criticism evoked around the relationship between education and autonomy. The relationship between education and women's autonomy is complex, multidimensional (Chanana 1996), and is not uniform across regions, cultures or levels of development. Uneducated women tend to have relatively little autonomy, while high educated women have more. How high the autonomy will be, depends on the extent of gender stratification in a society. Thus the norms of patriarchy are important for the impact of education on women's autonomy. There is only a positive relation between education and fertility, if the woman attained moderate levels of education (Jejeebhoy 1995).

Just like education, employment makes women conscious of their opportunities and rights. They naturally desire and deserve a better deal for themselves (Saxena 1995). Beside this, also work outside the home will increase their *knowledge autonomy*. Women's *physical autonomy* will increase due to employment, because no family can afford an escort to accompany females in their journey to and back from office. Going to office unaccompanied made it possible for them to go to other places also (Devi 1982). Having a job also motivates women to be more involved in activities outside the home (Bhargava and Saxena 1987). To have a voice in the decision making in the family is an important part of women's autonomy and is closely linked with women's economic and social autonomy. According to Devi (1982), the economic independence of working women is probably the most far-reaching effect. Employed women are expected to have greater economic self-reliance, also in their old age. To enhance women's *economic and social autonomy*, it is not enough to have employment. It is also important that working women have a say in how their earnings are used. In patriarchal cultures, it is often expected that working women, irrespective of education, give their earnings to their husband, mothers-in-law, or other senior members of the household. In these circumstances, women will have little decision making power and it is expected that they have no control over resources or economic self-reliance (Jejeebhoy 1995). Traditionally, the man is the head of the household and makes most of the decisions. But this position is getting undermined due to the employment of women. It is expected that her financial contribution to the family income will give her greater interest in financial decisions and more respect from her family (Devi 1982). In families with working women, the family decisions are more egalitarian in stead of being dominated by males. They have more privileges in the family and more to say when it comes to money matters (Jejeebhoy 1995).

Research of the United Nations (1993) shows that age is a much more important determinant of women's status than education. At each level of education, older women have higher levels of autonomy than younger women. Also Jejeebhoy stated that age can confer a great deal of

autonomy on women, independent of education. Even in strong gender-stratified cultures, older women gain considerable decision-making authority and control over household resources, simply as a result of their age (Karkal and Irudaya Rajan 1989; Jejeebhoy 1995). Also Hutter (1994) stated that women can improve their status and have more power at an older age. If women have given birth to sons, this is accomplished at the time they become mother-in-law themselves. All this indicates that women's power over domestic decisions is more closely linked to stage of the life cycle than to educational achievement. This calls into question the accepted relationship between education and autonomy. It appears that cultural and kinship norms continue to shape women's autonomy and decision making power, regardless of education. This finding can be supported by Jejeebhoy (1998) who explains that although the relation does occur, it varies by cultural setting, the woman's age and the kind of decision. However, in recent times daughter-in-law takes over leadership quiet soon from elders. This is a result of her education or mobility (Kandiyoti 1988).

2.3.5 Influences on the reproductive career

In this section the influences of education, employment and autonomy on the reproductive career are discussed.

The direct relationship between women's education and fertility is not uniform. It can be related with the stage of development of a society. In the early stages of a country's development, a small amount of education may increase fertility. Countries with higher levels of development and more egalitarian settings have a negative relationship (Jejeebhoy 1995). A woman's reproductive behaviour will also be affected by the norms of the social groups to which she belongs. Individual's behaviour can never be separated from the context in which it is situated, but as educational attainment rises, the reproductive ideas of the individual are less influenced by the community (Cleland and Rodriguez 1988, p.442 in Diamond *et al.*). The way education affects fertility depends on a threshold level of education which indicates a positive or negative association with fertility. These thresholds are highest in gender-stratified cultures and lowest among more developed and egalitarian societies. Although the influence of education on fertility varies greatly, the relationship between education and fertility has been mainly negative in recent years (Jejeebhoy 1995).

Sathar (1996) has no doubt that women's education influences fertility. First, through a reduced demand for children. They will have a wider choice of opportunities outside the family which will be in conflict with childbearing. Because of this, they will face higher opportunity costs in having children (Cochrane 1979). This reduced demand is also the result of a changed attitude towards traditional norms and beliefs regarding family size and quality of children (UN 1986). Second, education may reduce fertility through the postponement of marriage. The age at marriage rose because of the general practice of completing one's education before marriage, thereby shortening the period of exposure to pregnancy. Education may be associated with increased fecundity and lower rate of intra-uterine mortality and infertility by improving women's nutrition and health levels, although there is little evidence of these relationships. And thirdly, more educated people will have better knowledge of the reproductive process and easy access to modern and effective contraceptives methods. They will also use them more than others (UN 1979; Bhargava and Saxena 1987). In many developing countries there is almost no use of effective contraceptives between marriage and the first child. According to Riley *et al.* (1993), a short interval between menarche and first child is a consequence. However, this birth interval is expected to increase, because the period between menarche and marriage is nowadays longer due to female education and the participation of women in the labour force (Audinarayana 1994). Thanks to the effort made

by the government, the knowledge of family planning methods has rapidly spread in India over the past quarter of a century. Especially, among the middle and upper class women, many of them have actually adopted the methods (Devi 1982). “The concept of woman as a childbearing machine and of children as God-given has disappeared from a large segment of the educated people and the right of women to decide the number of children she should bear is getting increasing recognition” (Devi 1982, p.14).

Not much is written concerning the link between employment and a woman’s reproductive career. Bargava and Saxena (1987) describe that researchers are of diverse opinion regarding the relationship of women’s employment and fertility. The studies have either revealed conflicting findings or have been inconclusive in providing the nature and mechanism through which women’s work participation affects fertility. In many societies, women’s employment is considered as one of the means for promoting the use of contraceptives and, thereby, indirectly reducing fertility (Bargava and Saxena 1987). Also Jejeebhoy (1995) stated that the ability of working women to purchase contraceptive methods is increased as a result of more sources of income. There is also a link with child survival and family size desire.

According to Dyson and Moore (1983), fertility differences in the north and the south of India reflect difference in women’s autonomy. The more autonomy the women have, the more likely she is to affect her own fertility and to ensure better medical care for herself and her children. The four aspects of autonomy have different implications on the reproductive career of woman. A women’s *knowledge autonomy* affects her fertility in two different ways. First, this knowledge is expected to influence fertility through improved child survival. Child survival is improved by the knowledge of the causes, prevention, cure of disease and children’s nutritional requirements. It also helps to prevent unwanted births (Jejeebhoy 1995). Second, education exposes women to new ideas which may be incompatible with having many children and which can lead them, more generally, to question the old ways of life (Kritz and Gurak 1989). Enhanced *decision-making autonomy* in the home can influence fertility through several ways. Women have a voice in decisions related to marital age, duration of breast-feeding, post-partum abstinence, child care, family size and contraception (Jejeebhoy 1995). The influence of a greater *physical autonomy* on reproductive behaviour can operate in at least two ways. The interaction with the outside world can improve women’s ability to interact and deal with health and contraceptive services and so influence child survival on the one hand, and contraceptive use on the other (Jejeebhoy 1995). Women’s enhanced *economic and social autonomy* affect intervening variables which are described in the paragraph about the link between employment and reproductive career.

Some researchers are more sceptical of the effects of autonomy as a result of girls’ schooling. They think that teachers and textbooks provide strong gender role messages and that schooling have a fundamentally conservative nature (Kadzamira 1994). Also in the socialisation literature, schools are seen as conservative institutions that reinforce the gender inequalities present in the surrounding society. Besides this, education may reduce women’s marriage market as a result of the universal tendency for women to marry ‘up’ (Kadzamira 1994). Along with family, education, employment and age, other factors also help to increase women’s status or power in society in modern times. Factors like caste and place of residence also reinforce status (Devi 1982).

The caste system determines the social hierarchy in a group. The status of an individual is determined by the caste in which he is born. “In old days, nothing could alter this, neither education nor wealth, neither success nor failure. A man is born into a caste and he dies in it”

(Jena 1993, p.93). The process of modernisation brought significant changes in the caste system. Persons belonging to different castes attain high education and getting employment. This way the same social status can be reached (Jena 1993).

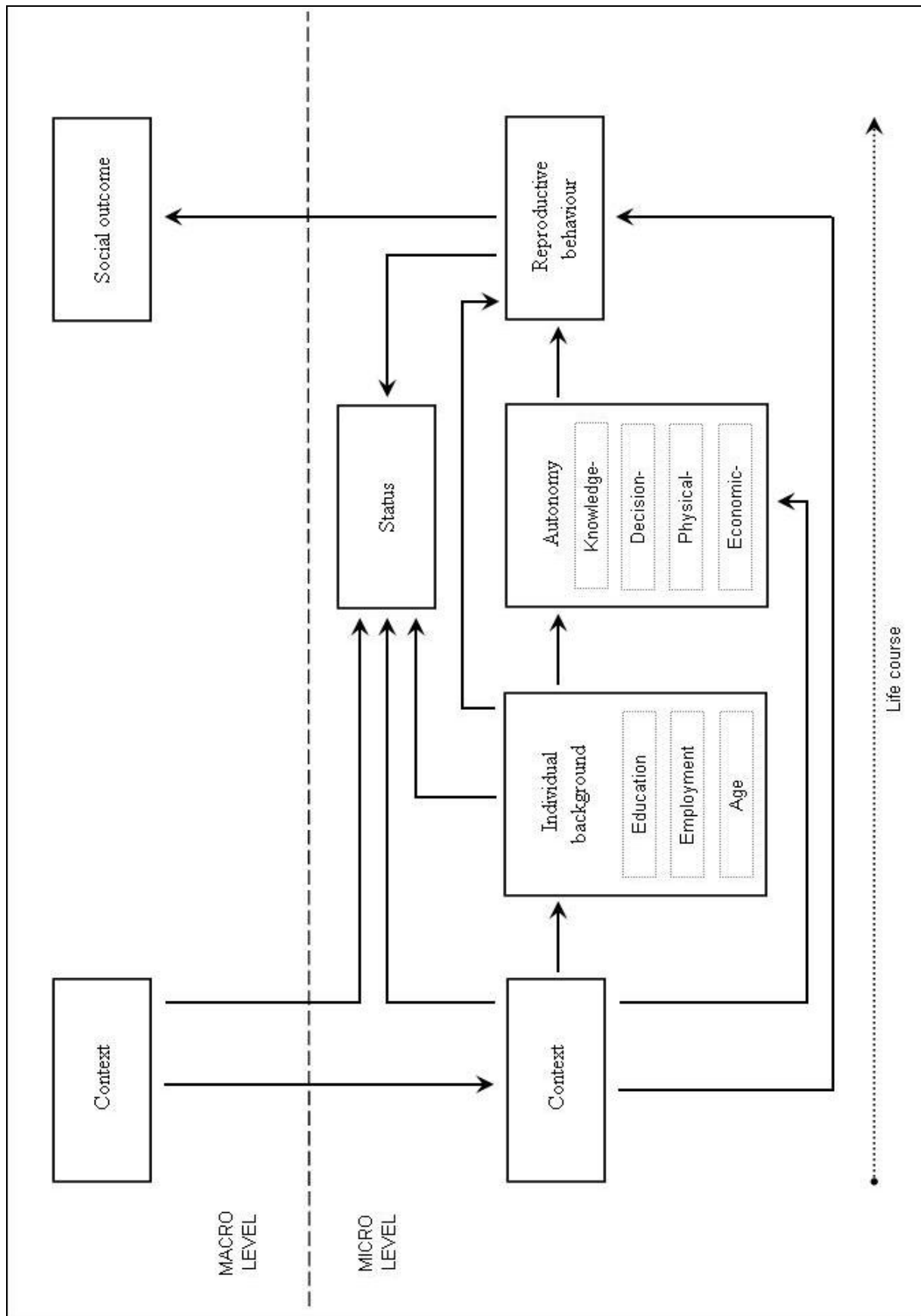
A rural or urban background is another factor that influences the decisions making power of women. If a person is born and raised in a rural environment, she may follow traditional ideals and have little say in decision making. However, if she is born and brought-up in an urban area she may resist the traditional role (Devi 1982).

2.4 Conceptual model

The conceptual model is derived from the adopted theories and the secondary literature (figure 2.2), to provide a framework in which the network of relationships of women's education, employment, age, status, autonomy and her reproductive behaviour is formed. The levels, concepts and relationships are all described in sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3. The macro level, which is determined by the Indian context, and the micro level of the social theory of Coleman (1990) are visible in this model. Also other concepts as individual background, individual behaviour and social outcome are used. The individual background characteristics exist of education, employment and age. The individual background characteristics influence the intervening variable, women's autonomy and the concept of women's status. The social outcome is not discussed elaborate, but will get more attention in section 8.2.

The life course perspective is the second theory adopted in this model. The life course perspective explains that a person's present behaviour has to be understood within the context of past behaviour in earlier stages of the life course. Here, the life course perspective exists of the educational, job and reproductive career that women follow. Women's status and autonomy should also been seen in this perspective, because they are influenced by several individual background characteristics which change through time. This all, is placed in a historical context (time), with the replacement of two age groups as a major mechanism of change.

Figure 2.2 The conceptual model



3 Methodology

In this chapter the methodology which is applied in this study will be described. This is an essential aspect of the whole research process, because in this part the manner in which the research is conducted is explained. This determines how well the research questions can be answered. These research questions, which are presented in the first chapter, are described in more detail in section 3.1. In section 3.2, the concepts and its operationalisation are described. Here, a link is made between the concepts from the model (section 2.4) and the way these are measured. The conceptualisation and measurement of the concepts can make a difference in the interpretation of the results of a research. In section 3.3, an explanation of the selection procedure of respondents is given. Followed by more information about the construction and the content of the in-depth interviews in section 3.4. In section 3.5 the focus is on the collection of the data. And in chapter 3.6 some reflections on the research and the fieldwork are provided.

3.1 Research questions

The *purpose* of this study is to try to untangle the network of relationships which determine woman's status and autonomy and influence reproductive behaviour. Important factors in this network are: women's education, employment and age. Hence, the questions that follow reflect the concepts used in the model (section 2.4).

The life course perspective is adopted, with the reproductive career of women and reproductive events playing a central role. A woman's reproductive career starts with menarche and ends with menopause. Within this career there are several events which are considered to be important in a woman's life: onset of menarche, marriage, first pregnancy, the birth of children and menopause (Hutter 1994). The order and timing of these events differ in societies. For example, in Indian societies childbearing mainly occurs within marriage, which is the socially accepted start of the reproductive career (Hutter 1998). The first birth interval occurs soon after marriage in order to prove their fertility (Hutter 1994). To get more knowledge of the reproductive behaviour of high educated, employed women, the first research question is:

- *What is the reproductive career of women in India?*

The life course exists of different careers which are interrelated (Hutter 1998). The educational and job career can affect the reproductive career of a woman, if she decides to wait to get married in order to finish her education or find a job first. The direct relationship between women's education and fertility is not uniform. The way education affects fertility depends on a threshold level of education which indicates a positive or negative association with fertility. These thresholds are highest in gender-stratified cultures and lowest among more developed and egalitarian societies. The influence of education on fertility varies greatly. In recent years, education of women mainly results in lower fertility (Jejeebhoy 1995).

Not much is written regarding the influence of women's employment on her reproductive career. Jejeebhoy (1995) mentions a relationship between women's employment and child survival, family size desire and more sources of income. The latter reduces her demand for

children for material support. Along with that, it increases her ability to purchase contraceptive methods. In order to get more insight in the factors that influence the reproductive career, the second research question is formed.

- *How does education and employment influence the reproductive career of women in India, according to the women themselves?*

According to Jejeebhoy (1995) women's autonomy is important for demographic change. Female autonomy means that women are in control of their own lives and have a voice in matters affecting themselves and their families. To examine the autonomy in women's life the third research questions will be:

- *What is the autonomy of women in India?*

It is not only essential to examine the degree of autonomy, but it is also important to know the factors that influence it. The factors of influence vary from her education, employment to her age. Supporters for improving women's status have emphasised that education is the most significant instrument for changing women's position in society. On the other hand, research of the United Nations (1993) shows that age is a much more important determinant of women's status than education. According to Jena (1993), the status of women is intimately connected with their economic position. Besides that, several events in the reproductive career are considered to be important in a woman's life. Marriage and the birth of children, especially sons, will change a woman's status and her social relations (Van der Velden 1991). The factors described above change through time. Therefore, the autonomy should be seen in the life course perspective. To get more knowledge about the effect of different factors on autonomy, the next research question is therefore:

- *How do education, employment, age and reproductive career influence the autonomy of women in India through their life course?*

Autonomy can be seen as an intervening variable between education, employment and age on the one hand and reproductive behaviour on the other hand. The relationship of the individual background characteristics with autonomy is mentioned in the previous research question. Therefore, the next research question focuses on the influence of autonomy on reproductive behaviour.

- *How does the autonomy of women in India influence their reproductive behaviour?*

According to Jejeebhoy (1995), status can be seen as prestige or esteem accorded. Sipila (1975) defines the status of a woman as "a conjunction of the position she occupies -as a worker, student, wife, and mother- at any point of time, the prestige attached to these positions, as well as the consequential expected rights and duties". This is confirmed by supporters of improving women's status. They have emphasised that education is the most significant instrument to change women's position in society (Vohra 1985). Jena (1993) stated that the economic position of women is related with their status, not only in her own perspective, but also in the opinion of others. Also Devi (1982) explains that the status of a woman in the family has changed for the better due to her employment. Besides that, several events in the reproductive career are considered to be important in a woman's life. Marriage and the birth of children, especially sons, will change a woman's status and her social

relations (Van der Velden 1991). Research of the United Nations (1993) shows that age is a much more important determinant of women's status than education.

- *What is the influence of education, employment, age and reproductive career on the status of women in India through their life course?*

Also in the life course perspective, the context plays an important role. The life events are universal, but are situated in the context (Hutter 1998). Individual's reproductive behaviour can never be separated from the context in which it is situated, but as educational attainment rises, the reproductive ideas of the individual are less influenced by the community (Diamond *et al.* 1999). In order to get knowledge how the social context influences the research questions described before, the sixth research question is formed.

- *How does the social context influence this all?*

These research questions are answered in the conclusions (chapter 8).

3.2 Conceptualisation and operationalisation

In this section, the concepts that are used in the theoretical framework are defined more clearly. The link between the concepts from the theoretical background and its measurement (operationalisation) is necessary in order to develop an adequate list of questions. The goal of conceptualisation is therefore, "the refinement and specification of abstract concept" (Babbie 1998, p.139). Conceptualisation is strongly connected with the operationalisation of these concepts. The conceptualisation is used to "measure empirical observations representing these concepts in the real world" (Babbie 1998, p.139). Some operationalisations are clarified by the questions that are used in the in-depth interview (appendix).

In this study the life course perspective is adopted (see section 2.2). The life course perspective exists of particular careers that women follow. Here the reproductive career and its events will be the focus. The reproductive career starts with menarche and ends with menopause. Other milestones in the reproductive career, which are celebrated, are the first pregnancy and the birth of children (Hutter 1994). Menarche is the first menstruation of a girl and is defined as the "physical start of the reproductive career" (Hutter 1999, p.77). Marriage is defined as the 'socially accepted start of the reproductive career' (Hutter 1998, p.19). The reproductive events are operationalised by asking the women the dates of the reproductive events described above. Also questions related to ceremonies that might be conducted at the social transitions are used to indicate the importance of these events. The respondents were asked to compare their ceremonies with the ceremonies of their mothers and daughters, to study the importance through time.

The influence of education on fertility varies greatly. In recent years, education of women mainly results in lower fertility. A certain amount of education is necessary, to accomplish a decrease in the fertility. This depends on a threshold level of education, which varies by countries and regions (Jeejeebhoy 1995). In this study, the minimal educational level is a bachelor degree at the university, to overcome this threshold level. The educational career is defined as the chain of stable and transition periods pertaining education (based on Willekens 1998). Here, women's PhD is seen as part of the educational research. This is decided, because the respondents that have completed their PhD, combined this with a full time job. The educational career is operationalised by asking questions about the start, interruptions and

the completion of the educational career. The dates of the reproductive events are also linked with the educational career at that time.

The employment career is defined as the chain of stable and transition periods pertaining employment (based on Willekens 1998). Employment is operationalised as a full time, white collared job. Full time and part time jobs have a different effect on the reproductive behaviour of women. Research indicates that fertility of full time workers is lower than part time workers (Groat *et al.* 1976; Debavala 1977). In this study, the focus will be on full time jobs. Besides having a full time job, it also should be a white collar job. According to Vohra (1985) white collared women are defined as female clerks and officers of various grades in governmental and commercial institutions. The white collar jobs are used for several reasons. First, in order to have a white collar job, sufficient education is acquired, which the respondents did attain. Second, Devi (1982) explains that white collar jobs enable women to earn a decent income and give the ability to spend it. This will explain why women in agriculture and blue collar jobs do not have a social status equal or nearer to men. They do not have education or opportunities for interaction except within a narrow field. The employment career is operationalised by asking questions about the start and interruptions of the employment career. Also the dates of the reproductive events are linked with jobs at that time.

Women's status is another concept in this study. According to Jejeebhoy (1995), status can be seen as prestige or esteem accorded. Sipila (1975) defines the status of a woman as "a conjunction of the position she occupies as a worker, student, wife, and mother at any point of time, the prestige attached to these positions, as well as the consequential expected rights and duties" (Sipila 1975 cited in Bhargava and Saxena 1987, p.71). The concept of status is operationalised by asking the respondents if they experienced a change in their status after events in their educational, job or reproductive career. These experiences are used to indicate a change in prestige and esteem after events, perceived by the respondents.

Another concept in the conceptual model is women's autonomy. Jejeebhoy (1995) defines autonomy as 'the ability... to obtain information and use it as the basis for making decisions about one's private concerns and those of one's intimates' (p.7). Female autonomy usually refers to the extent to which women are free of men's control (Oppenheim Mason 1984). Jejeebhoy (1995) used the term 'autonomy' because the term 'status of women' received much criticism. Jejeebhoy argues that it is important that women are in control of their own lives and have a voice in matters affecting themselves and their families. This is important for their reproductive behaviour, rather than how much prestige or esteem they accorded. In this sense, the commonly used term 'status of women' is unclear, because its interpretation is highly subjective. It varies from region, and it may be high even where women have little control over their lives. Despite increased attention to the concept of female status in demography, the meaning of this concept has remained unclear. Indeed, as the literature on the status of women has grown, alternative definitions and terms like 'female autonomy' emerge (Dyson and Moore 1983). In spite of this all, both of these concepts are studied separately. The status of women is examined to know how the respondents perceive their prestige and esteem through their life course. Women's autonomy is examined to indicate the control they have on their own lives and if they have a voice in matters affecting themselves and their families. Jejeebhoy (1995) distincts five separate but interdependent aspects of autonomy that are suggested as important in the education-fertility relationship: knowledge, decision-making, physical, emotional, economic and social autonomy (Jejeebhoy 1995; Bledsoe 1999). Three out of these five aspects are mentioned by Bhargava and Saxena (1987) to have influence on women's status. "Status can be derived from access to knowledge,

economic resources and the degree of autonomy enjoyed in the process of decision making and choice” (United Nations 1975; Chhabra 1982 in Bhargava and Saxena 1987, p.71). Basu (1992) distincts three separate but interdependent components of women’s position. First, the extent of exposure to the outside world. Second, the extent of interaction with the outside world, and in particular, the extent of economic interaction. Third, the level of autonomy in decision-making within and outside the household (Basu 1992, p.53). In this study, the similarities of the aspects which are described above are used to create four aspects of autonomy, which are defined by Jejeebhoy (1995, p.37):

- Knowledge autonomy is distinct as “women’s knowledge of and exposure to the outside world”.
- Decision-making autonomy is defined as “women’s say in family decisions and decisions concerning their own lives and well-being”.
- Physical autonomy is “the interaction with the outside world and the extracting of available services”.
- Economic autonomy is defined as the “self-reliance in economic matters as well as self-reliance for social acceptance and status. In particular, economic independence and access to and control over economic recourses enhance women’s ability to rely on themselves, rather than on their children or husbands, to attain social status or acceptance”.

The four aspects of autonomy are operationalised by the next questions:

- Knowledge autonomy:
How are you exposed to the outside world? Probe: mass media, more peer group contacts, going out with friends, more interaction with people.
- Decision-making autonomy:
In which matters of decision-making in your family are you involved? Probe: shopping for food, what to cook, deciding on child’s treatment, deciding to move, big expansive purchases like a car, home etc.
- Physical autonomy:
When do you move around alone and when are you accompanied?
If it is dark, will you always be accompanied?
Do you ask for permission to go to certain places to your husband or other family members?
- Economic autonomy:
Are you economic independent?
Do you buy things for yourself with your income?
Do you invest your money in things?
Do you maintain your own bank account or shared bank account?

