MAURITIUS RESEARCH COUNCIL
INNOVATION FOR TECHNOLOGY

WOMEN, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT: THE WORKING WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF THEIR REAL CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS PERSONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Final Report

December 2002

MAURITIUS RESEARCH COUNCIL

APPENDIX D
(Form 1050)

PI Name and Address

Mrs. Sushita Gokool-Ramdoo
Mauritius College of the Air
Reduit

MAURITIUS RESEARCH COUNCIL
FINAL REPORT

PART I- PROJECT IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION

1. Type the name of the MRC Scheme under which grant is made

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Mauritius Research Council

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The primary objectives and scope of the project
- The techniques or approaches used only to the degree necessary for comprehension
- The findings and implications stated as concisely and informatively as possible

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PART III - TECHNICAL INFORMATION (for program management use)

List references to publications resulting from this award and describe in full primary data, samples, physical collections, inventions, software, etc., created or gathered in the course of the research and, if appropriate, how they are being made available to the research community. This section should be limited to 30 pages. INCLUDED

I certify to the best of my knowledge (1) the statement herein (excluding scientific hypotheses and scientific opinion) are true and complete, and (2) the text and graphics in this report as well as any accompanying publications or other documents, unless otherwise indicated, are the original work of the signatories or of individuals working under their supervision. I understand that willfully making a false statement or concealing a material fact in this report or any other communication submitted to MRC is a criminal offense.

Principal Investigator Signature: Date: 10.12.02

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WORKING WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO PERSONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THIS STUDY

The main concern of this research is to "advance knowledge for promoting progress, and for enabling [women) to relate more effectively to [their] environment"(Cohen and Manion, 1985:43). It hopes to achieve this objective by questioning the spaces in which women evolve with a view to find out whether these spaces offer encouragement for their personal development and ultimately how conducive this is to national development. Their perception is an important element since, in my view, self-image is a crucial enabler for personal development. It concentrates on an important component of personal development, that is, psychological empowerment.

This project should be seen in the broader context of analysing development, through the Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Approach (SEGA). This approach sees development as a multifaceted process of increasing not only standards of living but also control over and definition of those standards. Development has social, political and cultural dimensions, as well as economic components. "It is a liberating process ... by which formerly excluded and subordinate social [and gender] groups not only transform their physical environment, but also gain power over their economic and political environment and over the knowledge, skills and other resources needed to sustain this transformation (Rowan-Campbell 1999:86). This, in my view, is psychological empowerment.

In this context, personal development refers to a sense of confidence and the ability to overcome internalised oppression as well as the capacity that they have developed to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship. (Rowlands, 1997a in Townsend et al, 1999). National development refers to the harnessing of all resources including material and psychological for all-round progress of the country.

This project looks at middle class married and working women. It therefore considers three domains: class, marriage and occupation. It questions these domains-namely which are seen as spaces which middle class women have access to, to express their personality. A combination of these spaces should give us a dynamic picture of how

middle class women evolve as human beings, contextually empowered or disempowered. Empowerment in this case refers also to psychological strength that the system equips the women with to understand their socio-cultural environment. The word empowerment is often used in gender-related literature. However, I define empowerment as the capacity to get things moving. Most of the time financial means enable women to get things moving in their lives. In this case empowerment is of mostly a material nature: it refers to financial independence. There are however, times when reportedly, financial means are diverted to other quarters, e.g. in cases where men take over their wives' income and space for action (see for example, Mirsky and Radlett, 1999).

Sometimes, empowerment is seen as "shakti" the energy within women, which generates the power to act (Liddle and Joshi, 1986:2). Gradually with the expansion in the literature regarding women and gender issues, in my opinion, empowerment has locally become an overused word whose meaning tends to become obscure. This is despite the fact that it retains all its loaded meaning as it is used by Rowlands (1997a). This word is very rarely used I this project. Personal development is seem as a more appropriate term since it is gradual, incremental and more general. It is not a flash in the pan item referring to only one aspect of personal development –e.g. financial comfort does not necessarily mean overall personal development.

The frequency with which this then is used locally, the fact that it is so much divested of its real meaning account for its very sparse use in this project. This project does seek to develop a research framework to measure degrees of empowerment. Whenever it is used, "empowerment" will mean the capacity to reason out circumstantial barriers and to act accordingly. Thus, this project seeks to analyse:

• How married and working middle-class women view education as an enabling factor for their personal development;

• The role of husbands in their personal development and the extent to which marriage and family provide a space for this;

• The degree to which their occupation helps them in their personal development

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- The perceptions of the women under study and those of their husbands;

- The extent to which women believe their personal development can contribute to national development. If so, how? And

- whether the Mauritius College of the Air can play a significant and positive role in enhancing both personal and national development by dispensing appropriate distance• learning courses .

Thirty working women from a stratified middle-class are studied through face-to-face interviews as well as a pre-determined questionnaire. The perceptions of their husbands are also gathered to give an overall and well-balanced picture. The views of the husbands are very important given the increasing feminist recognition of the key role of men in positing women for personal development.

It hopes to determine the degree to which marriage provides a fertile crucible for the optimisation of women's personal development as fostered by education and whether distance education can be a mode of study that can positively enhance personal development as well as the women's contribution to national development. I am deliberately silent on issues related to culture and religion since these will give rise to debates that cannot be discussed in the context of this research.

1.2 THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

There are many women-related studies that address women's access to education in general, to a particular type of education, especially those that are normally so-called 'male domains'. This study is different in that it tends to leave "aside questions about universal access, and about the quality of formal education and its questionable links with upward social mobility" (Eade, 1999: 5 in Rowan-Campbell). It is spurred by the realisation that "it is important to go beyond simple headcounts and ask what factors most influence children's academic performance; and how far educational opportunities for girls actually translate into well-paid satisfying jobs and a more rewarding and fulfilling adult life" (Eade, 1999:5). One of its aims is therefore to discover how far

education influences personal development and the resulting impact on national development.

It is different from the many studies that investigate into what women do with their time post-formal education, time especially in terms of the type of job they have access to and the accompanying occupational life-chances. Indeed, there are but a few that care to examine the sophisticated linkages between women's participation in education and occupation as well as the private sphere of family and marriage. The latter is now emerging as a crucial area to explore. In my view, an analysis of such linkages would help explain the present status of women's personal development and help forecast future trends. This is made possible by setting this research within the social relations analysis framework. This framework "concentrates on the precise terms under which women cooperate and on the specific institutions, such as marriages and markets that structure that cooperation. Such an analysis takes women's perceptions of the intricate power relations of their situations seriously" (Heward and Bunwaree, 1999:3)

Drawing extensively from a liberal feminist framework, this project makes absolutely no assumption. Whatever will emerge from this research will generate its own theory. This will possibly even flout all that have been used here as research framework and theoretical terms of reference. It starts off, however with the realisation that women are individuals and no generalisation can reflect their existence as a group. It is important to remember that their individual situations may be variations on the general theme. It is believed that while education, as in that which is provided by the system would have enabled women in one way or another, feminist education is bound to have another significant role: that of changing them from human capital to human beings fully conscious of themselves and their potential.

Whatever data will be collected in the course of this research, it is hoped, is meant to contribute to the major aim of this project, which is to contribute to knowledge in the fields of gender, education and development and to see what could best help women unfold their personal potential and better contribute to national development .

Women are often seen as marginal human and social beings in patriarchal societies in general. This general rule applies to the Mauritian society as well. There seems to be a tension between the direction taken by macro-structures in terms of education for women

and that, which is taken by individual private structures like the family. One group tends to create avenues while the other tends to constrain women's education to "preserve a set of social institutions and associated beliefs" (Heward and Bunwaree, 1999). The patrifocal family structure normally tends to generate pressures for conformity. Looking at the family through patrifocal lenses brings to attention the flexibility that socio-economic developments have insidiously albeit unavoidably permeated into the patriarchal structures of the family unit. However, in my opinion, despite that degree of flexibility, generally men have retained a high degree of control over women.

Men's power over women is seen as resting on their control over two major features:
(1) Economic independence
(2) Sexuality

Such control is seen to have filtered through all areas in a woman's life including marriage and occupation. This research project should help me uncover the extent to which this has happened among the middle-class women under study and the resulting effects. I hope to generate some solutions as well. In my opinion, women are very often kites in the hands of men: they have the illusion of freedom while still kept in tight rein.

I tend to believe that to fully develop as a nation, we need to have participating citizens; "men and women who take active interest in public affairs; who exercise their rights and perform their duties as members of a community larger than that of kinship network and immediate geographical locality" (Inkeles and Smith, 1974:15). This is why, in my opinion, there is pressing need to understand the extent to which women eventually become aware of the opportunities that can transform them into fully participating citizens.

From personal observation, I would tend to say that in the recent years, the perception concerning the rigidity of the patriarchal system seems to have been changing in some societies only. In others, women are still being subjected to inhumane treatment (See Mirsky and Radlett, 1999). However, while in appearance there seems to have been a change, women earlier studied still expressed frustration related to local beliefs (Gokool-Ramdoo, 1998). They blamed the educational system for the level of education they have achieved, further stating that the inadequacy of their of their education compounded by

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the views of their parents and other elements of a largely patriarchal society ill-equipped them for personal development. They were therefore in doubt how a poorly developed self could actually contribute to social and national development.

Many women expressed how their poor self-perception and poor self- image further impoverished their potential to act as mature, sensible and responsible citizens. In fact I was often confronted with the possible argument that families have relented to allow women have access to education more to enhance the family's status rather than the status of the individual women within that unit, It would seem to point to the fact that women's educational experiences are affected by their location in the social structure (Jayaweera, 1999: 174). This is a factor that very often presents an obstacle to women's personal development. There is very little awareness as to how stunted personal development can eventually affect national development. I believe that self-image and self-esteem are relevant enablers in personal development. An analysis of complex linkages between women's participation in national development and the more private world of family and kinship that they inhabit should help disclose how personal development and national development are mutually inclusive variables.

Another study I had carried out (Gokool-Ramdoo, 1998) hinted at the fact that the country was in a situation whereby an important percentage of its population was under‑confident and frustrated. Such women cannot therefore give the best of themselves. In crude terms, this means that there is a major part of the Mauritian society that is depriving the country of optimum resources. It would seem that the different socialisation pattern of girls and boys ultimately hamper the girl's development. With psychological resources so unevenly distributed, it would be interesting to examine how these middle-class educated women fare as adults within the institution of marriage as well as within the occupational structure.

1.3   **THE MIDDLE- CLASS WOMEN**

From literature surveyed, most studies that are concerned with gender, education and development issues tend to concentrate on women coming from poorer segments of society or from the poorer countries, e.g. Honduras (Kabeer, 1994) or Mexico (Townsend et al, 1999 It is probably true that these women are in more desperate situations than middle class women from any average country, However it is the very paucity of research on this category of women that has spurred my interest in this group.

Under the capitalist system, class is primarily defined by the wage relation that is whether a person earns wages or pays them, for which the occupational arena is crucial. Social mobility in the class structure is open to individuals in principle but limited in practice (Liddle and Joshi, 1986). In this case, the Weberian perspective on class is sufficiently illuminating. Class is seen in economic terms: classes develop in market economies in which individuals who share a similar position in a market economy and by virtue of that fact receive similar economic rewards (Haralambos, 1980). A person's class position basically reflects 'his market situation'. This in turn determines the life chances the individual is bound to enjoy. Factors other than the ownership or non-ownership of property are significant in the formation of classes. The market value of the skills of the property -less is significant in the formation of classes. In fact as capitalism expands, so does the middle-class.

In short, the middle-class is a group of individuals with varying levels of skills that can fetch varying levels of rewards: those with the highest skills can fetch the most attractive rewards. These rewards determine their market situation as well as their life chances. The middle-class women in this study are therefore all in a position to potentially better their life by virtue of their position within society.

The class system of social stratification, in my view, conveys a lot of dynamism to society. It constitutes a very effervescent group of people that can promote development in society but that can also become very conservative and thus slow down development.

It provides, in principle, opportunities for women to break out of their confined position. The jobs that are an extension of women's roles become more acceptable,

In Mauritius, the middle class arose from the British need for English educated Mauritians to administer the country under British superiors. In India, which was also a British colony, it is argued that the rise of the middle-class had a contradictory effect on women. Kamla Bhasin argues that in the middle class, "there has been some improvement because of various social and economic factors, but even today the majority of women live in perpetual subservience, self denial and self sacrifice... despite the fact that the number of women taking outside employment increases towards the top of the occupational and educational hierarchy, the vast majority of educated middle-class women are still confined to domestic activities" (Bhasin in Liddle and Joshi, 1986: 55)

This research project will determine the extent to which the above stands true for the middle-class Mauritian women. Economic independence for growing numbers of women since National Independence meant that women could be less controlled, but this did not bring much independence of thought among Mauritian women. The years following Independence meant that an increasing number of girls could benefit from free primary and eventually free secondary and tertiary education. Free education ultimately also meant increasing participation in the occupational structure. By the end of the 60s, free primary schooling encouraged most parents to send their children to school. Expansion in the occupational structure meant that educated women as part of labour could become more productive. An extra income could be earned in the family. Women in development provide an income for the family but this may be rarely under their control or their personal use.

In my view, women m employment clearly undersell their labour for the benefit of patriarchy. This is doubly exacerbated by the fact that women have to put in double shift since house chores are primarily their patriarchally defined gender role and they have little help from husband. This is especially a class -detennined phenomena being more visible among the working class subcultures and the rural population rather than urban.

Globalisation and the introduction of ICT in many walks of life is bound to change all that. Increased communication facilities and awareness of world trends brought a shift in attitudes that gradually affected even the rural community, which is generally viewed as a capsule of tradition, conservativeness and purdah. "Pragmatic considerations seemed to outweigh the socio-cultural inhibitions in determining people's response to education "(Chanana 1990:83). The hurdle of co-education in Mauritius has been smoothed away for anxious parents. The Mauritian girl has benefited largely from this attitude. Indeed all government secondary schools are single sex. The benefits that normally accrue to girls in such situations are very visible. Discounting possible negative teacher attitudes, lack of competition with male counterparts has made girls' education flourish.

The Mauritian women, in my opinion, are still rather passive. Their struggle is within well-defined personal parameters. I believe that women unconsciously experience subordination at work and in the home. I will analyse the social processes by which the women's personal experiences can be seen to be not exclusively individual, but echoed in the social structure. Moreover, I will demonstrate the importance of personal experiences as I relate them to national development.

1.3.1 THE MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN AND EMPLOYMENT

In Mauritius, the breakdown of men and women in employment is as follows:
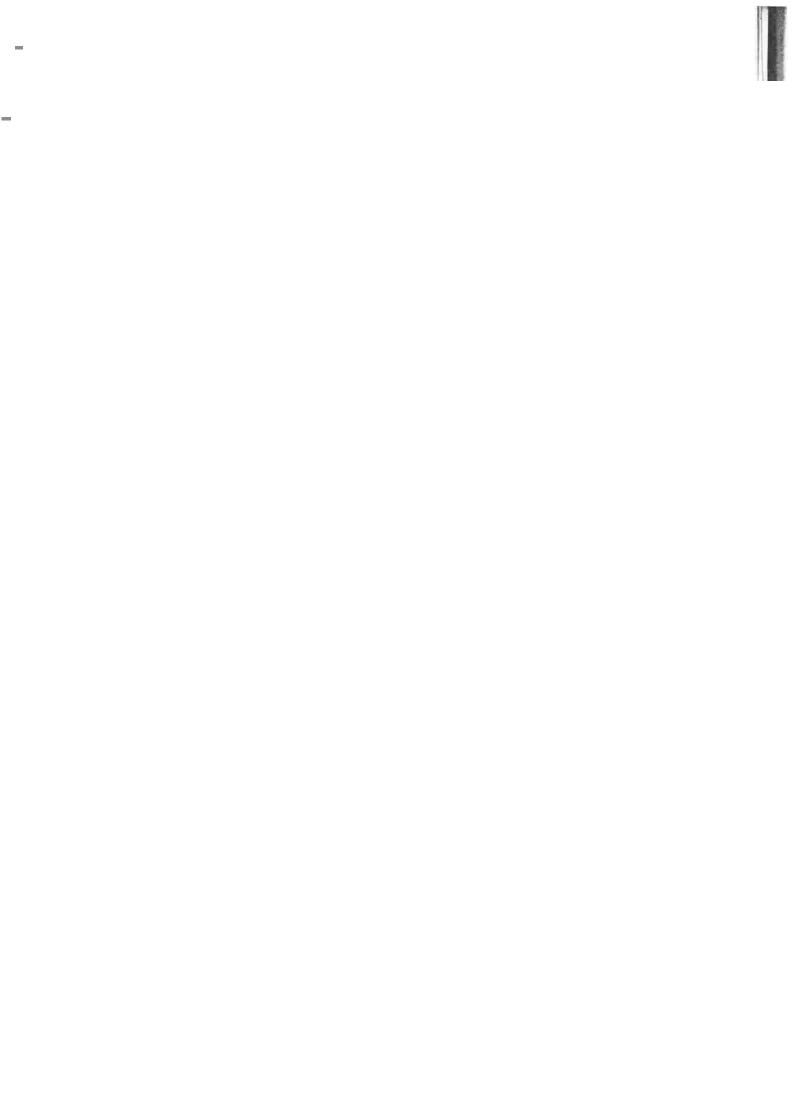
Employment[1] by industry and sex, 1997

	1997			1998			1999 [2]			2000 [3]		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	27.1	2.8	29.9	27.1	3.0	30.1	27.6	3.1	30.7	27.9	3.3	31.2
	10.8	5.2	16.0	11.2	5.6	16.8	11.9	5.6	17.5	12.1	5.9	18.0
Financing, insurance, real estate & business services	74.7	39.6	114.3	74.9	40.4	115.3	75.3	41.6	116.9	74.9	42.5	117.4
	(43.4)	(12.6)	(56.0)	(43.3)	(13.2)	(56.5)	(43.1)	(13.5)	(56.6)	(42.1)	(13.5)	(55.6)
	(5.1)	(0.7)	(5.8)	(4.8)	(0.8)	(5.6)	(5.0)	(0.8)	(5.8)	(5.3)	(0.8)	(6.1)
Activities n.e.c	2.4	0.1	2.5	2.4	0.1	2.5	2.0	0.1	2.1	2.0	0.1	2.1
	322.3	153.2	475.5	327.7	159.5	487.2	331.7	164.1	495.8	332.8	167.0	499.8

figures include foreign workers

Table 1

source: htt]

Since the middle-class in this study refers to those property-less women who rely on their level of education and skills to survive, employment is taken as the major criterion to qualify for middle-class. The middle-class woman as defined for the purposes of this study has completed secondary schooling and may have reached graduate or even postgraduate level in terms of education. She is employed in the services sector and her average income is as at least Rs. 8, 351 (1997 figures) (MWFWCD, 1999: 22). Her class is defined in terms of the level she has achieved in terms of education al achievement and also in terms of the economic status she derives from her husband's occupation. So we are looking at dual income households to determine rungs in the middle-class scale.

