

**MULTIPLICITY OF ROLES: EXPERIENCES OF  
MATURE WOMEN STUDENTS IN A HIGHER  
EDUCATION SETTING**

**BY**

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## Declaration

I declare that the work on which this dissertation is based, is original, except where acknowledgement indicates otherwise, and that neither the whole work nor part of it has been, is being, or will be submitted for another degree at this or any other university or tertiary education institution or examination body.

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K.B. Mosimege

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## **MATURE WOMEN STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF THE MULTIPLICITY OF ROLES**

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Student number: 98208714

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research project was to explore the experiences of mature women students in juggling the multiplicity of roles they faced during the adulthood stage of life. The lack of literature, particularly on the African woman's experiences of being a student while also dealing with the roles of being a mother, wife and employee, inspired this research. I explored the women's experiences using a qualitative approach and semi-structured individual interviews, and did a thematic analysis of the textual data.

The average age of the women who participated in this project was 36.8, and except for two of the 10 interviewees, all women were enrolled for a postgraduate studies. The majority of women enrolled for further studies because they wanted to increase their opportunities in the work environment, while one woman did so because of a career change.

The stories of the ten mature women students that I interviewed revealed five major themes. In describing their experiences of juggling multiple roles, the mature women students mentioned that they studied while also maintaining a job because of the financial obligations and the lifestyle of their age group. They experienced role strain from the many roles that required an equal share of their time, but managed to cope because they had personal goals to

achieve and would not relinquish those. Both congruent and incongruent experiences emerged between work and study, particularly when they could not attribute equal time to work and study. Although they were encouraged and supported by their partners and children, and sometimes also their families and the community, they still had to deal with the lack of support from the institutions where they were enrolled.

Extreme tiredness and guilt because of conflicting role demands were found to be most common among all ten women. For the most part the women had to deal with an increase in their role responsibilities and experienced different emotions regarding the influence of studying on family life. By managing their time well they were able to cope and had thus far been successful in balancing their different roles. Above all the mature women student were able to cope with the multiplicity of roles because they had determination, were focused and committed, and wanted to achieve success in their educational goals. Perseverance and dedication to their goals emerged as mature women students' most powerful tool for coping with multiple roles.

### **Keywords**

Adulthood	Career development	Developmental tasks
Mature women student	Role conflict	Semi-structured interview
Spill-over	Thematic analysis	Work-study experiences

## **VOLWASSE VROUESTUDENTE SE ERVARING VAN VEELVULDIGE ROLLE**

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### **Samevatting**

Die doel van hierdie navorsingsprojek was om die ondervindings van volwasse vroulike studente met betrekking tot hul hul veelvoudige rolle tydens volwassenheid te ondersoek. Die gebrek aan literatuur, in die besonder ten opsigte van die ondervindings van swart vroulike studente wat die rol van moeder, vrou en werknemer moet volstaan, het hierdie navorsing geïnspireer. Ek het 'n kwalitatiewe benadering en semi-gestruktureerde individuele onderhoude gebruik om die ondervindings te ondersoek en 'n tematiese analise van teksdata te doen.

Die gemiddelde ouderdom van deelnemers aan hierdie projek was 36,8 en buite vir twee van die tien ondervraagdes, was almal ingeskryf vir nagraadse studie. Die meerderheid vroue het ingeskryf vir verdere studie ten einde hulle werkseleenthede te verbeter en een respondent as gevolg van 'n beroepsverandering.

Die stories van die tien volwasse vroulike studente met wie ek onderhoude gevoer het, het vyf hoofemas openbaar. Ten opsigte van die wyse waarop die veelvoudige rolle hanteer word, het hulle genoem dat hulle studeer en wekr omrede finansiële verpligtinge en die leefstyl van hul ouderdomsgroep. Spanning word ondervind vanweë die veelvoudige rolle wat gelykwaardige tyd verg, maar die situasie word hanteer vanweë die feit dat hulle persoonlike

doelwitte het om te bereik wat hulle nie wil prysgee nie. Beide ooreenstemmende en overenigbare ondervindings is ervaar ten opsigte van werk en studie te wees, veral wanneer daar nie gelyke hoeveelheid tyd aan elkeen spandeer kon word nie. Alhoewel hulle eggenote, kinders en soms ook families en die gemeenskap hulle aanmodig en ondersteun, het hulle gebrek aan steun van die inrigtings waar hulle ingeskryf was, ervaar.

Ekstreme moegheid en skuldgevoelens vanweë die konflikterende rolvereistes was 'n algemene ervaring van al tien vroue. Hulle moes 'n toename in hul rolverantwoordelikhede hanteer en het verskillende emosies ervaar jeens die invloed van hul studies op die gesinslewe. Ten die veelvoudige rolle te hanteer het hierdie vroue effektiewe tydsbestuur as van groot belang beskou. Bowenal was die volwasse vroulike studente in staat om die veelvuldige rolle te hanteer omdat hulle gedetermineerd en gefokus was en hulself verbind het daaraan om hulle opvoedkundige doelwitte te verwesenlik. Deursettingsvermoë en toewyding tot hierdie doelwitte blyk kragtige meganismes te wees aan die hand waarvan volwasse vroulike studente hul veelvuldige rolle hanteer.

### **Sleutelwoorde**

Beroepsontwikkeling	Ontwikkelingstake	Rolkonflik
Rol-oorvloei	Semi-gestruktureerde onderhoud	
Tematiese analise	Volwassenheid	
Volwasse vroulike student	Werk-studie ervarings	

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

The number of mature women students in colleges and universities in South Africa has increased dramatically in recent years. These women are frequently referred to by researchers as “re-entry women” and for the most part are women over 25 years of age. Current literature on mature women students suggests that these women return to studies for various reasons that are personal, interpersonal and community based (Read, Elliot, Escobar & Slaney, 1988).

“For an adult in Africa success in a traditional community is measured by his or her ability to find a partner, raise a family, and provide for the children that guarantee that the family will survive through the generations”

([www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/chapters/kml/KME1.html](http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/chapters/kml/KME1.html)). A woman who fails to adhere to these expectations of bearing children and providing for the family is considered a serious problem. Many African women therefore tend to first comply with expectations by getting married and starting a family before pursuing aspirations to further education and career opportunities that are considered an expression of her individual self.

My observation has been that a traditional black woman gets married earlier – between the ages of 18 and 20 years – to comply with society’s expectations. She is therefore absorbed with generativity at a much earlier age and returns to school from the age 30 upwards when her children enter school. To make it possible for her to return to school, particularly for a woman in the rural areas, her mother or the husband’s mother looks after the children and the woman relinquishes many of her motherly duties in order to pursue further

education. The same woman in the suburbs might have a baby sitter either during the day or staying in. Nonetheless, enrolling for the first time or to further her education later in life causes the mature woman student considerable stress and challenges her ability to juggle multiple roles in order to pursue her goals.

The decision to become a student as a mature woman presents both challenges and constraints. These challenges and constraints affect not only the woman as a student, but also impact greatly on the family and the community. For some of them the experience of juggling responsibilities on different fronts has been described by as stressful, strenuous and conflict-laden (Home, 1998). I assume that mature black women students manage to cope with the juggling of responsibilities because they were brought up in a way that empowered them to do many things in and around the house. For example, they would carry the baby on the back, fetch wood or water, take care of the cooking, do washing and clean the house, as well as take responsibility for the vegetable and fruit garden, and do some knitting. On the other hand, women in modern societies need to have further education to enable them to contribute to the family financially by getting a better paid job and to the community by using their knowledge and skills to enrich other members of the community.

Much of the literature refers to women's experiences of juggling work and family responsibilities, but there is little material on juggling the two with the role of being a student. This observation is supported by Home (1998), who indicates that "literature devoted to women who combine family with work roles is expanding, but few studies examine those who add a student role" (p.336). My study is therefore intended to extend previous research by focusing on what it means to be a student while already being a mother, wife and worker.

## 1.2 Purpose statement

The purpose of this study is to investigate how being a mature woman student affects the role of parent, spouse, and worker. In other words, how returning women students balance work, family and school life and cope with the many challenges and constraints they have to face. The main objective of this project is to explore the experiences of mature women students in their adult life stage.

The research problem for this project relates to the lack of new and relevant research on mature women students' experiences, particularly in a South African context. There has been a great influx of black students, specifically women, to institutions of higher learning since the transition to a democratic regime in 1994. Many black women enrol for university courses later in life for a variety of reasons and because they are older and have already established a family, they are confronted with different roles that have to be performed simultaneously. Nonetheless, little has changed at these institutions to accommodate the needs of mature women students, while they are struggling to cope with the multiple roles of being spouse, parent, worker and student.

The research therefore throws light on how mature women students cope with juxtaposing different roles and the ways in which they balance these roles with the role of being a student. Based on a literature study and personal experience of being a mature women student myself, I assume that women have been empowered by their upbringing to cope with increased stressors. I also assume that further education benefits not only them personally, but also the family (financially) and the community when they apply their knowledge and skills gained at university to feed back into the activities of the community. Furthermore, I assume that individual interviews in which women can tell their stories will provide rich descriptions of how the women experience their roles as student, parent and wife, and worker and how they deal with the many demands on their time and energy.

Many mature women, particularly if they are employed outside of the home, experience what have been indicated in the literature as role strain and role conflict, and I want to describe how this materialises in the lives of mature women students who add yet another role to their responsibilities. I believe that with this project I can contribute the accumulated information to the knowledge base by providing in-depth descriptions of mature women students' self-reported experiences.

A mature woman student is someone who is already married and has children of school-going age. She has either not studied at a higher education institution before or she has returned to such an institution to continue with her studies at a later point in life. The study will focus on the experiences of mature black women in the Pretoria region. Because many black women in this city, where I as the researcher also reside, combine family life with working and studying, it will be possible to identify women who can provide rich descriptions of their experiences.

The research is exploratory and attempts to unveil the feelings, thoughts and experiences of mature women students juggling the responsibilities in their life-world. I investigate how mature women students experience the multiple role demands through the use of a qualitative research approach. Exploring the lived experiences of mature women students using a qualitative approach allows me as the researcher to acknowledge the opinions and thoughts of all participants trying to make their implicit belief systems explicit (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Although focus group interviews could be used (De Vos et al., 2002), I opted for semi-structured individual interviews to engage participants in expressing their views. Such individual interviews enable me to gain a deeper understanding of the topic under investigation. Participants can also provide further comments about their experiences that are usually not possible if expressed in other techniques that utilise preconceived categories.

Most research on mature women students (see Chapter 3) has employed quantitative methods and procedures holding the nature of reality as a constant (Taljaard, 2000). This implies hypothesis testing by means of measures using scales and self-report questionnaires, while it negates in some way the dilemmas of a marginalised group such as mature woman students and is not really suitable for studying the experiences of black women in South Africa. By employing a qualitative approach I hope to gain knowledge of the experiences of mature women students and how they juggle the roles of mother, wife, employee and student. The intention was thus not to test any hypotheses or generalise findings to a larger population, but rather to explore and describe how these women cope and what they do in order to cope.

Another reason for using a qualitative approach in this project is the underlying assumption about the role of the researcher. In quantitative research, the researcher is basically an objective observer who attempts to neither participate in nor influence what is being studied. In qualitative research, however, the researcher can learn most about a situation by participating and/or being immersed in it. In this regard, I, as the researcher, am able to make decisions about which kind of method to use that are based on my own experience and preference, the population being researched, the proposed audience for findings, time, money, and other resources available (Hathaway, 1995). I also have to be aware of how my own experiences influence the research process and this is done by employing reflexivity and exposing my assumptions beforehand.

### **1.3 Research approach**

In an attempt to understand the experiences of mature women students, this project will be conducted in an exploratory manner using semi-structured individual interviews to get an in-depth view of the lived world of mature women students. Exploratory research attempts to respond to the “what” of a phenomenon by asking, for example, what are the experiences

of the mature women students (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delpont, 2002). Furthermore, exploratory research is “conducted to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or individual” (Bless & Higson-Smith in De Vos et al., 2002, p.109) that cannot be gained by doing more experiment-based research. With regard to exploratory research, Kvale (1996) states that it is qualitative in nature and focuses on an interviewee’s life-world. It is research about people’s lives, their lived experiences, emotions, feelings and behaviours (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Furthermore, qualitative research involves an inquiry process that explores a social or human phenomenon (Creswell, 1998; Silverman, 2000) and produces research findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. In this regard, I consider a qualitative approach appropriate for this project because of the complexities underlying the phenomenon under investigation. I assume that exploring the topic under investigation, a qualitative approach is suitable providing as it does for inductive interpretations of the meanings people give to routine and problematic moments in their lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

There are limitations to qualitative research and some critics hold that it can focus too closely on individual results and fail to make connections to larger situations or possible causes of the results. Hathaway (1995) mentions in this regard that it is thus important that researchers should find the most effective and appropriate procedures to ensure that their studies are as accurate and thorough as possible. In this regard I will endeavour to be as rigorous as possible with the transcription and translation of data, and to ensure plausibility of the research report by interpreting findings in relation to a literature study of the various factors that could play a role in mature women students’ experiences.

## **1.4 Outline of the chapters**

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study with an outline of the aim and objectives of the research. In Chapters 2 and 3 this will be followed by an overview of the literature. I first investigate the developmental challenges that women face in their adult life stage (Chapter 2), and go on to review the literature on issues related to female students (Chapter 3). The stages of young adulthood and middle adulthood women as described by Erikson's psychosocial developmental theory will be discussed, as will the developmental challenges and expectations, and social role theory pertaining to the roles of women in their adult life stage.

Chapter 4 will focus on the methods and procedures for conducting this study, examining the utility of a qualitative approach and interviewing, and the strategies for data collection and analysis. In Chapter 5 I will present the findings and outcomes of the study, and discuss the themes and categories pertaining to the experiences of mature women students. In Chapter 6, I will present some concluding remarks, discuss the limitations and benefits of the project, and make some recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ADULT DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE - AN OVERVIEW OF EARLY AND MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the focus is on adulthood and the adult stage of development in women. According to Erikson, adulthood is divided into three sub-stages, namely early, middle and late adulthood. In this study, the focus is on the early and middle adulthood stages because, as Feldman (2003) puts it, this is a period when people launch themselves into careers, marriage, and families. Adult lives become centred on their careers, which form part of their identity, while also establishing and sustaining family life. The woman who wants to further her education may also decide, during this period of her life, to return to school and become a mature student. I will review the literature on Erikson's psychosocial theory and Levinson's theory of adult development, and also the life-events approach and social role theory on taxing circumstances that individuals face during their adult life cycle.

The concept "adult" is defined by Mwamwenda (1995, p.83) as a person who accepts and carries out responsibilities entrusted to him or her. An adult is able to make social and viable decisions, and is capable of maintaining an integrated and stable personality. According to South African government statistics the word "adult" refers to a person who is older than 21 but is not a student or who is under 21 and is married ([www.ssa.gov/statistics/ssi\\_annual\\_sts/2001/glossary.html](http://www.ssa.gov/statistics/ssi_annual_sts/2001/glossary.html)).

Feldman (2003) maintains that early adulthood begins around age 25 until 45 years, while middle adulthood is from approximately 45 to 65 years of age. During this period adult women usually face multiple roles, for example mother, wife, and worker, and juggling these

roles to find a balance seems to be a major challenge of their adult life stage. The roles also do not seem to occur in sequential fashion. The question arises as to where the woman's desire for furthering her education comes in and how her returning to school somewhere in the middle of the family life cycle impacts on both her own development and that of other family members (husband and children).

## **2.2 Psychosocial theory of adult development**

Development from one stage of adulthood to another is often characterised by a transitional period, which may be smooth or turbulent (Louw, Van Ede, & Louw, 1998). According to Erikson (1963), life's developmental changes or transitions occur in a series of eight stages of psychosocial development, five of which occur during childhood and adolescence, and the other three in adulthood. Each of these stages occurs as a challenge to resolve the issues related to a positive and a negative pole by finding a new level of ego integration (Feldman, 2003). Psychosocial development involves changes in interactions and understanding of each other as well as in knowledge and understanding of ourselves and our place in society.

Levinson (1978) proposes that human development takes place in four different seasons as likened to the seasons of the year. He describes a series of stages or periods within the life cycle denoting completeness or a process from a starting point (birth, origin) to termination (death, conclusion). The human life cycle therefore suggests that the journey "from birth to old age follows an underlying, universal pattern on which there are endless cultural and individual variations" (Levinson, 1978, p.6). Although he based his theory on interviews with 40 middle-aged men, his views on early adulthood and middle adulthood have some relevance to this study.

### **2.2.1 Early adulthood**

Erikson refers to intimacy and isolation as posing a challenge in early adulthood (Dworetzky, 1995). Although Erikson himself did not add any clear age range to the different stages of adulthood, some researchers describe early adulthood as between 20 and 40 years of age (Louw et al., 1998), while others observe the period between 25 and 45 years of age as the time for dealing with the challenge.

In early adulthood, Levinson (1978) writes, a young man (or woman) forms a preliminary adult identity. This is the time during which major choices are made, for example about marriage, occupation, residence and style of living, all of which define the person's place in the adult world. Levinson describes early adulthood as the stage full of energy, capability and potential when compared to other stages of development. The young adult also moves from being a "novice adult" to being more "senior" at work, in the family and in the community.

The crucial task during early adulthood is the establishment of an intimate relationship with someone who is not a family member. In other words, the two may begin the relationship as complete strangers and end up as a married couple. Intimacy is defined by Newman and Newman (1999) as the ability to experience an open, supportive, tender relationship with another person without fear of losing one's own identity in the process. Each person in an intimate relationship perceives his or her well-being through affectionate interactions with the other and this permits disclosure of personal feelings, the sharing and developing of ideas and plans. It is during this stage that an adult learns to give up some of her or his own desires so as to accomplish intimacy. It involves mutual empathy and mutual regulation of needs. Feldman (2003, p.311) suggests that "successful resolution of the crises of this stage results in the possibility of forming relationships that are intimate on a physical, intellectual, and emotional level".

Intimacy in marriage may, however, be disrupted by factors such as the birth of the first child, social expectations, the in-laws, etc. Difficulties during this stage can also result in feelings of loneliness and isolation even when engaged in a committed relationship. Isolation is described as the negative pole of the crisis of early adulthood (Newman & Newman, 1999) and the inability to commit oneself to another (Hayslip & Panek, 1989). Newman and Newman (1999) also explain isolation as resulting on the one hand from incompatibility between the partners, while on the other hand originating from childhood experiences of shame, guilt, inferiority, or alienation, all of which undermine the achievement of personal identity.

Feelings of loneliness may, furthermore, emerge as transient, situational, or chronic (Newman & Newman, 1999). *Transient loneliness* lasts a short time and passes, as when you hear a song or an expression that reminds you of someone you love who is far away. *Situational loneliness* accompanies a sudden loss, a move to a new city, or stress related to juggling multiple roles and trying to satisfy the needs of different people at the same time. *Chronic loneliness* lasts a long time and cannot be linked to a specific stressor. Chronically lonely people may have an average number of social contacts, but they do not achieve the desired level of commitment and intimacy in these interactions (Berg & Peplau, in Newman & Newman, 1999). Isolation may appear as a cause as well as a consequence of depression. For some women, there appears to be a link with an orientation toward intimacy in which the self is inhibited and devalued (Newman & Newman, 1999) and their cultural heritage that presupposes certain behaviour patterns in relationships.

In many African societies, where a collectivist culture prevails, women judge themselves by external standards and a feeling that they will never measure up to what other people expect of them (Kayongo-Male & Onyango, 1991). These women also believe that to

build a close relationship with a man they must put his needs ahead of their own, and that to do otherwise is selfish. They try to maintain the relationship by avoiding conflict and inhibiting any expression of their own views, and experience themselves as presenting a false front, appearing happy and satisfied on the outside although they are angry or resentful inside (Coltrane & Collins, 2001). Holding on to such beliefs about the relationship can cause great distress for the woman who wants to pursue her own career and return to further education after marriage.

In some cases isolation and loneliness may result from situational factors. The young woman who rejects marriage in order to attend medical school or progress in her career may find herself in situations in which her desires for intimacy cannot be met. On the other hand, loneliness within a relationship may be a product of diverging spheres of interest and activity (Van Schalkwyk, 2001). In a traditional marriage, for example, the man and the woman may participate in quite distinct roles and activities prescribed by their cultural heritage, career orientation, or religious beliefs. Over the years, the partners have less and less in common. This can be the case when a woman pursues further education while her husband maintains his level and has no aspirations or motivation to further his career prospects. A lack of mutual understanding and support for each other's life goals and needs develops that can cause loneliness and isolation even within the marriage.

### **2.2.2 Middle adulthood**

During middle adulthood there is reorganisation of personality focusing on the achievement of a sense of generativity. It involves integration of the skills and perspectives of preceding life stages and commitment of energy to the future (Newman & Newman, 1999). The individual and societal development is interwoven, and middle adulthood is a time for preserving the quality of life for future generations. Erikson (1963) refers to the psychosocial

stage of middle adulthood as generativity versus stagnation. Louw et al., (1998) suggest that the development of generativity is specifically to counteract stagnation. It is about moving from self-interest to contributing towards society and during this stage the adult person takes stock of his or her contribution to society and improving the life conditions of future generations (Erikson, 1963). In middle adulthood the individual is confronted by the midlife transition, which lasts from about 40 to 45 years (Levinson, 1978). Levinson views midlife as a crisis, believing that the middle-aged adult is suspended between the past and the future, and trying to cope with this gap threatens life's continuity.

Generativity encompasses procreativity, productivity, and creativity, and reflects the ability to contribute to one's family, community, work, and society, and assisting the development of the younger generation (Newman & Newman, 1999; Van Schalkwyk, 2001). Through efforts to maintain the world, nurture, and be concerned and caring the adult person experiences being actively involved in the building the future. With generativity come new ideas, new beings, bonds or relationships. Erikson also regards the psychosocial crisis of generativity as an important reason why people decide to have children. This suggests that parenting is a common expression of generative impulses. An individual is no longer concerned about aspects of the self (identity vs. confusion) or with one intimate other (intimacy vs. isolation), but is now preoccupied with the society as a whole, especially the next generation (Peterson & Stewart, 1993).

Success in this stage results in positive feelings about continuity of life and is indicative of a mature adult who can foster the development of others and contribute to the culture in which they belong. Difficulties, on the other hand, lead to feelings that one has done nothing in life or for upcoming generation (Peterson & Stewart, 1993). Newman and Newman (1999) furthermore assert that late adolescence and early adulthood are stages during which individuals commonly experience a desire to be generative so as to impact on

the world. This might be in the form of making a successful marriage, education, and so on, and is perpetuated into middle adulthood with the launching of one's children. At some stage, then, an individual will reflect to see if his or her generative aspirations have been accomplished.

McAdams, St Aubin and Logan (1993) identify four dimensions of generativity:

- *Generative concern* as a sense that one is making a difference in the lives of others and is contributing to future generations.
- *Generative commitment* involving personal striving or goals that have a sustainable nature and will establish something worthwhile.
- *Generative actions* consisting of a checklist for actions that the person has performed in the past creating, maintaining, or offering something to society at large and the family specifically.
- *Generative narratives* as the autobiographical recollections of generative meaning and the integration of different adaptive qualities.

McAdams et al., (1993) also report that when these four measures were combined, adults in midlife scored higher than the young and the older age groups on measures of generative commitment and generative narration. This implies that once the generative orientation emerges, it becomes apparent in the life goals and activities of a person in later adulthood. Peterson and Stewart (1993) measured generativity by scoring themes in narrative writing samples. These themes included productivity, caring, and general generativity. Productivity focuses on developing through the generation of tangible products or ideas. Caring involves all expressions of taking care of, and doing something for and avoids doing any harm.

These findings confirm Erikson's prediction that there is a foreshadowing of psychosocial themes in earlier life stages. Peterson and Stewart found that expressions of

generativity were especially notable among those young adults who had begun parenting, and who had successfully resolved previous psychosocial challenges (Van Schalkwyk, 2001). Most women have children in their early 20s and 30s, long before the generative stage (around 40 years of age) as hypothesised by Erikson (Peterson & Stewart, 1993). This raises questions about the appropriateness of Erikson's theory, especially for women. For instance, does it mean that if women have children before age 40, they will experience the crisis of generativity at an earlier age?

The opposite pole of the psychosocial crisis of middle adulthood deals with stagnation. "Stagnation suggests lack of psychological movement or growth" (Newman & Newman, 1999, p.458), and it occurs when an individual reflects on her life and discovers that she has been unable to combine the tasks of managing the household, raising children, and a career, and feels frustrated by further prospects of being able to do so. In the workplace, a woman experiencing stagnation may feel threatened by younger workers. Instead of mentoring the next generation she may become resentful, avoidant and withdrawn. This may lead to stress from frustration (Newman & Newman, 1999), and the individual will have to take drastic decisions to redefine her situation and goals, or take new risks to avoid deterioration in her quality of life.

Newman and Newman (1999) mention that experiences of stagnation may also differ for the narcissistic and depressed adult. Narcissistic people are self-absorbed and expend energy in accumulating wealth and material possessions. They relate to others in terms of how others can serve them. Chronically depressed women, on the other hand, do not feel a sense of accomplishment during middle adulthood. They think of themselves as worthless and are unable to perceive themselves as having sufficient resources to make any contribution to their society, even to their families. These women are likely to have a very low self-

esteem, and are doubtful about any opportunities for future improvement. They are therefore unwilling to invest any energy in conceptualising future progress.

### **2.2.3 Other approaches to adult development**

Erikson's and Levinson's theories, as well as other stage theories, have been criticised on many fronts. The main criticism against the stage theories is that they place too much emphasis on crises, especially midlife crises, negating the considerable individual variation in the way people experience adulthood. Researchers find little or no evidence for the incidence of midlife crisis and perceive this as being exaggerated. Furthermore, Levinson (1978) generalises views from his interviews with men to women as though they experience the stages in a similar fashion.

Helson's Mills College Study (Santrock, 2004) distinguishes between three groups of women, namely family-oriented, career-oriented, and those who followed neither path. Despite these differences, women in all three groups experience some similar psychological changes over their adult years with a specific increase in identity certainty and awareness from their 30s to their 50s. Between age 27 and the early 40s, there is a shift toward less traditionally feminine attitudes. Helson (in Santrock, 2004) concludes that rather than being in a midlife crisis, women experience a midlife consciousness. An increased commitment to a career or family helps women learn to control their impulses, develop interpersonal skills, become independent, and work hard to achieve goals. Women who do not commit to either of these tend to not develop as fully as other women.

The life-events approach constitutes another major way of conceptualising adult development. In the early version of the life-events approach, life events (marriage, divorce, and loss of a spouse) were viewed as taxing circumstances for individuals, forcing them to change their personality. More recent versions of the life-events approach, known as the

contemporary life-events approach, emphasises how life events influence the individual's development. The influence does not only depend on the life event, but also on mediating factors (physical health, family supports), the individual's adaptation to the life event (appraisal of the threat, coping strategies), the life-stage context, and the socio-historical context. For example, individuals in poor health and with little family support, experience the life events as more stressful. However, critics claim that this approach places too much emphasis on change and not enough on stability that at least to some degree characterises adult development. Other critics claim that daily stresses are ignored.

### **2.3 Developmental tasks of adulthood**

Despite the criticism of approaches to adult development, in this study it is relevant to also consider the expected developmental tasks of adulthood. Apart from the issue of whether or not adults have to deal with personality changes, Hayslip and Panek (1989) and Louw et al., (1998) describe various developmental tasks for the adult stage of life that relate to how women perceive and deal with multiple roles. These tasks involve the concerns, expectations, goals, events, and behaviours that arise at specific times during the life cycle for normal development to occur.

Developmental tasks can be very complex and require persistence. Each task requires a new level of conceptualisation with regard to the self and all the social systems. These developmental tasks are extended in middle adulthood to deal with nurturing an intimate relationship, expanding relationships, managing a career, managing a household, educating and caring for children and older adults, and caring for adolescent and young adults (Lachman & James, 1997). Difficulties in balancing the many tasks expected of an adult woman often lead to experiences of strain.

Louw et al., (1998) divide the developmental tasks into four groups relating to the self, interpersonal relationships, work and leisure-time activities, and the community.

- Tasks relating to the self entail an individual focusing on achieving independence and a sense of responsibility. Although the person establishes intimacy and commitment to a relationship, it also involves confirming one's own identity and the definition of one's values. In middle adulthood, this task also extends to adjustment to physical changes, physical strength and health, and redefinition of one's self-concept and identity. There is a reassessment of one's values and philosophy of life in order to develop generativity as in the transmission of culture and values to the next generation.
- Tasks relating to interpersonal relationships have to do with an individual's relation to other people. It involves choosing a partner, establishing a meaningful relationship with the partner, as well as becoming a parent and raising children. Later in life, the woman has to learn to live with her partner's physical changes, and find new areas of common interest to share with her partner. Helping the children to become independent and being supportive to them in their new roles often goes hand in hand with adjusting to and accepting responsibility for aging parents.
- Tasks relating to work and leisure-time activities involve an individual's ability to establish and find satisfaction in a career, and to develop a recreational pattern. In middle adulthood, this task relates to finding renewed job satisfaction, becoming a mentor for younger colleagues, preparing for retirement, and expanding social activities in preparation for retirement.
- Tasks relating to the community focus on finding one's place in the community and contributing to it. Involvement in the community and civic affairs, acting as a mediator and bridge between generations, and acting as a moral watchdog in the community are particularly relevant in middle adulthood when experiences of generativity prevail.

The developmental tasks deal both with individual aspiration and communal obligations. On the one hand, a woman can focus on the self and career prospects, while on the other hand she has to also attend to accomplishing tasks related to family and community. There are also cultural expectations in the sense that if one fails to complete the tasks or completes them later than expected, it is considered abnormal in one culture even though it may be normal in another. Many modern western women nowadays prefer to first focus on tasks related to themselves, completing their education by obtaining two or three degrees before getting married and raising a family (Coontz, 1997). They want more time to define their own lives and prefer a period of independent living and work before marriage. Coontz (1997) also states that whereas only 28% of women between the ages of 20 and 24 years were single in 1960s, now more than two thirds of the same age is single. Childbearing is also postponed and women only have one or two children as opposed to seven or more in the 1960s.

