Chapter 2
Background and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Every society in contemporary times is facing the onslaught of ongoing rapid social and cultural transformations. The consequences of such changes are visible in the behavioural and ideational changes of individuals in the society. Some aspects of sweeping social change have directly affected women’s lives and what had been considered restrictive for women is no longer perceived to be so, both by the woman herself as well as the social and the cultural context in which she lives. Women and higher education as well as women and paid work command the central stage in the changing lives of women through a re-structuring of their life course. Enabling women to pursue higher education and their participation in the labour force also illustrate the role of changing societal institutions in recent times. Family set-up, religious and cultural prescriptions have become more accommodative in the passage of time, which earlier spearheaded the traditional role of women as ‘homemakers’. Educational, occupational and family careers no longer follow the stable, continuous and predictable course. Their respective influence on the life course is observable in the timing and sequencing of events in women’s life. Hence the changing structuration of the life course indicates women’s new position in today’s society.

In the following sections we present the background and the theoretical approach to study the impact of women’s higher educational attainment on their changing lives. We focus on the events of first union formation and first birth; these events magnify change in the lives of women – in our case in Karnataka and the Netherlands. Hence the individual level occupies a central position in this research. However a multi-level approach enables us to understand the mediating influence of context on behavioural changes. The changes at the individual level are studied in cognisance with the lived and the perceived reproductive life courses of women in the cross-cultural contexts of Karnataka and the Netherlands. Distinguishing the reproductive life course into lived and perceived life course in the present cross-cultural research enables us to study the impact of women’s higher educational attainment on the events of first union formation and first birth both from the ‘emic’ and the ‘etic’ perspectives (Pike 1967, cf. Harris 1975). The emic approach focuses on studying the mediating influence of education on events of first union formation and first birth in the specific cultural contexts of Karnataka and the Netherlands and understanding it from the perspective of the people living in those cultures. In contrast the etic approach concerns the researcher’s perspective of understanding individual behaviour by comparing the events of first union formation and first birth across cultures against the background of women’s higher educational attainment. In this research, the emic approach highlights the perceived reproductive life course of women in Karnataka and the Netherlands represented by qualitative data, while the etic approach highlights the lived reproductive life course represented by the quantitative secondary data analysis. The emic approach of understanding individual behaviour is also termed as ‘verstehen’ by Weber (1947; cf. Coser 1977); it is characterised as an interpretative understanding of individual behaviour from the subjective meanings that actors attach to their own behaviour as well as the behaviour of others.

The terminology ‘changing lives of women’ in itself connotes behavioural change at the individual level as well as the structural changes at the societal level. The individual level, also known as the micro level, is represented by life events, their timing of occurrence and how these events are sequenced across
Higher Education and the Reproductive Life Course

cohorts. Higher educational attainment facilitated by expansion of the education system is a key indicator at the macro level that explains behavioural change at the individual level. For instance, women of the younger cohorts have a longer educational career in comparison to women in the older cohorts, influencing delayed events of marriage and first birth and the phenomenon of cohabitation as an alternative to marriage. These changes at the micro level emerge as a social outcome revealed through the changing position of women in contemporary society. This also explains how distinct patterns of delay in union formation and first birth are preponderant in the society as social outcomes. Such social outcomes could also be the result of women’s transition from ascribed status of being a woman – a weaker sex, to achieved status – whereby higher education enables her to decide, choose and prioritise events in her life. The concept ‘position of women in society’ encompasses the status of women, women’s control over resources compared to that of men, the degree of their autonomy from men’s control, or other privileges and oppression that arise from society’s institutions (Mason 1993: 20).

At the micro level we focus on the life course approach (Giele and Elder 1998) by which we situate the events of first union formation and first birth by studying them as parallel careers along with the educational career of women. We study how the educational career impacts on the timing of first union formation and the timing of first birth in a woman’s lived reproductive life course. Meaning given to the events that have already taken place in a woman’s life is elicited by investigating the perceived life course. Changes at the micro level are studied through the conceptualisation of generations, thereby situating life in a historical context (Corsten 1999, Becker 1992, Ryder 1985). In order to study structural changes at the macro level we focus on the social theory of Coleman (1990). Macro-micro linkages and social change through processes of modernisation and globalisation constitute the structural impact of context on individual behaviour. This theory is also used as the background of the theoretical framework linking up the macro and the micro levels. Giddens’s (1984) structuration theory explains the reciprocal relationship between the social structure and individual agency across time and space in the individual life course. This theory deviates from the one-way relationship between the macro and the micro levels and stresses on the duality of structure. This theory also emphasises the importance of modality in understanding the structure-agency linkages in the cross-cultural perspective through interpretative schemes, facility or resources and norms.

Section 2.2 gives a background to the changing lives of women in the cross-cultural contexts of Karnataka and the Netherlands and shows the common denominator of women’s changed lives. Section 2.3 discusses the life course theory wherein individual behaviour is located as well as the events of first union formation and first birth. Section 2.4 focuses on the structuration theory of Giddens (1984) and discusses the concepts of structure and agency and how each mutually influences the other in view of the duality of structure. In section 2.5 we present the conceptual framework which is derived from a synthesis of the theoretical perspectives.

2.2 Changing lives of women in the cross-cultural context: the commonality issue

This section is divided into three subsections. In subsection 2.2.1 we discuss the commonality issue in women’s role shift from that of a traditional homemaker to a working woman in the cross-cultural context. In this section we shall discuss women’s management of multiple roles in recent times by focusing primarily on the domains of family and work. Educational attainment of women is an important indicator of the changes in women’s lives in Karnataka and the Netherlands. In subsection 2.2.2 we study the role of women’s higher education and how it has influenced the events of first union formation and first birth in
Subsection 2.2.3 deals with the relevance of studying the changing lives of women especially in the cultural context of Karnataka.

### 2.2.1 Multiple roles: family and work

There has been ongoing research on the changing lives of women all over the world. Way back in 1956, Mydral and Klien together wrote a book titled ‘Women’s two roles: home and work’ focusing on the changing social conditions of women and how women can best sequence and combine the two roles in their life course. The authors argue that women’s ‘home’ role has been an ascribed role based on feminine abilities. While the ‘work’ role of women defers the acquired role argument and according to Mydral and Klien (1956: xv) ‘it is no longer a question of what women are physically and mentally capable of doing - women are fit for a much wider range of activities than merely those compatible with the commonly accepted idea of the weaker sex’. The role of a working woman was conceptualised by the authors as women’s changing needs and aspirations to develop their personalities to the fullest. In the book the authors also suggested necessary changes in public policy which would enable women to combine motherhood and working career through child-care facilities, more career and employment opportunities for women. The book largely focused on life and times of women across generations of mothers and daughters in the United States. It also dealt with statistics on women and work, comparing women internationally in the United States, England, France and Sweden.

Mydral and Klien’s (1956) book aims to understand the shifts then seen in women and work. Formerly women used to work before getting married and becoming a mother. However, after marriage and motherhood they permanently withdrew from the workforce. This sequence began gradually changing and women started returning back to work some years after the child had grown up. The authors termed this as the ‘contemporary feminine dilemma’ (Mydral and Klien 1956: 135) in which marriage and having one’s own family is a satisfying experience for the woman on the one hand, while on the other is the need for enhancement of her personality. The authors suggested that women can successfully combine these two roles by chronologically sequencing education, family and work such that women can begin working again after the children are of school-going ages and do not need the undivided attention of the mother. Thus Mydral and Klien (1956: xvi) argued that ‘women need not forgo the pleasures of one sphere in order to enjoy the satisfactions of the other’. The authors pointed out that women in modern times live longer and bear fewer children, which allow them to begin a career in the later years. They note that this career could be combined with marriage and motherhood only after their children’s formative years. To depict the change across generations the authors compared the life span of an average woman in 1854 and 1954 dividing life into different phases of education, work and family. However, the book was severely criticised for its one-sided view on women that focused especially on women as mothers, while neglecting to take into account fatherhood and the share of men in child-care obligations.

McLaughlin et al. (1988) studied how the lives of American women have changed by comparing women across different cohorts. The cohorts within a broader historical perspective comprised three generations of grandmothers, mothers and daughters. According to the findings, each of these generations has experienced a different life pattern in the area of education, participation in the labour force paralleled with a decline in marriage and fertility. The changing lives of women from different perspectives in various regional contexts have also been widely researched by Gerson (1985), Hochschild (1989), Hakim (2000, 2003), Moen (1992), Sørensen (1983, 2004) and Giele (2004). These researchers generally agree on the rising majority of women as ‘primary individuals’ in the advanced industrialised countries. Elder (1988) in his foreword to the book on the changing lives of American women refers to women as primary
Higher Education and the Reproductive Life Course

individuals in recent times by introducing the concept of the ‘new woman’. Women were at the center stage of change both in their personal lives as well as their social lives. They gained greater independence, more personal control over their own lives and life outcomes. Women had a say in their own lives by which they could time events in their life course in accordance with their career needs and fulfilment of personal desires.

Thus change is largely studied as a transition in progress, both in the lives of women as well as at the societal level, and as having certain facilitating and constraining characteristics. These changes stress upon the fact that women’s life course in contemporary times is marked by multiple roles, some of which are societal expectations while some are based on one’s personal preference and choice. Hence on the one hand, women can choose to be educated and not participate in the labour force, or on the other hand to be educated and work as well. The different choices that women make regarding higher education and its best utilisation by participating in the workforce lead them to their distinct life courses. So by following distinct life courses, these women are labeled as role innovators (Giele and Holst 2004, Giele 2004).

Giddens (1991) regards the distinct life courses as individual biographies and the role innovators behave the way they do in order to colonise the future as more women follow the same life course in the course of time. Giele (2004) uses the concept of ‘gender innovators’ to highlight the ‘new career-oriented’ roles of women and the ‘new care-oriented’ roles of men. She does so by bringing about a comparison between the traditional and the modern gender roles and views female innovators in recent times as redefining womanhood. Hakim (2003) discusses how the possibility for women’s different roles was enabled by the contraceptive revolution, equal opportunity laws, expansion of white-collar occupations, creation of jobs for secondary earners and the increasing material wealth that dominated personal preference for a particular life style choice.

Similar type of research in the Indian context that studies the changes in women’s life is limited, though women’s educational attainment and their labour force participation have increased across time. Research that has been conducted is divided into two groups according to Rajadhyaksha and Smita (2004). One line of research focuses on women’s opportunities for higher education and employment in the job market by the patriarchal structure of society (Ramu 1989, Chanana 1988, Dube 1988). These studies elaborate how the constraints exerted by the patriarchal structure are largely because men were reluctant to accept their role reversal from that of a breadwinner of the family to participation in the domestic roles in the household. The second type of research focuses on multiple roles of women in the Indian context and examines how women negotiate and cope with their different roles (Rajadhyaksha and Smita 2004, Basu 1999, Ramu 1989). In all these studies the target groups were urban, high educated, working women.