From Table I, we can say that middle class women are those who are employed in financing, insurance, real estate & business services, community, social and personal services, of which: central government and local government. It is to be noted that this table considers both the private and public sectors as well. These include the provision of services like education and health as well. Therefore, the middle-class women work in the services sector.

However, over the years, the number of women involved in the service sector where the income averages Rs. 8,351 (per month) (MWFWCD, 1999) has been steadily increasing as evidenced by the table below:

YEAR	1990	1997
Female employment ('000)	127.9	153.1
0/0 as Senior Officials	2.1	3.4
% as Professionals	2.2	4.1

Table 2

Source: Central Statistical Office in MWFWCD, 1999:22

In 1990, the number of women employed increased from 127.9 (000) to 153.1(000). The percentage employed as Senior Officials increased from 2.1 to 3.4, while the percentage employed as Professionals increased from 2.2 to 4.1. Unfortunately, the above breakdown does not offer any more detail regarding the specific types of employment undertaken by women from that category but only indicates that there is an increased

entry of women into middle-class. It is hoped that the present study will throw some light on the subject.

1.3.2 THE MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN AND EDUCATION

Women engaged in that level of employment would most obviously have attained at least secondary level of education as described in the following table:

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT '000 for women

YEAR	1990	1997
Total in thousand	127.9	153. J
% with Secondary and	39.6	52.9
Piploma		
University	1.6	2.0

Table 3

Source: Central Statistical Office in MWFWCD, 1999:22

Indeed, from Table 3, we can see that as at 1997, 52.9% of 153,000 women have at least secondary level education or have completed a diploma. As at 1997, 2% of 153, 000 have completed university education. These are the only statistics available regarding the criteria chosen, i.e. level of education, level of earning and professional status additionally husband's income will also determine the middle-class woman's life-chances and market opportunities.. Education is an enabling factor in the development of capabilities but it is not necessarily a facilitator unless women have control of resources. The unequal division of labour within household continues although professional dual earner families are seen to share tasks more equitably. Education, even higher education, does not appear to have motivated large numbers of women to challenge gender role assumptions. Control of female sexuality seems to be a visible manifestation of gender inequality. Domestic violence and sexual abuse occur irrespective of the education levels of family members. I wish to uncover the extent to which middle class women operate as individuals along the lines as above described.

As stated before, one of the objectives of this study is therefore to uncover the extent to which these working middle-class women are aware of whether they live in spaces conducive personal development and the extent to which their position within the social structure offers them the possibility of an independent existence (Liddle and Joshi, 1986: 4). It is crucial to examine and understand whether women are aware of their importance for national development and the extent to which their personal development allows them to fully contribute to national development. The second domain under examination will be marriage.

1.4   MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN, FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

As earlier stated another objective of this study is also to uncover the extent to which the institution of marriage and family provides enough space for these women to articulate their personal development in the context of the household. It is also set out to uncover how far marriage positions women to enhance their personal development and thus contribute to national development. Since self-esteem is seen as an enabler for personal development it becomes important to understand how far the intimate sphere of marriage saps or promotes self-esteem.

Some scholars (see for example Liddle and Joshi and Jayaweera) claim that marriage binds many women into unequal relationships with men. This inequality is not necessarily intrinsic to relations between women and men in themselves, but is linked to wider social and economic structures and is sanctioned by the power of the state. Women commonly express dissatisfaction with the content, quality and conditions of domestic life men do gain a great deal from women's household work". (Jackson in Robinson & Richardson, 1994,328 -335) Marriage, in my opinion, may be a repressive or liberating institution that is socially contextual and depends on a series of social linkages. For many men, however, marriage is very often seen as an empowering institution that provides them with cooking, laundry and sexual services. The females in the couples mostly provide these services and this leaves men free to pursue other interests. While

"Western women are defined as weak and in need of protection, in India, amongst both Hindu and Muslim cultures, women are seen by men as dangerously powerful. Men have to constrain women since the latter are incapable of controlling themselves: not because they are too weak to do so, but because their power is too great. In both cases

however, there seems to be need to control women, either to protect them against themselves or against others (Liddle and Joshi, 1986:55).

As stated before, each individual experience that will be described will necessarily be a reflection of the meso level at which structural socio-economic patterns along with their attached linkages operate In Mauritius, it would seem that the Western belief tends to prevail. In the name of protection, in my opinion, women are often subordinated and marginalized. As testified by the first phase of the study, I believe that the inner limitations present the greatest danger and obstacle to processes of self- empowerment. (Pilar Alberti in Townsend et al, 1999: 167) lucidly elaborates on the above.

"The glass ceiling of empowerment rests on internalized oppression, on the Cinderella, Scheherezade or chameleon syndromes. When women in general, think that they "cannot" do, think, achieve, get, have, feel or live, this is the Cinderella complex". (Dowling, 1982 in Townsend et al, 1999). These feelings of impotence and the desire for other people to take care of them limits women's capabilities and personal development".

While the above tendency is slowly changing, the first phase of the study as well as the prevailing mentality of women that I have met for this present study indeed indicates that Mauritian women are more comfortable with having somebody look after them even if it means being disempowered in real terms, that it the power to act is often removed from them.

"The chameleon complex refers to its capacity to rrurmc, (Fabra, 1996) to adapt its appearance to its surroundings and protect itself against danger. Women are said to mimic in social contexts, adapting their personalities to be accepted, by parent, relative, friend or husband for instance, and to escape rejection. Women may deny their own identities by denying their wishes, preferences, thoughts and differences. The Scheherezade syndrome takes the chameleon response further, but only with the opposite sex (Abelin, 1996)." Women may become insecure about their own values and desires and begin to identify with those of their husbands until they give up their own point of view entirely. Their wish to please leads them to silence their disagreement to avoid conflict. Many women have their capacity for analysis and criticism impaired by preferring silence to contradicting their "better half. Many ... give up their individuality as women and as human beings. (Pilar Alberti in Townsend et al, 1999: 166)."

From personal observation, I believe that for many women, the above is indeed true. They give up their individuality, refrain from voicing their opinion simply to avoid conflict. However, the fact that family relationships are of a rather intimate nature, negative behaviour or exploitation may be tolerated within families. This study is set out to reveal how far the above assessment is true for the Mauritian context. We need to find

out how marriage strips women of their individuality or on the contrary enhances their individuality. The third domain to be examined is occupation.

1.5 **THE MIDDLE-CLASS WOMEN AND OCCUAPTION**

Another objective of this study is also to uncover the extent to which the institution of occupation provides enough space for these women to articulate their personal development.

The rise of the class system with economic expansion is accompanied with an expansion of the occupational structure. This means that waged work in white collar and professional occupations becomes increasingly available. On the one hand women accept seclusion less easily; and on the other they are more expected to go out to work to secure the advantages that can become available with economic expansion. In certain cases, it is reported that many women even feel disempowered when going out to work despite the fact that going out to work is recognised as part of self-empowerment because it subjects them to new forms of exploitation and subordination (Kabeer, 1998 in Townsend et al, 1999: 168). It is argued that "although women have been subordinated and marginalised in different ways for much of history, their labour and the exploitation of that labour is the foundation of society's wealth." (Bullock 1994: 1). At times, it would seem that this is still the case: it would be interesting to know how far middle class women suffer exploitation and subordination at their work place.

It is generally agreed that in many developing countries there is a poor degree of fit between school and vocational training and employment needs. (Bullock 1994:92). So, despite the expansion in the occupational structure, the jobs created are not always matched by the educational system. This leads to a waste of human potential and undermines social and economic development and in my view, especially for women who are misguided into occupations that may not reflect their choice, nor their potential. Another factor that is interesting to observe, is the extent to which working women resist men's control over them in the spaces offered by marriage and work and how far economic independence can bring other types of benefits.

"It is increasingly recognised that the workplace is important as an environment for both formal and informal training and presents the opportunity to negotiate agreements that address the barriers to women's equality" (Bullock, 1994:5). Many more women are now going out to work. For many of these, the type of job that they have access to is very often an extension of their nurturing role at home. Nevertheless, the wages they command does offer them some sort of economic freedom, the extent and degree of which varies. There is some evidence that most women are out at work with the blessing of the men in the family; that is their freedom, to go out to work is sponsored by the men rather than women (Liddle and Joshi, 1986, Boolell, 1997). Resistance and other offshoots of economic independence therefore constitute other elements that this study will attempt to uncover.

Therefore whether or not they go out to work is very often subject to male control. If the family is seen to be a space for 'cooperative conflict' (A. Sen in Liddle and Joshi, 1986), in my view, work offers something that is not much different. There is the same type of divergence of interests, expectations, contributions, needs and degrees of control (Bullock, 1994: 3). At work also, the same two levers of control that govern the home environment seem to govern the lives of women:

(1) the degree of economic independence they can achieve; and their

(2) sexuality

It is argued that their pay tends to be low in occupations dominated by women because of their association with the domestic sphere and because women are still widely considered to be 'secondary' wage earners (Bullock, 1994: 2). Again, we will have to see the extent to which women are kites in the hands of men. Women's reproductive functions very often limit their chances to move on professionally. In other situations, women can be sexually harassed at work. These are issues that will be further examined in the course of this research.

1.6 THE MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN AND THE MAURITIUS COLLEGE OF THE AIR (MCA)

The MCA Act of 1971 stipulates that the object of the college shall be to promote education, arts, science and culture generally through mass media and distance education methods.

Organisational Structure
The MCA is organised into 2 major divisions:

• Media

• Distance Education

It also has a resource centre, the National Resource Centre (NRC) that services both divisions and those departments that provide management services. The Media division is further subdivided into sections: Educational Services, Graphics and Printing and Audio Visual Operations and Maintenance. The Division of Distance Education (DDE) which dispenses courses via distance education methods is supported by the Study Centre (a satellite of the NRC).The DDE has adopted Total Quality Management (TQM) principles as a means to install a Quality Assurance culture.

Management of the DOE
The Division of Distance Education (DDE) was set up in 1995 in implementation of the national plan for education. It is currently (2002) headed by the Officer-in-Charge under the general supervision of the Director of the MCA. It is staffed by 2 Senior Lecturers [one of whom is the Officer-in-Charge], 1 Programmes Co-ordinator, 4 Lecturers, one Administrative Assistant and ten support staff. The Academics are involved in both academic and administrative work.

Mission of the ODE
The Division of Distance Education operates in a research oriented Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) environment. It aims to meet the higher and continuing education needs of the people of Mauritius in the first instance and later in the Indian Ocean Region so that they can cope with the challenges put forward by globalisation. It endeavours to become a hub for adult learning through open/flexible learning mode and offer quality

student services to local and regional learners. It is customer-driven and is committed to enhance the availability of quality lifelong learning through appropriate ICTs.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The DOE is committed to:

- Provide lifelong learning to suit the needs of the adult population or Mauritius and the Indian Ocean Region
- Use the most appropriate ICTs to bridge the distance between the learner and the Tutor
- Facilitate and support the learning process of the adult learner.

The courses dispensed by the MCA having an examinable component are as follows:

TITLE	AWARD
Graduateship of the Institute of Fire Engineers	Institute of Fire Engineers
Certificate in Marketing	Chartered Institute of Marketing
Certificate in Librarianship in Information Science	MCA
Diploma/Advanced Diploma in Transport	Institute of Logistics & Transport
Masters in Business Administration	Indira Gandhi National Open University
Post Graduate Diploma m Human Resource Management	Indira Gandhi National Open University
Post Graduate Diploma in Financial Management	Indira Gandhi National Open University
Bachelor in Commerce	Indira Gandhi National Open University
Bachelor in Computer Applications	Indira Gandhi National Open University
Bachelor in Tourism Studies	Indira Gandhi National Open University
Diploma in Management	Indira Gandhi National Open University

The number of students enrolled at all times approximate a figure or 800 except if the Certificate of Proficiency for Pre-primary Education is dispensed. This significantly inflates the numbers. A quick survey however indicates that most of the women enrolled, except for the Masters of Business Administration Course are from the Lower Middle Class background. The MCA has to increase its credibility among women from the other strata of the Middle Class as well, especially since the Middle Middle Class is a much

bigger group to tap from. This research will examine the extent to which this is being done.

1.7   THE STRANDS OF RESEARCH

One look at the type of literature that arises from contextual study indicates that there are some crucial elements that affect women's personal development and empowerment:

- Education
- Marriage, Children and Family
- Occupation
- Personal Development

Obviously these are broad categories. However, I believe that they would prove useful for the purposes of this study. These will provide a guide to the main body of the research. There will be an important link between education and other variables like gender, work, marriage and personal as well as national development and we will see how the levers of control operate. It is believed that these strands intertwine to result into self-perception and are also determined by self-perception. Ultimately the eventual role of distance education in this context will be analyzed. These will all feed into the research tools as discussed later.

1.8   STRUCTURE OF THIS PROJECT

This project is broken down into the following sections. Section 2 discusses the literature available on the subject. Section 3 is about the relevance of the methodology as well as the appropriateness of the research methods used. In Section 4, I discuss the research process as well as the data collected and conclude the research. Probable limitations to this project may be, despite my precautions, the categorisation of middle-class women and the fewer number of respondents that I had despite my expectations. The lack of recent figures on the employment and educational status of women could have contributed, however involuntarily to data distortion. Despite the fact that percentage• wise or figure -wise, I may not have arrived at faithful results, I still maintain that the analysis is sound.

SECTION 2

WOMEN, EDUCATION, MARRIAGE/FAMILY AND OCCUPATION - THEORY AND PRACTICE

2.0   INTRODUCTION

As I find myself increasingly in the crux of feminism, I ask myself questions that seem to find resonance in many other quarters. One particular point put forward admirably by Eade (1999) constantly haunts me:

"Leaving aside questions about universal access, and about the quality of formal education and its questionable links with upward social mobility, it is important to go beyond simple headcounts and ask what factors most influence children's academic performance; and how far educational opportunities for girls actually translate into well-paid satisfying jobs and a more rewarding and fulfilling adult life". (Eade, 1999:5)

The question to which I am finding answers is whether those who have been through the educational system 'successfully' enough are in any way experiencing satisfaction as far as personal development is concerned. I want to know how far the institutions of marriage/family, education and employment provide sites for them to realize their self-worth. The baseline is to identify whether an awareness of personal development can be conducive to national development. By thus making a personal issue into a political one, I hope to demonstrate how important it is to espouse the cause for women. Feminism should become a way of life, since it is that movement that:

"speaks to the most profound yet basic of changes in the roles, the rights, and the relations which govern connections, commerce, and intimacy between women and men. This movement offers a vision of equality in society, equity in partnership, and freedom from gender stereotyping - freeing each person to pursue the roles best suited to their needs and talents. The movement has been dynamic because the struggle for change takes not on the world's battlefields but at home and in the most intimate space, the human heart"(Eade, 1999:11)

The purpose of this research is to see to what extent the middle-class, married and working Mauritian woman is enabled to realize her self-worth and how far she can enhance her contribution to her personal and eventually national development. Even as it takes men's views into consideration, in no way does this study go into much detail regarding constructs of masculinity. The scope of this study cannot be widened to such an enterprise. Men are studied here and their voices are give a space equal to their wives/partners in relation with how they are significant in the construct of the femininity of the women whose lives they share. Men are studied in a way to help me determine the extent to which they can help or destroy women in the latter's attempt at personal

development. This will also help determine the extent to which men become instrumental III accelerating or impending national development.

In my view, it is the human resources of a nation, not its capital or its material resources that ultimately determine the shape and pace of its economic and social development. The human resources are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social and political organizations and carry forward national development (Inkeles and Smith, 1994). Women are very much part and parcel of the human resources of any socio-economic set-up. This verily justifies women being at the center of this research.

Women in Mauritius have benefited largely from the results of feminist struggle elsewhere in the world as these have slowly filtered first to the women intelligentsia and later to women from other walks of life. Women activism in Mauritius is very limited since Mauritian women are largely complacent. The recent years of economic growth have taken care of their survival and have even given them many fringe benefits (like cars available to government officers, cheap textiles so that they can be fashionable and any type of job so that they can have some pocket money). A range of jobs has sprouted with economic development. Some of them are really short-lived but have still given these women a means of livelihood. There has not been any widespread women's movement other than one sporadic walk organized by women in the 1980's to exercise their right to walk at night.

Women's struggle in Mauritius is mostly located within the confines of their homes or their jobs (e.g. the much argued over equal pay-equal work concept with in the Mauritian Police Force). Sometimes women get organized to work for women e.g. Mouvement D'Aide a la Matemite, which seeks to help young women who find themselves pregnant. The Ministry of Women itself has a number of shelters to protect women who suffer from domestic violence. The few development projects that have been handled by the Ministry are mostly the Grameen Project and Schemes for the development of micro-credit enterprises. Recently the Ministry launched a tape carrying what women need to know about their rights. While all this is certainly to the credit of the Ministry, there is however, in my view, no structure which helps women question their status within society nor which can help them shape their lives in terms of how they view themselves and how they exist as individuals and as citizens of Mauritius. Women are noticeably absent in their own minds as women. The grand plans of the Ministry to set up a Gender Bureau to gender -educate all relevant stakeholders in education and employment seem to have collapsed without even a pitiful whimper. There is nothing regarding crucial items like extra maternity leave, paternity leave, family related programmes on the agenda of the Ministry. My own attempts to get things moving in that area have met with an opaque rejection from the present Minister who may have thought that I was looking for personal benefits from my meeting with her. The rape case of Sandra, one white upper-class woman

sparked enough anger to enable her to rally together men and women in a peaceful march in Port•
Louis, the Mauritian capital. It must be emphasized that this initiative was a private one and not an
official one. One good thing that came out of that initiative was the debate around punishment for
rapists and revision of the Bail Act. This is the general environment in which this study is set.

 This project hopes to contribute to knowledge related to the general fields of gender and
development respectively, as it analyses the three fields of education, family/marriage and
occupation with respect to women. At the outset, I would like to state that this project espouses some
of the post-impasse development theories (Schuurman, 1993), which generate some unconventional
research methods that stem from the methodology. These form part of the "scientific tools, which
could be used to construct a post-impasse development theory and to identify constraints on their
application" (Schuurman, 1993:1). This will be discussed later. In my view, post-modernism has
contributed greatly to the criticism of development theory. In my opinion, such criticism is positive
since it has brought us to a roundabout that can take several directions. One such direction points to
the overemphasis on economic growth in all development agenda, which triggered off several human
problems, the human aspect in most development issues seems to have been neglected. Therefore
economic growth in Mauritius rarely considers the HD! (UNDP, 1990). Development has been
reconceptualised (UNDP, Human Development, 1990 and 1991). Human development is now at the
center of development. How this concept is translated into practice is another matter. Yet, the
direction remains that development is now defined as the process of enlarging people's life with the
acquisition of knowledge and access to a decent standard of living. Only a few years ago, education
was solely seen as an instrument to generate human capital. What happened to the human beings that
formed part of the human capital was never a matter of concern; economic progress was the only
concern. Post-impasse development theories have changed this focus. While previously, human
capital formation was seen to serve economic growth, now economic growth is seen to serve human
growth and development.

