Chapter 7
‘I am different from my mother’:
Motherhood and Autonomy in daughter’s generation

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the events of menarche and marriage while this chapter examines the event of first birth and discusses different types of autonomy as defined by Jejeebhoy (1995) amongst the daughter’s generation in Bangalore. The chapter is divided into two broad sections. In section 7.2 we discuss the event of first birth and how women perceive this event in their own life course. Section 7.3 focuses on perception of autonomy and classification of women’s autonomy according to Jejeebhoy (1995) into five different types.

7.2 Birth of the first child: beginning of motherhood

In this section we shall study the event of motherhood commencing with the birth of the first child in the reproductive life course of the younger cohorts of women in the interview sample. This section is divided into seven subsections. In subsections 7.2.1 to 7.2.4 we deal with the perceived timing of the event, perceived first birth interval, ceremony that initiates transition into motherhood, and knowledge regarding motherhood. Subsections 7.2.5 to 7.2.7 discuss the behavioural changes expected of a mother, the perceived role change and the perceived gains of the event of motherhood.

In chapter 6 we already observed the impact of women’s higher educational attainment leading to later marital age in the daughter’s generation in Bangalore. However, the delayed age at marriage does not lead to a delay in first childbearing. Results of the secondary data analysis in chapters 4 and 5 also illustrated that higher educated women have shortened first birth interval in comparison to women of other educational levels. In the cultural context of India where pre-marital childbearing is rare, the emphasis is on the strong connection between higher ages at marriage directly related to the higher age at first childbearing. Both marriage and motherhood are equally important events in the life course of women from which women largely derive their status.

7.2.1 Perceived timing of the event

Some respondents considered their age at first child birth to be late, a view commonly held among women who became first-time mothers at the age of 28 and above. The main reason why they perceive it to be a late age was because of the potential medical complications for the mother and the child which created fear among some of them.
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'I was 35 years old and it was late. I was worried about being physically fit enough’

'I consider it a late age for the birth of the first child at the age of 35 years and 6 months. There was a risk of complication during pregnancy at that age. There is also a danger that the baby has some malformation’

'Because I read about so many things and I was a bit scared, I did not delay in view of my late age’
(The respondent was 31 years old when she had her first child)

For one respondent the large age gap between mother and child a reason why she regarded her age at first child birth as a late age. Echoing this view, another respondent added that motherhood at a late age means that the child might not yet have settled down in life when she herself retires from her job.

'Ideally, when we retire the children should be able to look after us. If we give birth at a late age then the child is not settled when we retire. That gap is too much. It is not good.’

'By the time my daughter came into this world I was 29. I consider it a late age. The age gap is too much between mother and child. I feel my age will catch up on me when I take responsibilities for the child.’

However one respondent who gave birth to her first child at the age of 22 regarded it an early age to take on motherhood. She considered it to be a young age in comparison to her friends who were pursuing further studies at the same age. However she viewed her early age as advantageous.

'At the age of 22 I considered it as an early age. My friends were still wondering about whether to do post graduate studies or continue working and here I was having a baby. But now (aged 32) I look at it as an advantage. It is an advantage to have children young because even if you go through hell in the early years they grow up somehow and you are still young when they are not totally dependent on you. Being young I am still energetic and I am back to my working life that gives me independence and financial independence’

Those respondents who became mothers in the age range of 25-28 years saw their age at motherhood as the right age or 'on time'. On time is also considered as the ideal age to assume responsibilities and begin motherhood. Women considered themselves as being both physically and mentally ready to become a mother at the ages 25 to 28. The physical and mental readiness refers to developmental readiness that determines the stages of development that facilitate transition from one stage to the other (Willekens 1999, Mills 2000). These respondents also indicated that by ages 25 to 28, adequate socialization from mother to daughter has already taken place and this eases the step toward motherhood.

'I consider it as the right age. I was physically and mentally ready to become a mother. I had heard of it from my mother as well as seen her taking care of so many things. I thought that I was able to take up the responsibilities of motherhood’

On enquiring about the ideal age when women should be first-time mothers, all those who perceived of their age as late and early considered ages before 30 as the ideal age. This age was considered to be the
maximum age for first child birth because of the perceived fears of complications both for the mother and
the child.

‘Before 30 is an ideal age. Then it is neither too early and nor too late. Both mother and child could be
at risk if a mother conceived at an age later than 30.’

Some respondents considered the question of ideal age for first child birth as being dependent on the
woman’s age at marriage, on the personal background of respondents and thus highly subjective in nature:

‘It depends on when the girl got married. After marriage give it at least 2 years and after that have a
child’
‘The ideal age is dependent on the person’

7.2.2 Perceived first birth interval

In this subsection we shall discuss about the first birth interval as perceived by respondents in the
interview. The first birth interval is defined as the interval between age (in years) at marriage and age at
birth of the first child. We arrived at this definition because all the respondents who were interviewed
discuss the first birth interval more in terms of the duration in years than months – the later being the
common measurement of first birth interval.

Respondents were asked about their opinion of the ideal first birth interval. There were differences in
opinion but a common response was ‘immediately after marriage’. This perhaps indicates the importance
of motherhood in the lives of the respondents and the age factor at marriage. Those respondents who
considered their age at marriage as late did not want to further delay the birth of their first child. This was
because of the common fear of medical complications that might arise for the mother and the child at later
child bearing ages.

‘Just after marriage, especially if a woman gets married at the age of 28 one should have the first child
immediately after marriage’

‘I got married late and I felt that delaying two or three years further may reduce my chances of
conceiving. That would make me closer to 35 years of age. I was certainly not going to wait that long
because I read so many things and I was a bit scared’

However, what we gather from most of the responses is that the ideal interval between getting married and
first birth was considered to be 2 to 3 years. While some respondents suggested it to be the required time
to enjoy the newly found independence and liberty that came about after marriage (see Chapter 6 section
6.3.8), other respondents regarded it as a period to get to know their husband before beginning with
motherhood.
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Some respondents mentioned that it was a personal choice to wait for 2-3 years before conceiving their first child. However, they were unable to delay their first child birth largely because of the delay already created by their late age at marriage. As one respondent explained, that she ‘gave up the thought of knowing’ her husband better in order to conceive her first child as soon as possible.

According to some other respondents:

- ‘I was already old. So I decided that it did not matter if I did not know my husband very well earlier. We thought that we will get to know each other later as I wanted to have a child’

Another respondent states that she could not afford the ideal waiting time of 2-3 years from marriage to first child birth even though she married at an early age. She was aware that the age difference of 9 years between her and her husband did not make it sensible to further delay her first child. Thus personally her desire for a longer first birth interval could not be fulfilled. However, at the time of the interview, this respondent was 28 years old and she considers her early age at motherhood as an advantage.

- ‘I could have waited but gave importance to the fact that my husband is 9 years older to me. At that time I considered it as an early age but now I look at it as an advantage. I am back to work and am also financially independent and I already have two children’

7.2.3 Ceremony: initiation to mark the transition

Ceremonies that were conducted to celebrate the birth of a baby were in the form of the naming ceremony or some other small ceremony. These ceremonies usually took place in the 6th or the 9th month after the birth of a baby. A typical ceremony consisted of a religious pooja where the new parents and the child were blessed followed by a feast. However, none of the respondents mentioned a ceremony immediately after the birth of their baby. Research amongst rural women in Karnataka by Hutter (1994), Hutter and Ramesh (2003) reveals that birth is considered to be polluting and the period of pollution lasts for five days after the delivery. On the fifth day (aidesi) a ceremony performed to mark the end of the period of pollution after the birth of the baby.
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‘It was a naming ceremony for our child. So a lot of people came and they blessed our child and us’

‘There was a ceremony when my son was 6 months old. It was a pooja followed by a big feast. It was also the naming ceremony of my son.’

The Christian respondents stated that there was no ceremony to celebrate the birth of their first child.

7.2.4 Knowledge and its sources

In this subsection we shall focus on knowledge surrounding motherhood which we have categorised into instructions, advice and information as discussed in chapter 6, section 6.2.4. This section also deals with the sources of such knowledge on motherhood to the respondents. The respondents identified their mother and doctor as being the main sources of knowledge on motherhood. However some respondents indicate that their knowledge on motherhood was largely gained through their own experience as well as from books. Apart from this type of knowledge the respondents identified another category of knowledge namely, ‘local knowledge’. Such knowledge is framed by community-specific ideas on motherhood. For example the type of food that should be avoided when breastfeeding and which type of food has to be eaten the mother after she gives birth to her baby.