Besides those questions, also the influences of education, employment, age and reproductive events on each aspect are asked for.

Another concept described in the literature (section 2.3) is the age of a woman. The age is operationalised by asking the date of birth of the respondents. This concept is used to form two age groups, one at the beginning and one at the end of the reproductive career. This way the experiences, perspectives and behaviour of two age groups are studied. Two generations are examined and a change in time may become visible. In this way, the research is getting a dynamic perspective.

The context can be seen as the surrounding in which the individual lives and derives (incomplete) information from (Willekens 1992; De Bruijn 1993). In this research the social

context and its influence on the behaviour of the respondents is examined. Here, the social context is defined as the social surroundings in which the individual lives and derives (incomplete) information from (based on Willekens 1992; De Bruijn 1993). An institution which is part of the immediate social context (micro-context) and closest to the respondent, is the family (Willekens 1990; Willekens 1992). The family is not a clear concept. There are different kinds of families: nuclear families, joint families and co-residing households. A nuclear family consists of a husband and wife living with their unmarried children. A joint family is defined by one or two parents living with their sons and their wives and children and is the traditional household form. The co-residing household, either nuclear or joint family, is established by family members who have their own household but still have the advantages of living together in one house. Besides these common households, there are still some other family formations: an uxori-local joint family, where against the general rule of patrilocality, the husband lives in the joint family of his wife after marriage (Hutter 1998) or a consanguineous marriage in which cousins or uncle and nieces marry. The concept of family is operationalised by questions, described below. To examine the family through the life course of the respondents, the type of family in which the respondent is raised and the type of family in which her spouse grew up are asked. Also the type of family in which she lived at the time of the interview is noted. Besides this, the influence of the parents' family and the family-in-law on the individual background characteristics, education and employment and the influence of the family on women's autonomy, status and reproductive career are asked (see appendix). The economic context is defined as the economical situation of the surroundings in which the individual lives and derives (incomplete) information from. It is operationalised by asking the respondents if they perceive their parents' family (at the time they grew up) as a lower, lower middle, middle, upper middle or higher class family. These questions were also asked relating their husband's family (at the time he grew up) and their own family at the time of the interview. The respondents were also asked if they perceive their parents' family as a traditional or a modern family. The answers of these questions give an idea of the level of modernisation of these households.

3.3 Selection of respondents

In this section, the selection criteria of the respondents, the sample size, the sample method, and the sample sites are discussed.

The criteria used for selection are based on the research questions. The respondents are selected under the following criteria:

- The first criterion is that the respondent has to be female.
- The women should be 30 years or younger, or 45 years and older.
- The women should be married and have at least one child, in order to study the link between reproductive events and autonomy.
- The minimal educational attainment of the respondent should be a bachelor degree.
- Another criterion is that the women should have a full time, white collared job.
- The respondent should live and be employed in Dharwad.

In qualitative research, the proper number of interviews is not determined in order to be representative or to make generalisations. Theoretically and ideally, the proper sample size is formed during the fieldwork itself. It is reached when the researcher can answer the research questions. At a certain point, the researcher feels that the data is saturated, means that conducting more interviews will not add more variation or new information (Ingham *et al.* 1999). Qualitative research is associated with small numbers of respondents. By having in-depth interviews, this small number will be compensated as a result of the detailed

information provided (Geertz 1973). Here, 26 in-depth interviews are conducted. Based on the selection criteria described above, 25 respondents are selected. One of the respondents appeared to work part-time. Eleven respondents form the 'older' age group and 14 respondents form the 'younger' age group. The sample size seemed to be efficient to answer the research questions, because information started to get saturated.

Participants' selection can be done in different ways by following different sampling methods. It is not necessary to have a random selection, which is appropriate in quantitative research. There aim is to describe characteristics across an entire population, which is not the purpose of in-depth interviews. Therefore, the types of sampling techniques which require random selection of respondents are not necessary or appropriate (Hennink and Diamond 1999). One technique used in this research is snowballing; finding new participants via people already interviewed. This is an effective and time-efficient method, but carries the risk of selecting people who share many background characteristics (Ingham *et al.* 1999). In order to create a divers group, not only snowball sampling is used. Different sample sites were visit to gather respondents: university campus, colleges, banks, Life Insurance Company, private companies and tax offices. In this way, respondents from different categories within the white collar occupations were gathered. This, because Bargava and Saxena (1987) wrote that the relationship between women's education, work participation and fertility is not that simple and varies by occupational category. To the researcher it seemed that women working in the Foreign Languages Department of Karnataka University had a very broad outlook and were more imposed by western influences. Many family members were studying or living abroad. After interviewing three women at this department, the researcher decided that the information would get biased if more interviews were conducted there. This is illustrated by a quote of a respondent, from the older age group, who worked there:

R1.4 "I've taken German. I'm a professor of German. I read German literature, German everything. The German thinking also influences us. Our thinking is not completely Indian thinking. All day, day in, day out, we are reading German thoughts. That influences us. If your read [Kapita], has thoughts that children should be brought up. And necessarily I will think: yah something new and why not try that with my life".

3.4 In-depth interviews

In qualitative research, the semi-structured interview method is used widely to collect data (Harvey-Jordan and Long 2001). It involves a predefined range of questions but it is flexible enough to focus on new topics or expand relevant issues (Payne 1999). The list of questions offers the interviewer the possibility to ask certain questions the same way each time but also offers the freedom to articulate on answers that the participant gave (Fielding 1993). Different types of questions are used in the interviews. Closed questions are used to get some background information about the respondent in a quick and more constrained way. Open questions are used to invite respondents to describe their own situation or experiences.

The interview starts with a brief introduction about the background of the researcher, the translator and the aim of the research. In this way, a rapport is tried to build to make the respondent feel comfortable. Then some questions about the profile of the respondent are asked in order to get more background information. This will contain questions about her date of birth, dates of reproductive events, her educational level and job situation at that time. Subsequently, the interview follows the reproductive events in a logic order: menarche, marriage, first pregnancy, first birth, other births and menopause or sterilisation. After that, topics like education, employment and autonomy are discussed. This structure is used to make it more understandable for the respondent. Some questions were formulated at the end of the interview to create a fade-out for the respondent to avoid an abrupt end of the interview.

These questions are related to the position and the status of women in Indian in general and how it changed in time. At times the interviewer talked with the woman about her children and if she raises them in a different way than she was brought up. This list of questions was meant to be a guide in conducting the in-depth interviews. Not all topics were included in all interviews, nor was the order always the same. But the life course perspective remained an important guide. According to Hutter *et al.* (2002), respondents appear to relate more easily to the different topics.

A pilot interview was conducted in order to test the list of questions. It is used to see if the respondent understands the questions and it is used as a practise for the interviewer to interview a respondent. Nevertheless, the pilot interview (respondent 1) is used in the analyses of this study. The interview was useful and not many adjustments were made to the list of questions. It seemed to be more a practise for the researcher and the translator to work together.

3.5 Data collection

The researcher worked with a female translator, who did not only translate but also helped to recruit suitable respondents. During the fieldwork, several advantages of working with a local translator were experienced. When arriving at a 'sample site', people seemed to be more interested when she introduced the interviewer and herself. When the interviewer tried to approach people by herself, she experienced that the people were more distant and suspicious. Beside that, it seemed that the translator could help building rapport in the beginning of the interview. Especially, when it seemed that she was from the same native place as the participant. Also some disadvantages of working with a translator are experienced. Because of the described advantages before, in a way, the interviewer gets dependent on the translator. As the translator did have other priorities and seemed not to be as motivated as the researcher wanted her to be, this could create some irritations and slow down the work speed. Beside that, it was difficult for the researcher to conduct respondents alone, in a country in which she did not know the appropriate way to approach people and in a city she is not familiar with the available facilities.

The in-depth interviews were conducted in the period from the 22nd of October until the 20th of December in the year 2004. The interviews were both held in English and in the state language Kannada. The translator was used to translate the questions of the interviewer in Kannada and the answers of the respondents in English. This was done during the interview, so the interaction between the interviewer and the respondent was best. Attention was paid by the translator, not to interrupt the participant in order to translate. This way of translation made it possible for the researcher to react on the answers of the respondents and besides that the interviewer could make transcriptions after listening to the tapes. Several times the translator joined when the interview was in English as well. In order to help in situations, when the Dutch or Indian accents create confusion or when the respondent did not know how to express herself in the right way. Along with that, the advantages mentioned before were a reason to have her presence.

It is important to build rapport and trust with a participant to have a successful interview. This can be difficult because there will be always aspects of an interviewer which are relatively unchangeable such as gender, age and ethnicity (Payne 1999). To be a female interviewer and having a female translator was essential in this study, because the subjects covered were quite private; relating to events in the life course and the experiences and emotions attached to this. In most of the conversations with the women, the age of the interviewer was not a problem.

But in some interviews with women from the older age group, they felt a difference in status. For example, the interviewer asked a respondent, from the younger age group, if she experienced a change in her status after marriage. She replied:

R2.20 “Both of you are girls, how can I explain? How will you understand?”

After explaining that the interviewer wants to learn about the Indian culture and is interested in the participant's experiences and stories, almost all the respondents tried to tell and 'explain' their story. The interviewer tried to reduce the cultural differences by wearing a chudidar (Indian traditional clothing). One respondent said after the interview that she was happy that the interviewer was wearing a chudidar. Beforehand, she had hoped that the interviewer would wear something decent. This indicates that wearing Indian clothes made her feel more comfortable. She saw this as a way of showing respect to the Indian culture. At the other hand, she expected me to be dressed more inappropriate, which says something about her perceptions of the western culture.

Not only the perspectives of the respondents were asked, but also their perspectives of their mother's and their daughter's life. With the intention of positioning her story in the middle of other generations. For instance, would she bring her daughter up in a different way than her mother raised her? What does she think is important in her daughter's life? How does she perceive her mother's or daughter's life in comparison with her own life? What changed in time? Once, it was possible to interview both mother and daughter; which was accomplished by snowball sampling.

The interviews were recorded in order to analyse the data afterwards. The respondent was asked for her permission to tape the interview after ensuring her confidentiality. It was explained that it is impossible to write down everything she says and that in this way data will be lost. Besides that, the conversation will not proceed in a fluent way, if the interviewer has to pause every time to write down what the person says. The tapes were used to transcribe the interviews. This is a procedure for producing a written version of the interview (Harvey-Jordan and Long 2001). Everything the respondent says is written. The advantage of this type of transcript is that no data is lost, which might turn out to be significant for the analysis. Also transcribing makes you familiar with the data, which helps in making connections and identifying themes for analysis (Fielding 1993, p.147). A disadvantage is that it takes much time. The interviews were coded by a number to achieve confidentiality. After the interview, additional field notes were made by the researcher. In this way, the context in which the research took place and aspects of non-verbal communication could be recorded. The context can influence the respondent's information. Non-verbal aspects like style of clothing, hair, jewellery, expressions and emotions can provide information about the individual and her ideas relating to the subject. Some respondents from the older age group got very emotional, because they wanted to get more education but in that time it was not possible.

It was not always easy to make an appointment with working women at the work floor, because they did not always have time during working hours. That is why the interviews were also conducted at the home of the participants. Most of the interviews were held with the respondent alone. This was done to ensure that the person was not influenced by other persons. It can be difficult to have that privacy, especially when the interview is conducted in the respondent's own house. In spite of that, the researcher tried to achieve this privacy by telling the husband and other family members that we wanted to talk about 'women things'. If the woman was at home, several times there were children around. They could disturb their

mother during the interview, so it was difficult for her to keep focused. During one interview, the husband was hanging around, children were in the house, the television was loud, but was also a distraction for the children and the electricity felt out. In this kind of situations it can be hard to continue an interview. On the other hand people may feel more secure and confident in their own space, than at their home or work place. Often a compromise should be made between quietness and privacy, and what is possible and practical for both the interviewer and the respondent (Payne 1999).

Secondary data is also part of data collection. Literature was gathered by using the library at the University of Groningen, Karnataka University and the Population Research Centre (PRC) in Dharwad. Written information was available, but it was difficult to get statistical information about the town Dharwad. Eventually, data of the state Karnataka and of Dharwad district is used (see section 4.1).

3.6 Reflections

In this section, some reflections concerning the research and the fieldwork will be given. These are important issues which helped the researcher to improve her skills.

The initial aim was to interview both mothers and daughters to examine the higher educational attainment, employment and the changing reproductive career of women across generations of daughters and mothers. It was too difficult to accomplish. It was not realizable, because most of the mothers did not live in Dharwad. One explanation for this is that the daughters most often did not live with their parents, but in a nuclear family or with their parents-in-law. In Dharwad, the researcher adjusted her approach by using two age groups instead, to examine two generations. The younger age group should consist of women 30 years or younger and the older age group should consist of women 45 years and older. The younger group was difficult to gather. In Dharwad it seemed to be difficult for graduates to find a job. Young people go to Bangalore because more job opportunities are there. If you get a contract with a company in India, it is not for a couple of years and based on your work experiences, it is for life time. From the interviews of employees of the Life Insurance Company, it also seemed that they did not interrupt their job career, because if they give up their job, they will never get a similar job back. Therefore, not much job places are created. That is why the first age group was adjusted to 34 years or younger. Nevertheless, the average age of the women from the first age group is 31 years. An advantage of this approach is that the respondents of both age groups fitted the selection criteria. If mothers and daughters were interviewed, it would not be likely that they both attained high education and be employed at the time of the interview.

One of the intentions of the researcher was to study the influence of the five aspects of autonomy on the reproductive lives of the women. This seemed to be a difficult task. By using questions related to the different aspects of autonomy, the operationalisation was done. It was more difficult to ask the respondents how these aspects influence their reproductive career. It was easier for them to explain how their education, employment and age affect their reproductive career.

For the researcher it was striking how the interviews differ from each other. To some women, only a couple of questions were necessary to let them talk, while others seemed only to know the words yes and no. Of course, after continuing the interview, most respondents seemed to be more at ease and shared more information, but two respondents shared as little as possible. One of these two respondents wanted to leave early, because her daughter was ill. The other

respondent seemed to be more private. Still, it was a challenge for the researcher to let her speak and to get to know her story.

It was a great experience to visit the houses of the respondents as an interviewer. The respondents belonged mainly to middle class families and had nice houses. Some look very western and it was a joy to use their western toilet. Others had showcases in which particular colourful things were placed: plastic picture frames, cuddle toys, paintings covered with plastic, silk flowers, toys, pictures of wildlife and especially waterfalls.

On one occasion, two of the respondents were neighbours and lived at the campus of the university. After conducting one of the interviews, the husband of this woman shared with us that the situation of their neighbours would be quite different because she was 'in charge' in that household. A couple of days later, the interview of the neighbour was held and from her answers it seemed that she did not have that much decision and physical autonomy. The questions that came in to my mind are: do the neighbours have a different view or was the respondent not that accurate while she gave her answers. An idea was to do some participant observation to see how much physical autonomy she got, but lack of time and appreciation of privacy kept the researcher of doing this.

4 Research area and study population

The conceptual model (section 2.4) exists of a macro and a micro level. To understand individual behaviour at the micro level, it is important to look at the context. The individual is situated within a hierarchical multi-level context (Willekens 1992; De Bruijn 1993 in Hutter 1998, p.11) and includes a social, cultural and economic context. These different contexts of the research area will be described in the sections of 4.1, in order to get more knowledge about the contexts at the macro level. Second, information regarding the study population, which is situated at the micro level, will be given in section 4.2.

4.1 Research area

In this section, the context at the macro level will be described by looking at the location of the research area (section 4.1.1), the demographic situation (section 4.1.2), the social context (section 4.1.3) and socio-economic indicators (section 4.1.4).

4.1.1 Location of the research area

The area in which the research is conducted is situated in the south of India, in the state Karnataka. This state exists since 1956, but was renamed Karnataka in 1973 (Hutter 1994). It was formed to collect all Kannada speaking people and counted 52,850,562 inhabitants during the last census (2001). This makes Karnataka the ninth biggest Indian state out of the 30, measured in population size. Almost two-third (66.01 percent) of these people lives in rural areas. The total land area is 191,791 km² and puts Karnataka on the eighth place in the list of biggest Indian states (Karnataka.com 2005). In the south, the state's capital Bangalore is situated.

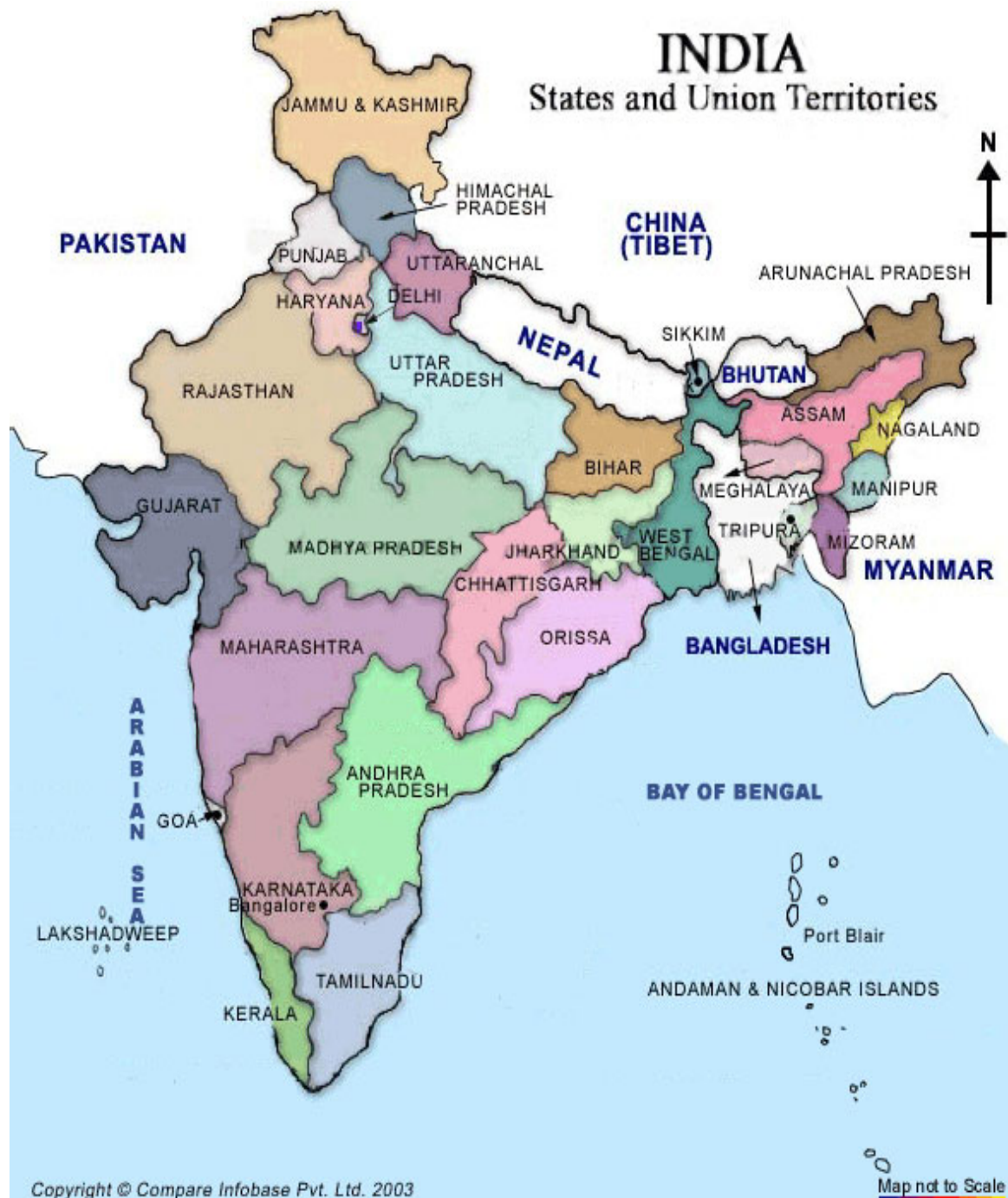
The state of Karnataka borders Goa and the Arabian Sea in the west. A transition area forms the small coastal plains to the Deccan plateau and is characterised by the mountains of the west Ghats, where most of the state is situated on. In the north, the state borders Maharashtra, Andra Pradesh in the east, Tamil Nadu in the southeast and Kerala in the south (see figure 4.1). Karnataka has a monsoon climate with a wet south western monsoon. From west to east the duration and intensity of this monsoon diminishes. Therefore the climate changes from wet in the west to semi-arid in the east. The climate is hot and wet during the summer and rainy seasons and pleasant during winter (Karnataka.com 2005).

The district of Dharwad is strategically located in the north of Karnataka (see figure 4.2). In 1997, Dharwad was recently divided into two more districts, Gadag and Haveri (Dharwad.com 2005). According to Karnataka.com (2005), this indicates a financially and politically progression in the district, because more administrative divisions were required. The Dharwad district is one of the 27 districts in Karnataka. Every district consists of lower units, called taluks. The Dharwad district consists of five taluks. One of these taluks is Dharwad taluk, in which the district town Dharwad (see figure 4.2) is located. It is situated in the north-west of the district. Information about the town is not included in the data of Dharwad taluk. Therefore, data of Dharwad district is used. This data is related to the urban and rural parts of the district, so data of the town Dharwad is part of the urban related data.

Dharwad forms a twin city, together with an industrial city called Hubli, which is a city 22 kilometers away. Hubli-Dharwad is located at a distance of around 430 kilometers from Bangalore. The twin cities have a history behind them dating back to the Hoysala period. Dharwad is the administrative capital of the Dharwad district and Hubli serves as the

commerce center. Dharwad is a quiet, pleasant, and fast growing city of almost 200,000 residents. Some information is available about these twin cities. Unfortunately, this data does not provide information about Dharwad itself. Therefore it is not useable, because Hubli is a much bigger commerce centre and will bias the information (Karnataka.com, 2005).

Figure 4.1 States of India



Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/india/indiastateandunion.htm> visited on 25/05/05

Figure 4.2 District map of Karnataka



Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/karnataka/karnataka.htm> visited on 25/05/05

4.1.2 Demographic situation

To get more information about the demographic situation of the research area, some demographic related topic will be described in this section. First the sex ratio's of the urban parts of Dharwad district, Karnataka and India are compared. Second, the age distribution is described. The age of marriage is discussed at third.

At this moment India's population is the second largest in the world, next to China. According to geohive.com (2005), India consisted of 1,065,070,607 inhabitants on July 2004 and has a yearly growth of 1.44 percent. They also portray an increase of 42,019 Indians every day. The census of India (taken on March 2001), putted the population of India on 1,027,015,247 million people, including Jammu and Kashmir, which population was projected to be 7,72 million in 1991 (Natarajan 1991, cited in Hutter 1998). The census of 2001 registered, that Dharwad district counts 1,603,794 inhabitants while Dharwad taluk consisted of 207,138 inhabitants. Unfortunately, the town Dharwad is not included is this taluk. The population of the twin cities Dharwad-Hubli is estimated to be 647,718 people in 1998 (Hutter 1998). Dharwad, the educational centre, counted almost 200,000 residents (Karnataka.com 2005).

The NFHS (1998-99), stated that the age distribution of the population of Karnataka represents a population in which fertility decline has set in. The proportions of the population in the youngest age groups (0-4 and 5-9 years) are smaller than the proportions in the next higher age groups. In spite of this, 33 percent of the population is still below 15 years and only 5 percent of the population is 65 years or older. The proportion below 15 years is slightly higher in rural areas (34 percent) than in urban areas (29 percent).

The sex ratio of a population, number of females per 1,000 males, is an indicator of the position of women. A low sex ratio indicates a higher mortality among women, which is a result of a son preference in Indian society (Hutter 1998). According to Hutter (1998) this preference is visible in female foeticide and infanticide. Beside this, it is also observed that girls receive less food during childhood, less health care and less attention (Hutter 1998). The sex ratios of Dharwad district, Karnataka and India are shown in table 4.1. The sex ratio of Dharwad district is 949. The ratio of the urban part of the district (952) is higher than the rural part (946). This urban sex ratio is higher compared with the state's ratio and compared to India as a whole it is much higher. It should be taken into account that the ratio of India is recorded ten years earlier.

Table 4.1 Sex ratios of Dharwad district (2001), Karnataka (2001) and India (1991)

	Total	Rural	Urban
Dharwad district	949	946	952
Karnataka	965	977	942
India	927	939	894

Source: Census of India (1991; 2001)

Although the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) of 1998-99 reports an early age pattern of marriage in Karnataka, it also provides evidence of a steady increase in the age at first marriage. Nevertheless, the data of the NFHS shows that almost three-fifths of women (age group 20-49 years) in Karnataka married before reaching the legal minimum age at marriage of 18 years for women. This minimum age at marriage is set by the Child Marriage Restrict Act of 1978. The median age at first marriage for females (age 20-49 years) is 18.7 in urban areas, while in rural areas the age is much lower and lies at 16.3. The NFHS of 1992-93 indicated higher median ages for females (15-49 years) of all educational groups in Karnataka. Illiterate women married on average at the age of 15.4 years; women with primary education at the age of 17.1 years; women with middle education at the age of 18.6 years and women with at least high school at 21.6 years.