This study concentrates on human development. It is asserted that "development theories based on
metadiscourses have no right to exist' (Schuurman, 1993:10). This assertion prompts me to align
myself with many other preceding feminists that theory must be grounded in research and in personal
experience. The *actor-oriented* approach is becoming increasingly popular with theorists that are
concerned with giving a human face to development. People are considered thus individually rather
than as a faceless group. According to Long (1990, in Schuurman, 1993: 18), theories of
development like the modernisation theory are too deterministic and linear since social change is
seen to result from external impulses. Long claims that "human (re) action and consciousness play a
central role" (Schuurman, 1993: 18). He is moreover interested in the interface between the meso
level (wider context wherein access to power and resources plays a role) and the individual actor.
Long does not consider gender or class as actors or agents, and I believe likewise. It is the

individuals that form part of the gender group or the class that are the active agents in any given society. *I* tend therefore to extend Long's belief to state that gender and class exist at the mesa level. They provide the context within which actors have access to power and resources that enable them to take on several roles. Class as well as gender both provide and determine with resources and room for action of the actor/actress. Gender studies have chosen a material object (e.g. the position of women, gender relations), which has been analyzed mostly within the framework of Marxist metatheory. This has brought attention to the fact that women are mostly exploited by the capitalist system. This idea has informed most feminist studies. Feminist research, while taking into consideration all preceding theories now lays increasing emphasis on women as subjects of research rather than objects. This is the direction also taken by this study.

In post-impasse period, Schuurman (1993) feels that a new explanadum for development studies should not be restricted to "diversity" but be explicitly concerned with "inequality" of access to power, to resources, to a humane existence ... in short inequality in emancipation. Inequality is thus a relevant concept to the micro level (household), the mesa-level (social categories), but also to the supranational level. The central requirement for post-impasse development theory is to design a theoretical framework that links these levels together to form an analysis. In this study I have attempted to link all these levels together. This study relates the individual women to society as characterized by the social fields of education, family and employment and weaves these together with personal and national development. As Schuurman rightly says, a meaningful connection between all the analytical levels can only be made if the relevant actors are displayed (Schuurman, 1993:31). This is why the research methods as employed for this study are instrumental in revealing the individual actors/actresses in the fields as above-mentioned. This is a study of how people try to negotiate the structurally defined hierarchical relations which are discriminatory and as such give unequal access to material and immaterial services like ideology and political power (Schuurman, 1993:31). As a matter of fact, power, actors, multi-leveled structure, inequality and diversity are the key concepts in the construction of post-impasse development theories. It is the ambition of this study to try and evolve one such theory. It is my belief that as long as theory is constructed ti-om real experience, it will have explanatory power and that shall be its purpose. It is not my intent to create grand theory but rather to have a theory that can explain individual behavior in a structural context.

2.2   THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL CLASS IN THIS STUDY

"Despite the focus on diversity emerging from other significant social divisions such as ethnicity, sexuality and nationality, discussion of the differences caused by class has been notably absent. In my view despite the fact that the class position of women remains contentious (the more so for

married women whose class position is inevitably linked to that of their husband's), class remains an important concept in the understanding of gender relations. Studies like that of Diana Coole's point to the need to reinstate class differences in feminist research, and argues that despite the difficulty of measuring it, class cannot be dissolved into a linguistically mobile and simple diversity of equally valuable differences (Coole 1996:23). Beverley Skeggs (1996) has demonstrated that the concept of class must be conceptually integrated with gender in order adequately to portray gendered power relations.

As different from the political concept of feminism, femininity is the expression of the core of what represents a woman, the physical, psychological and almost the ethereal. The Mauritian middle class woman has her own way to express her femininity. Whether she is from the lower middle class or from the upper middle class, the middle class woman is learning to come to terms with herself as a woman, as a worker, a wife and a mother. She learns to be fashionable, to create a beautiful and comfortable environment at home. She learns to improve her dress sense and to look her best, whatever her size. She learns to redefine her role with her husband along more democratic lines and she learns how to adjust her children into her overloaded schedule. She learns to perform well at her job; she becomes an increasingly conscientious and efficient worker. She learns to be discreet and most of the time is power dressed. It is immaterial whether she is a secretary or a manager. The dress code is increasingly that of power dressing. In that busy schedule, she also looks for some time for herself. She is becoming ambitious for herself, her husband, and her children. Everything that the family does is a mad scramble for something very ill defined. It is beside the point that a vicious system like patriarchy or capitalism underlines all her activities. Just too bad. The middle class woman is looking for ways and means to express herself.

2.3   **ANALYSING POWER**

This study like that of Liddle and Nakajima (2000) examines the structure of the social fields of employment, education and the family, the positioning of women within these fields, the capitals attached to these positioning, the relationships between the fields and the resulting effect on women's self-perception. It is claimed that the connections in the distribution of power between the different fields are very clear. It is stated that the fields of education, employment and the family are intimately tied together, such that powerful positions in the employment field are based on cultural capital acquired in the family and credentialised through the higher education field, whilst access to educational credentials is dependent on the social origin of the family. It is argued that it is through the deployment of various forms of capital that middle class women are able to achieve changes in social practices and move into subject positions. This present study goes on to examine middle class women's own representations of their positioning within the fields, showing how the capitals within these fields shape the women's practices and subjectivities.

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It examines the social fields of education, family/marriage and occupation as sites in which gendered power is produced, and questions how worthwhile women find their existence in such environments. It identifies the mechanisms, which women use to express themselves meaningfully. It examines "how far changes in the gendered distribution of power within these fields represent an opening up of positions of power in society to a wider social base, or alternatively constitute a means for reproducing forms of power based on other social divisions such as class" (Liddle and Nakajima, 2000: 166-167)

The three fields of education, family/marriage and occupation are crucially interrelated in the reproduction of power. Bourdieu argues that in developed societies, the field of education has become the primary site in which the social position of the family is reproduced and that the significance of education is less the credentialising of technical knowledge, and skills than the legitimating of the social reproduction of power. In education - mediated reproduction, the transmission of power and control over vital resources depends on educational credentials. Academic credentials represent investments in the contest over social classifications, but they are also weapons in the struggle (Wacquant 1993:27)

2.4   SOCIAL ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

Given the fields that this study analyses, it is fitting to use the social analysis framework, which includes all three. This framework includes elements like diversity and inequality in the way that it allows for the analysis of society as it uncovers the actions of individual actors/actresses. It helps give meaning to the various actions of the social actors/actresses. Most literature point to the fact that an increasing number of women at all levels are attempting to move out of their marginal status. There are hints in most relevant literature about how self-perception can affect personal development. Self-perception and socialization process are intimately linked and a positive socialization process is seen to have a directly proportional relationship with a positive self-image/self perception. [These two terms will be used interchangeably in this research]. There are hints in the women-related literature about how self-perception can affect personal development. Since perceptions and personal development constitute the main analytical strands of this study, it is fitting that the social relations analysis framework be used. The social analysis framework

"concentrates on the precise terms under which women and men cooperate and on the specific institutions, such as marriages and markets that structure that cooperation. Such an analysis takes women's perception of the intricate power relations of their situations seriously" (Heward and Bunwaree, 1994: 4).

Most studies point to the fact that despite individual and particularistic characteristics, there are also a few universal strands in the way women and girls live. Most come from patriarchal societies and female oppression exists in varying degrees. There seems to be no patriarchal society that can claim to be completely women-friendly. The only difference is that in some societies oppression is more strongly felt that in others. Indeed, most studies reveal the almost universal way in which resources are unequally distributed. This inequality influences the degree of ease with which women have access to facilities for schooling in a directly proportional equation. The degree to which the society is patriarchal is then instrumental in the distribution of resources. There have been many accusations leveled against theorists who seem to have lumped women into similar categories. While probably the categories are in actual fact similar, it is the backdrop to these categories in terms of social, economic and cultural factors that are dissimilar. The backdrop provides several types of opportunities to better or worsen the categories. The following are the categories in which women find themselves:

- They are female as determined by birth
- There is whole series of stereotypes attached to them most of which are negative
- The way they are treated varies from society to society but they seem to be almost universally viewed as being weak, oversensitive, over reactive and basically stupid
- Parents in certain societies view it as being a waste if there is need to invest into anything that could better conditions of women
- They are mostly viewed as part of patriarchal property, an asset or a liability depending upon circumstantial demands

The respective societies provide the backdrop against women are examined. This backdrop is determined by culture, norms and values that inform the particular societies, e.g. an open society will be more conducive to personal development of women and alternatively a closed society offers limited opportunities for personal development. To understand women's situation in society, it is crucial to examine the relationship between reproduction and production; the double role that women perform as mothers/wives and workers (Stromquist, 1999: 17, in Heward and Bunwaree, 1999). For this understanding, the household is a vital site, as women's consciousness is structured partly by the socialization process which enculturates the gender ideals of the dominant ideology and partly by women's pragmatic negotiation of gender roles" (Obbo, 1990 in Stromquist, 1999: 17, in Heward and Bunwaree, 1999).

We need to better understand social mechanisms, struggles and processes within households, which perpetuate domination and engender resistance. To achieve this understanding, we need to analyze gender ideology and the power relationships, especially the processes through which power is exerted within the family. Stromquist develops this analysis linking individual community and

institutional levels in an attempt to understand the complexities in changing relations of gender, education and development. An analysis of girls' and women's lives within patriarchal gender relations is of prime importance if one is to arrive at an intimate understanding of elusive perceptions. In my view, perceptions are often barely understood by the individuals themselves. They may be in situations that cause some sort of discomfort, but they are not equipped with the analytical feminist mind that enables an analysis of their situation and that helps link such situations with broader issues like gender, patriarchy and feminism. They are mere feelings that are barely grasped. Yet, I strongly believe that once harnessed these self-perceptions can provide very useful insights into issues that are only hinted at. Heward and Bunwaree (I999:6) identified five research strands for investigation into education and resultant female autonomy. These are:

- knowledge of the outside world
- decision-making in the family
- mobility
- emotional autonomy away from kin toward the nuclear family
- self-reliance, socially and emotionally

The above points have been incorporated into the interview schedule and questionnaire of this piece of research to understand the extent to which these factors operate in the making of a Mauritian middle-class woman whose potential is fully unfolded. At this point it is necessary to include a parenthesis about the changing social relations that accompanied industrialization in Mauritius. The ancestors of the contemporary middle-class women are mostly slaves from mainland Africa or indentured laborers from India. More often than not, these women slaves and women laborres worked {either in the fields or in the homes of white women as maids or companions) but retained a submissive status at home.

In a capsule [eschewing very dynamic events that cannot be covered within the scope of this study], it can be said that historical factors like national Independence eventually led to women going to school in greater numbers mainly to become teachers or clerical officers. As the civil services expanded and began to pool from the existing group of women, the type of interaction of these women changed and gradually they became more independent in mind. Decisions regarding choice of employment, disposal of their wages and eventually choice of partner for marriage, division of labour within marriage and other types of marital arrangements and so forth became increasingly independent despite resistance from parents, in-laws and even husbands themselves.

As this study unfolds, we will investigate how women negotiate the various spaces provided by marriage/family, education and occupation. Gathering perceptions of women on their experience will reveal how women's personal development is affected. We will understand whether the Mauritian society is an open opportunity-laden one or a closed, stifling one.

The focus of this study is especially on the middle class women. The middle class constitutes a very interesting group. In my opinion, structurally and psychologically (in terms of collective psychology), it constitutes one of the most effervescent social groups. Its structure is forever changing; people move into and out of it as fast as the socio-economic context allows. In Mauritius, the middle class family structure is either nuclear or extended. That is, it is characterized by either the couple living together with or without children in the nuclear family structure or the couple living together with or without children in a wider kinship setting with (in the patriarchal set-up) the siblings of the husband (married or not) and the parent(s) of the husband. Psychologically, it is characterized by strong aspirations for upward mobility. It offers a rich terrain for opportunities and life chances. People in the middle class aspire to upward social mobility more than any other thing. Identification and terms of reference are mostly with the upper classes.

2.5   MARRIAGE/FAMILY

Some scholars argue that marriage (and cohabitation) binds many women into unequal relationships with men. This inequality is not intrinsic to relations between men and women in themselves, but is linked to wider social and economic structures (Robinson and Richardson 19??: 328-338). It is claimed that the institution of marriage has a significant impact on the welfare of women and the status of men (Fox, 1991 in Heward and Bunwaree, 1999). She supports this claim by giving evidence gathered from rural women in Papua New Guinea where the status of women within the family is declining, leading to loss of self-esteem and deteriorating mental health. While women commonly express dissatisfaction with the content, quality and conditions of domestic life, men gain a great deal from the cooking and sexual services provided by their wives (Hill 1980) This assertion is tested within the Mauritian context as this study also deals with self-esteem. It is necessary to check to what extent the husband in particular and the wider kinship in general is supportive and thus question the link between positive self-perception, self-esteem and marriage and family.

The question remains why do women enter into a relationship in which they are exploited? The answer is that somewhat paradoxical; settling down has some positive aspects like freedom and independence from parents' home as well as for some, legalized sex. The manner in which marriage affects women varies culturally. A new bride often encounters marriage into the extended family with much hostility, especially in the Indo-Mauritian families. There may be a degree of domestic violence in this set-up prompted by the initial hostility with which a new bride enters this domain.

The situation seems to be gradually changing from the times when the strictest guardian of the sexuality of young women were the old mothers in law who thus ensured the reproduction of patriarchal domination. From personal observation, I tend to believe that the degree of hostility that, either the mother in law or the new bride faces depends on the extent to which resources are controlled by either party. For example, if the young woman marries into a rich, extended family, more control will reside with the mother in law who has had a lifetime of contribution towards the building of the family fortune even if the younger woman is employed. However, if she marries into an average family, she is bound to have more bargaining power if she is employed. The extent to which she can negotiate with this bargaining power now depends on the extent to which the mother/son bond is strong.

In fact, many women recall their mothers in law in very bitter terms. They were or still are subjected to the capricious ways in which older women exercise/ct their authority. The young women are socialised and integrated into the household. This socialisation process varies from outright physical violence to various degrees of coercion. Men even beat their wives to keep them in line - consciously or unconsciously they act as the agents of their mothers' will in enforcing compliance. If a daughter in law dares defy her mother in law's will, this can give rise to a lot of negative reactions which causes a lot of suffering to the couple.

The mother in law's stratagem is often weakened in the face of the genuine affection uniting the young couple when the latter contract a love marriage as opposed to an arranged marriage where many variables (like the type of family the son is marrying into and the type of girl he is marrying – mostly to his mother's taste) are controlled by the mother. From the mother's perspective such a bond can be seen as a powerful threat to her own bond with her son. A mother in law in the face of the love between a young couple often unconsciously feels scared of being removed from the family by the younger woman. Or at any rate, she is scared of having her authority undermined. As a counter threat, the mother in law enlists her son as an ally in abuse of the young wife. The man often sacrifices his own feelings towards the wife and beats her. This can definitely undermine the foundation of many sound relationships. The sometimes bitter struggle between the wife and the mother in law is often detrimental to the couple.

In the contemporary set-up, women seem to be less helpless as they bring emotional and economic advantages to the relationship. While earlier women tended to bear things silently, nowadays, young women are less tolerant towards this kind of treatment. Mothers in law have changed stratagem. It now seems better to side step an issue than pitch a son's ties against those of the wife. At best, it is expected the son might remain neutral and not get involved in any sort of argument. At worst, he

may defend the wife. Young wives have vested interest in evading or resisting the mother in-law's control and authority.

Given such situations, we need to see the extent to which education has gives women the "opportunity to participate in society, in particular through education, [which is] nevertheless an essential part of the struggle to do something positive to counteract... subordination through violence" (Fox, 1999:38 in Heward and Bunwaree, 1999). Violence is here understandably physical as well as psychological. Conversely, it is stated arguably that in the urban areas, women have supportive husbands, decision-making can be shared and the status of women improves to the mutual social and economic benefit of family and community. There seems to be a direct relationship between the wife's economic independence through employment and the way she can negotiate her new relationship with her mother in law.

2.6   EDUCATION

One essential ingredient that heightens women's awareness of their condition is education. It is important to uncover how far women are socialized to accept an inferior status and how far education is instrumental in helping them perceive the "existence of greater opportunities and wider choices in life than those assigned to them by traditional gendered cultural images" (ABD report, 1987 in Heward and Bunwaree, 1999:39). In some cases, it is clear that successful survival in schooling and progress to higher education does not necessarily translate into labor market advantage or higher earnings (Unterhalter, 1999 in Heward and Bunwaree, 1999). It is further asserted that

"gender discrimination crosses class boundaries and affects women regardless of the length of their education. Women continue to experience discrimination in personal, private and public spheres, as well as high levels of violence and low levels of self-confidence" (Lessing, 1994 quoted in Unterhalter, 1999 in Heward and Bunwaree, 1999).

As stated above, my understanding of violence definitely goes beyond the physical to encompass the psychological which may be the result of verbal abuse and psychological abuse as it happens in debilitating instances like extramarital affairs.

Realization has dawned from the many case studies in the literature that there is need for analyses that go beyond studying access to education but should also encompass the content of education and the way women experience education by tracing the life-courses of women. The subjective relationships that women develop with peers and authorities in their educational career are vital in themselves and in my opinion determine how successfully women shape their identities. It is further stated that such studies must take account of changing economic, political and cultural contexts, especially gender-segmented labor markets (Heward and Bunwaree, 1999: 13). It is necessary to draw

attention to the importance of local cultures (contexts) first of all for women's access to education and more importantly to the meaning of the educational experience in the lives of the women under study. The relationship between the family (natal and marital) and education is also crucial to help us arrive at a meaningful conclusion. In fact, the expectation that girls will eventually marry and become housewives means that what they learn at home can be considered by both mothers and fathers to be as important, if not more important than what they learn at school. This view is undergoing drastic changes however. I question the extent to which cultural beliefs reinforce gender stereotypes outside and inside school. Some studies have even found some female teachers were sensitive to girls' shyness and low self-esteem in class and have tried to tackle this problem. (Rose and Tembib, 1999:89 in Heward and Bunwaree, 1999). *In fact, as long as women continue to perceive themselves as subordinate, they will not be able to fully enjoy the opportunities of education.* "It is critical that cultural and economic constraints are addressed simultaneously to ensure that girls themselves and society more generally receive the benefits of their education" (Rose and Tembib, 1999:89 in Heward and Bunwaree, 1999).