‘I learnt about motherhood through my own experience.’

‘No one told me about it. I learnt it by experiencing it. Not every mother experiences the same things. But some basic things about what type of food I should avoid when I am breast feeding the baby and all that was told to me by my mother’

‘My mother advised me the importance of having more milk, vegetables and cutting down on chillies, and meat to gain energy back after delivery’

‘I did not get any instructions on motherhood about what to do. I used to read books so that helped me. I knew what to do, how to respond to a situation, what are the things that can spoil the child and how certain actions may be detrimental. All the information I got was from what I read’

Responses such as ‘experiencing motherhood’, ‘being informed about motherhood through books’ and ‘local knowledge on motherhood’ underlies learning as a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental influences. These responses relate to the social learning theory of Bandura (1991, 2002) about how most human behaviour is learnt observationally through imitation or modeling. Bandura’s theory defines individual behaviour as a triadic, dynamic and reciprocal interaction of cognitive behavioural and environmental factors. The cognitive aspects enable individuals to selectively pick out information and behave according to the cultural values and expectations. In the same way here we observe how information on motherhood such as the right type of food to eat after childbirth and the food that should be avoided is based on knowledge from books, local knowledge from mothers as well as personal experience. The transmission of local knowledge shows how an individual’s behaviour during motherhood is replicated based on cultural values and expectations.
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One respondent adds that many people provided her with different types of knowledge on motherhood. However she made her own decisions and choices on what to adopt by falling back on her knowledge gained through her own education.

> 'Many people told me many things. But I did not listen to everything that they told me. I followed what I found very sensible and which was supported by my education. I adopted those things. Some of the advice really saved me’

Knowledge in the form of instructions passed on from mother to daughter was concerned with child care.

> 'Sometimes it was my mother who gave me instructions on how I should really look after my child and take care of her. Sometimes my mummy scolds me when I do not take proper care of the kids’

> 'To some extent the dos and the don’ts were told by my mother like how to carry the baby with care, how to give bath and what to do when the baby cries a lot. She also told me about symptoms which I should look out for and call the doctor if necessary’

Apart from the instructions one respondent also mentioned advice on breastfeeding, which she got from her doctor as a form of knowledge on motherhood.

> 'My doctor advised me how to breastfeed the baby and to breastfeed the baby for 3 months after delivery. That made me lose all the weight that I had gained during pregnancy’

All respondents mentioned that their education and working career facilitated in acquiring the different types and forms of knowledge on motherhood. The higher education of women enabled them to have better knowledge about vaccination for children and awareness of babies’ growth. They claim that most of the knowledge was derived from books.

> 'Education provided me with the knowledge about vaccination and its benefits. It also provided me with general awareness of a baby’s growth and the caution one should exercise about baby’s health’

> 'I read about many things about child health and childcare from my study books and they were clear to me’

These respondents felt that their acquired knowledge resulted in a better upbringing of the child as well as their being a better mother when compared to women who are not as educated:

> 'My higher education has made me a better mother and also helped me in the upbringing of my child.’

> 'It was because I was better educated that I was a better mother. My high education helped me in bringing up my child in a better way in comparison to the women who were not as educated as me.’

Working career also contributed to the respondents’ knowledge through interaction with workplace colleagues who often become the source of knowledge in aspects of motherhood. This can be related to the knowledge autonomy of women (Jejeebhoy 1995). Some respondents indicated that they often learnt about childcare and balancing between work and motherhood from the experiences of the colleagues in the workplace.
Some respondents also mentioned that their working career facilitated in their knowledge about motherhood by making them financially independent. The financial independence in turn provided them with an alternative to buy books on childcare and motherhood. It also brings about a certain amount of independence in bringing up their child.

One respondent mentioned that her working career did not bring knowledge awareness about motherhood. She found it difficult to continue working after giving birth to her first child because of health reasons which made her resign from her job.

From knowledge acquisition and the sources of knowledge we move on to focus on the expected behavioural changes during motherhood.

### 7.2.5 Expected behavioural change

Motherhood is considered to be a bigger transitory phase in the life of the respondents than the event of marriage. The respondents in the interview sample indicated an all-encompassing behavioural change as one part of the transition process into motherhood. Apart from the behavioural change there are also role changes for the respondent herself, as well as in her relationship with her parents and the parents-in-law that form the second part of the transition into motherhood.

There were a lot of behavioural changes that came about after the birth of their first child. Loss of sleep, loss of freedom due to the focus of attention on the baby and numerous responsibilities as a mother was some of the behavioural changes that came about with the onset of motherhood. Loss of sleep was due to the baby’s irregular waking and sleeping schedules. This caused restrictions in movement leading to loss of freedom for the mother. Responsibilities such as taking care of the baby and attending to the needs of the baby demanded a lot of time from the mother.
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One respondent referred to her loss of freedom as ‘loss of autonomy’ while another respondent calls it as ‘sacrificing my life’. Loss of autonomy here refers partly to physical autonomy and emotional autonomy (Jejeebhoy 1995). The respondents drew a parallel with marriage as an event in their lives and also distinguished it from motherhood. According to them marriage too brought about a loss of freedom when compared to their pre-marital days. However respondents mentioned that there were no sacrifices made in marriage, while they are so common in motherhood.

Apart from the loss of autonomy and sacrifices made, one respondent indicated her behavioural change as ‘losing her identity’.

Other behavioural changes that came about with the onset of motherhood were becoming more systematic, planned and organised in the day-to-day activities. Another respondent added that she underwent a transformation from an active to an inactive person after the birth of her first child.

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‘I could not sleep when I wanted to, I could not write when I wanted to and not even eat when I wanted to. There was also no going out.’

‘I lost my sleep. Responsibilities increased and that I think is the greatest change that comes about when a woman enters into motherhood.’

‘After our son was born my movement was restricted quite a lot. I could not leave him alone and go out. I also lost sleep as I used to worry about him and he also used to wake up and cry in the night. I could see my focus changing totally towards our son.’

‘Lots of demands on my time, lots of responsibilities on my time more than anything else. It is my responsibility because it is my child. So no matter how busy I am, I have to make time for my child.’

‘A lot of time needs to be spent on my son to see that he is comfortable and at ease. So there is less sleep both for my husband and me.’

‘There was no going out, no sleeping. That total feeling of being taken over by forces outside me, that feeling became very dominant. There was thus a loss of autonomy over all my actions and thoughts.’

‘I had to really sacrifice my life like staying up late, when the child wakes up I too had to wake up and when she slept I used to sleep. Those kinds of sacrifices of sleep i.e. never sleep on my own time or not doing what I wanted to. That is the time when I began to lead a life according to others, here I mean my children. Till then I could live as I wanted to though not the same way as it was before marriage. I could not go out as often as I used to before my marriage. But I would say that there are no sacrifices made after marriage but yes lots of sacrifices take place after the child is born’

‘I lost my identity. Now I had to take care of someone else other than my husband.’

‘I became more responsible, more patient and I became a very systematic person. So I began planning my daily work, which I never used to do before. In the past I used to do things when I liked. It was at my own convenience. I used to go to work and come back, and then the rest of the time was all mine. Now it is not so. It is all planned on a daily basis’

‘I was a very active person and suddenly I was inactive, now one more life is totally dependent on me and I cannot ditch that.’
Respondents saw differences in their life before and after the birth of their first child. They considered their life after the onset of motherhood to be different from what it was before they became mothers, while others compared motherhood with the effects the event had on their working career.

For most of the respondents the restriction on movement was considered as one of the major behavioural changes that came about after attaining motherhood. In the period before childbirth most respondents indicated that they led an independent and carefree life. After childbirth the movements were restricted with added responsibility of the child.

Some respondents stated that they had to give up their jobs because managing a working career and motherhood was difficult for them. In other cases, some respondents began working after giving birth and after their child was less dependent on the mother. However, those who continued working talked about their behavioural changes in their working life before and after their baby was born. Most of them mentioned rescheduling their activities to fit their baby’s schedule. While other respondents stated that they managed with parents, in-laws or a maid (ayah) to look after their child in their absence.
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7.2.6 Perceived role change

In this subsection we shall focus on how respondents themselves perceived of their role change as a mother. We also study the perceived role change for parents as well as the in-laws after attaining motherhood.

Role change perceived by respondent

The birth of the first child brought about the role of motherhood for all the respondents. Motherhood made the respondents feel contented and satisfied. It was thus an important role change from ‘wifehood’ to ‘motherhood’ as sometimes children take up all the attention of the husband, which the wife used to solely receive before the birth of the child.