One of the earliest studies on urban working women in India was by Kapur (1970). Her research set the ball rolling on discussion about the changing lives of women in the Indian context. Studies in the 1970s and the 1980s amongst the urban high-educated women concluded on the contrast between the modern and traditional roles of women by emphasising women as ‘primary individuals’ (Rani 1976, Unwalla 1977, Narayana 1982, Hemlatha and Suryanarayana 1983). Participation in the labour market in the 1970s and the 1980s was considered exceptional as societal norms were critical towards women working outside the realms of the house. As such, many women adhered to the traditional roles of wife and motherhood. The balance between the traditional and modern roles was achieved through the support of husband, employing domestic help and use of household labour saving devices such as electric grinder instead of the traditional grinding stone, vacuum cleaner and washing machine (Rajadhyaksha and Smita 2004). Until the 1980s there were hardly any studies on the changing lives of women in India. In the period from mid-1980s till mid-1990s, research shifted from women and work to studies of dual-earner couples and
Chapter 2: Background and the Theoretical Framework

comparison of dual-earner couples with single-earner ones. Research by Ramu (1989), illustrated how
dual earner couples in the city of Bangalore in Karnataka coped with work and family pressures. The job
opportunities of high-educated women were in the urban areas and the prevailing structure of the family in
India was changing from extended families to nuclear families. Thus on the one hand, women were
striving to be independent by being employed and on the other the traditional family support was missing
(Ramu 1989). In addition, men still held the position of being the provider of the family (ibid). Hence,
egalitarian relations in the society were yet to be realised in this period of the working status of woman
(Rajadhyaksha and Smita 2004). Liberalisation of the market economy and the advent of economic
reforms formed the crux of the studies on women, work and family from mid-1990’s to date. The shift of
focus now is from dual-earner couples to dual-career couples (Rajadhyaksha 1996, Pande 2000).
According to Rajadhyaksha and Smita (2004) Indian women continue to balance between the family life
and work life.

‘The role of women, especially the role of married women, has been changing quite dramatically in the
Dutch society since World War II’ (De Jong Gierveld and Liefbroer 1995: 104). According to the authors
the changes were observable both in women’s private family lives as well as in the public sphere such as
educational attainment and labour force participation of women. With women going out to work,
egalitarian relationship between spouses and the sharing of household tasks have become common
phenomena. The national policies have also given a helping hand in bringing about changes in the lives of
identified three important policies concerning fertility. The first policy deals with educating the public
about contraceptives and providing access to contraceptives, the second deals with direct monetary
incentives for parents and the third policy enables women to combine motherhood and work by providing
women with maternity leave, parental leave and childcare facilities. Van de Kaa (1997: 6) mentions that
the period of the 1950s was the heyday of the ‘bourgeois’ family. During this period the age at marriage
was very low and marriage was universal in nature. Marriage marked the beginning of sexual relationships
and the family formation behaviour. If a woman worked before marriage then marriage was the end of her
occupation career (Manting 1994). This period was also the era of the patriarchal type of family where
women with children were discouraged from going out to work and the husband earned the family income
(van de Kaa 1997: 6).

The significant changes and developments that have taken place since the mid-1960s are explained by van
de Kaa (1987) as the transition of European societies from the first to the second demographic transition.
Van de Kaa (1987: 11) pointed out four basic features of the second demographic transition:

- Shift from the golden age of marriage to the dawn of cohabitation
- Shift from the era of the king-child with parents to that of the king-pair with a child
- Shift from preventive contraception to self-fulfilling conception
- Shift from uniform to pluralistic families and households

The factors behind these changes are summarised in the explanatory framework by van de Kaa (1988: 14).
According to him, the changes are categorised into three dimensions of structure, culture and technology
and these dimensions are highly interdependent and interrelated. The structural explanation refers to the
process of modernisation as a development of post-industrial society and welfare state (van de Kaa 1988).
Women’s increased educational attainment and labour force participation are some of the factors which
explain the postponement of union formation behaviour and motherhood. Liefbroer (1999) and Liefbroer
and Corijn (1999) study how educational attainment of women and their labour force participation lead to postponement of union formation and first birth.

Hence studying the dual roles of women in contemporary times enables us to understand how these roles have developed in the historical passage of time across different societies bearing distinct cultural connotations of women and work. At the same time these studies enable us in understanding how women accommodate their work with their family role and vice versa (how they accommodate their family role to their role as working mothers). Moen (1992) discusses the adaptive and accommodating strategies of women’s dual roles in American society, while similar research on Indian women has been discussed by Ramu (1989). Moen (1992) in her study categorises working mothers into four groups – captives, the conflicted, the copers and the committed. According to Moen (1992: 42), the ‘captives’ are the group of working mothers who reluctantly remain in the labour force due to preordained personal and economic factors. Examples are single mothers who meet the economic needs of the household. The ‘conflicted’ group of working mothers is those who are at the crossroads of their working career and motherhood and strive to deal with both roles adequately. Unlike the captives, this group of working mothers is more likely to leave their jobs when they can no longer cope with the dual pressures of being a good mother as well as a good employee. ‘Copers’ are the group of women who successfully combine their working career with that of motherhood. This group of women work while their children are young, and they do so either by reducing the demands of one or both of their roles or by prioritising them (Moen 1992: 43-44). Working mothers who fall in the ‘committed’ category have been defined by Moen (1992: 44) as those who have high occupational aspirations coupled with a strong commitment to marriage and family life. Thus this group of women on the one hand is strongly committed to their work to the extent that they delay their family life while on the other hand they are unwilling to sacrifice family life for their career. Ramu (1989) in his study of the urban married working wives in India classifies married women into four groups. They are the traditional housewives, the neo-traditional wives, the reluctant homemakers and the reluctant working wives. ‘Traditional housewives’ are the group of women who refuse to be persuaded by their husbands or others to seek gainful employment because of their own negative attitude and temperament towards paid work (Ramu 1989: 54). ‘Neo-traditional wives’ are those who willingly seek paid work but are fully aware of the fact that combining two roles brings about a ‘double burden’ (Ramu 1989). Those married women who have the aptitude for work but are not allowed to work by their husband due to traditional ideas of women and work fall in the category of ‘reluctant homemakers’. This category of women carries on family roles against their own wishes (Ramu 1989: 55). ‘Reluctant working wives’ are a group who are just the reverse of reluctant homemakers. This group of women participates in the labour force against their will perhaps due to personal and economic necessities (Ramu 1989). Thus while Moen’s (1992) study emphasises the dilemma of dual roles for working mothers, Ramu’s (1989) study reveals the dilemma of dual roles in the lives of working wives. From these studies we observe the coherence in dilemmas that women face coping with their dual roles in contemporary society. This dilemma seems to be a common denominator irrespective of the societal and cultural context of the woman herself.

Here we observe that the reasons why women enter into the labour force in both India and the Netherlands seem to be similar. The role conflicts, dilemma and adaptation to the different roles in the life course of working women also show similarity. However while the Western society has moved ahead with gender egalitarian structures in the society (Giele 2004, Hakim 2000, 2003, 2004, Moen 1992) traditional sex-role stereotypes are still perpetuated in the Indian context (Rajadhyaksha and Smita 2004, Basu 1998, Jejeebhoy 1995, Ramu 1989). We also observe the commonality of research on the changing lives of women and the differences in the different cultural contexts. The discussion of women, work and family is
based on the important premise of women’s autonomy and their position in society (Mydral and Klien 1956, Moen 1992, Ramu 1989). These concepts have been dealt with differently in the cross-cultural context of this research while we find the resonance in their universality yet bringing out their universality. In 1956 when Mydral and Klien studied women’s roles at home and work, the concept of women’s dual roles was a pervasive phenomenon only in the highly industrialised countries of the world. However, the authors mentioned that ‘to all those in the underdeveloped countries – the problems presented here do not apply at the present time – problems similar to those presently experienced in industrialized countries are likely to arise elsewhere at some later time, when other countries reach phases in their economic development corresponding to those reached in the industrialized West’ (Mydral and Klien 1956: xvii). While research on women, work and family in the modern industrialised world hardly focuses on autonomy of women per se but more on women’s choices, preferences and decisions (Hakim 2000, 2003), autonomy of women has been an important issue of research on women, work and family studies in India (Ramu, 1989, Rajadhyaksha and Smita 2004, Jejeebhoy 1995, Basu 1996, Parasuraman et al. 1999).

2.2.2 The role of women’s higher education

In contemporary times, societies have largely witnessed the expansion of the educational system and increased numbers of women participating and pursuing higher education than before. We also observe that women’s educational attainment has facilitated them with better jobs and earning capacity in comparison to women in the older cohorts. Studies on the changing lives of women in India and the Netherlands have discussed women’s educational attainment as a major propeller of the ongoing changes. In India where still a large number of women do not attend schools, studies have also focused on threshold levels of education. Jejeebhoy (1995) considers educational threshold in the Indian context as an important variable in understanding how many years of education are necessary for a woman so that she can have a say of her own in various matters in her life and influence her capability of decision making. Studies by Parasuraman et al. (1999) have also focused on threshold level of education. Most of this literature has also propounded on the fact that women’s lives are intertwined in the patriarchal system of the Indian society. This opens a new window on women’s changing lives in the Indian context and offers a different perspective than the Western studies on women’s changing roles.

Women’s educational attainment has significantly increased over the past decades in the Netherlands (Matsuo 2003, Gustafsson et al. 2001, Gustafsson 2001, Beets 1999, De Jong Gierveld and Liefbroer 1995); this has caused a widespread postponement in women’s age at first union formation and birth of the first child. In a similar way educational expansion has affected women’s lives in India (Bhat 2002, Dreze and Murthi 2001, Parasuraman et al. 1999, Velkoff 1998). Parasuraman et al. (1999) opines that changes in women’s education in India are changes that are coming about slowly but surely. According to these authors, despite the changes in the levels of women’s education a large gender gap still remains as daughters are disallowed from pursuing higher education while sons are allowed to attend school to the fullest of their ability. Over the years the impact of education has become stronger on events such as first union formation and first birth in both the cultural contexts of Karnataka and the Netherlands. Hence the longer the duration of enrolment in education the greater is the delay in marriage and first birth. Research evidence by Skirbekk et al. (2004) reveals the delaying effect of age at graduation on the timing of first marriage and first birth in Sweden. The reasons for such delay in the events of first union formation and first birth amongst high educated women have been widely researched in India as well as in the Netherlands. Role incompatibility between the student role and adult roles of being married and being a mother have been often cited as one of the reasons for the delay (Hoem 2000, 1986, Liefbroer and Corijn
Higher Education and the Reproductive Life Course