Education can be enabling in the unfolding of potentials, but unless women have control of resources, it cannot be a facilitator. While education in itself does not better women's general condition, it does posit women at a decisive fulcrum and can allow them to make choices for personal development. As more and more women become aware of and have access to higher education whether through distance learning or through the traditional didactic mode at the University of Mauritius or abroad, the influence of education is then seen in other areas of their life. In my view, this influence is especially visible in employment and in marriage situations. Gender relations are embedded in the changing political, economic and cultural contexts; employment as a result of education tends to challenge that. Distance education is seen to open up heretofore unheard of vistas. Ultimately, it is the nation that benefits from the personal development that is encouraged by all forms of education be it the traditional mode or distance education. One strand of investigation that stems from this research is the need to inquire whether distance education can have a more permeating role than traditional forms of education in the endeavor to encourage personal development for national development.

In developing countries, there seems to be a general tendency in favor of boys rather than girls going to school or attending university for the following reasons:

- It is more profitable to invest in boys' education since the girls will anyway get married, so their education will be of use to the husband's family and not the natal family;

- Girls can get 'spoilt' easily: that is they are sexually vulnerable. They should therefore not be allowed to go to school or university where they are exposed to the opposite sex.

- Girls are less intelligent than boys

- Girls will learn to think and therefore will constitute a threat to patriarchy

- Housework will suffer

While the tendency is changing in Mauritius the above reasons still color some people's vision and point to the fact that

"clearly access to education is insufficient unless education is used consciously to socialize girls and boys, men and women to reject negative gendered norms and to accept and practice gender equality, social justice and the observance of human rights, all of which are in essence indicators of human development" (Jayaweera in Heward and Bunwaree, 1999: 186).

This above assertion echoes with my own. There is need to slant our analysis beyond access to education. It is necessary to study what type of education is dispensed (that is everything concerning the educational environment, the educational curriculum and so forth) and what happens to the recipients of that education.

In my opinion the indicators of human development have to be broadened out to espouse those of national development. I tend to believe that the variables that feed into one or the other would be mutually inclusive. Middle class women accumulate new forms of power in the family and outside it, including economic capital from paid work, cultural capital from education and social capital from new networks and connections - all affecting the way middle -class women see themselves and their place in society.

In short, the school as a social institution relies on the family to transmit the social and cultural capital that is linked with class of origin, and the family relies on the educational institutions to ratify and accredit the norms and values that are the hallmarks of their class of origin ... and [eventually] destination (Wacquant, 1993:31–32).

2.7 **OCCUPATION**

I will examine the structure of the occupational field to ascertain women's positions within it. Molyneux (1984) regards women's entry in occupation as a major means of eliminating sex inequality. Data regarding women in employment that confer a middle -class status has already been analysed and discussed elsewhere. Employment has transforrnative potential for women in their consciousness as well as their material circumstances. It is believed that women in employment have the necessary financial independence to exercise a certain kind of leverage in dealing with their families and husbands. It is important to uncover the type of leverage and the extent to which it is possible to exercise this leverage. It is asserted that women

"from different socio-economic classes with the same educational attainment have access to jobs at different occupational levels." (Jayaweera in Heward and Bunwaree, 1999: 185).

This author states that while it is obvious that education has improved the status of women within the family, reduced family size and expanded their economic roles, the relationship between education, employment and empowerment remains complex. It is not necessarily true that an educated, well-employed woman is empowered to fully express her personality whether in the family, marriage or work employment situations. There are many factors that may hamper or promote that expression of personal development. In fact men and women with the same educational attainment reach different levels in the occupational structure. In this study we are set to uncover to how employment influences the various choices a woman may have in terms of physical mobility and social behavior and choice of marriage partner. The point here is to simultaneously find the extent to which employment contributes to women's self-confidence. The strongest barrier to women's social and economic emancipation consists of values and attitudes: not just the attitudes of men or the community but the attitudes of women themselves (Bullock, 1994:89).

Education is mainly considered in relation to women's employment opportunities and social status. It is nevertheless worth noting that higher levels of education among women are also associated with later marriage and child bearing, smaller families, and a higher standard of health and nutrition. This is all important to enable women to participate fully in their marriage as equal beings with their partners; in the field of education in terms of being free to access to even higher levels of education (that is being free to aspire to yet higher qualifications] and in the field of employment. In the latter field they can do even better in terms of being efficient workers that can be entrusted with increasingly sophisticated responsibilities.

As a matter of fact it is stated that

"women, require a range of vocational, entrepreneurial and managerial skills that can transform a woman's situation. It has become increasingly clear in the training of women for management that one of the most effective approaches is to set in motion a process of personal development for those concerned. Attempts to transform the structures of education and employment need to tackle a further issue: the values that society attaches to various skills. The very concept of skill may seem objective, but it is not, because what counts as a skill is the result of very subjective processes". (Bullock, 1994:89).

In my view, employment is a site that is laden with opportunities for personal development. In some instances, it would seem that this site is more neutral than the family/marriage where some relationships and attitudes are not negotiable. Some organizations (especially state-owned) that are big enough to provide anonymity are fertile ground for personal development in more areas than simply that provided by the job. In smaller organizations, especially private firms, the space for negotiation may be lesser. This may be conducive to sexual harassment and exploitation since the relationships working or otherwise may be too intimate and things at stake too high. This element will become self-evident as this study progresses.

2.8   **CONCLUSION**

To contribute to the knowledge in women-related field, it is necessary to study society in terms of the micro, meso and supranational levels. At these levels, gender and class are agents in which the principal actors i.e. human beings interact with one another. Such study will uncover the various relationships that influence women in their personal development. The social relationship analysis framework promotes understanding of how women negotiate such relationships in terms of inequality in access to resources and power.   For women a strong sense of identity and self-esteem are crucial for creating new gender relations both within and outside the family. Identity and self-worth are shaped by many factors: education and income; the availability of natal and conjugal family support; and the level of sexual, class and racial discrimination each woman experiences (Bullock, 1994).   There is growing consensus that participation in collective organizing actions outside the family and the home is a key step towards gender equality. However, women's particular place in the family structure and socially defined gender roles limit the forms of public action many women can take. Most women experience three specific gender constraints: multiple roles and responsibilities; the sexual division of labor; and the fear or actual

expenence of sexual or physical violence. I will explore how some middle-class women negotiate these constraints in the three above-described fields of family/marriage, education and occupation.

The family will be examined since it is principally the mechanism for control of female sexuality, which is a visible manifestation of gender inequality. This is important since control over female sexuality in class terms seems to have replaced the same control in patriarchal terms. Moreover, domestic violence and sexual abuse occur irrespective of the educational levels of family members. (Jayaweera in Heward and Bunwaree, 1999:186). I wish to know how far the family allows women to take decisions regarding themselves, their children, their couple and the family at large. This will indicate how conducive the family's support is to women's personal development.

The field of education will be examined since it represents the primary gateway to women's access to power in employment, and subsequently in the family (Liddle and Nakajima, 2000). I believe that this will provide a means of understanding how class is reproduced and women's position in class reproduction in terms of existing potential for personal development. An examination of the field of employment; because it is here that the social relations of class are structured in a capitalist society is also crucial. Finally, I will look at how women's access to positions of power in employment affects their position in the family and how this helps them in their personal development at work and in other relationships including their relationship with themselves, i.e. their self-esteem. Even as it investigates what the spouses think about the women sharing their lives in connection with the three institutions of family/marriage, education and employment, this study looks at men simply as a support agent or obstacle towards the unfolding of women's potential. The new theory that this study hopes to evolve is closely related to what both men and women think about and do for the personal development of women. This should give an indication of how this contributes to national development. The next chapter looks at the methodology and research methods employed to carry out this research.

SECTION 3   **METHODOLOGY**

3.0   **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the methodology and the research methods that have provided the necessary tools for investigation. As it is for any piece of feminist research, the methodological foundation is essentially feminist. But since the layers of research are so intimately linked with outer society, I have necessarily borrowed from sociological epistemology. As mentioned in the introduction, this research is firmly anchored in the social relations framework. This framework carries a feminist perspective as well as a combination of perspectives from mainstream Sociology. These help locate women as the main subject of research and focus attention on the political aspect of women. A discussion regarding the choice and appropriateness of the research framework and the resultant methods follows.

3.1   **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Stanley and Wise (1991:26) define methodology as a "perspective or a very broad theoretically informed framework which may or may not specify its own particular 'appropriate' research methods or techniques. Examples of such frameworks are interactionism or functionalism. The framework evolved for this particular research operates within the social relations analysis framework as it draws from phenomenology as well as symbolic interaction.

Phenomenology is concerned with how people make sense of their everyday world while interaction according to the school of symbolic interactionism is what gives rise to the multiple realities of humankind. It is the way, the context in which and the time at which human beings interact that allow them to construct the world according to their own self-perception. Hence the value, in my opinion, that should be given to self-perception in researching human beings. Self-perception is an important ingredient that helps people in their attempt at constructing reality. Jnteractionism moves away from a structural

approach to studying society and from a phenomenological point of view, every social event becomes a topic of empirical study.

The focus of this research is directed at the nature of interaction, the dynamic activities taking place between persons. (Cohen and Manion, 1985:37). "Interaction implies human beings acting in relation to each other, taking each other into account, acting, perceiving, interpreting, acting again."(Cohen and Manion, 1985:9). Taken-for-granted assumptions are uncovered. I believe therefore, that perceptions are regarded as an important factor that would give direction to action. This is where my opinion regarding perceptions fits in neatly. Interactionism and phenomenology seem to have a strong influence on feminism and feminist research. The feminist spirit that animates this research is that which espouses a "vision of equality, in society, equity in partnership and freedom from stereotyping -freeing each person to pursue the roles best suited to their needs and talents" (Rowan- Campbell, 1999: 11).

Since this is a piece of feminist research, it is obvious that a feminist perspective will inform the study. The feminist perspective is a "lens through which to view the process of inquiry and its social, historical and political context" (Fonow and Cook, 1991: 1-2). Logically, it generates its own particular research methods as will be later discussed. A feminist perspective is very much in line with interactionism since it does not make any prior assumption regarding the subjects of research. Like symbolic interactionism it seeks to understand the mechanisms by which participants achieve and sustain interaction in a social encounter, the assumptions they make, the conventions they utilise and the practices they adopt (Garfinkel in Cohen and Manion, 1985:33). In almost the same vein feminist epistemology and methodology arise from a critique by feminist researchers of the various biases and distortions that exist in the study of women by sociologists and other researchers. Feminists tend to regard their research subjects as products of their interaction with their socio-cultural and economic environment. They share very little with their positivist counterparts who tend to see human beings as simply responding to external stimuli, with very little regard for the specificity and bearing of their socio•cultural and economic environment. Feminists favour the alternative view of social reality, which stresses the importance of the subjective experience of individuals in the creation of the social world. Their main concern is with "an understanding of the way in

which the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world in which he/she finds him/herself (Cohen and Manion, 1985:9).

To attempt to give as true a picture of the experience being investigated, the researcher has to make an effort to get inside the researched and understand from within. Feminist methodology must negotiate between the issues of objectivity and the relationship between the researcher and the researched.

Feminist researchers have a firm commitment not to impose their reality on those being researched. They move a long way away from the positivist scientists' mechanistic and reductionist view of nature (and women)- which by definition excludes elements of choice, freedom, individuality and moral responsibility. Their supporters are more concerned with the individual and his/her need to fulfill himself/herself to the highest level of development. Feminists seek to constantly bring evidence to the fact that the realisation of a person's potential implies the meaning of existence, which is seen as "concrete and individual, unique and irreducible, not amenable to conceptualisation" (Kirkegaard in Cohen and Manion, 1985:24). They are increasingly concerned with personal development. When the question of truth is raised in an objective manner, reflection is directed objectively to the truth to which the knower is related. Feminists are concerned with uncovering meaning as perceived by the various individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated. An essential part of feminist work is directed at attempting to understand human definition of social reality and the strategies devised to cope with that reality. Therefore the world of perceptions would demand analysis. The fund of everyday knowledge by means of which we are able to come to terms with social reality varies from situation to situation. We live in a world of multiple realities.

The social relations framework, I repeat, is therefore an extremely useful framework, which allows us to see men and women as vibrant creatures who construct meaning in their lives as a result of their interaction with others. On the other hand, "feminism" is not merely a perspective, a way of seeing, nor even an epistemology, a way of knowing, it is also an ontology, a way of being in the world. It is the experience of and acting against perceived oppression that give rise to a distinctive feminist ontology: it is the analytic

exploration of the parameters of this in the research process that gives expression to a distinctive feminist epistemology/theory of knowledge (Stanley, 1990: 14).

The methodological concerns of the researcher are those favouring the more subjectivist approach select from a comparable range of recent and emerging techniques, e.g. accounts, personal observations and personal constructs. An important feature of feminist theory of knowledge is the place it gives to the emotional dimension of the research. It also takes into consideration the relationship that develops during the research between the researcher and the researched. Feminist empiricism is the main feminist response to the biases and problems of traditional disciplines.

The present research wants to examine personal experiences in the contexts of personal and national development. It seeks to look at various individual experiences and cannot therefore afford to generalize. The research framework evolved for this type of research is the social relations analysis framework. This framework identifies women as the subject of research. It seeks to understand the

"social processes that sustain the unequal distribution of resources so that power can be redistributed by addressing these issues directly. Making power relationships the focus of analysis highlights the differences among women and draws attention to factors other than gender through which groups have access to resources such as communities. Social relations analysis concentrates on the precise terms under which women and men cooperate and on the specific institutions, such as marriages and markets that structure that cooperation. Such an analysis takes women's perceptions of the intricate power relations of their situations seriously." (Heward and Bunwaree, 1999:3)

It lends a high degree of importance to elements like 'perceptions' that are seen as crucial in the construction of social reality. For this specific research, I have drawn elements from both the symbolic interactionist perspective as well as phenomenology, to enrich the social relations analysis framework. The symbolic interactionist perspective is helpful in that it tries to explain human behaviour and human society by examining the ways that people interpret the action of others. They do not deny the existence of some elements of asocial structure. For example they acknowledge the presence of social roles and also use the concept of social class to explain social phenomena. However they believe the social structure is fluid and changing in response to interaction. Ethnomethodologists claim that the social world consists of the definitions and categorisations of members of society. The subjective meanings are social reality (Haralambos, 1980). Within this enriched

framework, the feminist perspective allows the magnifying of the perception of married and working middle class women as well as the views held by their spouses.

To sum up, the methodology for this research is a rich blend of several streams that have been interwoven to provide a logical sequence. The research framework is the social relations analysis framework, which concentrates on the precise terms under which women and co-operate and on the domains that structure the co- operation. This is where phenomenology and interactionism are drawn from to enrich the framework. The phenomenological concern that the world consists of personal definitions others' actions richly informs the social relationship analysis framework. All these streams culminate in the social relations framework. Before going on to discuss research methods, I would like to stress the following point.

This piece of research is a contribution towards the "sociology for women" in which feminist research practice should never lose sight of women as actively constructing, as well as interpreting the social processes and social relationships which constitute their everyday activities (Stanley, 1990:34). The goals of this type of sociology for women lie in the fact that research in this area is mostly in the interests of women rather than just about women. It is committed action research that should investigate into the possibility of ending the socio-economic conditions that oppress women and the possibility of education, especially distance education being an active agent here. These principles should be located in research behaviour but also in written research by explicating the analytic processes involved in understanding "what is going on here". It helps analyse how the personal is political and it pushes this analysis beyond individual experience (Stanley and Wise: 135). It should help each individual woman understand how her everyday problems are generated by society at large. What emerges from the research is temporally, intellectually, politically and emotionally grounded and are thus as contextually specific as those of "the researched". Feminist theory is derived from the analysis of experience. It is continually subject to revision in the light of that experience. It is thus self-reflexive and accessible to every one. Unlike positivist science, it does not remain the premise of experts.

3.2   DEVELOPING RESEARCH METHODS

To determine the research methods that would enable me to answer my questions, I had to evolve the relevant research tools. A preliminary literature survey proved to be very useful. The appropriate research tools stem naturally from feminist theory as well as development theory. Feminist theory merged with elements of development theory provide the basis for this research

3.3   RESEARCH METHODS

The research methods devised for this project are as follows:

a) For women respondents (WR) -an interview schedule to be administered along with a questionnaire. The questionnaire is quite lengthy and is administered after the interview. The (Principal Investigator) PI carries out the interview, which is semi-structured, is meant to open up various issues. A semi-structured interview is here used as technique because while the PI has to probe in various intimate issues, the respondent is not allowed to have any sort of control over the direction of the interview. This has been decided after preliminary interviews in the course of the piloting whereby some respondents indicated a tendency to daydream and ramble. This was inadmissible, given the number of people that had to be interviewed.

The interview schedule provides an important backup to the questionnaire. It allows the respondent to discuss issues at length. Then the questionnaire allows the PI to pick up on various details that may not have come up during the interview. It was devised following my interaction with WRJ. I realised that information forthcoming from the questionnaire was too scanty and therefore wrote up an interview schedule. This was administered with WR3 and I was satisfied with the depth of the content of the information dredged. Therefore the interview schedule required no further modification.

b) The questionnaire, with 66 questions, is meant to act as a protocol. That is it covers issues that are mostly like those of the interview but makes the data more easily

quantifiable. The PI is also able to go into more detail. Like the interview schedule, it covers the following four broad areas:

- Education
- Marriage, Children and Family
- Occupation
- Personal Development

These probe into enough depth to reach at issues I wish to uncover.

c) For men respondents MR -a questionnaire has been devised. It is initially couched along the same lines as that for the women respondents. However it covers only one area• Maniage, Children and Family -since information is required from that area only. To probe for the views of the spouses, one innovative method has been evolved. During my initial inquiry, I was given to realise that many men actually did not want to meet a woman to discuss very intimate issues. For them it would have been difficult enough to talk to a man, but that difficulty was compounded when faced with a woman PT. So, I decided to resort to the wives as co-researchers and to have them administer the questionnaire with their spouses. However, I keep in mind factors like lack of research experience of the wives and the resultant margin for error.

I asked the wives who would form part of my piloting to ask their husbands whether the latter would be willing to participate in a survey. They were encouraged to give a brief description of what the project would constitute. Most wives reported that the husbands showed much reticence. This allowed me to deduce that if I forced the husbands into agreeing to have an interview, it would compromise the quality of the data. The interview would lack spontaneity and the respondents may even lie. This formed the basis of my decision to have wives interview their husbands along the protocol of a pre- set questionnaire. I asked all the wives to carefully note down the body language of their husbands during the administration of the questionnaire, e.g. whether they were irritated or thoughtful etc. In my view, whatever their reaction to their wives' questioning, the latter's lack of experience would be counterbalanced by the more relaxed nature of husband-wife encounter and the greater possibility for spontaneous and honest responses. Hence, in my view, the nature of the data would be enhanced. This research method is in

line with what Schuurman (1993) stipulates and what has been adopted by the Commonwealth Secretariat (Chant and Mc Ilwaine, 1998). The initial reticence noted proved to the general pattern in subsequent interviews. At times, 1 had simply to leave the questionnaires with the couples who felt their intimacy was being probed and hope that they would be filled. Even if the data collected could not be collected along lines that I wanted, they still in my view are an important source of information.