‘Before my son was born, after coming back home from work, I used to just relax on the sofa. But now all that is not possible. Not only are the thoughts diverted towards my son but also most of my activities are rescheduled around the baby. We now have an ayah (maid) at home and she looks after my son when my husband and me are out to work’

‘Despite going to work I have to make time. After coming back from work, even if I am tired, I cannot just lie down because I know that my child is waiting. So I have to make time for the child, as I am not at home the whole day. In my case my parents are there and they have shared a lot in bringing up my child’

‘I feel very happy being a mother. I am also contented and satisfied.
‘It is a lot of joy and happiness when I see my child but then it is also that I have to have some time for the child.
‘I felt wonderful being a mother.

‘In the beginning I thought that I have got a competitor because the child would take the complete attention of my husband. But I think it is ok. I think every lady goes through it.’

This respondent mentioned that every woman experiences being given less attention after the birth of the baby; this is a very noteworthy point. As husband’s paid more attention to the baby, wives tended to feel neglected.

Motherhood for some respondents also helped them to mature into grown-up individuals able to shoulder responsibilities, and balance roles by making adjustments and compromises.

‘It was a very painful period so I feel that it made me grow up a lot more. It made me introspective; it caused a lot of arguments between my husband and me’

‘I began to shoulder more responsibilities than ever before. Before it was just work and the household but now it is the child, work and also the household. The balancing act is more complicated now. Another aspect is the adjustment that needs to be done to cope’
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The motherhood role was considered a challenging role as it required balancing with the role of a wife. Respondents felt that balancing such roles require tactful management, which enables them to build up their confidence and become assertive. These are perceived as a role change for the respondents themselves brought about by the event of motherhood. It also led to a change from being ‘carefree and independent’ to being ‘responsible and alert’.

‘I became more responsible and alert. I used to be so carefree (bindas) and independent before. I was too much concerned for the child and anything that happened to the child used to worry me’

‘I had become even more responsible and also very alert. I was managing the house, looking after the baby as well as taking care of my husband all on my own. I found that I became very confident and also very assertive in what I wanted’

For most working mothers the inability to spend adequate time with their children due to the working hours and difficulty in taking leave when their child is sick brings about a sense of guilt. This guilt feeling often results in a lack of concentration at the workplace thus affecting work and productivity.

‘I experienced role conflict when it was difficult to take leave when the child was sick. So I would go to work but often could not concentrate on my work.’

‘When I started working after the birth of my daughter I used to feel that I was unable to give my child enough time. I used to think that my disappearance from would make an impact on the child. So I felt guilty and also experienced role conflict. Also when the child was sick and at the same time something important has to be done in the office. During these times if I cannot take leave then I feel really very bad. That is the worst time for a working woman, as she can neither stay at home nor work in the office.’

For the respondents who are working mothers, motherhood and work often created role conflicts. Such are the dilemmas of a working mother. Most respondents have expressed their role conflicts largely as ‘guilt feeling’ that arises because they are unable to balance motherhood and work as parallel careers. Working mothers also feel left out and deprived, as they might miss their child’s first words or first steps. These respondents indicated that mothers who are housewives have an advantage over working mothers because the latter are able to be with their child as he/she grows.

‘I myself feel bad that I am not around as he grows up or when he says his first words. I have this guilt feeling in me.’

‘When I go to attend some competition in which my daughter has participated I see that those mothers who are at home or are housewives do so much for their child. I feel sad that I cannot devote so much time as they do. But I see to it that I give my daughter quality time’

Thus there are a lot of adjustments and compromises that most working mothers make in order to balance motherhood and work. One respondent terms it ‘compromise with work and my child’. Working mothers indicated their role change in their workplace after attaining motherhood. For some respondents the kind of commitment and punctuality they had earlier at work changed. Whilst for others there is irregularity in work, there is also a lack of concentration and managing time becomes a problem for a working mother.
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One respondent, who works as a software professional, mentioned that motherhood and working career were ‘double responsibilities’. The dual responsibilities prevented her from pursuing further studies. Her difficulty in managing parallel careers of motherhood and work also discouraged her from taking up ‘higher positions’ in her professional career. She considers her inability to pursue higher studies and to take up responsible and challenging roles in her work as a defeat. She is positive about having much more time for herself after her child has grown up. She said:

‘I had to compromise at work and with my child. I can feel it at work and sometimes at home. The kind of commitment and time I used to give before I had my son, I felt that it has changed.’

‘I have some role conflicts because I cannot maintain punctuality in my work. I feel that it is a major problem. Time management is also becoming a problem for me.’

‘There were many things that I was concerned about and strict about. That strictness disappeared because I found that I did not have the time to concentrate so much on that. Things like checking the assignments and returning it the next day, I could not maintain that kind of regularity.’ (This respondent is a college lecturer.)

Most working mothers also indicated active co-operation from family (parents and in-laws taking care of the child), their bosses and colleagues in the workplace who helped in the adjustments made to combine motherhood and work. Most of these respondents happen to live in nuclear families. Some respondents have also mentioned that the older their children are the less dependent they are on their own mother. Thus as a working mother, fewer role conflicts persist (after their children are little older).

‘Coping between work and playing the role of a mother was difficult because of the dual responsibilities. I cannot take higher positions in my career. I could not pursue further studies and had to forgo that. Though these feelings of losing these things are there I also think that once my daughter grows up I will have more time for myself’.

For most respondents sending their children to the crèche when both parents go out to work is not considered a suitable option. Most women indicate that they dislike the idea of their children being looked after by some outsider in the crèche. Similar to the dilemmas of a working mother in the form of role conflicts and guilt feeling, some respondents spoke about their dilemma of going back to work after the birth of their child.
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One respondent, who works as a software professional, said that she was worried about whether she would get a job after a break of 2 years.

Another respondent, who is a management trainee, began working 4 months after becoming a mother had a different dilemma.

In the following we focus on how the respondents perceive of their role change for their parents.

Perceived role change for parents

Similar to the perceived role change as experienced by the respondents themselves, there is also their perceived role change for their parents. Reduction in the number of visits to the natal family is considerably greater as compared to the event of marriage. While distance played a major role after marriage (see chapter 6, subsection 6.3.7), while respondents became mothers it was the inconvenience of travelling with a small child that reduced visits to the natal home. Apart from the inconveniences, working women found it inconvenient to take occasional leave from work. It was more common for parents to travel to be with their grandchildren and also take care of the grandchildren to help out their working daughters.

Some respondents mentioned staying close to their parents’ house and thus parents become the natural caretakers of their grandchild when the respondent goes to work. This in a way depicts the role of grandparents.
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‘We stay near to my parents’ house so they took care of our baby when I went to work.’

‘It was like everyday somebody from my parent’s house used to come over to my house as I lived in the next lane. They used to come over to look after my daughter or I used to go over to my parents’ house.’

‘I visit my parents daily, as I stay close by. They take care of my daughter like dropping her off at school, picking her up, feeding her lunch, teaching her mathematics (as my mother is very good at mathematics). I often come home late from work.’

For some respondents, living close to the natal family or residing in the same house, along with parents did not bring about any perceived role change for their parents.

‘My role remained unchanged because I was living with my parents.’

‘As far as my parents are concerned, there is no change in my role; I visit them daily, as they stay close by.’

In other instances, daughters live for a longer time with their natal family after the delivery of the child. At the same time they pursue a career at work while parents look after the child.

‘Now I am here in my parents’ house and will stay here for sometime until the baby is little older, say about 10 months old. My mother takes care of her when I go to work. Right now I do not have any problems because she sleeps most of the time. But as she grows up it will be difficult’

Most respondents mentioned that the event of birth of their first child, which transformed their role of daughter to that of mother, made their parents happy and proud.

‘My parents I think were happy with the fact that one of the reasons for bringing me into this world was rewarded as I gave birth to somebody else’

For some respondents their perceived role change for parents was that they were treated as mature and confident individuals after they became a mother. Parents made them feel important because they were addressed as ‘the mother of so and so’, involved in decision making for the child and able to voice their opinion as a mother. Parents accorded more respect to respondent’s views about child upbringing issues compared to unmarried and childless women.

‘I was considered to be much more matured and confident after becoming a mother’

‘In the past my parents used to call me by my name but now they call me P’s mother. The way they address me has changed’

‘I feel that I am given more importance after the birth of my daughter. I am asked things, as I have to make decisions for my daughter. In the past I was not asked anything, as I did not have any experience as a mother. It is like only mothers can be asked about children’s problems. An unmarried woman or one who has not experienced motherhood is not qualified to say anything about children’s problems.’