#### **2.4 Marriage and the family**

I will continue this discussion of the literature by looking at some of the developmental challenges confronting the adult woman when she decides to enrol for further education and training at a later stage in life. Further on I will also discuss the multiple roles that adult women have to play based on their roles in the family, society and career.

Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1991) describe marriage as “a union between two people of the opposite sex, which is institutionalised by payment of bride-wealth or religious or civil ceremonies” (p.12). The two people are responsible for each other (socially, emotionally, etc), and the main aim is the creation of children. Benokraitis (1999) indicates that expectations of marriage differ according to culture. In western industrialised countries, married couples are expected to share economic responsibilities, to engage in sexual activity

only with their spouses, and to bear and raise children. This may be different in traditional African marriages where the husband is expected to provide for economic resources, while the woman tends to the home and children.

In many African cultures parents arrange the children's marriage in order to ensure continued economic gain for the family as a whole. Boys usually wait until their sisters are married so that there can be bride-wealth to use for their own marriages. Younger daughters, on the other hand, have to wait for their eldest sisters to marry first. Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1991) also indicate that couples should, by most cultural norms, marry first and have children later. In traditional and rural African communities many couples have a child or children first and then get married. Parents may also prolong the departure of children when they see that the child is contributing substantially in terms of labour in the home.

A key aspect of generativity and the developmental tasks of adulthood is the establishment of a family and having children. De la Ray, Duncan, Shefer and Van Niekerk (1997, p.3) define a family as "a group of people related by blood or law, living together or associating with one another to a common purpose, the purpose being the provision of food, shelter, and the rearing of children". The family is a social unit living together in a committed relationship for the purpose of sharing economic resources and bearing and raising children (Benokraitis, 1999). Coltrane and Collins (2001) add that family sometimes includes grandparents, distant cousins, siblings or other blood relations.

In the African culture both the classical/traditional and more modern forms of family life prevail (Kayongo-Male & Onyango, 1991). In traditional African families, bride-wealth, polygamy and patrilocal residence are often significant features and constraints on individual aspirations, and the family is centred on the reproduction of offspring more than any other functions (Kayongo-Male & Onyango, 1991). Urbanisation has changed much of this and modern African families have similar features to those of westernised communities

worldwide. However, cultural expectations of childbearing and caring for the household still prevail as the primary task of the woman. Traditionally a large family with many children has been considered beneficial to the family as social and economic unit. However, the size of the family has now changed with fewer children, and the nuclear family usually consists of a husband, wife and children living removed from other family members such as grandparents.

#### **2.4.1 The family life cycle**

The development of adults as parents is best described by means of a family life cycle (Hayslip & Panek, 1989; Kayongo-Male & Onyango, 1991; Newman & Newman, 1999; and others). The different stages in the family life cycle reflect the movement from being single and searching for a life partner, to the establishment of a family and being parents to a number of children. Eventually there is also the caretaking of one's ageing parents to consider, while children are also launched into their own adult lives. This is specifically important in the African culture where children are considered responsible for taking care of their parents in old age.

In the family a structured system develops that contains individuals and their aspirations through patterns of communication, boundaries, alliances, and rules that occur as individual family members change and grow, the adaptive family experiences transitions that alter the structure of the subsystems (Van Schalkwyk, 2001). When a situation of disengagement evolves, however, relationships are characterised by infrequent contact and a sense that the members of the family do not really seem to care about one another. This pattern may be viewed as similar to what Erikson describes as a concept of isolation within a family group. It can also be the result of extensive involvement by family members in work, community or study, which limits contact and could lead to poor communication patterns.

## 2.4.2 Parenthood

Parenting involves the child and the parent. According to Erikson (1963) parenting makes an important contribution to a successful resolution of the generativity crisis. Parenting does, however, require a great deal of learning. Newman and Newman (1999) assert that each period in the life of a child requires new and innovative parenting strategies and parents therefore have to be sensitive and flexible so that they can cope with the demands of this stage of life. Parents furthermore serve as important agents of socialisation with regard to roles within the family. Individuals get to know what is expected of them long before they get married. Thus a woman learns about specific roles early in childhood, such that mothers care for the children and fathers provide for the family (Hayslip & Panek, 1989).

A woman in middle adulthood has many opportunities to express her generative involvement through the care she gives to family and community. She enters many caregiving roles, some of which involve parenting, caring for her own aging parents, as well as managing the household and participating in altruistic community activities. At each stage of a child's life also places new demands on the mother as parent, and often the early and middle years of parenting are seen as strenuous and demanding. This is the time during which the parents raise newborns until adolescence. Infants require constant care and attention, and preschoolers require opportunities to acquire skills through interaction with peers, still with mindful supervision of the adult.

Early and middle school-age children require parental reassurance about their talents, skills and so on. School-age children also draw on parents' resources for ideas about places to go, and friends to visit. Parents therefore function as educators for their children. Newman and Newman (1999) maintain that parents' aspirations for their children and their involvement in children's education contribute extensively to the children's academic progress and success.

The adolescent may require less attention as regards physical matters, but continues to demand emotional support and guidance from the parents. It is generally held that parents of adolescence view these years as extremely trying when parents' principles of responsible adulthood are frequently being tested (Newman & Newman, 1999). Adolescents spend most of their time away from home and parents' supervision, and a lot of discussions take place about personal values, sexuality, discipline, school performance and so on (Hayslip & Panek, 1989). They develop the tendency to challenge their parents' guidance and parenting. Adolescents are exposed to many voices, for instance, television, magazines, peers at school and in the neighbourhood, all suggesting other means of solving a problem or defining success.

Apart from providing opportunities for caring and generativity, the demands of raising children pose particular challenges to the woman who wants to also pursue her own goals and ideals. The entry of women into the workforce influences family life in particular (Hayslip & Panek, 1989). Benefits of a dual-career family include financial stability, creativity and recognition. However, women also experience difficulties with fatigue and stress, role strain and role overload, making proper care arrangements for their children, and diminished time for family outings and so on. If women choose to also return to further education later in adulthood, the role strain may become unbearable.

Hayslip & Panek (1989) identify six effects of parenthood that add to the role strain of a woman:

- Time effects: Parenthood is time consuming because it involves feeding, bathing, and dressing the child and so on. This reduces the amount of time that parents have to be with each other to pursue their own activities.

- Family relations effects: More children in the family impact on the time parents have to spend with each child, particularly if the children are themselves in different stages of development.
- Career and education effects: Children's presence in the family reduces the parents' opportunities for educational and career pursuits and parents may have to postpone their educational aspirations.
- Social activity effects: Parents cannot easily attend parties or other functions because they have to make arrangements for their children. In most cases they have to look for a babysitter, and it becomes difficult for the parents, specifically for the mother, to maintain, for example, a fitness schedule. The mother often has to go home to relieve the babysitter and prepare the meals for the family.
- Mobility effects: Parents are restrained with regard to their mobility and cannot just get in the car and go on an outing or leave home to meet work commitments. They have to take the children's needs into consideration.
- Economic effects: Costs incurred by raising children including clothes, toys and schooling can be extremely high. Parents often have to prioritise the family needs to decide how money will best be spent.

### **2.4.3 Caring for ageing parents**

Middle adulthood is not only about future generations. It involves another test of one's capacity for generativity in the form of commitment to one's ageing parents. This is a major challenge for middle adult women: taking care of one's children, parents and grandchildren. Some adult women feel obliged to reciprocate the care and devotion that their parents extended them when they were young, and some, depending on their religious background, may even feel a moral obligation to "honour thy father and mother". For

example, an adult woman may have the duty to bathe, clothe and feed their parents (Newman & Newman, 1999).

At the same time the woman has to show commitment to her parental, marital, and work roles. She may not have financial resources to meet all her parents' needs. Although her commitment to her ageing parents teaches her own children about taking care of their parents once they grow old (Newman & Newman, 1999), it adds to the tasks she is expected to perform and leaves her little time to pursue other interests should she want to do so. Caring for her ageing parents may also be anxiety provoking in the sense that she is faced with the eventuality of their death. In my observation, however, unless her parents are very old or sick, they are still strong and energetic and often help with taking care of school-going grandchildren.

#### **2.4.4 Managing the household**

Family and children entail a particular style of living as reflected by the household. Management of the household refers to all the planning, problem solving, and activities adults engage with in order to take care of themselves and others who are entrusted to their care. It is expected that parents should provide an environment that facilitates human growth and mental health by managing the household as optimally as possible. This challenge often rests on the shoulders of the adult woman, who has to provide an environment that will enhance the potential of each member in the household, and thereby benefit the whole family unit (Newman & Newman, 1999).

#### **2.5 Social roles and contexts of adult development**

Social roles are commonly used to explain adulthood and the developmental tasks of adulthood (Newman & Newman, 1999). Adulthood is a period during which salient roles

such as worker, spouse, friend, parent, mentor, or community leader give structure to adult identity and meaning to life. Adults' involvement in multiple roles also helps socialise younger generations into the role expectations of their culture and society.

Eagly (1996) holds the view that men and women conform to stereotypical roles because they are acting according to the roles prescribed by society. These social roles are often segregated along gender lines, and historical and cultural contexts also play a role in how people are socialised for the roles of adulthood. For example, in traditional African culture men are socialised into working outside the home, and exhibiting masculine behaviours and assertiveness. Women, on the other hand, are socialised into working around the house, looking after children and exhibiting what is regarded as feminine behaviour.

Attempting to explain the origin of social stereotypes, Eagly and Wood (1999) suggest two theories, namely evolved disposition and social structure theory. According to the social structure theory women are allocated fewer resources to control and receive lower wages than men. This is called gender hierarchy or patriarchy. Men, having been allocated more resources, are imbued with more status, power and dominant behaviour. Dominant behaviour is controlling, assertive, directive and autocratic. Women on the other hand are expected to exhibit subordinate behaviours, implying that they have to be compliant to social influence, less overtly aggressive, and more cooperative and conciliatory (Eagly & Wood, 1999).

Gender stereotypes are communicated during social interaction, hence men and women engage in behaviours that confirm these stereotypes and perpetuate the gender divide. These gender stereotypes become internalised as part of an individual's self-concept and personality early in life. Men and women are also differently distributed into social roles in the social division of labour. Thus, men and women seek to maximise their outcomes within the demands and constraints established by society for its people (Eagly & Wood, 1999).

### 2.5.1 Socialisation

Stromberg and Harkness (1988) define socialisation as the process by which a person's behaviour and personality characteristics are created and modified according to the expectations of others. Socialisation is learned through agencies of socialisation, for example family, school, peer groups and media. It is an important process in the life of every individual as it permits development of the individual's social capacities and learning of norms and values for participation in the society. Socialisation is the process through which the child becomes an individual that respects his or her environmental laws and cultural norms and customs (Crespi, 2003).

The family is the most important social environment that provides the individual's connection with the social structure, while the socialisation process in the family prepares boys and girls to be part of a specific social group later in life (Miller, 1998). Parents, according to Aldous (1996), serve as the first source of information for their children. Socialisation in fact starts as soon as the baby is born with questions about whether it is a boy or girl. From birth children are socialised into beings that society wants them to be, making males appear quite similar, and females to adopt distinctly different behaviour patterns. Whereas girls have to focus on cooking and laundry, and establishing and maintaining relationships, boys get assigned to do maintenance work. Therefore, way we are, think, and behave is the product of socialisation.

In most cultures girls have been socialised to be over-responsible. Carter and McGoldrick (1999) indicate that boys are socialised to be more physical activities, while girls are taught to be more dependent and caring about the well-being of others. Girls are also more oriented to female roles and female adults, and are socialised toward family relationships instead of activities away from home. Gender socialisation is a more focused

form of socialisation in which children are socialised into their gender roles and taught what it means to be female or male.

Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1991) maintain that socialisation, affection and religious upbringing are traditionally matters of the larger kin group as well as the parents. Family members teach each other the appropriate skills, knowledge, and values underlying the roles each has to play at home and in society. Traditionally, however, a child was also socialised by the whole community to the extent that she could be corrected or disciplined by any adult if she misbehaved. Adults, mostly women staying home to tend to the household, had full authority to give any child simple duties. However, these socialisation tasks are now taken over by educational institutions like schools and nurseries when women enter the workforce and are not at home to educate their children (Benokraitis, 1999).

### **2.5.2 Social roles**

Social role theory is among the most influential explanations for why gender stereotypes are confirmed (Eagly, 1996). For the most part women are socialised to manifest social behaviours that afford them less agency and make more communal and relational demands than those of men (Eagly, 1996). It is apparent therefore that women and men confirm gender stereotypes because of the different roles prescribed to them by society and the social demands placed upon them.

Gender roles are behaviour patterns that are considered appropriate and specific to each gender. They are formed or acquired during the lifespan and often maintained until death. The child acquires them through imitation of the adult, usually by identifying with the same sex and this identification affects our roles within the family. Society, institutions and other individuals reinforce these behaviours (Aldous, 1996; Benokraitis, 1999). The positive aspect of socialised female gender roles is that women will be supportive and concerned about

responsibility and care in relationships (Stromberg and Harkess, 1988). A few decades ago, women strongly valued full-time homemaking and considered it early in life so they completed fewer years of schooling, and planned early marriage and child bearing (Stromberg & Harkess, 1988).

Benokraitis (1999) mentions some benefits of traditional gender roles. Adhering to the socialised gender roles promote stability, continuity, and predictability in the family because each person knows what is expected of him or her. Each person's rights and responsibilities are clear and there is no need for men and women to argue about who does what. If the house is clean, she is a good wife, and if the bills are paid, he is a good provider.

According to Crespi (2003), however, gender roles also have a negative aspect in that they limit what women can do, forcing them to be what society wants them to be. In modern societies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, the situation is gradually changing for women in both industrialised and non-industrialised countries. While women's status in many non-industrialised societies has up to now been quite different from that in industrialised societies, there seems to be a change taking place. Often, once a woman reaches middle age, her situation improves as she is freed from restrictions on her time such as child-care and domestic chores and her authority over the next generation increases.

Critics say that theories of adult development have a male bias (e.g., those of Erikson and Levinson), and that they do not explain the developmental transitions of adult women (Newman & Newman, 1999; Santrock, 2004). These theories place too much emphasis on achievement and careers for males rather than adequately addressing women's concerns about relationships, interdependence, child rearing, and caring. They view midlife as a heterogeneous period for women, similar to that for men and do not acknowledge individual differences. As the roles of women become more complex and varied, defining a normative sequence of development for them has become more difficult. Some women experience late-

life divorces and pressures to enter the workforce. Others capitalise on the vast opportunities now available to women in midlife and consider midlife the prime of their lives.

Feldman (2003) indicates that 75% of all married women with school-going children are now employed outside the home, and 56% of mothers with children under age 6 are working. “In the mid 1960s, only 17 percent of mothers of 1-year-olds worked full-time; now, more than half are in the labour force” (Darnton, 1990, Carnegie Task Force, 1994 in Feldman, 2003, p.316). Stromberg and Harkess (1988) also mention that girls nowadays have occupational aspirations, which help them pursue challenging educational programmes, and the majority of young girls (70 - 82%), aspire to combine work, marriage and child rearing as well as schooling. Women, more than ever before, are simultaneously acting as wives, mothers, wage earners (Feldman, 2003). Many of them are also students, as opposed to women in traditional marriages, in which the husband is the sole wage earner and the wife assumes primary responsibilities for care of the home and children.

Despite these changes, most married women are not free of household responsibilities even if they occupy high positions similar to their spouses’ (Feldman, 2003). This shows that household tasks between husband and wives have not changed substantially. Working wives still view themselves as responsible for traditional household tasks such as cooking, bathing the children, cleaning and so on. Husbands on the other hand still see themselves as responsible for household tasks such as replacing lights bulbs, repairing broken appliances and so on. It is therefore apparent that instead of women’s careers replacing household work, they are an addition to the role of homemaker.

## **2.6 Career behaviour of mature women**

The majority of the literature about the career behaviour of women focuses on career as it relates to role salience and identity, career and stress (especially as it relates to

work/family conflict, women's adjustment to the workplace), and the self-efficacy of women (Betz & Hackett, 1997; Ozer, 1995). The sequence of career behaviours for women is far more complex than for men, simply because women frequently interrupt education and career preparation in order to integrate family life. Gilligan (in Terrel, 1990) argues that women's career development occurs differently from men in that women are mainly socialised to focus on caring behaviours whilst men develop towards logic and reasoning and establishing a career early in life. Furthermore, women have to overcome obstacles such as gender discrimination and stereotyping that keep them in lower-paying jobs.

Although women in the past worked outside the home, they did not necessarily earn a living or pursue a career. They often had no access to other fields of education such as science and mathematics, and would train only as nurses, teachers, and clerks (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2002). These fields go hand in hand with the nurturing and caring that society expected a woman to demonstrate. Furthermore, for many women, particularly in low-income groups, the concepts of vocational decision-making and development are not useful when their economic survival is the main motivation for getting a job.

Havighurst (in Hayslip & Panek, 1989, p.403) identify six vocational patterns for women:

- Stable homemaker – consistent involvement at home
- Conventional career – brief period of employment followed by marriage and child-rearing
- Stable working career – career oriented and lifelong
- Double-track career – work after completion of education, then marriage, followed by a return to work
- Interrupted – working, then homemaking, and perhaps working again, depending on the demands of children

- Unstable – alternate periods of work and homemaking, dependent on economic pressure and health (common among low-income women)

Hayslip and Panek (1989) also indicate that attention to women's occupational aspirations is a more recent phenomenon, mostly because of previously held stereotypes that women's primary role was to be a housewife and mother. Career concerns were primarily important to single women. The topic of a career pattern for women became of interest as women's roles changed and more women entered the workforce, even in positions believed to be male-oriented. These days fewer women are unemployed and the majority are pursuing their chosen careers simultaneously with keeping up with homemaking responsibilities. Their career paths, however, seem to be more complex than those of men, particularly if they want to pursue further training in order to increase their career options.

Overall, career development, whether for men or women, refers to the processes by which she realises her place in the world of work and pursues an identity related to her work environment. Early in life, when completing school, many young people develop and identify with their careers through continued education. Work exposure in early adulthood leads to the establishment of a discernable career path that continues through adulthood. For black women who adhere to traditional beliefs, however, this development is not always possible, particularly if she first embarks on establishing a family before entering the work environment. In this case, the woman might want to pursue further education later in life and thus she becomes a mature woman student.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In early adulthood young women begin to practise everything they learned and were socialised to believe regarding adult roles. They marry, have children, and take care of the household management. In their middle adult years, women have the opportunity to

contribute significantly to their culture and to express their own value orientation, moral code, temperaments, and skills through work, home and child rearing. They grow more sensitive to the needs of those around them, and become more influential in their social environment.

However, with changes in society giving more credit to women's abilities as employees, many young women now also enter the workforce. Their worldview becomes more diverse, and appreciation of the interdependence of the systems increases. While the burdens of childcare and homemaking may reduce somewhat in middle age, women in middle age experience many stressors if they want to further their career aspirations or pursue educational goals. Newman and Newman (1984, p.403) assert that "one of the major stresses in this life stage is competition among roles".

## CHAPTER 3

### THE MATURE WOMAN STUDENT

#### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will review literature pertaining to the mature woman student. The focus is on women of between 30 and 50 years of age who opt to either study for the first time or return to school when they are in the middle adulthood stage of development. The purpose in this chapter is to explore existing research on the definition of a mature student and the differences between traditional and non-traditional students. Furthermore, I will discuss possible reasons why women return to further education later in life, and highlight some of the challenges that mature women students have to face.

#### 3.2 The mature woman student

A mature student is someone who has had a significant break from formal study between leaving school and embarking on a new programme of study (Bell, Hamilton, & Roderick, 1986). Crosby (1980) refers to mature students as non-traditional and the younger students as the traditional group. The mature woman student who returns to school for full or part-time study is thus a non-traditional student because she maintains responsibilities such as employment, family and community apart from being a student (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992). Benshoff and Lewis (1992) indicate that in the previous 20 years, the percentage of adult students increased tremendously so that 33-50% of the students could be classified as non-traditional and over the age of 30 years. This emphasises the fact that adults are a fast growing segment of the population in higher education.

White, Cox and Cooper (1992) and White (2001) conclude that the number of women students in higher education has also been increasing at a rapid rate in the past three decades. The increase has been observed among people aged 25 years and above (Harrison, 2004), and the number of students in part-time higher education actually more than doubled from 14% in 1970-71 to 39% in 1987-88. “Although the traditional aged college students may still be visible on campus, adult students are becoming the new majority in the student body ... many of these students also have the responsibility of children and a job” (Kaplan & Saltiel, 1997, p.17). As adult students enter a higher education institution, their role demands expand, and adult women students face many difficulties that could be personal and/or related to the family and job context.

Richter-Antion (1986) identifies six distinct differences between mature and younger student groups. These differences relate to a sense of purpose, financial commitments, nature of time commitment, life experience, lack of an age cohort, and the concept of social acceptability.

With regard to sense of purpose, mature students return to school with a clear purpose in mind. This purpose could stem from positive or negative stimulus, for example, career advancement or divorce echoing statements such as: “I am divorced now and have to rely on myself to provide for the children” or “I don’t want to spend the rest of my life as a secretary” (Richter-Antion, 1986, p.59). In this regard, mature women students are described as achievement oriented and highly motivated. Younger students, on the other hand, could be attending higher education because of parental or peer pressure or simply because it is the next level of schooling from their current one. This being the case, traditional students’ attendance of higher education may not represent a conscious choice and specific purpose as such.

In terms of financial commitment, mature women students are often employees and for the most part financially self-sufficient. They pay tuition out of their pockets or from the family's joint financial resources, wanting value for their money. If the lecturer does not show up for a lecture, the mature student thus feels cheated of her time and money. This is different from younger students, who simply send the bill home for parents to take care of. The younger students may be delighted at the lecturers' failure to show up for a lecture. Benschoff and Lewis (1992) describe traditional students as those who go to university immediately after completing their high school studies, and who are thus still mainly dependent on their parents. These students are usually in their late teens and completing the challenges of identity formation, and the majority are still unattached and supported financially and otherwise by parents and/or organisations concerned with the well-being of students at higher education institutions.

The third difference between mature students and their younger counterparts relates to the nature of time commitments. The mature woman student generally has more demands on her time than younger students. She is simultaneously a mother, a wife, a worker and a student. She has to juggle work and family as well as academic responsibilities. For example, the mature woman student might have to take care of a sick child, which could mean that her studies have to take a back seat for the time being. While a younger student has much greater choice in deciding whether to read today or go out to a party, the mature woman student may have to deprive herself of pleasure for her academic work, because she has to divide her time among all her equally important roles.

Another difference deals with the life experiences of traditional and non-traditional students. During class discussions or when doing an assignment, the mature student can draw from her previous experience. This may help her to easily understand what the lecturer is explaining and make her keen to share her knowledge by asking questions or commenting.

Younger students, on the other hand, may become impatient with the mature student who comments too much or makes considerable inputs on a particular topic. The mature woman may also not be prepared to accept things that the lecturer says on the topic and it could further frustrate younger students when she requires clarification and ask questions that prolong class discussions.

With regard to mature students, Richter-Antion (1986) further asserts that they lack an age cohort. Whereas younger students are traditionally between 18 and 22 years of age, the mature student is supposed to be in a different developmental stage and thus does not have the support of her peers to deal with issues and problems of student life. Non-traditional students, because of their age and other responsibilities, do not fit in, being expected to have already reached a different transitional period in their lives.

Finally, the mature student is faced with the concept of social acceptability. Younger students are regarded by society as on time concerning their going to school/university, getting married, and having children at stipulated periods of life (Santröck, 2004). With regard to the mature student, however, society may feel that she should attend to other things such as family and job responsibilities instead of going back to school.

### **3.3 Socio-historical context of women as students**

Historically girls were not encouraged to commit themselves to education except for very basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic (Kayongö-Male & Onyango, 1991). Kayongö-Male and Onyango (1991), Lessing (1994), and De la Rey et al. (1997) reveal that, for example, in the 1800s women were regarded as intellectually inferior and less important than men and they were thus excluded from general school education. Institutions for higher education in particular were closed to women and only a few women managed to graduate in

the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mostly with major obstacles put in their way by society and those who believed that the woman's place was at home.

In South Africa, the situation was not much different, and the apartheid laws further excluded black women from obtaining certain jobs that specifically demanded higher education (<http://education.pwv.gov.za/DoE>). Prior to 1994, there were two basic policies in the education system in South Africa. On the one hand there was Bantu Education Act of 1953, which stipulated that blacks should not be overqualified for positions not envisaged for them. For the rest of the population, specifically the white population, there was the National Education Policy, which promoted a racially and culturally segregated and differentiated education system (<http://education.pwv.gov.za/DoE>).

Since 1994, the education system in South Africa has been significantly restructured to address the geographical, political, and occupational needs of the country and all its peoples. The new constitution makes provision for the nine provinces to each have its own education department tasked with delivering education in accordance with the national education policy. The Department of Education is mainly responsible for policy formulation and monitoring of implementation at the national level but implementation takes place at provincial, district and local levels (<http://education.pwv.gov.za/DoE>). In recent years, unlike a few years ago, more black South African women have also gained access to higher education.

Despite many efforts, some female students, even the ablest among them, seem to have low self-esteem and limited aspirations, keeping away from science subjects in particular (Merrill, 1999; Papalia & Olds, 1989; Santrock, 2004). Observers attribute this to the way in which girls are socialised during childhood and adolescence, with the expectation that they should focus on relationships, while boys are allowed to focus on career choice and

preparation. Society gives girls subtle and not so subtle messages that emphasise the primacy of their roles as wife and mother and the difficulty or impossibility of combining personal achievements with love and family. In recent years, however, the role of women in society has changed tremendously and this is explicit in their enrolment at tertiary institutions. Papalia and Olds (1989) indicate that in the 1970s high school girls were less likely to complete their schooling, but today they also register for advanced degrees. Levinson (1996) mentions that the dreams of women in young adulthood now focus on both achievements in their personal life and relationships as well as career opportunities, which also makes women's lives more conflict-filled and less stable than before.

### **3.4 Reasons why women re-enter further education**

The rise in the number of mature women returning to higher education has inspired research in the area (Holliday, 1985; Johnson, Schwartz, & Bower 2000). According to Kelly (1987), there are two broad reasons for mature women to re-enter the education system, namely career advancement and personal development. Benschhoff and Lewis (1992) and Johnson et al., (2000) also indicate reasons of family life transition such as marriage, divorce and death of a spouse.

#### **3.4.1 Personal reasons**

Many of the subjects in Kelly's (1987) study indicated personal reasons for returning to school as mature women students. Some women always want to be more than housewives, and because they cannot find a suitable job without training, decide to study. Others enter further education to avoid boredom and a non-stimulating home environment. Their husbands are busy and absent from home for long periods, and they find voluntary activities

to be unchallenging and their children no longer quite so dependant, and want to broaden themselves. Yet others use their studies as an escape from marital and family problems.

Mature women students also want to prove to their home community that they can achieve educational goals, which give them more self-confidence and develop their identity. Faith (1988) states with regard to women returning to further education that a “lack of self-esteem is one of the reasons why adults return to study” (p.102). She asserts that such students seem to study in order to strengthen an unstable self-esteem, discover their own identity, or for personal self-fulfilment. Self-esteem can be boosted by success with educational goals, while some women also have a need for intellectual fulfilment, satisfaction, and realisation of their potential. These women know that education will help them gain confidence to talk to people, and boost their self-confidence (Kelly, 1987). Holliday (1985) also states that modern women have an increased appetite for education, and enrol in an advanced degree programmes because of a desire for increased status as a college student.

In some cases, it is only later in life that a woman has time to devote to her own interests because less time is needed for childcare. Often women have to wait until the time is ripe before taking up an education that they long intended to follow. Pascal and Roger (1993) and Kaufman, Spain and Bianchi (in Hoffnung, 2004) indicate that the “earlier generation of mothers typically delayed career involvement until their children entered school” (p.1). A woman may have the will to return to studies but has to wait for her children to reach a stage at which they are independent enough to be left by themselves before she can pursue her own ideals. As one woman in Pascal and Roger’s (1993) research indicated: “Not because the children are growing up, but I was waiting for the children to grow up, so that I could come and do something”, while another woman said: “When the children were both at an age when I could go into education I did. I’d thought of doing it for a long time” (p.63). In my opinion,

this shows that these women wanted to have less role conflict and to get the best results in their studies without worrying about nurturing their young children.

Pascal and Roger (1993) further state that the significance of sponsorship is an important factor encouraging mature women to return to school. Financial support from a husband with a secure income opens prospects that were previously not possible. As the couple gets older and become more financially stable, the woman has more confidence to go on with her studies (Pascal & Roger, 1993). On the other hand, the break-up of a marriage may make it necessary for the woman to become the main earner for the family. In this case, economic realities of single parenting and a husband who dies or ceases to offer economic support after a divorce, encourage a woman to improve her qualifications (Holiday, 1985). One of Pascal and Roger's (1993) respondents said: "in the first place I needed to increase my earning power, so that I could earn enough to keep myself and my daughter" (p.65).

### **3.4.2 Career reasons**

Most studies of women in adult education programmes focus on women in search of identity and integrity and only a few studies include women who have always been career oriented and are thus returning to update their skills in order to further their career (Holliday, 1985). Holliday (1985) does, however, indicate that women return to study in preparation for a career or occupation, in preparation for a career change, and even to enhance skills and abilities to increase job options. Benshoff and Lewis (1992) furthermore state that a high-paying job or prospects for promotion also provide an impetus for mature women to return to study.

Nonetheless, integrating family, career and student roles is not always easy. Because a career has become important in women's lives, career specialists have a lot of work to do in ensuring that they assist women in integrating family and career roles. Nowadays, women

enter careers and continue with their studies in spite of having a young family, and role conflict can cause distinct problems if the mature woman has insufficient support systems. On the other hand, career mothers are role models to their daughters, and when the woman is satisfied with her career decision and educational achievements, it has positive outcomes for the child. Overall, pursuing further education builds the woman's positive self-concept and self-esteem, self-directedness, assertiveness, and independence (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992). Holliday (1985) refers to issues such as achieving competence, managing emotions, freeing interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, becoming autonomous, clarifying purposes, and developing integrity.