There have been attempts to go beyond development theory impasse. There has also been need to develop scientific tools which could be used to construct a post-impasse development theory and to identify constraints on their application. The women in my piloting have been briefed on the latter specifically, since these obviously constitute data. This line of thinking has also found expression in the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat, for example (Chant and Mc Ilwaine, 1998). The research carried out by the Secretariat (1998) involved interviews carried out by Sociology students who gathered data from members of kin. Most of the time they were very closely involved in the nature of the data that was gathered, since these many times concerned them personally.

The authors recognise that, the scope of the information is compromised by the fact that, as opposed to being spread over a broad cross-section of people, most of the surveys involved interviews with family members by university members (Chant and Mc Ilwaine, 1998). However, they also state that the ties of kinship made the methodology much more intimate and participatory than is common among most fieldwork-based studies of gender with significant ramifications for those involved.

Therefore, my decision to enlist the help of the women respondents in the actual process of research seems to be in line with the core theory that informs the whole research process. My (unconventional method) espouses some of the post-impasse development theories (Schuurman, 1993) which generate some unconventional research methods that stem almost involuntarily from the methodology. Several scholars have then examined the "scientific tools, which could be used to construct a post-impasse development theory and to identify constraints on their application" (Schuurman, 1993: 1). It is asserted that "development theories based on metadiscourses have no right to exist' (Schuurman, 1993:10). This assertion prompts me to align myself with many other feminists that

theory must be grounded in research and in personal experience. The actor-oriented approach is growing increasingly popular with theorists that are concerned with giving a human face to development. According to Long (1990, in Schuurman, 1993: 18), theories of development like the modernisation theory are too deterministic and linear since social change is seen to result from external impulses. Long claims that "human (re) action and consciousness playa central role" (Schuurman, 1993: 18). Social change is much more a factor of personal reactions to outside stimuli, that is, the interface between the mesolevel (wider context wherein access to power and resources plays a role) and the individual actor.

I would tend to extend this belief to state that the combined elements of gender and class provide the context within which actors have access to power and resources that enable them to take on several roles. Class as well as gender provides the actor/actress with resources and room for action.

My study attempts to link the individual women to society as characterised by the institutions of education, marriage and occupation and weaves these together with personal and national development. However as Schuunnan rightly says, a meaningful connection between all the analytical levels can only be made if the relevant actors are displayed (Schuunnan, 1993:31).

The above justifies my choice of having wives interview husbands to display the husbands as significant actors.

3.4   LIMITATIONS

In the course of my research work, I was awarded a Fulbright grant to read for a PhD in Adult Education. This had direct implications on my research process in terms of time I could spend on persuading respondents to collaborate and in the number of people whom I could rely on. It proved to be very difficult to have people, especially men willing to collaborate. I believe that in terms of representativeness, this may have impacted in a negative manner on the data. As such I could not discuss my findings around percentages but rather around individuals.

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SECTION 4

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

As I uncovered the actors and actresses of this study, I progressively entered and very enriching experience. Within the research perspective, which determined its formulation, one can be certain of one thing: even no data is, *in a sense,* data. Even from those who were extremely unwilling to volunteer information, I could infer information from their reaction. During the time I spent doing the research, I talked to 43 couples out of whom only 30 were willing to participate. Finally, I interviewed or administered questionnaires to thirty couples only. This is why I can only infer tendencies from the data obtained and cannot make claims. The couples interviewed were so distinct one from the other that no quantification was possible. Some were older couples (30%) who were interviewed along with their own married children. The age distribution was as follows:

Number of Women	Ase Grouo
20	20 – 30 years old
5	30 – 40 years old
2	40 –50 years old
3	5O –60 years old

Table 4 – Breakdown of women respondents according to age group

This offered the additional advantage of offering intergenerational perspectives that allowed for some degree of comparison and helped measure the degree of change experienced as a societal phenomenon. As time went by, it became increasingly difficult to have respondents contribute as couples. Most of the people I met complained that time was a very limiting factor, since they were very busy in their personal lives and could not find time to think about themselves. Gradually my circle of respondents widened to include people with whom I was less and less acquainted. Most of these people were very wary to talk about themselves. There seemed to be three reasons governing this kind of attitude:

I.   They did not have any vested interest in somebody else's project, especially when there was no material gain to be obtained.

2.   They feared giving details about themselves to a complete stranger despite the fact that I had a letter of introduction clearly spelling out my intent.

3.   They did not have time to spend on thinking about themselves. All middle-class couples interviewed or asked to fill in a questionnaire were, according to their very personal definitions, living life in the fast lane.

Nevertheless, despite these rather difficult interactions, enough information was gathered to gel into a conclusion to this study. I would like to point out that while transcribing the experiences of these couples, I have willingly omitted their names. I have also found it difficult to quantify the number of people owning to specific attitudes, beliefs and activities again confirming the theory that stipulates that individual experiences can only be particularistic and not universalistic.

It is now customary in feminist research to give names to respondents, but the contract of trust is so high in this case that I cannot do it here. In the cases where I do report the respondents' feelings, it is mostly to support the information that I have gathered regarding the space/s which women found conducive to their personal development. In a few instances, the personal experiences are so very specific that I had no alternative but to give a fictitious name to allow the reader insight into the kind of supportive data provided by the respondent. This was especially to protect the identity of the interviewee and also to help me maintain a higher degree of detachment to the subject.

There were two questionnaires; one for women and one for men. In the first instance, I will examine the feedback from the questionnaire prepared for women respondents (WR). The middle-class working married women with whom I interacted in the course of this study were often overwhelmed by the number of events that characterized their workaday loads. The income level based on the following range helped determined the social class from which the respondent came. The following table classifies class according to income.

Income range		Social class category	%
Rs. 5,000 – 9,999		Lower Middle Class (L.M.C)	60%
Rs. 10,000 – 14,999			
Rs. 15,000 – 19,999		Middle Middle Class (M.M.C)	33.3%
Rs. 20,000 – 25,000			
Rs. 25,000 and more		Upper Middle Class (U. M.C)	6.6%

Table 5 - Class according to income

The women interviewed were distributed equally among the Lower Middle Class (LMC) and the Middle Middle Class (MMC) respectively. A few women [who did not ultimately participate in the project] from the Upper Middle Class (UMC) bracket either claimed that they were too busy to collaborate or that their husbands were not willing to help or objected to wives' participation. The husbands of most (about 80% of the interviewees) of the women interviewed earned more than the women themselves. Therefore even if on their own they belonged to one particular class, together they belonged to a higher class. In my analysis, I have considered the women in relation to their husbands' income and status as well. Therefore, they had automatic promotion to a higher class. It is noteworthy that only a few of the persons interviewed were childless. The women who were more well qualified and/or those who earned the higher incomes, [there was not necessarily a direct relationship between education and income, since some women were at the very start of their careers and were bound to change to higher earning jobs in the future] were also those with whom the interaction proved to be more fruitful.

1. Education

I probed into details that could yield data like how did the school and university experience, both academic and extra-curricular impact upon personal development. I was interested in finding out linkages between:

- Extra-curricular activities (ECAs) and personal development;
- Socialisation in educational environments and personal development;
- Level of education and personal development;

- Social class and attitudes to distance education.

- **Extra-curricular activities (ECAs) and personal development**

  Extra curricular activities and other school or university-based activities seem to have been attractive to most of the higher educated women (equipped with at least one degree - 39.%). Interestingly, there seems to have been no power relationship between gender groups during ECAs. That is there were no major conflict while boys and girls were engaged in ECAs. All peers considered one another as equals. Those with higher educational qualifications, seem to have participated more actively in extra curricular activities. Maybe this was because they spent more time in educational institutions and so were more exposed to available opportunities. Or maybe they wanted to have a more all round personality development as could be afforded by the ECAs. Indeed, ECAs took care of what could not be taken care solely by academia. Depending on the type of activity, ECAs allowed for a plethora of interactions with peers and people from older age groups, especially people who were already employed. This helped these young women develop skills for organisation of activities, gave them a sense of responsibility, fostered negotiation skills at such an early age that the demands of their occupation later in life only seemed an extension of the skills acquired during ECAs. This is not the case for those who were not so much involved in ECAs. They did learn many of the above-described skills, but not with the same ease as they were acquired at an earlier age. And they reported that the world of work was encountered with more apprehension. According to these women, ECAs had helped them widen their vision beyond academia. They were aware of a more wholesome and holistic approach to personal development through education.

- **Socialisation in educational environments and personal development**

  Most of the women interviewed attended single sex schools. The better-educated women were committed to all that allowed for an overall personality development and this commitment was sustained at university and beyond. In fact some of them stated that at least one particular teacher or lecturer had played a significant role in their lives, either positively or negatively towards shaping the women's personality and setting personal objectives. For example, Meena (33 years old) reported how her Sociology teacher's description of studying in Canada had opened up vistas for her. Studying abroad and becoming as accomplished (in her view) as the teacher became part of her landscape for personality development. Meena in fact went on to become much more accomplished than her teacher. Such reports were

however very few, especially from women belonging to the LMC. In fact most of the better-educated women reported that most of their teachers did not work to their satisfaction either academically or in terms of providing role models. They were rather contemptuous of their teachers and claimed that their most satisfactory interactions were with their peers.

Encouraged by their particular teachers, Meena and Clara (32 years old) became women who counted for the country's development by being in strategic posts and gained access to MMC or UMC. They were aware of the concept of personal development and how it counted for national development. Just as they had wished to work for the best of their schools, so in later life they wanted to work for the best of their country. They believed that their personality had been carved by the positive and negative experiences of both ECAs and academic activities. ECAs had been more important for them at school and even at university. Their academic achievements helped them gain access to jobs in the higher rung of the occupational ladder, but they owed most of their personal development to ECAs. Among these women, many had been awarded scholarships. They belong to the MMC and UMC groups. They were very highly animated by a spirit of competition and by a sense of commitment to Mauritius.

From the data gathered, it is possible to infer that the social contexts of specific school/universities were conducive to different types of personal development. It would seem that respondents from UMC and MMC who have mostly attended prestigious and high achieving institution, had benefited from a different type of socialisation from those of their peers from the LMC. Their peer groups had characteristically high aspirations and achievement. As such they had developed a frame of reference that automatically put them in the fast lane of personal development. They were more aware of opportunities for personality enhancement be it career -wise or sartorial -wise, They gradually geared themselves for power. Interestingly, it would seem that they deferred gratification. They invested in the future and in 78% of the cases I investigated into, they reaped multi-fold all they had invested. Being more open for opportunities, they seemed to invite these opportunities for travel, scholarships, business endeavours with all related almost glamorous benefits.

The reverse seems to be true for women of the LMC. The latter had a frame of reference that was more geared towards immediate gratification and locally available opportunities. They seemed to have eschewed global possibilities. Their world was very small. Opportunities were limited and life was conditioned by romantic movies. The women from LMC were mostly interested in getting married once they were out of school. All their peers thought

along similar lines. The teachers they had encountered were not helpful in opening new vistas to these insular students. The latter were caught in an insularity trap. From school to home, life was similarly conditioned by what happened on TV. The women who formed part of this group reported that one peer could not pull up the other. They all had the same type of aspirations, which appear to be horizontal rather than vertical.

- **Level of education and personal development**

For the lesser-educated women (33%) under study, their educational experience was something that did not matter much beyond simply earning them qualifications. They were all from the LMC group. The lesser-educated women (equipped with at least their 'A' Level) stayed in the margins of school being mostly concerned with schoolmates and fun extrinsic to school. The better-educated ones seemed to have participated wholly with the spirit of their school, always wishing that their school outdid others. None of them reported that any teacher had had any type of influence on them. This seriously cast some doubt on the type of teaching taking place in schools in Mauritius, especially since both the better-educated women and the lesser-educated women rated private tuition as more helpful than school. For the lesser-educated ones, school was not really a monument to be honoured but rather a place where one spent time and the outcome of such pass time was eventually a certificate that allowed access to a white-collar job. They did not attend university because most thought that they had reached the age for marriage.

The vision of these women as students was very limited and left much space for regret in later life. Many of them were not even aware of the existence of something called university –that was mostly because of the terms of reference of their social class. This was even more limited since to them school had meant working moderately hard, passing the examinations and getting into a job as soon as possible. That was what all their peers were engaged in doing. School had meant –attending classes –playing some pranks- going for extra coaching with a private tutor –coming back home to homework and movies. They had no idea of the outside world of opportunities and their limited interaction also limited their vision. They ended up being rather frustrated with their lot and were desperate to have higher qualifications that could help them move out of the LMC and could at least offer their children better life chances than could be afforded by a dead-end lower middle class occupation.

On the other hand the better educated women could afford a higher level of personal development – simply because their higher qualifications gave them access to more highly remunerated jobs with all the attached benefits.

- **Social** class **and attitude to distance education.**

 For the better-educated women, any course via the distance learning mode would mean something that would enhance their educational accomplishment, either by equipping them with better skills so that they are more efficient (upskilling) or give them new skills to help them cope with a changing environment (reskilling) and eventually entitle them to an increment. Upgrading would be also be an important criterion that would motivate them to follow a course. This would definitely contribute to better their quality of life and would not imply any type of sacrifice for their respective family. The type of distance learning course that they found most attractive were once that could provide immediacy of response and could be studied at work. They were increasingly against the idea of print-based courses and were more for on-line distance education courses, which were more in line with the concept of !CT in development (Information and Communication Technologies). They did not want to be saddled with a course that was not really progressive by being simply theoretical and with a limited degree of interactivity.

The lesser-educated women viewed distance learning courses as a lifeline although they had no idea as to what type of courses that they should really follow. Such courses were, as they perceived them, compensatory endeavours that were instruments for personal development, in as far as these women could earn higher incomes via these courses. These were the women who claimed that they required a second chance to do things better. Their earlier lack of commitment to school made them all the more committed to becoming qualified through distance education. They wanted to make up for things they had missed in earlier life at school. Most of them required academic courses that would help them get a better start in life (albeit at a late stage). Distance education courses were mostly attractive since they could help the women shoulder multiple roles at the same time. The type of course did not matter so long as they were able to enjoy it and it could provide them with extra income.

I would tend to argue that since distance education courses by their very definition could not provide the wide range of opportunities for personal development that were provided by face to face encounters with peers and tutors (at some length), the lesser educated women from the lower middle class were automatically excluded from many opportunities offered by school or university life. I can safely infer from the data obtained, that such opportunities offered at the right time and in the proper contexts have helped create women who were very accomplished in terms of overall personal development. Taken at the right time, such interaction as provided by the school/university paved the way for life events that went beyond simply studying for qualifications and thus boosting the numbers that go into official statistics for educational achievement. The interest of the lesser-educated women in any academic course was for the extrinsic rewards that any such course could bring to them

CONCLUSION TO EDUCATION

The women interviewed were very much conscious of the positive and negative effects of their educational experience on their personal development. Their educational experience includes alt that was done in and out of school. That is intra and extra curricular activities. As adults, they were even more highly aware of the opportunities foregone more often out of ignorance rather than any other reason. Bitterly regretting bygones, distance education seemed to be a vital and viable lifeline - whether to earn higher qualifications and higher incomes or simply to learn more about one's environment. To all women interviewed, however, education was a way to be socially mobile.

2. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

While studying the Family, Marriage and Children domain, it was interesting to note that those who were married longer felt very differently from the more newly-marrieds. Initially some women stated (20%) that marriage was for them a means of social mobility. They either contrived to "fall in love" with some one from a higher class or had a marriage arranged so that they could gain access to a higher social class. But to be able to achieve that, they stated that education was a useful passport.

For alt respondents however, to a greater or lesser degree, marriage has enhanced the space for personal development, in a manner that was not available in the natal family. The older women viewed their natal family as a place of innocence, while the marital family was a place strewn with problems. They had virtually no sexual experience; marriage was a place of

sexual discovery that was often shocking. Strict observance of virginity before marriage was required and mothers in law often came to confirm the bride's virginity with the son (Anita and Kamla -6.6%). Anita (54 years old) and Kamla (52 years old) lived their lives through their children. It is only in middle age, when the husband's authority had wavered and the in• laws dead, that they reported that they could enjoy opportunities for personal development. Their grown-up children became friends with whom they could share their past sorrows and help further the development of the youngsters.

For the younger women, the natal family did provide some opportunities for personal development. Such opportunities were related to the possibility of attending school and university and the offshoots of such activities, e.g. the freedom to participate in ECAs, to go out with friends for leisure activities and to attend school sports events. These were obviously done within the bounds of respectability as defined by the parents at that point in time. In fact in the face of the increased level of freedom enjoyed by young women nowadays, one of the respondents, Sheba (35 years old)confesses

"To me life meant to be enjoyed. There are things that I had always dreamt to do but all of the activities I wanted to indulge in meant having a man by my side. I realised that my family would not tolerate simply a partner or boyfriend especially if it meant enjoying sex and nightlife. So I had to get married to legalise such activities. But I had not counted on eventually having babies or having a mother-in-law constantly breathing down my neck. We were in competition over my husband's attention and she always won because she was a widow. I sacrificed the best time of my life for her."

Marriage to Sheba had meant a lot of fun. But unfortunately to her that type of fun could not be enjoyed out of marriage. Unwanted obstacles like interference from in-laws had implied the end of fun for her. She strongly wished that she could have enjoyed the companionship of the man she married and whom she loved dearly without being married to him: that is, to have the fun without the responsibilities. But she realised that that was not meant to be in the Mauritian society.

Many women, especially from the younger age groups wished they could have enjoyed themselves without the bondage imposed by marriage. The in-laws rather than the husbands themselves very often imposed this bondage firstly on the husbands, who responded out of filial loyalty and secondly on the daughters in law who very often had no choice but to bow to their authority. There were cases when husbands had to cajole or even coerce their wives to accept the views of their parents. In some instances, they resorted to violence to achieve

their ends. And the most sorry fact is that they may not really believe in what their parents were enforcing. The latter mostly curtailed the wives' freedom (to dress and to entertain friends) or to dictate the manner in which the children were being brought up. Many reported (39.9%) that they are free to do as they wish as far as the husbands were concerned, but these also reported also reported that there are times when the in-laws interfered, their freedom was limited and actually curtailed. And this is despite the fact that marriage has indeed increased their opportunities for self-development. In fact this was mostly the feeling of most of the better-educated women who formed part of the MMC and UMC.