Motherhood also makes a woman a recipient of advice and instructions from parents on proper care giving for the child. Similarly, the responsibilities entrusted by parents were another perceived role change for them. The responsibilities were more concentrated on care giving in the interest of the child’s future.
Apart from the perceived role change for parents we also asked questions on what has been their perception of role change for the in-laws with the onset of motherhood. We focus on this issue now.

**Perceived role change for in-laws**

Most in-laws showed respect, adoration and happiness for the birth of their grandchild. Some respondents indicated that the birth of her son i.e. a grandson for her in-laws brought about much more happiness in comparison to a granddaughter. While one respondent felt this as her duty as a daughter-in-law, another respondent was loved and adored by her in-laws for the birth of her son. However for some in-laws the sex of the grandchild did not make a difference in the way they treated the respondents. One respondent mentioned that as her daughter was the first granddaughter in the family her in-laws doted on their granddaughter.

The other perceived role changes were respect and praise for successfully balancing parallel careers of work and motherhood. Others felt that their in-laws saw them as responsible and mature because they had become mothers. One respondent added that her in-laws had begun addressing her as mother of P, her child. This was her perception of role change for her in-laws.

**Perceived gains of the event**

From the perceived role changes we now move on to the gains of motherhood. Each and every event in the life course of a woman brings about change for the individual in the form of advantages and disadvantages. In the following subsections we shall be focusing on advantages and the disadvantages of motherhood in the lives of the respondents. Motherhood in India is an important status-enhancing role of a
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woman. At the same time the other status enhancers are educational attainment and labour force participation of women. We thus intend to study the influence of education and the working career on the gains of motherhood amongst the women in the interview sample.

Advantages

Motherhood is perceived as a status enhancer in Bangalore society. Most respondents mentioned increased social acceptance in society as a mother in comparison to women who are married but childless. Thus motherhood has brought about a feeling of contentment and satisfaction. Some respondents indicated that people also show respect and admiration for women who are mothers.

‘Increased social acceptance, I would call it popularity. I also felt close to nature. I thus feel satisfied with myself’

‘When compared to a woman who is married but does not have a child I am surely in a better position because I am a mother. I get respect as a mother and people credit me with the status of a mother’

‘I felt happy that I am a mother of a child. It is a lot of fun watching them grow up and listening to them and talking to them. I felt so wonderful when he started saying his first words’

For some, motherhood was perceived as a ‘natural consequence to marriage’. Although that perception is not commonly shared by all, it makes a woman feel happy and satisfied.

‘For me, I was happy because I had to become a mother one day. I felt that it is good that I have a child’

‘I do not consider motherhood as either an advantage or a disadvantage as it is a natural consequence’

Satisfaction in being a mother also arises from the inbuilt social pressure to become a mother. It is indicated as a ‘duty of a daughter-in-law’ (mentioned in section 7.2.6). Hence most of the time women feel very relieved after they become mothers and as a result can concentrate on work. They turn out to be more confident and mature in their outlook, which has an effect on their self-esteem. Thus motherhood brings about change in the personal life of the individual, which is one of the most important advantages.

‘I could never imagine before my marriage that I would be managing motherhood and working career together. So personally I have changed. Now that I am a mother I can concentrate on my work. Work has given me the appreciation that I get in the office for what I do. So my self-esteem has gone up because of all this appreciation that I get in my work. Motherhood has helped me’

Another respondent adds that though motherhood is a personal achievement of social status in society, it also ‘means sacrifice of individual needs for the woman herself’.

‘Once you become a mother, you take up the responsibilities better. Yeah, motherhood means some sacrifice of individual needs, at least in India where husbands show male chauvinism and do not cooperate. I have never seen a man taking a break and sitting at home and baby-sitting while the wife goes to work a few years after childbirth’
Chapter 7: Motherhood and Autonomy in the Daughter’s Generation

Disadvantages

The disadvantages are related to the inconveniences experienced by mothers. Loss of personal freedom, loss of sleep and loss of personal space were considered as major disadvantages by most of the respondents.

'I lost my freedom. I could no longer have fun and roam around with my friends. So having a baby means for restrictions on one’s movements’

'Sometimes there is absolutely no time at all for myself. Also there is less sleep and more worries and tension.’

'I lost my space. The personal space that I had in which I could do things that I like, I cannot do them anymore now’

'The time I had for myself I am slowly losing it’

Other disadvantages of motherhood were mentioned as being ‘physically tied down to house and the child’, restrictions on socialising with colleagues at workplace and pursuing hobbies such as going to movies, theatres and visiting handicraft fairs, as elaborated below:

'I was physically tied down to the house and the baby. Being at home I was needed to play other roles as well like endlessly serving guests that visit. As I was at home I was largely taken for granted by all.’

'When my colleagues go on an outing as a team I opt out. I say that I can’t join them as I have a child’

'I am the one who likes going to plays and movies. But I have not seen a movie for ages in a movie theatre. Once or twice I have taken my son to the theatre but he has slept through the movie so I managed to catch a movie. But otherwise he would not have sat for 3 hours in the movie theatre. I also love going to handicraft fairs. In the past what I did is 9:30 to 4 are my working hours and after 4 I used to go and come back by 5. But now my son waits for me at home so I can never go anywhere and at 4 I go straight back home’

Pursuit of higher education in most of the cases is directly linked to being a better mother. It also helps the better upbringing of the child as indicated by most of the respondents. A higher educated mother is considered to be more knowledgeable about the needs of the child in comparison to mothers who are not educated. Hence educated mothers are thought to socialise their children in a different way than uneducated mothers. Knowledge awareness is an advantage of motherhood and is derived mainly by reading books, watching movies, documentaries on health issues. Educated mothers in their daily life with children often adapt a lot of this knowledge to their daily life.

'So being higher educated has made me a better mother and has helped me in the upbringing of my child. I am educated so I know what is happening with my child, I can understand my child better and also know what is better for the child. An educated mother can mould the child in the way she wants by identifying a child’s needs and what she can give the child so that the child improves. She can educate the child in all the other areas.’

'My education helped me in bringing up my child. I had read so many things which I was adopting myself as and when the baby was growing. I also got to know about many things by watching movies, documentaries on health issues, etc.’
Higher Education and the Reproductive Life Course

Confidence in being a mother was also mentioned as an advantage of motherhood. It is facilitated both by the higher educational level of the respondents as well as their working career. The educational background influences due to confident decision making for the child while the physical and financial independence from labour force participation makes them confident.

Flexible work hours and support from colleagues at the workplace also contribute to the advantages of balancing parallel careers of work and motherhood.

The persistence of role conflicts and the guilt feeling in not being able to spend adequate time with the child has been described as a disadvantage of having a working career.

However, some respondents felt that their higher education and working career had no effect on their gains of motherhood.

7.3 Perceived autonomy

Women’s educational attainment and labour force participation are observed to be the two most important means by which women attain status and autonomy (see chapter 2). Both status and autonomy are also considered to be influential aspects of women’s empowerment. This has been backed by secondary literature in the Indian context (see Jejeebhoy 1995, Parasuraman et al 1999). While a woman’s status assigns her position in the society, autonomy determines her ability and right to make decisions (Jeffery and Basu 1996, Basu 1996, Mason 1984, Cochrane 1979). Several researchers such as Mason (1993),
Jejeebhoy (1995), Basu (1996) and Das Gupta (1996) have argued about the causal link between the position of women and autonomy. Jejeebhoy (1995: 37) states that ‘education is the key to transforming women’s attitudes and values from traditional to modern and their behaviour from constrained to emancipated’.

According to Jejeebhoy (1995: 37) there are five categories of autonomy. In her research, Jejeebhoy studied the various types of autonomy as separate yet interdependent elements. The autonomy types are knowledge autonomy, decision-making autonomy, physical autonomy, emotional autonomy, economic and social autonomy. In our research we have operationalised autonomy and its types according to Jejeebhoy’s (1995) classification and we assume that they are influenced by two important factors: higher educational attainment and workforce participation. How these autonomy categories are related to each other and how they are influenced by the two factors will be studied in the following subsections based on in-depth interviews of a younger generation of women (here we address it as the daughter’s generation) in Bangalore. We observe that the two factors cannot be independently studied. This is because of the significant interaction effect between the two factors and their influences on the various autonomy types.