The NFHS (1998-99) explains that the ages at which women start and stop childbearing are important demographic determinants of fertility. Indicators of lower fertility are a higher median age at first birth and a lower median age at last birth. "The median age at first birth for any group of women is defined as the age by which half of all women in the age group have had a first birth" (NFHS 1998-99, p.70). The median age at first birth in Karnataka for women age 25-49 is 19 years and for women age 25-29 it is 19.3 years. These median ages are slightly higher than the median for women at older ages (18.6-18.9 years). In table 4.2 the median age at first birth according to residence and education level is provided. This mean age of women who lives in rural areas (18.3) is two years lower than women who live in urban areas (20.2). Also lies this mean age of illiterate women (17.6) six years lower than for women who have completed at least a high school education (23.6). The religiosities of women also have an influence on the median age at first birth. This age is highest of Christian

women (23.7), five years lower for Hindu women (19.0) and nearly six years lower for Muslim women (17.9).

The age at last childbirth is an indicator of the end of childbearing of older women (NFHS 1998-99). Twenty-seven percent of ever-married women (age group 40-49 years) had their last birth by the age of 25 years, 88 percent by the age of 35 and more than 95 percent by the age of 40. The median age at last birth is lower for women in the age group 40-44 (27 years) than and for women in the age group 45-49 (28 years). “The typical reproductive age span (which is the difference between the median age at last birth and the median age of first birth for women who have ever had a birth) is shorter in Karnataka (9.1 years) than in India as a whole (9.9 years), consistent with the lower level of fertility in Karnataka” (NFHS 1998-99, p.71).

The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is a summary measure that gives the number of children a woman would bear during her reproductive years (NFHS 1998-99). The TFR of women in Karnataka aged 15-49 years is 2.13. This rate is provided by different background characteristics: place of residence and education (table 4.2). In urban areas the TFR is 1.89 and in rural areas it is 2.24. The TFR by educational background is available and indicated higher median ages for females (15-49 years) of all educational groups in Karnataka. The highest level of education is the completion of high school and above. The TFR of these women is 1.9.

Table 4.2 The median age at first birth and the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) by residence and education, Karnataka (1999)

Background characteristics		Median age at first birth	TFR ¹
Residence	Urban	20.2	1.89
	Rural	18.3	2.25
Education	Illiterate	17.6	2.57
	Literate, < middle school complete	18.9	2.09
	Middle school complete	20.7	2.06
	High school complete and above	23.6	1.89

¹Rate for women age 15-49 years

Source: NFHS-2 (1998-99)

The ideal number of children that ever-married women in Karnataka prefer is provided by residence and education (see table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Mean ideal number of children reported by ever-married women by residence and education, Karnataka (1999)

Background characteristics		Mean ideal number
Residence	Urban	2.0
	Rural	2.3
Education	Illiterate	2.3
	Literate, < middle school complete	2.1
	Middle school complete	2.0
	High school complete and above	1.9

Source: NFHS-2 (1998-99)

The differences are generally quite small. This may indicate a widespread norm for having about two children. The means of this ideal number of children is similar for women of all ages (2.1-2.3). In urban areas, this average is slightly lower (2.0 children) than in rural areas (2.3 children). The mean ideal number of children is higher for all educational groups: for illiterate women 2.3 children, for women who have completed at least a high school education 1.9 children. Muslims seemed to prefer a mean ideal of 2.5, Hindus an ideal of 2.1 and Christians an ideal of 2.0 (NFHS 1998-99).

4.1.3 Socio-economic context

In this section the social and economic contexts are combined. First the social context is described and second, some economic indicators are discussed. The social context consists of the family, which can be seen as an institution at the micro level that constitutes rules and behavioural guidance (section 2.3). To get an idea about the social context, data of the family types in Karnataka is given. In the urban areas 59.2 percent lives in nuclear families and in rural areas 53.9 percent lives in a nuclear family. This is a reason why the mean household size of the urban and rural part of Karnataka differs: 5.0 compared to 5.4 (NFHS 1999).

The women of the study population are high educated and therefore education is one of the factors that are examined. It is interesting to know that India's constitution guarantees free primary school education for both boys and girls up to age 14 (Desai 1994). Here the focus is on high education to get an idea about the percentage of women that attained this. The NFHS provides the educational distribution of ever-married women (age group 15-49 years) by the highest level of education attained in different age groups (see table 4.4). The level of literacy increases along with the age of the women. This illustrates the progress in the spread of education over a period of about three decades. Although, illiteracy is decreasing, still more than half of the women in the youngest cohorts of ever-married women are illiterate. At the other hand, the proportion of women who have completed at least high school is higher for women in the age group 25-29 (26 percent) than for women in the age group 45-49 (16 percent). The level of literacy is relatively high among Christian women (82 percent), lower among Hindu women (44 percent) and lowest among Muslim women (40 percent).

Table 4.4 Percent distribution of ever-married women age 15-49 by highest education attained, Karnataka (1999)

Highest education attained	Percentage
Illiterate	55.2
Literate, < primary school complete	4.4
Primary school complete	14.3
Middle school complete	6.6
High school complete	11.0
Higher secondary complete and above	8.5

Source: NFHS-2 (1998-99)

Religion is an important part of the context. It is present everywhere in daily life. For example, Hinduism is not only a religion, but can be seen as a way of life. This becomes visible by the following rituals: daily baths, daily pujas in the God's room in the house, abundant festivals and visits to the temples (Hutter 1998). Table 4.5 shows the distribution of the four main religions in Karnataka and India. The religious composition of Karnataka is quite similar; as compared to India as a whole the percentages differ slightly. In Karnataka and at the national level, the main religion practised by the population is Hinduism. The

second main religion is practised by Muslims and the third religion, Christianity, is followed by only 1.9 percent of the population.

Table 4.5 Percent distribution of the three main religions in Karnataka and India (2001)

	Hindus	Muslims	Christians
Karnataka	85.4	11.6	1.9
India	82.0	12.2	2.3

Source: Census of India (2001)

An economic indicator is the level of urbanization, which is a marker of modernization. In Dharwad district, 55 percent of the population lives in urban areas. This is high compared to the state Karnataka and India as a whole. In Karnataka, only 34.0 percent and in India 25.7 percent of the population live in urban areas. It should be kept in mind that Dharwad district is relative small and the twin cities Dharwad-Hubli are included in this data. Nevertheless, the population density, in square kilometer of this district, is 376.1 and higher than the density of Karnataka which is 275.6 (Census of India 2001).

Information on aspects of women's employment for ever-married women (age group 15-49 years) is provided by the NFHS (1989-99). In Karnataka, employment of women increased slightly, from 47 percent in 1992-93 to 51 percent in 1998-99. The percentage of rural women that worked lies higher (64 percent) than the percentage of urban women (31 percent) that worked at any time in the 12 months preceding the survey. The women in rural areas are predominately agricultural workers (84 percent), while in the urban areas the distribution of occupation is more divers. Most female workers are production workers (26 percent), 23 activities to tertiary sectors like the service sector, which is illustrated by the data of the urban female workers.

Women's contribution to their families' income can be seen as a significant feature of women's work participation in Karnataka. Most women report that they contribute at least half of the total family earnings. Six percent of these women say the family is entirely dependent on their earnings and 8 percent say that their earnings contribute almost nothing (NFHS 1998-99).

Dharwad has grown beyond its borders, with industries dotting both its northern and southern boundaries. In years ahead, it promises to be a concentration of commercial activity. The location of the city on the NH4, situates it between two of the most industrialised centers in the country, Bangalore the capital of Karnataka state and Pune the second most industrialised city in Maharashtra (Karnataka.com, 2005).

4.2 Study population

This section presents a profile of the respondents of the study population by age group. This profile is subdivided in parts related to demographic, cultural/social and economic background information. Through the whole section comparisons, of the profile of the respondents with data of the context (section 4.1), are made.

Vital information of the respondents is given to get more knowledge of the reproductive behaviour of the study population. The number of children that the respondents have and the number of children that the respondents prefer are shown in table 4.6, by age group. The

majority of the respondents of both age groups prefer two children. This number is similar with the widespread norm for having about two children, described in section 4.1.2. The majority of women from the second age group prefer two, but 10 respondents only have one child. Two of those respondents were pregnant of their second child and two other respondents mentioned to prefer a second child. The desired number of children of the second age group shows a slightly decrease of the number of children.

Table 4.6 Family size and desired family size of the respondents by age group

Number of children	First age group N=11		Second age group N=14		Total N=25	
	Family size	Desired number of children	Family size	Desired number of children	Family size	Desired number of children
1	4	3	10	6	14	9
2	6	6	4	8	10	4
3	1	2			1	2

Cultural background characteristics of the respondents are given by looking at their religion and their castes. Table 4.7 shows the distribution of the four main religions of the respondents by age group. Hinduism is the main religion practised by the respondents of both age groups. Muslims, Christians and Jains follow with relative small numbers. The religious composition of the main religions of the study population is quite similar compared to the composition of religions of Karnataka and India.

Table 4.7 Distribution of religions of the respondents by age group

Religion	First age group N=11	Second age group N=14	Total N=25
Hindus	7	12	19
Muslim	3	0	3
Christians	1	1	2
Jain	0	1	1

The castes of the respondents were difficult to interpret by the researcher. With the help of the translator, the castes of the respondents are placed in hierarchical order. Those castes are only a few of the castes that exist in India. Data from the interviews indicate that only the Hindu respondents belong to the caste system. The highest caste created is the Brahmin, to which five respondents belonged. The biggest share belongs to the second highest caste, the Linguyat. To the third caste, the Marathi, one respondent belongs. Two respondents belong to the lowest caste available in this research, the Mogaveera.

Table 4.8 Distribution of castes of the respondents by age group

Caste	First age group N=11*	Second age group N=14**	Total N=25***
Brahmin	2	3	5
Linguyat	3	8	11
Marathi	0	1	1
Mogaveera	2	0	2

* Four respondents of the first age group are not Hindu and cannot be placed in a caste.

** Two respondents of the second age group are not Hindu and cannot be placed in a caste.

*** Six respondents are not Hindu and cannot be placed in a caste.

Table 4.9 shows information regarding the family types in which the respondent (parents' family) and her spouse (husband's family) were raised. Also the family type in which she lived at the time of the interview is noted (own family). From the interviews it seemed that the majority of the respondents grew up in nuclear families, while most of their husbands were raised in a joint family. Noticeable is that only three out of the 25 respondents lived in a joint family at the moment. This means that most of the respondents have independent nuclear families. This is also indicated by the data of Karnataka related to the family types in section 5.2.1).

Table 4.9 Different family types by age group

	First age group		Second age group	
	Joint	Nuclear	Joint	Nuclear
Parents' family N=25*	3	8	3	10
Husband's family N=25**	5	5	11	3
Own family N=25***	1	9	2	12

* Data of one person of the second age group is missing

** Data of one person of the first age group is missing

*** Data of one person of the first age group is missing

The educational level of the respondents who fitted the selection criteria varies. Four women completed PhD, five finished their master degree and 14 received their bachelor degree.

Table 4.10 indicates the perceived economic situation of the families by the respondent, according age group. In spite of some small differences between the age groups, the data show that the respondents' own family and her husband's family is most often of middle class. A high number of respondents perceived their own family as an upper middle class family. Especially, this is indicated by 'older' respondents. In general, this means that the economic situations of the study population stayed similar or improved.

Table 4.10 Perceived economic situation of the different family types by the respondents according age group

	First age group			Second age group		
	Lower middle class	Middle class	Upper middle class	Lower middle class	Middle class	Upper middle class
Parents' family N=25*	1	7	3	3	8	2
Husband family N=25**	0	8	2	3	10	1
Own family N=25***	0	2	8	0	5	4

* One answer of a respondent from the second age group is missing.

** One answer of a respondent from the first age group is missing.

*** One answer of a respondent from the first age group is missing and five answers of the second age group are missing.

The occupation of the study population varies and is illustrated by table 4.11. The study population consists of different kinds of categories. Most respondents from the first age group are placed in the teacher category and four of them are clerks, most often at the Life Insurance

Company. The occupations of the respondents in the second age group are more divers. The biggest group consists of clerks, but the other categories are also filled.

Table 4.11 Distribution of occupational categories of the respondents by age group

Occupation category	First age group N=11	Second age group N=14
Teacher	6	4
Clerk	4	6
Private company		2
Government	1	2

5 Reproductive career: menarche and marriage

In chapter 5 and 6 the reproductive career, which starts with menarche and ends with menopause, will be looked at. The reproductive events, the ceremonies and the social transitions which proceed along with that, are studied. The ceremonies which are conducted at reproductive events indicate the importance of the transition in the life course. Beside this, the social transition is studied by looking at changes in the behaviour of the women after the event. The order of reproductive events is described as they proceed in the reproductive career. In this chapter, the focus will be on the onset of the first menstruation of a girl (section 5.1) and marriage (section 5.2). Traditionally after marriage the woman will live in her husband's family. In section 5.2.7, the family types in which the respondents lives through their life course and the type they prefer are discussed.

In chapter 5, 6 and 7 the data of the interviews is described. In those chapters abbreviations are used to relate the interviewer with her questions and relate the respondents with their given answers. The I indicates the interviewer and the R indicates the respondent. More information of the respondent is added to its abbreviation. The first number relates to the age group: 1 means that the respondent is from the older age group and 2 means the respondent is from the younger age group. The second number indicates the personal number of the respondent. This way, several answers of the same person can be noticed. Sometimes words in the sentences, given by the respondents, are placed within brackets. This is done when those words were not clear or not understood by the interviewer. It also happens that additional information is added within brackets.

5.1 Menarche

Although, the reproductive career starts with menarche, in practice the event of childbearing occurs to women in relatively stable sexual unions. In India marriage marks the socially accepted start of the reproductive career. However, the onset of menarche is celebrated a 'rite de passage', indicating a major change in the life course and is therefore often involved with a special ceremony nowadays but also for many decades ago (Hutter 1998). Data collected in the interviews indicate a mean age of menarche, among 25 respondents, of 13.3 years. According to Hutter *et al.* (2002), bias can occur if many respondents indicate their age at menarche to be 12 years, which is the socially accepted age at menarche. In this study, only two respondents stated to be 12 years at the onset of menarche. Therefore, it is expected that the data are not biased and represent the average age of menarche of the study population.

5.1.1 Ceremony

Traditionally, the first menstruation of a woman is celebrated with a ceremony. It was noticeable that only four out of the 25 respondents had a public function: two from the older and two from the younger age group. Therefore, there seemed not to be a relationship between the age group and the conduction of a function. In this section, first a description of the ceremony is added to give an idea about the procedure. It should be kept in mind that the ceremonies are not conducted in a similar way, but depend on caste, religion and social economic position of the family. After that, the respondents will explain why they had or didn't have a ceremony with the onset of menarche.

Respondent 6, from the older age group, had a function and describes the procedure.

R1.6 "Yes, we had to do in our caste. Now it is vanished this system is vanished. Especially in our caste, fishermen community. First if puberty takes place, they will call all the people, especially the ladies. They will

call five ladies, married ladies. And they will put in front of the house a panel, to sit and they will collect all the coconuts. In our side, coconuts they bring, in coastal area. They will make [...] of coconuts to keep. Then they will make us to sit on that and these ladies will come, with all kind of decorations, like sari, flowers and gold. These ladies will come and bring the water in a pot [...] on the head. Then there will be lunch or diner. Diner to all the people in the locality. That they want, because they are very happy to tell to the people: my daughter is ready for the marriage. She has her first... That was the custom, but now that custom has stopped”.

I: Did you like the attention?

“No, no it was horrible. Better for my daughter I didn’t do”.

The following respondents, from the older and the younger age group, did not have a function, but explain why they think a function takes place with the onset of the first menstruation.

R2.20 “In Karnataka, this tradition is scientific; because I studied, I became to know it. At that time of puberty, they have a ceremony. They would call some people; have some rituals to the girl. In that time, neighbours, the relatives, public, people use to see her and instead of making a ceremony, it’s an occasion to see a girl. Then to propose her and then say ok or not with regard to marriage proposal. It’s an occasion in which surrounding people can see the girl and who ever want to have wedlock with her, can propose afterwards”.

R2.5 “I asked my mother why others are having a big ceremony, being embarrassed by sitting in front of so many people. Then she gave me an explanation. She said in the older days, especially in the villages, ones you attain puberty it is high time to get married. How to advertise? There was no paper, printed media in those days. How to say: my daughter is ready for the marriage market or marriage. So this is publicity. It goes word by mouth and ok that this means in this house there is one girl and in that house there are two girls. So it’s for publicity sake”.

The women were asked if they conducted a ceremony for their daughters. Only one of the women, respondent 11 from the younger age group, gave a function, while she did not have a function with the onset of menarche herself. She explains:

R2.11 “Because I wanted to make her feel, that it’s a... Girls, she is going to be a woman. I wanted to make her feel special then. This is a special thing to a woman, to a girl, which everybody can’t [get it]”.

Although this function was conducted, the life of the daughter of respondent 11 did not change much. The respondent did not put restrictions on her and did not expect different behaviour from her. She just wanted her to feel special. The other respondents did not have a public ceremony, but had a function within the family itself. Respondent 8, from the older age group, tells about this.

R1.8 “No. We don’t make it a big deal. The other fact, they make some different kinds of sweets and all and some traditional plant, they give us. But as a ceremony there was nothing. It was kept like a secret. It stayed in the family and didn’t get out for a couple of years”.

Many respondents did not have a public function, in order to keep the onset of menarche a secret. Respondent 13, 32 years old, kept the onset of menarche of her niece hidden for her sister-in-law.

R2.13 When the daughter of my brother got puberty for the first time. She was in my home and we made a simple function, rituals within the family. We didn’t make public and we even did inform to her mother also, because she has to call her mother and her brothers and then it would become public. And we gave her a bath every day and on the 5th day, we put some holy water on her head and we were given her a special bath and new clothes and go to the temple. So in this way we simple did.

The next quotations illustrate different reasons why menarche was not celebrated publicly. In some castes the ceremony is vanished.

R2.21 “In Brahmins, they don’t have that kind of traditions, calling all the people, conducting functions, we don’t have that”.

R2.14 “It was a small function. It should not be public. It was public within the family. Usually in our caste, we don’t do it as a public function. We, the family members only, would participate in it. And my sister’s function was also like that”.

The educational and modernisation level of the parents was mentioned often as the reason not to have a public function.

R1.9 “As my parents are educated they not prefer”.

R2.20 “No function, because my parents are modern, it’s not necessary. When they make it public, after a girl get menarche, traditional people think that she becomes a women and ready for marriage. But in modern families they think of education”.

Some respondents indicated that their mother was not educated, but had a broad outlook and wanted to change the lives of her daughters. This is illustrated by respondent 5, from the older age group.

R1.5 “I’m very proud about the fact that my mother knew so many things. She really did recall these stupid rituals, like for example, puberty. A big function is there, all of that was rubbish. She did not do all these things for us. But she gave us good nutrition; because at that time the body requires nutrition. So we were given nice things to eat, nutritional food. Because you started blood loose, we needed to grow and for the growth or our bones and muscles and stuff like that. With girls get puberty, they would go to the temple, they would pray to God. You should not do pujah. Don’t go in the kitchen and all these things. She said no, all that is rubbish, it has not meaning. So long you are clean and hygiene, you can touch anything, you can pray to God, anything. Ultimately nature has made us like this. So I’m brought up in a really different way”.

Respondent 5 perceives her mother as broadminded, because there was no public ceremony and there was no custom of pollution. However, Hutter *et al.* (2002) explain that the giving of special nutritional foods to a girl is a tradition and part of the ceremony at menarche. Not having a public function does not mean that the transition that comes along with menarche is decreasing in importance. Traditional rituals and celebrations are still held within the family. A big part of the respondents describe the customs of segregation and pollution. A Muslim respondent from the older age group and respondent 19 of the younger age group illustrates this custom:

R1.7 “No we don’t do a public function. Up to seven days, we were kept in a room and we should not touch Koran, or holly things, place etc. We don’t do prayers at that time; don’t touch the holly things, because otherwise they will be polluted at first time”.

R2.19 “It was there. It was not a function, but the basic rituals like calling, anti mother’s, brother’s wives, two married women from neighbour to give some arty, it’s a basic ritual we have done that. They kept me in a separate place for five days. I had some restrictions, I should not touch anything. Everyone follows all these restrictions with regard to pollution. Nobody use to touch us”.

The family composition has also an influence of having a function, like described by respondent 11 from the younger age group.

R2.11 “No my eldest sister had a grand function of that. Because, there is only a four years age difference between her and me. She hasn’t got married, then. I am the second one and if somebody would ask me to marry... So it was hidden”.

Respondent 11 illustrates that there is still a connection between having a public function with menarche and getting married. The respondent did not have a public function, otherwise she would interfere in the marriage possibilities of her sister. The following respondents also show a relationship with a public function and getting married. They did not have a function because they were too young to get married.

R2.17 “No, because my mother wasn’t interested in that. Cause I was 13 years on that time. She is not interested to publish that one to people. I think she thought I was too little at that time. Actually after puberty, everybody will be feeling that she’s getting married now. Now she’s able to marry, in that manner. They will see that’s why”.

R2.15 “No it was not published. They didn’t tell any person in my family. I was staying in my aunt house. Because I was very small at that time. I was just 13 years old. We didn’t think about a function”.

I: Do you think you would have had a function if you were older?

“If I was more than 15 years old, they have made a function”.

The above illustrates a relationship between a public function at the onset of menarche and marriage. The girls were too young and not ready to get married and that is why it was not

published. Another aspect is the safety of the girl. The following respondents, both from the younger age groups, explain that:

R2.14 “It’s a little bit risky to tell other people unnecessary informed about this. It’s dangerous also regarding the safety of the girl”.

R2.15 “They may get some problems afterwards. Because it’s just like a village. And because of some old boys, when they have their eye on the girl who had got menarche. It’s a way of security”.

Respondents 19 and 18, both from the younger age group, did not like to have a public function and convinced their mothers.

R2.19 “Actually I didn’t like that. Asking the parents to come and sitting. I don’t like all this. So, actually my mother was interested to do such a function, because I’m the last baby of them. My elder sister also didn’t have a function. So my mother, very much wanted my function, to make it very grand. As I didn’t like it, finally we didn’t have a function”.

R2.18 “No. Actually I refused, my father refused. No need to do these things, that’s all. My mother insisted, because she is from village place. She insisted. My father refused. Even I refused so that was cancelled”.

Data from the interviews indicate that the celebration of the onset of menarche is rare. The families did not want to publish it, but keep it a secret. The reasons why there were not many ceremonies conducted are described above. This does not immediately mean that this social transition lost importance. The transition itself was still celebrated with some rituals or a function within the family. The ceremony was not held public, because there seems to be an association between a public function and publishing this event at the one hand and marriage on the other hand. The parents of the respondents did not think of a marriage for their daughter at that point in time, but considered education as a first aim and wanted to provide safety to the girl. In sum, it can be stated that the importance of the social transition still exists but is postponed by keeping the menarche secret in order to let the girl get some education first.

5.1.2 Changes in behaviour

The social transition of menarche is accompanied by physical changes. Beside this, also changes in behaviour, which are social constructed, are a possible result accompanied by this transition. First, in short the physical change is described by a respondent from the older age group and a respondent from the younger age group. Second, the behaviour of the girls after the onset of menarche is mentioned.

R1.4 “The full affair, I found it very messy. I could not manage. At that time we didn’t have pads. We didn’t have that much money to buy pads. We use to use clothes. And I always use to soak. We every time come home with a big pant. A really unpleasant thing. I always hated that. I could not walk with this big thing here. Even walking style would change. Horrible experience”.

R2.20 “Physically change only, mentally nothing”.

Some respondents experienced changes in their behaviour after reaching menarche. The majority of women from the older age group and half of the women from the younger age group experienced this. The next respondents experienced a change in their interaction with the outside world.

R1.2 “Responsibility. Elders used to advice regarding behaviour and therefore some tension, psychological came. They used to advise like you should be like this, like that. You should not talk much, not mingle much with the boys. Earlier also, I was not talkative, not used to mingle with others. Mother every day told us: if something happens, the girl child has to suffer. Elders used to say: if thorn meets a leaf, it is the leaf which has to torn, no harm to thorn. Every day they told us, elder, my mother, my grandmother, how to behave social life. Every day”.

R1.4 “I never liked it. At home, it was especially my father who started to put restrictions. I was not supposed to play. I was fond of playing. He thought in that time, sports were only for boys. You have to be normal, more mature. Now I mean. Girls should be different. But I was more brought up with boys. I had a lot of... three brothers and my cousins, all boys. I was the only girl, in all the boys company and my father said: you’re not

going to play with the boys and I was... I used to jump from trees, boys games to play only with the boys. So that time I never liked. I thought because this period is all, if get all these restrictions”.