The lesser-educated women from the LMC were content to be married early and to uphold the traditions of the society and particular ethnic groups. Discontent settled in a few years after marriage. They resented the in-laws, harboured negative feelings, but did not rebel actively. This tendency was reinforced among the Indo-Mauritian women who bore with the mothers in law grudgingly. In fact, there was an inversely proportional relationship between the level of income and the imposition of the in-laws' wishes on the women studied. The higher the income they earned, the more independence they commanded and the lesser they yielded to the authority of the in-laws. Most of them consciously acted in a manner that flouted and even eliminated the authority of in-laws. The story of Deepa (35 years old) is very telling.

Deepa had a strong and driving libido by the time she graduated from school. She was forced (by her parents) into marriage to legitimise her sexual activity with her much older boyfriend in order not to sully family honor. She was shocked into a marriage where she rapidly became pregnant, nearly poor and was confronted with the flagrant affairs of her husband. Her life became an unending story of debilitation and undoing to her personality. She was a bright girl from a star school and she was rapidly turned into a wreck. She was pregnant with her third child when she joined the University of Mauritius. The University provided a positive experience. She tried to capture her youth with a few affairs (that to her meant relationships without responsibility), qualified for professional jobs and finally took control of her life. A success story in my opinion.

Many women, especially those who were romantically involved before marriage continued to benefit from a very high level of support from the husbands. It would seem that for both of them everything was to be learnt together. While they were together on

the learning curve, they provided mutual support. This reinforced their relationship. However, with time, husbands more than wives became less inclined to contribute to the self-image of their wives. It would also seem from the study that as opposed to LMC women, those living in extended families of the MMC and UMC showed signs of benefiting from the higher educational level of their in-laws and the resultant understanding and lower interference levels in the matters of the young couples. This is mostly the case for the Inda-Mauritian couples.

Couples from other ethnic backgrounds reported to being free enough in and out of marriage. Attitudes towards sex and fun are more open and positive among those people. For them marriage represented mostly the need to formalise the companionship of a spouse and provide the space to legalise the birth of children. Christelle, e.g., admitted to having had a very active sexual life with several partners before feeling the need to settle down with one partner, her husband. She is now sexually faithful and has two children. She believes that she has settled down in life and expects her husband to be sexually faithful as well. However, whenever she can find a babysitter, she continues to go out and have fun.

Ameena and Soobhashinee on the other hand (a Muslim and a Hindu woman respectively) own to having had some experience of pre-marital sex (they did not state the degree to which their experience went) and they suspected that their husbands may had done so as well, but now they were sexually faithful and expected their husbands to follow suit.

Extra-conjugal relationships seem to be flourishing nowadays among the group under study. It is difficult to ascertain however, whether this is due to the fact that nowadays in a more permissive society, people feel more at ease to confessing that they have lovers or, whether there is an actual rise in the phenomenon. If the latter is true, it is believed that this may be because work provides the space where heightened interaction with members of the opposite sex can lead to relationships that can be damaging to couple life. Some women (especially Meena who nearly had a mental breakdown) reported that their husbands' extramarital affairs have had a debilitating effect on them. They have however stayed in these relationships:

"I felt completely lost. I was too ashamed to tum for help to my parents. I felt I was very unattractive as a woman. Since my husband is a well-known man, I was scared of encountering his mistresses, knowingly or unknowingly, in crowds. I was scared if they would see me with him, they would pity me or be contemptuous of me. Every woman I saw was a potential threat for my husband's attention. I shied away from going out with my husband. I used to be very proud of him, but gradually I felt enormous self-hatred and eventually I found him despicable. But despite all that, deep down I still loved him. I felt that if! left him, I would be at the mercy of anybody. And I did not want to deprive my child of her father" (Meena, 33 years old)

To some women, their husbands' extramarital affairs would mean the end of their mamage:

"If ever I knew that my husband was having an affair, we would have to have a long hard talk to decide what to do with our marriage. But for me whatever decision we took, it would definitely be the end of our marriage". (Lalita, 31 years)

Some of the women interviewed refused to even face the eventuality of their husbands having affairs – they were very scared to. It meant the complete overhauling of their whole world. Fewer women expressed a desire for extramarital affairs as opposed to the men interviewed. The latter admitted that affairs were part of the scenario of being married, some at an earlier stage and some at a later stage of being married. But they claimed that they would come back home to their wives. Love and sex were completely dissociated.

There are of course instances where the mentality of respective spouses could be crippling; men found it acceptable to have affairs but this privilege was not extended to their wives. On the other hand some women interviewed admitted to having toyed with the idea of having affairs, primarily because their husbands were too involved professionally and did not have sufficient time for them or they were bored with one partner. In fact there was a direct relationship between education, income (almost automatically class) and the wish for extramarital affairs. The more educated and the more income the women commanded, the more open they were to affairs which they viewed as part of personal development in terms of the range of experience open to them. And, of course, this was very very private.

Conclusion to marriage and family

From what I have gathered in the course of this study, women are happier married than otherwise. This is essentially because in the Mauritian context, marriage provides space for personality growth and development that is not available in other personal contexts like

bachelorhood and spinsterhood. Living together in relationships other than marriage is not well accepted and therefore canies its own load of tension. Marriage is potentially a healthy and constructive situation whereby women *and* men can express their adult personality fully and find support for further growth. It is more socially acceptable for persons of particular groups (more specifically Indo-Mauritians) to have access to night-time entertainment, outings and parties being married than not. Despite the fact that things like one-night flings are not acceptable to many women of the middle-class, there is increasing evidence of its occurrence. Therefore it is not deemed safe for young women to experience certain activities like dancing in discos, for example, on their own. However, many young women admitted having done it on the sly by escaping parental surveillance while others claim to having done it while abroad, the more so during their studies. Marriage, whenever husbands are willing, therefore, provides the next best route to having fun on prohibited tenitory. Without parental authority looming in the background, marriage provided an exhilarating ground for self-discovery and for the affirmation of the adult personality of both men and women.

3.   OCCUPATION

While most of the women went out to work for both personal development and to earn money, it is important to note that the most vital reason that women leave their home is money and status. 6.6% of the women respondents were not working at the time they got married. The husbands encouraged them to go out to work to supplement the family income. The second more important thing that motivated women to go out to work was to have something to do and to meet friends. Most of them would not like to be a housewife, but as one respondent (Ashwina, 32 years old) said:

> "I work because I feel I have something to offer to others. But this doesn't stop me from being a housewife when I'm at home".

Or some feel that staying at home would have been daunting since it would have been boring to stay at home for days on end and a lot of time on one's hand. Most of the women under study felt that they did not identify extensively with their profession and would introduce themselves by name first and in the course of their conversation would eventually disclose their profession. It was definitely not the first and foremost thing on their mind. One woman was on leave without pay. She had to stop working temporarily because she had to follow her husband in his career. This was an indication that the husband's career was of prime importance.

This was not the case with women who were either medical doctors or PhD holders. For this category of women, most probably because of the appellation that accompanied their name (Dr. So and So.),

they identified with their profession or level of education. One thing that very soon became apparent however was the fact that they were all subjected to some degree of discrimination at work. This discrimination took the shape of outright harassment to subtler forms of anti-women treatment. Sometimes the male colleagues were outright rude. As a matter of fact, the male colleagues reacted badly especially if the women were superior to them in rank. They tended to flout the women's authority and to be generally impolite and inconsiderate to them as human beings. Or to complicate matters that were given as simple instructions and to make them into very complicated matters. The higher up the women are in the occupational hierarchy, the more they inspired jealousy and spite. As Susan explains:

> "I sometimes hear from others [both male and female colleagues] about me and I notice that they keep everything to themselves".

Exploitation and subordination at work are taken in their stride. They found ways and means to manoeuvre and negotiate such problems:

> "I just hear about what others have to say about me but pay no heed. I go to work, do what I'm paid for, get my salary and that's it". (Aarti, 32 years)

Both home and occupation provided spaces where all the women under study could express their personality. At home they could be more in control because save for the in-laws, they did not have much hierarchy to negotiate with. And even then, the hierarchy could be more flexible at home than at work. One respondent said that if she was convinced she was right about a decision she had to take, while the instruction given was in her opinion, wrong, she had enough will to do what she believed was right. And she had her own way of getting that done. That power was conferred to her by the status provided by her occupation.

Occupation was a very important field since it provided the strategic positioning to these women for personal development. Jobs that entailed exposure to many people, especially those from other countries did provide opportunities to increase self-awareness coupled with awareness of the outer world. In one sense, such jobs were, as one respondent, Priya (25 years old) a Shop Assistant in a glamorous outlet puts it:

"... meeting customers from all over the world provides a step towards globalisation"

Studies were viewed as being important if they could be instrumental in helping one acquire more qualifications and skills to increase job opportunities or if they were immediately related to work.

> "Studies are important as they help you acquire more qualifications and skills therefore increasing your chances for a better job." (Roukaya, 33 years old)

While most women (60%) felt that they should enrol on courses that could give them a push along the salary scale, some (33.3%) would not mind a non-academic course for pleasure or information. About 75% of the respondents claimed that they would aspire to be in a position of leadership along with all the responsibilities that that would entail. The impact of associated responsibilities on their families was something that they would consider once they came to that particular bridge. At this particular point in time, none of the women researched owned to any type of conflict between their double roles as workers and housewives respectively. Most of them would avoid being 'professional' housewives, which they viewed as a potentially stifling and boring situation, but

> "[work] does not stop me from being a housewife at home" (Reetika 32 years old)

CONCLUSION TO OCCUPATION

All in all, it would seem that occupation has galvanised women's opportunity for personal development. Despite the fact that some women report to having to suffer jealousy and pettiness from male colleagues and sometimes unhealthy competition, to all intents and purposes, occupation has provided women with sufficient assets to improve upon themselves and to show their worth. They have enough space to express themselves, to use, develop and enhance the various skilts that they have learnt and acquired. As such they contribute directly to national development by increasing national income and by shaping the direction of the country's progress towards development.

3.   PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

About 25% of the respondents stated that they had no idea what was meant by personal and national development. They had no idea either what could be their contribution to national development. This percentage was from the lesser-educated group of women. The remaining women interviewed believed that they were effectively contributing to national development and that was not solely through their occupation.

Personal development to them meant not only acquiring an enhanced awareness of what was going on in their environment, but availing themselves of opportunities and being able to share with others what they acquired from such opportunities in an encouraging space.

Opportunities for personal development were described mainly in terms of:

• Widening the range of experiences

• Money to give access to the range of opportunities available, especially travels abroad, and

• Beauty culture and time to do all that can make a woman feel feminine, self-possessed.

As one very intelligent and thought –provoking respondent puts it;

"I can still be a housewife be able [to contribute to national development] by inculcating values in my family." (Sheetal, 30 years old)

For those of them who had their own clearly defined concept of personal development and the directly proportional relationship between the personal and national development stated that it was their exposure to education that enabled them to reason in that fashion. The more educated they were, the more they were aware that they had incremental need for personal development which existed in the wider bracket of national development. Personal development meant being equipped to do their best in whatever circumstance.

CONCLUSION TO PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The two concepts fed into one another simultaneously. To conclude, one can say that all the women interviewed agree that both marriage and their occupations have been sites for personal development. And anything that may increase their level of personal development was welcome, especially any distance learning course that may foster that – be it academic or non-academic, it had to be related to their needs of the moment. While they recognised that in some way or the other they contributed indeed to national development, they believed that personal development was their most immediate concern. Once structures for personal development within the domains of education, employment, family and marriage were carefully established, they believed that national development would take care of itself. Especially since they believed that one fed into the other automatically. In my view this is a highly valid point, since as compared to many developing countries, people in Mauritius are still very humane in their approach to life. It is commendable if structures are put into place to enable people to maintain this style of life.

THE MEN IN THE STUDY

Hearing the men speak provided for a very refreshing change. Again the more fruitful interactions were with the more educated men. The latter had more things to say and were more independent in thought. They were open and interested in the research activity. They did not have to be led through the questionnaire and their responses were very spontaneous. The lesser educated men had to be dragged through the questionnaire. Some of them squarely refused to help in the project and prohibited even their wives from doing so. I felt, rather than can just

assert, that those men who did not wish to contribute were very unconfident. It was not as if they had something to hide, but rather did not feel confident about what they had to say. They were

rather scared, in my view, about how they would be judged, especially by someone they did not know and who was daring to investigate into the privacy of their thoughts.

MARRIAGE, CHILDREN AND FAMILY

The following areas were investigated into:

- Age at marriage

- Experience as a married person — — — ·1„ℂs marriage providing enough space for personal development?

- Is support available ◆?◆ to the *husband from* the *wife?* }
  in various areas of life
  ◆?◆ from the *husband* to the *wife?*

- The qualities of the wife as a human being

- The husband's role in shaping the personality of the wife

- Hours of leisure

- Housework

- Interference from in-laws

- Extramarital affairs

- The wife's pregnancy

- Household income

- Domestic violence

The first part of the interview/questionnaire mostly asked questions about the age at marriage, the number of children the respondents had and more elaborate questions pertaining to their experience as married men. These questions were mostly to probe into whether they felt marriage provided a space for personal development or whether it cramped the men under study. Most of the men interviewed were married between the ages of 25 to 34. Only 18% of the respondents had been married for more than 15 years. The incidence of love marriage especially among the younger couples was on the increase. This was, in my view, due to the fact that

education and employment offered spaces where men and women could interact freely and make choices regarding their prospective spouses. Only one man among the thirty interviewed did not enjoy his marriage. As one respondent put it, to most of them marriage represented a positive experience:

> "Marriage is an event which has helped me be more mature and live harmoniously with someone else. But it has not hindered my development"(Cedric, 35 years).

The above was a generally held view. Marriage offered them grounds to affirm their adult personality. Despite the usual burdens and responsibilities (especially related to children], it was an experience they would not have forsaken. In cases of love marriages, the husbands were already much aware of the qualities of their partners as being those that easily approached their personal ideal. They were also appreciative of such qualities. They all admitted to not being committed to housework. They would indeed help with housework but that was the wife's area. This confirmed Bhasin's assertion that women in even highly paid employment, form middle to upper classes, irrespective of level of education were often confined to the majority of domestic work- with very little input from their husbands. Even years into the marriage, they indeed made it a point to acknowledge their appreciation, being fully aware of the positive and motivating effect of their sincere compliments. The men, especially the younger ones, were very much aware of how this could help shape the wife's personality positively since the wife would feel herself-worth was enhanced.

None of the men encountered displayed the need to control the wife; be it her mobility, her freedom to dress or her freedom to interact with other people. The lesser-educated men however gave hints of having a need to control the wife although they were not explicit about it. In these cases, they earned more than the wives did. Most of the couples questioned revealed that their income-spending pattern was mostly egalitarian. The husbands' income was spent mostly on goods and services for the household. The wife's income was in many cases spent on herself, her husband and children or on family luxuries like entertainment. There was no distinct breadwinner as such. Both viewed themselves as breadwinners.

The only point about which the men from the UMC and MMC were very explicit in showing the need for control was when they were confronted with the possibility that the wife developed and sustained any type of relationship with other men. This may be put down to human nature-some sort of possessive streak. Very few men indicated that they were obsessively jealous of their

wives. In most cases, the wives were also happy people that steered clear of such encounters that may pose a threat to couple life. The LMC men were very implicit in showing the degree of control they exerted on their wives. One such subtle way was in the manner they were the ones to agree or not to contribute to this research project.

My impression of all the encounters with men was of happy and satisfied people to a greater or lesser degree. The younger ones did say that they did feel a bit burdened (at times) by the responsibility of having a wife and child. These were especially the times when they would feel like doing something on their own for personal fun, like going out with friends. The wives interviewed however never once had such complaints. It would seem that the latter took their responsibility in their stride and whenever they had to go out with friends, they took care of looking for babysitters instead of automatically counting on the wives' collaboration as it was in the case of the men.

Most of the husbands indicated that they would support their wives in things that would directly benefit the family, e.g. if the wife wanted to study further or if she wanted to change her present job. This support would not be extended if she wanted to go on a trip abroad or if she wanted to stop working [although in this case the reason may be because if the wife stopped working there would be a stretch on the family budget]. They expected that their wives would support them in instances where they would be required to help their own family at large when that occurred on a once in a while basis.

However, they reported that they would protect their families from *excessive* interference from their own relatives. Especially if that meant that their side of relatives wanted to do certain activities that would be detrimental to the resources available (in terms of time, space and money) to spend with their own wife and children.

In the younger couples especially, the men tended to be protective of their wives and children with respect to interference from in-laws on both sides. On the other hand, the older men reported that they were of a different cultural mind-set and in-laws as well as their own parents meant authority to them. They had had no choice but to abide. This scenario is changing among the younger couples, much to the grief of many [especially lesser-educated] mothers-in-law who felt it was now time for them to enjoy the rewards of sacrifices they had made as daughters-in•law in their youth. The lesser educated mothers-in-law regretted quite bitterly the fact that they

could not exercise the same authority on their daughters in law as had been exercised on them by their own mothers in law. The more educated ones did not bother much about such power games but were more concerned with getting on in life and as they approached the age to be pensioned off, they were keen on looking for opportunities to travel and enjoy life since their children were now settled.

There was not a single husband who reported that he would not he happy to hear that his wife was pregnant. All pregnancies were very much welcome as long as the children were within the family's budgetary forecast. Interestingly, although most husbands would *not* support wives who did not *want* children, they would extend support to wives who could not *conceive* children. This was a very interesting find since it revealed that most men were developing a tendency to think independently and not to be conditioned by the patriarchal Mauritian society. It would also seem that the romantic feeling between couples could shield them from interference from other quarters and was modifying the rigid patriarchal structure of the Mauritian society.

The question of conceiving a child, for example, was a very sensitive one. While interviewing both sets of respondents, I realised that increasingly men were moving away from the age-old idea that women were simply there for procreation, cooking and sexual services. As the nuclear family became more predominant as a mode of family life, so there was a paradigm shift from women for procreation, cooking and sexual services to women for companionship. In the increasingly capitalist society, men as a group became fragmented and less cohesive. Where at one-time men cohabited with women in two distinct groups, from my reading of the situation, it would seem that men have gradually left the company of other men with whom there is a heightened level of competition to now view women increasingly as their best friend. Women's enhanced educational qualifications as well as social status has also allowed them to meet men in their households on different terms. They are seen more worthy of companionship.

In the nuclear family set-up, mothers-in-law (the guardians of patriarchy) have less say in couple matters. This enhanced relationship between spouses can to all intents and purposes weather storms from the capitalist world and even to some extent, the patriarchal framework. Men are set to support their wives despite the fact that their patriarchal conditioning still permeates in many of their interactions with their spouses. For example support of their wives would be stronger in areas that relate more to family matters rather than anything else, like the woman's personal development. If her personal development will increase the well-being of the

family, then definitely the wife can expect some sort of support. But most husbands would not go to the extent to sacrifice their comfort (strongly contributed to by the wives' presence), if it did not mean extra satisfaction to them personally. From what I have gathered, men are now increasingly interested in having women as their leisure companions. Hence their increased contribution to housework, while not being a sustained commitment, is indicative of their realisation that women are also tired from outside work and can only have spare time for leisure with some help. And since they want women to be by their side for leisure activities, they do indeed spare women from some drudgery so that the latter are freed to spend some leisure time with their husbands.