7.3.1 Perceived knowledge autonomy

According to Jejeebhoy (1995: 37) education enhances women’s knowledge through greater exposure to the outside world. In this section we shall study how respondents perceive their higher education as enabling their exposure to the outside world and how they have personally benefited from this exposure.

Most of the respondents stated that they gained knowledge of the outside world by reading books, magazines and newspapers. High educational attainment has been perceived as the most important factor for this knowledge gain. Apart from these, watching television, movies and surfing the internet were indicated as other means of being exposed to the outside world facilitated by women’s higher education.

‘Exposure to the outside world is obtained by reading magazines, newspapers, watching TV and surfing the internet.’

‘I read many books, newspapers, surf the internet and all that have got me exposed to the outside world. Watching movies is also very effective in keeping in touch with the wider world.’

Some respondents have also mentioned that their higher education has enabled them to obtain newer and better ideas.

‘I tend to meet people in my college and thus I get new ideas. The teachers talk to me about the things that are happening around. I thus get exposed to so many new and better ideas. I tend to think not necessarily as my mother or anyone else tells me and thus I have independent thoughts on the subject’

‘It has helped me to meet people from various study disciplines and to interact with many people. Being better educated has also helped me be a good mother’

‘Knowledge enhancement is facilitated by attending many talks and seminars. It is also helpful to come into contact with other educational institutions and to interact’
Higher Education and the Reproductive Life Course

We also observe that higher education has helped to enhance knowledge in areas such as the use of contraceptives to plan pregnancies, breastfeeding and child care.

'It has helped me be a good mother. It gives me the independence to think about what is right and wrong for my children and how I should manage motherhood'

'From books I knew about the safe days and the unsafe days and I made sure we followed them as long as we did not want to have a child.'

'I got to know about breastfeeding practices in many parts of the world and also amongst working women. We do not have such things in India though.'

The other important factor, women's working career, also positively affected knowledge enhancement because of interaction with workplace colleagues, who often become the sources of information about some aspects of motherhood.

'In my workplace I meet so many people and interact with so many people. In that way I learnt many things from them which I can apply in my child's upbringing'

From the preceding discussion we see the direct effects of education and working career which facilitate greater exposure to the outside world. However, these two factors also seem to indirectly affect women's interaction with the outside world through enhancement of certain qualities of the woman herself, such as confidence, independence and personality.

Respondents indicated that higher education was a factor which instills confidence and independence. They also mentioned that these qualities come about by meeting and interacting with people from different educational backgrounds and study disciplines. Further, these qualities are perceived to have enabled them to develop their social skills, even their personality, like ‘presenting oneself in front of others, the ability to think and communicate better’.

'Education has given me the independence and the curiosity to find out about things. More than anything else it has given me the courage and the confidence to live. I know how to present myself in front of others; this gives me a strong personality.'

'Being higher educated I get a better chance to talk to people and interact with many people. It has given me the independence to decide on what is right and how I should go about it.'

'My education has made me able to think in the broader spectrum of things. That has helped me in my level of communication and interaction with people'

Characteristics such as independence, curiosity to know things, courage, and confidence can be related to higher order goals of self-esteem and self-actualization. Hence we can say that higher education not only facilitates exposure to the outside world but also enables individuals to attain their higher order goals.

Most of the women in the interview sample have indicated their higher education to be a causal link facilitating them to pursue a working career.
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The workplace provides a conducive atmosphere to meet, interact and socialise with colleagues. It is also a place where women can surf through the internet. All these are perceived as enabling women’s exposure to the outside world by sharing and discussing information. Often, information is also shared through meetings and seminars, where women meet and interact with other people apart from work colleagues. Also, such meetings, seminars and conferences have facilitated travel, both nationwide and international; this too has enhanced their knowledge as indicated by the respondents.

In addition to the interactions, most respondents found it advantageous to learn, adapt and adjust to new ideas from others’ experiences. For most of them it was tips on career improvement, childcare and dealing with children’s problems that proved to be useful.

Most respondents also stated that their work had enabled their financial independence. It is also perceived by the respondents that their working career brings about more recognition. Workforce participation makes a woman less dependent on others for her financial needs and thus provides her with a freedom of choice on how to spend the money. Dealing with workplace challenges enhances the personality of a woman by making her confident. Moving out of the home to participate in the workforce brings about a sense of independence from the confines of the home.
Higher Education and the Reproductive Life Course

"At work I get recognised as I put in a lot of hard work and I get appreciated for it. It (the working career) gives me the financial support that gives me more freedom to buy say a new product in the market and use it."

"My working career has made me independent and confident. It has also made me financially independent. I am thus freer to do things."

"Facing the new challenges at work has given me a kind of confidence to face life as it comes. My professional career has taken me out of the house. It gives me a feeling of independence from being at home. I travel to work and make friends on my way to work."

Thus we observe the importance of education and working career in the knowledge autonomy of women. Having a professional career gives woman exposure to the outside world whilst higher education directly link to their individual goals and goal attainment. We also observe how working career and education are related to women’s economic autonomy through financial independence. Apart from the observed direct effects we have also stressed on how the indirect effects influence enhancement of knowledge as well as provides women greater exposure to the outside world.

In Table 7.1 we summarise the perceived direct and the indirect effects of education and working career on knowledge autonomy of women as indicated in the in-depth interviews amongst the younger generation in Bangalore.

Table 7.1: Perceived direct and indirect effects of women’s education and working career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher education of women</th>
<th>Working career of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct effects</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indirect effects</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Being well read</td>
<td>- Enables moving out of the confines of home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Influences independent thoughts</td>
<td>- Vouches for independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect effects</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indirect effects</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Idea of oneself</td>
<td>- Economic independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Becoming more confident</td>
<td>- Interaction with people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Curiosity to learn about things</td>
<td>- Developing own circle of friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Enables personality building</td>
<td>- Sharing knowledge and information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Presenting oneself in front of others</td>
<td>- Learning from each other’s experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Changed values and outlook</td>
<td>- Facilitates adjustments and compromises (both in work life and personal life)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Being less religious</td>
<td>- Influence on personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Following fewer beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ideas of breastfeeding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use of contraception</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Childcare</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Being a good mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3.2 Perceived decision-making autonomy

It is observed that higher education and workforce participation of women bring about greater decision-making autonomy in matters both outside and inside the house. A higher educated, working woman is permitted to participate in the decision making more in comparison to one with less education (Jejeebhoy 1995). Jejeebhoy has hypothesised that this type of decision making is enabled through confidence brought about by being educated.

In the interviews the respondents were asked about the matters of decision making on which they are consulted on a daily, monthly and yearly basis. By categorising into daily, monthly and yearly schedules we intend to study to what extent the women in the interview sample are autonomous in decision making. However, we did not restrict ourselves to only household matters as we assume that working women are capable of making decisions in matters outside the house also. In addition, we also enquire how higher education and the working career of these women have been helpful in their decision-making autonomy.

Decisions on a daily level range from what has to be cooked to buying the grocery and taking care of the children. Responses from the interviewed women suggest that the respondents themselves decide on all matters related to the household. For such matters they are never consulted. Women consider the household their domain and thus they feel confident in deciding in matters of the house. As these women are working women, they cook according to their likes and convenience. Taking care of the children is viewed as in keeping with the status of motherhood. Women have indicated that they looked at several schools for their children and then decided on which school the children should attend. Most of the mothers also preferred jobs with flexible working hours in order to take care of the children when they get back from school.

Apart from cooking and childcare, for other household matters too decisions are jointly taken between the respondents and their husbands. Respondents mention being consulted by their husband on matters of daily basis like going out for a party, movie or to attend a function, meeting friends and colleagues. Sometimes in-laws too ask for prior consent of their daughter-in-law largely because of her work schedule and pressure at work.

‘Whenever it comes to home and the kids, it is me who decides. I just do the things on my own like what needs to be cooked, what things have to be got from the grocery and all that. I see to it that I pick up the kids from school and take them home. It is possible because I have flexible working hours’

‘Cooking is one example of my domain. I cook whatever I like and according to my convenience. I decide on which school my daughter should go to, which school would be best for my daughter according to the school surveys that I did myself to find out more about the school’

‘My husband and I take decisions together. We consult each other and then go ahead with any decision’

‘Sometimes whether to attend a function or not, going out for a party or meeting some of his friends and family, my husband asks me before hand. I then decide depending on work pressure’

‘Activities on a daily basis also include some religious ceremonies. For this my mother in law lets me know some days before the ceremony and asks me whether I can attend it or not. I decide depending on the availability of leave in the office’
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On a monthly basis, wives were consulted in decision making about the payment of monthly bills, buying the monthly groceries and paying school fees for the children. The respondents mention that their husbands consult them about such decisions and also cooperate substantially. It reveals on the one hand the ability of women to take decisions on their own and often in cooperation with their husband, and on the other it reveals husbands often consulting their wives about certain decisions to be taken.