1999, Blossfeld and Huinink 1991, Jejeebhoy 1995, Jain and Nag 1985). Thus there is a strong preference for completion of education followed by participation in the labour market and achieving a secure economic position as prerequisites for a married relationship and parenthood (Manting 1994, Oppenheimer 1988). At the same time there is a prevalence of age norms which dictates the proper age for marriage and birth of the first child. However, these age norms are translated differently by higher educated women in comparison to women with less education. Higher educated women are considered to value qualities such as self-fulfilment, autonomy, creativity and independence and hence are more likely to delay union formation and birth of the first child (Barber et al. 2002, Beets 1999). In the Indian context, research evidence shows that in recent times the prolonged education career of women is leading to the postponement of marriage to later ages (Basu 2002, 1996, Jeffery and Basu 1996, Jejeebhoy 1995). Studies by Parasuraman et al. (1999) and Jejeebhoy (1995) illustrate that women’s higher education in the Indian context plays an important role in enhancing her autonomy thus indirectly leading to a delay in marriage and motherhood. Jejeebhoy (1995) has hypothesised three routes through which educational attainment of women can delay age at marriage. Firstly, educated girls have a greater say in their lives, in the decision to marry, selection of a suitable marriage partner and thus can resist early arranged marriages. Secondly, education enhances premarital employment that brings financial benefits for the women which leads to postponement of marriage. Thirdly, educated women are less ‘marriageable’ at an early age as their marriages cost more and finding a suitable partner from the small pool of marriageable educated men at an early age is difficult. Thus marriage is delayed amongst these women. Jejeebhoy (1995) makes a passing reference to the delayed marriages amongst high educated women in India due to the increased number of years these women spend enrolled in education, while Das and Dey (1998) point out that educational attainment of women has helped to bring in new ideas about marriage such as delayed marriages, intercaste marriages and love marriages. However, studies by Jeffery and Basu (1996), Vlassoff (1996) and Visaria (1996) cast doubts about the validity of women’s higher education and autonomy in the Indian context. Basu (1992) also states that higher education enables women to have a courtship period before marriage which facilitates a better understanding of the man whom the woman will marry. According to the author, it eventually leads to a relationship based on compatibility.

Also school as an institution instils values that lead to preference for delayed marriage and delayed parenthood amongst high educated women (Thornton et al. 1995, Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 1988, Caldwell 1982). Jansen and Kalmijn (2002) distinguish between family-oriented and career-oriented individuals. The former are less likely to opt for careers of education and work and this result in them entering into stable union and family formation early. As career-oriented individuals are more likely to emphasise on their education and working careers, this delays union formation and starting a family. According to Oppenheimer (1997) higher educated women tend to marry less as the opportunity costs of foregoing a professional career from full-time employment to part-time are much more than women with less education. Higher education also increases the opportunity costs of having children, as a result of which these women bear fewer children (Liefbroer and Corijn 1999, Blossfeld 1995, Becker 1991). Becker (1991) relates economic benefits of educational attainment to marriage and birth of the first child through income effect and price effect. Becker’s view on marriage is based on traditional sexual division of labour in the household. Increase in educational attainment enables women’s participation in the labour force facilitating their economic independence. Thus increase in women’s employment and economic independence weakens the institution of marriage because the sexual division of labour in the household becomes more disadvantageous for women and also increases the unattractiveness of staying at home. According to Liefbroer and Corijn (1999: 48) the price effect influences the relationship between educational attainment of women and family formation; this is because by being employed part-time or by
quitting the labour market altogether, high educated women have to give up much more income than low educated women.

Gustafsson (2001) gives an economic explanation for the association between higher levels of education and women’s age at first birth. The opening lines of her article begin with ‘Increasingly young women in all European countries educate themselves for a lifelong labour market career’ (Gustafsson 2001: 225). According to her, ‘women’s career costs’ in the form of wage loss during withdrawal from the labour force at the event of pregnancy and loss of human capital investments and of returns to these investments explain the postponement of first birth amongst high educated women in the European context.

2.2.3 Relevance of women’s changing lives in Karnataka

Morgan and King (2001) published an article titled ‘Why have children in the 21st century? Biological predisposition, social coercion, rational choice’ about extensive changes in the societal and cultural framework in recent times. Their main research question was ‘why have children in settings where the net economic costs of children are clearly substantial?’. A recent newspaper article in a leading daily edition of an Indian newspaper ‘The Times of India’ (TOI 2004b), carried an article with the headline ‘Single and successful women - Be happy you’re single’. This article pointed out that amongst the high educated working professionals in India, marriage as an institution is slowly beginning to assume new definitions. Unlike the traditional definition of marriage by Kapadia (1965) wherein marriage provided the legal sanction to sexual union between couples, in modern times, marriage is defined as a relationship that fosters mutual respect, trust and independence (TOI 2004b). Hence it is clear that traditional concepts surrounding the institution of marriage and the choices of women are being subjected to challenge and re-definition.

The focus of attention in this particular study is the changing lives of women in the cross-cultural perspectives of Karnataka in South India and the Netherlands. As noted in the previous section, there is a good amount of literature and research evidence about the changing lives of Dutch women due to their higher educational attainment. In the Indian context, the dramatic changes in the lives of women are steadily beginning to receive due attention in the form of research evidence (Rajadhyaksha and Smita 2004, Parasuraman et al. 1999, Ramu 1989) and newspaper articles as illustrated in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the article</th>
<th>Name of the newspaper</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman power? Is it for real or just a myth?</td>
<td><em>The Times of India</em></td>
<td>April 4, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single &amp; splurging, life can’t be sweeter</td>
<td><em>The Economic Times</em></td>
<td>March 3, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual stress: working couples trauma</td>
<td><em>The Times of India</em></td>
<td>September 21, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage knots: Live-in or give in</td>
<td><em>The Times of India</em></td>
<td>September 29, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job or child? Tech couple face a hard choice</td>
<td><em>The Times of India</em></td>
<td>April 27, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What the Indian woman wants</td>
<td><em>The Times of India</em></td>
<td>January 16, 2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These newspaper articles attribute women’s higher educational attainment as one of the key proponents of change in their lives. The changing lives of women is viewed in the perspective of higher educational
Higher Education and the Reproductive Life Course

attainment influencing women’s entry into the labour market as well as simultaneously influencing the timing of events such as union formation and first birth.

2.3 Life course theory

The early studies of life course were life cycle models that concentrated on single role sequence. For example, the life cycle of individuals was portrayed as ‘children mature, marry and have children who then grow up and start a family as the cycle continues into another generation’ (Elder et al. 2003: 7). In recent times life course studies concentrate on bridging the gap between social dispositions and individual preferences for a particular behaviour (Settersten 2003, Giele 2004). Moen (1992) and Hakim (2000, 2003, 2004) study the link between multiple roles of women – family and work – in relation to marriage and family formation in the individual life course. This reflects the changing role of women in the society from that of a traditional homemaker to that of a contributor to the household income. It is also an indication of changes in individual behaviour in order to cope with these changes.

In the following subsections we discuss how the life course theory is used in the present research which distinguishes life course into the lived life course and the perceived life course. In the subsection 2.3.1 we elaborate what we mean by the lived life course. Subsection 2.3.2 elaborates on the perceived life course and the similarities it shares with the life story approach. Change across life course is explained by the concept of generations in subsection 2.3.3. This section deals with understanding life course development as externally manifested by the occurrence of unique historical events. These events reveal how societies change under the influence of such historical events and at the same time bring how societies bring about change in individual behaviour and reasoning for such behaviour. In this subsection we also examine how generation is conceptualised in the present research and its link with birth cohorts. Generational changes are linked to stages of economic development of societies. We also discuss modernisation and globalisation as two important engines of social transformation that have influenced the changing lives of women in Karnataka and the Netherlands.

2.3.1 The lived life course

Elder (1985) distinguishes the genesis of life course research in two important phases. The first phase was the phase before 1940 and the second phase was 1960 and after. According to Elder (1985: 23), in both these phases social change acquired problematic meaning for individuals and for the society as a whole. Individuals in the society considered social change as altering their life course and the changing life trajectories were expression of this change. Life course studies have also focused on shifts in the multiple roles of women over the passage of time. Through her research on changing life course of women activists in the historic women’s suffrage movement, Giele (1995) raised questions of innovations in women’s life patterns. From her research she could observe how women first changed their roles and then began to change the larger institutions of work and family of which they are a part. Giele (2002, 2004) and Giele and Elder (1998) identify four universal factors by which innovations occur in typical life patterns. They are as follows:
- location in time and place
- linked lives that stem from participation in social institutions and groups
- agency that expresses individual goals and
- timing of life events that represent strategic adaptations.
Both Giele and Elder differed in their approach to the study of life course. From Giele’s (1995) work we can conclude that she based her theory more on the relations between the individual and the surrounding social structure while Elder’s (1994) research has concentrated more on the micro level where the individual is the focus.

In our research we combine both the approaches by Giele (1995) and Elder (1994). We focus on the events of first union formation and first birth at the micro level; this enables us to understand the changing lives of women at the micro level through shifts in the age at first union formation through marriage and cohabitation and birth of the first child. The relation between the individual and the surrounding social structure is studied by the impact of women’s higher educational attainment on the changing lives of women at the micro and societal levels in the form of women’s changing position in Karnataka and the Dutch society.

Hence the events of first union formation and first birth are situated in the reproductive life course, which is studied in parallel with women’s educational career. With the occurrence of these events the educational career runs the risk of being terminated, completed or continued. The termination of the educational career can take place (i) before the marital or fertility event has occurred, (ii) after the event has taken place, or (iii) coinciding with the occurrence of the event. For instance, traditionally in the Indian context, attainment of menarche sometimes coincided with the termination of a girl’s education. Jeffery et al. (1988) and Khan and Singh (1987) observe that this was because parents were concerned about keeping their daughters ‘chaste’ and hence married them off following the attainment of menarche. Jejeebhoy and Kulkarni (1989) state that a girl’s education is often terminated before the event of menarche for reasons such as taking care of the younger siblings at home, distance of the school from the house or lending a helping hand in household chores. As discussed earlier in section 2.2.2, role incompatibility, dual role expectations and incompatible careers also lead to termination of education career. We also observe in section 2.2.2 that events such as first union formation by marriage and first child birth take place only after completion of the educational career. Sometimes adjustment and adaptation to the different roles as well as facilities, such as crèches, day-care centres and support of the extended family, enable women to continue with their education career after getting married or becoming a mother. Thus in conjunction with the multiple roles is the concept of career. A career is defined as a ‘chain of stable and transition periods pertaining to a given domain’ (Willekens 1989: 8). Hence studying the parallel processes enables us to understand behavioural patterns as outcomes of interactions between multiple processes in the individual life course (Willekens 1999).