### **3.5 Developmental issues for mature women students**

Benshoff and Lewis (1992) highlight some of the developmental issues for women who return to study. Many women feel guilty about not being there for their children, and are concerned about the quality and expense of childcare. Even women who have minimal individual conflict feel responsible for maintaining their role within the family, and make compromises in career and studies due to family considerations. There are also women who perceive a lack of credibility when returning to school, and receive insufficient support from their families for taking up further educational goals.

Holliday (1985) highlights two specific developmental factors for women returning to higher education later in life. On the one hand, there is an identity conflict that occurs when a woman starts to question her abilities, cultural values, limitations, and attitudes with regard to occupation or a suitable role in society. On the other hand, there is an integrity crisis that ensues when a woman starts questioning herself and how she relates to the world. Such questions call for active participation in her studies on the part of the mature woman, which will then qualify her for more individualised relations with herself, others and society. Her

lifestyle becomes significant and meaningful, and she acquires coping styles that relate to independence, assertiveness, and being outgoing (Astin, in Holliday, 1985).

### **3.5.1 Combining different roles**

Apart from the personal and developmental growth that a woman can achieve when returning to further education, mature women students face a situation in which they have to juggle family, career and student life. They assume a new role as students together with their expected roles as spouse, parent and worker. These diverse roles can affect the way people think and act, and may also influence the way in which they carry out these roles, or whether they carry them out at all (Moen, 1992). Burns and Gabrich (2001) point out, however, that although about 33% of respondents in their study reported high conflict, it is notable that the majority either reported moderate or low conflict. It thus seems as though women experience more positive changes from their enrolment at college or university.

Frankel (1993) describes three ways in which women seem to cope with their experiences of role conflict. By applying structural role redefinition a woman can modify the external demands and negotiate and alter the expectations of others regarding her performance. Personal role redefinition is an attempt to reduce role conflict by making changes in her attitudes, perception, and behaviour without modifying the expectations, perceptions or behaviour of others. She establishes priorities, ignores role demands that she cannot comply with, and finds a balance between her own needs and those of others. Some women also apply reactive role behaviour, in which they attempt to resolve role conflict by improving the quality of their role performance (e.g., planning, scheduling, and working longer hours). According to Frankel (1993) personal role definition is the healthiest way to deal with role conflict.

### 3.5.2 Personal domain

Kelly (1987) reports that mature women students have an improved self-esteem or self-confidence as a result of enrolling for further education. “I had a very low self image... now I see myself as a person” (Kelly, 1987, p.46). Most respondents in Kelly’s research indicate that they feel more confident than when they started at college or university, and see themselves in a more positive light. Faith (1988) indicates that women students frequently cite increase in self-esteem as a benefit of returning to studies and it seems that the older the student when she returns to study, the more her self-esteem increases

One of the goals of education is to encourage the development of independent thinking and resourcefulness in life management. This is particularly relevant for black married women whose status and evaluation of self-worth are relatively low because of their dependence on their partners (Kelly, 1987). Merrill (1999) indicates that returning to college or university makes women more confident about analysing a situation and looking more deeply at solutions. Some students also state that they are more tolerant of people who are different to themselves and that they no longer expect everybody to accept their decisions either at home or in the job environment.

In research with working mothers, Moen (1992) found that there is a relationship between working and levels of personal distress. Some full-time housewives are more likely to be dissatisfied with their lives than working mothers, while women who accept employment and enjoy their jobs are most likely to benefit on a personal level (Moen, 1992). Similarly Kelly (1987) finds that some mature women students report an improvement in their life in general since enrolling for further education. The women are less depressed and being occupied and busy does not give them time to feel sorry for themselves. Some women also indicate that they experience less tension as students than as homemakers, and that tension

occurs mostly during examinations or when meeting deadlines for submission of major projects.

Emotional and financial independence appear to be great motivators for women to enrol for further education. Some women are tired of being financially dependent and look forward to a time when they can be gainfully employed and make a meaningful monetary contribution to the household economy (Kelly, 1987). They also realise that they cannot be dependent on another person for their happiness and become increasingly emotionally independent.

Work and family roles are central to the personal identity and life experiences of adults (Moen, 1992). Studying as a mature student helps the woman to create a separate identity from that of her partner. The woman defines areas of interest and expertise, and is able to resolve identity and integrity dilemmas for which she was previously dependent on her partner. However, some marriages dissolve due to too much autonomy on the part of the woman after studying, and because she is able to say “no” to demands made by others that do not comply with her own values and ideals.

Apart from greater independence, mature women students also learn the value of interdependence and how to successfully integrate their studies with their everyday lives. Thus they learn to cope with the increased stresses and strains of university life. Moen (1992) indicates that women who cope are those who are able to reduce the demands of their roles or to prioritise them appropriately. Women with aspirations for further education decide to have fewer children and choose jobs with more flexibility to accommodate their other concerns. Merrill (1999) claims that study groups are more common amongst mature women students where they help each other make sense of their new academic and social world. Women working together in such study groups manage to survive the workload of studying by cutting down their work into more manageable portions and sharing tasks.

Kaplan and Saltiel (1997) identify five ways in which mature learners integrate studying into their lives. Mature women students keep their focus on their goal and pace themselves so that they dedicate regular blocks of time to their studies. They learn effective stress management and emotional health skills to balance different roles and find harmony by structuring their schedules effectively. Women students cope by working hard to achieve each short-term goal and celebrating each achievement, irrespective of how small it is. They also make sure that they have someone who can support them in various circumstances.

Finally, student life influences the mature woman's ability to be in control of life's difficulties. Weston (1991) believes that people with control over their lives do not feel threatened by life's demands and challenges. Despite internal and external circumstances that may cause discomfort, mature women students develop a locus of control that enables them to balance and enjoy relationships at home and with other students, their studies and homemaking. They also develop flexibility that makes it possible for them to decide to change their goals (e.g., tolerate an untidy house) or lower career expectations (e.g., spread the educational programme over a longer period of time), and learn to delegate responsibilities while completing other tasks.

Studying gives mature women students a measure of power and control over their lives, so that they become "new women" (Merrill, 1999, p.206) by the end of their studies. David, Edwards, Hughes, and Ribbens (1993) indicate that women see higher education as giving them status in the eyes of others. Intellectual status elevates the person and puts her on the same level with educated people, especially those who have degrees.

### **3.5.3 Marital relationship**

Burns and Gabrich (2001) indicate that husbands of mature women students have not made much difference with regard to assuming household responsibilities and taking care of

the children. Although some respondents in their study indicate that their husbands assist by taking the children out to give the women space and time to read, others still have to deal with all the family demands while their husbands take off alone, leaving her to deal with studies and childcare. What is not clear here is whether fathers are willing or not to assist or whether mothers are unwilling to share the responsibilities and rather take on more than they can cope with.

On the other hand, women in Kelly's (1987) study also indicate that they felt more respected by their partners and that men valued their opinions in lots of things. These women perceive the intellectual stimulation coming from studies as broadening their involvement in the outside world, and they are able to discuss things happening in the world. "I feel as though I've got something to bring in the way of conversation that I didn't have before" (Kelly, 1987, p.148). They relate better than before, and feel that the relationship is more balanced. Other women indicate that although their marriages should have dissolved because of differences before they enrolled for further education, their studies give them greater self-awareness and interest in ideas, which helps to balance relationships that are at risk.

Nonetheless, Billings and Sievers (1998) note that women who engage in studies later in life tend to spend less time with their husbands. This could result in poor communication and weakening of the relationship. In this regard dedication to educational goals comes at the expense of marriage relationships. Lack of support from the non-student partner also tends to weaken the marriage relationship (Billing & Sievers, 1998). The lack of support could be because the non-student partner perceives a threat if his wife increases her capabilities, or because of the student's growing independence that increases her autonomy.

### **3.5.4 Family and children**

In a study with 100 mature women students with school-aged children, Burns and Gabrich (2001) found more positive than negative influences of the mother's studies on her children. With the mother as role model, children work on their schoolwork more on their own and have more respect for educational goals. Kelly (1987) states that respondents speak of their children having increased personal happiness and satisfaction, and that they are proud of their mother's achievement. Children also seem to show signs of accelerated autonomy because the mother is not home and less available to run after them.

On the other hand, the mother's studies can have a negative impact when she does not have enough time to be with the children or misses school activities. The mother is also sometimes too tired to monitor the younger child's schoolwork and the parent-child relationship deteriorates (Burns & Gabrich, 2001). Because of the demands of work and study, women students are left with no option but to ask relatives or look at other childcare facilities to care for their children (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). It seems that the influence of a mother returning to study depends to some extent on the age of the child. A four-year-old child may have more difficulty in adjusting to temporary separation from the mother, while teenagers appreciate the increased independence (Kelly, 1987).

### **3.5.5 Work and social life**

Kirby et al., (2003) write that most mature students indicate that they get too tired and that when they are at work cannot be as productive as they should be. Their studies demand much time that is often lost on sleep, with their going to bed very late or waking up very early in the morning. The students also indicate that their studies take time away from work when they complete assignments during working hours. Moen (1992) indicates that maternal

employment causes ambivalence in some mothers who are subject to substantial cross-pressure by trying to be both a good mother and a good employee.

On the other hand, Kirby et al., (2003) also indicate positive points for women combining work with study. Some experience an increase in respect or status at work, while others are able to apply their knowledge and new skills in the workplace with greater understanding and confidence. Mature women students indicate that attending school enhance their careers and that acquiring more skills serves as an asset to the company.

However, role overload can be detrimental to women's psychological well-being because it introduces competing demands on time, energy and involvement. Role strain or overload can be more stressful for women than it is for men, although the increased roles can be better for some women's health (Moen, 1992). Much of the mature woman student's role overload relates to the nature of her family responsibilities and her ability to cope successfully with the increased demands on her time, energy and emotions.

For the most part, as Clark (1997) indicates, the role overload that working mothers experience places several restrictions on their social life, family ties and even friendships. Juggling too many conflicting roles puts them at a disadvantage when it comes to matters not related to work and study. Kirby et al., (2003) also indicate that mature students complain about not having time to spend with their own parents. However, furthering her education helps the mature woman to interact better with other people and take part in different conversations, all because of the confidence she gains while achieving academically. She has the opportunity to meet with people who share the same interests and have similar background and school become an opportunity for networking.

### **3.6 Needs of mature women students**

A concerning aspect that mature women students have to deal with is the lack of organisational structures at college or university that are suited to particular needs (Merill, 1999). Institutions are not adult friendly and lack support (e.g., financial support, guidance, pre-course information, and parking) for mature women students. According to Holiday (1985) institutions for higher learning do not provide sufficient financial aid to meet the needs of mature students.

Another issue is that young female students feel they do not have anything in common with older women whose lives and conversations centre on children, home and work. Mature women students, on the other hand, feel uncomfortable and out of place in class with 18-year-old students who sometimes have limited life experience (Merrill, 1999). Furthermore, mature students often have to employ more complex coping strategies to deal with the conflicting and competing demands of studies that might cause disruption to the family and they feel that younger women are not conscious of these difficulties.

Edwards (1993) mentions that mature women students with a family at home may be less focused towards the end of the last lecture, already thinking of the tasks awaiting them at home. These students go to lectures but leave directly afterwards in order to attend to family matters or get back to work (Kelly, 1987). They therefore have little time to interact with other students or even the academic staff. In spite of getting help from the institution to build self-confidence and develop study and time-management skills, the mature woman student has to rely on support from family and friends who may not be equipped to provide the correct skills (Home, 1997). There is also the lack or absence of childcare facilities for mature women students with children who may need such facility in order to attend classes.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

Mature women students have various and diverse reasons for returning to further education later in life. For some the experience may be pleasurable despite the constraints of having to learn with younger students that do not have the same life experience. On the other hand, some women are confronted with juggling various roles that cause overload and stress (Santrock, 2004), and limited time to attend to all the academic expectations. Competent support systems to help them cope with the multiple demands are not necessarily in place. Acknowledging the special needs of mature women students who are simultaneously spouse, parent, employee and student provides an opportunity to fashion social worlds that will promote healthy communities, families and individuals.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

#### 4.1 Introduction

The aim of this project was to gain an understanding of mature women students' experiences of their multiplicity of roles. The focus was on the women's perceptions of juggling the responsibilities and demands of different life roles they encountered simultaneously during their adult life stage, particularly when they became a student at an institution for higher learning. Based on a review of existing literature, I explored the challenges and benefits of being a mature woman student, and the influence of being a student on the woman's personal, interpersonal, and community life as she enrolled for formal education later in her life. Uncovering the lived experiences of these women contributed to the field of developmental psychology in which little research had been done on this area, particularly on black women in South Africa who had become students again later in life.

#### 4.2 Research objectives

The main purpose of this project was to explore the experiences of mature black women students in a South African context. The research objectives involved:

- Gaining an understanding of the thoughts, feelings and experiences of mature black women in a South African community regarding their responsibilities in multiple roles.
- Evaluating mature black women's experiences of role strain and role conflict against existing literature in the field of social role theory and the adult developmental stage.
- Exploring the mechanisms that mature women students in a black community in South Africa used to cope with the responsibilities of their multiple roles.

- Gaining an understanding of the benefits mature women students considered when returning to further education later in their lives.

The objectives focused the research throwing light on how mature women students coped with juxtaposing different roles and the ways in which they balanced these roles with the role of being a student. Being a mature women student myself, I assumed that women were empowered and that further education benefited not only them personally, but also their families (financially) and the community when they applied their knowledge and skills gained at university to feed back into the activities of the community. Finally, I assumed that individual interviews in which women can tell their stories would provide rich descriptions of how the women experienced their roles as student, parent and wife, and worker and how they dealt with the many demands on their time and energy.

### **4.3 Research method**

In this project I utilised a qualitative approach mainly because it best fitted the nature of my study and could provide rich descriptions of the mature women students' experiences. De Vos et al., (2002, p.423) defined qualitative research "as an active, participating, capacity building, involving, encouraging, mobilising and enabling research procedure in which the participants and researcher are seen as equal partners". In other words, the researcher and participants participated equally in generating the data for the project, and acknowledged the subjective knowledge of the participants that developed from their own experiences (Neuman, 2000).

Apart from the participatory nature of the research process, I perceived capacity building as appropriate because it gave participants an opportunity to gain insight into their own situation and enhanced their self-development. It involved sharing of knowledge and experiences that helped people to realise that they had control over their lives. Participants

were practically involved in problem solving as they shared ideas and experiences with me as the researcher. Furthermore, they explored known territories when asked to share their day to day experiences of being mature women students, and the process enabled them to re-construe their past experiences, giving them a platform to observe the positive and negative experiences in a new light. The processes of the qualitative approach followed in this project thus allowed me as the researcher to get as close as possible to the phenomenon being studied. The basic underlying assumptions of qualitative research also guided and sequenced the types of data collection methods and the data analysis that I utilised (De Vos et al., 2002).

#### **4.4 Procedures**

In order to achieve the objectives set for this project, I collected data through the use of semi-structured, face-to-face individual interviews. The semi-structured interview approach provided for enough flexibility so that the interviewee was able to give as much information as she would like (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Kvale, 1996), while allowing me to ensure that I got the necessary data for executing this project. I therefore conducted the interviews on a specific topic guided by an interview schedule that enabled me to get sufficient data in order to understand the experiences of mature women students.

The kind of data that I was looking for were representations of the views and thoughts that the women had about being a student later in life and their perceptions of the differences and similarities between studying for a first degree as the obvious continuation of school. I was also looking for representations of the possible role conflicts they might experience in their adult life stage, and their perceptions regarding the mechanisms they used to cope with the many responsibilities imposed on them as mature women students. The interviews were conducted in such a manner that they could provide me, as the researcher, as well as the participants an opportunity to explore the topic of discussion as comprehensively as possible

(De Vos et al., 2002). In this manner I collected rich textual data that I could interpret with regard to the women's experiences and, as Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argued, provided greater breadth than other types of data collection.

#### **4.4.1 The participants**

Kvale (1996) advised that as many participants as possible should be interviewed until the researcher found out what she needed to know. However, for the purpose of this project I interviewed 10 women who met the criteria set out below. The criteria for recruiting participants were that the women I interviewed were:

- Studying at a South African university
- Attending evening or day classes regularly, or block sessions occasionally
- Married and between the age of 30-50 years
- Living with her husband and children, who were of school-going age, in Pretoria, Gauteng
- Employed simultaneously to being a student and mother
- Willing and able to articulate her own experiences and thoughts about the topic in English or Setswana (both languages in which I am fluent)

I recruited participants through snowballing or purposive sampling techniques. This type of non-probability sampling was applicable to hard-to-reach individuals and individuals who had to fit specific criteria such as those set out above (De Vos et al., 2002). Applying purposive sampling enabled me to collect data from members of the target population whom I was able to locate, and then to seek information from these individuals that helped me to locate other members of the targeted group. The process continued until I had gathered data from 10 participants or until a saturation point was reached.

#### **4.4.2 The interview**

Kvale (1996, p.30) proposed that “the purpose of the qualitative research interview is to obtain descriptions of the lived world of the interviewees with respect to the interpretations of the meaning of the described phenomena”. It also allowed the respondents to use their unique ways of describing and defining their world. Individual interviews furthermore provided a greater flexibility for respondents to be open in their views (Fontane & Frey, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and encouraged innovativeness on the part of the researcher (Silverman, 2000).

In preparation for the interviews, I contacted the consenting woman to arrange for a place, time and duration that were suitable for her and me as the researcher to conduct the interview. This meant that I conducted some interviews in the woman’s home, while others preferred to attend the interview in an office to avoid interruptions. De Vos et al., (2002) suggested that the venue for an interview should be non-threatening and comfortable, and should provide sufficient privacy so that the interviewee could tell her story without disturbances from external sources.

#### **4.4.3 The interview guide**

Conducting interviews for this project required good planning and proper preparation in order to maintain consistency and to ensure that the interview material would be relevant to the topic under investigation. Prior to conducting the semi-structured interviews it was important to devise an interview guide. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) explained the interview guide as a schedule of questions drawn up when the research question was clearly conceptualised and the research agenda related to it was finalised. The main purpose of the interview guide was to direct the discussion. De Vos et al., (2002) indicated that the

interview schedule forced the researcher to think ahead about possible difficulties that might arise in terms of wording of questions and sensitive areas.

According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) there were two principles that had to be observed when developing an interview guide. First, questions could be ordered from more general to more specific. This helped me to plan the conversation starting with non-threatening issues and focusing on establishing rapport, and leaving more difficult and sensitive questions for later. Secondly, questions could be prioritised according to their relevant responses to the research agenda, and there should preferably not be more than 12 questions. It was necessary to help some participants with cues or key words to formulate her answer but these prompts did not lead the respondent in the sense of providing direction to her responses. As the interviewer I sometimes rephrased a question but avoided suggesting what the interviewee should say or prompting her to respond in accordance with my views (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

Given the guidelines from Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) I organised the interview questions to move from more general, non-threatening issues to more difficult issues later in the conversation, including the following questions in the schedule for this project:

1. Tell me about the high points and low points in your experience of being a student at this point in your life.
2. What stands out in your life as a mature student? Give examples and explain why these things stand out for you.
3. What are the things about being a student at this time of your life that you find most exciting and interesting?
4. What are the things about being a student at this time of your life that you find most difficult to deal with?
5. What conflicts stand out for you? How do you deal with these conflicts?

6. What dreams do you have for the future?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

#### **4.4.4 Collecting the data**

Utilising the semi-structured interviews I collected data from ten individual women meeting the criteria set out above. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to relax and talk freely, expressing their own opinions throughout the interview. I was observant of non-verbal cues, which in a way increased my ability to follow up on key issues and be alert to sensitive issues that might cause the woman distress.

Throughout the interview, I used the guideline with questions to direct the conversation. Only one theme was discussed at a time until exhausted. Follow-up questions or probes were used as part of extracting full information from the interviewee. Probes, such as “tell me more”, “I don’t understand”, “do you have an example of that?”, “do you have a similar perspective?”, were used to ensure rich and in-depth data and to minimise the amount of irrelevant information (De Vos et al., 2002). In this way I ensured that the interviews assumed the appearance of a natural, interesting conversation, but were well controlled.

The interviews were conducted in a language in which the interviewee was comfortable, namely either English or Setswana, because I am also fluent in these languages. This allowed for a more natural conversation with the woman, and ensured that the interview was interactive and fully engaged the woman in the conversation (De Vos et al., 2002). Interviews were tape-recorded and specific demographic information noted separately. Tape-recording facilitated transcription and was more accurate than note-taking (Kvale, 1996).

#### **4.4.5 Ethical issues**

Interviewees were notified beforehand about the importance of tape-recording and that they could have a copy of the transcripts upon request. Participants were also be assured of confidentiality during tape-recording, and that recordings would be used with their permission and for research purposes only (De Vos et al., 2002). Access to the tape-recordings was restricted to the researcher alone, and no identifying information was recorded or used when writing the report.

Prior to conducting the interview I assured the woman that her information will be treated as confidential, indicated clearly what the purpose of the research was, and requested her to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix A). Furthermore, the interviewee was told that she was free to express her ideas on the topic clearly and explicitly without interference, and during the actual interview I allowed her to finish what she was saying at her own pace, only using probing questions when necessary and for elaboration in order to obtain rich and in-depth data. I thus strived to create an atmosphere of trust right from the start, and ensured the woman that all her opinions would be valued.

#### **4.5 Data analysis**

Data analysis for this project was based on the purpose of the topic under investigation as well as on the nature of the interview material. At the core of textual data analysis was the task of discovering themes and patterns of talk. Themes were considered to be abstract constructs that were identified before, during and after data collection (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). I conducted a thematic analysis that focused on identifying themes related to the lived world of mature black women students studying at higher education institutions in South Africa. In this regard I followed the steps outlined below.

#### **4.5.1 Transcription of the interview data**

The first step was the transcription of the entire interview from oral speech to written text in order to have textual data for the analysis process. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) and Kvale (1996) indicated that the transcriptions had to be done thoroughly to ensure that the interview was accurately reflected in the text and in order to facilitate the analysis process. Transcriptions were also useful in the sense that it was possible to pick up incomplete sentences, half-finished thoughts, odd phases and other characteristics of the spoken word during the discussion, and to rectify these if necessary. Proper transcriptions made editing possible, which increased readability (De Vos et al., 2002), and ensured that the researcher had a full text to use for analysis.

All the audio tape recordings of the 10 interviews were transcribed and translated into English (if it was conducted in Setswana) to provide the textual data for analysis (see Appendix B). An independent third person was asked to listen to the tape recordings and read the transcriptions and translations to ensure that I had recorded all the words of the women I interviewed.

#### **4.5.2 Thematic analysis**

It was the researcher's responsibility to extract from the textual data obtained from the transcriptions, an accurate and essential description of the content and examples given by participants and to make sense of the whole transcribed interview (Taljaard, 2000). Kvale (1996) supported this view: "the purpose of the qualitative research interview has been depicted as the description and interpretation of themes in the subjects' lived world" (p.187). In this process of analysing for themes I read the textual data and asked critical questions (Neuman, 2000), initially identifying themes that could lead me to new questions and encouraged higher order thinking. The aim was to read and question the texts in such a

manner that it would allow me to write plausible descriptions of the women's experiences and draw conclusions.

Textual data was furthermore best analysed through concept formation and coding. Conceptualising was done by taking apart an observation, sentence or paragraph and giving each incident or event a code. Similar incidents were given the same codes (De Vos et al., 2002), and eventually patterns emerged that related to the research question. Using the open coding approach, I examined the textual data for proper groupings of concepts, and linked concepts so as to reduce the number of units with which to work (Aronson, 1999; De Vos et al., 2002).

In more detail, the analysis process entailed the following:

- **Reading and rereading the data**

The transcripts, including the information recorded by means of interview notes and other material gathered during the interview process, were read and reread. I bracketed the themes that related to the participants' experience of being a mature student coping with multiple tasks by highlighting some sections of the text in different colours. Although a tedious process, this exercise helped me to identify the meaningful units that seemed to communicate self-contained meanings from a psychological perspective.

- **Being vigilant of emerging themes**

The intention of thematic analysis was to explore the participants' experiences of their daily lives and understanding what the underlying psychological processes were that the women encountered such as their emotions and perceptions of the topic. Taljaard (2000) indicated that researchers should force themselves to explore the data for emerging themes, language usage, repeated comments and feelings, and in the further re-reading of the textual data I took note of these psychological processes to include them in the final interpretation of the data. Speculative themes were also recorded and analysed, with

some themes that were more obvious than others emerging as the analysis process continued. Themes that were common to all interviewees were noted and grouped together, and the process was repeatedly checked and rechecked so as to make sure that significant meanings were not clouded by irrelevant examples.

- **Keeping track of themes, interpretations and ideas**

Once the reading and re-reading were completed, I noted all the important ideas and themes that arose from evaluating the transcripts. I employed various techniques for recording this information such as worksheets, ideas and themes. Again the relevant themes and sub-themes were recorded and highlighted as they related to the topic under investigation.

- **Constructing classification schemes and integrating meaningful units**

The next step was to transform the meaningful units so as to understand the meaning of statements uttered by participants. I did this by adding comments in the column next to the transcripts and using the coding system I devised for linking themes and sub-themes together. I then integrated the themes and meaningful units in terms of the topic under investigation by organising them into a matrix that related to and answered the research objectives. I posed further questions about each theme so as to ensure that they fitted the objectives of the study and answered the overall purpose of this project.

Taylor and Bogdan (in Taljaard, 2000) suggested two classification schemes that were useful for identifying themes and concepts. The first focused on how people classified objects and others in their everyday lives, while the second was based on the researcher's own classification scheme. In this regard, I employed a system of grouping themes based on categories shared by the interviewees, piecing the themes together to form a collective picture of participants' experience (Aronson, 1999; Constan, 1992).

Based on the literature review and the objectives of this project, I evaluated the textual material for the following themes:

- Studying as a mature woman student (MS)
- Congruence and incongruence between work and study (WS)
- Self-concept (S)
- Experience of others and communities (F)
- Methods of coping (C)

The final step in data analysis of textual data was to build a valid argument in response to the research objectives. This was achieved by referring back to the literature so as to develop a story line and observe the themes that linked to the unfolding of the interviewees' experiences. I conducted an extensive literature survey on the topic prior to the investigation, and in the final instance I compiled a report in which I represented the women's views and gave a description of their experiences of being mature women students. In this report I made sure that the project lived up to the scholarly criteria of readability and believability (Kvale, 1996).

#### **4.6 Credibility and trustworthiness**

A key issue for qualitative research was developing a shared understanding of appropriate procedures for assessing credibility or trustworthiness (Smith, 2000). The term "trustworthiness" was often used interchangeably with the word "validity", whereas the term "credibility" was interpreted to mean "reliability". Stenbacka (2001) suggested that the concept of reliability was disconcerting in qualitative research. Patton (in Golafshani, 2003) stated that a qualitative researcher should already take note of validity and reliability when designing the study and analysing the results so as to ensure the quality of the study. Golafshani (2003) further added that the quality of a study had to be judged by the paradigm

in which it was conducted and stated that credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability were essential to the qualitative research paradigm (De Vos et al., 2002; Smith, 2000). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also wrote that sustaining the trustworthiness of a research report depended on discovering truth in a rigorous and accountable manner required of all research.

Qualitative research was regarded as trustworthy when it was based on the systematic collection of data, utilised acceptable research procedures, and allowed the procedures and findings to be open to systematic and critical analysis from others. Trustworthiness related to how we determined if ‘we got it right’ (Smith, 2000), and Stenbacka (2001) suggested that maximisation of trustworthiness meant credible results that lead to believable accounts and description, which was an important concept for both doing and documenting quality qualitative research.

In this regard, I used the criteria provided by De Vos et al., (2002, p.351) to ensure quality outputs and trustworthiness for this project:

- **Credibility:** I attempted to answer the question ‘does it ring true?’ Credibility, equated to internal validity and referring to how truthful the findings were, was achieved by interpreting the textual data based on the literature study on the topic of mature women students. This allowed for believable accounts and descriptions of the women students’ experiences, thoughts and feelings.
- **Transferability:** As criteria for testing external validity, I evaluated how applicable the research findings were to another setting or group. This was done by also integrating literature on working women who had to cope with multiple roles and evaluating the textual data for examples of juxtaposing different roles.

- **Dependability:** In order to ensure that the findings were consistent and reproducible, similar to testing for reliability, I endeavoured to describe the research process and procedures in great detail.
- **Confirmability:** Evaluating the findings in terms of neutrality and questioning whether they were representative of the subjects' views and the inquiry process, I employed rigorous methods for analysing the data and reflecting on my own assumptions in order to reduce any biases and prejudices that could have confounded the outcome of this project.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter I outlined the research design, methods and procedures, and the way in which I did the analysis of the textual data obtained through semi-structured interviews with 10 mature black women students. The investigation focused on the mature women students' experience of the multiplicity of roles in their day to day lives, and a qualitative approach and thematic analysis seemed most appropriate to this topic. In the next chapter I will present the thematic analysis and a discussion based on my interpretation of the themes in relation to the existing literature.

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

#### 5.1 Introduction

I collected data from ten mature women students aged between 30 and 50 years, using individual semi-structured interviews. The verbal data was transcribed to provide textual data for analysis purposes. In this chapter I summarised the stories of the participants, highlighting the important biographical details of each woman and the main themes that emerged from her experiences as a mature student. In the second part of the chapter I gave an interpretation of the major themes that emerged from the experiences of all the women.

The experiences of the mature women students interviewed for this project revealed that they were all involved with the tasks of adulthood, dealing with marriage, parenting, an occupation, and establishing a lifestyle that defined their place in the adult world (Erikson, 1963; Levinson, 1978). The stories that these women told revealed that as students they had both individual aspirations and communal obligations that demanded their time and energy. On the one hand, the women focused on themselves and their career prospects, while on the other hand they had to attend to carrying out tasks related to family and community. Furthermore, the participants were not, at the time of the interviews, taking care of any ageing parents. Rather, in some cases their own parents assisted them by looking after the grandchildren, specifically over weekends so that the woman could have time free to attend to her studies.