R1.8 “Some of our games, like going out and playing and all you know were restricted. You were not allowed to stay out long. I think they became a little more the same. Be carefully about how and they went all that. They used to keep... We were also told, to take care, not to be like children. How you behaved before”.

R2.14 “My behaviour was restricted and I became serious and silent and left over things like laughing, playing with boys. I get myself not to have talking contact with unknown persons. I can talk others, male members, but in a very restricted manner. And I thought these things come naturally, rather than insisted by others. And before this stage, people use to take me as a child, than afterwards they started looking at me as a mature woman”.

R2.11 “Yes, I had a complete change in my life, after that. I was a sports man and I couldn't go outside, I couldn't wear a pants, I couldn't wear a shorts, I couldn't dress like this. I was always kept in a room. Because after six o'clock or after dark you could not go outside, that was the reason. As soon I got my menarche. My parents say you are like a diamond kept in a room. It can not glitter. They feel now. So they wanted my husband to court me, the diamond in such a way, so that she would glitter everywhere”.

Just like respondent 11, respondent 19 also experienced a change in dressing.

R2.19 “We take care of our dresses, we should dress decently, as a mature girl. I use to play with the boys; I use to mix with them earlier very easily and very closely. And afterwards my mother also advised and I also thought to keep some distance with the neighbour boys. I should not interact that much. Elders also advised, I should come early in the evening. And neighbours will have an eye afterwards you and you should take care of physical elements also, afterwards”.

A slightly higher number of respondents from the younger age group did experience a small difference or no difference in their behaviour after menarche.

R2.1 “Slight changes in behaviour, they treated me as grown up”.

R1.10 “The whole environment was quite simple. We had no distinction between a boy and a girl at home. That's how he brought us up, my father, especially my father. My mother was a little traditional. She uses to say: don't talk to that boy. My father said no. He was very broadminded”.

In order to keep the menarche of respondent 9 a secret, her behaviour could not change that much.

R1.9 “I use to go as usually and there was nothing like a ceremony or something. It was kept as a secret and therefore I could not make so much change”.

Although the next respondents did not experience much change in their behaviour, they were given advice.

R1.8 “Be carefully. Don't allow them to touch you and all these things. We were told. Look after you, be carefully”.

R1.5 “No nothing really changed in my life, but than I was educated by my mother and she told a lot of knowledge [...] and she also told how I could be carefully, biologically, not to get problems. That advice was given”.

I: So there were no restrictions, for example in the interaction with boys?

“No, but than there was a restriction of going physical, because you can not be foolish enough to go physically, that moment was there. That we shouldn't be getting pregnant and all that. That was one thing. But I was brought... I used to go to school, so we used to have people and just friends, but it was not physically”.

The data of the interviews indicated that a slightly higher number of women from the older age group experienced change in their behaviour after menarche, compared to the women from the younger age group.

5.1.3 Education

At the time of the onset of menarche, the parents of the ‘older’ and ‘younger’ respondents, thought education was more important than marriage. The respondents did not have employment at that time, except for some chores in the household. Almost all the respondents explained in the same way, why their parents thought education was more important at that

point in time. In their perspectives, the parents want them to be independent and be able to take care of themselves in the future.

R1.5 “She [mother] said: time has changed. The main motto of ours is not to get you married. And you don’t want to get married now either, it’s not time. First comes education”.

R1.8 “First they wanted us to settle in life and take a job or be able to take a job. Be qualified enough to get a job. That was the first thing. And there was no hurry for marriage. So, both are working, me and my sister. Both are working”.

Some parents were educated and that is why they wanted their daughter also to be educated.

R2.13 “Because we have to, different from the previous generation. In the previous generation education was not there. It was not that much. But since we are educated, we also expect our children to be educated.

Both of them gave a lot of importance to education. Especially for a daughter, that is for a lady, a girl. For girls, education is very important. Nowadays, they know the things. Actually, which is happening in nowadays, in villages or in cities and everything. If she’s educated she can stand on her own legs. And she can face anything which comes in her life. And that way, both of them thinks. My mother, she had one thing in her mind. She is illiterate, she only up to 7th standard. So she wanted that her daughter should study a lot. Even my sister is also MCOM [Master of Commerce]. So both are educated means that our opportunities increased a lot after studying”.

And other parents were uneducated and poor and they expected their daughter to have more opportunities in life by getting education.

R1.9 “As my mother was not so educated, she preferred that. If education is there for girls, they are in a position to tackle their problems. Whatever they face, whenever they encounter some problems, they face it. I believe that”.

R2.12 “As they were not taken any education, our children should get the education. There for, four of us are in jobs now. Now they are in a good position. As they grew up in a poor status, they thought our children should not face this. They should be in a good position”.

The parents played an important role in the educational attainment of their daughter in this study population. Respondent 8, from the first age group, shows how much.

R1.8 “I wanted to stop studying after BA, but my father forced me to study for library sciences. He made me to study. He never listens. You should be able to lend a job, later when we cannot help you”.

I: Now when you look back, what do you then think about the decision?

“Now I know the position, why that a job offers independent. It’s very important. So, I was thinking the same lens about my daughter now. First I want her to settle. She should be able to stand on her own feet best. It’s my risk. I want her to study well”.

Respondent 19, from the second age group, explains that she achieved everything, because of her parents.

R2.19 “She never had given any household works, she never offered any household work to us. She encouraged for only study. In my BAMS she uses to feet me. Everything is because of my mother and father. Being a doctor or a lecturer, everything goes to my mother as well as to my father. My PG [post graduation] is because of my husband, he too encourage me a lot”.

Respondent 19 explains how her mother encouraged her to study. The influence of the mother on the education of her daughter is also described above by respondents 5, 13 and 9. Beside this, the respondents indicated that they also want their daughters to have good education.

When the girls get older, most parents still think that education is important. Respondent 3, from the older age group, had to marry when she was 17, although she wanted to have education so badly.

R1.3 “But in my life I wanted good education, but I had bad luck. My parents want so early marriage. In my life this is one biggest strategy situation. I can’t face. Today also I can’t forget it. I wanted to become a good doctor [her daughter is now a doctor] and do some social work, but in my life I can’t achieve that because I’m... My parents...There’s no cruel way of advice but they expected some good behaviour from me. There was no male member in my home at that time. Therefore some advice was given to me by the society and neighbours: have good behaviour. In those days, that is... Today the situation is different. I think if I grew up in this atmosphere I would convince or face... In that time I had no capacity to”.

The educational career of respondent 3 did not stop here. She forced her husband to study, in order to continue her education. She explains why:

R1.3 “First my mother-in-law against it. Because, I and my husband were equally educated. So I was not expected to learn more than him. Then I forced my husband to learn up to Ba [bachelor]. He finished BA. Then I got an opportunity to learn more. Then I learned more but he stopped it. He was not interested. He did not encourage me, but he gives permission only”.

5.2 Marriage

All the respondents were married at the time of interview, as this is a required selection criterion. Data collected in the interviews indicate a mean age of marriage, among 25 respondents, of 23.3 years. In the study population, the lowest age of marriage is 17 years and the highest age of marriage is 33 years. If the mean age of marriage is calculated again, without the minimal and maximal ages (two respondents married at age 17 and two married at age 30 and 33), then the mean age of marriage is 23.1 years.

5.2.1 Arranged and love marriages

In the Indian marriage system there exists two types of marriages: arranged and love marriages. Four out of the 25 respondents expressed that they had a love marriage.

R1.4 “We knew each other for long, six years. He’s related also. He’s one of our relatives. My brother’s wife’s brother. But it’s not arranged. We like each other. Then we decided to marry. It was not that my parents arranged it; not my parents or his parents, but we decided it”.

Two of the respondents indicate that after falling in love the marriage was arranged by their parents. According to respondent 19, 28 years old, an arranged marriage has a higher status compared with a love marriage. So they both said that their marriages can be seen as an arranged love marriage.

R2.19 “The thing what has happened, we both decided that we should get married with the permission of both families. Because here love marriage has another status compared to an arranged marriage. So both of us decided that we should take consent of our parents first and then get married. According to the rituals of the arranged marriages. At that time, I expressed to my parents that I was ready to marry, and he also. And then my parents kept this as confidential and they convinced their relatives, saying that our daughter will do PG, and afterwards go for marriage. As they have to maintain some formality, maintain the relations. And after BAMS, we wait up to my husband to get a job... And afterwards my husband’s family came and the rituals are like as arranging marriage”.

R1.24 “Love and arranged marriage, because I liked him, he liked me and then after that my grandfather liked my husband. So he came and talked with the family and the family members were very happy. His father and mother, after seeing me, they like me very much. We were in university. He was doing PhD, I jointed for PhD. And he saw me there and he proposed. I said: my family members have to agree, otherwise I can’t”.

5.2.2 Timing of marriage

Janssen (2000) stated that menarche indicates that a girl is ready for marriage. The mean age of menarche of the respondents is 13.3 years, while the mean age of marriage of the respondents is 23.3 years. If we compare these ages, there is a difference of ten years between those two events. Therefore, there seems not to be a link between the onset of menarche and marriage. This is also an explanation why there are no child marriages conducted in the study population. “The concept of child marriages refers to those marriages, which are conducted before the girl has reached menarche” (Hutter 2002, p.109). The influences of education and employment on the timing of marriage are described in this section.

The next respondents, from both age groups, married at an ‘early’ age of 17 years. They both had different reasons for their ‘early’ marriage. The following woman married at an age of 17, because she was the oldest daughter in her family.

R1.3 “They want to arrange my marriage, because we are five [daughters] in the family. Parents who are doing their children’s marriage, they are so well people, so they like that”.

Respondent 15 married when she was 17 years old with her mother’s youngest brother, in other words her uncle.

R2.15 “He is not an outsider, he’s my one uncle. I got married with my own uncle. He’s my mother’s younger brother. It is a kind of kin marriage. It is practise here. He was brought up in Belgium, that’s his native place. He wanted to marry, because he had to live in a house. He had to make a house at that time. So he needed marriage. He always was right, so he got married. He is a real gentleman. They knew him very well. And when an outsider comes, they think that some problems will be there. My in-laws, my grandparents, they also thought that if an outsider comes, then there will be problems. Because of my aunt, she has to be with us. Because she lost her husband when she was just 16 years old, so somebody wanted to take care of her. When an outsider comes, some problems will be there. They told me”.

In this answer, the advantage of a consanguineous marriage seems also to be related with security.

The influence of education and employment on the timing of marriage is discussed in this section. It is expected that education increases the age of marriage, because of the general practice of completing one’s education before marriage, the age at marriage will raise (UN 1979). The next respondents explain how their education influences their age of marriage, according to them selves.

R1.9 “As I wanted to complete my Ba [bachelor] degree first, then other things, it influenced my age of marriage”.

R1.10 “Certainly, because I finished my post graduation in [...]. I never thought about marriage before that”.

R2.23 “They asked me but I said: first I should complete my education. Then after degree, they thought it’s better to get marriage and I got a... after degree, and I said I completed first time than I will get married”.

R1.24 “Marriage, actually after the completion my MSc [Master of Science] degree. Then you take up a job, then marriage”.

R2.17 “Because, when we are doing education, we are studying, you know? Parents will wait, if she has to complete her degree, her education. That’s why, that’s one reason. After that, after finishing education, it’s some opinions will be created in our mind. I have to do something. I’ve to delay my marriage. That’s one more thing, and after that you have to spend our education to our children and surrounding people. It’s a necessary for us. Otherwise it will be a waste of time”.

Surprisingly, 11 out of the 25 respondents married before the completion of their education. An explanation for this high number is that 6 out of those 11 did finish at least their bachelor degree before marriage, but continued their educational career.

R1.4 “I did my PhD in 92. 92 I submitted my thesis and in 93 I was awarded. That was long after the birth of my children. It was a busy period, but somehow I managed. That time I was building house also. My husband was also not here. He was transferred. He use to come only once in the week, weekend. So, I had to look after my children’s education, my PhD and the house. And at that time my mother-in-law was not well. She had cancer. I had to take her to doctor in Bangalore. All these things came in the same period. It was very stressful”.

R1.6 “Then they come, we will marry. Then I was crying: I don’t want to marry. I’m not interested in marriage, I was telling my father. I told: I don’t want, I don’t want. Then ok father come and called them: she’s not interested. Let her finish her Ma and then we get married. Then in their house they were all opposing. No, no, now, you come anyway. You should have marriage in that house. And then they started to see... girls. My husband, he saw me and said: No, I want to marry her only. I didn’t agree. I went to [...] for my study. Then he comes to [...]. He was asking: why are you not agreeing? I don’t completed my Ma and I want to do my research, I’ve ambitions, I’m not interested in marriage. Don’t disturb me. He went back. All his brothers and sister, they like me. I don’t know, they forced: we want that girl only. So, my father came to Mangalore then. From morning 8 o’clock to afternoon 2 o’clock, my father and my husband had long discussions. In between I was there, I was crying: I don’t want to get married. They were telling, no you should get married, from the husband’s site. Also my father. Then at last, I agreed. And then the marriage took place. When my fiends came from tour, I was married. My father convinced. In our caste, it’s a highly qualified family, very kind. If you marry and go to that family, everything, later also, is good now. In society, they marry they are taking that girl to that family. So it’s a good reputation. They agree for their education. I wanted to study, he agreed. I wanted a job, he agreed. So in their families also, everybody is working”.

R2.11 I: So you continued with your study. Did your parents-in-law encourage that?

“They didn’t want me to continue my education, but my husband was always with me for my education”.

R2.15 I: You finished your BA after marriage, did you agree with your husband about that?

“Yes, I finished BA after 2 years of my marriage. Then I completed MA, continued my studies. I did not stop. Then after 4 years, I got my first child. In 89 we got married. In 93 she was born. In 94 I finished. In [...] I finished my MA. After that I finished my MC and then I got my second child. It was so good planned”.

I: Why did you think education is important?

“Because I wanted to stand on my own legs. I wanted to support my family by earning something. Now I’m doing that”.

I: Your husband supports you?

“Definitely, without his help I wouldn’t complete my study”.

R2.19 “Immediately after Bams. Immediately means, two years after Bams. It was a love marriage. We were classmates, myself and my husband. So afterwards, we continued our education; post graduation. So after marriage we again shifted for post graduation. Actually my husband completed his PG [post graduation] course just 6 months back. Still, I’ve to write for my final exams, because within that I got my baby. It’s just 4 months old. So because of that I couldn’t write the final exams”.

Employment did not seem to affect the age of marriage that much. Only the next woman talked about a delay. She was an athlete and her sport career (employment) influenced her age of marriage.

R2.13 “After degree up to eight, nine years my parents did not think about marriage. I got a proposal and my father asked me. And then I said that I should achieve in sports, running first and then I will marry and they agree”.

Respondent 4 married when she was 25 years old and will describe how the unemployment of her future husband influenced her age of marriage. In this case, it is about a love marriage.

R1.4 “I married late, not very late. I prefer 23 as ideal, but because my husband did not have a job at that time, so we delayed it”.

Surprisingly, there were many respondents that did not finish their education career before marriage. Especially, the respondents that did promotion research completed this after marriage. This is also because of the combination of their family and employment. They first wanted to help their children with their school work. When the children became older, the respondents focussed again on their own education career. Others did marry before the completion of their university degree, because of different reasons.

Most of them received a very good marriage proposal. They would marry, but arranged that they could precede their education afterwards.

5.2.3 Marriage proposal

To get an idea how the marriage is arranged, some descriptions are given by the following two respondents.

R2.21 “The family of my husband made the first step. We used to match the horoscope. They came to our house and the mediator was there. She brought the horoscope and we went to the priest there and he told us that our horoscopes matched. My mother-in-law believes in horoscope. And they told, here horoscope is very good and you can marry. They come to our house, we had a meeting and we used to talk. At that time only they fixed our marriage”.

R2.17 “Actually here the procedure is like that. First, from boys side comes to the girl’s side and asks if there’s a girl for a marriage. And they will come to our house. And after that they will see us and when they are ready to get marry with us. There’s a mediator for our marriage. Then they give their opinion regarding us. And after that we might have a marriage”.

In modern times, the marriage procedure can be done in a rather modern way. Respondent 6 describes the arrangement of her daughter’s wedding, who studied in the US.

R1.6 “A demand was, the boy should be in the States, completed Science Engineering, and the same caste. And the boy should be from our region. According all the four qualities, we will not get. So like that, the proposal was very good, up three, this one was fulfilling. The boy was in the States, same cast but he’s from Dharwad. That she didn’t like. Then I said you search for yourself. So she went to the internet. She searched a

boy and told us, there's a boy. He's from [...], he's engineer, he's in California. So she advise us and took in the complete address and we searched by seeing his relatives only. But internet worked”.

Ironic is that she arranged her marriage in such modern way, but never met her husband before marrying him. Her parents met his parents in India, before she came over from the US in order to marry.

Respondent 4 told another interesting story regarding her daughter's marriage arrangements and how her education played a role in this.

R1.4 “Very recent, this fact I tell you, I don't know whether is... My daughter was engaged. But than last week she told me: I'm breaking that. I cannot adjust. He is a completely different person. So I said: your are mature enough to choose for yourself”.

I: Did she choose the boy by herself?

“She had chosen herself, but at that time, she didn't know him that well. And she asked for our permission, whether to go ahead. Ok, that was in June. But after one month they had problems and than last week, just three days ago, she told that she decided not to go ahead. Though we had announced. That was the engagement also”.

I: What was your reaction?

“We will give you the decision. What ever you decide. We didn't put any pressure. Whatever the people think, the society thinks. Because now it's also difficult for us, to explain to everybody, what happened, they start gossiping. But that is not important for us. Important is [your rightness]. If you're not happy, than don't do it. Otherwise you will not be happy in life. So, she just decided. So that much freedom... Because we know now what is life. What is real to us? What are real issues? We don't live for others, just for ourselves”.

I: Did your education influence your reaction?

“An educated mother would not have taken this decision. She would try to ask others opinion. I don't take any bodies opinion. So, we sit and decide. But we can, brothers and all. But nor my brothers... they all said: let her decide”.

Characteristics of future husband

The respondents were asked what kind of husband they and their parents looked for. Just like the daughter of respondent 6, who searched her partner at the internet, most women had some criteria to which the future husband had to fulfil. The answers were very consistent. The most given characteristics are: educated and employed, so he can support her. Also, he should not have bad habits, but have a good character. Others also mentioned that he should have a good background, same religion, culture and be serious. One respondent married her uncle (the youngest brother of her mother), because the family preferred not marrying an outsider.

5.2.4 Ceremony

The size of the marriage ceremony of the respondents differs. Most of the time, the ceremony was shorter than their mothers, because in the old days it was celebrated more grandly as respondent 12 and 13 explain.

R2.12 “In that time, there used to be 3 or 4 days marriage, in early days. Nowadays it uses to be one day”.

R2.13 “It was grand in that time. In that time, there use to be three days marriage. Nowadays, it can be finished within half day also”.

But the kind of ceremony also depends on the family composition. The next respondents experienced that.

R1.9 “As I was the first in the family, my parents made a grand function. My mother's ceremony was also grand, because she was only daughter to her parents. In old days, they perform four days marriage ceremony”.

R2.16 “It was celebrated grandly. My mother celebrated it grandly. Almost more than 2000 delegates were there. In the house of the family it was celebrated. It was the first marriage in our house, as well as in their house. He's the first son, and I'm also the first daughter so it was very grandly celebrated”.

Respondent 4 was the youngest in the family. This and the economic situation of the family influenced their marriage function.

R1.4 “I married in Germany. In hostel, with 14 friends. I had a one year scholarship and then we had some financial problems, both families. I’m the youngest of a family of six. My father had retired long back. Before, when I was in fifth standard only, my father had retired. So, after that he did start to do some contract work. He was still working. He had done so many marriages. So he had no money. In India, marriages are really expensive. We have to invite all relatives and all that. My father did not have money. I didn’t want to put him this burden. And my husband is the eldest in the family. He had two young brothers who were still studying. They also had financial problems. So he was also thinking: first marriage means a lot of expectations will be there from the relatives. So we both discuss and we thought if I send you the ticket only it will cost 3,000 rs. to Germany no expenses at all. One lunch it is no much. Then we can go to Switzerland for the honeymoon. So we confined both of the parents. This is our plan and my husband also wanted to see Europe. We did have money to go on our own. Since I have scholarship and worked a little bit in the weekends. And I still had some money. Then I said: you come here, we will get married here. So we all liked this idea. It was agree for everyone. Though the relatives were grumbling, but both parents were happy”.

5.2.5 Dowry

A custom in Indian society is the giving of dowry. This means that the bride’s parents give gifts and cash to the family of the future husband at the time of marriage (Jena 1993). According to Jena (1993) it is expected that the process of modernisation would make people view the custom of dowry as an undesirable event in the marriage rituals.

On asking respondents, if dowry was given when they got married, several answers were given. Only a small number of women had given dowry. Some gave dowry while the in-laws did not ask, while others only gave presents to the married couple or to their daughter and others (majority of the women) did not give at all.

Some families of women gave dowry to the family of the husband with the marriage. Respondent 23 explains why:

R2.23 “It is normal to give dowry, means the situation is created very automatically, because when they ask... without dowry they are not going to marry. It becomes a compulsion if you want to arrange a marriage you have to give. That type of situation makes us to give dowry”.

The families of the following respondents did not give dowry. Their answers show a connection with religion:

R1.25 “There was no dowry, they thought whatever we can give as a gift, we give and whatever we can give to our daughter or to the pair. Usually it is not practised among Christians. As compared to Hindus, there are some ancestral heritage property. Therefore, these will go I think. Usually here, Christians don’t make property, they do job, what they want until their wish or extent and they live within that arrangements. Therefore dowry is usually not practised”.

Or modern ideas:

R1.5 “Our father made it clear. Anybody who will ask for dowry will be out. They will never match us. It concerns the person and not the dowry, like buffalo’s, commodities. So there were my ideas, my mother’s ideas and my father’s ideas”.

Or a shortage of girls:

R2.23 “No dowry. Nowadays it has become less. It’s not practised in our community and in the time of the sisters of my father, they have give dowry. In my generation nobody has given dowry. Nowadays, there are no girls in our community. In our caste, there’s shortage of girls”.

Or female employment or property:

R2.12 “No dowry. In my community it’s there, but there are several adjustments. It depends on the circumstances. As I was in a job, they didn’t prefer dowry”.

On asking respondent 10 why she thinks her husband’s family proceed the marriage negotiation after her family refused to give dowry, her answer is related to the property she will inherit.

R1.10 “Probably, because it was a good match to his. In our family, it’s not costume in my father’s family. They brought up [...]; his property was also divided in similar manner. The two daughters, both got their equal share. So there was no question of dowry at all”.

Respondent 11, 33 years, stated that her family did not give dowry.

R2.11 “Not like that, simply some gold, only gold”.

Another unusual story was told by respondent 19, 28 years old. The respondent will explain how her father arranged her to continue her education after getting married.

R2.19 “It’s not a dowry. They never expected me to give anything. It was not a dowry actually. It’s left to you, you can take it as dowry or not. But in-laws’ family, they never given anything to education i.e. PG [post graduation]. So my husband told me that you finish your studies, when your father is giving money to you. He said: we practice up to two years than I can finish my PG. But there, in in-laws’ family, is not much scoop to education, like this area and dowry is more practised there... lacks together. Then he said: I will join you two years later in PG, but I thought it is not good, like I complete my pg, and than waiting for him. I wanted that at the same we should complete PG and my father paid for this education also, three lacks. I feel very much to repay that amount, at least 3 lacks. Actually what happened, after marriage we jointed for PG? So he gave that money to the college itself, to the management. Not to my husband’s parents but directly to the college. I was interested and my father helped me, doing both of us [...]”.

5.2.6 Change in behaviour

Marriage means the beginning of a transition in a woman’s life. This transition can get along with a change in behaviour. On asking the respondents how their behaviour changed after marriage their answers indicate an increase in responsibilities. This will be illustrated by the following respondents.

R2.16 “Sometimes we use to feel like some responsibilities are there. We can’t go out very freely, as before. That all changes, we have to obtain”.

R1.2 “Elders used to say that now it is not like earlier. Responsibilities are more like that. Always it is different to be an independent bachelor. Less freedom”.

R1.5 “Kind of because I was looked as a responsible person. Initially, you were just one of the students, with responsibility. Even I felt that there’s a kind of responsibility. You have a kind of commitment; you cannot just take the decision or going somewhere. Once you are into a relationship, you need to discuss things out, consult”.

Several respondents talked about feelings of safety after marriage.

R1.9 “I felt save, having a guardian after marriage and happy also. In our society people use to think, if someone hasn’t married or late, they think there’s a problem. They feel lonely. At that time, 18 years was the normal age to marry and I was 22, 23 and I felt that it is better to have a life partner”.

R2.12 “Before marriage, after marriage, some differences were there. It should be change, because there are a lot of differences in married and unmarried life and people in society give more respect to married women only and I also felt it, feeling more safe. Earlier I also was safe, but after marriage I felt more safe”.