Understandably enough they would not be happy about the wives' affairs but would negotiate such a happening rather than outright condemn the wife, especially the men from the UMC. For themselves they would consider having an affair if they were seriously bored with their marriage, if their partner had changed a lot in the course of marriage. Only one husband reported that he had had several affairs because he was fed up with the incompatibility between his wife and his mother (they were living together in an extended family). He needed a breather and so went to other women. When the wife got to know about it, she was shattered. They are still together, mainly for the children. Eventually, however, the couple reported that things improved for them once they moved out of the extended family set-up and bought a house for themselves when the man's mother died.

A FINAL WORD

My encounter with my subjects of research was personally very disturbing. I had started out with the intention of interviewing about 100 couples. Many potential contributors were very enthusiastic about the project. As they realised that I was going to probe into very personal matters my potential contributors dwindled to very few indeed. Among those that I finally got to interview or to fill in my questionnaires, there were many who were unwilling to participate fully as the exercise unfolded. Sometimes, the men were completely reticent. I had to ask the women respondents to almost cajole their spouses into accepting to participate. It seemed to me that the men felt that they would not be able to reconcile their reality with their appearance. What I found disturbing was the fact that the data collected is based on what the subjects are willing to acknowledge but may not reflect the real mode of life, not reveal dark secrets that in one way or another shape their social life. Notwithstanding what they have withheld from me, I

can confirm the following conclusion, *which is exclusively based on my interviewees'* *experience.*

The rising level of educational achievement and aspiration among the middle class women is not the only major event to emerge from this study. Education has given them the opportunity to clime higher rungs of the occupational ladder since qualifications are, as is universally acknowledged, the main key to the occupational structure. Those who have acquired minimal qualifications, which at the time they left school was viewed as 'reasonable' for girls, are now fearing for their future. As they look on at the achievements of their peers, they are now justifiably scared that they may be excluded from the material and social rewards enjoyed by those who had pursued their education and now hold posts of responsibility that command status, monetary rewards and to some extent power. This is especially true of women who left school early with no qualifications and were likely to follow the traditional lower middle class to semi -skilled work, early marriage and motherhood. Even marriage for many of these women is fraught with restrictive practices. At times they are aware of such practices; they may either rebel against these or simply abide by them. Incredibly enough (to my mind at least), I found that at other times, the women with whom I have interacted were blissfully unaware that they were not being given enough space for their personal development. They believed that their contribution to personal and national development was therefore minimal. The women from the MMC and UMC groups were on the other hand, more conscious of the need and the actualization of opportunities for personal development. They believe that they can be the leaders of development in the country and are set out to carve their own very individual paths. Education, marriage/family and employment become spaces that they use to shape their destinies instead of the other way round. All, with or without restrictions become spaces, to lesser or greater degrees that these women use to fashion their lives in a constructive manner that is continually and positively expansive.

From my reading of the situation, based on the data gathered, the women from the MMC and UMC groups are out to turn any opportunity to their advantage. Not so the women from the LMC who are content with their lot at home, but are now anxious to study further for material gain. They are a rather unquestioning group. In my view, however, they have to break out of this paradigm like their peers from the MMC and UMC. This is because it is important to be knowledge oriented and skillful and to filter these into all areas of life. To most of them, distance education was a very nebulous idea. To those of them that were very focused, they

maintained that the only way that they would be willing to work through a course would be to have those that were interactive, relevant and very accessible. They were keen to enrol on on‑line courses even for re-skilling, upskilling or even upgrading. To a large extent they could count on their husbands for support. In this marmer, they can find the family and occupation as spaces, which can foster personal development.

The middle class women in Mauritius are also in a self-sacrificing position, but to a lesser extent possibly than in Bhasin's study because a society made up of African, European and Chinese diasporas offers fresh ground with fresh opportunities. Although families/husbands are now more supportive of women, the latter have not really had the space to challenge gender role assumptions. In fact, gender role assumptions have been seriously shaken but not really challenged in the group under study.

The MCA has a lot to do to be able to match the demand of the middle class women. While the mission statement of the Division of Distance Education points to the direction that is being followed, a more elaborate use of ICTs in its course delivery is vitally important if it has to stay in business. Otherwise, it will witness the exodus of potential learners to private and more expensive dispensers of courses through distance education. To many of the middle-class women interviewed, convenience was often more important than expense. But the MCA has to explore the possibility of recruiting people from their respective niches rather than offer courses based on perceived demand with no link with national development. The courses dispensed take care of personal development only as far as the people involved can command extra increments or chances for promotion. The andragogy involved in course delivery, that which may have intrinsically taken care of personal development is not always very sound. I can assert this statement from personal observation of class activities and from interviews of some women students.

Mauritius in the year 2002 is becoming a more skilled and affluent society based on knowledge and information. But in the same process, it is also becoming a more unequal and less cohesive one. One point that is confirmed is that, contrary to popular perception, the family one is born into, and its location in the social structure, continues to exert a powerful influence upon individual lives, starting with educational experience, which then permeates into other domains. As Bourdieu said, education is clearly the primary site in which the social position of the family is reproduced in the Mauritian society. I reiterate what was said earlier about education-

mediated social class reproduction, the transmission of power and control over vital resources depends on educational credentials. Academic credentials obtained through face to face or distance education methods represent investment in the contest over social classifications, but they are also weapons in the struggle (Wacquant, 1993:27). The middle class women in Mauritius as demonstrated in this study are living examples of this theory.

I can only confirm that the middle-class women's struggle is within well-defined parameters of their home. Bad things felt during their educational experiences or at work are internalised and repressed. Many a time they do not even realise that they are being discriminated against. This is echoed in the social structure. In fact I find that many women have in the majority of cases (95%) been coerced to accept the points of view of their husbands— in the name of"adapting" to their marital family thus confirming the Sheherazade symptom prevailing among middle class women.

Professionally, many women reported to being seen as threats. Men harass them sexually since this is viewed as an arm for legitimate defence rather than anything else. The middle-class working women in Mauritius are very much aware of their role in their personal development and national development-whether it is a positive or negative or even neutral contribution. Some of them act in a manner that makes things work for them and some are keen to let things be. As a matter of fact, those who find ways and means to get things moving in direction that will enhance their life-chances and market opportunities are, it would seem to all intents and purposes from this study, behaving in the contemporarily correct direction. They are acting for the better since the very social framework is evolving to accommodate this breed. One can only be positive about the unfolding of their potential for their personal development so that they can be more instrumental in national development.

PART II - SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT (for public use)

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

It is argued in most feminist literature and experiences that women are marginal beings left far behind by development activities of the country. As a course developer with a strong inclination for national development it is important for me and for the institution for which I work to know they type of potential women represent for national development in Mauritius. It is also important to know why this potential remains untapped or mis-utilised. Another aim of this study is to uncover means to fully exploit this potential and thereby help arrive at personal development for women as well as national development for the country.

Two bodies of literature can provide insight into this issue: feminism and phenomenology (more specifically symbolic interactionism). Feminist literature has gone to extreme pains to discuss women's experiences and thereby often eschewing women as part of a society that comprises of men's experiences also. The trend is only now giving way to a shift of emphasis onto masculinity as part of the feminine experience. Phenomethodology is concerned with how human beings make sense of their workaday world while interactionists claim that interaction is what gives rise to the multiple realities of humankind. It is the way, the context in which and the time at which human beings interact that allow them to construct the world according to their own self-perception.

This study seeks to understand the way middle-class working women operate in three specific social contexts in Mauritius. It borrows from phenomenology and feminist standpoint to analyse women's position within the social relations analysis framework as it lends meaning to women's self-perceptions, uncovers what prompts positive or negative self-perceptions, how these affect personal and eventually national development and also whether two sponsoring agencies can in any way help improve the situation for the better by devising appropriate distance education courses.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Enriched by elements from phenomenology and feminist standpoint, social relations analysis framework provides the most apt research methodology. Social institutions like marriage and markets structure the way women operate in society. The social relations analysis framework emphasises the importance of women's perceptions of the power relations with which they grapple. Standpoint feminism, in my view being very close to symbolic interactionism is concerned with the ways that people interpret the actions of others especially in terms of power relationships and creates space for women to voice their experiences. Interactionism is also useful in explaining social phenomena. It is believed that social structure is fluid and changes in response to interaction. Interactionists are concerned with the fact that the social world consists of definitions and categorisations of members of society. The methodology for this research is a rich blend of several streams that have been interwoven to provide a logical sequence. The phenomenological concern that the world consists of personal definitions of others' actions richly informs the social relations analysis framework. No assumption was held for this research. There were simply a few research questions that became leads. The players in the field, that is, the researcher and researched were free to react to the questions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My three basic research questions were:

1. Do the institutions of family/marriage, education and occupation provide space for personal development of women?

2. Are these women aware how personal development is related to national development?

3. Can distance education courses/programmes help positively in this matter?

2

Participants were expected to talk about their personal experiences regarding the way they interacted with the social institutions of family *(both natal and marital)/marriage;* what factors affected their educational experience and their expectations regarding the educational opportunities available in Mauritius and abroad (especially via the distance learning mode); and finally their openness to opportunities for personal development in their occupation. Such information would be helpful in determining whether women were aware that they contributed to national development and whether there was anything to be done to help them enhance personal development and eventually national development.

RESEARCH PROCESS

I met most of the women in their homes, which I believe provided a non-threatening and familiar atmosphere. Some of them requested that only the questionnaire be given to them and asked for a month's time to give it back. [For this category of respondents, I could not hold any interview; besides the initial explanations regarding what I was doing, they were very much on their own]. Initially I had decided that a guided interview schedule followed by a questionnaire being administered, which was meant to be a protocol to the interview. As a matter of fact, there were very few respondents who finally were willing to be interviewed in -depth, They felt they would rather hide behind the anonymity of the questionnaire, which they wished to fill themselves and which provided the option of writing in one's name. So the questionnaire which was initially meant to act only as a protocol in support of the interview schedule ended up being my main research tool. Only those respondents with whom I entertained a close enough relationship were willing to participate in both the interviews as well as having the questionnaires filled. The male respondents were even more unwilling to participate in the research process personally. Sometimes they refused point-blank. They did not mind being questioned by their wives/partners or filling the questionnaires on their own, however. Finally, there was no standardised way in which data was collected. Data collection was very much dependent on the respondents' mood or mind-set. As I interviewed them I tape-recorded the conversations. If I did not interview them at their request, I let them fill in the questionnaires on their own and later collected them. I met

people who were mostly personal acquaintances or acquaintances of acquaintances. This was because most middle-class women whom I met were reluctant to participate. So it was important to have somebody who knew somebody who knew me! However, I believe that by whatever means the data were collected, they still form part of the varied methodology allowed by ethnology and standpoint feminism.

CONCLUSION

My encounter with my subjects of research was personally very disturbing. What I found disturbing was the fact that the data collected is based on what the subjects are willing to acknowledge but may not reflect the real mode of life, not reveal dark secrets that in one way or another shape their social life. Notwithstanding what they have withheld from me, I can confirm the following conclusion.

The rising level of educational achievement and aspiration among the middle class women is not the only major event to emerge from this study. Education has given them the opportunity to clime higher rungs of the occupational ladder since qualifications are, as is universally acknowledged, the main key to the occupational structure. Those who have acquired minimal qualifications, which at the time they left school was viewed as 'reasonable' for girls, are now fearing for their future. As they look on at the achievements of their peers, they are now justifiably scared that they may be excluded from the material and social rewards enjoyed by those who had pursued their education and now hold posts of responsibility that command status, monetary rewards and to some extent power. This is especially true of women who left school early with no qualifications and were likely to follow the traditional lower middle class to semi -skilled work, early marriage and motherhood. Even marriage for many of these women is fraught with restrictive practices. The women from the MMC and UMC groups were more conscious of the need and the actualization of opportunities for personal development. They believe that they can

be the leaders of development in the country and are set out to carve their own very individual paths. Education, marriage/family and employment become spaces that they use to shape their destinies instead of the other way round. All, with or without restrictions become spaces, to lesser or greater degrees that these women use to fashion their lives in a constructive manner that is continually and positively expansive.

To most of them, distance education was a very nebulous idea. Most of them stated they could count on their husbands for support. In this manner, they can find the family and occupation as spaces, which can foster personal development.

The MCA has a lot to do to be able to match the demand of the middle class women. While the mission statement of the Division of Distance Education points to the direction that is being followed, a more elaborate use of ICTs in its course delivery is vitally important if it has to stay in business. Otherwise, it will witness the exodus of potential learners to private and more expensive dispensers of courses through distance education. I can only confirm that the middle-class women's struggle is within well-defined parameters of their home. Bad things felt during their educational experiences or at work are internalised and repressed.

Professionally, many women reported to being seen as threats. Men harass them sexually since this is viewed as an arm for legitimate defence rather than anything else. The middle-class working women in Mauritius are very much aware of their role in their personal development and national development-whether it is a positive or negative or even neutral contribution. They are acting for the better since the very social framework is evolving to accommodate this breed. One can only be positive about the unfolding of their potential for their personal development so that they can be more instrumental in national development.

PART 111 - TECHNICAL INFORMATION (for program management use)

The whole report constitutes the body of the technical information that has been generated by this project. The research methodology does not allow for the generation of quantifiable data. The grounded research methodology used for this piece of research has evolved data based on human perception in a particular context. This is not something quantifiable. The only data that can be presented in a quantifiable form is based on the sample and related to income level and age distribution. Among the 30 middle -class working and married women interviewed, the age distribution was as follows:

Number of Women	Age Group
20	20 – 30 years old
5	30 – 40 years old
2	40 –50 years old
3	50 –60 years old

Table 1

The income level based on the following range helped determined the social class from which the respondent came. The following table classifies class according to income

Income range	Social class category	%
Rs. 5,000 – 9,999	Lower Middle Class (L.M.C)	60%
Rs. 10.000– 14,999		
Rs. 15,000 – 19,999	Middle Middle Class (M.M.C)	33.3%
Rs. 20,000 – 25,000		
	Upper Middle Class (U. M.C)	6.6%

Table 2

All information gathered in the context of this research is available in the final report. The reference section is annexed in this part of the report.

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Dear Respondent,

I am Sushita Gokool-Ramdoo. I am married with two children. I am a Lecturer at the Mauritius College of the Air. My interest in women, education and development stems from academic and professional concerns. An earlier research that I had carried out in 1998, when I was studying towards an MA in Education and International Development, made me realise how intimately linked one woman is to another. Should we let go of our petty concerns, I am sure that we can become a force that should be contended with by the largely patriarchal society. As a Lecturer, I develop distance education courses for a wide range of people. I believe that I can successfully merge my personal and professional interests should I get the feel of what type of course could most conscientise women vitally towards national development.

I am presently carrying out a research project, which is sponsored by the Mauritius Research Council and the Mauritius College of the Air. This research is entitled: **Working women's self-perception on their contribution to personal and national development** (ongoing). This is where I need your support and that of your partner. My research method consists mostly of administering questionnaires. I will be grateful if you could fill in the one attached. I will be further grateful if you could ask your husband/partner to fill in the questionnaire designed for men. This will give me an insight into what women feel about their personal development in 3 areas of life: family/marriage, education and employment. I will also glean information regarding what the male counterparts of my women respondents feel about the same issues in the same contexts. I want to know whether/how the social institutions of family/marriage, education and employment help/hamper a woman in her personal development. This will help me realize how far personal development can impact on national development and whether or not women can be helped by courses through distance education. This will help establish which type of courses can enhance women's personal development. I am very grateful to you for your participation in my research activity and for helping in furthering knowledge related to women in Mauritius.

Relying on your support,

Sushita Gokool-Ramdoo

Please note that writing in your name is optional and NOT compulsory. Any data given will be treated as confidential.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WOMEN RESPONDENTS

Date of interview _ Place of interview

Date of birth

Present Age Current Occupation — — — — —

Income range Rs. 5000 - 9 999 D

(please tick) Rs. 10 000 - 14 999 D

Rs. 15 000– 19 999 D

Rs. 20 000 - 25 000 D

Rs. 25, 000 and more D

For the following questions, please tick the appropriate box. Sometimes you may have to lick more than one box.

Status:

Married D Divorced D Widowed D Single O

EDUCATION

1. What level of schooling have you completed:

a) Secondary school Forms 5 D Form 6 D

b) University D

c) Was university in Mauritius D UK D

USA D Australia D

Singapore D India D

Other

d) Can you please specify your present qualification? ___

2(a) How do you look back on your school life? *

I liked   I disliked

Studies   D   Studies   D

Teacher/s   D   Teacher/s   D

Leisure activities D   Leisure activities D

School mate/s   D   School mate/s   D

For the above question, if e.g. there was any one category that you liked as well as disliked you can tick boxes for both.

2 (b)   Was there any other thing that you can think of that made you either like or dislike going to school? *(give details)*

2 (c)   Can you give reasons?

3.   (a) How do you look back on your life at the university? *

I liked   I disliked

For the above question, if e.g. there Was any one category that you liked as well as disliked you can tick boxes for both.

Studies   O   Studies   O

Lecturer/   O   Lecturer/s   O

Leisure activities O   Leisure activities O

Class mate/s   O   Class mate/s   O

3 (b)   Was there any other thing that you can think of that made you either like or dislike going to school? (give details)

3 (c)   Can you give reasons?

4.   How would you qualify your experience at university?

	YES	NO
a) Something that I enjoyed thoroughly	D	D
b) I felt that my personality was being given a boost	D	D
c) I was able to realize my potential to its optimum level	D	D
d) I had an inferiority complex and could not seize opportunities for self-development	D	D
e) I never mixed well with other students so did not engage in ECA** activities	D	D

**ECA stands for Extra Curricular Activities

5.   In your experience would you say that studying abroad bas given you more opportunities for personal development?
a) Yes   D   b) No   D

6.   Would you say that opportunities for personal development had more to do with academic matters or extracurricular activities?

Please elaborate

7. If you say YES to the above question, is this because

a)   You do not have to worry about what they will say

D

b)   You do not have to bother about what "people will say"

D

c)   You can let go all sorts of "don'ts" that the Mauritian society imposes

D

Any other reason you can think of...

8.   If you had attended the local university, can you say what opportunities for self-development you came across at the University of Mauritius?

MARRIAGE, CHILDREN AND FAMILY

How many children do you have?

a)   D   b)   2   D   c)   3   D

d)   more than 3   D   e)   none ⬤

2   How long have you been married?

a)   Less than 5 years   D   b)   5 to lO years   D

c)   More than lO years   D

3   How do you feel about being married?

                                                                        YES   NO

a)   Free to do as you wish   ☐☐

b)   Feel cramped into a small space

            but manage to live your life the way you want   ☐☐

c)   Your freedom is limited and at times actually curtailed   ☐☐

Can you elaborate on the above?