## 5.2 Background information

Biographical data (Table 5-1) were recorded during the interview session and a brief biographical description for each mature woman student presented below to contextualise the textual material used for the analysis. I used pseudonyms to refer to the women in order to protect their identities and to ensure confidentiality.

**Table 5-1** List of interviewees and biographical data for each woman

Participant	Age	Marital status	No. of children	Study program
Letta	36	Yes	3 girls	BEd (UP*)
Grace	41	Yes	3 boys	MEd (TUT**)
Lenah	31	Yes	2 boys	Higher Certificate in Industrial Engineering (TUT)
Naomi	35	Yes	1 boy	MPhil (Science) (US***)
Monica	31	No (lived with fiancé)	1 boy, pregnant	Diploma in Accounting
Helle	38	Yes	3 boys	MBA (UP)
Ruth	35	Yes	2 girls	MBA (UP)
Hope	47	Yes	1 boy, 1 girl	MBA (UP)
Alice	31	Yes	1 boy, pregnant	Master's degree in Public Administration (UCT****)
Mavis	43	Yes	1 boy, 1 girl	Diploma in Public Administration

\* UP refers to University of Pretoria

\*\* TUT refers to Tshwane University of Technology

\*\*\* US refers to University of Stellenbosch

\*\*\*\* UCT refers to University of Cape Town

The average age of the women who participated in this project was 36.8, and the average number of children was 2.0. Apart from Mavis and Monica who were doing their first diploma, all the other women that I interviewed were enrolled for a second or further

degree in their field. The majority of women (90%) enrolled for further studies because they wanted to increase their skills for the work environment, while one woman (Hope) did so because of a career change. For the most part they received support from their respective spouses, but had some guilt feelings about limited time spent with the family and having to deprive their children.

*Participant 1: Letta*

Letta was 36 years old, married and had three girls of ages 17, 13 and four years respectively. She was employed and worked as assistant manager when she registered for her Bachelor of Education (BEd) at the University of Pretoria. She received support from her husband and children and had a helper to attend to housekeeping tasks. Letta had to postpone her studies many times because she had to work full-time in order to help support the family, providing a much needed additional income. She could therefore never study full time, and decided to study while working “*because one salary was not enough for a family these days.*”

*Participant 2: Grace*

Graces was 41 years old, married and had three boys of 19, 18 and 11 years. She was employed as a teacher and had to meet the demands of the transitions that were evident in the South African education system (“*doing OBE*”). At the time of the interview, Grace was completing her Master’s degree in Education at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). Grace was only able to continue with her studies later in life because, according to an agreement between her husband and herself, they took turns to study. “*With me is like we [referring to her husband] were taking turns to go to school ...*” and she was able to enrol for the Master’s degree once he

had completed his studies. She was encouraged by the support she got from her husband and her children, and was very determined and committed to completing her degree. Although she had a helper at home, she believed that the helper was not supposed to do everything and that she “*still have to cook meals for the family.*” She mentioned that her husband was “*very traditional in the African way, preferring food that was cooked and prepared by his wife.*” The children often complained about the helper and Grace was then called upon to solve the conflicts.

*Participant 3: Lenah*

Lenah was 31 years old, and had two boys, four years and two months old. She already had a Master’s diploma in Engineering, and at the time of the interview she was registered for a Higher Certificate in Industrial Engineering at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). At her workplace, Lenah held a management position and often had to manage conflict among workers. She revealed that she often “*regretted enrolling for further studies because it deprived her of quality time with her children.*” She had a helper who stayed with the family and helped Lenah look after her young children.

*Participant 4: Naomi*

Naomi was 35 years old and held a management position at her place of work. She had one boy of six years, but felt that she did not give him the attention he deserved because of her studies. Naomi was registered for a Master’s degree in Philosophy of Science and Technology at Stellenbosch University, which is in the Western Cape Province, some 1,600 km from her hometown. She felt that her studies required a lot of her time, interfering with her roles as mother and wife, and when

she tried to compensate by going out with her child to the movies, she found it “*boring and fell asleep during the show.*” This frustrated her even further, because she was then unable to discuss the movie with her child afterwards. She felt the role strain particularly when she had to compromise on her studies for the family.

*Participant 5: Monica*

Monica was aged 31, stayed with her fiancé and their one son of 13 years and was expecting the second child. She received much support from her fiancé and the child, which made her believe that it all “*depended on her to use the opportunity to complete her studies for the Diploma in Accounting.*” She had been promoted to a new job as assistant director and that was in line with what she was studying. Monica did not have a helper because of financial reasons.

*Participant 6: Helle*

During the time of the interview Helle was 38 years old, married and had three boys of 8, 5 and 4 years of age. She had been promoted to an executive position and had registered for an MBA with the University of Pretoria. She received support from her understanding husband and respectful young children, as well as from the helper who took responsibility for most of the housework. However, she felt that the “*work context sometimes did not support her enough*”, providing time for studying, and that this impacted negatively on her health. She tried to meet all her role demands by spending some quality time with her family, reading bedtime stories to the children and attending functions with her husband, but this became more difficult because of her studies. She indicated that she was “*a God fearing and a*

*praying woman*” who believed that God helped her to cope with juggling all the role demands.

*Participant 7: Ruth*

Ruth, aged 35 at the time of the interview, was married and had two girls aged 13 and five years respectively. She was employed as a lecturer and wanted to be a role model as a student by getting good grades for her coursework in the MBA degree for which she was registered. Because of her heavy workload, she felt that her studies deprived her of the opportunity to see her children through their developmental progress, particularly helping her eldest during her teenage stage.

*Participant 8: Hope*

At the time of the interview, Hope was 47 years, married and had two children (a boy and a girl), aged 16 and 12 respectively. She occupied a management position at her workplace. Her husband was also studying and she felt they did not have sufficient quality time with the children, especially the one that was living at home (the boy was away at boarding school during the week). Her parents lived far away, but she expressed gratitude for her daughter’s friend’s mother and other neighbours who supported her by taking the child to the movies so that she could study. She was registered for an MBA with the University of Pretoria, and was “*thankful to God for helping her cope with the difficulties of juggling different roles*” and to the helper who did everything at home, including buying groceries.

*Participant 9: Alice*

Alice was 31 years old married and had one child, a boy of 13 years old, and was expecting her second child. She occupied the position of deputy director and was registered for her Master's degree in Public Administration at the University of Cape Town, in the Western Cape Province, some 1,600 km away from her hometown. She received support from the husband and the child, but she had no helper because of financial reasons.

*Participant 10: Mavis*

Mavis was 43 years old, married and had two children, a boy of 20 years old, and a girl who was 14 years old. She was registered for the Diploma in Public Administration, and did a lot of juggling such as “*collecting children from extramural activities in the evenings.*” Her husband was considered a traditional conservative African man who did not perceive it as appropriate for a man to do household chores. However, her husband allowed her the time to study and the children also offered support by assisting, for example, with cooking. Her determination and commitment to her studies influenced other family members to start studying as well.

### **5.3 Thematic analysis**

At the heart of qualitative data analysis is the task of discovering themes. The themes that I identified came from the literature review, the phenomena being studied, my theoretical orientation as researcher, and personal experience (Bulmer, in Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The themes were clustered together as meaningful units for gaining insight into how mature

women students cope with the multiple tasks of work, family and community life. Five major themes emerged from the textual data:

1. Being a mature student at university—studying as a mature women student (MS)
2. Work related experiences—congruence and incongruence between work and study (WS)
3. Personal development and self-concept (S)
4. Family life and community involvement (including the extended family)—influence of studying on others (F)
5. Coping with multiple roles (C)

These themes and the interpretations were discussed separately integrating the literature and giving give plausible accounts of the challenges and constraints posed to the ten women in this project when they became students at the respective institutions.

#### **5.4 Being a mature student**

In describing their experiences, the mature women students all indicated that they returned to their studies later in life because they considered furthering their education important for their career advancement. Although most of the women already had some qualification from an earlier period in their lives, they regarded further qualifications as an opportunity to improve their job opportunities or to enhance their capacity in the job they had at the time of the interview.

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Letta  | Mmm... what excites me is that what I am studying is in line with what I am doing at work so... it's a challenge and it's an eye opener. |
| Monica | Mm... I'm studying because I need to develop myself. I have dreams to fulfil; I have no choice but to upgrade myself.                    |
| Hope   | I actually study because by profession I'm a pharmacist, and I realised that   |

I had to change my career because there were far too many things that did not work and I decided to get out of that industry. Not only that, I found out that most of the time I was considered a technical person, ... even though there were lots of managerial issues that I was handling, I found that I was not getting the respect that I would get with management ... emm ... emm ... you know, degree or diploma.

Alice I am studying because ... emm ... I want to upgrade my personal profile and it will also make contribution to my current work programme and future ones.

Holiday (1985) mentioned that women, particularly those who were career-oriented, usually returned to study because of career reasons. The mature women students in this project all indicated this as a reason, as well as gaining access to high-paying jobs or prospects of promotion (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; White, 2001). Hope in particular mentioned that she had been working in a laboratory for a long time and wanted a change and that this was her main reason for studying again.

Women returned to study for various reasons. Astin (in Kelly, 1987) suggested that women did not start tertiary education for negative reasons, but usually have a love of learning or a need for future financial gain. Kelly (1987) indicated that in a study evaluating mature women's motivation for higher education, 75% of women students wanted to pursue a career to gain independence, power, personal satisfaction, stimulation and validation. Kelly (1987) also purported that many women who pursued further education later in life always had the desire for higher level qualifications. Some of these women were previously disadvantaged because of financial constraints or because of cultural biases that prevented girls from studying unless they belonged to middle-class families. For some women, completing their school education was disrupted by teenage pregnancy, and they could only in adulthood fulfil a desire that was not fulfilled from childhood.

According to Pascal and Roger (1993) women returned to study because of their commitment to the labour market. Looking for a more satisfying job by furthering one's education contributed to the greater good of society. Miller (1984) stated that 87% of women derived a sense of personal accomplishment from work, and 58% indicated that they preferred work outside the family. Women "want more out of life than what ordinary jobs usually available to women could provide" (Pascal & Roger, 1993, p.19). Some women realised that they made a mistake leaving school before obtaining a qualification that would enable them to find gainful employment (Kelly, 1987). Other women felt that men had dominated the labour market keeping women in low-paying jobs for too long and that they wanted to make a difference by pursuing further education. In work and study, mature women students met a need for generativity that created a sense of self-satisfaction and creativity and made a contribution to society.

However, becoming a mature student was not always easy for these women. The women in this project felt that they had too much schoolwork and this often overwhelmed them. In their opinion lecturers treated them in the same way as full-time students, without consideration for the fact that they were not. They had to deal with what to them was a lack of understanding from lecturers who expected that they complied with all the requirements in the same way that the full-time or younger students had to. Although they did not want the lecturers to lower the standards, they expected a little more concern for their circumstances when they did not have sufficient time for projects and assignments while also coping with the responsibilities of motherhood and work. Some of the women also complained that they had difficulty accessing their lecturers, who were not available outside of regular office hours. Unfortunately for some women, lecturers did not always respond to e-mail messages. However, Monica did indicate that she perceived her lecturers as very supportive.

- Letta            Otherwise you have to beg the lecturer and get humiliated in the process by these lecturers who tend to be very rude at you.
- Lenah            Hm ... Lecturers who are not tolerant, they disregard the fact that you are a mother and worker, and they treat you as a full-time student. You try to contact them through the e-mail, telephone you know actually ... it is disappointing when your academic lecturer does not return the call or does not respond to your mails.
- Monica           We have support and access whenever we need help.

Richter-Antion (1986) already identified the difference between mature students and their younger counterparts particularly with regard to the nature of time commitments, and the difference in life experiences of traditional and non-traditional students. Mature women students faced a situation in which they had to juggle family, career and student life. They assumed a new role as students together with their expected roles as spouse, parent and worker. Although mature women did benefit from returning to higher education (Burns & Gabrich, 2001), adult students often experienced difficulties balancing the responsibilities of family, work and education at the same time. Kelly (1987) indicated that mature women students often experienced feelings of frustration and guilt when trying to fulfil each of the expectations and requirements of family, career and education. When she then added the role of student to the role demands, she experienced being overwhelmed and pointed at the insensitivities of others for not understanding her predicament.

Terrel (1990) asserted that women students often enrolled part-time in order to have time to deal with pressing family and home situations, which resulted in their taking longer to complete their training. Returning to further education had both positive and negative influences on the mature woman student. However, in this project it seemed that the positive influences predominated and even made it possible, despite perceiving lecturers as being

insensitive, for women to cope with the role overload, conflict and spill-over that resulted from juggling multiple roles.

For the most part, the mature women students also believed that they did not have the same opportunities as the full-time students had. For example, access to the library was limited and often the library would close while they were still busy looking for information. Although the libraries were open on Saturdays, they closed early, making it even more difficult for working women with a family to pursue their studies. Early closing time on Saturday was particularly difficult for some women because they first had to attend to household tasks before they could pay attention to their studies. The unavailability of other services such as photocopying facilities was also cause for concern. Mavis described this challenge quite extensively.

Mavis            There are I mean there are so many differences to when I was a young student, I used to have my own time. I didn't have kids. I mean I was full time on books. Secondly, I used to have access to the library I mean round the clock, like in the morning until 5 pm. But with this now, I mean the time when I leave the office most of the libraries are closed. And weekend is only few hours, they open maybe from 8am to 1pm. And during 8-1 I still have to do some domestic chores in the house so after 1pm the libraries are closed as compared to earlier on when I was still... still a full-time student I was enjoying all the benefits of a student.

Ruth             At night the facilities are closed ... mature women are not able to make photocopies ... they need to provide more academic support.

According to Merrill (1999) mature women students experienced organisational structures at college or university that were better suited to eighteen-year-olds. The woman had to adjust to an institutional culture and organisational structures that were not considerate

of her specific needs as a mature student. Although higher education institutions had large numbers of mature students, there was little evidence that staff attitudes and institutional practices had caught up with the needs of this group (Burns & Gabrich, 2001; Merrill, 1999). Mature students were not always received and accommodated with sympathy and understanding, and a “rigid system and inflexible rules make it more difficult for adults to function as undergraduate students in the same way as younger students” (Merrill, 1999, p.201).

Some academic staff was also not prepared to meet the needs of mature students and expected them to be the same as younger students with no additional responsibilities. Few institutions for higher learning in South Africa adjusted their administrative procedures or operating hours to cater for mature students and the time that these students had available for such procedures. Furthermore, universities did not adjust their time-tables to accommodate mature students, most likely because they still preferred full-time, younger students to enrol in their courses.

Faith (1988) indicated that “women in distance education often face the same basic problems of too much to do and too little time to do it well” (p.156). Part-time residential students also had a more marginalised student experience than their full-time counterparts. To them being a student occupied a smaller fraction of their daily lives, and campus life was very different in the evenings from the daytime. Furthermore, part-time courses might be restricted, leaving the mature student who wanted to enhance her career prospects through further education with a limited or unsuitable choice (Merrill, 1999).

Apart from the above, some of the mature women students, although still in their midlife, experienced the impact of slowing down of their information processing abilities (Newman & Newman, 1999). As they grew older, they tended to become forgetful and some of the women participating in this project alluded to the fact that they were slow to grasp new

concepts or in reading the vast amounts of materials required of them. This made studying at a mature age more difficult for some, particularly if they had to compete with younger students who had the benefit of continuing their studies without interruption.

- Lenah ...because now we are getting older our memories are not as sharp as before, and it is not easy to remember the definition any longer.
- Hope I cannot read fast. I never knew that I could not read because you get all these thousands and thousands of articles that you have to read and analyse...
- Mavis ...being a student at my age you know sometimes we usually forget things even if ... I mean I've studied ... if I need to put those things on paper I usually forget them because there are so many things in my head so I need to go back and you know re-write or redo whatever I did earlier on.

### **5.5 Congruence and incongruence between work and study**

In terms of the relationship between employment and studies, the analysis pointed towards the impact of work on studies and vice versa. This in particular was an aspect that was not mentioned in the literature, which rather focused on the relationship between work and family. All the interviewees indicated that what they were studying directly related to their respective jobs. This made it easier for them to understand the learning material even if they were slower grasping some of the concepts, and they could also implement what they learnt in their work situation. Mature women students in full-time employment thus considered studying a great benefit to their work.

- Naomi What I'm studying is relevant to my work ... So whenever I go I come back with new knowledge that I can apply to my work.
- Alice I learn things that I can come back and implement practically at work,

- rather than then when I learnt things in theory and it ends up being just theory.
- Grace            Studying in line with my current job ...
- Letta            Mmm ... what excites me is that what I am studying is in line with what I am doing at work so ... it in a way capacitates me.
- Monica          So for me learning and getting better, I'm able to give better service.

Applying their studies in the context of their work gave them a feeling of efficiency and confidence to perform better in their work and in their studies. Richter-Antion (1986) mentioned that mature students had the advantage that they could easily draw from their previous experience to support their understanding of concepts in the learning environment. The participants in this project indicated, for example, that when some concepts with which they were familiar were introduced in class, they were able to associate (*"I find that when they introduce new concepts I'm able to associate"*) and grasp much faster than when altogether new concepts were discussed (*"...but at this age the maturity also helps you understand things better..."*). They also indicated their perception that younger students became irritated when they, as mature students with broader work experience, wanted to discuss these topics (Pascal & Roger, 1993).

Another benefit of combining work and study was that their employers, in most cases, granted them bursaries for furthering their education. Alice indicated that *"they do if related to your job description"*, while Helle said that the *"employer pays for your studies"*. Pascal and Roger (1993) indicated that sponsorship had a significant influence in encouraging mature women to return to and complete further education. Because they often had to pay back the grant if they did not pass a course, it encouraged them to work harder and gain the qualifications. Grace said that if *"the government is giving them ... mmm ... a bursary they are forced to read"*, and Monica indicated that *"it's good that it [the work] provides bursaries"*.

However, apart from the benefits, the participants did experience a lot of stress when they had to juggle the two roles of work and studies. In both the work and the study context, they had to comply with deadlines for submitting written reports or assignments. If timelines clashed, they experienced increasing demands on their time and juggling the roles of worker and student became very stressful. They complained about lack of time to balance the two roles, and felt that they sometimes had to compromise on either of the two so as to cope with the demands.

For all the women that I interviewed, the cost of living demanded that they should work while studying, thus having to deal with the increased work load and the expectations of all their adult roles. Hope indicated that “*there is no way ... both of you have got to work*”, and Lenah said that “*the cost of living is too high ... one salary is not enough, that is why we have to keep on studying*”. It became clear that apart from valuing education and studying for career advancement, the women I interviewed wanted to uphold their lifestyle (“...*my husband needs that portion of my money ... by the way our lifestyle is based on that*”). This demanded that they continued with their full-time employment while simultaneously studying for higher qualifications.

Whereas the Bantu Education Act of 1953 stipulated that blacks should not be overqualified for positions they held in the labour market, the mature women in this project indicated that they were, as members of a newly instituted democratic society in South Africa after 1994, moving away from such discriminatory policies towards equal opportunities for all people in the future. They were using their love of learning to create a new future for the next generation. This was done by achieving competence, managing their emotions, becoming freer in interpersonal relationships, becoming autonomous, and clarifying purposes for developing integrity (Holiday, 1985; Kelly, 1987). Almost all the women indicated that their

involvement in further education enabled them to contribute more fully to their work context and to a just society.

## 5.6 Personal development and self-concept

According to Erikson (1963) personal development was one of the developmental tasks of adulthood. In a sense it formed part of the woman's striving for generativity, a stage during which she was focusing on making a contribution to family, community, and society and leaving a legacy for the next generation. In this project the pursuit of personal goals became evident in the reasons why women enrolled for further education, and in their ability to cope with additional role demands.

The women participating in this project indicated that their advanced studies served to expand their horizons and gave them an opportunity for personal development. Studying kept them up to date with current knowledge systems and provided them with new information in their field. In general the women believed that studying helped them to develop personally, and Helle specifically indicated that she studied because of her love of books and her "*habit for studying*".

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| Lenah | ... it also increases my knowledge on my managerial skills or management related matters.  |
| Grace | We shouldn't stop reading, you are always up to date, you don't feel inferior.   |
| Helle | I love studying so the benefit is that it keeps stimulating me intellectually. And like I told you right from the beginning it's a habit for me so it's a very good habit. |

As discussed by Holiday (1985) and Kelly (1987), two broad reasons for mature women to re-enter the education system emerged. Apart from career advancement, personal

development, a love of learning, the status of being a college student, and an appetite for education encouraged them to enrol for advanced degree programmes. The women that I interviewed all indicated similar attitudes and desires for self-improvement and realisation of their generative potentialities.

Another aspect of personal development that was highlighted by the women that I interviewed was their belief that through studying they gained respect from partners, colleagues, and the community. Their studies enhanced their dignity as women, and made them feel good about themselves. Furthermore, studying gave them the opportunity to mix with other learned people such as executives and lecturers on an equal footing, which enhanced their self-esteem even more. In this regard, they not only increased their own positive self-regard, but also gained regard from significant others, which encouraged them to realise their full potential and achieve self-fulfilment (Faith, 1988).

Hope	Ever since we started studying and meeting other people who are executives in their own way, we have sort of broadened.
Grace	Even when the learned make comments, you can tell.
Ruth	Wanting to be a better person.

In an environment such as the labour market where men dominated for such a long time and women were kept in low-paying jobs, women often lacked self-esteem (Faith, 1988; Kelly, 1987). Pursuing further education seemed to strengthen their self-esteem, helping them to build confidence to compete in the labour market and in interpersonal relationships. In some cases, it was only later in life that the woman had time to devote herself to furthering her education and to gain confidence in her own abilities to pursue educational goals and realise her potential.

All the participants indicated that they highly valued the ability to speak with knowledge and confidence, and that they were aware that these qualities were also valued in society (David et al., 1993). Intellectual status elevated the women and put them on the same level as other educated people. Because they valued independent thinking and resourcefulness in life management, qualities they used to observe in other learned people, they pursued further education in order to gain these qualities for themselves. Overall, education helped these women to establish positive self-esteem (“*that makes me efficient and competent...*”), self-directedness (“*I feel great, you know*”), assertiveness (“*...get the respect that I deserve*”), and independence (“*it gives you respect in the community*”).

Some of the participants believed that studying boosted their personal profile with regard to parental, work and cultural generativity (Newman & Newman, 1999). They felt that by achieving the educational goals they had set for themselves, they not only contributed to their own self-esteem, but also became role models and motivators for future generations. In this regard they could fulfil the responsibilities of adulthood to provide nurturance and guidance to the young, develop skills that they could pass on to others, and were creatively involved in advancing a culture of learning.

Ruth                      Wanting to engrave your name to other people’s future for the next generation. What I want to see happening is using my knowledge to profit women. To make sure that I use my knowledge to develop other women and also help them, mentor them emm ... coach them to attain, to be sure of themselves, to be assertive and to understand that they do have the capabilities that they can make it in life. Sending the positive spin-offs to other people, women.

Stewart and Van der Water (in Newman & Newman, 1999) suggested that there were three phases of generativity:

- Motivation as the generative desire to have an impact on the world expressed in the person's goals.
- Belief in one's capacity for generative action when realising opportunities and a growing confidence to have an impact in society through, for example, procreativity and parenting.
- A subjective sense of generative accomplishment when reflecting on one's life to see if generative actions have been achieved.

For the women that I interviewed, these phases culminated on the one hand in their ability to re-enter higher education institutions and become involved in furthering their own educational goals, and on the other hand setting an example to the next generation. This resulted in a subjective sense of well-being that could not have been achieved without furthering their educational goals despite the challenges and constraints. Through their studies they also served as role models to their children, instilling a learning culture in them (Kelly, 1987). Just as career mothers became role models for their daughters when they were satisfied with her their decision, women who were satisfied with their educational achievements had a positive influence on their children.

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| Letta  | My girl says that by the time she is our age she will have long completed her PhD.  |
| Monica | Sometimes it's exciting for him [speaking of her son] to see that his mom also learns. So for him I think maybe in a way it's an encouragement.               |
| Helle  | I mean 'Moroka' and myself ensure that our children have role models because we are setting a foundation. Chances are that they will follow in our footsteps. |

However, when a mother became a student, her role demands expanded, adding to her already existing responsibilities and pressures of being a spouse, caretaker of the children and manager of the household, and being an employer (if she was working as well). Additional pressure from lecturers/professors demanded time and effort that she had to “borrow” somewhere else (Burns & Gabrich, 2001), and she had to exert additional effort to find a balance. Because most women wanted it all, they tried to be “superwomen” who were prepared to combine family, career and studies. The major problem was trying to keep all parts of their lives in equilibrium (“... *you try to cover it by working here and there in the home until it is your time to study*”). Women attempted this because they thought they had no choice or because they wanted more security, which they sought in financial, educational and personal goals.

### **5.7 Influences of studying on family and other people**

Erikson (1963) indicated that women in middle adulthood were primarily concerned with nurturing and caring. Newman and Newman (1999) indicated that even when both partners were equally involved in the household management, most couples tended to see childcare and certain household tasks as primarily the wife’s domain. In the traditional African culture women were also considered the primary caretakers of home, husband and children (Burns & Gabrich, 2001). The women I interviewed also indicated that they experienced further stressors from cultural expectations. They emphasised that, according to their culture, household tasks and caring for the children still prevailed as the primary task of the woman in traditional African families (Kayongo-Male & Onyango, 1991).

However, the women that I interviewed manifested something else. Instead of staying at home to look after husband and children, they were pursuing their education in order to get a better paid job that could add to the family’s income and living standards. They indicated

they that studying as only for a particular period of time and that they would be able to resume their motherly duties soon without too much damage to their children's development.

Alice            Because you are not going to study for the rest of your life, it's just maybe for two years and then after that you can concentrate on your family.

Ruth            ... you sit down with them and make them understand that you are going to take 2-3 years now of study.

Helle            As long as you can convince them that you know this is just a phase of studying is not here to stay it's just a stage.

Despite this positive attitude, mature women students often experienced feelings of frustration and guilt when trying to fulfil the expectations and requirements of family and education (Kelly, 1987; Moen, 1992). Similar to a working mother, the mature woman student experienced considerable strain in trying to meet her commitments while allowing adequate time for nurturance and recreational activities with her children, intimacy with her husband, and maintenance of the emotional climate and physical environment of the home (Beale, in Newman & Newman, 1999). The women complained that they were forced to juggle many roles at the same time. Simultaneous with being a student, they had to consider their role as mother, as wife, as caregiver of the family, and as community member. All these roles required their full attention, and competed for their time, which lead to stress and tiredness. The interviewees commented, for example, about extreme tiredness that prevented them from playing all the roles as perfectly as they would have preferred.

Lenah            It's not really easy to get time to study.

Hope            It's extremely demanding and there's very little time to prepare for either work and for school.

- Helle I don't spend enough time emm ... with my husband, I don't spend enough time with my children.
- Mavis You need to get enough time to study, but with us as mothers we don't have enough time to study because still we have to look after the children, in the afternoon we have to make, prepare food for the family. We need to help children with their homework.
- Ruth You don't get to go together as both partner and wife, one is busy with the books.
- Hope I go with them even though I fall asleep (laughing) in the movies.
- Naomi I would like to spend more time with my family.  
I go with him only to fall asleep in the movie and when we get out he wants to discuss the movie but you are not able to discuss mainly because they are for kids but also that I am tired.

The one role that stood out as causing most stress to the women I interviewed was that of being a mother. Most of the time the women felt that studying forced them to compromise on their mother role, which was actually their main obligation in the family. At the same time the role strain they experienced left them wishing that they had obtained a higher degree before they got married. Ruth in particular advised younger women to study before they get married. But although frustrated, the women perceived these feelings as their own problem and blamed themselves for lack of proper organisation of their responsibilities.

- Letta If you are going to delegate your responsibilities to a helper, it does not go down well with you as a mother. Because cooking and caring for the family is the mother's responsibility You feel like you are escaping from your responsibilities, neglecting, you feel obliged, after all is not their problem that you are only studying now at this age of your life. Don't make it their problem, you have to do your part as a mother ... society, our black culture is like that, house work is the mother's responsibility.

- Lenah ... because when you look at the black men they are not expected to help with house chores or children.
- Grace Hey (laughing) it is our responsibility, everything in the house, actually we have to do everything in the home. ... You also have your own work assignments that you have to do but you need to work in the kitchen from there eh ... you sit down and after that you are tired you can't sit down and do your school work.
- Naomi When I get home I am wife and mother, I take over my responsibilities as such. But also when you come back from work in most cases you are tired, and you just want to put your feet up and do nothing and you find yourself having to assist with the homework of the child, prepare dinner, ensure that everything is going according to plan in the house, and that is not always hm ... easy to manage.
- Ruth And remember our cultural background, I am married to a Xhosa man who in his own mind a wife must be there, must provide, must be able to cook and all that and when you don't, when you are not able to do that it becomes a challenge.

When women enrolled for further education, they were often confronted with feelings of inadequacy concerning home and childcare. "Both family and education were indeed greedy for the allocation of the women's 'doing' time" (Edwards, 1993 p.65). As a result of the many demands on their time and effort, mature women sacrificed family events for studies. They compensated by cooking less ("*Nna ga ke sa apaya ka* [I don't do any cooking at weekends because] *ke na le class* [I've got class], *my girl cooks*") and leaving household management for times when there were no assignments due or examinations to be written (Kelly, 1987).

Furthermore, mature women struggled with attending the children's school activities when these happened to be on the same day or at the same time as her lectures (Burns & Gabrich, 2001). Both Mavis and Ruth indicated that they could not attend their children's

school activities, and Ruth also added that she had to turn her daughter away when asked to coach them for netball because she had to study.

- Mavis            So I usually don't afford to attend six o'clock meeting but after seven I usually go to meetings.
- Ruth             You don't attend to school issues, you sort of like feel you overlook these things or alternatively postpone by e-mail with the principal.

All participants spoke about an element of guilt they felt for neglecting their children while pursuing their studies. They felt guilty that they could not take proper care of their children while studying, and commented that they did not have time to monitor their children's school work. In some cases there was a decline in their children's school achievement leading to lower marks, which particularly concerned them.