Respondents 7 and 17 illustrate that marriage is seen as an important transition by the social context.

R1.7 “People will comment if a girl not got married at right time. Relatives who gathered immediately teas that lady”.

R2.17 “Before marriage I felt some disturbance because of the surrounding people. People can be sully minded no? And after marriage I didn’t feel disturbances”.

The change in behaviour also depends on the type of household in which the respondent lives after marriage. An enormous change can occur when a respondent moves from a ‘modern’ family to a more ‘traditional’ family. In section 4.2 it is described that the respondents were raised mainly in a nuclear family, while most of the husbands grew up in a joint family. Traditionally, the bride moves to her husband’s family after marriage. This can create a context which is quite different than a woman is used to. This is described in the next section.

5.2.7 Family

The following respondents experienced much difference between their parents’ and their husband’s family.

R2.23 “The biggest difference is we’re totally different from their way of living, with him, his parents and family. It’s a sudden change in my life. And we are unfamiliar with his nature and we accept something from married life and they also expect something of us”.

R2.18 “Because at least in my case I can say, they are village people. They concentrate on agriculture life. They don’t want to make their children that independent. We have so much land, so you should take care of that. That kind of thinking they have, but what I think is indifferent. I give more importance to education. Because I’ve seen what these kinds of people are suffering because of lack of education. Like women don’t have any power to take some decisions. They have simple to follow their men, like this. And they don’t have financial independence. So many things. They are frustrated, so I don’t want my child to be like that. So that’s the main difference. They will not understand the concept also. That’s the problem. Because of these circumstances, it’s not their fault or anything, I prefer a nuclear family.

R2.16 “When I got married there are some changes in the families you know? Here, whatever the problems, whatever the money matters, it will be shared by all of us, like my father, mother, brother. All of us use to sit together and share. We have an equal responsibility in the family of my parents. But there it’s not the thing. My father-in-law. We will not knowing the condition of my family. That change initially uses to find a lot of different and ladies are not given much importance in financial conditions and all”.

Respondent 18 was brought up in Mumbai. She did not want to live in a traditional environment. Therefore, she would not accept a marriage proposal before they agreed on some issues related to family and career.

R2.18 “Because before marriage also, we had talks. Because my standards were very high. With every proposal I use to talk separately and individually. I talked about career and all. Because of this village background, I was repressing this proposal. When he committed that he wants to educate his child and all. That is why he’s marrying me. So the concept was clear and excepted”.

It is a custom to move to the husband’s family after marriage and not to live in the wife’s family. Some respondents lived with their own parents due to several reasons.

Respondents 16 and 19 live in their parents’ house after the birth of their children.

R2.16 “Actually, an Indian costume, living in wife’s house is not much encouraged. My husband may feel it. Otherwise, there’s no problem with my parents also. We can go and live in his house live and his family, but it’s not encouraged that he comes and life with my parent. It’s a custom, like a son-in-law can’t stay with the parents of his wife”.

R2.19 “Now, I’m with my mother’s house [in Dharwad] as postnatal care has to be taken. Afterwards we make other house. It’s not a joint family, but presently I’m staying with my mother. Later, after two months we have our own house. It’s just for three months. My baby is very small and I have to appear for the exams. I’ve to study. So if I start my own home, now itself, it’s very difficult for me to do everything, cooking, and looking after my child, everything. So I’m staying with my mother, means in my house, mother, father, brother, husband. With them I’m staying, but after three months, as soon as I complete my exams, I will start my own family”.

If the husband is in another place for his job, women also might prefer living with their parents. This was the situation of two respondents. Respondent 12 explains:

R2.12 “My husband used to be either in Bangalore up to 1997, because he had a job there and in that time I felt it’s very comfortable, it’s very good to live in a joint family, rather than in different places. I lived with my parents alone”.

Respondent 25, 58 years old, liked her daughter to stay after marriage. She planned this during the marriage negotiation of her daughter.

R1.25 “We were searching for a son-in-law who could stay with us. That boy was from a different place”.

I: You did not want your daughter to live with her family-in-law?

“First thing was, as I’ve only one child, I thought it was better if she is with us, otherwise if she goes to her house, there will be only two in our home, after retirement and I worried that. Another thing is, I had the feeling that we have no son; therefore it would be very good if my daughter stays with us. After the marriage of my daughter, I said to my son-in-law even thought my child is very happy to live with us, you maybe not prefer to live with us. So we advised him: so you can make a house in Dharwad, in this city itself. But he preferred to live with us, because he had a feeling that he will spend most of his time outside the house, because of education, high education, and all of these things. He had a feeling that he will miss family attachment. And he preferred to live with us and he said he was interested in living with us and not in making another family. I’m very eager to have some family attachment with you. And than all things combined together”.

Almost all the respondents lived in nuclear families at the time of interview. This can be seen as an outcome of the modernisation of society in which the joint families are breaking up and getting replaced by nuclear or quasi-joint families. As modernisation goes on, individuals, especially women, would prefer to establish independent nuclear homes rather than living in large families with many other family members (Jena 1993). The opposite seemed true, the greater part of the respondents preferred a joint family. The following respondents prefer a joint family, because they prefer their family members to look after their child when they are at work.

R2.21 "I prefer a joint family, because my child needs the love, I cannot give. When I was working, she wants me: mammy you won't go to work, mammy you won't go to work. She uses to tell like that. I like it if my mother-in-law was with her. She would be very happy with her, playing like that. So I want a joint family".

R2.15 "I prefer a joint family, because suppose we are there, co-operation will be there. If you, especially for the working women, if we become late somebody is there to take care of the children, isn't it? Otherwise we have to struggle all the way. We have to come earlier, we have to arrive early. We have to think about our time. Here now I think, that sometimes... Today I came around 18.30 I didn't bother about my children, because my anti is here to take care about them. She has been staying here for six years, after the death of both my in-laws, she has stayed here".

Respondent 23 shares this opinion, but also wants to take care of her parents and her parents-in-law.

R2.23 "As we have a job, it's very good that parents take care of our children; they are needed. It's good to have elders in the family and take their guidance. Another reason is, because they have taken care in our childhood, it might be my parents or my husband's parents, so you need to look after them, when they are in the need of us. There are two reasons".

Respondent 2 preferred a joint family, because she wanted to raise her children with family, so they knew how to mix up with others.

R1.2 "I like joint family, because as we used to come out of the house, our children depend on servants. Than our children don't know how to mix up with others. They don't know about the relatives, what is the sister, what is the brother, grandmother... Sometimes we don't find some thing to talk, to communicate".

On the other hand, respondent 13, 32 years old, prefers a nuclear family, because she has a job.

R2.13 "As there's a job, I prefer a nuclear family. If there's no job, better to live in a joint family. In nuclear families you can cope with job and family. In joint families, we have to do certain household activities, otherwise we will be misunderstood by the other members of the family. To take an example, we can get up later when we have holidays in nuclear families. In joint families that's not. If we have no jobs, we can just cope with the household activities in a better way".

There are also other reasons why women prefer a nuclear family. Respondent 23 thinks it is not good to depend on elders. Besides that, she talks about a generation gap that occurs in a joint family which influence her say in the upbringing of her children.

R2.23 "There are two aspects. One is this younger group. They are not really responsible. They leave their responsibilities, duties to the elders. They will take care of my children also, why should I worry about it? And what happens, usually there's a head of the family and he used to work hard and he used to share his earnings he used to give food and clothes and everything to all the members and there will be several people without work who depend on them. They are not used to take responsibilities regard to work. Another thing is that there is a generation gap. My children are taken care by my parents. They don't let me give some discipline reactions towards my children. Whenever I want to make them strict and give some small punishments to make them to read or write; to make their homework. They used to stop me. They said that however this kid is already intelligent and smart compared to us when we were children. We were not used to study this much. And what happens nowadays, kids are so sharp. They can grasp more than earlier and we use to give more modern, technical, more education that is suitable to this time, this situation. But this elder people take the care much which is required exactly and than they become... Even children also, use to take the help of the grandparents and they are scolded by us, parents. Because of that it hinders".

Also respondent 14 explains that she prefers a nuclear family because then she can interfere in the upbringing of her children.

R2.14 “It’s better to have a nuclear family for jobholders, because when we go out of the home due to our jobs, we can take help of the servants in a nuclear family, very easy, comfortably and we can also prefer babysitting. In joint family, there are obligations. We have to depend on other relatives, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, to take care of our children. At that they may be unhappy, because we are passing our works to them and we are not joining them in the household works. It may create some tension and if we are willing to put some servant in the joint family. They may not agree because we are there the relatives we can take care. But it will become a burden to them also. Therefore this tension may appear. With regard to childrearing, in a nuclear family we can depend on servants, as we’re paying them we can just command them. You have to do this way, you should not give these things, and you have to give these things only. But in a joint family, we can’t assist to our elders, as they have their won beliefs. Even though we are not willing to that way of childrearing of them, we are not in the position to command them, or insist them. Even sister-in-laws may feel bad as they are relatives. I can’t say: no don’t do this, don’t do that, because it’s my child. We can’t feel no, because they will feel bad. And once it happened...”

Some negative experiences with joint families can create a preference for a nuclear family.

R2.17 “We think some disturbance is there. There’s no... His father and mother were not living with us. Only his brother and his family. They were of different profession that means a businessman. They were not co-operative with us. That is why my husband felt that we had to go outside. Sometimes we were fet up with. I have no mother-in-law, she’s living with my sister-in-law. In our house only, we have two parts; lower and upper part. They were living in the upper and the lower part is ours and we gave that one for rent. Positive things of a nuclear family, means it’s better to grow individually when we are in a nuclear family. When we are in a joint family, there’s no responsibility. It will be shared. Here we get more responsibility. I have to manage alone all the things as well as my child, husband, house and housework also. I have not kept any workers here. I’m only doing all the works. That’s why it’s a little bit difficult for me to manage all this. But I will by trying for that. And if there’s any problem is there, everything will be shared. That’s why we were feeling so many disturbances. Here we have to feel individually. That’s why it’s a little bit complicated and that much of positive things we are also getting here. Privacy we will getting, no? And first of all we will proceed in our life”.

One of the most important reasons why women from both age groups prefer a joint family is that relatives will take care of their children very lovely, while they are at work. Striking is that many women preferred a joint family, but only three out of 25 respondents actually lived in a joint family. From the interviews it seemed that most respondents could not live in a joint family, because they moved to Dharwad to have good education for their children or to have jobs that are not available in the villages were the family-in-law or other relatives live.

R2.18 “Just for my child educational purpose. Second thing, our profession. Like we both are doctors. For that purpose we are staying in city. My in-laws are staying in village”.

R2.1 “Because of our jobs, my husband and I have to live in Dharwad”.

Some respondents lived in a nuclear family, but explained that there were often relatives staying with them. So they were almost never a real nuclear family.

R1.4 “But we had lot of relatives staying with us. Just for educational purpose, to go to school; my cousins. It was not a joint family, but we were never only six of us. On that time children were coming and going”.

R1.10 “We did educate a lot of people, because my husband’s family is from a village, so we did educate a lot of his brother’s children, here. We got them educated here at the university, because we had all the facilities, so they were educated here, and now they are all married and settled”.

6 Reproductive career: first pregnancy, birth and menopause

In this chapter the second part of the reproductive career will be described. In section 6.1, the first pregnancy of a woman is of our attention. The birth of children is discussed in section 6.2. Beside, the description of the reproductive events, the influence of education and employment on the number and timing of children is explained. Finally, the end of the reproductive career is explained by looking at menopause (section 6.3).

6.1 First pregnancy

The ceremony which is conducted with the first pregnancy is described in this section. All the respondents celebrated their first pregnancy with a function. The timing, the place and the number of functions differ. First, respondent 20 explains why she thinks such a celebration exists.

R2.20 “Yes a grand function. The function of wearing the flowers of giving. It’s scientific, because it’s told in our epics also that after five months, the child starts to hear the outside and it’s a way of giving good values. It’s a way of passing good values to the unborn baby”.

The ceremony can be conducted in different ways. This is described by the following respondents.

R2.13 “There were two functions. First was after five months of the pregnancy. Five women from my mother’s family came and made a simple function with rituals and after eight months several people from mother’s family and the in-law’s family came. They made a grand function. They presented their son-in-law gold and give a green sari to me and it was a big function”.

R1.4 “Just a diner. All relatives are invited and they put flowers to the girl and both sit together. That’s it, in the seventh month of the pregnancy”.

R2.14 “We had a function at the fifth month in my mother’s house and at the eighth month at my husband’s house. It was a small function; relatives gathered. There was a lunch and clothes were given to me”.

A Christian woman describes her ceremony with her first pregnancy.

R1.8 “Yes, after five, eight months we had a ceremony. I invited all my lady friends and all. We had a prayer. We boiled an egg and cut it in half. And I had to give it, if I wanted a boy child I had to give the other half to a small boy or if I wanted a girl, I had to give it to her. I gave it to a boy, not by choice; there was only one boy available. And I got a boy”.

Also, the mothers of the respondents had a function with the first pregnancy. On asking respondent 18 if her mother also had a function with her first pregnancy she answers:

R2.18 “Yes, it was big. Quite similar. Traditions, they are the same”.

The importance of the first pregnancy can be studied through time by comparing the ceremony of the respondents with the ones their mothers had. The data of the interviews showed that all of the women had a function with their first pregnancy. The respondents also stated that their mothers had a function with their first pregnancy as well. This indicates that the first pregnancy is still important in the life of a woman.

6.2 Births of children

The birth of children is seen as the fulfilment of the major purpose of a woman’s life (Van der Velden 1991) and is traditionally celebrated by a ceremony, which is described in section 6.2.1. In section 6.2.2 the reasons behind the desired number of children is explained, while the number of children of the respondents are already described in section 4.2. The change in number of children through time is mentioned in section 6.2.3. Followed by the timing of children and the influences of education and employment of this timing (section 6.2.4). In

section 6.2.5 the use of spacing methods is described. Finally, a potential change in the behaviour of women, after the birth of children, is discussed.

6.2.1 Ceremony

When a child is born, this is celebrated with a naming ceremony. All the respondents had this ceremony with their (lively) births. However, this function differs in timing, size, number and place. Respondent 15 explains the purpose of a naming ceremony according to her.

R2.15 “There was a function, a naming ceremony. We called some of my relatives. Some of my relatives attended the function. Some of my neighbours also, they were also there”.

I: Is it an important ceremony?

“Yes, otherwise how do we call her? We have to tell her name to the villagers”.

Some descriptions of the ceremonies are added to give more insight in this kind of function.

R2.21 “Yes a naming ceremony, we use to. We had it after the 13th day. We use to pin the ears and after that we use to put the child in a cradle and we call the neighbours and relatives and we use to put the name”.

The next two respondents describe the different locations of the naming ceremonies.

R1.4 “The first child, my birthplace. Then, rest of the children at in-laws’ place. That’s the tradition here. First pregnancy, the woman goes to parents’ house for delivery. Then the naming ceremony will be done at mother’s place. For second child it will be husband’s place”.

R2.18 “Small. We did the ceremony in my father’s house, my parent’s house. We didn’t do it grand. Just we followed the rituals”.

Respondent 5, from the older age group, illustrates the way the baby receives the name.

R1.5 “Yes on the 13th day, we were baptising and then also give a name to her, that’s the naming ceremony. So we give five names and the fifth name will be the final name, official name, by which we call her. The other names could be the names that you like, names of Gods, usually the [...]. So four names plus the fifth one. Like my mother’s name was one of the names given to her, father-in-law’s name, my grandmother’s name, my husband’s name. But the ultimate name, I thought is [...] it means satisfaction”.

Some respondents have conducted two naming ceremonies.

R2.13 “There were two naming ceremonies. First one was on the 13th day after childbirth and my sister-in-law, father-in-law, mother-in-law, husband came and made a function in my mother’s home. And after 5 months, there was another naming ceremony. It was a normal function and after 5 months there was a function in the in-law’s family. When I came from my mother’s family to my husband’s family, there was a function”.

Respondent 8 is Christian and describes the ceremony.

R1.8 “Not on that day, but afterwards when he was... naming. We have our Sunday mass, so in the mass we have in our church. So then they call the parents [...], they bless it. And all the elders of the church also come forward and they have a special prayer. And at home we had a small party”.

Data of the interviews show that all the respondents and their mothers had celebrated the births of their children. It is difficult to compare the ceremonies in time, because they differ enormously. This depends on the economic situation, religion, caste, sex and family composition. However, both generations conducted the ceremonies which indicate that the importance of this event did not change.

6.2.2 Number of children

The number of children, that the study population desires and actually has, is described in section 4.2. It was noticeable that quite some women preferred one child. At the time of interview, 14 out of the 25 respondents had one child. Out of those 14, two were pregnant of their second child and two preferred to have another child. So, 10 women preferred to have one child: four from the older age group and six from the younger age group. First, some respondents will describe their desired family size and their reasons for this preference.

Respondent 5 has one daughter and explains why she prefers one child.

R1.5 “I didn’t want to have many because he [husband] was all the time away and I had to manage everything. And we both had decided that we only have one child, if we can effort good things and bring her up in a nice way, where she can get everything. Because two children means, we thought, we cannot effort the best, the best. So we decided to have one, so we can effort the best and bring it up, in the best way. He or she will never [...]. But it didn’t matter if it was a female or a male child”.

Respondent 13 has one daughter, but prefers two children.

R2.13 “Two is correct. If there’s only one child, she will become alone and if there are two they will have some company for each other and they will grow well”.

The preference of a particular family size is influenced by education and employment. Respondent 20 prefers and also has two children as a result of her education.

R2.20 “It’s a country problem, a lot of population, so a small family. I don’t know how they raised so many people; to raise two children is enough to me. Because we are educated we have to think about it. Another one is that whether we can fulfil all the needs, necessities of the child and how much we can give to how many children, that has to be considered. Therefore I thought”.

Respondent 9 has three children. She also explains how her education influences her number of children.

R1.9 It is because of education I thought there are many children, you can’t give them proper education, qualified education. You can’t take care of them up to they have high status, which they want and I felt how much strings my parents taken having four children and try to give a degree to us, and I thought if the number of children is limited I can give a very good education to them and take care of them very well and I felt I wanted to give education like dr. or engineer and lots of money is needed to give that kind of education. It’s possible, when I have a limited number of children. And I thought this due to my education only”.

The following respondents from both age groups explain that they prefer one child, mainly due to their employment.

R2.17 “Here only, I want to stop. Only one child, because, I’ve to manage, no? It’s difficult for me to manage a child and that work and when we will share love with one. It has to share with two, if we have a second child. Some first child will be [...] that’s why I’m not interested. All my love I want to spend with her only. I want to supply love only. That job would be influenced that because now we only have one child, we now have to manage the child as well the job also. When we have many children, you have to manage those children, no question of a job. You have to spend all you time with the children only”.

R2.18 “Only one is enough. We want to concentrate only on one child. Financially and in every way, because we both are working, we can’t effort. Because day to day life with the child, to take care of him and anything becomes more difficult. Both are working, so that’s it”.

R1.24 “I prefer one, because I’m a working lady and I can’t give much of my time for my children. And if I have one, at least I can manage. To look after the education [...]. I thought I have only one kid. It was my intention and I have a kid”.

Data of the interviews indicate that women prefer one or two children in order to combine motherhood with their employment. The reason to have a second child is mainly to have company for the first child. It is also a way of security, because it is possible that something happens with the first one. Many respondents want to give their children the best and much affection, that is why they explain to prefer one or two children in order to accomplish that.

6.2.3 Change in time

The respondents stated that women had more children in the past. The following answers were given to explain the preference of fewer children of women nowadays. Respondent 6 and 15 describe the present situation in which education and the use of contraceptives are more common.

R1.6 “Yes, but my father was educated, you know? In those days, my mother-in-law had ten children. We are only with three children. He had that sense of family planning”.

R2.15 “My mother had four children. I was her fourth child. She got four children. I didn’t want that. I wanted only to have one or two children. That period was like that. It was normal for the people to have a dozen of

children. My husband is ninth one. It was common in that time. Now it is not that. At that time contraceptives were not used, perhaps. People did not have any idea about family planning. Now since we are educated, we should plan our family. We should have an idea about a small family. If you have more than three or four children, we can not give education to them. Isn't it? For that matter we... there should be a small family”.

Some answers given by the respondents can be associated with the ‘wealth flow theory’ introduced by Caldwell (1976). This theory explains fertility decline as a result of a reversal in the net wealth flows between parents and children. A change in the social organisation of a society, and specifically in family structures are seen as underlying cause of this reversal. The change in direction of the net wealth flow indicates a change in the significance of children. Caldwell argues that in all traditional societies the net wealth flows from younger to older generations. This provides an economic motive of high fertility; children were seen as an economic asset to the family.

R2.12 “Yes, at that time it was no usage to give education to the children and especially in rural areas they wanted many children, because they were necessary to work in the households, in their fields, on plantations. There was no thought of giving education to them that is why they prefer many children”.

This flow will only be reversed if the economic and emotional primacy is withdrawn from the grip of broader family ties and is focused on the conjugal family. Children become an economic burden.

R2.13 “At that time things were so cheap and they were able to manage several children, but nowadays things are becoming costly. If we prefer a really luxury life and therefore we want to have a limited number of children. The thing is it's not much important to have more children, but to have limited and take care of them in a very efficient way”.

Nevertheless, children are still wanted for non-economic reasons.

Answers of the respondents might add another dimension to the theory of Caldwell. Caldwell stated that fertility declines because children become an economic asset. Nowadays, ten out of the 25 respondents prefer only one child. This means that their fertility is low, not because of the fact that the economic asset their children is too big (the respondents are in a good economic position, see section 4.2), but because they want to provide their child the best; emotionally and financially.

6.2.4 Influences on the number of children

Beside women's education and employment, also the context, a particular sex preference and infertility have its influence on the number of children. This is described in this section.

Context

The context of a woman can create a gap between her desired family size and the actually number of children. Three respondents expressed that their husband did prefer a different number of children. Respondent 20 and respondent 6 prefer to have only one child, while their husbands wanted to have a second child.

R2.20 “I said: one is enough, but my husband expected two children. He wanted two because we can't ensure that one is enough. Because, we don't have any security, if something happens to it. It's better to have two”.

I: Why did you prefer one child?

“When we look at the problem of the country, one is enough. This delivery time is just like hell, a bad experience. It's very wonderful when we love our children at that time we are hugging them, but at the time of carrying and delivery it's so difficult. Therefore, I only wanted to have 1 child”.

R1.6 “My husband wanted a second child. I try to, I only wanted one child. So, my husband was telling me, you can not postpone this pregnancy, because this is endless. Teaching, I mean study, is also endless, but have a second child. Otherwise it's very difficult to grow. And later it's not good. If it's help, a second child is holding us? So finally I had”.

Respondent 4 preferred three children. Her husband did not want to have another child, but preferred to have two children.

R1.4 “I wanted one more. I wanted three children, but my husband did not allow me. He said working women; two is enough. We have one son and a daughter. He didn’t think... He was more practical. He thinks about what we can provide the children. Our means, our savings and all. We use to think in future. Three children is too big family. We will not be able to look after and all that. But I’m more emotional thing [...]. They will have nice siblings, feelings for each other. Two, they might fight; at least three then that will be... Even doctor said, because caesarean section. They said a third pregnancy is not safe. And my husband took advantage of that [laughing]”.

Respondent 11 explains how her family-in-law influenced her number of children.

R2.11 “I knew at that moment I thought only one child is enough, because I wanted to have a career, at the side. That was... One is enough, children one or two it’s the same thing. I wanted a career. I wanted to have an identity for myself. So, I felt one is enough and I can move to my career. I started working. I had another child because in my family [in-law], we listen to all. I particularly listen to..., because very elderly to me. Each and everything we listen to them. My mother-in-law, my sister-in-law, my bother-in-law. They wanted to have one more child to have, so that it is the family complete. So they forced me to have another child. I agreed, I didn’t want to loose my relationships”.

From the answer it seemed that the family-in-law preferred another child because of security reasons.

Information of the interviews seems to indicate an influence of doctors on the number of children that a woman has. One respondent stated the following:

R1.3 “In those days, doctors use to suggest having three children”.

She had two children but three deliveries, because the second child expired at birth.

Respondent 17 has one daughter. She wanted to have a sterilisation after the birth of her daughter.

R2.17 “I wanted to take an operation this time, but doctor refused to take the operation. That’s why they didn’t operate. We are not interested in the sex of the child”.

I: Why did the doctor refused?

“Actually, one child is... you know. That’s why. Don’t think now, after seven years”.

Combination family and job

The influence of employment on the number of children is described before, when the women explain their desired number of children. In sum, the combination of having employment and children is difficult to manage. Respondent 24 provides an example how difficult it can be to manage the job career and the reproductive career. She has an important governmental job and gave birth to her son, eleven years after her marriage. Before that birth, she had two abortions.