2.3.2 The perceived life course

In this section we discuss how the present research has conceptualised the perceived life course in order to understand first union formation and first birth in the cross-cultural contexts of Karnataka and the Netherlands. The concept of culture thus becomes important in understanding how the sequence and timing of these events are different but yet similar amongst the same group of high educated women in Karnataka and the Netherlands. So culture provides the normative and meaning-giving rules influencing prevalence and perception of certain ideas. For example, consider the perception of right age at first birth amongst high educated women in Karnataka and the Netherlands. The right age may be perceived as being after the completion of educational career irrespective of the cultural contexts, while social norms of late motherhood and cultural significance of motherhood may also influence women’s perception of the right age of becoming a mother.
As stated earlier, our research makes a distinction between the ‘lived’ life course and the ‘perceived’ life course, the study of which directly links to the etic and emic approaches. The lived life course views life manifested by the occurrence, sequence and timing of events as life progresses. The perceived life course views life from a cultural standpoint as meanings are attached to events based on cultural background as well as the background based on personal endowments such as higher education. The lived life course thus is based on empirical facts and the information is derived through secondary data, while the perceived life course is constructed from primary information collected in the form of oral and autobiographical narratives. The distinction between the lived and the perceived life courses shares similarity with the distinction between the life history and the life story approach. Matsuo (2003: 68) describes the life history approach as the study of events in objective terms (for example, age at event), while the life story approach studies events in subjective terms (for example, meaning given to the events). Thus similar to the life story approach, the perceived life course focuses on the mental processes and cognitive schemes based on cultural background. This influences how individuals perceive the events that have taken place in their life course and give meaning to them. These cognitive schemes work within the framework of needs, goals, opportunities and constraints allowing individuals to interpret and construct reality depending on the cultural context in which these individuals are located. These cognitive schemes are termed as schemas (D’Andrade 1992, 1995) and cognitive maps (Abeles 1990). By emphasising the cognitive patterns in the cultural context we view the facilitating and the constraining aspect of culture. DiMaggio (1997: 282) argues that the cognitive aspect of culture should not be ignored ‘if we are interested in how culture enters into people’s lives and for any explanation of culture’s impact on practices we rest our assumption about the role of culture in cognition’. The author distinguishes between two types of cognition – automatic cognition and deliberative cognition. Automatic cognition occurs in routinised behaviour and heavily relies on culturally available schemas (D’Andrade 1995). Deliberative cognition, which occurs when individuals are sufficiently motivated, enables them to think critically and reflexively irrespective of the dominating cultural context (DiMaggio 1997). For instance, the cultural schema on motherhood in India requires women to care for their children in the initial growing up years of the child’s life. However, working women have to deliberately give up this cultural schema of motherhood and leave the child in day care centres while they go to work.

Perceived timing of events such as menarche, first union and first birth in the cross-cultural context elaborates the theoretical link between the lived and the perceived life courses. While menarche is biological in character, the occurrence of first union and first birth is dependent on the individual background such as ongoing educational career. The perception of age at occurrence of these events as early, late or on time refers to formal and informal aspects of age structuring (Settersten and Mayer 1997). Formal age structuring operates at the level of social structure and social institutions. On the other hand, informal age structuring refers to how individuals and groups in a society divide the life course into meaningful segments, define the kinds of behaviour appropriate for individuals of different ages and clarify notions that exist about the proper timing and sequencing of life events and transitions (Settersten and Mayer 1997: 235-236). Thus even though the importance of cultural contexts has not been specified in the abovementioned definitions of formal and informal age structuring, one needs to keep in mind that the age structuring is sensitive to cultural differences. Perception of timing of events in the life course also suggests the relevance of age norms and age expectations. Settersten and Mayer (1997: 242) categorise age norms into statistical age norms, optimal age norms and prescriptive and proscriptive age norms. According to them, statistical age norms depict statistical regularity of timing of events followed by a majority of the population or sub groups of the population. The optimal age norms refer to collective notions about the best, ideal or preferred ages to experience various life transitions. The prescriptive and proscriptive age norms refer to collective, shared expectations about when certain transitions ‘should’ or
Chapter 2: Background and the Theoretical Framework

'should not' occur. The perceived timing of events is also dependent on the age expectations that are based on cultural and social conventions prevalent in the society.

Occurrence of events in the life course enables transitions from one stage of life to the other. In the lived life course, transitions are represented by events and the duration of time spent between two events. However, in the perceived life course, transitions are indicated by ceremonies that mark the initiation into specific transitions in the life course. These ceremonies are based on the cultural context of the individuals. For example the event of menarche that is celebrated as ‘rite de passage’ in rural south India denotes a new status for adolescent girls (Hutter et al. 2002). This is specific to and understandable only within that particular society. Hutter (1998: 83) mentions that traditionally in Indian society menarche indicates maturity and in Kannada, the local language of her research area, menarche is termed as ‘dodakke’, which means ‘becoming big, grown up’. Hence the development across stages requires the presence of certain attributes that facilitate transition from one stage to the other and these attributes are related to domains in life. For example, attributes such as educational attainment, marital status and parental status are relevant in the domain of education, marriage and parenthood in the individual life course. Willekens (1999: 27) terms this as the ‘developmental readiness’.

Knowledge and its sources in the perceived life course works through the representational function of the cultural meaning system. The representational function defines the knowledge and beliefs specific to cultures about what is out there and what can be done with it (D’Andrade 1984: 96-97). Transitions from one stage to another in the life course are based on knowledge that is derived both by formal and informal means. Local institutions, professional management, religious community, and mass media are the formal means of knowledge. Knowledge that is derived from members within the family circle such as mother, older sister, and those beyond the family circle for example close friends, peer groups are typically informal means of knowledge. Educational and cultural background of individuals could influence the type of knowledge that is received and interpretation of such knowledge. Educational background of individuals also facilitates decision and action in accordance with the knowledge that is received (de Brujin 1999). For instance, in the context of Karnataka local beliefs associate menarche with pollution which requires knowledge about do’s and don’ts during the days of the menstrual cycle (Hutter et al. 2002). Miller (2003) studies women’s narratives on first-time motherhood and knowledge about motherhood mediated through professional and expert bodies of knowledge. Expected behavioural change is also a part of the perceived life course wherein the cultural meaning system through its directive function plays an important role. The directive function directs behaviour through social pressure and external sanctions and also through intrinsic motivation to conform (D’Andrade 1984: 97).

The occurrence of events also leads to perceived role change, which is influenced largely by social expectations of roles. Linton (1988) defines roles as shared normative expectations that prescribe and explain behaviour. According to him, roles are dynamic aspects of status, and social group membership comes about with a package of statuses and roles. Status is the relative social position of an individual within a group, while role is the part that society expects us to play in a given status. Goffman (1977) examined social interaction taking place in a society by means of role-taking and role-playing. Role-taking is the form of social interaction where we judge our own behaviour from the other’s perspective. Role-playing is the form of interaction where the situation and the roles are created to some extent before individuals act. Roles are like tags allowing people to know what they should expect from each other. For example, the role of a mother is a societal expectation, which undergoes change as a result of women’s educational attainment. Recent research by Hakim (2003, 2004), Giele and Holst (2004) and Moen (1992)
Higher Education and the Reproductive Life Course

on women’s role and the changes in women’s roles prevalent across time emphasise gender roles, expansion of role opportunities for women and multiple roles that women combine in their life course.

The perceived life course also focuses on perceived gains. According to the dictionary the meaning of the word ‘gain’ is acquiring something by means of increase or addition. We study perceived gains in two categories. First is the perceived gain of acquired attributes such as higher educational attainment and having a working career. The second is the perceived gains of the events in the individual life course. In her theory of marriage timing, Oppenheimer (1988) discusses the gains of marriage. She observes that decrease in gains of marriage is induced by the economic independence of women, which also results in delayed marriage.

We observe that women’s need to be economically independent in India was confined to a small group in the older generations, unlike the younger generation of women. Amongst the older generation even though they attained higher education, the perceived need to work used to be limited by societal norms. However, in the present times, supportive husbands, who have begun to acknowledge their wives’ right to work, have enabled women to pursue their working career (Rajadhyaksha and Smita 2004). In addition, women had to overcome the limitations set by culture and the kinship structure of the society (Jejeebhoy 1996, Caldwell 1993). The study by Matsuo (2003) reveals how work has become increasingly attractive amongst Japanese women in the younger generations while marriage has become less attractive. However, in the older generation her findings suggest that marriage and childbearing were much more important than work and education. Similarly for the Dutch women, their felt need to move out of the traditional role of a housewife encouraged them to participate in the labour force; this participation was a gain for women (Crouch 1999). However, this was possible only when the relationship between spouses became more egalitarian and a marginal shift in the distribution of household chores took place (De Jong Gierveld and Liefbroer 1995, van de Kaa 1987). Studies in gender-stratified societies reveal that women gain from being higher educated and this also leads to personal as well as economic gains. Personal gains could include aspects such as enhancement of one’s own personality by being higher educated, or increase in courage and confidence or sense of independence by being a working woman.

2.3.3 Life course and generations

In order to understand changes in individual lives across time we make the link with the study of generations. Life course and generations situate life in a historical context. At the same time they focus on life course development of individuals across biographical and historical time. In the previous sections we have already observed how the individual life course is shaped by social and cultural transformations. Hence focusing on the concept of generation emphasises time as an indispensable concept in life course development. In our research generations are taken as the units of analysis to study life course development and changing life course at the micro level and broader social change at the macro level.

Generation as a concept first became the topic of research because of an article published in 1928 by Karl Mannheim ‘Problem of generations’. Mannheim in his article on the one hand distinguishes three levels at which generations can be formed, and on the other hand he works out the interplay of these levels in his explanation of the ‘unifying factors’ of generations (Corsten, 1999). By the unifying factor he meant the compatibility amongst the different generations to coexist side by side. Since then, over the decades the topic of generation has gone through several transformations. Many theoretical approaches that cover a wide range of subjects from anthropology, political and cultural sociology have been used to explain the concept over time. Generations have also been studied in the various categories of cultural generations.
Chapter 2: Background and the Theoretical Framework

(Mannheim, 1952), historical generations in the form of cohorts (Ryder, 1985, Glenn, 1977) and political
generations (Alwin, 1992).

Etymologically the word generation is derived from the Greek word ‘geneses’. It refers to genealogies as
lines of descent. Generations do not exist one after the other; two or more generations exist side by side.
As no single generation stands alone, the definition of a generation is dependent on comparisons across
multiple generations. But each generation differs from the others due to certain events and patterns that
representatively mark that generation. However, generation has been defined as “the grouping of a number
of cohorts characterized by a specific historical setting and by common characteristics at an individual
level (biographical characteristics, value orientations and behavioural patterns) and a systems level (size
and composition, generational culture and specific organisations and social networks)” (Becker, 1992: 222). The generational differences on the one hand depict the life course development leading to change in
the individual behavioural patterns and on the other hand the social change occurring at the macro level of
the society.

Generations and the life course development of individuals are comparable because generations can be
termed as a set of individual life courses. Thus people who are born in the same time period experience
similar events that occur in that historical phase and hence have similar biographical phases (Corsten
1999). For example, women born in the late 1940s in the Netherlands experienced the post-World War II
reconstruction whereas women born 10 years later experienced the silent revolution i.e. introduction of the
contraceptive pill in the 1960s. On the other hand, people who were born in the same time period
experience historical events in the same sequence in their lifetime (Corsten 1999). For example, a girl who
was born in the year 1949 in Netherlands experienced the post-World War II reconstruction in her
childhood, while in her formative years she was exposed to social conditions brought about by prosperity
and peace, and in her adulthood she experienced relatively favourable opportunities brought about by the
changing situations due to women’s emancipation of the 1960s.