Women indicated that they were consulted by their husband about decisions on a long-term duration such as buying a television, washing machine, selecting things for the house, planning and organising yearly holidays. Other matters of decision making on a long-term duration for which the respondents have been consulted included buying land for building a house and buying valuable items for the house. Not only were the women consulted in the decision-making process along with their husband, but some of them also mention having contributed financially.

However, it is revealed that sometimes, when it comes to decisions involving investing a lot of money, women do not feel very confident in taking such decisions all by themselves.

Most women indicated that their high education and working career have contributed to a compatible relationship with their husband. They indicated that they are given importance, respected and treated as an equal by their husband.

According to Jejeebhoy (1995) higher education of women facilitates acquisition of wider knowledge and greater exposure to new ideas. This enables women to be confident in taking decisions as well as the appropriateness of the decisions taken. In the following response we observe how this respondent considered her higher education as an advantage in differentiating right from wrong thus enabling her to make meaningful choices.
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Most women state that their educational career has facilitated their working career. Respondents have mentioned that the financial independence, which they have achieved from their work, gives them a sense of security that enables them to be confident in taking decisions. They have also mentioned that their working career has made them less dependent on others and enabled them to contribute in financial matters of the household. We can conclude from the following responses that financially independent women are taken more seriously in the household in comparison to housewives who do not earn money.

| ‘My working career has given me a sense of security by being financially independent. It also gives me confidence when I make decisions for the family and has also enhanced my personality’ |
| ‘I think that just because I am financially independent I am not dependent on others. I am also taken seriously in my household because I put in my salary in the running of the household. If I had been a housewife I would not be taken as seriously as I am being done now’ |

Women consider their working career as enabling them to make fast decisions in the context of time constraints by prioritising choices. Aside from gaining knowledge from higher education, working women find it advantageous sharing experiences with work colleagues. Often that adds to the quick decisions that working women are capable of taking.

| ‘I make fast decisions because of constraints of time. This has helped me to prioritise things and utilise less amount of time in things which do not actually need so much of time. It has helped me to prioritise my choices purely due to time constraints and preferences’ |
| ‘The experiences of colleagues and friends about a product or home appliance throw light about the product and hence act as a deciding factor. It also helps me in deciding on whether to buy the product or not’ |

Table 7.2 summarises the perceived decision-making autonomy, qualities that enable decisions to be taken as well as the influence of women’s higher education and working career.

In the next subsection we focus on the effects of high education and working career of women on their physical autonomy.
Table 7.2: Summary of perceived decision-making autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decisions taken solely/jointly</th>
<th>Perceived qualities that influence such decisions</th>
<th>Perceived influence of higher education</th>
<th>Perceived influence of working career</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decisions on a daily basis</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solely by the woman herself</td>
<td>- Things related mostly to the household domain</td>
<td>- Confidence in decision making</td>
<td>- Enables financial independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What has to be cooked</td>
<td>- Ability to differentiate right from</td>
<td>- Less dependence on husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Buying the groceries</td>
<td>wrong by weighing the pros and cons</td>
<td>- Enables contribution to the family income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Taking care of the children</td>
<td>- Making meaningful choices</td>
<td>- Fast decisions due to time constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions taken jointly with husband</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Freedom to choose and decide</td>
<td>- Sharing experiences with colleagues which enables quick decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Going out to a party</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Enables balancing dual roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Watching a movie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Meeting friends and colleagues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Women consider it their domain</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- As per likes and convenience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Flexible working hours</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Weekly activity of the whole family</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Part of being a mother</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Cooperation of the husband</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Compatible relationship with husband</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Given importance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions on a monthly basis (Joint decisions)</td>
<td>Decisions on a yearly basis (Joint decisions)</td>
<td>Solely decided by the husband</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- paying monthly bills in the house</td>
<td>- Buying a television</td>
<td>- Involving large investments of money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- buying monthly groceries</td>
<td>- Washing machine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- paying school fees of children</td>
<td>- Other household items</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Planning and organising yearly holidays</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Buying land, house</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Buying valuables for the house</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Compatible relationship with husband
- Women decide and they are also consulted
- Given importance, respect and treated as an equal by their husband

- Considered at par with husband
- Importance as an individual
- Respected by husband
- Treated as equal by their husband
- Women partially contribute

- male domain perceived by the women themselves and their husbands
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7.3.3 Perceived physical autonomy

According to Jejeebhoy (1995), higher education enhances physical autonomy of women through more contacts with the outside world. Her findings reveal that higher educated women have more freedom of movement as they face fewer constraints on physical mobility and hence have greater self-confidence in using available services.

Our study examines how higher education of women and their workforce participation have influenced their physical mobility. As all the respondents in the interview sample are working women, it naturally suggests to us that these women do not have restricted freedom of movement, which would otherwise be the case if these women were traditional housewives. Hence here we look into the influence of women’s higher education and working career on their physical autonomy which is viewed as their ability to move around freely and unaccompanied.

Jejeebhoy (1995: 37) indicates that ‘better educated women are expected to have more self-confidence in dealing with the outside world than women who are less educated’. The self-confidence could be the result of higher education of women, pursuing a working career that brings about financial independence or the status derived from marriage and motherhood. Hence in this subsection we shall study what roles higher education, working career and the status of a married woman and motherhood play in the physical autonomy of women. Our subjects in the interview sample are working women.

Respondents who work in the IT sector point out that late working hours cause them to arrive home after it is dark. We enquired whether they return back home alone or are accompanied by someone. Most of the respondents mentioned that they move around alone and unaccompanied when it is dark. Some working women travel by bus, which is the public means of transport, while some drive their own car or ride a moped/Kinetic Honda to work. Two respondents also stated that they are independent and have freedom of movement.

‘Yes, I move around alone. I have a Kinetic Honda and ride that everywhere. I am independent and go wherever I want and I am neither dependent on my husband to take me nor the auto rickshaw drivers.’

Our respondents said that their moving around alone after dark was largely due to their working hours. When required to travel for reasons other than work after dark, women indicated that their husband or any male member of the house accompanied them for security reasons. Women also feel it necessary to be accompanied if public transport services are not reliable.

‘Mostly I come back home after it is dark due to my working hours and I always go out with my husband or my parents after it is dark. It feels safe to be with a man.

‘If it is not dark I move around alone, but otherwise, somebody accompanies me because I do not feel safe.’

‘I go alone to some places where I feel comfortable, or if I am familiar with the place and the places where I do go many times, there I go alone. New places where I feel uncomfortable because of the distance, or if I am going alone with my small child, I take somebody with me. When it is dark I usually call up my husband and he comes to pick me up or I see to it that I am back home before it is dark.’
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Women consider that their education and working career make them self-confident which indirectly capacititates them to move alone and unaccompanied after dark. Self-confidence empowers women as well as encourages risk-taking behaviour. For some, the feeling of self-confidence emerges from the freedom of movement and financial independence they derive from participating in the workforce.

'I have the self-confidence like I know I can do it, so I do not have to be scared of anything and can face everything. I can also decide if I don’t catch the bus at a particular time then I take an auto. I need not worry about paying the auto and reaching my destination rather than wait for the bus’

'My education and working career have given me the confidence and I am happy about it’

Educated and working women obtain more respect from their family members and society. As some of the responses reveal, these women are questioned less about coming back home late and going out alone after dark because of their status as a working woman in comparison to women who are housewives.

'Society does give respect to an educated woman and working women’

'If a housewife goes out alone in the night then society looks at her in a suspicious way. On the contrary, a working woman is not seen that way. Society says ‘Oh, she is coming back home from work late at night’. Yes, society does have different kinds of standard and different rules.’

Sometimes professional requirements like being a doctor and software professional require women to come back or leave home after darkness. These women feel that neighbours and society understand the irregular working hours which thus disallows them to ‘point their fingers’ at such un-prescribed behaviour thus enabling freedom and less social control.

'I being educated and working, my moving around alone is not questioned. Moreover people here in the neighbourhood know that both my husband and me are doctors. So they do not point out fingers at me for moving around alone at night. They know that I do not do such things for my pleasure but only when there is a need to attend someone in the hospital.’