R1.24 “Because immediately after marriage, I had an abortion. Because I was suffering with the [...] and the doctor said the foetus may not be in good condition. So, I was aborted. Then I started using the [...], because I was working in M. I was not interested to have a kid at that time, because the counterparts are the men that are working with me. They should not say that you’re unfit to work. That kind of attention. Let me not have a kid. Because once I was aborted, I needed a little rest for that. Then a second time I had an abortion. Then I thought, even I have a kid, I should not trouble my kid, because that was not the time; I use to get out for days, together. So that’s what... When I go to my family area, at least somebody will come and look after my son. But that’s why I took ten years time. Then I came back I was comfortable, because I can get somebody, because my family members had come and stayed with me. Then I had a kid”

Then her husband suggests adopting a child, if she cannot manage a pregnancy along with her job.

R1.24 “Actually what was you’re a working lady and you’re taking more responsibility even in the office. If you don’t have time. If you’re not up for a kid, I’m also ok. Because he had seen me doing work. And is it better if you don’t have also, we not mind, we can adopt one child, he uses to tell. He uses to tell me that. If you are so busy with all this work, better we can adopt one. Then it came in my mind, when I can I will produce one and after that I was having this kid”.

Still the problem exists of combining work and family. Who is taking care of the children when their mothers are at work? Servants and babysitters are mentioned most often by the respondents, but also relatives seem to take care. The next respondents will illustrate this.

R1.6 “My mother-in-law was there. My mother was there when the children were small. I used to come to the university, for studying my PhD. I used to call my mother. She used to stay two months here. And when my daughter was small, she used to take her to Mangalore. When she started to go to school I had my mother-in-law to come here. So I made some arrangements; mother and mother-in-law. In spite of the servant who was there. But we need our own people. You can’t trust them, servants you can’t trust”.

R2.13 “It’s difficult, when children are too young. When they go to school, we can manage with the household and office. But we have to do it, to see some improvements in life. It's better to have a job, both husband and wife. Up to two years my sister-in-law was there to take care of the child and then there’s a babysitter nearby and I use to take the help of that babysitter”.

R2.15 “My cousin was here to take care of my child. So I could go out. She stayed until I completed my Mphil, for three, four years she stayed here”.

Above, the respondents describe how relatives live at their house in order to look after the children, while they are at work. Like described before in section 5.2.7, education and employment create nuclear families in Dharwad, where there are opportunities to work. The combination of job and family changes the nuclear family, due to the stay of relatives in the house. This way, a new kind of family is created. The nuclear family does not only exist of husband, wife and children anymore, but also of other relatives. This indicates that other family formation arises, which changes through the life course of the respondents, due to the temporally stay of these relatives. Especially, when the children are too young to go to school, some help is needed. Some had relatives at home, but decide to use the help of a servant. Respondent 18 and respondent 14 are examples of that.

R2.18 “My mother-in-law uses to take the care, but she didn’t like this atmosphere. So already 1.5 month back she had left. So my auntie is taken care. My husband in the afternoon and me. It very difficult and only one responsible person is not there. Because of working difference of circumstances and thinking a child is suffering. And she was not serious; she didn’t feel responsible to take care because both of us are working. That kind of thinking. Just because my husband asked her to come over here and her husband asked her to come over here. She came, that’s all. Because of that approach, we had many problems and clashes. So that happened. Now I’m assisting to keep some made. But they don’t have that concept like they will be in their houses... So that approach was there. She [mother-in-law] wanted to live here, from the in-laws’ house. There started to be differences between the houses” [her mother-in-law stayed at their place for three months].

R2.14 “I lived with my mother-in-law and sister-in-law. My mother-in-law didn’t use to give lunch to my son in the afternoon. So I use to go to my home in my lunch hours to give lunch, made my son to sleep and then join the office. I was so tensed. I felt so many problems. Now you see, today I stay at work and the servant gives lunch and takes care of my child very well. With regard to childrearing, in a nuclear family we can depend on servants, as we’re paying them we can just command them. You have to do this way, you should not give these things, and you have to give these things only. But in a joint family, we can’t assist to our elders, as they have their won beliefs. Even though we are not willing to that way of childrearing of them, we are not in the position to command them, or insist them. Even sister-in-laws may feel bad as they are relatives. I can’ say: no don’t do this, don’t do that, because it’s my child. We can’t feel no, because they will feel bad”.

On asking the respondents, if their husband helped in the household, some respondents indicated that this was the case:

R2.1 “There’s no much difficulties. My husband shares several household works with me. He helps me in child caring and also kitchen works”.

R2.21 “Yes, he used to help me and he used to dress my child and he used to drop her to school and all. He very much helps me. In the morning I use to ‘dance’, do this one: food, do that... He used to very much helps me”.

While other respondents did not have the help of their spouse:

R2.16 “He don’t have a habit of doing household works, since his childhood. What he says, we can appoint workers, as many as we wish. We don’t mind to spend money. He personally, is not having the habit of doing the work. When an emergency comes and if it’s unavoidable that he has to help me, he will. Not routineable”.

R1.10 “No, no, no, no, not at all. He was a doctor, so he was a busy man. Second thing, in the villages where he’s brought up, there even to day, they don’t want boys to work at home. They don’t like boys working at home. So he has the same culture. Even today, he hasn’t come to the kitchen and see what’s going on, because that domain is entirely mine. And I’m happy about that independence, I get there. I used to criticise because all my brothers, they all cook. I use to criticise, but now I got used to that. So if I come now to the kitchen, I feel he’s an intruder. Probably you never got an interview like this from any one”.

The ages of the respondents indicated a small difference related to the help of the husbands in the household. The husbands of the younger women helped slightly more than the spouses of the older women.

Respondent 5 describes how she could not continue her employment after birth, because she did not have a helping hand.

R1.5 “It was a balancing act. To combine was though. I wanted to do both and [...] because I didn’t have any helping hand. In that time I started to miss my mother. I thought if she was there; at least take care of my baby for some time. Than getting servants here is a really problem. You won’t get a servant. The reliable ones, who work well and do all this and be honest, don’t steal. So from that point of view it was very though. Than I took a break for some months and than come back and took off the job. In that time I looked for a crèche, because nobody would take the baby, when the baby was just about 2 or 3 months only. The baby had to be minimal 8 months - 1 year. So, I had to wait. During the waiting period I was with him [husband]. In his posting area, that is in the north and than when she was old enough to be kept in a crèche, I came back and than took up my job”.

Son and girl preference

“Sex preference would have an effect on fertility if couples who have already reached their desired family size continue child bearing in order to achieve the appropriate sex composition (Nag 1991, p.26 cited in Hutter 1998). This can be illustrated by the interview of respondent 2 who was the only person that indicates that the sex preference influenced her number of children.

R1.2 “First one, but then two, because I wanted a daughter. Who is there to celebrate the birth arrival of son? I wanted daughter and therefore I preferred second pregnancy. If my first child was daughter, I would not have expected for second pregnancy. Girls have more qualities like love, sensitivity. Son is there, tensions are more. My mother expected two sons only. She thought if daughters are there problems are more. Mother preferred a small family”.

The reasons why the respondents preferred a male or a female seemed to be quite similar. Some common reactions are illustrated by the following quotations. Respondent 4, expressed that she preferred a girl and her in-laws’ family a boy.

R1.4 I: Why did they prefer a boy and you a girl?

“I don’t know, my mother-in-law was always for boys. She never liked girls. She had three boys and one daughter, who is my brother’s wife, but she would always treat that boys... give a lot of importance to the boys and she never really like girls. I feel girls bring a lot of joy and peace in the household. She will be more caring, like a mother to the siblings, as she gets later brothers and sisters you knows. She will love them more. Like an elder son, would not care much about the younger siblings. But a daughter is always... All my brothers they use to think like that, even my mother wanted always girls. So she uses to tell me. First she had a son and then a daughter, my sister. She was very weak; she was born in the eighth month. She was kept in incubator and all. So my mother never believed that she would survive. She always had the fear that this baby will not survive. She wanted a daughter, one more daughter. Then she got three sons, continuous. Then she went to all the worship places and prayed for one more daughter. Then I was born. In that time she was very happy. She used to tell me that: I like girls and I didn’t have faith that the other girl would survive so after many prayers you are born. You are my joy. My prayers are answered and all. She pampered me a lot and maybe some of that got in to all the children. All my brothers, they said: daughter, daughter first. So I was used to think I want a daughter”.

R2.13 “I wanted a girl child. My mother used to say: it’s better to have girls. Boys are making trouble, problems. I also felt, I shouldn’t get a boy. If I got a second change to have a baby, I prefer again a girl child only”.

I: Why are boys making problems?

“Whenever boys are growing up, there’s a risk they may fell in bad habits. And after the marriage also they can

be influenced by their wives and go out of the house. They can go from the parents, far from the parents. At any moment, they can just take of. And girls they will be happy with us, up to what time they can jointly leave and afterwards their going to their houses and after that there will not be any confusions or something. They will take care of by their family-in-law and we need not to bother about it”.

I: There was only not a son preference of your husband?

“My mother-in-law used to say: I want a grand son. And I used to say: no, I want a girl. My husband also prefers a second baby, boy or girl, it makes no difference”.

The preference of a particular sex can be influenced by having children of a particular sex; this is illustrated by respondent 15.

R2.15 I: Did you and your husband have a son preference?

“I had, especially. He never had. I had, but what to do?”

I: Why?

“One girl was there. I wanted one more male child. One girl was there, one boy I needed”.

Most often it seemed that there was a male preference by the husband or by the family-in-law. Most of the respondents stated that they did not experience much pressure of these persons.

R1.9 “Yes, I felt, because it’s usually in our community to expect a son first. And even though I personally was not that much desired to get a son, it was the first impression. It’s good, it’s better to have first a son, because they used to worry, if one got first a daughter. So, I also felt according to their wishes”.

R2.23 “My in-law elders, their way of thinking was even though we read a girl child very well, given all the facilities, it will go to other house. So, what’s the use of it, or something? It will not remain as our family’s child. If it’s a male child, it will remain as a member of our family. And I don’t think like this way. It doesn’t make any difference, if it’s a son or a daughter. Even though it’s a daughter, we can rear her and if we want we can make her to stay in our home only”.

Das (1987 cited in Hutter 1998, p.41) expects that as modernisation continues son preference may also diminish. There is a son preference by a small group in this study population, which can be seen as an indicator of modernisation. Noticeable, is the fact that also six women had a daughter preference. The other respondents did not express a sex preference; they just wanted their child to be healthy. Not only when they already had a son, but most often when they had their first pregnancy. This was something unexpected.

Infertility

The number of children can also be influenced by infertility. The next respondent, from the older age group, had one girl child, but she preferred to have another male child. She also considered adoption.

R1.25 “When I was 42 years, I had an external structure line within the uterus and doctors operated and removed the uterus. So I couldn’t have any children. I desired but couldn’t. Up to 8 to 10 years I regularly use to check up, why am I not carrying? I asked the doctor, after my child birth. Then he examined and treated for several years and then he examined and told that there’s a problem and then I removed it to be save. I worried for several years, but when I come to know that there was a problem, I prepared myself and didn’t expect anymore. At that time I was much even to adopt a male child to continue our family and its name. I preferred to adopt a male child till my sister-in-law gave me an example that she experienced it. Because she was not having children, she adopted a baby. But unfortunate she lost that baby and neighbours commented on her like, she’s unfortunate not to get a child, but even she lost the adopted child also. So she said, my sister-in-law advised me: don’t do it in this way. However you have a daughter, be happy with it. If she [daughter] gets children, you can take care of it very well, afterwards. And with Gods grace, my daughter has two sons now. They are living with us and I’m very happy”.

6.2.5 Timing of children

Women have to prove their fertility after marriage, because their roles are defined in terms of being wives and mothers (Saxena 1995). It is expected that the first birth interval is short after marriage. If the birth interval is getting longer than two years of marriage, people and

especially her family-in-law will question whether she can have children, or not. Another indication

is that between marriage and the birth of the first child, hardly any contraceptives are used (Hutter 1994).

From the interviews it seems that 15 out of 25 had their first birth after two years of marriage. There was no influence of the different age groups on this first birth interval. The first birth interval can be short when the couple does not use contraceptives like respondent 17, or because they planned it that way, like respondents 14 and 9 illustrate.

R2.17 “No, there was no plan, that’s why I’ve a child. It was surprising for both me and my husband. And he also didn’t have any information about the married life. I hadn’t so. In a sense”.

R2.14 “Both families didn’t put pressure on us. As my husband was 30 years old at that time. So we didn’t take any planning. We thought it can happen at this time also”.

R1.9 “First child there was no planning. After one year I got a baby. I expected a child very much just after my marriage, my husband also”.

The next woman got pregnant immediately after marriage, because she did not use family planning. Her husband wanted to abort the child.

R2.18 “Just it happened. We were thinking of planning, but it happened. Actually, I’ve asked my husband, what kind of planning we will use. But he was not serious about these things at that time. So it happened. But afterwards he resisted: we will not have a child that early. But because I am a doctor I know the complications if first pregnancy is admitted. I insisted: no we will continue. It was better to decide before, to plan first. But since it was happened, let us to continue it and except it. And he did”.

The age at marriage also has an influence on the timing of the first birth interval. Two women from different age groups married when they were 17. They gave birth to their first child five years after marriage.

Respondent 16 wanted to create a long birth interval between her two children, because of her education.

R1.16 I: There’s six years between your first and second child. Why did you choose for this gap?

“Because of my education. I had not a choice of planning. My condition as like as soon as possible, I had to get kids. Hormones are not good for my condition, so the doctor advised me: you have first to go for one kid. Afterwards you can think of contraceptives. So without planning. The contraceptives it may interfere with my pregnancy in future that was the advice of the doctor. So I couldn’t risk with my first kid. So after getting my first kid, it was enough. If I get a second kid or not; I’ve not any problems. That was the idea, so after that. It was my PhD time and all. I can’t go for the second. So then I used contraceptives. I was much frustrated, because immediately after marriage I got my first pregnancy and it was an [iud], nine months complete pregnancy was there and during delivery I lost my first baby. Immediately within a gap of four months I got second pregnancy. And I was frustrated like looking afterwards the baby, college and clinic. I need some [...]. Now he’s started to go first standard and his school timing will be from morning to evening. And he can manage himself now. So I felt now it is time for me to, and it’s a new college started, so there’s not much... here. It’s just two months back, this college is started. Not any arrangements. This building is going on, they are constructing. It’s just a temporarily arrangement. And actually I had some health problems. My menstruation cycle and all. I was in the condition, that I can’t go for any of contraception and all. Initially I had to go for the issue, that was my status. My health condition was like that. So, in the first year I got pregnant. There as no change for... If it was late, I don’t know what happened”.

Respondent 19 planned her son to be born after the completion of her education. But because of some complications she got pregnant.

R2.19 I: Did you stop your education when your son was born?

“No, I didn’t stop; I didn’t appear for the final exams. So, everything was over [finished] regarding the synopsis thesis submission, everything was over. So exams was in September 15, he was born on September 28 and it was [...], means I went for a caesarean section. I had to take some rest and everything, so I dropped it. After six months, means in the month of March, coming march, I will go for the final exams. Actually, I planned the baby

after six months, means after the completion of PG [post graduation], but immediately after two years, I stopped taking pills and with that I had got some complications like [post miliminaria] and everything. So for that I took treatment, for three months. It's for the regulation of the cycles. We didn't plan a baby. So after regulation of the periods I never thought I will conceive. Otherwise that's why we postpone the baby after three years, means for the fist three years. Actually in this society, after marriage, almost within a year or within two years, means already I'm having, my age is 28 years. He's 31. So, thus looking at the age, what should have... is as much earlier 23, 24, 25 that's better. But for the sake of education, we postponed it".

Employment can affect the timing of childbearing. Respondent 13 explains:

R2.13 "After three years of marriage I was engaged to sports and several times my mother wanted to have a grandchild, but my father used to say that you wait. First she has to build up a career in sports and afterwards she can get a baby. If she gets a baby first, she can't engage in sports. He used to convince her [mother]".

The birth interval between births can also be a result of the employment of a woman, which is illustrated by respondent 21.

R2.21 I: When are you planning to have the second child?

"No, because I want my daughter to be independent. I have to feed her. I have to make her sleep. She's very much dependent on me. If I had another child, I may not concentrate on her and she feels bad. My mother is very much concentrated on the small baby and not concentrating on me. She should understand that: no, my mother loves me as much as for the baby child also. So I want her to become a little bit independent".

I: How old do you want your daughter to be?

"Four, five years. After completing her fourth year".

Respondent 4 got pregnant, although she planned to have a birth interval between her first and second child, because she was employed.

R1.4 "Even when my second pregnancy, it was unexpected, even when I was taken pills, oral pills, I conceived. I was using that. In spite of that I conceived. And then the doctor told me that I was pregnant. I was feeding my first baby, so I was under the impression that as long you feed, you don't become pregnant. Because I never thought that I'm pregnant. When I come to know. It was a big dilemma for me. How will I manage, because my son was not even one year, hardly ten months old? When I come to know about it, that I was already pregnant, then I told my parents-in-law that I wanted to abort. Then they said: if you thinkings are of bringing up the children is the problem, then no problem. We are here at home. We will take care of the children, but if there other reasons... then you decide. Then I thought it over and I let it".

Also other factors can influence the timing of births. Respondent 12 postponed the birth of her children, because she and her husband had to conduct the marriages of her two sisters-in-law first.

R2.12 "Yes, we had no child up to four years after marriage, as we had our own responsibilities. So they used to ask often when we were in their home, especially my mother-in-law; means sister-in-law of my mother-in-law".

I: Would you listen to them?

"I was anxious to see, whenever we had a child. But we had to given importance to that, because as my mother-in-law felt sick after six months after our marriage. We cared about that thing. She used to worry about her two daughters. She needed our help. To ask is naturally, but we had not cared".

Respondent 10 became mother after being married for eight years, because of medical reasons.

R1.10 "He was born late, because of some medical problems. So I was not well for some time. The doctors asked us not to have a child soon. So we postponed it".

6.2.6 Spacing methods

In chapter 2 it is described that more educated people will have better knowledge of the reproductive process and easy access to modern and effective contraceptives methods. They will also use them more than others (UN 1979; Bhargava and Saxena 1987). Several respondents got pregnant, because of having not accurate information about family planning or due to the failing of these planning methods. Some of these cases are described in the

previous section by respondents 10, 19 and 4. Most women did not use family planning methods after marriage. After the first child, family planning was used more often to plan the second child birth, in order for the respondents to manage the family life and their employment.

Respondent 12, from the younger age group, did never use family planning.

R2.12 “I felt that to adopt some family planning, is risky to my health, risky to me. If I take some tablets or something... Therefore I didn’t prefer that”.

6.2.7 Change in behaviour

On asking respondents if their behaviour changed much after becoming a mother, their answers indicate an increase of responsibility. Also other answers were given by the next respondents.

R1.5 “My roles changed, more responsibilities, more commitment. And I also had to make time for my child and my profession. Because that was all the time there, that I would not stagnate. And also [...]. But yes it is sometimes difficult, it will give some tension. It was a balancing act. To combine was tuff. I wanted to do both and [...] because I didn’t have any helping hand. In that time I started to miss my mother. I thought if she was there; at least take care of my baby for some time. Then getting servants here is a really problem. You won’t get a servant. The reliable ones, who work well and do all this and be honest, don’t steal. So from that point of view it was very tough”.

R2.14 “More responsibilities. I had to manage my home and child and husband”.

Respondent 2 described how she lost her shyness after getting her first child.

R1.2 “I lost my shyness. My friend Karant said that shyness and serene for dirty will go away. Doctor said to me: put the sari aside a little bit [show some body]. But I felt so much shy to do only that. Then she scolds me like: you do everything! Why are you worrying? She was an aged woman. I felt it on that day itself [that I lost shyness]. Until that time I was not willing to open the bathroom door when my mother wanted to help me with my head bath”.

The emotional condition of respondent 21 changed after becoming a mother.

R2.21 “It was very nice to have a child. They have that affection. Before that we don’t have affection towards a child but after that we get our child we have affection for that. If it cries, it’s... what happened to that; we have that affection towards the child. And we feel responsible as a mother and I should be responsible and taking care of the child. I should make her grow, educate her...”.

6.3 Menopause and sterilisation

Women’s reproductive career ends with menopause or with permanent sterilisation. On asking respondents how their lives changed after menopause, most of the time the answers were regarding the physical changes. Respondent 10, 58 years, illustrate this.

R1.10 “Oh yes, changes within me. I use to feel depressed, a lot of depressions. Especially when I used to go to college. So whenever I would be on the way, I would feel depressed. Almost having tears in my eyes. And I would flush a lot. But since my husband is a doctor, he knows how to take care. Trying to see that I didn’t get into a lot of problems. It was nearly a year I didn’t realise it was due to that, but later it came to me”.

Respondent 4 did not experience many physical changes.

R1.4 “It went so gradually that I didn’t have any emotional problems or physically problems”.

The respondents did not express much change in their behaviour or status at this point in time. If there was any change, it was the result of the influence of their age, or other factors on their status and autonomy, which will be described in chapter 7.

7 Autonomy and status

The autonomy of women is the focus in section 7.1 in order to examine women's autonomy and how education, employment and age influence this through the life course. In section 7.2 women's status is the key concept. The influences of education, employment, age and reproductive career on status through the life course are discussed. All this is studied by looking at the two different age groups of the study population.

7.1 Autonomy

The first part of this chapter is dedicated to the autonomy and is subdivided into sections, which describe the four aspects of autonomy separately. In each of these sections, the influences of the factors described before, will be examined as indicated by the respondents. Not only do factors affect autonomy, but also autonomy seems to affect fertility. This is described in section 7.1.5. The respondents were also asked how their autonomy differs with the autonomy of their mothers'. Their perceptions regarding differences in autonomy are discussed in section 7.1.6.

7.1.1 Knowledge autonomy

Knowledge autonomy is defined as "women's knowledge of and exposure to the outside world" (Jejeebhoy 1995, p.37). Data of the interviews indicate that the respondents experience education as the biggest influence on this aspect of autonomy. Respondent 5, from the older age group, explains in a symbolic way how education influenced her exposure to the outside world.

R1.5 "Like, had I not got all this knowledge and exposure, I wouldn't be so much aware. I wouldn't know the world at [...]. I would feel like a frog in a well. You know because for a frog the well is his whole world. Maybe my outlook and horizons have changed thanks to the exposure of education qualifications and employment. Definitely".

The following respondents explain how education influences their understanding of the world and society.

R2.11 "Education makes a woman a little self-confident, you know and she thinks more about the subject and material, what's life like. And she can see the world more rightly. That's what I... To a certain point, a woman should have a bachelor degree and she is going in the right path, she needs a... Till that at least, she should have education. My employment has most influenced my life".

R2.12 "Yes, definitely. With education we can understand society better and we should learn from everybody. There are different types of people in the society and if we mix up with them in a very good way, we can learn things better".

According to the next respondents, education does influence their interaction with other people.

R2.1 "It [education] helped me to have interaction with friends".

R2.16 "Definitely, we come across many people. Every day we experience new things. If we were in the house, whatever the male members tell us, we'll know about that only and we will discuss about the same thing. But when we can contact so many people and many places. Definitely".

R2.21 "Education helped me a lot, in getting this job and I can interact with people properly. I communicate with them".

R2.19 "Definitely, means when if I go outside, I come to know how to improve my family life. So if they get education, they can get outside. It doesn't mean they going outside, it means you cross a lot of people, you come to know their problems, everything. So if a girl gets education and if she went outside for some work and all, she will come to know problems in society and how she can manage all those things".

Two teachers from the older age group claim that only a degree has no influence. This is illustrated by respondent 5:

R1.5 “So what is education? Is it just getting degrees? There are so many people who get a degree, PhD, also. Who still have not come out of their traditional way of thinking? So that is no education. Education is awareness of knowing, what the practicality of life is and what you expect of life. The meaning behind everything that you are doing. So that is what education is, it is more awareness, knowing what happens in the world, knowing what is right for you, be able to make your own decisions in life. So that way, awareness through education it comes. Not just getting degrees. I have chosen for one child because of my awareness and by my practical situation”.

Employment has influence on the knowledge autonomy. Due to her employment, respondent 23 experienced an extension of her knowledge.

R2.23 “Yes, after the completion of my education, you will have some knowledge. But it’s with regard to a specific discipline and in one way it’s limited to that subject only. But after the job, knowledge improved”.

She also expressed to have more interaction with the outside world due to her employment, rather than her education.

R2.23 “After the completion of our education, we have very little contact with the outside world. After employment, we will have some contact with higher authority, and surroundings, colleagues are working around and there for the status is more here. People give also that respect according to our job rather than complication of our education”.

This is also illustrated by the following respondents from the two age groups.

R2.1 “Job also gives that confidence to interact with outside people”.

R1.2 “Now I meet more people outside. So that helped me”.