- Ruth             She used to be very good with mathematics. Now the grades are going down. And because I don't have time to attend to her grades ... That's why sometimes I refer them, go to aunt, aunt knows this but it does not replace you as a mother anyway.
- Letta            I get so impatient, tsamaya ko go Ellen a go thuse, [go to Ellen to help you], a kere Ellen dilo tse o di dirile wa di itse [Ellen knows these things she did them at school].
- Alice            ...kids have got homework you need to help them with homework.

Furthermore, women with very young children felt guilty that they did not have time to read bedtime stories to their children or to assist them with their evening prayers. Their religion was important to these women and they wanted their children to grow up in the tradition. Thus, the fact that they were not available to lead their children in the Christian ways created a sense that they were at fault and this was unacceptable to them. Some even

regretted having enrolled for further studies because they could not give the kind of attention to their children that they believed was required.

- Helle Negative is just that you know, we read bedtime stories and sometimes I am not there ...
- Lenah ...read the kids a story and for evening prayers at home...
- Naomi ...and in order to raise your child properly you have to learn all the things about church rules.

The mature women students that I interviewed also perceived that their studies had an impact on the extended family. While she was still in the younger age range and did not need to take care of her parents in late adulthood, her parents and even her siblings could not always understand their drive for further education at the expense of family life. Some even mentioned that the husband's family was, for example, not supportive and thought that she was wasting her husband's money or did not take proper care of the grandchildren.

- Letta They thought I was paid for by their brother only to find that it was my parents paying for my studies.
- Helle My in-laws do not understand. Maybe they think I am trying to outsmart my husband.

Others did, however, receive much needed support from the extended family who helped her to continue with her studies as a mature woman. Ruth mentioned: *"My father would, for example, go fetch my daughter at school when I'm not there, my sister would fill in and fetch ... you know, that sort of thing. They will take them for a weekend for me to study."* Mavis, on the other hand, had inspired her family to also further their education, saying: *"Most of my family have started studying also..."*

The interviewees also indicated that, apart from family, work and educational responsibilities, they had church and community commitments (Terrel, 1990). Although this was in line with the generative actions of middle adulthood of becoming engaged in creating, maintaining and offering to society at large (McAdams et al., 1993), it meant additional stress for the woman who was also enrolled for further education. The women I interviewed appeared to be rather extensively involved in church activities and because religion was important to them, they did not want to relinquish this role while pursuing their educational goals.

- Helle        At the moment I am preparing for a presentation tomorrow at church, amongst other things. I finished writing [an exam] on Tuesday, then the very same day I receive a call that I have to make a presentation.
- Lenah        I forget the other thing you have got commitments to ya ko kerekeng [church] duties, attend meetings for the department that you are responsible for, you have to go out because some of the duties of the church office work take place on Sunday.
- Mavis        The church is also part of the thing that need my attention, so weekends I need to go to church, I need to prepare some of the things as I belong to some of the organisation in the church.

It seemed therefore that furthering her educational goals had a particular impact on her commitments to family life and added significant role strain to mature women's lives. A mature woman student experienced role overload, role conflict and spill-over from juggling the roles of worker, mother and spouse (Moen, 1992; Newman & Newman, 1999). Role overload occurred as a result of too many demands and expectations to handle in the time allowed. For example, a mature woman student has to monitor children's school work, drop

the children at school, and collect younger children from aftercare while also preparing for an assignment or examination related to her studies (Burns & Gabrich, 2001).

Role conflict occurred when the demands and expectations of various roles conflicted with each other. Mlondo (1987) stated that working women experienced conflicting loyalties about their responsibilities as workers and as mothers. Women were committed to providing support to children and husband. They put the interest of their families above their own, and when they became involved in the role of being a student, it became even more challenging. Even in middle adulthood, when children were supposedly more independent, coping with studies and parenting simultaneously could be challenging. Lachman and James (1997) noted that the developmental tasks in middle adulthood focus on educating adolescents to become young adults, and this task became more difficult when the mother did not have sufficient time to build an intimate relationship with her teenager.

Spill-over of roles also occurred when the demands of or preoccupations about one role interfered with the ability to carry out another role. According to Chickering and Havighurst (in Terrel, 1990) mature women students have heavy demands on their time, energy, and emotions, which cause roles to exert pressure on one another for using any available time possible. Padula (2001) believed that family demands in particular caused conflict and emotional distress because of conflicting values between school and family. Although they were goal oriented and had little interest in extracurricular activities at the institution where they enrolled as students, they were heavily committed to various school, church, family and work activities that also took up their time. The most common conflict was therefore lack of enough time to do everything needed for the family, career and studies.

Beale (in Newman & Newman, 1999) asserted that the combination of role overload, role conflict, and spill-over could lead to reduced satisfaction at work and in family roles, and a decline in the person's sense of well-being. Although most of the research on role overload,

conflict and spill-over referred to women trying to balance job and family demands, it seemed that mature women students experienced similar and added conflicts. Burns and Gabrich (2001) indicated that adult students experienced difficulties balancing family, work and college life. However, although about 33% of respondents in their study reported high conflict, it was notable that the majority either reported moderate or low conflict. It thus seemed as though women experienced more positive changes from their enrolment at college or university, and this motivated them to continue despite the many difficulties, guilt feelings and frustrations they had to face.

## **5.8 Support systems and coping**

Although the mature women students experienced role overload and excessive demands on their time and energy, it appeared that the interviewees had, at least in their experience, sufficient support systems in place to help them cope with their studies. Apart from their own parents and siblings who helped them when needed, they also received support from their husbands and children. Furthermore, they relied extensively on their own coping strengths and spirituality to manage the multiplicity of roles they had to deal with as mature women students.

Whereas some women indicated that their husbands were traditional and expected them to still take care of household duties, most of the interviewees said that their partners supported them in continuing with their studies. For example, her husband would stay up late to keep his wife company until she had finished her studies for the day, he would fetch her at university when she finished classes late, or he would take the children out on weekends to give her more time for her academic work. Monica in particular indicated that her fiancé assisted with the cooking, which allowed her to study. Their children were also supportive

and encouraged the mother to continue with her studies. Letta indicated that her daughter would cook the meals over the weekend while she attended lectures.

- Letta            He pushes me to study a\_re [saying] “don’t sleep, go and study I’ll watch TV while I’m waiting for you”.
- Grace           He ke sa tsoge ka (I don’t wake up) at 2am Peter (not his real name) will knock, saying ‘mommy wake up’.

Kirby, Biever, Martinez and Gomez (2003) indicated that women students’ husbands were more understanding and shared responsibilities at home. This brought the couple closer as they depended on each other to make the woman’s studies possible. Because the woman student had her own interests there was also an overall decrease in tension in the household that could improve marriage relations (Kelly, 1987). Some women indicated that, since they returned to study, their husbands appreciated the domestic work more, and there was more agreement about gender-role expectations.

A very important coping mechanism for the women that I interviewed was their religion. They believed that God gave them the strength to cope and that they would not have been able to continue without their religious value system. Helle in particular said that “*without that I don’t know how other people do it, seriously.*” She referred to being prayerful for strength and wisdom from God so as to cope as a mother in juggling her responsibilities. It seemed that prayer and putting God first in everything she did, being committed to playing her role at church, provided the women with inner strength that helped them pursue their goals. For instance, Helle indicated that the day she was writing an exam, she received a telephone call asking her to prepare a presentation for the church. She said that an inner voice said to her “*you have been doing all these things but you don’t want to serve God*” and so she

accepted the invitation, knowing that one day she will get a much better reward than just getting the degree.

- Helle I am a praying woman, that's my greatest source of strength.  
I think my biggest one is just my commitment to God.
- Hope Another thing is that God helps me to cope. If it were not for Him it would be very difficult to cope.
- Lenah ... not all women can be able to cope with that kind of conflict, hence I say it's only determination with the grace of God.

Apart from their religion, the women that I interviewed all indicated that they had to rely extensively on their inner strengths and own abilities to organise and plan, and to commit to thorough time management in order to cope with the many responsibilities of a mature women student. They saw their intrinsic abilities to juggle multiple roles as a major source for making time for their studies while also attending to family and housekeeping demands.

- Monica I use the weekends, more especially at night it's much quieter [to study]. Although planning as well comes in, like cooking once a week but different lifestyles.
- Lenah My timetable is always when they have fallen asleep, I find time to study or early in the morning. I think planning is very important, revise it on weekly basis ... hence I say it's only determination.
- Naomi But it's all about eh ... management of time. Sometimes you study till late on Saturday.
- Ruth Time management becomes the key as a strategy to balance all these roles and communicating your plan.
- Letta I stay until 6 or 7 pm so that I can push as much as I can [at work] ...
- Helle First year I was doing after hours MBA but now this year I changed to modular ... that is in trying to address the issue of time. I sleep and study at night.

Their personal determination and working towards the goals they had set for themselves also helped the women to focus and commit to their studies (Holliday, 1985; Padula, 1994). They were determined, serious, and highly motivated to achieve their educational goals despite role overload and additional stress. One wonders if women would be so committed if someone else set the goals. Commitment by mature woman students to their personal goals also became apparent in their discontent with lecturers who were unavailable for appointments or did not show up for a lecture (Richter-Antion, 1986). They did not only feel cheated of their time and money, but also of attaining their personal goals. Hope specifically indicated that when she did her junior degree it was simply like a transition from high school without any goal orientation. Now she was committed and wanted to attain her goal in the best possible way.

- Monica ... compared to younger students, here its goal oriented ... You do this because somehow you are halfway through your goals. I would say, the future is much more clear so it makes your goal more attainable and it also gives you the courage.
- Hope It's the determination ... it's the determination more than anything else... When I went to the university, for instance I did my junior degree in 1976/8 ... so I went to the university because I had passed matric and it was natural progression, but I didn't put as much effort as I am putting now as a more mature student. I was just an average student who was going along with parties and all that. I don't have time for all that now. I am much more focused because I know I need to, you know to obtain this ... hmm ... degree.

Despite their determination, however, some women were concerned that they would not be able to complete their studies as expected because of juggling many roles. Terrel

(1990) mentioned that women students often enrolled part-time, which resulted in their taking longer to complete their training. Naomi in particular was doubtful whether she would be able to finish in time, saying: “*I would like to finish my studies in record time and I’m not sure if is possible.*” Ruth commented that she would like to send a warning to younger students to be more committed:

Ruth            One recommendation I would make to other women is not study when you’re old. Make sure that you study when you are still young. Although you learn continuously through short courses but you won’t have much impact into your family. Or other alternative will be starting the family late when you have finished studying because it is really ... really it’s traumatic to see your family going through this process and you are not there for them wa bona (you see).

## 5.9 Conclusion

In describing their experiences of juggling multiple roles, the mature women students that I interviewed mentioned that they studied because of financial obligations and the lifestyle of their age group. They experienced role strain from the many roles that required an equal share of their time, but they managed to cope because they had personal goals to achieve and would not relinquish those no matter what. By utilising their inner strengths and managing their time well they were able to cope and had thus far been successful in balancing their multiple roles. Although they were encouraged and supported by their partners and children, and sometimes also their families and the community, they still had to deal with the lack of support from the institutions where they were enrolled.

Above all the mature women student were able to cope with the multiplicity of roles because they had determination, were focused and committed, and wanted to achieve success in their educational goals. Holliday (1985) and Padula (1994) referred to the distinct

characteristics of mature women students. Both authors indicated that mature women students were serious, determined, enthusiastic, highly motivated, eager to learn, and academically successful. They showed greater need for independence and were more outgoing and assertive than their younger counterparts. They also showed reduced anxiety and better relationships with their children and partners, because appropriate attachment relationships had already been formed. Many of the women in this project also found their main strength in religion and maintaining their involvement in religious activities.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of mature women students in juggling the multiplicity of roles they face during their adulthood stage of life. The lack of literature particularly on the African women's experiences of being a student while also dealing with the roles of being a mother, wife and employee inspired this research. I explored the women's experiences using a qualitative approach with semi-structured individual interviews and a thematic analysis of the textual data. In this final chapter I reflected on the major findings and the methods of evaluating the credibility and trustworthiness of the processes and outcomes of the project. I also considered the limitations and made some recommendations for future research in the field.

#### 6.2 Objectives and outcomes

The objective of this project was to gain an understanding of the thoughts, feelings and experiences of mature black women in a South African community with regard to the role strain and role conflict they might have had while enrolled for further education at a higher education institution. Mature women students were defined as women who were in the adult stage of development and had to deal with personal, family, employment and community life tasks. I interviewed ten black women in Pretoria, a major city in South Africa, all of whom were enrolled at various higher education institutions across the country. They were all either married or in a long-term relationship, had children and were working in full-time employment. Although some of these women afforded the services of a baby sitter or domestic helper, some could not do so because of financial reasons.

Being a student later in life added particularly to the role overload and spill-over that these women experienced. It brought additional stress to the woman's already busy lifestyle, and she had to employ various coping mechanisms to deal with the responsibilities of the multiple roles she was engaged with. Apart from having to perform in their roles as mothers, workers and active members of the community, they added the role of student to an already busy schedule and had to juggle the different roles in order to attend to all their responsibilities.

The participants in this study commented on various aspects of being a mature student that both coincided with what had been documented in the literature and added new knowledge to the field. They enrolled for further studies for a variety of reasons, including career development, a better salary and a better lifestyle. Because they were all in full-time employment, it seemed that improving their job opportunities and being well-prepared for a better job were significant reasons for enrolling in further education (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Holliday, 1985). They specifically indicated that studying kept them up to date with current issues and matters in their field of study and made them more competent in their workplace.

Personal reasons also seemed to be important to the women who participated in this study. They indicated specifically that they gained on a personal level from studying again at a later stage in life, and that it gave them confidence when engaging in conversation with learned people. It seemed that generativity, the psychosocial expectation of the adult life stage according to Erikson (1963), was particularly evident mature women students' personal reasons for further education. The participants were committed to personal strivings or goals, which gave them a sense that they were involved in something worthwhile not only for their own benefit, but also for future generations (their children and other women in the community). In general, the mature women students that I interviewed felt good about

studying and felt that other women could see its importance and would do likewise. It helped them with managerial skills, boosted their self-esteem and also encouraged their own children, brothers and sisters to study. It also became apparent that they continued to serve the community and became role models to younger women at church and in the neighbourhood.

Furthermore, the mature woman student also experienced mixed emotions once she had enrolled and got involved in the demands of being a student. A concern for not being able to fulfil their parenting and housekeeping responsibilities left some of the women with a sense of guilt, while others outright expressed that they felt like dropping out and regretting every having started with further education. Their sense of helplessness and low self-esteem emerged when the lecturer returned their work and they had not achieved the marks they hoped for. For the most part these emotions surfaced because they felt that there was not enough time to do all the things required of them in the important roles they had as mature women.

However, in expressing their views, the participants revealed that they employed different strategies to cope with the role conflict they experienced once they enrolled for further studies (Frankel, 1993). With regard to structural role redefinition the women coped by modifying the external demands and negotiating the expectations of others regarding her performance. Despite being from more traditional African backgrounds, which posed particular demands on the role of the mother as nurturer and caregiver in the home, some women indicated that their husbands and children supported them and made it possible for them to pursue their educational goals. Husbands would not necessarily take over the household tasks, but would rather support their wives in different ways such as taking the children out for the day or picking her up from university when she had to stay late for

classes. Community support was also evident, which enabled the women to have more time for studying while neighbours and friends took care of the children.

Personal role redefinition became evident in the way that the mature women students in this study reduced the role conflict they experienced. She established her priorities, ignored role demands that she could not comply with, and found balance between her own needs and those of others by focussing on important things rather than minor frustrations. In this regard, her commitment to her personal goals and her determination to succeed gave her a sense of directedness that enhanced her self-esteem. Instead of trying to modify the expectations, perceptions or behaviour of others, she utilised her inner strengths to pursue her goals and for some of the women in this study, her religious affiliation was a particular source of inner strength.

Finally, some mature women students also applied reactive role behaviour, in which they attempted resolving the role conflict by improving the quality of their role performance (Frankel, 1993). They planned carefully, worked longer hours, and managed the multiple tasks with the efficiency of a manager at work. Although they were often frustrated by the lack of sufficient time to act optimally in all the roles, they managed to organise their environments in such a manner that they could continue with their studies and achieve their goals.

### **6.3 Research process**

I adopted a qualitative approach to study the objectives set out in Chapter 4. A qualitative approach seemed suitable for the exploratory nature of this project, and the texts obtained from the interviews proved sufficient to gain an understanding of mature women students' experiences regarding their multiplicity of roles. The research process and procedures were explained in detail in Chapter 4 and I followed the procedures carefully in

order to obtain the textual data for analysis and for doing the thematic analysis. Nonetheless, there were some aspects of the research process that limited the outcomes of the study.

Using the snowball sampling method, I drew interviewed women who matched the criteria. They were living in the Pretoria community and were enrolled at various institutions of higher education, both in Pretoria and elsewhere in South Africa. The difficulty with snowball sampling was, however, that referrals did not always meet the criteria. Some women who were referred to me could not be interviewed even though they were willing because, for example, they still only had children of pre-school age, while another had separated from her husband, and a further two were self-employed. Although snowballing fitted the research approach and allowed me to interview women from different institutions, a more representative sample might have been possible if a different approach had been used.

Semi-structured individual interviews were employed for data collection, which allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of mature women students' experiences. The women were very forthcoming in the interviews and responded succinctly to probes and questions. But individual interviewing did not allow me to explore the experiences of a large number of women and the findings could not therefore be generalised to the entire population of mature black women students. On the other hand, generalising was not the purpose of this qualitative study. However, although the findings were limited to the local community in which I conducted the project, the findings could contribute towards the development of a comprehensive survey for exploring the topic further.

The data analysis of the transcripts was based on guidelines by Aronson (1999), and the thematic analysis enabled me to explore significant themes evolving from the women's experiences. The method of analysis was adequate to answer the research question regarding women's experiences, thoughts and feelings of being a mature student. For the most part the thematic analysis revealed issues that were also alluded to in the literature on working

women's experiences of combining family life and full-time employment. In this regard I could use the literature to support the outcomes of this study. But it did not result in significant new revelations that could add to the knowledge base. A much larger investigation, either qualitative or quantitative, would be necessary in order to achieve such an objective. A common disadvantage of qualitative research was also that objectivity was not possible and I had to take care that my own experiences of being a mature woman student did not interfere with the credibility and trustworthiness of the interpretations.

#### **6.4 Credibility and trustworthiness**

Establishing credibility and trustworthiness of the findings was a general concern throughout the project. As researcher, I was concerned with questions about “how to determine if I got it right” and “how truthful the findings were” based on the textual data that I gathered. I made use of the guidelines outlined by De Vos et al., (2002) to evaluate the procedures for collecting and testing information and included more than one case to allow comparative evaluation. In this regard I documented the questions and observations, used audiotape recordings that allowed for replay when transcribing the textual data, and utilised peer examination, referential adequacy and dense description of the sample to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

Credibility can be equated to internal validity and referred to how truthful the findings were and whether they could be believed. In this regard I ensured that the representations of the interviewees' experiences were supported with inserts of their own words uttered during the interview and as captured in the transcripts. Thus the reader can also check whether the interpretations were credible. The full transcripts were also included in this document for further reference.

Transferability in qualitative research was used to test for external validity and could be evaluated by ensuring that the research findings were also applicable to another setting or group. The focus of this project was on the experiences of mature black women students, and although only a small group was interviewed, I presented the interpretations in relation to the literature on the topic. Because there was limited literature on the specific topic, I reviewed literature of similar investigations in other settings, such as mature women's experiences in the workplace. In this regard, I could evaluate whether the themes I identified were relevant to the setting, and most likely to other groups. Generalising the findings was not the purpose of this study and I therefore did not attempt to generalise the findings to all women in similar settings. This would only be possible with a much larger and more representative sample.

With regard to dependability, I attempted to present the procedures for this project in a consistent and reproducible manner. I explained clearly and comprehensively all the procedures that I followed in this project, and it would be possible for another researcher to follow the same procedures in a follow-up study on this topic. The findings were also evaluated in terms of neutrality and by questioning whether they were representative of the interviewees' views and not a product of the my biases and prejudices. Avoiding one's personal experiences and biases was most difficult in this project. The interpretations were subjective and given my own involvement as a mature women student, I could not fully ignore my own assumptions. The findings could therefore be different when interpreted at another time and with another theoretical basis.

However, I attempted to establish trustworthiness in this project by paying attention to the aspects highlighted in Creswell (1998) and Smith (2000). Peer examination, referential adequacy, and dense descriptions were used to optimise the quality of research outputs. Peer examination involved discussing the research with colleagues and my supervisor, and I did this both before and after collecting the data and compiling the textual material for analysis.

Thus I could ensure whether the topic was worth investigating and also whether the results were acceptable and believable.

Referential adequacy was used by mechanically recording the data and accurately documenting information. By using audiotape recordings instead of only note-taking, which might be faulty at some points, I endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions. Uncovering the lived experiences of mature women students through individual interviews allowed for in-depth descriptions, and in the report on the outcomes of this project (see Chapter 5) I gave dense descriptions describing each participant and the emerging themes in depth (Smith, 2000). Providing descriptions of the research process and how I reached the conclusions could help another researcher replicate the study and enhanced the trustworthiness of this project.

## **6.5 Recommendations for future research**

It was clear from the findings that mature women students experienced difficulties in their juggling of the roles of wife, mother, worker, and student and that a strong support network was an important element for coping. Support was expected from the lecturers/professors, husband and children, and parents and parents-in-law. What made it more difficult was that even though the workplace supported mature women students financially, there were not enough time allotted prior to examination and the responsibilities of both working and studying were at time very demanding.

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations became evident:

1. Institutions including lecturers/professors and information services (libraries and photocopying rooms) should not treat mature women students the same as full-time students. Adequate provision should be made for their particular circumstances

without lowering standards just because they were engaged in multiple roles while being a student.

2. Mature women students should be encouraged to explore and utilise appropriate coping mechanisms in all areas of their lives. Ensuring good health when they were studying and learning how to cope with demands on their time by children and family were important in order to maintain good psychological well-being throughout the years of study.
3. Research could be conducted to explore the experiences of children whose mothers were students.
4. Most men, particularly African men did not believe in doing household chores and only minimally supported their wives during their studies. Psycho-education programs for men to facilitate greater understanding and possibly bring about changes in this regard, would be highly beneficial for those families where the mother enrolled for further education later in life.
5. Finally, a more comprehensive study on the particular experiences of mature women students also involving other regions and including a much larger sample could be beneficial to inform policy and ensure that women would be empowered to make the contributions to society that they were capable of.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

Juggling the multiplicity of greedy roles that require equal division of time by mature women students could be considered strenuous and difficult. As the women I interviewed indicated, there was just not enough time to perform adequately in all the roles they faced as adults. They had to employ different mechanisms to reduce their guilt feelings when they could not meet their obligation as mothers, but the women nonetheless gave their studies

priority over the needs of the families. This could be interpreted as selfish or egocentric. However, looking at the benefits of achieving higher and better qualifications for their complex lifestyles made mature women students committed and determined to cope with the multiple tasks.

The experiences of the mature women students that I interviewed emphasised that policy-makers and administrators at institutions for higher learning should take note of their concerns and difficulties coping with the multiple roles while working towards their educational goals. The women suggested, for example, that because there was a general complaint in the country that there were not enough qualified women in certain fields policy-makers should come up with rules that would allow women to study with less strain. Mature women students recommended that study leave should be granted without loss of income, which would enable them to study full time and possibly finish in record time. This would allow them to go back to their jobs better equipped and able to concentrate on the job. Administrators at universities should also make facilities such as the libraries and photocopying areas available to mature women students, particularly over weekends when they can escape work and family responsibilities and attend to their studies.

Finally, it was evident from this study that mature women students' best mechanisms for coping were: faith in God and commitment to their religious practices, regularly revising planning and time management, and having strong support networks from either their own parents, own children, husband, family or neighbours.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **INFORMATION LEAFLET AND LETTER OF CONSENT**

#### **TITLE OF PROJECT**

Mature women students' experiences of multiplicity of roles

#### **INTRODUCTION**

You are invited to volunteer for a research project concerning mature women students' experiences. This information leaflet is to help you to decide if you would like to participate. Before you agree to take part in this study you should fully understand what is involved. If you have any questions, which are not fully explained in this leaflet, do not hesitate to ask the researcher. You should not agree to take part unless you are completely happy about all the procedures involved.

#### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH?**

You have been identified as a mature women student at the University of Pretoria and the investigator would like you to consider taking part in this project exploring the experiences of mature women students' multiplicity of roles.

#### **WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME DURING THIS RESEARCH?**

If you decide to take part, you will be one of approximately 10 participants who will be interviewed individually. The project entails focus group interviews, in which we have a group of 5 women who will be sharing their experiences with the researcher who is also a mature women student. You will be free to express your opinions in a language of your choice so as to be explicit, and to reveal as much or as little of your own experiences that you feel comfortable with. A tape recorder will be used to record information for transcription purpose, the data of which will be destroyed after the completion of the academic report. Your anonymity is ensured therein that no personal detail will be revealed in the academic report. The interview may last approximately 1 to 2 hours, and will be conducted at a time of your convenience during December 2004. The interview will take venue at the University of Pretoria or at a convenient place for me, and the exact venue will be communicated to you well in advance.

#### **HAS THE PROJECT RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?**

This investigation was submitted to the Research Proposal and Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria, and written approval has been granted. The study has been structured in accordance with the required ethical procedures, which deals with the recommendation guiding research involving human subjects. A copy of which may be obtained from the investigator should you wish to review it.

## **WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT IN THIS PROJECT?**

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate or stop at any time without stating any reason. Your withdrawal will not affect your progress as a student at UP in any way. However, the investigator retains the right to do everything possible to keep you involved with the project.

## **MAY ANY OF THE PROCEDURES RESULT IN DISCOMFORT OR INCONVENIENCE?**

As indicated above, the focus group interviews will be tape-recorded for transcription purposes. You are allowed to reveal as much or as little about your experiences of being a mature women student as you wish. The transcripts will be made available should you wish to see whether you are correctly quoted or not. The procedure should not result in any discomfort or inconvenience, and we hope that you will still consider participating in this project.

## **DISCONTINUATION OF TRIAL TREATMENT**

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate or stop at any time without stating any reason and without prejudice.

## **SOURCE OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

If at any stage you feel that you need more information regarding the project and its purpose, please do not hesitate to contact me, Keolebogile, at, (012) 548 2707 (after hours) or 073 6657 524, or my supervisor, Dr GJ van Schalkwyk, + 9853 655 1364.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information obtained during the course of this investigation is strictly confidential. Data that may be reported in scientific journals will not include any information that identifies you or your child as participants in this investigation.

Researcher: Keolebogile Mosimege, 012 548 2702(AH); 073 6657 524  
Supervisor: Dr GJ van Schalkwyk, + 9853 655 1364

## RESPONDENT INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Ms Keolebogile Mosimege, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of the project: Mature women students' experiences of the multiplicity of roles. I have also received, read and understood the written information in the Information Leaflet regarding the project and its purpose.

I am aware that the interview will be tape-recorded for transcription purposes and have no problem with this procedure. I am aware that the results of the project, including personal details regarding my age, date of birth, initials or any other identifying information will be anonymously processed into a final report for a Master's dissertation as undertaken by Ms Keolebogile Mosimege for the MA in Psychology.

I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation to the project. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the project.

Participant's name \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's name \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness's name\* \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

\*Consent procedure should be witnessed whenever possible.