Becker (1985) worked on the concept of generation and differentiated generation into four different types.
They are the pre-war generation (people born between 1910 and 1930), silent generation (people born
between 1930 and 1940), protest generation (people born between 1940 and 1955) and the lost generation
(people born between 1955 and 1970). He described the generations in general by means of their
characteristics and the ways by which one generation could be differentiated from the other in terms of the
changing opportunities and constraints. Becker’s work also incorporated the socialisation hypothesis and
the hypothesis of relative scarcity to conceptualise generations in his study.

Becker (1985) through his study of generations tried to emphasise the linkage between the micro level
(individual behaviour) and the macro level (structure). The life course differences were presented at the
micro level of individual behaviour when observed across different generations, while social change could
be identified by studying the macro level of structure of the society. Coleman (1990) has elaborated
further on the macro-micro linkages of individual behaviour through ongoing social change at the societal
level. These were emphasised by the usage of terms such as ‘generational units’, ‘generational culture’,
and ‘generational style’. Recent studies by Alwin and McCammon (2003) and Alwin (2002) reveal the
macro-micro linkages. The patterns of generations have been tested over time by various scholars
including Blossfeld et al. (1993), Inglehart (1990), Alwin (1990, 1992), van Rijsselt (1992), Becker (1989,
While Inglehart (1990) and De Graaf (1988) studied the changes in value orientation, Gadourek (1982)
examined the generational differences in the redefinition of roles due to social change in the Netherlands.
in the 1970s. Blossfeld et al. (1993) analysed the intergenerational differences in the family formation process by using case studies of Germany and the Netherlands. Van Rijsselt (1992) in his research tested the two hypotheses of socialisation and the scarcity of human needs, which is the basic crux for formulating the concept of generations in many of the studies. One of his important conclusions was that inter-cohort differences in attitudes and value orientations eventually lead to generational differences.

In our research birth cohorts are taken as an indicator of generations both in quantitative and qualitative data analyses. Hence generations in this study are defined as a cluster of adjacent birth cohorts. The argument for the conceptualisation of generations in this study uses the hypothesis of scarcity based on Maslow’s theory of hierarchy of needs and the hypothesis of socialisation by Inglehart (1977). According to the hypothesis of scarcity (Inglehart 1977: cf. Becker 1992: 223), ‘once physical needs and the need for physical safety are satisfied, a human being will need non-material satisfaction, in particular self-development’. Inglehart’s (1997: 223) hypothesis of socialisation predicted that experiences in the formative period in the life course take root more firmly than the experiences from other phases in life. Ryder (1985) also confirmed through studies that experiences in the formative period have a deeper impact on the lives of youth. Since 1977, the socialisation hypothesis by Inglehart has been recast as ‘formative security’ (Inglehart 1990: 121-124).

In recent times, based on economic development of Karnataka and Dutch society, conceptualisation of generations takes into account shifts in opportunities and constraints. These shifts are assumed to be dependent on stages of economic growth of these societies. According to Rostow (1970) the stages of growth are an economic way of looking at whole societies and all societies fall within one of the five categories that he formulated: the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity and the age of high mass consumption. The traditional society was based on agrarian economy and a hierarchical social structure. Women’s role in this traditional society as traditional housewives, taking care of the house and hearth, has been outlined in the works of Becker (1991). Women’s role in the family and in the society at large was subservient to that of the men (Boserup 1981, 1990). Traditional society according to Boserup (1990) was part of the subsistence economy. According to Rostow, the preconditions of take-off usually came about due to external intrusion by more advanced societies. Economic progress was perceived to be possible and a necessary prerequisite for societies to grow. The economic ideal of societies based on industries, trade and services was much sought after (Rostow 1970). Boserup (1990) draws a parallel to this stage of economic development of increasing population density and the change from a system of tribal ownership of land to a system of peasant production. Women’s primary role still remained traditional, and early marriage and dowry prevailed. Women worked in family-owned agricultural fields while those who did not work on the fields were considered as an economic burden for the husband’s family (Boserup 1990: 135). The stage of take-off is termed as the ‘great watershed in the life of modern societies’ by Rostow (1970: 7). During this stage industries expanded rapidly, provided employment to people and expansion of urban areas came about. This was also the stage of modernisation of the society. Thus work shifted from the agricultural sector to the manufacturing sector. According to Rostow, the Indian economy was in the take-off stage of economic development in the 1950s after independence from the British. A shift from westernisation to modernisation was observed in this stage of economic development in India. Boserup terms society in the take-off stage as capitalist enterprises based on wage labour and that ‘the creation of such enterprises can be a means to liberate women from family obligations and unhappy marriages, but in most societies there are many obstacles to such a process’ (Boserup 1990: 136). Some of the obstacles that were prevalent in the traditional family hierarchy excluded women’s participation in the labour force and women were submissive. In the next stage of economic development, developing economies sought to extend modern technology over the
whole front of its economic activities, to become a participant in the international economy (Rostow 1970: 9). This stage is termed as the ‘drive to maturity’. Social transformation by means of globalisation can be a predominant process in this stage of economic development. Due to the interconnected nature of this process, globalisation provides huge opportunities for economic growth. Globalisation here is defined as an expansion of technology in different societies. The fifth stage of economic development by Rostow is the age of high mass consumption. Van de Kaa (1988) in the explanatory framework of the second demographic transition views technology as one of the important dimensions that has brought about changes in the lives of women. In the year 1991, liberalisation of the Indian economy also facilitated the advent of globalisation in the country. Women’s changing lives in the globalised economies of Karnataka and the Netherlands have already been discussed in section 2.2 of this chapter.

Thus we have observed how shifts in opportunities and constraints take place as societies progress in their economic development. Hence studying individuals across generations helps us in understanding the historical influences on events in the life course and it also facilitates our understanding of social change affecting individual lives. In the following paragraphs we shall discuss modernisation and globalisation as two important processes that have influenced women’s lives in stages of economic development.

**Modernisation**

In the Netherlands, the process of modernisation is taken to be one of the major dimensions leading to social changes and making an impact on the life course of women. Modernisation is included within the structural change discussed by van de Kaa (1987, 1988), Lesthaeghe and Surkyn (1988). This process of social change has its consequences in the emergence of the post-industrial society and the welfare state. It is characterised by increased standard of living, emergence of strong social security, increased functional differentiation, increased structural complexity, increased mobility, rise in the overall level of male and female education and increase in women’s participation in the labour force (van de Kaa 1988: 14 cited in the explanatory framework for the second demographic transition).

In Karnataka social change through westernization came about as a result of the colonial rule of the British (Srinivas 1972). This process of social change can be attributed to by an admiration for the English way of life, the English language, changes in the clothing habits, food habits and major life style changes that had been absorbed in the Indian way of life (Srinivas 1972). There was also the expansion of the system of education, and English was the medium of instruction at schools. In the same way as westernisation, modernisation in India was colonially controlled in the initial stages and the end of the colonial rule in India brought about the termination of externally imposed modernisation (Dube 1973). Modernisation is thus equated with westernisation and it implies the progress of the society towards conditions inherent in industrial society and a bureaucratised social structure (Altbrach 1976). Around the 1950s, the cultural and social transformation of the Indian society had much to do with mass media connectivity and access to radio and films. It was during this time that modernisation as a process of social change enabled women to pursue higher education (Kumar 2001). The transition from traditional to modern societies however did not bring about women’s participation in the labour force. In the 1950s the traditional structures of Indian society which were still intact prevented women from taking up jobs (Kumar 2001, Tandon 1998). Women were usually underpaid in comparison to men and working women were considered as having a bad character (Tandon 1998). Marriage was constructed as being more important than women’s career (Ramu 1989).

Thus in India, westernisation came about with the opening of English-medium schools and it was through modernisation that greater numbers of girls were sent to these schools to acquire education (Singh 1993).
The relationship between girls’ education and the process of modernisation in a developing country such as India can be explained in two ways: when girls go for higher education they feel more secure about their future and in doing so their attitudes change from a traditional way of thinking to a more modern outlook.

**Globalisation**

Globalisation as a process of social change is defined as ‘the intensification of the world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa’ (Giddens 1990: 64). Castells (1996, 1998) argued that the process of globalisation triggered the beginnings of a new economy, a new society and a new culture through a set of three interdependent processes. They are the advent of the information technology, flourishing of socio-cultural movements such as feminism, and an economic crisis of both capitalism in the West and statism in the former Soviet empire and China (Castells 1996, 1998).

In our research globalisation is not directly related to technological advancement but has more to do with the linking up of distant localities through worldwide social phenomena. In other words, it stresses on the universality of the influences of higher education of women and their labour force participation that lead to individualism, higher needs orientation and cultural change portrayed by the cultural meaning system of the society. Van de Kaa (1987) hypothesised that the transition from first to second demographic transition was from altruism to individualism.

The trend towards decentralisation in India and the liberalisation of the market economy has brought about the economic restructuring in the country. The economic liberation of India and the burgeoning Indian economy since 1991 connected India to the globalised world. Women began participating in the employment sector. During this period the country also saw a boom in multinational companies and the information technology spawned services such as software industries and call centres. The higher education of women enabled them to join the skilled labour force (Rajadhyaksha and Smita 2004, Kumar 2001). Globalisation brought about exposure to the mass media and other print media such as newspapers and books. The mass media linked up the lives of women in India to those in far-off countries. In this way the processes of change and development were linked in different parts of the world. The observed influence on the lives of women as a result of technological changes are that women relate themselves with the experiences of other women in the world and thus become more knowledgeable. Giddens (1991) has also referred to this type of globalised behaviour of women. According to him, when individuals decide to move away from routinised to innovative behaviour, they often seek to ‘colonise the future’ through such innovative behaviour. We shall cover this in detail in the following section.

**2.4 Structure and agency: Emphasis on duality of structure**

The essence of structuration theory is that it bridges the gap between agency and structure, often referred to in demography as the nexus between individual behaviour and social institutions (Mills 2000: 14). The main focus of the structuration theory is on the two central concepts ‘structure’ and ‘agency’. The theory also lays emphasis on dualism between structure and agency, known as duality of structure, which reflects the interdependence between structure and agency as well as their recursive nature. According to Giddens, structure and agency are not two separate concepts but two ways of considering social action. Time-space distanciation is another feature of this theory that enables us to situate the cross-cultural context of the present research as well as the study of the changing lives of women across generations of mothers and daughters. However, one of the major criticisms of Giddens’s structuration theory, as mentioned by
Giddens himself, is its inapplicability to the developing countries of the world. According to Giddens the reason why this theory cannot be applied to the developing countries is because concepts such as pure relationship, plastic sexuality or individualisation and capitalism are unimaginable in some of the developing countries (Giddens 1990; cited by Mills 2000: 44).