R2.14 “As I have a job, we can contact with many people outside and we can get a wider perspective with regard to the world. I felt it, whenever I compare my two sisters-in-law, who have no job, who are house wives; I think that I’ve a wider perspective and more life experience”.

Some respondents explain how their reproductive career affects this aspect of autonomy.

Respondent 1, 26 years, explains how her marriage influenced her exposure to the world.

R2.1 “After marriage I exposed to the world more. It was village and little scope to exposure with the outer world. But after marriage I came to this city and got more opportunities”.

Respondent 15, experienced an increase in her knowledge due to the reproductive event of motherhood and due to her employment.

R2.15 “I got more knowledge about being a mother and being an employer. I had more responsibility for things”.

Respondent 2 has a different opinion. She thinks that life experience of elders influences her knowledge in stead of education.

R1.2 “I think what is there in education in this regard. It is the life experience of elders. Talking with people, you see. We read history, political science, but what happens I don’t know. Where has [the knowledge] it go?”

According to the respondents from both age groups, education and employment give them knowledge, make them more self-confident to interact with the people and create a wider perspective of the world. It also helps to interact with people. Employment stimulates the contact with higher authority, colleagues and the surroundings. This way, education and employment place women in a better position to understand society.

7.1.2 Decision-making autonomy

Decision-making autonomy is “women’s say in family decisions and decisions concerning their own lives and well-being” (Jeejeboy 1995, p.37). Almost all of the respondents expressed to have a voice in matters. The next respondents will describe that.

R1.6 “It is equal. Sometimes will be there. Sometimes he will not listen. Sometimes I will not listen, whatever the say. Then we have to compromise ourselves”.

R2.15 “Both of us talk together, my husband and me. Until we both are fine. We talk together and compromise. Which one is better we take. We think about it carefully”.

Two respondents from both age groups indicate that their husband had most decision-making autonomy, although respondent 18 stated that she is a person of discussion.

R2.18 “No, actually my nature is of discussion. I’m taking the decisions. But my husband is not like that. He thinks I have to follow him, blindly. So that’s the difference. But I know, if I go that way, there will be more disturbances in family. So I will gradually I think I will make him understand the importance of discussion. Discussing is another thing. But I will make an effort to make him understand what the discussion and after discussion there are differences. If you take the individual decision, that in fact it will have an impact. It will have on me and on the family and everything, and our career. So that is a big struggle”.

R1.2 “More, husband is taken decisions”.

The following two women indicate that they had much decision-making power.

R2.1 “All [household decisions] are mine. It’s me only. He asks”.

R2.21 “My husband uses to ask me if he wants to do anything, if he wants to take any decisions, he uses to consul me and is that ok or your opinion about that. And I use to give it, if it’s right, I say you can proceed and if it’s not, I use to give my opinion, because of this it’s not right I feel like that. And if you want to do it, you can do it”.

The above answer seems to indicate a bigger decision-making power of the respondent compared to her husband. But on asking if they both discuss, she answered:

R2.21 “Yes, everything we discuss”.

Several women indicate that they make some decisions by their selves and other decisions together with their husbands. The following women will illustrate this.

R2.13 “If it’s with regard to purchase of small things, I can take it. If it’s with regard of the purchase of some land, house or big things, we both together make decisions”.

R2.14 “With regard to small things, I can take the decision. Or when my children are sick, I can take. With regard to major issues, we will discuss and than only we will take. Without discussing I will not take a decision”.

Respondent 20 makes the day to day decisions, while her husband makes the ‘big decisions’.

R2.20 “With regard to big decisions, he takes the decision, with regard to small decisions, day to day thinks I can decide”.

Respondent 4 explains that her husband makes decisions regarding electric purchases.

R1.4 “Yes the decision-making is equal. But electric things I will leave to him. I don’t understand that much of technology. I will say: you should decide”.

In nuclear families, most of the time the decisions are made by husband and wife. In joint families the decision-making of the women is less. This is expressed by respondents 13 and 23.

R2.13 “In this home we both, together take decisions. If it’s in the in-law’s family, my husband with his parents take the decision”.

R2.23 “In my husband’s family, I usually don’t take decision. There are elders and my husband use to take the decisions. Here there is no hesitating to decide something. Whatever it is, it is left in the husband’s family only. With regard my child, his rearing, I take all the decisions. Not regard to financial condition of the family”.

In some cases, the in-laws play an important role in the decision-making power of a woman. Respondent 11 experienced this while she lived in a nuclear family. Her employment affected the situation trough time.

R2.11 “Yes, only they are not living in my house, but almost all the decisions are taken by my in-laws. Now it’s also my sister-in-law, she takes the decisions. I don’t have any rights; they take the decisions for me”.

I: In your own household?

“We [respondent and her husband] make the basic decisions, we take. The major decisions have to be taken there by my sister-in-law, my mother-in-law and my brother-in-law. But major things are discussed, such as taking land, taking purchases for the house, or taking some big assets. Those are all decided with all my family-in-laws. First, they didn’t treat me as a member also to make decisions. They wouldn’t take opinion of my also. What I think about things, what should be taken, discussed. Now, I’ve been... If there’s taken a decision, they also think of me. See, this is going on, what could you say like... of this matter. This was after my employment. They feel I’m... I’ve something in me that I can take some decisions and that I’m able to do something. Other than housework and all. After my employment; it has some status to mine opinion. They think about my opinion now”.

The next women from both age groups illustrate how education influences their decision-making.

R1.25 “As I have education, I’m able to think with regard to decision-making”.

R2.21 “Because of education only. Because I’m educated, he wants to consult me and he uses to tell me everything and he wants feedback from me, what I want to do, what’s my decision. He uses to give reference to my decision”.

According to respondent 4, educated women are less influenced by others.

R1.4 “Education gives us the power to reason, analyse things. You can compare what is good and what is bad. Not just being influenced by others. If a person is not educated he will always be influenced by what others say. But if they are educated, you can think for yourself. But I also see educated people who also don’t think that much. Education not necessarily gives all that, but it has to be more than education. It lies in education”.

Respondent 5 also explains how education makes your decision-making less reliable on others. Beside that it improved, because she is on equal footing with her husband.

R1.5 “Without education, how should I decide? Because I’m educated I can stand with him on equal footing. Otherwise, if I’m not educated, whatever he says, I will say yes. That’s how I think. Being aware of things, not having just a degree, doing PhD, for the sake of doing PhD and not knowing what in the world is and still relying on somebody to make decisions, still relying on somebody to choose and all that stuff”.

The next respondents feel that this aspect of autonomy changed, because now people listen to them.

R2.11 “I feel that time [before employment] I didn’t have the freedom to make decisions of myself. My opinion... If she said yes or no, it was not a point of my decision. After my employment; it has some status to mine opinion. They think about my opinion now”.

R1.8 “Because you are also earning, they will listen to what you say. Otherwise people may find, when you don’t have a job, they want not listen. Like you might not be of any value to my decision or my opinion. Because I’m having both education and money also by employment. My decision and thoughts are valued. Like my co sisters were at home, like my sister-in-law. Even though they have money and all, they cannot devote their thoughts like I do. So when I look at them, I’m in a better position to say something. I feel better than them. Not by fight and by force, naturally it comes”.

Respondent 15 thinks her decision-making power increased, because she is economic independent due to her employment.

R2.15 “After having a job I’ve more decision-making power, because of economic independence. Yes, taking decisions about some economic spending like that. At least it is”.

According to women from both age groups, the age of a woman affects her decision-making.

R1.2 “In Indian culture, elder go on saying, advising and it influences us the most. They say like: we have done it, so it will happen”.

R1.4 “I think so. Experience... You learn each time. You make mistakes in daily life”.

R2.14 “As life experience becomes more, decision-making power becomes stronger”.

Respondent 25 stated that after being married her age influenced her decision-making.

R1.25 “Between 35-65 years, with regard to responsibilities and decision-making, almost all the things”.

Three respondents explain how reproductive events had an impact on their decision-making.

Respondent 14 explains how her marriage influenced.

R2.14 “As life experience becomes more, decision-making power becomes stronger. Age is supporting. After marriage it’s going better. I can take more decisions. Even though there was freedom, facilities, before marriage. We are expected to obey or parents you know?”.

Respondent 20 describes how motherhood made her less involved in the decision-making.

R2.20 “It was more before motherhood because... As I was engaged, busy with child rearing, my concentration about other things was less of my concern”.

From the data of the interviews it becomes clear that the decision-making of the respondents is not only influenced by the concepts of the conceptual model, but also by other factors, which are described below. Respondent 17 illustrates the effect of an age difference between the spouses. This played a role in the past, when she was younger. Nowadays this is not an issue anymore.

R2.17 “Sometimes my husband was taking the decision, because I was so little to take the decisions. I have one childish nature. Moreover we have an age difference, ten years of age. It’s happened in the past but now he’s asking for everything. Both will be discussing now”.

Respondent 10 explains how her decision-making changed after her husband became sick, four years ago, after 33 years of marriage.

R1.10 I: When did it change, that you also had a say in the decision-making?

“It changed when he became very sick. He was quite sick for some time. He had kidney failure, so I was the one who took him to the doctor and stayed with him for 12 hours and come back. I took a strong decision, taking him to a different place and getting him operated. I was all alone. So that made him very good. I can face everything in life, you know?”

Some respondents told that at some time in marriage, their husband was living at a different place as they had employment over there. Respondent 5 makes clear how this affected her decision-making power.

R1.5 “If my husband would be there all the time with me, he would do most of the things. And then I would not learn much of things. In a way, that is a blessing that he’s away and I’ve to handle everything from the home front. So that had made me more strong, more confident and I do more things. In fact, I [...] much more than he does, because he’s more into the army life. Army life is very much...”.

Almost all of the respondents expressed to have a voice in matters; to have decision-making power. Several women indicate that they make some decisions by their selves and other decisions together with their husband. In nuclear families, the decisions are often made by husband and wife, while in joint families the decision-making of women is less. Respondents from both age groups indicate that education and employment influenced their decision-making the most. Education gives them power to reason, to analyse things in order to make a decision. It makes them less influenced by others and more on equal footing with their spouse. The employment of women makes them earning and often economic independent, which gives them more decision-making autonomy. Also the age affects women’s decision-making in a positive way. The reproductive events did not seem to have a big influence, while other aspects like the age difference between the spouses, illness of the husband and a separate living situation of the spouses, seems to have an influence.

7.1.3 Physical autonomy

Physical autonomy is “dealing with the outside world and the extracting of available services” (Jejeebhoy 1995, p.37). Most of the respondents expressed to be mobile, this is illustrated by the following respondent.

R1.4 “I’m alone. I’m not scared. I’ve travelled alone, always. Very often to Germany and even in India to seminars. But I see to it that my husband comes in India. As he went to Germany, first time when we married. He had come in 94 again when I got my reward for my PhD thesis. It was an international competition. So I send my thesis to the competition and then I won the price. So that time I wanted my husband to come, attain that function. So, I’ve gone six times, so twice he came and four times I’ve go alone”.

In order to get more information regarding the mobility of the women, the respondents were asked if they need to ask permission when they leave the house. Only five out of the 25 respondents had to ask permission. This is illustrated by the next respondents.

R2.12 “Yes, I ask my husband for permission. Sometimes it is necessary. If it takes much time to go outside and something, then permission asking is necessary. If it’s to office, there’s no need”.

R2.21 “I use to ask permission, because... I prefer to ask permission and I used to take permission and go”.

R2.1 “I ask for permission. Most of the time he agrees, as he knows where I’m going and which place it is”.

Four out of those five respondents that had to ask permission were from the younger age group. The majority of the other respondents stated that they only inform their husband if they would go.

R2.23 “It’s not like permission, but we have to tell them, where we are going”.

R1.5 “I don’t need permission. I need to inform him and he needs to inform me when he’s away. Because if I call him up and otherwise I get worried. We inform each other, but it is not that I take his permission to go, because he knows that ok there’s an important conference. He knows that it’s professional important to me, but it’s our responsibility to each other, then we inform each other were we are going. That’s it. If he has to go on some conference somewhere or on some course, he’s send as a requirement of his profession, then he goes. I’m not going to stop him. Neither is he’s going to stop me, but we should know where we are”.

There are also several women who can move freely, but are scared of the dark and prefer to have company. This is illustrated by two women from both age groups.

R1.9 “I want some company to go. In the dark I need somebody, otherwise I can’t. I don’t feel happy to go alone outside in the dark. Somebody should be with me”.

Respondent 17 describes that she is sometimes forced to go outside on her own.

R2.17 “I don’t practice to go alone, I want always company when I go outside. It is my own choice. Actually they were forcing me to go alone, but I’m not interested in that I have not so dared”.

Women’s education supports this aspect of autonomy. Respondent 4 explains that education gives her confidence.

R1.4 “It gives us confidence, to protect ourselves. We are not really scared of anything. I used to go from station at two o’clock alone to my room. Then they said: you shouldn’t do it. But I’m not scared basically”.

The next respondents can communicate better because of their education.

R2.21 “Because I’m educated I can communicate with the society properly. If I was not educated I don’t have that ability to move in the society. Because I’m educated I can move properly”.

R1.24 “Education also, it’s a part. Because if I was not educated properly, it could have been a different story. For me, it’s not like that. I can speak three languages. I can move and I can talk and I can present myself with any of the [...] in the offices”.

As a result of her employment, it is necessary for a woman to travel to her workplace. In this way her physical movement is extended.

R1.24 “But my work, I use to go from place to place. Different industries, 200 or 300 hundred km. away. Because of my job I’m moving. Wherever I have to move for the government, I will move”.

R1.4 “Yes, I go alone to places, like congresses and all that”.

R2.13 “I can move alone. If my husband is there he accompany my. Otherwise I can move I have that much courage, due to my sport activities and he’s also doesn’t expect me to ask permission with me to everywhere”.

The following respondent talks about a facility provided by the company, which increase her mobility.

R1.8 “They [Life Insurance Company] give us free travel facility. So, we can go travelling and that expense is bringing to us later by office [...]. That is a [...], we can see many many places. You can meet people and working definitely improved my status”.

A change in jobs, a transition in the job career, can influence the physical autonomy. Respondent 6 experienced this.

R1.6 “Since five years I’m director of Women Studies. I was a lecturer just in History Department. I was coming from the house, finishing my work, library, work, PhD and going home. I’m the only daughter, father never used to allow me to go anywhere, that fear was there, facing the people. But after becoming a director, I participated conferences and seminars, everything. So it gives more courage, gives me more confident. I can go anywhere, no fear at all. I can talk with any person. So that’s my personal experience”.

I: What was the reaction of your husband and the family?

“He was not allowing me to go anywhere. He was not allowing me. After becoming director of Women Studies, whenever I use to go, I used to go and I would take this madam, lady you met before. Anywhere... suppose I had to go to Delhi, Madras, Bangalore... I would take her and go, because I had company and travelling also safe”.

I: So your husband agreed with that?

“Yes, he’s agreed. He thinks somebody is there to... He can’t go out to places, he will be busy with work. And I have company, so he’s satisfied”.

The age of women is also a factor that should be taken into count. Respondent 3 tells the following:

R1.3 “Age. Situation. Now I’m old. I cannot bother. Where I’m going that also depends. If we know the place then we take some help from anybody”.

Reproductive events did not seem to have a big effect on the movements of women. Education and employment played a more important role in this aspect of autonomy. Nevertheless, respondent 21 experienced an effect after becoming a mother.

R2.21 “Quite the same, but at the time of movement I have to carry my child I’ve to take care of it, because of that I use to ask my husband for everything. I ask permission. I’m more restricted”.

Respondent 10 mentions a different factor that influences her mobility positively.

R1.10 “We have a car, so... We have a car for a long time, since I got married. We have car. I used to take the car also when it’s dark”.

Most of the respondents expressed to be mobile. Also the majority of the women did not need to ask permission before they left the house, which is an indication of physical autonomy. Noticeable is that more of the ‘younger’ women had to ask permission. However, some of these women did not want to move alone. Can it be that ‘older’ women have more freedom to move around as a result of autonomy gained by their age? Education and employment influence the physical movement of women from both age groups the most. It increases women’s confidence and courage in protecting themselves and in better communication. The work participation makes it necessary for a woman to travel to her workplace, which makes her more mobile. Age and reproductive events did not seem to influence the physical autonomy much.

7.1.4 Economic autonomy

Economic autonomy can be defined as the “self-reliance in economic matters” (Jejeebhoy 1995, p.37). “In particular, economic independence and access to and control over economic resources enhance women’s ability to rely on themselves, rather than on their children or husbands, to attain social status or acceptance” (Jejeebhoy 1995, p37). Data of the interviews indicate that almost all the women required some economic autonomy. On asking if the respondents were able to spend as they wish, most respondents answered that they were. On asking if they were economic independent, most women agreed. Still, the degree of the women’s economic autonomy differs much.

The respondents were asked if they had their own bank account. Only two respondents did not have their own bank account. Respondent 23 explains why:

R2.23 “I have not opened a bank account, because I’m in the starting period of my job”.

The rest of the women had their own and most often also a shared account with their husbands.

Respondent 4 explains how her education influences her economic autonomy.

R1.4 “I relate everything to education. Because I had education, I had a job. Because I’ve a job, I’ve an income. And education had thought me to spend also, how to spend. Suppose if I earn and my husband ask me every [paise], where did that money go? I will feel very uncomfortable I will fight. So, I think it’s good. When you work, when you spend so many hours working, you have a right on that”.

R1.8 “Uneducated women are still under their parents’ and husband’s control. They are not as free as we are. If they like something, they are unable to buy. But even if they have money, they have to ask their husband and then take his permission and see if they can buy the thing. We are quite free”.

The next respondents explain how their employment made them free to spend.

R2.21 “It’s very much because, if I’m not working we have spent with one salary only. He use to restrict, don’t spend that, don’t purchase that... But I’m also working and I am also getting a salary so he never restricts me to spend”.

R2.14 “It’s due to job, because if I was not economically independent I should wait for him. I should ask with him. Who knows if he has that much money at that or not, I have to wait for him. Now it’s due to that job, I can purchase these things”.

R2.15 “Yes, since I earn I’m free to spend”.

R1.10 “Jobs make us economically independent, give you more freedom. I’m confident that all girls should be economically independent. They should not go beg for one or two dollar, they should not go beg. Once they have this economical independent status, then they are independent. The girls, some of the girls are earning very well now. So when I see them, I will feel that it’s good that they earning well. Suppose they want to go and purchase something, they want to spend some charity or something they can have. It’s better to be well qualified”.

Respondent 18 explains that she has a higher educational attainment and a higher income than her husband. This will decrease her economic autonomy in the following way.

R2.18 “Actually what happens, my husband he’s [...], so his education is less than me. And that is bad in India, you know? So like India mentality... He should not have that kind of complex and all. That I’m educated and earning more. I use to give him my whole salary. So we decided that he spend the money. But what happened afterwards, it’s not that correct [attitude], because it was taken granted. What concept I had that was misused or misunderstood by him. So nowadays I’m thinking I should take my own decisions and all. Because I’ve believed in him before, that he had talked before. That he will take care of my son’s education. That I told him, because he’s a bit confused about things now. So at this level I think I should have my own decisions and all. Nowadays I think it’s necessary for me”.

Data of the interviews indicate that almost all the women from both age groups required some economic autonomy. Almost all the women had their own bank account and could spend their own income as they wish. However, they would discuss big purchases with their husbands. The interviews indicate that education and employment have most influence on this aspect of autonomy. Education thoughts women how to spend and it makes them able to buy things, because they are less dependent on others. By having employment, women have an income which gives them most often economic autonomy.

7.1.5 Fertility

Data from the in-depth interviews seem to indicate an influence of women’s autonomy on her fertility, which will be described in this section.

Respondent 5 starts to describe the effect of her education on her decision-making.

R1.5 “So that is what education is, it is more awareness, knowing what happens in the world, knowing what is right for you, be able to make your own decisions in life. So that way, awareness through education it comes. Not just getting degrees. I have chosen for one child because of my awareness and by my practical situation”.

She describes the influence of education on her knowledge of the world, her awareness and decision-making and how this influences her choice to have one child. In other words how her knowledge and decision-making autonomy influenced her fertility. Also data of the interview of respondent 18 indicate the influence of decision-making on her reproductive behaviour.

R2.18 “Since I’m educated I can take my own decisions. At least I can strive for it. At least now, I’m thinking of that matter, whether I should have more children or not. I can think of it at least and then take the decision, whether to have a child or not. What quality of life we can give to our children? On those basic things, we will think to have another child or not. That’s my stand towards that matter”.

7.1.6 Change in time

On asking the respondents if their autonomy differs from the autonomy of their mothers, their answers indicate an increase of women’s autonomy in time. Most often, this increase is explained as a result of women’s education. The following answers indicate a strong relation with the decision-making autonomy.

R2.11 “Totally different. Because, my mother’s opinion is not of great... She can tell her opinion, then they think over that. In the same time, in my house, if I have an opinion that could be a final of some one. Now, I’ve more to say”.

R1.24 “There is a generation gap. My mother was not much educated, she was a housewife. But we got a very good education, because of her. She looked after the house very well and looked after the interest of the girls. That’s how we are educated. There’s a change, because she was restricted to the household activities. And she had never taken up some decisions. She uses to listen, only whatever her father says. But it’s not like that with us. Since I’m a working woman, that’s our generation. There’s a change”.

Beside a change in respect and decision-making, respondent 21 also describes a change in mobility.

R2.21 I: Do you think the position of women also changed?

“Yes, now everyone will give respect to a woman. At that time, at my mother’s time, they don’t ask decisions, they don’t communicate with... if any decisions they want to take they never ask the women. They use to ask the men of the family and use to take the decisions. But now it changed. They use to ask: why are you doing this? Is that right or wrong? What is your opinion? They use to ask opinion, but at that time they never use to ask the opinion of women. At that time they have restrictions. They use to ask permission of their mother-in-law, father-in-law and... everyone in the family they use to ask permission. We are going, then they use to give the permissions. But now it is changed”.

Respondent 23 explains that her mother had less interaction with the outside world and she expects to be more economic independent. She expects this, because she just worked for several months.

R2.23 “The major difference is, my mother’s life uses to be spent within the four walls of the house. Whatever she does, she can do within that view only. But my life... I can go to my place of birth, as means it’s out of the family-in-law. Another thing is, till now I’m not economically independent, but if you are an earning woman, this support will be there”.

She also stated that the status of women changed through time, due to education.

I: Do you think that the status of women changed through time if you compare women in the time of your mother and now?

“Yes, it’s positive only. In my mother’s time, they did not use to give education, that’s the main [difference]. Nowadays, female education is more”.

Something similar is described by respondent 20, who describe the change in mobility and decision-making in general.

R2.20 “Yes, earlier she uses to be between the four walls of the house. Nowadays, she got independence. Nowadays there is respect to women and people ask about her decision, when they are going to make some decisions. In earlier days, there is not used to be education or job to the girls and therefor they use to say to the girls as like: keep quite, argue no. We will decide”.

From the interviews it seemed that women’s autonomy increased in time. Especially the mobility and decision-making of the women, in other words the physical and decision-making autonomy. Mainly, this is a result of an increase in education. Also employment plays a role; it made women more economic independent.

7.2 Status

In this chapter the status of the respondents is the focus. First the influence of reproductive events on women’s status will be explained in section 7.2.1. The effect of education (section 7.2.2), employment (section 7.2.3) and age (section 7.2.4) will follow. The respondents were also asked which factor increased their status the most troughs their life course. This way a comparison between the different factors of influence is made and described in section 7.2.5.

7.2.1 Reproductive career

The respondents were asked if they felt a change in their status after marriage. The next women experienced a change in their status.

R2.12 “Before marriage, after marriage, some differences were there. It should be change, because there are a lot of differences in married and unmarried life and people in society give more respect to married women only and I also felt it”.

Respondents 11 and 19 felt more status, because they were not treated as children anymore.

R2.11 “They treated me different. First I felt like she’s a girl, anywhere they could call me. Now specially, when I got married, when we have a function, my uncle and my auntie, together they will come to call me. You are married, you should come with your husband, come to my house. I had, my respect was little growing up then”.

R2.19 “Status and respect changed a lot. When I was unmarried, we were seen as kids in our surroundings. When we got married, we looked up as mature girl. Respect is good in comparison with bachelor life”.

Respondent 13 experienced a change in status due her role in ceremonies.

R2.13 “In several festivals, rituals, people are in the need of married women. There are several rituals like warship, pujah they put some red powder; they puts some fruits and flowers, grains and clothes in several functions. To perform those rituals, married women are necessary. To several festivals both husband and wife are necessary”.

Respondent 14 felt a change in status, because she settled in life.

R2.14 “Status was increased after marriage. Our parents got relieved of the responsibility of the child, after marriage. They were happy that their daughter was taken care of by their son-in-law and I think of this reason. In society our status increased. The interaction with people and how people look at her”.

This change is also due to her enhanced decision-making.

R2.14 “After marriage it’s going better. I can take more decision. Even though there was freedom, facilities, before marriage. We are expected to obey our parents you know? So I think after marriage I got more status”.