Witness's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS

#### Interview 1

Interviewer: Keo

Interviewee: Letta

Time: 19:00

Duration of interview: 1 hour

Interview date: 4/12/2004

Age: 36

Marital status: Married

Number of dependent children: 3

Degree for which enrolled: B.Ed Honours in assessment and quality assurance

Location of living quarters/house: Pretoria North

Keo	Tell me about the high points and low points in your experience of being a student at this point in your life.		
Letta	Kana ha ore [by the way when you say] high you mean exciting and low depressing.	Clarification	
Keo	Yes		
Letta	Mmm... what excites me is that what I am studying is in line with what I am doing at work so... it's a challenge and it's an eye opener. For me because it...it...in a way ahem... capacitates me in my job. To add onto what I've said, the kind of work that I'm in, you are expected to write a whole lot of documents, policy documents, present papers and...under...ordinary circumstances one would not read you know and search literature about anything but because I'm studying I'm forced to search literature and read it for my studies and at the same time boosts...	Study + Job =challenge, eye opener Positive experience Capacitates self Challenging Advantages of reading Study + Job=literature search  Personal development	WS2  MS3 S2 S3  WS2  S3
Keo	Your efficiency and so on		
Letta	Mmm (agreeing)		
Keo	What about getting a helper		
Letta	If you are going to delegate your responsibilities to a helper, it does not go down well with you as a mother. Because cooking and caring for the family is the mother's responsibility. You feel like you are escaping from your responsibilities, neglecting, you feel obliged, after all is not their problem that you are only studying now at this age of your life. Don't make it their problem, you have to do your part as a mother .	Family =responsibilities Role expectations Stereotype role of being a mother  Obligations for own role Concern for others Responsibility	F4 F4  F2
Keo	But in this era you are working helping these men of ours, why can't we just say may be... help us/ why is it our responsibility/		

Letta	Society, our black culture is like that, house work is the mothers responsibility	Culture=house work is for women Role expectations are culturally prescribed	F2 F4
Keo	What stands out in your life as a mature woman?		
Letta	I think... It's difficult to really say what stands out, but you will find that in most cases we compromise on our studies , as a result of our commitment at home and at work neh,	Work + home=studies, suffer Compromise to balance roles, fulfil commitments Studies =Pressure Demands of studying Limited time for studying	WS4
Keo	Mmm...		
Letta	So our studies you know we...we...end up doing assignments under pressure, you know and we study ...for exams we study a day or two before because we don't have time so this aspect of studying you know, it...it gets compromised. And then what stands out as you said <u>e feleletsa ele</u> [you end up being] committed <u>ko gae</u> [at home] <u>le ko mmerekong</u> [and at work] because if you don't perform at work <u>go na le di</u> ...you know to me, ke gore [it is that] what keeps me going neh!	Demands of home & job to perform Convincing self that multiple roles give meaning to life Home+work=studies compromised	WS4 S4
Keo	Mmm... (yes)		
Letta	is because I am looking forward to that day when I will get the degree , that's...that's you know, ...to know that I have achieved under the circumstances	Getting degree Future perspective Achievement orientation	S4
Keo	If anything comes as we go on feel free to talk. What are the things about being a student at this time of your life that you find most difficult to deal with?		
Letta	Like meeting deadlines, submitting your work, your assignments,	Pressure of studying	MS3
Keo	Mm (agreeing)		
Letta	To me that really frustrates me because to start with you don't have time to do those assignments but you've got to submit on time. Otherwise you have to beg the lecturer and get humiliated in the process by these lecturers	Frustration Time constraints  Humiliation Studies=beg lecturer	MS3 MS3

	<p>who tend to be very rude at you, I don't know why lecturers tend to be rude <u>lebona</u> [them] to us you know and yet they are aware of our situation, our circumstances, but they just don't so having to meet deadlines to me sho! [oh] When I end up doing my assignments, there is so much pressure you can't...like last week I was submitting an assignment on Friday neh!</p>	<p>Need for compassion</p> <p>Pressure Studies=work suffers Studies=incomplete assignments</p>	MS3
Keo	Mm (agreeing)		
Letta	<p>Because we have classes every other Friday <u>ke gore</u> [that is] I spend that whole day at work doing my assignment (WS4), luckily my boss was not around (laughing) ...and <u>le ha ke tla go tsamaya ke e printa ke tsamaya</u> [even when I was to leave for class, printing it] I was late for class, you know...so that pressure. So if you had time you will have done much ...better</p>	Time constraints detract from optimal performance	MS3
Keo	Ok, so as a student is meeting deadlines What about the family?		
Letta	<p>I don't have a problem at all I think ...it's because my husband was studying and completed last year and we allowed him time. <u>Ke gore</u> [that is] he was studying like you won't believe. <u>Wa itse</u> we had no life when he was studying. It was just "I'm studying, I'm studying, I'm studying." So he expects me to do the same. <u>Ke gore</u> [that is], in fact you find that he...he pushes me to study <u>a re</u> [saying] "don't sleep, go and study I'll watch TV while I'm waiting for you." ...and then <u>ha o lapile</u> [when you are tired] you will tell me then you know, but then, but is just that you feel guilty as a person despite the support that you are getting, but you feel guilty as a mother.</p>	<p>Family=support system Support from husband Motivation from husband</p> <p>Additional pressure from husband</p> <p>Guilt</p>	<p>C2</p> <p>MS2</p>
Keo	What conflicts stand out, how do you deal with them, do you wake up in early hours?		
Letta	<u>Nna ga ke kgone go tsoga vroeg</u> [I can't wake up in the early hours] so what I do I spend an hour or two late afternoon so that I can read,	Can't wake up early	

	ahem... the worker is at home so I stay until 6 or 7 pm so that I can push as much as I can		C4
Keo	Where, at work?		
Letta	<u>ko mmerekong</u> [at work], and then <u>ha ke tla ko gae</u> [when I come home] there's cooking, and then, I'm lucky because Ellen (not real name) likes cooking ...maar jaanong [but now] <u>o fitlhela ke fila gore</u> maar <u>janong o kare</u> [you find that I feel like] I am burdening her because <u>le ena o a bala</u> and <u>ka mo ke expecta gore a apeye</u> [she is also reading and I expect her to cook so that I can read] mm...(agreeing) ...and another thing, food must be ready long before 7pm for my husband otherwise he does not eat and if he doesn't eat I feel very bad .	Demands for alternative measures Creativity  Study+work=family suffers Delegates cooking task Guilt for not complying with role expectations Guilt for asking others  Pressure from husband Guilt	C4 C3  MS2  MS2
Keo	Hmm, you have to satisfy all these roles What about monitoring children's school work?		
Letta	<u>Nna</u> [I] I get so impatient <u>wa bona</u> [you see] I get so impatient	Impatient=Children's school work suffer	F2
Keo	O batla gore a fetse [you want him to finish ]		
Letta	A fetse, tsamaya ko go Ellen a go thuse, [go to Ellen to help you] a kere Ellen dilo tse o di dirile wa di itse [Ellen knows these things she did them at school]	Eldest child suffers Shifts responsibility Guilt	F2
Keo	What dreams do you have for the future? A kere jaanong re tsena sekolo, we need to know where we are going [since you are studying].		
Letta	Nna, my dream and ke gore [that] dream became that real recently you know ...like I was saying the other day about that woman (lecturer) but in any case she wants her work which I failed to do. She had scripts and said I did not submit, I said I did. The lecturer does not understand how, that out of 200 students, yours get lost. She was so rude. She said to me you wasting your money you are no better as an adult than as a mother, that you are suppose to be doing your work you know what example are you setting, she was	Studies=difficult lecturers Realisation of own dreams Rudeness of others Lack of compassion Demands of studying  Humbleness  Difficulties	

	<p>so rude. But because I was begging I didn't want to react, I have to be humble. Fax couldn't go through, she said I can e-mail as long as there is no virus. What does she think I am? But I remained humble. I e-mailed it. After that conversation, her attitude is driving me to study and make sure that one day I have doctorate like her. Just that thing made me look forward to the day I get doctorate. I am going to look for her wherever she will be thanking her that I am a doctor today because of her attitude.</p>	<p>Motivation derived from other's attitude Future perspective Goal achievement</p>	S4
Keo	<p>What is the impact of being a student in the community? Perhaps it does not work in the suburbs, what are we going to plough back, what about relatives?</p>		
Letta	<p>They thought I was paid for by their brother only to find that it was my parents paying for my studies. That attitude is there. They can be negative sometimes, saying what are you reading why are you not finishing?</p>	<p>Family=in-laws complain  Negative attitude of others/community/family in-law</p>	F3
Keo	<p>Anything on the side of the church maybe, what do they say?</p>		
Letta	<p>Complaints during church education day that we are bringing worldly things into the church...yet we are encouraging them</p>	<p>Church Lack of understanding in community Have to defend self &amp; choices</p>	F4
Keo	<p>Finally, I would like to know about this, what exactly do we think, because I think we are coping, we are making it as women, but what do you think it is that make us cope?</p>		
Letta	<p>I think what make us cope is the driving force which we mentioned that our goal is making us cope and make sure that we push always no matter what. ...and like I also said, it is the support that I'm getting from my husband ko gae gore, bala, bala. Ha kere kea robala wa ntsosa, ke nako ya go bala [he's always saying read, read, wakeup and read]</p>	<p>Strong will=coping Self-motivation  Support from husband</p>	<p>C4  C2</p>
Keo	<p>What about the children, do they support us in this venture?</p>		

Letta	Nna ga ke sa apaya ka [at weekends because] ke na le class, my girl cooks. My girl says that by the time she is our age she will have long completed her PhD.	Family support=children cook Encouragement for children to see mother studying	C2
Keo	I think we are used to juggling the roles, remember wood on the head, child on the back, cleaning and cooking all at once.		
Letta	Yes our upbringing was that of juggling the roles.	Culture=upbringing – juggling of roles	C2
Keo	Why only now are we studying?		
Letta	It's true, schooling is expensive, so you keep postponing studies since it will be difficult to survive with one salary, that of the husband. So, you try to cover it by working here and there in the home until it is your time to study [sekolo se atura neh, and then ha go bereka ntate a le one ka salary e one, chelete ya gone e ne e ka se nkise sekolong, e tlhokomele le ban ka fa. So o dula ontse o postpona ore are fetise mo pele ke tla ya sekolong.]	Waited until accumulated enough things at home, then study Financial constraints Consideration of others before attending to own ideals	MS3

## Interview 2

Interviewer: Keo

Interviewee: Grace

Time: 19:30

Duration of interview: 1 hour

Interview date: 11/12/2004

Age: 41

Marital status: Married

Number of dependent children: 3

Degree for which enrolled: Masters in Education

Location of living quarters/house: Pretoria North

Keo	Tell me about the high points and low points in your experience of being a student at this point in your life.		
Grace	Studying in line with my current job yeah... you are always up to date with your work. You are always up to date like with us, at school we are doing OBE and if I am doing it , if I'm studying I'm learning more and when I get to the class I, I excel. Oh! but at the same time jo! [yeah] it's a lot of work It's a lot of work	Study+job=up to date Achievement orientation Capacity building Strain=lot of work Demands of studying	WS2, WS2.  MS3.
Keo	Yes		
Grace	And another thing with ahem...teachers... ahem... they tell you they want... today and	Job=incentive	

	<p>next year they talk about levels so, wena [you] if you don't read it means you are eh... like this year all those who are, who are under 12 they have to, the government is giving them mmm... a <u>bursary</u> they are forced to read, they have to upgrade it so you need to upgrade yourself so that whenever the government says you are, you are there</p>	<p>External pressures Job=government acknowledges your work Self-motivation</p>	<p><u>WS3</u>  S4</p>
Keo	So from the government side it's some kind of an incentive?		
Grace	Yes, yes		
Keo	You referred to a lot of work. Sort of negative. A lot of work as a mother ...		
Grace	<p>As a mother, I have to come back home, cook for those children You know sometimes you feel like saying ooh! come and help me but is not possible because those children are also having their own work that they have to do but ...you also have your own work assignments that you have to do but you need to work in the kitchen from there eh... you sit down and after that you are tired you can't sit down and do your school work. By the way you still have emm... scripts for the children at school that need to be marked. So sometimes what I do I have to wake up at 02:00 or 01:00 and sit down do my other work, hey it's very, It's a lot of work.</p>	<p>Role expectations Family = mother's responsibilities Consideration of others Making excuse for children Demands at home Housework=strain Conflict of roles= study+work+family Role demands—time-consuming Demands of job Study in the morning=strain Strain=lot of work Alternatives for time management</p>	<p>F2.  MS3 F2 F2  C4</p>
Keo	Yeah, it means ahem... the juggling of all these responsibilities, but.... It's a lot of work but is it exciting or what is it that you have to do you are a mother, why can't you get a helper...throughout the day what is it that says I have to		
Grace	<p>You can, you can get a helper but a helper will never do everything Some husbands like mine does not eat food cooked by a helper, I do have someone who helps with cleaning and whatever. When I come back from work I have to cook for him, he enjoys food from me. The children also, they will give you some complaints about helper, so sit down solve problems. We have to do everything in the house and at the same time help the husband by bringing in money.</p>	<p>Excuse for helper Demands from husband, added pressure Pleasing husband  Children=demands on mother Strain=demands on mother Demands on women Financial constraints</p>	<p>F2 F2   MS3</p>

Keo	In this era why can't we just say men must help us		
Grace	Hey (laughing) it is our responsibility, everything in the house, actually we have to do everything in the home. At the same time we are helping them. But they expect us to do everything in the house	Role expectations Excess demands on women Mother's responsibility Expectations from husband/family	F2 F2
Keo	Why does it look like we have guilt?		
Grace	Trying to sit down is like ignoring your role as a woman.	Mother's role Expectations of self	F2
Keo	What stands out in your life as a mature woman?		
Grace	Imagine you didn't sleep last night what will you do at work, will you be able to work, you are just going to work, you are just going to sleep at work, instead of working you know sometimes you feel like you can just give these children work to do and then you... you...	Study+work=strain Time constraints Skimp on work demands because of strain	WS2
Keo	You sleep		
Grace	mm...(shows agreement)You are just tired.		
Keo	You are finished		
Grace	mm.. (shows agreement). Sometimes you go there with something to read as you are busy with your work you are also reading because you are writing exam the following day.	Demands of study=exam Work suffers Multiple role demands	WS2
Keo	Ok, what are the things about being a student at this time of your life that you find most exciting and interesting?		
Grace	Nna [me] I feel great you know		S3
Keo	mm.. (shows agreement)		
Grace	When I'm studying at this age because I know so many people are not reading they are lazy to read so I am able to sit to sit down with my... my lecturer and then he... he will help me with whatever I can't do so I feel so great that at the end I will be eh... I will be eh... getting my certificate, I am achieving this and I feel I am encouraging my children I always tell them you know I am studying at this age, you have to... you don't have to wait for... for being an old mo... eh man you have to just continue reading but because ... so it is encouraging to our children, I wrote in my thesis, encouraging my family to study	Joy of study=feel great  Study=achievement/ self concept/efficacy Motivation Support from external source (lecturer) Role model=Encouraging family Self-motivation Encouraging children to study	S3      F2
Keo	That's great! What are the things about being a		

	student at this time of your life that you find most difficult to deal with?		
Grace	At work or where?		
Keo	As a student,		
Grace	Oh!		
Keo	As all those four		
Grace	<p>Hmm...what is difficult for me is when I do my work I take it to the professor and he rejects it.</p> <p>I feel like crying, so many times. You know I will look at the professor and professor says no, eh...you have done nothing here, you know out of 10 pages he can take two pages and say this just go and destroy. Jo! Hey...you feel like crying you know, you feel like crying</p>	<p>Study=professor Frustration, disappointment</p> <p>Humiliation Demands of study=conflict between bad and good feelings</p>	<p>MS3</p> <p>MS2</p>
Keo	Ok, so as a student is when the professor, supervisor,		
Grace	Yeah, the supervisor		
Keo	Feels that you haven't done enough		
Grace	Yeah, you have to go redo it yet you didn't sleep for a week or two doing the same thing, now you must go back and do the same thing hm...	Accumulation of stressors	
Keo	And then, what about at home then, something to talk about?		
Grace	<p>Yeah, the family, you don't have time for them, and then sometimes they will be angry and ay (yeah) it seems as if you are going to concentrate on these books of yours you don't care about us you know.</p> <p>Sometimes I expect my son Paul (not real name) to do the typing for me I do the writing and leave typing for him and Paul is also at school you know doing his homework so <u>he a gana</u> [when he refuses] hey, <u>I ke fila gore</u> [I feel that] he is so jealous he doesn't want me to complete my studies So I must write it and I must type it myself, jo!</p> <p>Aowa [no] it's too much for me and I give that pressure to the family.</p>	<p>Pressure to the family Making demands on others</p>	<p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p>
Keo	As a mother do you feel guilty...?		
Grace	<p>Yeah, I used to sit down eh...from 4pm when I come from work until 11pm, so I realized that I was neglecting my family and I don't want to wake up when I'm sleeping, but I learnt to wake up at two or 1am.</p> <p>So I do my cooking we eat then we go and sleep the same time as usual as if there is nothing going to happen then 2am I'm up.</p>	<p>Guilt feeling=neglecting the family</p> <p>Create alternative strategies to cope Pressure on self Time management</p>	C4

Keo	What conflicts stand out		
Grace	I sleep at the same time and wake up when they are fast asleep. Ga ba nkutlwe, ga ba mpone, ke a tsoga kea batlogela, ke yo bereka [they don't hear me nor see me, I wake up to go and work] to avoid conflict.	Avoid conflict by putting more pressures on self	C4
Keo	You have to satisfy all the roles		
Grace	And another thing, you have to monitor the younger children's school work. <u>Ke go re fa ontse mo ore wa mo monitora o a robala</u> [that is, when sitting trying to monitor child's work you sleep] (laughing) But wa itse [you know] something that I learn from these boys my boys, ke gore lebone le tshumiwa the whole night you study fa ele gore ke nako tsa go bala (burn the midnight lamp).	Role expectations Role strain & role overload Parental demands=monitor younger children's work Children=self motivating	F2  C4
Keo	mm.. (agreeing)		
Grace	Yeah, because, bona...(they) will read from school they sit down and study, when I come because ke ba roma thata they run away then I remain alone he ke fetsa (kids read and run away when I come, because I send them too much) they come then we pray I'm tired I am going to sleep the other two will be up for three hours the other will go and sleep the other remain when this one goes to sleep he wakes up the one who went to sleep earlier until nna he ke tsoga ka (I wake up at) 2 am	Lack of support=children run away when mother comes back from work Guilt for overburdening the children Alternative routines for household to cope with demands Support from children	F2  C4
Keo	Ok		
Grace	So, they are like encouraging me, because he (if) ke sa tsoge ka (I don't wake up at)2am Peter (not his real name) will knock, mommy wake up.	Children support	C2
Keo	That's nice		
Grace	I want to be a doctor but not to start it now, I want to do other course, but rest the whole of next year (2005).	PhD Future perspective	S4
Keo	Impact of being a student in the community, perhaps it does not work in the suburbs, what are we going to plough back, what about relatives. In-laws what do they feel about your schooling when their brother is spending money on your schooling.		
Grace	I had two children before I went to school. I expected him to pay for my fees. At least my parents were supportive.  My husband went to school and I had to work	   Demands from husband	   F3



Grace	With me is like we were taking turns to go to school. Le rona nere rata go nyalwa ka pele. [we liked to get married too early]	Taking turns to study Husband has to first have opportunity to study— woman has to wait	
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### Interview 3

Interviewer: Keo

Interviewee: Lenah

Time: 14:00

Duration of interview: 1hour: 15minutes

Interview date: 19/12/2004

Age: 31

Marital status: Married

Number of dependent children: 2

Degree for which enrolled: Industrial Engineering Certificate

Location of living quarters/house: Pretoria East

Keo	Tell me about the high points and low points in your experience of being a student at this point in your life.		
Lenah	<p>The highlight I can say that I'm ...Gaining more information which I find applicable in my job and always, ...it also increases my knowledge on my managerial skills or management related matters.</p> <p>So, I'm able to do handle conflict at home as well as at work as well as social differences because of what I am studying.</p> <p>And lowlights I can say it's not really easy to get time to study as well as being a wife, a mother, I also have to you know, take care of my husband, cook the food, and play with the children.</p> <p>And as a working mother is not easy because I knock off at 4:00. I have to make sure gore [that] ba thapile [they have bathed] nako enngwe they..boy-boy (not real name used) o batla go tshameka di puzzle [sometimes my son wants to play puzzle] and I am tired.</p> <p>And I have to... make time for my books, especially when assignment date is near, you find that I eh... o kreiya ke regret ke re eh... [when assignments are due I really regret why I registered] I wish I did not register but I'm coping.</p>	<p>School+job=information &amp; knowledge (cognitive)</p> <p>Study=managerial skills &amp; conflict management skills</p> <p>Advantages within work &amp; family life</p> <p>Conflict management skills</p> <p>Study=strain</p> <p>Family demands=care for husband</p> <p>Play with children</p> <p>Role expectations</p> <p>Work+home+study=strain</p> <p>Time constraints</p> <p>Role overload</p> <p>Demands of studying</p>	<p>S2</p> <p>WS2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>MS3</p> <p>MS2</p>
Keo	I 'm interested in this point where you say you are coping. Just indicate to me what you think it is that makes you cope. You have indicated that you have so many things to do.		
Lenah	I think is determination, determination and	Determination+focus+vis	C4

	<p>focus, knowing where you want to be your vision that this is what you want to be. So that what drives me.</p> <p>And I ... have come to accept gore [that] the time we are living is very fast.</p> <p>And I just realized [gore] that it has also eh, eh, shown to me [gore] that as a woman I am capable of doing many things at a time I can cook whilst I am bathing the other baby. I can you know eh...whilst the washing machine is on, I'm busy with other house chores.</p> <p>So with studying I...I have managed to...to...to...to make sure that my studies neh! my timetable is always when they have fallen asleep, I find time to study or early in the morning because you find that at the end of the day I am very tired so I could study for one hour or two.</p>	<p>ion=coping</p> <p>Future expectations</p> <p>Life is fast</p> <p>External expectations</p> <p>Women=capable, multitask</p> <p>Self-motivation</p> <p>Timetable</p> <p>Time management</p> <p>Study when family is asleep</p> <p>Study early morning</p> <p>Tired at end of day</p> <p>Alternative strategies for coping</p>	C4
Keo	Ok		
Lenah	But I must say the presence of the helper helps me a lot.	Helper=Social support system	C4
Keo	By the way your helper stays with you?		
Lenah	Yes, she wakes up early and a <u>tlhapise ngwana</u> [bath the boy] and take out the clothes an evening before.	Helper	
Keo	All right! What stands out in your life as a mature student and give examples.		
Lenah	I think planning is very important when you are a (laughs) parent, student, worker and wife you need to plan your time accordingly; you know that you have, in a day 24hours. You need to study, you need to do your housework.	Study+housework=Planning Self-management Self-motivation	C4
Keo	So time management is very important		
Lenah	Yes, it's easier when you plan at least a month ahead, a month ahead or revise it on weekly basis. Get menu right, cook meal that will stay at least two days, you know things like that. And then, in your studies you'll know when your first assignments are due and what are going to do to make sure that you submit on time.		C4
Keo	Mmm.... (agreeing)		
Lenah	I forget the other thing you have got commitments to ya ko kerekeng [church]	Community=Church	F4

	<p>duties, kids story for evening prayers at home. Attend meetings for the department that you are responsible for, you have to go out because some of the duties of the church office work take place on Sunday</p> <p>All these have to be taken into consideration.</p>	<p>Family=evening prayer Meetings</p>	
Keo	<p>What excites me is that at the end of the day women cope. Do they ever complain or ask help from husband.</p>		
Lenah	<p>You know, complaining does not help, because when you look at the black men they are not expected to help with house chores or children. We ask men to help bathing male children but they struggle because they are not used to it. In our culture you know, that work is for women. If they help it is voluntarily and occasionally not too often. Which is stressful and you know...</p> <p>So you end up accepting. You end up accepting that if he is not prepared to help it is our culture.</p>	<p>Family+culture=strain Lack of support</p> <p>Culture=Family=women's responsibility</p> <p>Acceptance of demands Accept your responsibility</p>	<p>F4</p> <p>F4</p>
Keo	<p>Tell me, what are the things about being a student at this point in your life that you find most exciting and interesting?</p>		
Lenah	<p>My current studies are in line with my career path. Most of the things are suitable, is in line with my vision. Maybe one was not able to...to focus properly when we were choosing a career, while we were still studying maybe that is why one is studying at this age. There was lack of proper career guidance ...or lack of study opportunity, as you know that we black people we did not have eh...our parents couldn't afford to send us to universities. So you end up taking any available opportunity that will allow you to further your studies, and I had to study education.</p>	<p>Studies+career Future expectations</p> <p>Lack of career guidance then</p> <p>No study opportunities Lack of funds Financial constraints Self-development</p>	<p>WS2</p> <p>MS3</p>
Keo	<p>What is it that you find that at this time of your life is difficult to deal with?</p>		
Lenah	<p>Hm... Lecturers who are not tolerant, they disregard the fact that you are a mother and worker, and they treat you as a full time student. You try to contact them through the e-mail, telephone you know actually</p>	<p>Study+lecturers=difficult Intolerant, not available Deadlines Lack of compassion &amp; support</p>	<p>MS3</p>

	<p>...it is disappointing when your academic lecturer does not return the call or does not respond to your mails. You will be asking a question related to your assignment and you have deadline for the assignment so the longer it takes to respond to your question, that doesn't only irritates you, it discourages you. You ask yourself what kind of a person you are dealing with, ...you end up losing hope on the institution itself.</p>	<p>Emotions=disappointing Discouraging, irritating</p> <p>Loose hope Questioning self-reflective</p>	
Keo	Any other difficulty besides that of the lecturers		
Lenah	<p>Not having study what, study.... partners . If we would have people who will discuss the...the problems that you encounter on the subject...</p> <p>So if you have someone to you know... But now your only study partner is your lecturer.</p>	<p>Study=lack of study partners Lack of social support for study</p> <p>Dependence on lecturer</p>	MS3
Keo	Do you think it would be easy to come up with the study group?		
Lenah	<p>You have to contact the institution first for a list of people who have registered the same course. It depends on whether the institution is allowed to release that kind of information. So it is actually a strenuous exercise.</p> <p>Most of the hiccups that one comes across tend to frustrate and make you regret why you registered.</p> <p>But studying... this thing of writing exams...maybe if we could have open book tests (laughing)</p> <p>...because now we are getting older our memories are not as sharp as before, and it is not easy to remember the definition any longer.</p>	<p>Hiccups=frustration</p> <p>Possible solution Exam = memories no longer</p> <p>Sharp- open book Self-evaluation</p>	<p>MS3</p> <p>MS3</p> <p>MS4</p>
Keo	I've been told open book exam is very difficult. Won't it make us relax, sit back and then during the exam we page and page not knowing where to find what?		
Lenah	Something that you ...something that you ...because most of the eh... open book are application questions, you apply your memory, maybe you use the concepts of the course itself to apply, to solve a certain problem. So as long as you know your concepts well.	<p>Solution focused Self-evaluating Age constraints</p>	S4
Keo	So, while we are still talking about the difficulties at the institution itself, shall we say, how do you find it with the younger students?		
Lenah	No, the courses that I have registered are sort of distant learning. No formal lessons or any	<p>No younger students No contact tuition—self-</p>	MS3

	<p>formal interaction. We just communicate via telephone or e-mail.</p> <p>I just indicate that I have studied this and these are the problems I encountered. The previous course I had class mates of more or less my age.</p>	<p>study</p> <p>Self-management</p>	
Keo	What conflicts stand out for you, in general, interpersonal, intrapersonal.		
Lenah	You want specific conflicts that I came across.		
Keo	As a mature student		
Lenah	<p>I have come across too much conflict. Maybe I can say the way I handle them. I try to ...If somebody had said something that upsets me I'm not, sometimes I am sensitive, sometimes I am oversensitive, sometimes I am under sensitive. So I react to different groups differently.</p> <p>But when really something has upset me and we don't reach an agreement with someone like not being biased, open minded, trying to look at that particular point from that person's point of view and try to understand it as well as you know conveying my point of view also to the person.</p> <p>Looking at the pros and cons of the conflict. Looking at the positives and negatives. If it's at home me and my husband, whoever is wrong is on the wrong side, after looking at the both sides of the problem, the pros and cons will have, the guilty party will apologise.</p> <p>When coming to, to, let's say at work when a colleague has done something that upsets you, just approach the person. You get to know what language you use when you are with your colleagues</p>	<p>Handle conflicts</p> <p>Self-efficacy for conflict management</p> <p>Self-reflective</p> <p>Strategies for coping with conflict</p> <p>Perspective-taking</p> <p>Consideration of others</p> <p>Strategies for conflict management</p> <p>Work-related conflict</p>	MS3
Keo	You as a student, if you can focus on conflicts that you come across as having added this role of student into the existing role of a mother, wife, employer. What other conflict can you indicate besides the general ones?		
Lenah	<p>As I said, you can plan but things may not come out as planned. So sometimes you need to prioritise your responsibilities.</p> <p>Though I find it very hard to meet the deadlines of other activities like at church.</p> <p>When you prioritise you focus more on the studies and you don't even have time to tell the kids their Bible story, because now you are being pressured by conflict</p> <p>...you end up compromising other daily</p>	<p>Plan fails</p> <p>Prioritise responsibilities</p> <p>Time constraints</p> <p>Studies=family suffers</p> <p>Guilt</p> <p>Compromise on values</p>	C4

	activities or chores. You can leave the house unclean and telling the kids that today I am bringing you takeaways, I won't be able to cook. And that can you know ... if it happens twice a week, you know complaints will start coming up, what's happening in this house now.	Takeaways  Complaints	F2
Keo	What dreams do you have for the future?		
Lenah	Well I see myself in three years from now... with my studies completed and being a consultant in that field of my study. Because I'm completing my studies in three years time. But I thought I will continue two more years but I would like to be a consultant	Consultant Future perspective Achievement orientation	S4
Keo	Is there anything that you would like to add to this whole topic of being a mother of juggling the responsibilities		
Lenah	You know eh... what can I say, it's really a challenge for women just being a women who are living in this era or of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century because in the past women were not working they were housewives, that is why they could do all these house chores you know and nourish their children with the best way that you can think of. But now the challenge, we are living in a very dangerous society, things about the kids we don't have enough time for them ...and if you don't you feel guilty because you know that somebody is going to get time to be with your children ...it can be either drug lord or prostitution, you know those people who molest children ...and you always blame yourself because you did not spend enough time with the children. So as a woman we have to, as women we have that challenge that you know the environment that we are living in is very dangerous, ...and on the other hand it's very strenuous for us because you want to excel at work you want to excel at home and be a role model for the children. But what I can say is that it is very challenging for most women ...not all women can be able to cope with that kind of conflict, ...hence I say it's only determination with the grace of God. I must mention the assistance that come from the domestic worker I wouldn't make it to	Reflecting on past  Family  Society=dangerous  Role strain—protecting children Strain      Role model Guilt	MS3     F2       F2   MS3  F2

	achieve all. May be our life span could have been reduced by half.	Coping=determination & God's grace Helper	C3 C4
Keo	I am interested in what make us cope, is it the way we are brought up, doing everything.		
Lenah	We don't want our children to experience what we have experienced ...so, we need keep increasing our knowledge, to know what's happening, we can't just say I've my degree now I am fine. The cost of living is too high, one salary is not enough that is why we have to keep on studying. Political changes that have recognized the appraising of women, it ...it..comes as an opportunity you know. We can also sit behind computers and sit in the boardrooms and argue some points you know.	Protection of children Consideration of others Knowledge as way of coping Study continuously=model to children Financial constraints Study +work=cost of living One salary not enough Political considerations— expansion of opportunities Opportunity for women=computers, boardrooms	S2 S4 S2

#### Interview 4

Interviewer: Keo

Interviewee: Naomi

Time: 10:00

Duration of interview: 1hour

Interview date:10/01/2005

Age: 35

Marital status: Married

Number of dependent children:1

Degree for which enrolled: M Phil in Science and Technology

Location of living quarters/house: Midrand

Keo	Tell me about the high points and low points in your experience of being a student at this point in your life.		
Naomi	The high point is the knowledge that I gain as a student in... what I'm studying is relevant to my work.  So whenever I go, my course is structured in such a way that it's blocks that I attend. So whenever I go I come back with new knowledge that I can apply to my work. Eh... the low points is that I come back with a lot of work, ...and it impacts somehow negatively on my work and...also on the family.	Study+work=relevant Knowledge Apply to work  Study=lot of work  Study=work suffers Family suffers	WS2 WS4

	But it's all about eh... management of time.	Time management	C4
Keo	You talk about management of time may be you could expand on that.		
Naomi	Yes		
Keo	How do you get to manage your time		
Naomi	Look it's...it's not easy. It depends on the amount of work that I have. I juggle between my work... responsibilities, and my studies and in most cases eh, ...my studies suffer because I find myself doing a lot my... work and not doing academic work. As a result you find that when I have assignments I leave it until the last day, and then I spend long hours working on it.	Juggle responsibilities  Work=Studies suffer Assignments last minutes Strain long hours on assignments	MS3  MS3
Keo	In this whole mess, what about at home, how do they see this, do they give you the chance		
Naomi	No, they don't give me the chance. When you are home you come back, you take over your responsibilities as a mother and as wife. ...and sometimes there are not clearly structured eh... responsibilities cut for wife and father, so my, my academic work suffers.	Family responsibilities  Culture Role expectations Role strain	F2  F2
Keo	Does our black culture allow us to divide the work, house chores?		
Naomi	No, no, not really. I mean in theory ...in theory we can say yes to gender equality stuff like that, but practically when I get home I am wife and mother, I take over my responsibilities as such.	Culture=equity is theory Mother's responsibilities Role overload	F2
Keo	What stands out in your life as a mature student, Give examples and explain why they stand out for you.		
Naomi	I think the fact that you are an adult you are no longer a full time student eh... you have work to do and studies to do, ...you are not only focusing on your studies like when I was doing undergraduate studies, I had all the time to study. Now the challenge you have to manage your time effectively between work, my home and studies and as I have already said that is not... always very easy. In most cases my studies suffer.	Adult focus on lot of things not only studies=juggling  Comparison: full time & part-time students  Time management Strain=studies suffer	MS4  MS3
Keo	What surprises me is that we do manage		
Naomi	Somehow at the end... But you can't say, like I plan that I will spend so much time on my studies or my home but it never happens like that. But <u>ke</u> [then] somehow at the end we manage to pull through. But is not easy to study being	Plan fails Difficult to organise tasks Long-term vision Self-motivation Difficulties	F2  MS3

	an adult.		
Keo	Mm...(agreeing)		
Naomi	Because you have your problems that as a mother and your mind needs to focus on the problem and when you study you are working. Sometimes you are in a class, and you get sms from children.	Studies+family Problem Sms Role overload Roles interfere with one another	F2
Keo	Would you say culturally, we were somehow trained juggle the roles. Cleaning, baby on your back all those things.		
Naomi	Somehow we were prepared to be able to manage these things, like multitasking. Because as women you know we always did a lot of things at the same time and as a result we get, ...we become experts in multitasking and managing that at the same time. But I think also the... fact that we're now living in the suburbs and left our families in the rural areas that type of support system is no longer there. For instance if I was staying with my parents they would take care of the kids and I would focus on other things, ...but now because I'm here on my own just with my immediate family I find myself having to juggle everything around.	Culture multitask Upbringing prepare women  Self-efficacy  No support system Lack of support system  Role demands	C4
Keo	Ok. What are the things about being a student at this time of your life that you find most exciting and interesting?		
Naomi	I think as a mature student, your focus is different, you... you study, you are no longer playing. When I was doing my undergraduate as a full time student I had a lot of time and I would play around. ...But now when you sit down to study you really focus on your studies ...and the fact that I have gained much experience at work, it makes me benefit more from the theories that I have learned from studies.	No longer playing Comparison-younger and mature students  Self-motivation  Work experience counts	MS4  WS3
Keo	So this experience of being a worker it also benefits you on your studies.		
Naomi	mm...(agreeing) and you can relate theory to practice, as somebody who is working practically you can implement what you are learning.	Theory into practice Capacity building	WS2
Keo	What are the things about being a student at this time of your life that you find most difficult to deal with?		