Structure defines both the rules guiding actions and the resources empowering actions hence referring to the interdependent dimension in which the social system operates (Giddens 1984, 1981). The interdependent dimension is defined as ways by which people’s practices are shaped by the enabling and constraining nature of structure which conversely produces and reproduces structure. Social systems are patterns of relations in groupings of all kinds, from small intimate groups to social networks to large organisations (Giddens 1991). Examples of system are families, peer groups and communities in which patterns of relation are either face-to-face or exist across time and space. Thus social systems are empirically observable, intertwining and relatively bounded social practices that link individuals across time and space (Sewell 1992: 6). Structure provides the rules but exercises no direct control over the individuals. Individuals in turn adhere to these rules because of ontological security leading to routinised behaviour. It is ontological because individuals base their knowledge, trust and security of their existence on it (Mills 2000).

The individuals that carry out the actions are termed as agents. According to Giddens, human agents are knowledgeable and capable and can act in innovative ways. This capability to be innovative can transform behaviour in the long run. In order to behave in a particular way, Giddens (1984) suggests that we first look into the notions that attribute special social and cultural meanings to particular events, actions and ideas. Based on these notions, individuals deviate from routinised behaviour to innovative behaviour.

Figure 2.1 depicts the structuration framework of Giddens (1984). From the figure, it can be seen that social structure and human interactions are distinguished into three dimensions and the recursive character of these dimensions is illustrated by the linking modalities. As human actors communicate they draw on interpretative schemes to help make sense of interactions. At the same time these interactions modify the interpretative schemes, which are embedded in the social structure as meaning of signification (Giddens 1984, Mills 2000).

**Figure 2.1 The structuration framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>signification</th>
<th>domination</th>
<th>legitimation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modality</td>
<td>Interpretative scheme</td>
<td>facility</td>
<td>norm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>communication</td>
<td>power</td>
<td>sanction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Giddens 1984: 29*
Higher Education and the Reproductive Life Course

Similarly, the facility to allocate resources is enacted in the wielding of power and it recursively reproduces social structures of domination. The legitimation structure is produced through moral codes in the form of norms that help in determining what can be sanctioned in human interactions (Giddens 1984: 25).

2.4.1 Macro and micro levels in social theory

Similar to the distinction between structure and agency by Giddens, in accordance with methodological individualism, Coleman (1990) argued that to explain social systems, the direct relation at the macro level is threefold. The first applies to the independent variable characterising the society and the dependent variable the individual; the second is with both the independent and the dependent variables characterizing the individual and the third is with the independent variable characterising the society (cited by de Bruijn 1999:19). The approach by Coleman implies the relevance of several analytical elements in the theoretical framework (cited by de Bruijn 1999:19) as follows:

i) a theoretical approach to assess the context of individual behaviour (macro level)

ii) the mechanisms by which the context influences and structures individual action (macro-micro connection)

iii) a theory of individual behaviour (micro level) and

iv) a transformation mechanism (micro-macro connection)

Coleman’s (1990) social theory of the micro and the macro levels is presented in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Macro and micro levels in social theory

(Source: Coleman, 1990; cited by de Bruijn, 1999:18)

Context and social outcomes are the essentials of the societal level as opposed to the individual level constituted by individual background and individual behaviour. It is through interaction at both the societal and individual levels that the characteristics of each element change. Rising numbers of girls enrol for higher education due to expansion of the system of education (macro context), which influences the educational career of women resulting in them being higher educated. Events such as marriage and first birth that shape the reproductive life course of women at the individual level (micro level) takes place at a later age amongst high-educated women. Higher educated women also can generally choose between the occurrence and non-occurrence of these events. They can largely decide on how events such as marriage and first child birth should be sequenced in their life course in order to get the best out of them. It is thus a conflict between societal role expectations and perception of different roles from the perspective of high-educated women. For example, the societal role expectations revealed by the right age for girls to marry...
and the right age for motherhood are in contrast to how high educated women perceive their roles as a ‘wife’ and a ‘mother’. The choice and the decision-making ability of high-educated women are reflected in societal outcomes due to their changing position in the society. The context has a structuring impact on behaviour since it draws people into commonalities, dependencies and interdependencies (de Bruijn 1999: 21). According to de Bruijn (1999), the context is multidimensional, multilevel and fragmented. In the present research, the multidimensional context is revealed by the social and cultural facets of Karnataka and the Netherlands. The multilevel dimension focuses on the universal and the context specific aspects of women’s higher education in relation to individual behaviour and social outcomes in the society. The social context can be termed as the ‘structure of institutions’ that embody information about opportunities and restrictions, consequences and expectations, rights and duties, incentives and sanctions, models, guidelines and definitions of the world (de Bruijn 1999:21). A demographic phenomenon, which is solely at the individual level (micro level), is associated with a large number of societal, structural and cultural aspects. These aspects are also observed to exist at the macro-level. The direct macro level relationships can either be statistically inferred (Coleman 1990) or causally inferred from the individual level (Willekens 1999). Thus it is important to study both the macro and the micro levels in conjunction with each other.

2.4.2 Importance of modality in structure-agency linkages

As already discussed we employ the structuration theory by Giddens (1984), in addition to Coleman’s social theory (1990), because the structuration theory explains the duality of structure, which is not taken into account in the latter theory. The other reason why we use structuration theory is because it explains the structure-agency linkages in our day-to-day lives across time through modalities. The modalities thus act as linking blocks between the macro and the micro levels of the society. The modalities defined by Giddens are interpretative schemes, facility and norms. Interpretative schemes are stocks of shared knowledge that enable human agents to interpret behaviour and interact with others meaningfully. The interpretative schemes are the ways by which the values and norms in the society orient individuals to a particular mental schema and thus influence their action (Mills 2000, D’Andrade 1995). The interpretative process is enabled by the institutional properties of signification structure through a set of rules. These rules allow certain types of interactions and meanings in social interaction and through these interactions the rules are reproduced, enacted and modified. Facilities are resources that provide the necessary authority to individuals to achieve a desired outcome. They enable accomplishing goals through the use of power. Power is exercised by the institutional property of domination. According to Giddens, for human agents to act, they must posses the appropriate allocative and authoritative resources. Norms are the rules that dictate the legitimation structure in the form of informal morals or formal legal regulations (Giddens 1984 cited by Mills 2000: 15). Thus norms define the institutional standards of behaviour.

2.5 Elements of the life course by Giele and Elder (1998)

In this section we explain the important elements of life course as proposed by Giele and Elder (1998) and integrate these concepts into Coleman’s (1990) conceptualisation of macro-micro levels in social theory and the structuration framework of Giddens (1984). We integrate development and change across life course with trajectories of development at the societal level. We discuss these macro-micro linkages against the background of methodological individualism forwarded by Coleman (1990) and important elements of the life course paradigm proposed by Giele and Elder (1998).

The four important elements of the life course paradigm outlined by Giele and Elder (1998) are:
Higher Education and the Reproductive Life Course

- the human agency
- location in time and place
- linked lives and
- timing of lives.

These elements will be elaborated in the subsections that follow. In the previous sections we have explained the linkages of lived and perceived life course with parallel careers of education and the embeddedness of these interlinkages within the social and cultural contexts. This embeddedness also enables us to understand how events at the micro level and social outcomes at the macro level are influenced (Willekens 1999).

2.5.1 Human agency

Human agency is typically where individual behaviour takes place and hence is central to the life course paradigm. According to Giele and Elder (1998: 10), the concept of human agency is referred to as individual goal orientation wherein individual lives are organised around goals and achievement of such goals. This goal-directed nature of individual lives influences their decisions and motives to meet their own needs. Individual goals are dependent on the cognitive approaches that individuals assume in the context of institutional and personal backgrounds. Thus individual goals are culture-and society-specific, both of which have a constraining and facilitating effect on individual behaviour (Giddens 1984). This is also referred to as ‘cultural embeddedness’ from the perspective of human agency in social cognitive theory (Bandura 2002). This theory distinguishes between three modes of agency: (i) personal agency which is exercised individually, (ii) proxy agency in which people secure desired outcomes by influencing others to act on their behalf, (iii) collective agency in which people work together to secure what they can not accomplish on their own (Bandura 2002: 269-270). In our research the lived and the perceived life courses of women at the micro level in the cross-cultural contexts explains human agency. According to Bandura (1991, 1997), the cognitive mechanism that guides and motivates individual behaviour is perceived as self-efficacy. It is the belief that individuals have about themselves and their capabilities, which exercises control over their level of functioning and other events that affect their lives (Bandura 1991: 257). Individuals make their choices through these beliefs of efficacy. In comparison to the perceived self-efficacy is the perceived collective efficacy which represents shared beliefs by collective action (Bandura 2002). The two types of efficacies influence individual behaviour and are considered to be common across cultures. However, the way in which they are structured, developed, exercised and put to use are different cross-culturally. In Karnataka and the Netherlands, the perceived self-efficacy of higher educational attainment of women could be the same. However, expression of this perceived self-efficacy in first union formation and birth of the first child in India might be different from that in the Netherlands. This links to the two characteristics that Giddens (1984) has identified to be present in a human agent. He considers human agents to be knowledgeable and capable of adopting innovative behaviour. Here we observe that women’s high education in the cross-cultural context provides them the ability by which they can decide to ‘delay’ these events in their life course. At the same time the cultural norms and cultural meanings attached to these events also influence women’s choice and decisions to delay, which is a goal in itself.

The structuration framework of Giddens and methodological individualism by Coleman reveal that individual behaviour can neither thrive on its own and nor does it perpetuate on its own. The influence of structure is essential in enabling and constraining individual behaviour. The cultural meaning system enables us to understand how individuals in different cultural contexts adapt themselves to their local
environment by which they structure interpersonal activities (D’Andrade 1984: 116). Giddens’s concept of structure is seen to provide rules and resources enabling or constraining behaviour while D’Andrade (1992) relates institutions in the society through norms and sanctions which direct individual behaviour. D’Andrade (1984) observes how schemas are culturally oriented with their roots in the cultural meaning system. A schema is a ‘conceptual structure that makes identification of objects and events possible’, and it forms a ‘person’s internal representation of his/her environment’ (D’Andrade 1992: 28). Hence for schemas to motivate behaviour and initiate action, individuals first attribute meaning to facts around them. Strauss and Quinn (1997: 6, cited by Hutter and Ramesh 2003) explain that ‘a person’s interpretation of an object or event includes an identification of it and expectations regarding it and often a feeling about it and thus a motivation to respond to it’. So the schemas also highlight the social and cultural expectations regarding proper behaviour and the proper roles to be played in those situations (Hutter and Ramesh 2003). The perceived timing of events in the perceived life course explains the social and cultural expectations and prevalence of age norms and age expectations. The schemas on menstruation in the rural south Indian village relate to segregation because menstruating women are considered to be polluting (Hutter and Ramesh 2003, Hutter et al. 2002). The age norms and age expectations as regards the age of marriage and first childbearing in India are part of the schemas on marriage and motherhood. Here we observe how the cultural meaning systems influence individual behaviour with the help of cultural schemas on marriage and motherhood.