The treatment of males changes after marriage, according to respondent 23.

R2.23 “Status comes with marriage. In India, unmarried women are treated somehow different by the male members of the society. Especially jobholders, whom interact freely with them, but once married, there will not problems with the male members of society”.

Respondent 25 relates responsibilities with status.

R1.25 “After marriage. It increases our total responsibilities. We are in the position to deal with the responsibilities, therefor status comes after marriage”.

Not all the respondents felt that their status changed after marriage.

R1.10 “It didn’t change much”.

R1.9 “Not like that. Before marriage I also had some status, because of education and a teaching job and I’m satisfied with that also. I did not feel much change after”.

Surprisingly, data of the interviews indicate a higher number of women from the younger age group that experience an increase in their status after marriage. On asking the respondents if they noticed a change in their status after becoming a mother, some respondents noticed a change. First, respondent 15 explains:

R2.15 “Yes, there is a difference in respect. Now I become a mother so they give all respect”.

Respondent 3 felt a change because she fulfilled a duty towards her husbands’ family.

R1.3 “Family was happy; I also. It was one of my duties towards my husband’s family. Everything changed”.

Respondent 23 experienced an increase in her status and explains the effect of a male child on the status of women in India.

R2.23 “It comes automatically, this respect and status come immediately. Automatically she gets. Especially, when she gets a male child. In India scenario, a girl not having a child means, they may just leave her. They can get divorce and it’s practise. When a girl has a child, especially a male child, her place is fixed in the in-law’s family”.

The following respondents of both age groups did not experience difference in their status after giving birth.

R2.1 “There was not much change. Child caring became an extra responsibility”.

R1.9 “It was as usually, as everyone would feel in life, but responsibilities, child caring was a change. It was the same. I just did not felt change because it was just after two year of my marriage I got my child. I feel that if I postponed that childbirth I may feel some difference in their looking”.

Respondent 4 did not perceive an increase in her status. She illustrates that the opposite happens. The status of woman will decrease when she does not become a mother.

R1.4 “The opposite happens. If you don’t get a child for a few years, then the pressure is like what’s happening? Are you career minded or don’t you want children or some physical problems, that you don’t getting. Marriage and children everything is normal. So, nobody has anything to say”.

Quite some respondents, especially of the younger age group, felt a change in their status after marriage. People in society would give more respect to married women; they were seen as mature women in stead of girls. The status after this social transition is visible by the roles married women have in ceremonies. Besides the higher number of respondents from the younger age group, that experienced an increase in their status after marriage, they also experienced a bigger increase in their status after becoming a mother. A possible explanation for the influence of the different age groups is provided in section 7.2.6.

7.2.2 Education

Many women perceived an increase in their status after completion of their education.

R2.15 “Yes. They give a lot of respect to high educated people”.

R2.17 “They give respect to me, I felt like that. Without degree, we are just housewives, only for housework we be mend and when you have a degree, they will see you have a job and you that... coop to make it. Means she’s educated, she knows everything like that it becomes. Otherwise she’s for uneducated. I felt so, but I haven’t experienced it like that”.

R1.8 “Yes. In some meetings and some conferences we have. We are able to have a good dialogue and all and they do invite us for lectures and all that. It has really good [...]”.

R1.4 “Yes, everybody respects I might feel, PhD I mean doctor. I myself also think I have achieved something. I’m a role model for the younger generations in our families. Even small girls. I asked what do you want to become? They said: like you”.

Respondent 5 experienced admiration and jealous due to her education.

R1.5 “Yes, definitely. People ask me for suggestions”.

I: Do you think Indian people look up to high educated women?

“Yes, they do. There are a few yes, but they are looked up to. And there is also another side. Some women who are jealous and there are some women who admire. Jealous people, you find plenty. They say: oh, she’s doing all that, she is neglecting her family. I don’t know what makes them feel that I’m neglecting my family. It is just that they have some excuses to say”.

Respondent 21 says that traditional people do not prefer education, but they do respect that.

R2.21 “They used to respect me because I’m educated. I’ve knowledge. They use to respect people that learned much, because they are not educated. Here traditional people don’t give any preference to education, but they used to respect those who learn”.

Respondent 10 thinks that education is especially in the present day important for women’s status.

R1.10 “Absolutely. It’s very important. Especially now, in the present day, it’s very important. Because now many girls are getting into engineering, which many girls never did before. They are all doing very well, very well in fact”.

A small number did not experience much difference in their status after completing their education. Respondents 12 and 14 illustrate this:

R2.12 “I didn’t feel so because I was already in a job, but I feel it’s very good, proper and right to have a very good education. It’s essential”.

R2.14 “In cities it’s not a big deal to get a degree. Everybody will get it. I don’t think status will be higher with regard to a degree”.

Most women of both age groups, did perceive an increase in their status due to their higher education. They are not only seen as housewives anymore, but as jobholders. It makes them have good dialogue.

7.2.3 Employment

On asking the respondents, if their employment changed their status, almost all the answers indicated an increase.

R2.17 “At that time I got a lot of respect of everybody, employee, engineers and all. They have given a lot of respect at that time; after my job”.

R2.21 “Everybody used to give respect to that... They use to treat me different because I’m in job”.

R2.21 “I think I’ve now status in society, as I’m working now”.

Respondent 11 owns her own business and explains the effect on her status.

R2.11 “Yes, too much. I think I’m more satisfied with my employment and nobody says that I’m mrs. so and so. They know my name”.

Employment can also influence the respect from the in-laws’ family as described by the next respondent.

R1.5 “And then I had took a job, I got more respect in my in-laws’ family. Otherwise, you know, like she is not earning, she is dependent on her husband. Because all my sisters-in-law were working. They were all doctors and I was looked down upon. But then I took up a job and short then it add some and now I’ve a lot of respect”.

Also respondent 12 experienced more status because she is not economic dependent, but contributes to the family income.

R2.12 “It’s of very much concerned the status, but it’s essential nowadays to have a job and then join or help to the family income”.

According respondent 10, status is not always acquired by women’s employment; it changed in time.

R1.10 “Now yes”.

I: Was it not always like that?

“Changed in the last 15,20 years. Things has changed in India so much with globalisation. Lot of things changed. I never saw so many girls coming out of the house. When we were young, all my friends got married when they were 18, 19. They never come to colleges, even in Bangalore. Only few of them come to college. So of them got married early. But with globalisation, with coming of IT especially and also things have changed so much. People have a different kind of outlook now, then what they had”.

Respondent 23 believes that employment was the cause of an increase in her status, rather than education and reproductive events.

R2.23 “After marriage, child and job, status increased. But after job I got more status and respect. It’s more than we complete our education, compared with the completion of our education. At that time, we have very little contact with the outside world. After employment, we will have some contact with higher authority, and surroundings, colleagues are working around and there for the status is more here. People give also that respect according to our job rather than complication of our education”.

She explains how her status influences her family.

R2.23 “There’s more respect for the women, having a job, because it’s a thing of proud to the husband and in the family-in-laws and to the parents also. Yah, our daughter or wife doing a job and that’s because due to the employment we have more contacts with the outer side. My family has not asked financial assistance until now, but I think it’s also one thing”.

Not all the respondents perceived a strong increase in their status, due to their employment.

R2.14 “Slightly. If we both are earning in the family and we can move from lower middle to upper middle, then the status will increase”.

A higher number of women from both age groups, indicated that employment increased their status more compared to women’s education. The influence of employment on status was not always there, but is an effect of globalisation. The respondents experienced an increase in respect, especially in society, but also in the (in-laws’) family, due to the contribution to the family income.

7.2.4 Age

The next respondents experienced an influence of their age on their status.

R2.20 “Respect? No, it comes with maturity. When we are students, there is no respect, there is sympathy on students. Loving from public is there, when I was doing social work, got all respect”.

Respondent 25 noticed the effect of age at her job, but also explained how employment can contribute to the status of younger women.

R1.25 “That’s naturally. It’s there regarding jobholders, age influence is there. To every post according to their post, they have their own influence, after they get a certain age”.

I: And in society or in the family?

“Commonly we give respect to the elders, but events... though younger people also will get some respect according to their job and attainments. If a younger person is at a good position. If there’s some quality, whatever it may be they get some respect”.

Respondent 24 experiences the effect of her age at the work floor.

R1.24 “See, when I joined this job, even though there was some freedom. They have given freedom. But even then I use to feel it. I feel, why should I stay right there and I should come back [home], that’s why. But now I’m free to. When I reached at the age of 40, that’s free. And now I wouldn’t feel any uncomfortable feelings or anything in my job, where ever I go”.

Not all the respondents experienced an influence of their age. Respondent 5 stated that:

R1.5 “I didn’t felt so, it was like before”.

A small number of women noticed a change in their status due to their age. There is respect for elder people in the Indian society, but this can overcome by other factors.

7.2.5 Context

Some women indicated that the context also has an influence on their status. Respondent 14 makes a distinction between a high educated environment and a rural area.

R2.14 “My status improved, because there’s a special, different treatment in our society regarding married women who has no children. In an employed environment, which is high educated, it’s different, but in rural area even though a girl is not having a mistake. They don’t think that way. Even though the male is responsible for infertility, they use to blame the female only. More responsibilities. I had to manage my home and child and husband”.

Respondent 18 experienced most status after her marriage in Dharwad and thinks that she will have most status due to education in Mumbai.

R2.18 “In Dharwad, after marriage. There’s much difference in Mumbai. There people are more modernised. They don’t give that much importance to marriage issues and all. What I think, they are very practical and broadminded. So, marriage as such, that issue will not make a big difference for my status. I think education does”.

Respondent 16 explains how the influences on her status differ at levels of the context, society and family. First she will describe her increase in status due to education.

R2.16 “Yes. I think, because it will give me more financial income as well as status. And consideration will be there. After the completion of my PhD, I’m feeling good, I did a very good. Although, I took all the strains. The outcome is good”.

I: More status with education than marriage and being a mother?

“All on different angles. Society is not concerned with my marriage and with my kid. Society is definitely concerned with my career. My family members are more concerned with my marriage and kids and all. Two different things I can’t compare these things. Whatever I want to get from that, I got it whatever I’m getting from it, I’m getting”.

Also, respondent 11 experiences a difference in status in her family or in society.

R2.11 “No one in the public [...] I think now, education is really important as we go in public. In society it improved my status. That is, thinking that she has gone in life as a professional. And she has education, with her two children and all. Definitely it improved. As through, in our family, education doesn’t matter”.

Women’s status seems to be dependent on the context. A distinction of the context can be made between urban areas and Indian society at the one hand and rural areas and the family

on the other hand. In urban areas and in Indian society, education and employment are factors that influence women's status. While, in rural areas and within the family, more status is gathered by reproductive events.

7.2.6 Comparison of factors

Most respondents experienced changes in their status as a result of different factors. Therefore, the respondents were also asked which factor increased their status the most through their life course. This way a comparison between the different factors of influence can be made. Women from the older age group felt that they had most status at the end of their reproductive career when they did not have to take care of their children anymore. This is illustrated by the following women:

R1.4 "Now I have not responsibility of children. They are earning, they are doing [...]. Both are not married. But I've given them freedom. If you want you choose, if you want us to choose will search. So on that point I'm ok. And normal, status I also have as head of the department, professor and even in university. I have people respect me. I don't do any politics or any after dinner affairs. I do my job and go home. So people wish... When I go to anybody I feel that they respect me".

R1.6 "Yes, now it's nice. We settled you know? Very happy, both children are intelligent. They're settling their lives. These days are good according to me. We struggled so much. Now we're seeing the fruits. Well that satisfaction is there. We are all ambitious people. I mean always trust for them [...] knowledge. We think that's happiness. Children are some how... Some children of professors are not studying properly. Many problems will be there".

R1.9 "After the marriage of my children, I feel I can live my life very boldly, because before that time I had one thought that was always on my mind. I should perform this things first".

R1.8 "After we got the children, after we build the house and also before I got married. In that time I somehow grew up, [...] building a house, taking responsibilities. I have three brothers, we had to [support] them, high jobs and all. And that I enjoyed the [freedom]".

I: But then a lot changed for you.

"Before that I was quite free like careless. My parents would look after me. I was a free bird. Then later on after I got a job and all this. Brothers thinking of their jobs. And then we would used to stay in a higher house and they look after us to leave the house. So that was too much pressure on my parents. They are teacher, they brought up five children. Family, assets and all, like that".

The answers of the women from both age groups indicate that education and employment have the biggest influence on their status. A higher number of 'younger' respondents experienced an increase in their status after the reproductive events: marriage and childbearing (section 7.2.1). In this section it is described that women from the older age group felt that they acquire most status at the end of their reproductive career when they did not have to take care of their children anymore. An explanation for the higher influence of the reproductive career on the status perceived by the 'younger' women can be the fact that they did not experience the end of the reproductive career yet. The 'older' women finished their reproductive career and indicate with that experience, that they have most status at the end of the reproductive career. It should also be remembered that when a woman indicates that she experiences most status after marriage or at the end of her reproductive career, her life course is interrelated with her educational and job career. So it is possible that the reproductive event itself does not increase the status alone, but accomplish an increase in combination with other factors.

8 Conclusions

The major findings of this study are discussed in this final chapter. In the beginning of the thesis (chapter 1) six research questions are posed. These research questions are also discussed extensively in the methodology (section 3.1). Here, the research questions are answered, based on the analyses in chapter 5, 6 and 7. The study population of this study consists of high educated, employed, married women with at least one child who lives in the city Dharwad. The women belong to two age groups, 34 years or younger and 45 years or older.

- *What is the reproductive career of women in India?*

The reproductive career of a woman consists of events such as menarche, first pregnancy, birth of children and menopause. Events mark transitions which are indicated by the celebration of a function. The occurrence and timing of reproductive events form a woman's reproductive career. Data from the interviews indicate that among the higher educated women in Dharwad the celebration of the onset of menarche is rare. This does not mean that this social transition lost in importance. The transition itself was still celebrated with some rituals or a function *within the family*. The ceremony was not held *in public*, because the parents wanted to keep the menarche of the girl secret. According to some respondents, the conduct of a ceremony with the onset of menarche would be a way to publish the fact that in their family a girl was ready to marry. There still seems to be a link between a public function with the onset of menarche and the indication that a girl is ready to marry. The parents of our respondents did not think of marriage at that point in time, but considered education as their first aim in order to make their daughter independent. They also wanted to provide safety to the girl, by not spreading the news of her menarche. In sum, it can be stated that the importance of the transition still exists but the 'social meaning' is postponed by keeping the menarche secret to the outside world in order to let the girl first get some education. The social transition of menarche is accompanied with physical changes and also accompanied with changes in behaviour. A slightly higher number of women from the older age group and half of the women from the younger age group experienced a change in dressing and in their interaction with the outside world. Traditionally, the event of menarche is close related to the next reproductive event of marriage. Data of the respondents show a difference of ten years between the mean age of menarche and the mean age of marriage. Therefore, there seems no link between the onset of menarche and marriage.

The Indian marriage system exists of two main types of marriages: arranged and love marriages. Only three out of the 25 respondents had a love marriage. One respondent had a consanguineous marriage with the youngest brother of her mother. The rest of the respondents had an arranged marriage. The women and their families preferred to have a future groom who is educated, employed and have a good character. Beside this, he should also have the same religion and culture.

Marriage indicates the beginning of the next stage in a woman's life. The majority of the respondents noticed an increase in responsibilities and also feelings of safety. Traditionally, the bride moves to the joint family of her husband after marriage. This is sometimes the cause of big changes after a woman's marriage, especially when she moves from a modern nuclear family to a more traditional joint family. However, at the time of interview, almost all the respondent lived in nuclear families. This can be seen as an outcome of modernisation, in

which women prefer to establish independent nuclear homes rather than joint families. The opposite seemed true, however a high number of women from both age groups did not prefer to live in a nuclear family, but in a joint family. In this way, relatives could take care of their children very lovely, while they are at work. From the interviews it seemed that respondents were not able to live in a joint family, because they moved to Dharwad for educational facilities and white collar jobs. In small villages were the family-in-law mainly lives, these educational and employment opportunities are not provided.

All the respondents and their mothers celebrated the first pregnancy, in which the passing of good values to the unborn baby is central, and the birth of their children with a naming ceremony. This indicates that the importance of these reproductive events did not change in time. The respondents were asked if they preferred a son or a daughter before they had children. Noticeable, is the fact that six out of the 25 women had a daughter preference. They stated that a girl is more loving, caring, sensitive and mother for her siblings, while boys make trouble and they can get bad habits. Six other respondents had a son preference, because a male child will remain a member of the family. The other respondents did not express a sex preference; they just wanted their child to be healthy.

Background information of the study population shows that most women from the older age group had two children and most women from the younger age group had one child. However, a majority of the 'younger' respondents preferred to have two children. When the two age groups are compared it seems that five 'younger' women and three older women preferred to have one child. Data of the interviews indicate that women prefer one or two children in order to combine motherhood with their employment. The reason to have a second child is mainly to have company for the first child. It is also a way of security, because it is possible that something happens with the first one. Beside that, the respondents also want to give their children the best and all their affection, that is why they explain to prefer one or two children in order to accomplish that.

From the interviews it seems that 15 out of the 25 respondents of both age groups had their first birth after two years of marriage. This shows that fertility is still important in the lives of our respondents. The first birth interval was short because most of these couples did not use contraceptives. The age at marriage influenced the timing of the first birth interval. Two women from different age groups married when they were 17 and gave birth to their first child five years after marriage. Between the first and second pregnancy, more women used spacing methods to regulate this birth interval. The behaviour of women of both age groups did not change much; a small increase of responsibility was noticed after the birth of the first child.

Women's reproductive career ends with menopause or with permanent sterilisation. The lives of the respondents of the older age group did not change after menopause. Some answers indicate physical changes.

- *How does education and employment influence the reproductive career of women in India, according to the women themselves?*

It was expected that education increased the age of marriage, because of the general practice of completing one's education before marriage. Most respondents indicated that their education increased their age of marriage. Surprisingly, 11 out of the 25 respondents married before the completion of their education. An explanation for this high number is that six out

of these 11 women did finish at least their bachelor degree before marriage, but continued their educational career. Also five of these 11 finished their PhD. They married before the completion of their educational career, because they received a very good marriage proposal. Most of these respondents arranged that they could continue their educational career after marriage.

Employment did not seem to affect the age of marriage. Although women's employment could influence the marriage negotiation. In section 2.3.1 it is described that girls' education increases the dowry which have to be paid to the family of a boy with a higher education. Employment seems to have a reverse effect; often dowry was not given because the respondents were employed. In general, most respondents stated that they did not pay dowry.

The number of children that a woman prefers is influenced by her education and her employment. Education made some respondents aware of the increase of Indian population and about how many children they can provide the way they want to. Data of the interviews indicate that women's employment influenced her number of children. The respondents explain that they do not know how to manage their family life and their employment when they have more than one or two children.

Many women stated that they wanted to delay the birth of children after marriage, due to their education. They were attended to complete their education first, before starting at the next reproductive event. However, data indicate that the majority of these women got pregnant before finishing their education as they do not know about these methods or the methods failed. The effect of employment on the timing of the first child is indicated by one respondent who wanted to build a sport's career first. More respondents planned their second child in order to manage their child and their education or employment.

Data of the interviews seem to indicate an indirect influence of women's employment on her fertility. Employment has an influence on the family type in which women live, namely a nuclear family. According to respondents, the disadvantage of this family type is that there are no relatives to take care of the children when they are at their work. Therefore, difficulties emerge to combine work and family, which affect the preference of small families. Another consequence of this difficult combination is the emerging of a new type of household: a nuclear family with other family members. Most often this is the mother, mother-in-law, sister-in-law or niece that lives temporarily with the married couple to help them, when the children are small.

- *What is the autonomy of women in India?*

The four aspects of autonomy as distinguished by Jejeeboy (1995) and Basu (1992) are examined. Knowledge autonomy seems to be visible in the lives of the women being interviewed as they experience the interaction and exposure to the outside world and the growth of knowledge and their understanding of society.

Almost all of the respondents expressed to have a voice in matters; to have decision-making power. Several women indicate that they make some day to day decisions by their selves and bigger decisions together with their husbands. In nuclear families, the decisions are often made by husband and wife, while in joint families the decision-making of women is less.

Most of them also expressed to be mobile and did not need to ask permission to leave the house, which is an indication of physical autonomy. Noticeable is that more ‘younger’ women had to ask permission. There were also some women who had the freedom to move around, but preferred to have company. Data of the interviews indicate that almost all the women from both age groups required some economic autonomy and could spend their own income as they wish. However, they would discuss big purchases with their husbands. Only a small number of women did not have their own bank account.

- *How do education, employment and age influence autonomy of women in India through their life course?*

According to the respondents from both age groups, education and employment has given them knowledge, made them more self-confident to interact with people and created a wider perspective of the world. Employment stimulates the contact with higher authority, colleagues and the surroundings. This way, education and employment put women in a better position to understand society.

Respondents from both age groups indicate that education and employment have a big influence on their decision-making. Education gives them power to reason, to analyse things in order to make a decision. It makes them less influenced by others and makes the relationship with their spouses more equal. The employment of women makes them earning and often economic independent, which gives them more decision-making autonomy. Also age affects women’s decision-making in a positive way. The reproductive events did not seem to have a big influence, while other aspects like the age difference between the spouses, illness of the husband and a separate living situation of the spouses, seem to have an influence.

The physical movement of women from both age groups was most influenced by education and employment. It increases the confidence and courage in protecting themselves and also in the communication. The work participation makes it necessary for a woman to travel to her workplace, which makes her more mobile. Age and reproductive events did not seem to influence the physical autonomy much.

Economic autonomy is influenced by education and especially by employment. Education thoughts women how to spend and it makes them able to buy things, because they are less dependent on others. By having employment, women have an income which provides them most often economic autonomy.

Beside, the four aspects of autonomy, the concepts confidence and courage returned often in the conversations with the respondents. Data of the interviews indicate the growth of confidence and courage of the respondents as a result of their high educational attainment and employment, which affect their interactions with people (knowledge autonomy) and their mobility (physical autonomy). Confidence and courage can be placed in the conceptual model, as an intervening variable between education/employment and autonomy.

From the interviews it seems that women’s autonomy, especially the physical and decision-making autonomy, increased in time. Mainly, this is a result of the high educational attainments of the respondents. Also employment plays a role as it makes women more economic independent. The lives of the respondents’ mothers took place within the four walls

of the house, while an increased confidence and autonomy broke down those four walls of the respondents.

- *What is the influence of education, employment, age and reproductive career on the status of women in India through the life course?*

Most women from both age groups, did perceive an increase in their status due to their higher education. However, a higher number of women from both age groups, indicates that employment increased their status more compared to their education. The influence of employment on status is a recent phenomenon. According to one of the respondents, it is an effect of globalisation. The respondents experienced an increase in respect, especially in society, but also in the (in-laws') family, due to their contribution to the family income.

Although, there was an effect of age on the status, this was mainly overshadowed by the influences of other factors. The women talked about an increase in status as a result of age in general, but did not experience this much by themselves. There is respect for elder people in the Indian society, but this can also be achieved by women's employment.

Quite some respondents, especially of the younger age group, felt a change in their status after marriage. People in society would give more respect to married women; they are seen as mature women instead of girls. The status after this social transition is visible by the roles married women have in ceremonies. Women from the younger age group also experienced a bigger increase in their status after becoming a mother. Not only the event of marriage, but also the type of marriage can increase the status of women. It seems that an arranged marriage has a higher status compared with a love marriage. So two out of the three respondents that had a love marriage said that their marriages can be seen as an arranged love marriage, because it was arranged by both families. Many women from the older age group felt an increase in their status at the end of their reproductive career, when they did not have to take care of their children anymore. It should also be remembered that when a woman indicates that she experiences most status after marriage or at the end of her reproductive career, her life course is interrelated with her educational and job career. So it is possible that the reproductive event itself does not increase the status alone, but accomplish an increase in combination with other factors.

- *How does the social context influence this all?*

It was remarkable how the parents encouraged their daughter's education. Especially, the mothers seem to want to give their children what they missed in life. This influence of the parents was especially there, when the children were younger. After marriage, the husband agreed or allowed his wife to attain education.

A difference between women's desired family size and the actually number of children they have, can be created by the context. A small number of respondents expressed that their husband or family-in-law did prefer a different number of children. Once a sister-in-law discouraged a respondent to adopt a child. Respondents also seem to indicate a possible influence of doctors on the number of children.

According to our respondents, women's status depends on the context. Two distinctions of the context can be made. First, a division between urban areas and rural areas became clear. Second, a distinction between Indian society and family is made. In urban areas and in the

Indian society in general, education and employment are factors that influence women's status. While, in rural areas and within the family, more status is gathered by reproductive events.

The autonomy of women, especially the decision-making autonomy, is influenced by the context. In nuclear families, most of the time, the decisions are made by husband and wife. In joint families the decision-making of the women is less.

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