Naomi	<p>I think the fact that I have a family, I would like to spend more time with my family. I want to... do things that I can't do because I am studying.</p> <p>I have to divide my time between being a student and wife and a mother those are the most difficult things and I don't have all the time to do all the things.</p> <p>...and studying compromises quality time of the family.</p> <p>Studying is working, because with the nature of that we do you find yourself taking work home and the time that you wanted to spend with the family, you find yourself doing work on the computer because of the pressure.</p>	<p>Divide time No enough time for all roles</p> <p>Study+ family = Conflict</p>	<p>F2</p> <p>F2</p>
Keo	The next question is about conflicts. What conflicts stand out for you and how do you deal with these conflicts?		
Naomi	<p>Sometimes when I work on my computer, my son just comes and wants to talk to me and you find yourself now dividing your attention between doing work and eh... talking to the child.</p> <p>But also when you come back from work in most cases you are tired, and you just want to put your feet up and do nothing and you find yourself having to assist with the homework of the child, prepare dinner, ensure that everything is going according to plan in the house, and that is not always ehm...easy to manage.</p>	<p>Work+family=tired Dinner Not easy Guilt Role demands Role overload</p>	<p>F2</p> <p>WS4</p> <p>MS3</p>
Keo	What dreams do you have for the future as a mature student?		
Naomi	I would like to finish my studies in record time and I'm not sure if it is possible (laughs).	Achievement orientation	S4
Keo	How does being a student impact on the family, Satisfying the husband?		
Naomi	If you are anxious thinking about, you have an assignment due tomorrow, you are not thinking about anything else but your assignment and your spouse needs you. So it does affect your attention. If you break to give him care it is not easy to go back and read.	<p>Demands from husband Switching roles difficult</p>	F2
Keo	What about the community or social life?		
Naomi	<p>What about the community or social life?</p> <p>I think social life gets affected because you get back you are tired you have your academic work and you can't attend to your other social things</p> <p>...like, for instance my son, six years old and</p>	<p>Community-social life suffers Sleep in movie</p>	F2

	<p>he likes going to the movies and in most cases I go with him only to fall asleep in the movie and when we get out he wants to discuss the movie</p> <p>but you are not able to discuss mainly because they are for kids but also that I am tired. ...and for instance church sometimes you study till late on Saturday because you have to wake up and go to church especially in winter, and you are tired you can't wake up. ...and in order to raise your child properly you have to learn all the things about church rules. But this goes back, not necessarily to social thing, to the fact that if you want to have qualified black people, women in particular, there has to be something that ought to be done like even us, study links, page that links, because we complain all the time that we have few black wo... educated women ...but part of the thing that causes us to drop out as women is these responsibility, because somehow, when you are neglecting your child over your studies you feel bad and you find yourself sometimes deciding to drop out. That's why I say I wish I could finish on record time (laughing) and I know is not possible because I have to divide my time equally.</p>	<p>Church Studying interferes</p> <p>Child must know church Compromise on values Government External support is lacking Role overload Guilt over children</p>	<p>F4</p> <p>F4</p> <p>MS3</p> <p>MS3</p>
Keo	That serves as some kind of recommendation.		
Naomi	<p>But there must be something that can be done by policy makers because they always complain that we don't work have qualified eh... women in certain fields and when we try it's very difficult because we have a lot of work.</p> <p>We study at night and have to come back here and deliver the facts, come fresh and bright in the morning and its not always easy.</p> <p>So <u>mena</u> [me], I would recommend Study leave, paid study leave for women.</p>	<p>Possible solutions= policy makers And study leave with pay</p>	<p>WS4</p>

### Interview 5

Interviewer: Keo

Interviewee: Monica

Time: 11:00

Date: 08-06-2005

Duration: 30 minutes

Age: 32

Marital status: Live with partner

Number of dependent children: 1

Degree for which enrolled: Diploma in Accounting

Location of living quarters/house: Gezina

Keo	Why are you studying		
Monica	Mm... I'm studying because I need to develop myself. I have dreams to fulfil; I have no choice but to upgrade myself.	Self development Self improvement	S2  S2
Keo	What do you mean you've got no choice?		
Monica	Hm... I mean how do you survive without education these days. Things are getting challenging.	Importance of education Challenges in society/work context	S2 MS3
Keo	Indicate the high points and low points In your experience of being a student at this age of your life.		
Monica	The high points, I would say (laughing)...  I will emphasise mostly on the low points of which mostly are you know, the time, the lack of time. You don't get enough time to study, to do assignments. You know how things are, you always study at the beginning of the year and so on, but most of the things you never get to do on time and as expected. So those are the lows and at the end you end up stressed because you... you... ...you feel lacking you don't get to do all that you want to do in terms of the studies.	Uncertain about high points Lack of time  Stress  Feeling of inadequacy	MS4   MS2  MS3
Keo	Ok, but what are the good things about studying?		
Monica	The good thing is learning because, I mean at my age learning is different from let's say a high school,  most of the things that you learn you tend to relate you know with your experiences and at your current job or whatever...  somehow it's easier because your understanding is much, much better than the previous levels may be say secondary.	Motivation Different to learning as a young student. Relevance to life experiences Practical value for her job. Advantages of being a mature student	S2   WS3
Keo	In other words, you are saying there's a difference between being a student at younger age and later age.		

Monica	<p>Ja (yes), at younger age definitely you get more time, you can... you know, concentrate at your studies</p> <p>but at this age the maturity also helps you understand things better and</p> <p>the resources as well you have internet access and all that. I mean most of the time you use that from work so, it's some advantage.</p>	<p>Advantages of younger students = concentrate only on studies Advantages of mature student = better understanding Access to resources</p>	<p>MS3</p> <p>WS3</p>
Keo	Are you in a way saying you use time at work for your studies?		
Monica	<p>I don't use my time at work for that but if I have to get something on the internet, I am able to do so, checking exam dates.</p> <p>I don't have internet at home so for 20 minutes I can use.</p>	<p>Advantages of working = access to resources. Lack of resources at home</p>	WS3
Keo	What stands out for you as mature student, give examples and explain why stand out for you?		
Monica	Mature students, plan and adhere to plans, give time, what should I say, make time	Planning.	C4
Keo	Compared to younger students...		
Monica	<p>Compared to younger student, here it's goal oriented.</p> <p>You do this because somehow you are half way through your goals I would say, the future is much, more clearer so it makes your goal more attainable and it also gives you the courage.</p> <p>Whereas as a young student most of the time you say I have to get a course. Like you say I want to be a doctor but it's not really in you. If you're mature you also able to change career paths it makes it more fulfilling.</p>	<p>Goal orientation Motivation</p> <p>Future orientation; goals attainable</p> <p>Younger students not really goal focussed Career changes possible; fulfilling</p>	C4
Keo	What are the things about being a student at this age that you find more interesting and exciting?		
Monica	<p>For me I am moving from what I'm doing from being PA to doing administration full time because the course which I'm doing now is an accounting course.</p> <p>So I've been doing that you know because that's what I wanted to do but I was not able to... to do that at work, I was not exposed to that kind of work,</p>	<p>Improved job opportunities;</p> <p>Goal oriented; studies matches with her job Previously lack of exposure Able to implement studies at job.</p>	WS2

	so it's getting exciting for me knowing that soon I'll be moving and whatever I'm studying I'll be implementing.		WS2
Keo	It's the direction		
Monica	I've been wanting to do. So for me it's sort of paying off	Paying off; advantage of studying	
Keo	Ok. What are the things about being a student at this time of your life that you find most difficult to deal with as a student, mother, worker, spouse?		
Monica	<p>Making time... making time for your studies you know you ... you my problem, I'll talk about myself, I sometimes relax during the year and only at the last minutes not to say relax because I don't get time but I always postpone and then come exam time I have to crunch everything all at once. So it's quite stressful towards the end of the year when you have to crunch everything.</p> <p>You have to also help the kids with the homework, the stuff. So by the time you finish there is cooking and kids homework and clearing up where you have to you are so tired. I mean after the long day's job all that is left all you want to do is get into bed.</p> <p>And getting into bed is not easy to just get into bed take a text book and read, I mean you prefer to take a magazine or something (laughing) ...just read through to refresh so it's... it's difficult</p>	<p>Difficult to make time to study. Take responsibility Would rather relax than study Procrastination</p> <p>Stressful at year-end because of procrastination Family responsibility</p> <p>Tiredness</p> <p>Read textbook instead of relaxing/ magazine</p>	<p>C4</p> <p>MS3</p> <p>F2</p> <p>MS3</p>
Keo	It's difficult. Is there a strategy that you use to ensure that you study?		
Monica	<p>I use the weekends, more especially at night it's much quieter. During the week we go into... I don't know... procedures or what routine, you cook, you do this,</p> <p>whereas weekends are more flexible, children can visit and all that then you get time to study.</p>	<p>Use weekends for studying Family responsibilities during the week Flexibility Children go out</p>	C4
Keo	Why do mothers do routine why can't husband help?		
Monica	No, the partners like me, for me it's a partner, he helps where he can but at the same time you know some people are,	<p>Marriage as partnership Partner helps where he can. No helper (financial</p>	

	<p>it also goes with financial situation, some people have helpers to do all that. I guess it makes life easier but if you cannot afford that you have to do it and I think as a mother as well you wouldn't want. You also want to see yourself taking care of the family. You don't want to neglect your family.</p> <p>It's all about choice at the same time but you have to pay whatever the decision you make either way some form of payment.</p> <p>Although planning as well comes in like cooking once a week but different lifestyles.</p>	<p>constraints).</p> <p>Take care of the family; avoid neglect Choices that have a cost = financial for helper, time if doing it herself. Planning; change in lifestyle</p>	<p>F2</p> <p>C4</p>
Keo	It differs from one person to the other. It's a strategy		
Monica	Like me I cook meal to last for two days	Cook meal to last for 2 days.	C4
Keo	In other words, as a mother you feel like neglecting your family		
Monica	<p>It's because of how the roles have been defined,</p> <p>the motherly or the female role we grew up with them saying to cook, to see that everything is in order in the house, this and this.</p> <p>Something that we grew up looking at our mothers. Its automatically in us.</p>	<p>Female role definition Responsibility for housework</p> <p>Legacy from upbringing – woman's tasks</p>	F4
Keo	It suggests conflict between mother and student roles		
Monica	<p>I don't think it's conflicting as such, but it's balancing and back to time management. I guess if we can maybe get into practice and how to manage our time.</p> <p>Because at the same time there's a lot of time we waste through TV and other things.</p>	<p>Do not have conflict Balancing roles of mother &amp; student Time management</p> <p>Should avoid procrastination &amp; time wasting.</p>	C4
Keo	What conflicts stands out for you and how do you deal with these conflicts?		
Monica	I guess it's... do you mean within the family or as an individual?		
Keo	It's all directions, intra, inter...		
Monica	<p>For me mostly... it's... I don't see much because my partner is very supportive, he also helps out even with my studies if I need help. I think for me it's really up to me and planning for myself and doing it for myself.</p> <p>My boy is supportive.</p>	<p>Partner very supportive. Taking responsibility Son is supportive.</p>	F2



Keo	So studies suffer?		
Monica	Yeah, looking at the time I spend here, I come early but sometimes leave at five half past five, so the work get most of my time	Studies suffer, work gets most of the time.	WS4
Keo	What does the child say?		
Monica	Sometimes it's exciting for him to see that his mom also learns. So for him I think maybe in a way it's an encouragement.	Supportive Studying motivates son.	F2 F2
Keo	No negative impact		
Monica	They also have their time to play and we shout at them to keep quiet.	Guilty about shouting at kids when they are playing.	F2

## Interview 6

Interviewer: Keo

Interviewee: Helle

Time: 13:30

Date: 10-06-2005

Duration: 45 minutes

Age: 38

Marital status: Married

Number of dependent children: 3

Degree for which enrolled: MBA

Location of living quarters/house: Groenkloof

Keo	Why are you studying		
Helle	Ok... I'm studying because, I think for me it's a habit more than anything else. I cannot say I'm still looking for career change or anything <u>wa bona</u> (you see) I'm studying because it's something that I enjoy. Because I mean this is my second masters degree and also I could have emm... done my PhD long time ago but I didn't want to do in labour studies and management <u>wa bona</u> (you see) so that's why I had to branch out <u>ke etse</u> (to do) MBA but my ultimate aim is to do a doctorate in business. So masters degree is my way towards PhD.	Motivation – studying as habit Not for career change  To do PhD in business	S4  S4  S2
Keo	So ultimately you want to do doctorate in...		
Helle	DBA doctorate in business administration, and you can only do that if you've got an MBA	Doctorate in Business Administration.	
Keo	Could you indicate the highs and lows of being a student at your age?		
	I think the highs are that you can still do something that is emm... specifically yours. Is not my husband's thing, it's not my children's thing, it's just mine.	Focus on self-improvement Something specifically yours. Not easy for mothers to	S4

	<p>And I think as a mother it's always very difficult to do something that you really love, something that is focusing on you.</p> <p>So the highs of it are that I am able to... to prove to myself that I still have my life together. I can do things that benefit <u>na</u> (me) as Helle.</p> <p>And then emm... the lows are that I am forever feeling guilty.</p> <p>I feel guilty because emm... I don't spend enough time emm... with my husband, I don't spend enough time with my children, with my in-laws, with my parents and sisters and brothers.</p> <p>You know, I think when you are studying the problem is that there is something that you have to sacrifice. Emm... I just don't know but especially with MBA people say by the end of it, after your MBA chances are that emm... your husband divorces you or something goes wrong</p> <p>but I think its true because sometimes you experience the stresses and strains because you have to be studying all the time.</p> <p>There are syndicate meetings, you see like this office basically I have been here until 4:00 in the morning last week</p> <p>and I can only do that if Moroka (not husband's real name) understands.</p> <p>And you know why I am coping because Moroka does not spend a week at home. He works in Polokwane, so it's a blessing for me.</p> <p>So the lows are that you sacrifice the most important relationships.</p>	<p>focus on self</p> <p>Studying benefits her</p> <p>Guilt = not time with family</p> <p>Limited time for extended family.</p> <p>Sacrifice, neglect could lead to divorce.</p> <p>Stresses and strains</p> <p>Time consuming to study</p> <p>Understanding husband</p> <p>Husband works away from home</p> <p>Sacrifice important relationships.</p>	<p>S3</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>C4</p> <p>F2</p>
Keo	How does your study impact on the children, in-laws and so on?		
Helle	<p>My in-laws do not understand. Maybe they think I am trying to outsmart my husband.</p> <p>But you know what you have to live your life.</p> <p>But my family understands. My husband understands.</p> <p>But for the functions, he does not attend if I am not going.</p> <p>So what I do is that I study in the night and in the morning we then can attend the function.</p> <p>When we come back I sleep and study at night.</p> <p>But my husband just wants to be with his wife.</p>	<p>In-laws don't understand.</p> <p>Live your life.</p> <p>Family understands.</p> <p>Required to accompany husband.</p> <p>Study at night to attend functions with husband.</p> <p>Demands of married life</p>	<p>F3</p> <p>F2</p> <p>C4</p> <p>F2</p>
Keo	How do you deal with conflicts that arise		

	among the roles?		
Helle	<p>The biggest strain for me, for instance after my exam, before, this year has really been a difficult year because I have to do research, I am an executive, I've got a demanding job and Moroka is not there at home and I have to attend to the children and everything. So there is real strain but for me has affected my health. My skin reacts every day. But fortunately my husband is so supportive.</p> <p>The conflict is that life does not have to stop. So I say but I have to submit this assignment, and he would say I will help you at night let's do this. So stress manifest in the skin when I'm very uptight.</p>	<p>Strain = exams</p> <p>Demands of job</p> <p>Husband away during the week</p> <p>Effects on health – skin problems</p> <p>Supportive husband</p> <p>Demands of life</p> <p>Supportive husband</p> <p>Stress manifest in the skin problems</p>	<p>WS4</p> <p>C2</p> <p>MS3</p>
Keo	Your aim is to finish your degree.		
Helle	You know another stress is that we are building a house	Stress = building a house	
Keo	But how do we cope, what makes you cope		
Helle	<p>I am a praying woman, that's my greatest source of strength.</p> <p>At the moment I am preparing for a presentation tomorrow [at church], amongst other things. I finished writing [an exam] on Tuesday, then the very same day I receive a call that I have to make a presentation.</p>	<p>Cope through prayer</p> <p>Demands from church duties.</p>	<p>C4</p> <p>MS3</p>
Keo	Actually that is another role, the community. Any other thing you would want to say. The strategy that you use to cope.		
Helle	<p>I think my coping strategies are very bad, because I think even this skin reaction I should have known better and just use water. I think I am one person who is very goal driven, so I shouldn't have panicked. You hear so many people saying drink this and that it work so my coping mechanisms have been very poor</p> <p>but I think the biggest one is just my commitment to God, like in between all these things, like the day I was writing an exam I received a call that I prepare presentation for the church. I almost said I am busy, but then for a minute I had the inner voice saying, you have been doing all these things but you don't want to serve me. So I am doing it for God you see, and I console</p>	<p>Bad coping strategies.</p> <p>Goal driven</p> <p>Advice from others</p> <p>Health deteriorates because of poor coping</p> <p>Commitment to God</p> <p>Demands of religion – guilt</p> <p>Solution in serving God</p>	<p>C4</p> <p>C3</p>

	myself that at the end of the day the reward will be better than getting a degree.		
Keo	So actually it is sort of balancing the spiritual, the family and all the other aspects		
Helle	Exactly. I think without that I don't know how other people do it, serious.	Importance of religion/spirituality	
Keo	Anything about studies and work		
Helle	Conflict, I think when you are older most of the time benefit is that the... the... employer pays for your studies but the down side is that especially myself in an executive position, emm... support is not there because you really have to do what you have to do at work. You have to perform, you have to deliver at the same time you have to pass your courses because they are paying for you. If you don't pass you have to reimburse them. So emm, that's conflict, you can't go crying, to my husband yes, but at work it's about performance. So I think it's a bad combination, if we had a way all of us we should stop working and just study  but because we can't afford it then we have to try to balance.	Work = employer pays for your studies (support) Work = demands to deliver (no support).  Studies = pass your courses.  Conflict between work and studies.  Wish to stop working & only study. Can't afford, so try to balance.	WS3  WS4  WS4  WS4 WS4
Keo	You mean if you had a way you would...		
Helle	Study full time. Like myself, if I knew that I could take time off but still get my salary, I would stop working but I mean... remember that if I stop working my husband needs that portion of my money, by the way our life style is based on that. Right now we are building a house, so if I stop working they are going to sell that house. So we try to balance.	Wish study leave with full pay  Financial constraints – lifestyle requires her income	WS4
Keo	How does study impacts on the children, yourself and on your work.		
Helle	Ok I think the impact on the kids is that, the other day my son said mommy's job is to study and to go to work. So what I'm saying is that the good thing is that they grow up knowing that you must study. So that's a very good impact because out of this for sure they will not have to be convinced that you have to study, you have to study. I mean Moroka and myself ensure that our children have role models because we are setting a foundation. Chances are that they will follow in our footsteps. That's positive.	Children supportive Motivation to children – encouragement  Parents are role models to kids = positive  Mother not there for bedtime stories = temporary negative	F2  F2

	<p>Negative is just that you know, we read bedtime stories and sometimes I am not there but it's a temporary negative, it's not permanent one.</p> <p>So I am not worried about that because I have to make them understand role modeling and the value of education. Fortunately God has just blessed us because somehow we can see success out of studying.</p> <p>And when it comes to me personally it's because I love studying so, the benefit is that it keep stimulating me intellectually. And like I told you right from the beginning it's a habit so for me it's a very good habit and I believe that it keeps me out of trouble. I don't have to be visiting friends for gossips, I am out of mischief. So personally I like studying for that purpose. And when you study [neh!] when people know that you are studying already there are people that will never mess with you in terms of maybe coming to gossip. It gives you respect in the community, and I think emm... and it's a status thing because of different statuses of a mother, wife, worker so being a student it's status, and I think it keeps me young. For instance when I go to school I put on track suite, tekkies and student bag. So I just feel young. I think the negative thing, oh, but... the other biggest positive is that fortunately for me my studies are equivalent to my job successes. So every time I studied I have actually seen the benefits career wise. The main negative for studying is time, it's just time with the people you love nothing else that's the only negative.</p>	<p>Kids understand value of education</p> <p>Blessings from God blessed –success of studying. Studying = no time for friends and gossiping, out of mischief</p> <p>Respect, status</p> <p>Self-esteem – keeps me young.</p> <p>Studies equivalent to job success, benefits career</p> <p>No time for the people you love = negative</p>	<p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>S4</p> <p>S2</p> <p>S2</p> <p>S2</p> <p>S3</p> <p>S4</p> <p>WS2</p> <p>WS2</p> <p>F2</p>
Keo	But how do you work through this problem of time		
Helle	<p>First year I was doing after hours MBA but now this year I changed to modular... that is in trying to address the issue of time. So I'm no longer after hours I am modular so what it means is that we are back to routine. My boys get bedtime stories every night. Emm... they see mommy before sunset, I don't study away from home, I'm always at home and</p>	<p>Solve time problem by doing modular not after hours anymore. Can do bedtime stories for kids.</p> <p>Children understanding</p>	<p>C4</p> <p>F2</p>

	<p>my boys understand as long as mommy is in the room, that's what they say, mommy as long as you are in the room, don't bother her, and they never come. After five minutes they come, are you in mommy we won't make noise stay there. But TV volume is high, so I just learn to cope.</p> <p>They sleep at eight, immediately after eight then I take something like three hours. So I have actually balanced that thing.</p> <p>No I am very strict with bed time in my house you won't find any child talking.</p>	<p>Study immediately when kids sleep at 8pm</p> <p>Discipline for children to make time for study</p>	
Keo	So you still have control over the boys.		
Helle	<p>I am realistic, I know one day the boys will say no mommy but one thing for sure when I still have control over them I will never give up. The eldest has already negotiated to sleep at 8:30 when he is in grade four, but I'm not hard. Another impact is career wise that my study is directly related to my progress. Right now I have been headhunted for this job and I mean I don't think they will have called me had I not studied.</p>	<p>Disciplining</p> <p>Flexibility</p> <p>Benefits of studying – career progress</p>	WS4
Keo	So you are able to implement what you are studying		
Helle	That makes me efficient and competent	Self-improvement Competence	
Keo	Any other thing to talk about		
Helle	<p>For me the concluding thing is that you need to have a very strong and supportive husband, if you are married. I firmly believe that a supportive system constituting of a good husband, emm.... Obedient and loving children, which I believe they only come from God and by His grace our children will be like that for many more years to come.</p> <p>And I also think the people that matter in your life like your parents, your sisters, your brothers as long as you can convince them that you know this is just a phase of studying is not here to stay it's just a stage and at the end of it all I will still be myself you see.</p> <p>But the rest of the other people I don't have to worry about.</p>	<p>Support systems: husband, obedient and loving children.</p> <p>Parents, sisters and brothers.</p>	<p>C2</p> <p>C3</p> <p>F3</p>
Keo	You indicated that you studied after hours, tell me your experience with younger students		
Helle	<p>You know you are right. I think in after hours there's more young people I didn't realize. It was a very difficult year for me, I just found them do childish. I didn't realize that</p>	Young students are childish.	MS3

	<p>(laughing), I found them so childish. I would often get very impatient with their jokes, because I never enjoyed their company. And this year I met older students. We talk the same story and I enjoy the discussions I can also relate.</p> <p>You are right I didn't even realize it was an age thing. It's a maturity thing. You know they are still getting married inviting me to their weddings and (laughing) how long have I been married.</p> <p>But funny when I was young I used to be like that in class.</p> <p>These children, they talk about how many marks you got oh! Imagine.</p> <p>And this year nobody is interested in marks. You are so right. Everybody of my age live or strive to live this kind of lifestyle for our age. So these children make weird statements, they think we are young. They compare with us.</p>	<p>Never enjoy their company. Enjoy company of older students.</p> <p>Used to be childish when I was young</p> <p>Different lifestyles &amp; expectations</p>	S4
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### Interview 7

Interviewer: Keo

Interviewee: Ruth

Time: 12:45

Date: 15-06-2005

Duration: 1 hour

Age: 35

Marital status: Married

Number of dependent children: 2

Degree for which enrolled: MBA

Location of living quarters/house: Mooinooi

Keo	<p>Basically the interview is about juggling of the roles of a mother, student, worker and wife. The positive and negative impact of being a student on yourself, family and work. My first question therefore would be why are you studying</p>		
Ruth	<p>I think it's a question of personal goal.</p> <p>You sort of start off by identifying personal goals your developmental goals and say at a certain stage you want to achieve certain ... certain qualifications.</p> <p>So what I have done when I turned 30 years, I decided that for the next 10 years I am going to develop myself. So the 10 years that I actually consider developmental late mature ... mature development in education.</p> <p>So from that perspective, it is the driver, sort of</p>	<p>Personal goal Developmental goals Achieve at certain age. Self development</p> <p>Personal growth To be a better person To impact on the lives of women, be role model, leadership for upcoming young women.</p>	<p>S4</p> <p>S4</p> <p>S2</p> <p>S4</p> <p>S2</p>