D’Andrade (1992, 1995) observes that individual behaviour is the outcome of schemas that function as goals that motivate and instigate actions. When an object or event is interpreted, it passes from lower-level goals to higher-level goals. According to D’Andrade (1992: 30), individual action is determined by top-level goals which are also known as the ‘master motives’ or ‘ultimate goals’. Top-level schemas serve the dual function of initiating action autonomously as well as providing a goal for the action to take place. Goals such as love, success and security are part of the top level motives. The middle-level motives consist of schemas for issues such as marriage and job. These schemas cannot instigate action autonomously and require the help of other goal-schemas (D’Andrade 1992: 31). The third level or lower-level motives are entirely dependent on higher-level schemas to instigate action. For example, schemas for shopping, going to the bank occur at this level. Drawing a parallel between levels of schemas are Maslow’s theory of human motivation (1970), Rokeach’s cluster of goals (1973) and Lindenberg’s motivational cluster (1990). While Maslow’s theory of motives typifies a universal motivational structure, the cluster of goals and motivational cluster relate motives to the context in which individuals live. However, there are studies that refute the universal nature of Maslow’s theory of motivation (Chagnon 1977, cited by de Bruijn 1999). Maslow (1970) identifies five basic needs in a hierarchical order. The lowest being physical survival needs, then the need for safety and security, followed by social needs such as a sense of belonging, then the need for self-esteem and the higher-order need is the need for self-actualisation. According to Maslow, individuals first cater to their lower-order needs and then move up in the hierarchy to achieve higher-order needs.

To understand individual behaviour with the help of social theory, the normative and the interpretative rules hold significance (de Bruijn 1999). Normative rules are those that prescribe, direct and regulate individual behaviour while interpretative rules are the rules that provide meaning (Hargreaves 1980). A nice example about how marriage as an institution is changing in India is illustrated in a recent newspaper article in The Times of India (TOI 2004c) an Indian daily as well as in Hindu Business Line (The Hindu 2005). These articles stated that amongst the higher educated working women professionals, marriage as an institution at the macro level is slowly beginning to assume new definitions. The article indicates that being married is considered less respectable amongst this group of women as women nowadays need to be...
Higher Education and the Reproductive Life Course

higher educated as well. Thus at the micro level, women seem to have the opportunity to delay marriage in order to attain higher education. Considering marriage as less respectable in comparison to high education is the normative rule for this group of women as reported in this article. The higher educated working women professionals postpone marriage to be economically independent or they prefer remaining single until they find a suitable man. Hence we observe how the lives of women have become intertwined within the contexts and these contexts in turn construct, organise and define the life course.

In our research women’s higher educational attainment can influence women’s perceived autonomy in the cross-cultural context. Perceived autonomy is studied in five major dimensions of women’s lives in Karnataka and the Netherlands based on Jejeebhoy’s (1995) classification of autonomy. They are:

- perceived knowledge autonomy which is gained from education which enhances women’s knowledge through exposure to the wider worldview. This wider exposure leads to changes in women’s attitudes and behaviour enabling them to adopt different lifestyles
- perceived decision-making autonomy concerns how education reinforces women’s say in family decisions and decisions concerning their own lives and well-being. An educated woman not only makes her own decisions but she is also confident that she can carry out her decision.
- perceived physical autonomy in interaction with the outside world indicates how an educated woman faces fewer constraints on her physical mobility by means of greater contact with the outside world.
- perceived emotional autonomy is obtained from education which brings about a shift in loyalties and ensures greater bonding of conjugal families from the extended kinship structure. There is a more egalitarian relationship between spouses because of better inter-spousal communication. This brings about greater bonding and intimacy between spouses and between parents and children.
- perceived economic and social autonomy concerns how education enhances women’s self-reliance in economic matters, which is basic for social acceptance and social status. It also enhances her access and control over economic resources by providing her with economic independence. This legitimizes self-reliance rather than reliance on her husband or child to attain social status and acceptance.

(Source: Jejeebhoy 1995: 37)

Perceived autonomy is manifested differently in different cultures and societies. As Jejeebhoy (1995: 7) in her study points out women’s autonomy as individuals is conditioned largely by the extent of gender stratification in their society. Mason (1993) and Cleland and Rodriguez (1988) in their studies on the developing countries recognise the fact that reproductive behaviour is also strongly conditioned by the degree of gender stratification in a culture. In this research we will address the question “What happens in societies where gender stratification is not observable through equal access to economic resources”? Jejeebhoy (1995) bases her classification of patriarchal gender-stratified societies on the definition by Radcliffe Brown (1952). Patriarchal societies are those that can be characterised by patrilineal descent, patrilocal residence, inheritance and succession practices which exclude women, and hierarchical relations in which father or his relatives has authority over family members. According to Jejeebhoy (1995) patriarchal societies being more non-egalitarian are less developed and can be regarded as gender stratified (Jejeebhoy 1995). On the other hand, societies that are more developed have fewer gender disparities, propagating egalitarian gender relations (Jejeebhoy 1995). Studies by Dyson and Moore (1983) show that women in South India exhibit more egalitarian gender relations by playing a more decisive role within the family and outside it than women in the northern part of India. The state of
Karnataka that this study focuses on is located in South India. The Dutch context presents a much more egalitarian culture than Karnataka. Egalitarian gender relations play an important role in this cultural context with women sharing the same platform as men in all walks of life (De Jong Gierveld and Liefbroer 1995). Thus in a patriarchal gender-stratified culture as that of Karnataka, the educational threshold to attain autonomy is realized through high levels of educational attainment. Whereas in the Dutch cultural context where everyone has equal access to resources the education thresholds to attain autonomy are lower. Apart from the different cultural traditions located in different types of society what becomes very relevant is the status attained by means of individual autonomy of women. It is defined as the relative social position of an individual within a group (Linton 1988). Hence when women attain higher education they also attain a better position in the society. The social position is an indirect indicator of women’s perceived autonomy. Across generations this social position is achieved in stages. Thus we can say that perceived autonomy of women comes about in stages, and each stage is reached by a different generation.

Apart from perceived autonomy, women’s higher educational attainment enables them to make a transition from ascribed status to achieved status as formulated by Linton (1988). Ascribed statuses are those that come naturally by birth. Such types of status cannot be chosen. Examples are the family into which one is born, being born a male or a female, born in a particular caste. Achieved statuses are those that can be acquired by obtaining attributes in our life course. Attributes help individuals to gain in the social prestige thus enabling them to acquire an established position as a result of their accomplishments (Linton 1988). These types of attributes can be termed as enhancers to the status that is achieved. Higher education becomes a status enhancer for women that facilitates them to make this transition (Kasarda et al. 1986). The status enhancement perspective by Kasarda et al. (1986) uses the dimensions of social mobility, namely those that are upwardly mobile as opposed to those who are non-mobile. Educational attainment of women comes into the picture in their study as a status enhancer that has influenced fertility across time. The authors recognise the transition that women make from a status dependency on their fathers or husbands to an independent status. Thus a transition from ascribed status to achieved status is implied. Studies by de Graaf and Luijke (1992) and de Graaf and Kalmijn (2001) have systematically looked at the trends in status attainment from ascription to achievement in the Netherlands across generations of women. The former relate status attainment as a process attributed to the changes at the societal level. De Graaf and Luijke have particularly looked at how the status attainment across generations takes place by means of educational attainment prescribed by the Blau and Duncan model in 1967. De Graaf and Kalmijn’s study in 2001 explains intergenerational occupational mobility in the Netherlands via the indirect channel of educational attainment. In the Indian context, Srinivas (1972) studied the intergenerational transmission of social status as a consequence of people moving from ascribed status to the achieved status. Srinivas (1972) explains the transmission by means of westernisation. Westernisation facilitated movement from traditional ways of life to Western lifestyle. In Srinivas’s study (1972), English education was a means by which people could adopt a Western lifestyle and hence achieved status in the society. He has however not worked on educational attainment per se. The studies by de Graaf and Luijkx (1992) and de Graaf and Kalmijn (2001) do not clearly define the key concepts in their studies i.e. ascription and achievement. Srinivas (1972) has provided the explanation of the concepts of ascription and achievement but it is limited to the Indian context only.

2.5.2 Location in time and place

Location in time and place in the life course paradigm refers to the cultural background (Giele and Elder 1998: 9). In other words it is the embedded life course in cultural contexts and shaped by the historical
Higher Education and the Reproductive Life Course

events that individuals experience over their lifetime (Elder et al. 2003: 12). Thus individual behaviour not only takes place within the precincts of the social and cultural contexts in which the individual is situated but also draws the meaning of events from the cultural background (Giele and Elder 1998). The cultural background prescribes rules prevalent in a particular historical period and the birth cohort of the individual. Thus cultural background provides the basis for individual behaviour.

Hence for behaviour to take place it is essential to link this element to human agency. As we have already discussed in the previous section dealing with human agency, human agents become need-and goal-oriented depending on the cultural meaning systems in which they are located. The mental schemas that motivate and instigate action are also called cultural schemas (Quinn and Holland 1987). The cultural meaning facilitates what people must know in order to act the way they do and interpret their experiences in the distinctive way that their cultures prescribes (Quinn and Holland 1987). Thus schemas change with the passage of time and across generations of mothers and daughters. Hutter and Ramesh (2003: 15) state that ‘schemas can be passed on from one generation to the other’. These changes can refer to changes in schemas that both motivate and demotivate certain behaviour. According to D’Andrade (1984: 96) the cultural meaning system has four functions: which are representational, constructive, directive and evocative. The representational function refers to knowledge about the surrounding environment, the constructive function creates cultural entities that people adhere to, the directive function directs behaviour through social pressure and external sanctions as well as by intrinsic motivation to conform, while the evocative function evokes feelings (D’Andrade 1984: 96-101). In the section on human agency we have already discussed how cultural schemas are embedded in the cultural meaning system which influences individual behaviour.

The context can thus be defined as the environment or the setting (social, cultural, economic and political) around an individual, which provides the rules and regulations, models and guidelines for behaviour to take place. For example, to prove her fecundity in rural Karnataka, a woman needs to be a mother soon after the consummation of marriage takes place; this is a context specific challenge for women in the Indian context (Hutter, 1994). Thus proving her fecundity soon after marriage imparts the cultural meaning of the position she is able to establish in her society with the birth of her first child. ‘The social environment, in all its differentiation is seen as the major contextual ingredient in the explanation of individual behaviours and the resultant outcomes at the societal level’ (de Bruijn, 1999: 21). The social context can be related to the social institutions like the family, local community structures like the social networks, public administrative arrangements like legislation, stratification system and the labour market and the gender system of a society (McNicoll 1994). The social institutions discussed here resemble the concept of structure introduced by Anthony Giddens (1984). In addition to the social context, the cultural context also influences individual behaviour. It is through the cultural meaning systems in the society and individuals behave according to the prescribed cultural norms. Culture provides the normative, interpretative and meaning giving rules (D’Andrade 1984) thus facilitating a particular type of behaviour or restricting it. For example delaying marriage and motherhood may seem convenient for higher educated women in Karnataka as they gain time to enhance their career prospects, but the cultural significance of marriage and motherhood disallows further delays after certain age. Thus women may delay their marriage only until a certain age, which is culturally permissible, after which they eventually marry.