4   As compared to the time when you were single, do you think that being
     married has increased your opportunities for self-development?

                a)   Yes   ☐   b)   No   ☐

5.   Can you elaborate on your response to question 4, please?

5   In which situation do you feel that you are in control of your life

                                                              YES   NO

a)   At home with your husband and children   ☐☐

      Give reasons

	YES	NO
b)　　At work	☐	☐

Give reasons

7.　　Would you say that it is only once in a while that you can expect to have support from your partner/husband or can you expect that *all the time?*

a) Yes, once in a while　　☐　　b) Yes, all the time　　☐　　c) Never　　☐

8.　　Do you think that your husband can *consciously* help in shaping your self- image?
　　a)　　Yes ☐　　　　b)No ☐

9.　　Do you think that your husband is proud of your:

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
a)　looks	☐	☐	☐
a)　cooking skills	☐	☐	☐
b)　housekeeping skills	☐	☐	☐
c)　intellectual capacity	☐	☐	☐
d)　professional ability	☐	☐	☐

10. If he pays you compliments, do you feel that he is being:

	TRUE	FALSE
a)　　hypocritical	☐	☐
b)　　honest	☐	☐
c)　　positively critical	☐	☐
d)　　negatively critical	☐	☐
e)　　he never pays me any compliment	☐	☐

11. How do you normally react to his comments as listed in question 9?

		TRUE	FALSE
a)	you are positively motivated	D	D
b)	you feel secure	D	D
c)	you feel insecure	D	D
d)	you are usually indifferent	D	D

12. Would you say that his comments contribute to shaping your personality?

YES   NO

a) I am so emotionally involved that my husband can practically create   D   D
or destroy me

b) I stand on my own feet and nobody can shape my self-image   D   D

13. How would you rate the level of material comfort in your home? Please think of how much these comforts can relieve you of housework.

a) Very comfortable   D
b) I have all the facilities money can buy   D
c) Reasonably comfortable   D
d) I possess simply the basic amenities   D

14.   How many hours of leisure would you say you had per week?

15. Would you say that the degree of comfort you have at home influences the number of hours of leisure that you can have?

Elaborate, please ...

16. How much leisure time can you say that you spend with your husband? What type of leisure activity would that be?

17. How often do you dine out with your husband?

a) At least once a week   D

b) At least twice a month   D

c) At least once a month   D

d) Once in a while for important occasions   D

e) We never go out for dinner   D

17. Is dining out an important activity for you, in terms of

    a) having some time for intimate conversation   D

    b) not having to cook being a rare treat   D

    c) it's leisure time that you look forward to   D

19. Would you say that you share roles with your husband? Does he

    a) cook food   D

b)   babysit   D

c)   help with housework   D

20.   Let us say that you are in a situation where you feel that you have to undertake something for your personal development. This can be anything ranging from a course that awards you a qualification to a course in pottery for pleasure.

a)   How easy would it be for you in terms of the arrangements, financial or otherwise?
(ffyou have cooking or babysitting commitments, please give then, special consideration)

b)   Would your husband support you?

I)   Yes   D   2)   No   D

21.   Can you say that your husband has a serious and sustained commitment to housework?

a)   Yes   D   b)   No   D

22.   How would you rate his contribution?

		YES	NO
a)	Satisfactory	D	D
b)	More than satisfactory	D	D
c)	Less than satisfactory	D	D

23.   Do you believe that marriage and motherhood

		YES	NO
a.	constantly make you feel oppressed	D	D

b.   are areas that give meaning to your life and enhance a sense of self-worth?

D   D

Can you elaborate?

24.   If you share roles with your husband, would you say that your in-laws would disapprove of your husband's help?

a)   Yes   D   b)No   D

25.   You live in

      a)   an extended family?   D

      b)   a nuclear family?   D

26.   You had

      a)   an arranged marriage?   D

      b)   a love marriage?   D

27.   Would you say that your in-laws exercise control over you and your marriage?

a)   Yes   D   b) No   D

Can you please elaborate?

28.   Let us consider a situation where you live with your in-laws. Especially because you are a working woman, would you say that your in-laws have very high expectations from you in terms of housework etc. ?

29. What were your own expectations from your marriage before your got married?

30. Have they changed with time?

31. How would you rate the following in your marriage:

		HIGH	MODERATE	LOW
a)	mobility	☐	☐	☐
b)	freedom for dress	☐	☐	☐
c)	freedom to talk to other men	☐	☐	☐
d)	freedom to entertain any other relationship with men?	☐	☐	☐

32. If your husband had an extra-marital affair, would this destroy your self-image?

a) Yes ☐   b) No ☐

33. How would you cope with such a situation?

34. If it ever occurred to you to have an affair, would it be because you

a)   are bored with your marriage   D

b)   want a different range of experience as part of personal development   D

OCCUPATION

1.   What are the main reasons that have led you to work: money or personal development? Can you state which is more important for you?

2.   Do you identify with your job?

a)   Yes   D   b) No   D

3.   When you meet somebody for the first time, do you introduce yourself as Mrs. So and So or do you give your occupation as part of your identity?

4.   Would you say that at your job place you are discriminated against? Or do you feel that you are given the same treatment as other colleagues especially male colleagues?

5.   Is your income the main income or is it used for extras? Who is the "breadwinner"?

6.   How do you spend your income?

   a) On yourself most ☐   b) On your family most ☐

7.   In which area do you feel that you can express your personality the most:

   a)   home   ☐

   b)   employment?   ☐

8.   Are you perceived as a rival by your

   a)   male colleagues   ☐   Briefly explain

   b)   female colleagues ⬭

9.   According to you, do you think that somebody's ethnic group can influence the way one performs at work? Think of the Mauritian situation.

10.   Let us say that you are appointed as the Director of an organisation and you have to work very long hours, go abroad frequently and generally hold a lot of responsibility. Would you agree?

   a)   If yes, why?

b)   If no why?

11.   Does work fulfill any need for self-development or to what specific need is it related?

   a)   Monetary   **D**

   b)   To have something to do   D

   c)   To avoid being a housewife   **D**

   d)   To meet friends   D

   e)   For status   **D**

   f)   To while away time   **D**

12.   Would you like to be a housewife?

   a) Yes **D**   b)No **D**

   Give reasons why

13.   Do you think studying or taking a course can make any difference in your life?

   a) Yes **D**   b)No **D**

Give reasons why

14

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

1.   According to you, what does personal development mean?

     a)   being increasingly aware of opportunities around you   D

     b)   being able to choose among those opportunities   D

     c)   being able to do more things on your own   D

     d)   widening your range of experiences   D

     e)   all of the above   D

Is there anything you would like to add to the above?

2. Are you aware of the concept National Development?

    a) Yes   D   b)   No   D

3. According to you what is National Development?

4. Are you aware that you contribute to National Development?

    a) Yes   D   b)   No   D

5. Do you think that the only way to contribute to National Development is through your employment/occupation?

    a)   Yes   D   b)   No   D

6. If you say NO to the above, can you say what other ways can help you contribute to National Development?

7. Do you think that by increasing your level of personal development, you can contribute more significantly to National Development?

   a) Yes   **D**   b)   No   **D**

8. Would you say that your education has offered you the possibility of being aware of your need for personal development?

   a) Yes   **D**   b)   No   **D**

9. If you say no to the above, is there any other factor that may have increased your need for personal development?

10. Has the education that you have received positioned you in a way that you can avail yourself of opportunities for personal development?

   a) Yes   **D**   b)   No   **D**

11. Are you aware of distance education as a means to earn qualifications?/

   a) Yes   **D**   b)   No   **D**

P.L EXPLAINS THE CONCEPT

12. To your mind what sort of distance education courses could help your personal development?

   a)   Academic ones   **D**

   b)   Non-academic ones   **D**

   c)   Please give details

13. Has marriage been a site for personal development?

      a)Yes ☐   b)   No ☐

14. Has your job provided you with opportunities for personal development?

      a)Yes ☐   b)   No ☐

Can you please elaborate?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MEN RESPONDENTS

Respondent no.   Date of interview — — — — — — •

Date of birth   Place of interview — — — — — — —

Present age

Current occupation

Income range   Rs. 5 000- 9 999   D

(please tick the appropriate range)   Rs. 10000—14999   D

                                 Rs. 15000 -19999   D

                                 Rs. 20 000 -25 000   D

                                 Rs. 25 000 and more   D

                                 Level of schooling:

Primary   Secondary   Tertiary   Other
D   D   D   D

Please specify qualification

For the following questions, please tick the appropriate box. At times you will find that you may have to tick several boxes.

MARRIAGE, CHILDREN AND FAMILY

I. At what age did you get married?

Please tick among the following range:
a) Age 20- 24   b) Age 25- 29   c) Age 30- 34
☐   D   D

                           e) 40 and beyond   f) step/foster children
d) Age 35- 39   D   D
☐

2. How long have you been married?

a) Less than 5 years   b) 5- 10 years   c) 11 -15 years

D   D   D

d) more r:Jn 15 years

3. How many children do you have?

a) 1 child   **D**   b) 2 children   **D**   e) none   **D**

c) 3 children   **D**   d) more than 3 children   **D**

4. How do you feel about being married?

	YES	NO
(a) As if you are under constant watch by society	**D**	**D**
(b) Free to do as you wish	**D**	**D**
(c) Feel that you are cramped and controlled by your wife	**D**	**D**
(d) Feel that you need to control your wife	**D**	**D**
(e) Feel burdened by wife and children	**D**	**D**

Other:

5. Which of the following statements are true of your experience as a married person?

	TRUE	FALSE
(a) Being married has helped me feel more at ease with myself as an adult.	**D**	**D**
(b) I am happy because I can exercise control over my spouse and my family	**D**	**D**
(c) I feel my adult personality has a space for growth	**D**	**D**
(d) Marriage has cramped me and limited any personality development that I may have experienced	**D**	**D**
(e) My step/foster children create trouble for my wife	**D**	**D**

Can you elaborate on the above answer/s?

6. Would you say that you support your wife:

	YES	NO
a) In everything that she does	D	D
b) Only if she wants to study further	D	D
c) If she wants to go on a trip abroad alone	**D**	D
d) If she wants to change her present job	D	D
e) If she wants to stop working	D	D
f) If she does not want to have any children	**D**	D
g) If she cannot conceive children	D	D

7. Would you say that such support is the exception rather than the rule in society?

a) Exception   **D**

b) Rule   D

8. In what sort of activities would you say that you support your wife the most?

a) Activities related to her personal growth and happiness   **D**

b) Activities that are directly related to family matters   D

9. (i)   Would your wife support you in whatever you do?

    a) Yes   b) No

         D   D

   (ii)   What would she NOT support you in?

10. How far are you prepared to go into housework?

a)   Not much, I believe that this is my wife's area   D

b)   Fully, since I believe in sharing all responsibilities with my wife   D

c)   It depends on whether I feel like being involved   D

d)   II depends on whether I have time to do any housework.   D

e)   I will abide by her opinion if I think she is right   D

11. How often do you go out for dinner with your wife?

(a)   About once a week   D

(b)   More than once a week   D

(c)   At least twice a month   D

(d)   Only on special occasions   D

(e)   Never   D

12. Would you say that having dinner with your wife is an occasion whereby you

	YES	NO
a) feel that it is part of a routine	D	D
b) are happy that you can relate with your wife without the burdens of house-care	D	D
c) look forward to share the intimacy of the situation	D	D
d) feel that this is a rare treat	D	D

13. In the following situations, state whether you expect your wife to support you:

	YES	NO
a) you have to go abroad for lengthy business trips	D	D
b) you have to go abroad for study purposes	D	D
c) your relatives keep on requiring your help in their personal matters	D	D
d) your relatives interfere continuously in your personal agenda	D	D

e) I don't expect anything from her   D   D

f) I will agree with her opinion as long as I think she is right   D   D

14. Can you safely say that you can RELY on your wife's support in the above situations?

     a)   Yes D   b)   No D

15. If you say NO to the Question 14, can you say in which areas you cannot expect much support from your wife?

16. Are you disappointed that you cannot count on her for elements that you described above?

a) Yes D   b) No D

17. Do you *consciously* help in shaping your wife's self image?

a) Yes D   b) No D

18. Are you proud of your wife's:

	YES	NO	YES/NO
a) looks	D	D	D
b) cooking skills	D	D	D
c) housekeeping skills	D	D	D
d) intellectual capacity	D	D	D
e) professional ability	D	D	D

19. Do you tell her how you feel about her qualities?

	TRUE	FALSE
a) Yes, very often	D	**D**
b) No, not at all	D	**D**
c) Sometimes	**D**	D

20. If you pay her compliments, are you being:

	TRUE	FALSE
a) hypocritical	D	**D**
b) honest	**D**	**D**
c) positively critical	D	D
d) negatively critical	D	D

21. How does she react to your comments?

	TRUE	FALSE
a) she is positively motivated	D	**D**
b) she feels secure	**D**	**D**
c) she feels insecure	D	D
d) she is usually indifferent	D	**D**

22. Would you say that your comments contribute to shaping her personality?

a)   Yes **D**   b) No **D**

23. Are you conscious of the effect you have on her?

a)   Yes **D**   b)No **D**

24. How many hours of leisure do you have per week?
a) Less than 5   b) Between 5- 10

         D   D

c)
M
or
e
th
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lO

D

25. How many of these would you say you spent with your

a)   Family   b)   Friends   c) Others

   D   D   D

26. If you have children, how many hours per day do you spend looking after children?

 a)   Less than 5   b) Between 5- lO   c) More than lO

   D   D   D

27. Do you suffer from interference from

	YES	NO
a) Your in- laws	D	D
b) Your own parents	D	D

28.(i)   Would you say that such interference is really detrimental to your family Life?

      a) Yes **D**   b)No **D**

  (ii)   Please state the nature of that interference

29. Do you think that your wife tends to exaggerate interference (if at all) as stated above?

      a) Yes **D**   b)No **D**

30. Do you exercise control over your wife's

	YES	NO
a) Mobility	D	**D**
b) Freedom to dress	**D**	**D**
c) Freedom to talk to other men	D	D
d) Freedom to entertain any other relationship with men.	D	D

31. Do you feel bored with marriage to the extent that you contemplate having extra-marital affairs? *(Please elaborate whether you answer yes or no to the question)*

32. According to you, how would your wife react if you had such an affair?

33. If you had to do it over again, would you rather get married or not? Can you elaborate?

34. In your household, who decides on how is your income spent?

35. How would you react to your wife was pregnant?

36. (i) What do you think about domestic violence?

    (ii) Do you beat up your wife?

Thank you for your kind co-operation.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MEN RESPONDENTS

Respondent no.

Date of birth

Present age

Current occupation

Date of interview — — — — — —

Place of interview — — — — — —

Income range

(please tick the appropriate range)

Rs. 5 000- 9 999	D
Rs. 10000 –14999	D
Rs. 15000 -19999	D
Rs. 20 000 -25 000	D
Rs. 25 000 and more	D

Level of schooling:

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Other
D	D	D	D

Please specify qualification

For the following questions, please tick the appropriate box. At times you will find that you may have to tick several boxes.

MARRIAGE, CHILDREN AND FAMILY

1. At what age did you get married?
   Please tick among the following range:

   a) Age 20- 24 □

   b) Age 25- 29 D

   c) Age 30- 34 D

   d) Age 35- 39 □

   e) 40 and beyond D

   f) step/foster children D

2. How long have you been married?

   a) Less than 5 years

   D

   b) 5- 10 years

   D

   c) 11 -15 years

   D

   d) more Ef1 15 years

11

3. How many children do you have?

a) 1 child **D** b) 2 children **D** e) none **D**

c) 3 children **D** d) more than 3 children **D**

4. How do you feel about being married?

	YES	NO
(a) As if you are under constant watch by society	D	D
(b) Free to do as you wish	D	D
(c) Feel that you are cramped and controlled by your wife	D	D
(d) Feel that you need to control your wife	D	D
(e) Feel burdened by wife and children	D	D

Other:

S. Which of the following statements are true of your experience as a married person?

	TRUE	FALSE
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(b) I am happy because I can exercise control over my spouse and my family	D	D
(c) I feel my adult personality has a space for growth	D	D
(d) Marriage has cramped me and limited any personality development that I may have experienced	D	D
(e) My step/foster children create trouble for my wife	D	D

Can you elaborate on the above answer/s?

6. Would you say that you support your wife:

	YES	NO
a) In everything that she does	☐	☐
b) Only if she wants to study further	☐	☐
c) If she wants to go on a trip abroad alone	☐	☐
d) If she wants to change her present job	☐	☐
e) If she wants to stop working	☐	☐
f) If she does not want to have any children	☐	☐
g) If she cannot conceive children	☐	☐

7. Would you say that such support is the exception rather than the rule in society?

a) Exception ☐

b) Rule ☐

8. In what sort of activities would you say that you support your wife the most?

a) Activities related to her personal growth and happiness ☐

b) Activities that are directly related to family matters ☐

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a) Yes   b) No

☐   ☐

(ii) What would she NOT support you in?

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c) your relatives keep on requiring your help in their personal matters	D	D
d) your relatives interfere continuously in your personal agenda	D	D

e) I don't expect anything from her   **D**   **D**

f) I will agree with her opinion as long as I think she is right   D   D

14. Can you safely say that you can RELY on your wife's support in the above situations?

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a) Yes D   b)No D

17. Do you *consciously* help in shaping your wife's self image?

a) Yes D   b)No D

18. Are you proud of your wife's:

	YES	NO	YES/NO
a) looks	D	D	D
b) cooking skills	D	**D**	D
c) housekeeping skills	**D**	D	D
d) intellectual capacity	D	**D**	**D**
e) professional ability	D	D	**D**

19. Do you tell her how you feel about her qualities?

	TRUE	FALSE
a) Yes, very often	D	D
b) No, not at all	**D**	D
c) Sometimes	D	**D**

20. If you pay her compliments, are you being:

	TRUE	FALSE
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b) honest	D	**D**
c) positively critical	**D**	D
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      D   D   **D**

25. How many of these would you say you spent with your

a) Family   b) Friends   c) Others

    D   D   **D**

26. If you have children, how many hours per day do you spend looking after children?

a) Less than 5   b) Between 5- 10   c) More than 10

    D   D   D

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	YES	NO
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28.(i) Would you say that such interference is really detrimental to your family 1.ife?

    a) Yes **D**   b)No **D**

  (ii) Please state the nature of that interference

29. Do you think that your wife tends to exaggerate interference (if at all) as stated above?

    a) Yes D   b)No D

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	YES	NO
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b) Freedom to dress	D	**D**
c) Freedom to talk to other men	D	D
d) Freedom to entertain any other relationship with men .	**D**	**D**

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32. According to you, bow would your wife react if you bad such an affair?

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35. How would you react to your wife was pregnant?

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