Higher education has been attributed to have provided knowledge about places and a sense of direction. One respondent mentioned that her high education has enabled her to not hold prejudices and wrong perceptions about people, to judge people better by interacting with them.

'I am knowledgeable about the place and of course about the bus routes’

'Yes, it has helped me a lot because if I had not gone for high education I wouldn’t have come across many a people and I would not have known how the character of the people will be, their notions and perceptions. I thus would have some prejudices and not gone out at all. Maybe I would have stayed at home and always would want my husband to accompany me. So now I have attained high education I know how people will behave and I do try to understand people. I thus go out alone and I am on my own’

However, for some respondents their educational and working careers have had no influence on their physical autonomy. Some feel their upbringing plays a greater role while for others being a woman
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remains perpetually ‘a weak point’, which hinders their freedom of movement irrespective of their level of education.

‘My parents trusted us and we were also fearless. We also knew our limits. So it was my family upbringing that helps me in moving around alone. I have always been doing this.’

‘Whatever education status you have, you have definitely a weak point in being a woman. An educated woman does so much but still she has a problem in moving around especially after dark.’

One respondent added that ‘emotional intelligence’ plays a much greater role than high education and working career of women in enhancing the physical autonomy of women. We observe that these high-educated women travel to many places and interact with many people. In these circumstances education does not play a role but it is the emotional maturity that is important. However, as one respondent acknowledges the fact that her higher education enabled easier social acceptance in comparison to an uneducated woman.

‘As far as getting oneself easily accepted in the society education does play a part but it does not play such important a part. It has more to do with what today we call as emotional intelligence. It is how one is emotionally as an individual besides one’s social acceptance level in a foreign society.’

Respondents said that their physical autonomy was facilitated by their status as a married woman and mother. Exhibiting the signs of a married woman i.e. the toe ring and mangalsutra were indicated as an advantage in the differential treatment to women as compared to women who are not married.

‘If a man sees that a woman is wearing a mangalsutra and a toe ring then he avoids that woman. Married women are given more respect in our society than unmarried women.’

‘When you exhibit that you are married either by showing the signs and symbols or the accessories of a married woman in our society or having a child then I think that we are not taken for a ride or fooled around with.’

Most of the respondents also indicated that a woman with kids is generally respected more than married women without kids, as they are not teased by men. This has been elaborated by some of the respondents in the following way:

‘I think that people treat a woman who is married and with kids in a different way. They are treated with more respect. I am sure there is some difference when compared to the women who are not married and also who are not mothers’

‘A common man will give more respect to a woman with a child rather than a single woman who is striding along the road’

One respondent mentioned that her inconvenience in carrying her child all by herself restricted her from moving around alone although her marital status gives her more freedom to move around freely.

‘By having this marital status there is always more freedom to go out anywhere. But now that I am a mother I have to restrict myself from going to certain places because I cannot carry my baby alone. Thus someone has to accompany me because it is inconvenient managing a child on my own.’
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We thus observe how the status of a married woman and motherhood facilitates their physical mobility. However, some respondents share a different viewpoint. One respondent mentioned that being married or unmarried does not make any difference in the treatment given to women that restricts her physical autonomy. While, another respondent attributed the inhibiting factors of physical mobility to having better looks and being better dressed rather than the status of being married or being a mother.

| ‘I don’t see a difference in the attitude of men towards women even after they are married and after becoming a mother. Some men tease and comment at women no matter they are married or not, a mother or not.’ |
| ‘I think people tend to play the fool if one is better dressed and better looking. Not more to do with the fact that one is married or has given birth to a child’ |

We observe that young women tend to be more fashionable and hence prefer not to wear accessories that symbolize being married. This makes them unsafe as one respondent point out.

| ‘Being married or being a mother does not help really. There are people who can play with married women also. Especially when young women do not prefer wearing any signs of marriage hence they are not safe.’ |

Table 7.3, summarises perceived physical autonomy by illustrating how physical autonomy is facilitated for women and how women’s lives are affected by it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s perception of what gives them physical autonomy</th>
<th>How do women perceive their life being influenced by it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher education of women enables</td>
<td>- Greater self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Women to work outside the house</td>
<td>- Independence of women and freedom of movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Respect from family members and society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s working career allows</td>
<td>- Easy acceptance in the society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Women to break with the tradition of housewives</td>
<td>- Sense of direction and knowledge about places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Women to return home late from work</td>
<td>- Overcome prejudices and wrong perceptions of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Women to travel by bus, drive a car and ride two-wheelers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Women to move around after it is dark</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Women to pursue professional qualifications (e.g. a doctor or IT professional)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A married woman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- By wearing the signs of marriage (Toe rings, mangalsutra)</td>
<td>- Greater self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Married women in comparison to unmarried women has a higher status</td>
<td>- Risk-taking behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Respect from family members and society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Status as a working woman in the eyes of the family and society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Suspicion not leveled at a woman if she returns back home late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Respect from society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- More freedom to move around freely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Society does not point fingers at married women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- More respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Being less teased by men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a woman in itself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A weak point in itself that makes women dependent on others to accompany them when it is dark</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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7.3.4 Perceived emotional autonomy

In this subsection we shall focus on the roles that education and working career play in women’s perception of their emotional autonomy. A higher educated woman prefers being married to a man who at least shares the same educational qualification or is better educated than her (see subsection 6.3.2). We observed this from the background information of the interview respondents. Jejeebhoy (1995) indicates that increased female education implies several changes in family dynamics, which includes greater interspousal communication, more intimacy between husband and the wife, sharing and caring between partners and close familial bonds. These changes enhance the emotional autonomy of women.

Emotional autonomy in the present research is operationalised by asking respondents with whom they share their emotional problems and what kind of activities they do together with their husband and children. Thus we intend to focus on interspousal communication, intimacy between husband and wife and close familial bonding. The emotional autonomy of women can be indirectly related to their high education and working career. The women who have been interviewed are working women and hence enquiring about the kind of activities share with their husband and children would indicate how modern working couples divide the domestic workload as well as the bonds of closeness in their family.

Most of the respondents indicated that they share their emotional problems with their husband. The problems can range from problems in the workplace to personal problems. Some respondents contextualise their problems and accordingly share them with husband, mother and/or sister.

‘If I have some emotional problems I share it with my husband only. If it is something, which I feel only my mother can be of help then I tell her.’

‘I share it with my sister. But if it is some problem with husband then I will talk about it to my sister and if it is a problem with my sister then I will talk about it with my husband’

We thus observe how education and working career of women have encouraged greater intimacy between spouses and greater loyalty to the conjugal unit than to the larger extended kin network. As both the husband and wife go out to work, most respondents have stated that they spend 3 to 4 waking hours on an average with their husband daily. Most women also indicate the cooperation of their husband in various household work on a daily level.

‘We have strictly divided household chores. He helps in the household chores but it is very minimal.’

‘In the morning even before I wake up he boils the milk and keeps it warm. He wakes me up everyday. He also helps me in cleaning and dusting the house. Cooking and looking after the kids is my job.’

In the weekends and holidays the respondents said that their husbands helped them with work, both inside the home and outside. These include the weekly shopping, cleaning and dusting the house. Most of the respondents also indicated attending church together with their husband, going out for walks, and socialising with family and friends during weekends and holidays.

‘Every second Saturday he (husband) comes home early and we go out shopping or meet my in-laws or some friends. On Sunday mornings we go to church together. We go together for a walk or have dinner outside.’
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The familial activities with kids involve spending time together in the park, playing, going out for picnics and outings.

| ‘We have small picnics in the nearby park and spend the whole day outside’ |
| ‘During the school summer vacation we go on outings’ |

Table 7.4 summarises the influence of women’s educational attainment and working career on their perceived emotional autonomy.