2.5.3 Linked lives

Linked lives are defined as interdependent lives by which individual lives are intimately connected to the lives of others (Giele and Elder 1998). In the life course paradigm it is referred to as social integration
Chapter 2: Background and the Theoretical Framework

(Giele and Elder 1998: 9). Linked lives are lived interdependently and socio-historical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships (Elder et al. 2003: 13). Linked lives are hence interdependent lives whereby the social ties among individuals facilitate both in recreating and reinterpreting life courses through shared individual experiences (O’Rand 1996). It includes cohort effects or in other words collective influences at a particular historical period represented by generations. Thus by means of social ties, individuals share and interweave experiences to integrate social interaction with individual behaviour. Liefbroer (1999) studied the transition from youth to adulthood as a chain of linked processes that has its influence on ‘family-life events’. The opinions, behaviour and careers of significant others have an influence on the individual choice processes. Thus individuals in the society have set definitions of their world around them and these definitions of the world in turn influence their behaviour. Changes in the timing of first union and first birth across generations of mothers and daughters studied through the lived and the perceived life courses enable us to understand linked lives.

In the present research, the temporal and cultural location is illustrated through changes in individual behaviour across different birth cohorts of women in Karnataka and the Netherlands. The birth cohorts are then categorised into generations of mothers and daughters. For instance, women of the older generation in Karnataka might have identified themselves primarily as homemakers. Other women too in the same generation followed similar societal and cultural norms. Thus we observe how the historical and cultural location influences individual behaviour. Individuals experience institutional and social ties by being members of the social network. The institutions provide the rules and resources and through social networks events are co-experienced and replicated. Individuals thus do not function solely in the society, they always function as collectives and their involvement in goal-oriented groups (Giele 2004). Some of the goal-oriented groups are education and work; for an individual these instil a greater sense of association with a particular group. Individual role expectations are both in the societal domains as well as how the individuals themselves perceive their role. These are observed through the social timing of events and roles as wife and mother. The very fact that a woman in a particular cultural context should marry at a certain age or become a mother by a certain age already indicates the societal expectations that shape individual behaviour.

2.5.4 Timing of life events

According to Elder et al. (2003: 12), the developmental antecedents and consequences of life transitions, events and behavioural patterns vary according to their timing in a person’s life. The cross-cultural contexts present two distinct cultures as well as two different types of society. The Dutch cultural context that has seen a transition from standard biography to choice biography (Liefbroer 1999, Liefbroer and De Jong Gierveld 1994) represents the post-traditional (modern) culture (Gauntlett 2002). Standard biography represents the standard ordering of life events in the life course of a woman. Mills (2000) describes them as the ‘classical life paths’. These include the normal ordering of events such as leaving the parental home, entry into the labour market or leaving parental home to enter into marriage and subsequent childbirth. Mills (2000) states that new stages in the life course emerged, for example living independently without a partner, cohabitation, conceiving and having a child prior to or in the absence of marriage. The ‘destandardisation’ of the life course gave rise to an egalitarian society wherein everyone had equal access to the economic resources and there was often less gender disparity (Liefbroer 1999). The cultural context of Karnataka could be seen as a rather traditional culture wherein tradition provides individuals with fairly well-defined roles. Adherence to patriarchy is one of the basic tenets of a traditional culture (Jejeebhoy 1995, Basu 1992). The life course of a woman is subsumed under the standard ordering of the life events. Jejeebhoy (1995) classifies such a type of society that is still patriarchal as gender-stratified society.
2.6 The Conceptual Framework

Following the theoretical perspectives, this section explains the conceptual model, which is illustrated in Figure 2.3. This is the basic conceptual model of the present research and gives an overview of the whole research by highlighting concepts that have emerged from the theoretical framework and how these concepts depict inter-linkages. The model in Figure 2.3 also summarises how these concepts are related to each other in the cross-cultural context and integrated in order to explain the influence of women’s higher education on their changing position in society. This framework also serves as a tool for answering and analysing the research questions. The first research question focuses on individual behaviour conceptualised by the timing and sequencing of events such as first union, marriage, cohabitation and first birth in the reproductive life course of women in the cross-cultural contexts of Karnataka and the Netherlands. The second research question links up the macro level with the micro. In this research question we attempt to study how the changes in educational structure and educational expansion have influenced educational attainment of women, which in turn affect the timing of first union formation, marriage, cohabitation and birth of first child. The third research question enables us to understand how women perceive their higher educational attainment as an influence on their life course across generations. The fourth research question illustrates how women’s position in the society has changed across generations of mothers and daughters in the cross-cultural context. Separate conceptual models are also adopted for the secondary data analyses in chapters 4 and 5 and qualitative in-depth interviews in chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9. These have been depicted in figures 3.1 and 3.6 respectively in chapter 3.

The conceptual framework takes into account the time dimension both at the macro and the micro levels. Incorporation of the notion of time gives the conceptual framework a dynamic approach. Macro-level changes are studied through institutional time, which refers to how education as an institution has evolved with the help of the educational reforms in Karnataka and the Netherlands. The timing of life events forms an integral part of the life course development at the micro level. Hence the dimension of time at the micro level takes into account biological, historical and social time. Biological time refers to the chronological age of an individual at which particular events such as marriage, cohabitation and the birth of the first child occur in the reproductive life course of women. It is also referred to as chronological time by Willekens (1999). Historical time takes into account historical events that play a role in shaping individual lives. Here we study historical time by categorising women into birth cohorts based on their ‘year of birth’ in Karnataka and the Netherlands. Historical time is also connected to the relationship between generations of mothers and daughters in the cultural context of Karnataka. When social and cultural meaning is attached to chronological age, it refers to the concept of social time. These come about in the form of age norms and age expectations in terms of a particular stage of life course development. In the present study they are revealed through the perceived and socially expected age at events of marriage, cohabitation and first birth in terms of being early, late or on time.

The basic conceptual model as shown in Figure 2.3 is structured according to the social theory of Coleman (1990) by distinguishing broadly between the macro and micro levels. Context and the social outcome signify the relevant components of the macro level conceptualised through aspects of social change engendered by the processes of modernisation and globalisation. The social outcome at the macro level is the position of women in society in the cross-cultural contexts of Karnataka and the Netherlands. At the micro level, individual background and individual behaviour is linked through the life course perspective. The educational career of women forms the individual background while the lived reproductive life course and perceived reproductive life course form the basis of individual behaviour. The life course perspective
facilitates studying the changes in individual behaviour across birth cohorts. The change in individual behaviour in turn is re-reflected back at the macro level in the form of the social outcome of women’s position in the society.

The context is thus multi-dimensional and multi-level (Willekens 1999, de Bruijn 1999). Multi-dimensionality enables inclusion of the social and cultural dimensions that explain individual behaviour. The social dimension incorporates the immediate environment and the social institutions. These institutions provide rules and resources that facilitate and constrain individual behaviour. The cultural context includes the cultural meaning system with the help of which people adapt to their environment and structure interpersonal activities (D’Andrade 1984). The cultural meaning system contains normative properties and sanctions which direct individual behaviour. Because of its multi-level dimension, the context enables cross-cultural comparison of Karnataka and the Netherlands. Hence in order to understand the social outcome, which is the changing position of women in society, the causal mechanisms involved in producing this outcome need to be addressed (Coleman 1990). So, on the one hand the social theory of Coleman (1990) makes a distinction between the context and the individual represented by the macro and the micro levels respectively, while on the other it explains individual behaviour with the help of contextual factors which are expressed as social outcomes at the macro level. Thus ‘the theory begins and ends at the macro level, but in between dips to the level of the individual’ (de Bruijn 1999:18).

Apart from the social theory of Coleman (1990), we also incorporate Giddens’s structuration theory (1984) into the conceptual framework. This theory brings about the relationship between the structure and the agency, which is also a distinction between the macro and the micro levels. The theory brings together the subjective and objective approaches in understanding the structure agency linkages. The subjective or interpretative approach emphasises the role of human agency in shaping social systems, while the objective approach stresses on facilities and constraints on social action imposed by the institutional framework. In the present research, structure refers to the institution of the educational system in Karnataka and the Netherlands. It is through the structure that social action by human agency (which is individual behaviour here) takes place. Agency is located in the micro level represented by individual behaviour. This exists in relation to the societal level changes through aspects of social change that affect individual behaviour. Individuals refer to the rules and resources provided by the institutional framework of the society for behaviour to take place at the micro level. The human agents drawing upon the rules and resources in their daily lives interpret, enact, reproduce and modify social actions. The recursive interaction between structure and agency over time gives rise to social structure at the macro level.

The link between structure and agency in our daily activities is transmitted through the modalities within the structuration framework at two time points. These modalities at time t are interpretative scheme, resources and norms. The modalities are drawn upon by the social actors in their interaction with other actors and are the medium for the reproduction and modification of the institutional properties of the social system. The interpretative schemes are stocks of shared knowledge that social actors use to interpret behaviour and interact with each other in a meaningful way. Resources are the stocks of tangible and intangible assets, which facilitate and enable individuals to act. They are allocative (material) resources and authoritative (power) resources (Giddens 1984). The institutional properties of domination influence the allocative and authoritative resources. Norms as modality are the rules dictating the ‘ways of doing things’ providing moral sanction to the social action. They define the institutional standards of behaviour and are shaped by expectations of social actors as regards their rights and obligations. Modalities at time t +1 include socially expected role changes, perceived autonomy and perceived ascribed and achieved status.
Hence in comparison to the social theory of Coleman (1990) which highlights the one-way stance of the macro level affecting individual behaviour at the micro level, Giddens’s structuration theory (1984) explains the social structure and the human agency in relationship with each other through modality as the ‘duality of structure’. The structuration theory thus contains the basic elements of the social theory of Coleman (1990) but in addition argues for the recursive nature of the structure and agency linkage. The social theory however does not elaborate on how the macro level influences the micro level. It is for this reason we use the concept modality in order to understand the linkages between the structure and the agency. The social theory of Coleman does not take into account the time perspective whereas time space distanciation is a central concept of the structuration framework.
Chapter 2: Background and the Theoretical Framework

Figure 2.3 Conceptual Framework

INSTITUTIONAL TIME

SOCIAL CHANGE

Macro Level
Structure (Giddens, 1984)

Micro Level
Agency (Giddens, 1984)

Context
MODERNISATION and GLOBALISATION
- Educational structure/Expansion
- Structural and Cultural Change
- Cultural Meaning Systems

Social Outcome
POSITION OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY
- Socially expected role changes
- Perceived autonomy
- Perceived ascribed and achieved status

At time t
Interpretative scheme
Facility
Norms

At time t + 1

Individual background
Educational levels
Age at graduation

Individual behaviour
Lived reproductive life course
- Sequence and occurrence of events

Biological, Historical and Social Time
(Age, Birth Cohorts and Generations)