In the next subsection we focus on the influences of high education and working career on women’s perceived economic and social autonomy
Table 7.4 Summary of perceived emotional autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived influence of women’s higher education</th>
<th>Perceived influence of women’s working career</th>
<th>Perception of what enables women emotional autonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Higher educated women prefer marrying higher educated men | - Enables activities together with husband and sharing household work  
  - Weekly shopping  
  - Cleaning and dusting the house  
  - Going out for walks  
  - Going to church  
  - Socialising with friends and colleagues  
  - Spending time together with husband and children  
  - Going to the park  
  - Picnics and family outings  
  - Sharing emotional problems with husband  
  - Problems related to workplace  
  - Personal problems  
  - Spending an average 3 to 4 waking hours with husband | - Egalitarian conjugal relationship  
 - Close bonds of conjugal family  
 - Greater social equality between husband and wife  
 - Emotional nucleation of the family system from joint family system to the nuclear family set-up  
 - Greater interspousal communication  
 - Greater emotional intimacy between spouses |
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7.3.5 Perceived economic and social autonomy

It is observed that women’s better education and working career contribute to their economic and social self-reliance (Jejeebhoy, 1995). According to Jejeebhoy, educated women are more likely to express favourable attitudes toward saving money for the future. Further, higher education enhances women’s participation in the workforce and thereby their control over financial resources. In the present research we have operationalised economic and social autonomy by the freedom to invest money, maintaining a separate bank account and the feeling of self-reliance. We enquire how all these have been enabled by higher education and working career of women. We also ask women how their status as a working woman is accepted in the household.

All respondents in the interview sample make a clear link with higher education enabling workforce participation of women. They also link it directly to their economic independence, which gives them the freedom to invest, contribute to the household income and enhances self-reliance on economic matters. Below we illustrate the respondents’ views about how their education and working career enhanced their economic independence.

In the previous subsections we have already studied how economic independence of women enhances their confidence in and interaction with the outside world. Economic independence is also perceived as enabling decision-making autonomy both within and outside the household arena.

All respondents maintain separate bank accounts and largely invest their money in life insurance policies and mutual bonds. Some women also indicate that they invest in gold for the future benefit of their daughter. Thus economic independence enhances women’s economic autonomy and also enables women to pursue their hobbies and interests.

From the following responses we observe that economic independence also encourages women to be self-reliant on economic matters as she knows how to spend, where to spend and on what to spend without the interference of others in such decisions. Here again women related the influence of their education and working career on their economic independence.

| 'In my case it is one and the same. Because I received higher education i.e. PhD in physics I got this particular job and hence this economic independence.' |
| 'Because of my education I got this job and because I have this particular job I have the money. So they both are related to my economic independence.' |
| 'I do invest in LIC policies and savings account.' |
| 'Generally I save. I would like to invest on my kid’s education, or do some traveling. Some portion I save in the form of gold, which is about 25 percent of my salary. Then I also have some LIC policies.' |
| 'If I was not educated maybe I would have been a housewife. This education helped me in getting a job and making me economically independent. The basic idea behind working is that I am paid for what I work. So that has helped me to be self-reliant. By working I have a steady flow of money coming in at the end of each month.' |
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For most of the respondents their contribution to the household income alongside their husband brings about greater equality in the relationship between spouses, which is often achieved by pooling the salary and spending from it. However, some women mentioned that their contribution to the household income is often for small things while lump sum expenditures fall under the husband’s domain. Thus women’s income is largely saved apart from the household contribution.

In addition to economic autonomy, which is facilitated by women’s economic independence, women strive for social autonomy as well. Social autonomy is operationalised by enquiring how the status of being better educated and having a working career is accepted in the household. In the previous subsections we have already noted the perceived social status in the form of respect that is accorded by in-laws and husband to high educated and working women in comparison to housewives. The decisions that these women take are also respected and given importance. Marriage and motherhood also provide a kind of social status, which enables women’s physical autonomy in comparison to unmarried and childless women.

In recent times most families are nuclear families, hence the role of in-laws has diminished. For the respondents in the interview sample their participation in the economic activities has been well accepted by their husbands. In most families it is considered a natural thing and spouses cooperate with each other. One respondent added that:

‘My husband and me have a fixed contribution for the household. We first pool the money and we have a monthly expenditure. We spend from the pooled money and the remaining money we put in the savings account. I have chosen to pay for the things in the household, as they are petty amounts. For all the big lump sum amounts it is the domain of my husband to pay. I have left it to him because his earning is more than mine.’

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‘Nobody gives me money when I go out or asks me to go by auto or bus. They know that I have the money and can manage my plan of action.’

Self-reliance in old age is related to social autonomy of women according to Jejeebhoy (1995). Educated women in the interview sample have shown an inclination not to stay with their children in their old age. They also prefer freedom in their old age as well as the freedom of their children. The following response supports this observation:

‘I would not like to stay with my children in the same house because I feel that the children also have to enjoy their freedom. They should have the independence for themselves, as we need our own independence’

In Table 7.5 we summarise the economic and social autonomy as perceived by the younger generation of respondents in Bangalore.
Table 7.5 Summary of perceived economic and social autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How is social status perceived to be accorded?</th>
<th>Perceived social autonomy in women’s life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Respected for being a higher educated woman</td>
<td>- Decisions taken by women are respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Respected for a working career</td>
<td>- Women are given importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Respect from husband and in-laws</td>
<td>- Husbands consider their wives’ working career as natural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Respected as a married woman</td>
<td>- Transition from traditional housewives to working wives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Respected as a mother</td>
<td>- More cooperation between husband and wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Less interference from in-laws due to the nuclear family set-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Self-reliance in old age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Perceived reliance on own income and savings rather than on children’s income and savings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Need for freedom in old age</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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7.4 Perceived changes: ‘I am different from my mother’

In this chapter we have discussed how respondents perceived the changes in the event of motherhood by comparing their own generation with that of their mother’s. Most of the perceived changes were mentioned as revolving around two important changes that have come about in society since their mother’s generation. First is the break-up of the joint family system and second is the increase in women’s educational attainment and workforce participation levels. These two issues are perceived to have brought about changes in the concept of motherhood as a whole. Most respondents have stressed the concept of ‘community parenting’ that was prevalent during the generation of their mother largely due to the joint family system which meant that everybody took care of the child. Respondents feel that women in such family set-ups were supported by the larger extended family, which also brought about more cooperation between the female members of the family. Daughters in the younger generation have nuclear family set ups consisting of husband, wife and children. They perceive getting less support and cooperation from members of the extended family, which is considered to be a disadvantage in comparison to their mother’s generation. However, respondents perceive of close bonding with their child which was not so in the case of the older generation where everybody took care of the child. As women in the younger generation have working careers without family support from the extended family, they seek the cooperation of their husband as well as childcare support provided by crèches and day-care centers.

Most respondents have mentioned about their experience of motherhood as something that has made them feel happy, contented and satisfied; this has not changed in comparison to their mother’s generation, according to the respondents. However, a perceived change that has been widely mentioned is the changing schemas on motherhood across generations. Respondents in the younger generation indicated that they feel happy and satisfied being a mother when they are able to do everything for the child, while in their mother’s generation the very event of first birth itself brought happiness and satisfaction. Respondents in the daughter’s generation argue that their feeling of happiness and satisfaction is different from their mother largely because they are working mothers. Hence, as working mothers, their view is that they have deviated from the prevailing notion of motherhood which requires mothers to be with their child throughout all the stages of development of the child. Thus working mothers feel that they spend inadequate time with their children. This, according to the respondents, has brought about role conflicts and guilt feelings. Hence feelings of happiness and satisfaction as a mother are measured differently by working women in the younger generation.

Another perceived change related to motherhood across generations of mothers and daughters is the ‘concept of parenting’. According to respondents in this chapter i.e. the younger generation, the concept of parenting is greatly influenced by their higher educational attainment as well as working career. They perceived themselves to be functionally a better mother for their child by having more control over what they want to teach their children and making conscious decisions for them. By comparison, they felt that their mother had less control over how children were brought up and that mothers then were more casual about parenting. Respondents also perceived their mother as having less choice on the timing of motherhood and were largely submissive to their husband. In comparison, respondents felt that their higher education enabled them to be confident and their working career gave them the physical and economic independence, which makes them at par with their husband.

Perceived changes across generations are also revealed in the knowledge about motherhood. Whereas in the mother’s generation, knowledge about motherhood was commonly learnt from elderly family members in the joint-family set-up, in the daughter’s generation it was found that women derived a substantial amount of knowledge about motherhood from exposure to the mass media. Respondents also felt that the use of modern gadgets such as the washing machine, blender/mixer, microwave oven
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has made ‘motherhood an easier experience’ when compared to their mother’s generation. Also the availability of ready-to-eat baby food, baby clothes, baby products and various utility articles for the baby has enabled working women to balance the dual roles in their lives.

We are interested in knowing how the older generation of women in Bangalore perceive their lived reproductive life course. In the next chapter we shall illustrate the perceived reproductive life course of the older generation of women in Bangalore. In that same chapter we also make a comparison between the younger generations of respondents in chapters 6 and 7 to that of the older generation of mothers.