	<p>a goal that makes me do sort of the things that I want to do, the sort of things that I want to do.</p> <p>Studying is basically for personal growth and personal development and .. and .. to be a better person,hoping to bring change especially in the lives of women and to be a role model in terms of leadership for upcoming young women.</p> <p>Being a mom for an example being all those roles that a mother is supposed to be is quiet challenging.</p> <p>One is you are a mother there are positives and negatives of being a mother you 've got challenges.</p> <p>One, you've got young kids and you don't see to their developmental stages, you sort of like overlook their developmental processes and when you do that especially coming from a psychological perspective, you know that you have to observe those stages and at the end of the day you end up overlooking them and you feel guilty at the end of the day.</p> <p>So the positive side of being a mom and emm ... studying is that you understand the importance of learning, the importance of unders.. learning and education and also setting targets from learning perspectives and the kids also grow to understand and have patience that emm .. you don't easily get things.</p> <p>So early gratification tends to.. to ..pave the way because they know that for you to benefit or to get better things in life you have to study a lot. Emm.</p> <p>The negative side is that you are never there. For example, my daughter emm ... said to me, you know mom, when you finished studying when you are 40, I will be 17 years and you wouldn't have seen what happened to me anyway so it's sort of create guilt in a way and kids manipulate the situation. That's the negative side.</p> <p>They say because you are not there , because you are not there for us, that is why we are</p>	<p>Role challenge Not able to see the developmental stages of your children Psychological perspective</p> <p>Feel guilty</p> <p>Understand importance of learning Learn to set targets Kids understand that it is not easy to get things but study a lot.</p> <p>Never there for children. Child's complain Guilt Kids manipulate the situation</p>	<p>F4</p> <p>MS3</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p>
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	behaving the way we, that's why we fail at school.		
Keo	Ok		
Ruth	<p>And the other negative is that you don't see to their educational process, you don't have time to look at what is happening at school, you don't attend to school issues,</p> <p>you sort of like feel you overlook these things or alternatively postpone by e-mail with the principal, with the school and hope that things will work and it doesn't always follow, emm your kids will definitely want you to be there like other kids</p>	<p>Don't see children's educational process. Make excuses for not attending school issues. Kids feel bad when mother is not there for school meetings</p>	F2
Keo	They want to see their own mother like other children		
Ruth	<p>For example, my daughters, I don't even have time to attend to their extramural activities, like sports, and they see other mothers who are there all the time assisting in this and that and <u>wena</u> you just come in there to attend not necessarily to be part of the building process <u>wa bona</u> you see.</p> <p>The other negative is that my daughter one day asked me, mommy you know you used to play netball at school why don't you coach our team and I said I don't have time.</p> <p>She said why don't you have time and I said I'm studying and all that. She sort of created some alternative statements saying mommy, do you think your study is better and best than just being there for me, that kind of stuff. So you juggle your time.</p> <p>And then time management becomes an important.</p> <p>Being a wife as well as being a learner or mature student you face both negatives and positives. One negative I would say being, my husband for example feels the plunge of the wife being emm ... of.. of the hus.. the wife being studying and not being there for him.</p> <p>So I consider, I reckon them to be kids, they want to be taken care of as well. So they don't feel that attention, they feel we are neglecting them, we don't attend to them, I don't attend to</p>	<p>Kids complain</p> <p>Husband complain Need attention like kids=demands on mother Can't attend functions at his work</p>	<p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p>

	<p>the functions that he invites me to, because I am studying, I don't get to see what he does at work, because I'm always, there's always a reason why I'm not there.</p> <p>The other negative is that you don't get to go together as both partner and wife one is busy with the books and the other is sort of like going and you're left behind in a way from experience point of view and when you realize he is up there you are remaining here hoping that with studies you will develop and you have a lot of patch ups to do along the way.</p> <p>The positive side is that it's a commitment in a family you find a woman studying. You sort of before, sit down and plan for this, plan and say look you study for this period and give each other a chance so it's about negotiating and communicating and also emm.. form of agreement and planning.</p> <p>There's a lot of planning that goes on, to say up to this stage you are able to study and such kind of things. And sometimes you find that even if you plan you're still expected to perform other roles, for example emm.. providing, being there , transport, emm.. buying food, making them well , pay this and all that at the end of the day you are still a mom, you know the bottom line is you are still a mom.</p> <p>It does not exclude you from the functions of being a mother, by studying you know.</p> <p>Emm.. from being emm a worker perspective is.. you .. especially with me because I'm a lecturer you set yourself high goals being a lecturer you are supposed to pass in any case.</p> <p>There's no doubt about it. And when you sort of like your grades become lower then you questioning yourself you say but I teach my students to perform high then you become hard on yourself.</p> <p>And at the end of the day it creates more stress to yourself because you're setting to high standards to yourself and also vested in your learners. And you forget that the type of degree</p>	<p>Can't be together as partners</p> <p>Study=commitment Planning Communication Agreement</p> <p>Role demands=provider,transport,buying food</p> <p>You are still mom</p> <p>Worker=set high goals, to pass course as want your students to pass.</p>	<p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2 C4</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>WS4</p> <p>WS4</p>
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	<p>you are doing is more developmental and more cooperate not junior degree.</p> <p>Being a worker and studying it sort of create some... some... gap in your working environment because people don't get to see you. They see you when you are stressed and they ask what's happening and you don't know how to explain that because they don't expect you to feel that way, they expect you to be a performer in any case by virtue of the nature of your job.</p> <p>Emm... the other negative side is that you're never available to do certain organizational duties. You're always having an excuse that you are studying and people are watching and looking at you in a stance that emm... they want you to be involved and use your knowledge towards the development of the organization but you are not there you know.</p> <p>So sometimes when we study we sort of like don't apply what you learn. We sort of want to get finished with what we are studying and only after that can we learn, or apply our knowledge.</p>	<p>Work see you stressed, expects you to perform.</p> <p>Work=you make excuses, never available to do certain work related duties.</p> <p>Don't apply studies to work but want to finish first.</p>	<p>WS4</p> <p>WS4</p> <p>WS4</p> <p>WS4</p>
Keo	Ok		
Ruth	<p>So those are the negative side, but the positive side is that people look at you and.. and.. they sort of respect you for who you are, you know the determination, the the.. umph, or the ability.</p> <p>I mean in the department most of people, they sort of feel I've thrown myself in a deep end but they know that I've got the courage to do it and they believe in my courage. they say you really are positive about you you want to do and you send a positive message to others that you can do it and also people can follow you footsteps. So that's very positive.</p> <p>But the negative side is you are always carrying this burden of studying you feel you want to get rid of it and get finished and unfortunately we</p>	<p>Gain respect for studying</p> <p>Ability and courage to study</p> <p>Motivation to others</p> <p>Study=burden</p>	<p>S3</p> <p>S4</p> <p>MS3</p>

	<p>loose side of the fact that studying is an ongoing process. Every time you are going to be learning. There's never an attainable moment, when you get your degree you sort of looking forward to another thing so it's sort of ongoing incremental process and I see as more as developmental process wherein when you get one level you want to get to another level.</p> <p>So in a way it needs to be harnessed to a point of growth wherein you continuously strive for perfection or you continuously striving for growth in your life as a mature student.</p> <p>And the other issue, the other most important part about, about.. being a worker is that you are sending the positive spin-offs to other people, women. Because for an example in my case I've got social club and since they realized I'm studying, they have started studying most of the them. So you don't know that you can be a role model unaware.</p> <p>Emm... you know. You might not see what the benefits are but people come to you and say you know what, you are encouraging us also to go on and it's .. for me it's a positive side as well to keep on your toes. To keep on developing so that you can develop others. So basically those are the positive and the negative sides of all the levels from a personal point of view up to family point of view.</p> <p>One other important factor that is relevant is the fact that both the positives and negatives is your interaction with other people in the community . Positive side is, you, if you don't use your knowledge you sort of like isolated, you are alone you are studying and you don't get to interact with the outside world often because of the pressures of your work and when you finish you realize you don't have friends anymore, they are gone. Because when they wanted you ,you were never there.</p> <p>So at the end is a negative side of studying and also being part of the community or part of friends you know. I realize, I realize that when I take stock, I no longer have friends, the only friend I have are my books or people that I</p>	<p>Study is ongoing</p> <p>Encourages other women to study.</p> <p>Interaction with community</p> <p>Lose friends</p>	<p>S4</p> <p>S4</p> <p>F4</p> <p>F4</p>
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	<p>interact with during my.. the process of .. so that is isolating. But on a positive side you sort of gain better that way as you grow older emm.. you sort of get to understand yourself better to say what emm... in life you have to network with people of this caliber or people who share same kind of emm... knowledge or emm... belief system.</p> <p>Emm... you can always go back to your roots, I mean go to people and people who accept you will be the ones who see education as most important.</p> <p>There's no heart feeling in losing friends who feel you are not there for them.</p> <p>So from the community you don't get access to the community because you are never there, you cannot volunteer doing certain things because of the fear of not being able to sustain you sort of sitting there and waiting for you to sort of finish studying. Emm... there's never an end, when you start you must really get there and finish.</p> <p>So the community also is waiting and watching you, for example, in our culture you have to attend funerals for example and people are watching if you don't attend funerals and also explain that you are studying, when you have something similar they also say the same thing we are also studying.</p> <p>So you have to strike a balance between your involvement in the community and studies because is not about you only it's also about other people and also your interaction into the community itself is very important. So on that note you have to strike a balance as a multitask woman. Strike a balance up to a point where you don't upset the system but you can be part of the interaction through the system which is very challenging but at the end of the day it is worthwhile.</p>	<p>Network with people of your caliber</p> <p>Never there for the community</p> <p>Culture suffers=can't attend funerals</p> <p>Strike the balance between culture and studies</p> <p>Don't upset the system Challenging but worthwhile</p>	<p>F4</p> <p>F4</p> <p>F4</p>
Keo	<p>Now how do you get to balance the system. I think it appears may be twice or so this thing of striking a balance. What do you do to create time, is there any strategy that you come up</p>		

	with to get to create time or the family. What strategies are put in place to strike the balance.		
Ruth	<p>I think the issue of planning, there is too much planning that needs to go in there. Time management. When you study there is no way that you can be haphazard, you have to make sure that you have networks. One you have your support networks, the family, your husband. If you don't have a supportive network it becomes a problem.</p> <p>My husband will be supportive but at some point he sort of loose out and blame you for all sorts of things but you communicate. I think communication is important. As a persistent woman you realize that you have your own emotions as well, saying you know what I am so challenged and like giving up.</p> <p>But when you communicate to other people you realise like you share with your study group, you share sort of this feeling and you sort of diffuse it away so communication becomes most important part and time management as well.</p> <p>And also project plan , you sit down and plan in terms of bunch of time, how you use time in and out of your studies. And how you make sure that your family time is quality time because you can be with people but that does not mean quality <u>wa bona</u> (you see). so in my view whatever time and I also teach my daughters that whatever time, they need to understand that any time that we we have is quality, it has to be turned into quality time.</p> <p>So they sort of understand that, whether it's in a car, in a shopping that moment they have to use because it's never going to be thee, so that time will pass and you will never gain it again. In their lives they have to realize that you are not a developer of time, time passes, you don't manufacture time but you use time profitably. So if you don't use it then you are gone <u>wa bona</u> (you see) and making up time is very challenging because now you're stressing up too much other networks.</p> <p>Making time is when you sort of meet you agree</p>	<p>Lot of planning Time management</p> <p>Have support networks</p> <p>Family supportive but sometimes don't understand</p> <p>Communication is important</p> <p>Study group</p> <p>Project plan</p> <p>Family time be quality time</p> <p>Teach children to use time profitably</p>	<p>C4</p> <p>C2</p> <p>MS2</p> <p>C4</p> <p>C4</p> <p>F2</p>

	<p>on making discussions that are very crucial. Although sometimes is haphazard but you are trying to want to discuss important things but at the end of the day you realize that the things that you discuss are more administrative so, you end up administering your family more than being part of it. Because most of the time which is the negative side, most of the time we sit and discuss, when we discuss it's about who is paying what, who is buying groceries. We don't have time to talk about how much you love and appreciate him. But you administer technically your family. So it becomes an administrative job than a relational job. So that part the emotional part will suffer at the end of the day.</p> <p>And then from work relationship, the time management also is the most important thing, and communicating your plan, for an example I will send in to the head of department my time table, for the semester to say this is what I'm going to be doing and they understand, they know if I'm not here I am writing exams.</p> <p>Communicating with everybody at that time and being strategic in doing that because you cannot just communicate to everybody, I communicate to the head of department and he will understand that if she is not here then she is studying. Then it helps you grow as a person as you juggle around the roles, as you know that we women we are gifted in juggling around the roles, it comes naturally.</p> <p>But at some point you feel you know what, you are not a super mom you are also a human being, you also fall into a trap of not being there of procrastinating and all that you know.</p> <p>And on being a learner and time management, you realise that if you don't start, the early start is very important in what you are doing. If you don't start and postpone all the time you must know that you are not going to make it.</p> <p>So again on all of these roles time management becomes the key as a strategy to balance all these roles. So in my view time is very very... critical.</p>	<p>Mother=family administrator</p> <p>Emotional part suffers</p> <p>Work: time management; communicating your plan to your head of department</p> <p>Women's juggling of roles is natural</p> <p>Not a super mom but normal human being Procrastination</p> <p>Early start as a learner</p> <p>Time management Balance all the roles</p>	<p>F2</p> <p>WS4</p> <p>S4</p> <p>C4</p> <p>MS2</p>
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	<p>And from a personal point of view you have to be strong. You have to be emotionally intelligent, you have to be mature, know yourself, what makes you tick, what makes you stressed. Because you will realize that there are times when in your life, you are going to stress up to the level where you don't know whether you are strong or not strong. So you get challenged and pushed very very hard so your stress management.</p>	<p>Personal strength Emotional intelligence Maturity Knowledge of self</p> <p>Stress management</p>	MS3
Keo	Ok		
	<p>Emm... you need to have time off from books, and that comes from planning. If you don't plan you will realize that you don't work smart, you have to review your plans all the time. Time off meaning, have time to.. to.. view nature, have time to observe what is happening around you. Don't just look at the books.</p> <p>There are things you can do along studying for example talking to people who are doing the same thing as you, who are in the same problem as you and being positive about life. And then at the end of the day you will realize that this thing that you are in is going to pass and at the end of the day you will be .. you will be a better person you know. You look at the future of what is the goal, and the goal is making it in life and also to be a leader. So those things will come if you sustain <u>wa bona</u> (you see) the process.</p>	<p>Plan time off from books Review your plans To view nature Observe what is happening around you</p> <p>Talk to people with same experience as yours</p> <p>Challenge will pass</p> <p>You being better person</p> <p>Making it in life</p> <p>Sustenance</p>	<p>C4</p> <p>S3</p>
Keo	<p>Ok, now at some stage you indicated that there's aught to be time for each other , and that studying is ongoing. I just want to know how do you overcome that, giving each other chance to study.</p>		
Ruth	<p>Like I said, studying and learning are two different things. When you study emm... it's a question of maybe going through a degree and finishing it. For example my plan is to do a PhD and that PhD will definitely come. But I am in a time frame of 10 years in terms of growth, I started when I was 30, now I'm 35 so when I'm 40 I should have finished with that and now using my knowledge to learn and learning for my people as I say learning comes from different angles, different from studying. So learning is ongoing which is going to come even after I finish your degree.</p>	<p>Set time frame to develop yourself</p> <p>But learning continues after studying</p>	<p>S4</p> <p>S4</p>

	Because the minute you stop learning you..., I have a belief that when you stop learning you'll die. So everyday you have to use to attain a goal, but also continue to learn. You can study but continue to learning. So that is how I use the concepts.	Belief that stop learning=death	
Keo	I was gonna ask about your dreams for the future but I think you just alluded to it that you want to do PhD		
Ruth	<p>That for me will be more of emm.. academic goal. In terms of how I use my knowledge is also very important. Attaining a goal is not only relevant is important but how you use your knowledge is the most important part of your life.</p> <p>Emm... what I want to see happening is using my knowledge to profit women. To make sure that I use my knowledge to develop other women and also help them, mentor them emm.. coach them to attain, to be sure of themselves, to be assertive and to understand that they do have the capabilities that they can make it in life and to use my story, you know, and narrate it better to them and explain that you know what through planning, through .. when you sustain and when you persevere you definitely get to know what you want in life. And also that planning your goals and future goals medium to long term way ahead then you can be able to review your plans over time and that is my goal, the ultimate goal.</p> <p>To help other women in future to develop and grow and understand that learning is ongoing and is never an unattainable goal.</p>	<p>Using your knowledge (how)</p> <p>To profit women To develop other women Mentor women</p> <p>Coach women Help women be assertive</p> <p>Self story telling about planning and sustenance</p> <p>Learning is attainable</p>	<p>S4</p> <p>F4</p> <p>F4</p>
Keo	What are the things that excites you as a student		
Ruth	<p>Nothing, I think what I said is emm. being a student is .. is a frame of mind. Emm.. you can be a student and not feel like you are being a student. That will only come when you plan and when you use your time profitably.</p> <p>But if you don't do that you will definitely feel the pressures of being a student. Being a student is all about, we call it a student syndrome basically, where you don't plan, you procrastinate and only at the end you start running around and do all sort of things but, if</p>	<p>No pressure in being a student</p> <p>Student syndrome</p>	MS4

	<p>you have proper planning and adhere to your plan then you can be able to enjoy being a learner, a student. But with me basically what I do is I also have some negative style of procrastinating, but I review my plans all the time and then I say Ok this strategy did not work then I need to change and use another strategy, <u>wa bona</u> [you see].</p>	<p>Procrastination</p> <p>Review your plans often</p>	MS3
Keo	Ok		
Ruth	<p>And one other thing that I .. makes me enjoy being a student, is because I believe in my capabilities or I know that ultimately, no matter how long it takes but I'm going to, when I persist in something. I don't sort of give up easily, I really.. really persevere. So that is actually emm.. a positive side, toward me being a student, my perseverance, my sustain.. my ability to sustain with my goal and wanting to achieve a specific goal. So that's exactly what makes me .. and I think I'm ..I'm a person who likes to to learn on an ongoing basis. So I don't see myself, I fear the moment when I stop learning where I stop studying because I feel I won't have anything to do, because there I have to learn to build my space with helping other people to be part of the community.</p>	<p>Enjoy studies because of belief in own capabilities</p> <p>Persistence</p> <p>Perseverance</p> <p>Push to achieve the goal</p> <p>Never stop learning and helping other people</p>	<p>S4</p> <p>C4</p>
Keo	Ok. Now back to the family, how does emm.. being a student benefits the family.		
Ruth	<p>Being a student, one ,I think I have indicated that there are positives and negatives sides. Positive side to the kids is basically understanding that learning is important and having the culture of learning in the house. I mean my 5 year old when I started she was 0 year now she is 5 . I was 30, she is 5 now and I'm 35.</p> <p>what it means in that developmental process is that she understands that we have to sit down and read and when you are not doing anything she asks you have you finished studying. Because she knows she has the culture of learning in the house then she sort of like grow with the kind of belief that learning is working hard and she is actually very positive about, she enjoys studying, she is good.</p> <p>Actually she is very very.. very intelligent mainly because of that. Not necessarily, I mean</p>	<p>Culture of learning for kids</p> <p>Kids enjoy studying</p> <p>They are positive and intelligent</p> <p>My studying stimulates them to learn at early age</p>	<p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p>

	<p>what it does is it stimulates them to learn. Especially at a very early age. But, for the other one whom is a teenager it has got positive and negative spills. Teenagers want attention. They need you, they want you to be there all the time. One thing that happens at that stage is they actually abuse the situation or they use it profitably.</p> <p>They understand that learning is important, they know that they cannot question that but they hate the fact that you are not there for them. And at that stage they it's a very critical stage wherein you have to oversee to their growth, oversee to their schoolwork, and you will realize that with a drop in their performance at that stage because they are very much attention seeking.</p> <p>So that's what I observe with my daughter at the moment. She used to be very very good with mathematics now the grades are going down. And because I don't have time to attend to her grades because I sort of like had a belief that she can do it then I relaxed on that one. And then I realized when I checked you know here and there that she actually is not.</p> <p>She said to me mom, you know what when you finished studying I will be seventeen she has calculated, and she asks when are you going to finish your MBA, when are you going to start your PhD, when are you going to finish your PhD, and then she counts all those years ok, I am 13 now I will be 17 when you finish your PhD. So you won't see much of my teenage stage. So that sort of punishment to get which is negative.</p> <p>But you can turn it around by communicating all the time, and also this way the support networks come in like the husband, family, mother, aunt and so on. That's why sometimes I refer them, go to aunt, aunt knows this but it does not replace you as a mother anyway. You feel guilty about that, of not being able to fill that gap.</p> <p>From husband point of view, the negative is that the husband will sort of use it to his advantage,</p>	<p>Teenagers want attention</p> <p>Oversee their school work</p> <p>Drop in teenagers schoolwork</p> <p>No time to attend to kids grades=drop down</p> <p>Demands of teenagers</p> <p>Best is good communication with the teenagers</p> <p>Family support system</p> <p>Refer kids to aunt</p> <p>Guilty feeling</p> <p>Husband blames you</p> <p>Feel guilty</p>	<p>F2</p> <p>C4</p> <p>F2</p>
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	when things go wrong he says is because you were not there. All this comes back to you , you feel very guilty about not performing fully or doing your role as a mother.		
Keo	In other words study takes preference over your other roles		
Ruth	<p>It depends how you puts it. Emm... it doesn't necessarily mean studies take over, it does to certain extent if I use may be a percentage to it it would be maybe 55% 45 %, because at the end of the day you are not fully functional as a mother.</p> <p>So definitely studies take major chunk of your time away from your role as a mother you know. So, for me I would translate it to working, when you are working you also not a full mother. Because you still have to do other things. So what for me it does is you have to be flexible, you have to be balanced. Your ability to balance your career and also your studies and also your role as a mother becomes very important now.</p> <p>And remember our cultural background , I am married to a xhosa man who in his own mind a wife must be there, must provide, must be able to cook and all that and when you don't, when you are not able to do that it becomes a challenge. And your ability to overcome that process it's actually a winner, a winning battle, because I am at this stage struggling with that.</p> <p>You know to make them understand that you are not a super mom. You are just an ordinary mother and also going through challenges in life this stage will definitely pass. So reassurance always, must be there, and that's mainly through communication.</p>	<p>Studies take 55%</p> <p>Not fully functional as mother</p> <p>Studies take much time</p> <p>Working=not fully functional mother</p> <p>Be flexible Balance career and studies</p> <p>Culture challenge=woman is a wife</p> <p>Winning battle</p> <p>Reassure the family, communicate with them</p>	<p>F2</p> <p>WS4</p> <p>F2</p> <p>C4</p> <p>C4</p>
Keo	What kind of help do you get.		
Ruth	Remember I said you need support networks. My support network are such that they can come in any time I need them. But is not always like available. Sometimes he wants to eat the wife's food. Out of the blue, when you are supposed to write exam.	<p>Strong support networks</p> <p>Husband's demands</p> <p>Challenge during exam</p>	<p>C4</p> <p>F2</p>
Keo	Whose food has he been eating		
Ruth	No, what happens is I've got a helper, I've got aunt, my family, my daughter is at boarding	Helper	C4

	<p>school. So, again it's about planning. When you start studying make sure that everything is set up and you will have spoken to people, you sit down with them and make them understand that you are going to take 2-3 years now of study.</p> <p>Like I said I am going to take 10 years to develop myself and my husband is also taking 10 years to develop his own business, so, it's more of development but in a different way. So your ability to communicate with everybody becomes most important part. And remember this is my second masters so , I learnt from the previous one say how to make use of the support networks, when you are also studying.</p> <p>So you grow as you study that when you go to another level you realize that ok, this is how I need to use my networks. And then make sure that you relate well to these people and serve them well. For example you must be giving. When they have done you favour you reciprocate, or take them out or you know make sure that you make them see that you appreciate.</p> <p>So that sense of appreciation sort of makes it easy. Makes networks stronger and grow longer and they can be able to fill in up at any stage. For an example I've got very close , my family is very supportive. My father would for example go fetch my daughter at school when I'm not there, my sister would fill in and fetch you know that sort of thing. They will take them for a weekend for me to study. The challenge is my husband sometimes he thinks is just too much. He just wants attention.</p> <p>So those challenges really come time and again and you will be challenged to a point where you feel like giving up. Because there will be pressure from him you know to make you realize that you are not there, you are not available.</p> <p>We were moving a day before I write so he does not see how moving would destruct my exam and basically it had. You cannot stay with the boxes around you. People agree that you study but the practical part of it. So you have to</p>	<p>Planning</p> <p>Self development</p> <p>Good communication</p> <p>Previous experience</p> <p>Relate well to your support system</p> <p>Reciprocate</p> <p>Her parents are supportive</p> <p>Feel like giving up</p> <p>Pressure from present</p> <p>Family demands during exam=negative impact</p> <p>Continuous reassurance</p> <p>Family respects you for studying</p>	<p>C4</p> <p>S2</p> <p>C4</p> <p>C4</p> <p>S2</p> <p>C2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>MS2</p>
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	<p>continuously reassure and they can say we are enough.</p> <p>Sometimes you feel like the husband and kids club against you, they go and talk about you to create pressure so that you give in. but at the same time they respect you , my husband will not say it but you hear people saying what he tells them about you</p>		
Keo	Any other thing you would want to talk about.		
Ruth	<p>Yeah, may be to conclude is maybe to say that it will be very interesting to see how we come out of this juggling of roles as women.</p> <p>For example this process that I'm going through is a practical example of woman who is very challenged.</p> <p>One recommendation I would make to other women is, not study when you're old. Make sure that you study when you are still young. Although you learn continuously through short courses but you won't have much impact into your family.</p> <p>Or other alternative will be starting the family late when you have finished studying because it is really , really it's traumatic to see you family going through this process and you are not there for them <u>wa bona</u> (you see). And the other thing is as a woman you tend to feel guilt of not providing for the family. We need to be strong and positive and assertive and know that what you are doing is actually for the benefit , is not your MBA, is the family MBA . So if they understand that they will be able to get through the process.</p> <p>So I think it's all in the name of goal, wanting to be a better person, wanting to engrave your name to other people's future for the next generation. It is like seeing a tree and wanting to engrave your name on the tree that people would read when you are not there.</p> <p>So for me it's a long term, wherein I can put my name or have a mark on my name even when I'm not there and then having people and generations learn from what I have done.</p>	<p>Role juggling=challenge</p> <p>Advice younger women to study while young</p> <p>Do short courses when old=less impact on the family</p> <p>Studying when old is traumatic to family</p> <p>Guilt feeling</p> <p>Be strong, positive,and assertive</p> <p>Studies benefit whole family</p> <p>Better person</p> <p>Other people, upcoming generation to learn from what you have done</p>	<p>MS3</p> <p>MS2 F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F4 S2</p> <p>F4</p>
Keo	Studying while you are young and so on, is		

	there determination in it.		
Ruth	<p>When you are young, I think It's better because you can be able to focus better without feeling guilty. That on its own it's an advantage. Although in our situation especially in the apartheid era, we couldn't study when we were still young we had to work because money was not available.</p> <p>But for now our future children are going to be able to have funding, we are planning for them and they will be able to make it. And I always advise them, that all I want is for you to sit and study and finish. When you finish, you have degree then you can upgrade later sit and study up to masters level, and I mean it takes up to 25 years.</p> <p>I really feel, I honor those women who study in their 30s, it's quite challenging.</p>	<p>Better to study while young=better focus</p> <p>Was not easy for us during apartheid era</p>	<p>MS3</p> <p>MS3</p> <p>C4</p> <p>MS3</p>
Keo	Anything to recommend to the universities and so on		
Ruth	<p>I think it's basically is the support that they need to give the mature students. At night the facilities are closed mature women are not able to make photocopies they need to provide more academic support.</p> <p>Mature students must form own networks or study groups for teamwork so that they share the work and all women be open about what they're going through as motivation and encouragement to other women.</p> <p>Be able to plough back to the community what you have learnt.. mature women to extend networks to the families they study with so that partners could understand what the women are going through and share the experience. This will also help the children to link up and share similar experiences of their studying mothers and motivate them to study.</p>	<p>Universities to support mature students, facilities be opened at night e.g. photocopying rooms</p> <p>Team work for mature students</p> <p>Plough back to community</p> <p>Women to extend networks to partners and children of study group</p>	<p>C4</p> <p>C4</p>

## Interview 8

Interviewer: Keo

Interviewee: Hope

Time: 13:00

Date: 17-06-2005

Duration: 60 minutes

Age: 46

Marital status: Married

Number of dependent children: 2

Degree for which enrolled: MBA

Location of living quarters/house: Midrand

Keo	Why are you studying		
Hope	<p>I actually study because by profession I'm a pharmacist, and I realized that I had to change my career because there were far too many things that did not work and I decided to get out of that industry.</p> <p>Not only that, I found out that most of the time I was considered a technical person, a pharmacist and treated as such, even though there were lots of managerial issues that I was handling, I found that I was not getting the respect that I would get with management emm.. emm.. you know ,degree or diploma.</p> <p>So I just decided let me just go out there and get proper grounding in all aspects of business so that whatever I do I can be able to do it much better than I've been doing it and may be as well get the respect that I deserve.</p>	<p>Career change</p> <p>Respect</p> <p>Proper grounding in business</p> <p>Do better</p>	<p>S4</p> <p>S3</p> <p>S3</p>
Keo	Ok. The next question would be what stands out in your life as a mature. You give examples and explain why these things stand out for you. I'm saying mature student because of the juggling of the four roles.		
Hope	<p>For instance in class one thing that I realized is that I mean having worked for the last 15 –20 years, I find that when they introduce new concepts I'm able to associate. I may not you know be able to catch up the concepts as fast like the younger ones I understand I'm able to apply that much much better because of the level of experience that I had before I started studying MBA.</p> <p>When it comes to ... I think I think this juggling has actually changed me in a way from the person I was. I will say so because when I visited my parents not so long, I .. my</p>	<p>Work experience assist in class</p> <p>Can't catch concepts fast Younger students grasp fast</p> <p>Juggling makes me edgy, irritable</p> <p>Pressure from work</p>	<p>WS3</p> <p>MS3</p> <p>MS3</p>

	<p>father just asked me Hope what is wrong. Why are you so edgy, irritable.</p> <p>We were just watching TV and I just remarked ‘this stupid why should you.. and he said Hope what is wrong this is not you, you know (laughing) and I just realized that there’s a lot of pressure on me at work, especially with the position that I you know hold here, it’s extremely demanding and there’s very little time to prepare for either work and for school. So all the time you find yourself somewhere emm.. in the middle, jack of all traits and master of you know none.</p> <p>At home it doesn’t get any better because my husband is doing masters in engineering management and that is stressful. So I think both of us are irritable and our poor child who is still at home is the one who is suffering (laughing) the other one is in boarding school. So it’s much much better, emm.. she doesn’t feel it but the other one will be going to boarding school next year.</p> <p>I think we feel, personally, I feel very guilty that I am not able to give him the attention that I could give to the elder sister and inside me there is always that thing that says you could have done better if you had time but there is just no time.</p> <p>And working for the (name of the company) , the company is sponsoring me but I don’t get the study leave that I thought I was going to get. I normally leave work on Friday and sit for exam on Monday, when most of the people that I study with are already on study leave.</p> <p>So I write exams without proper preparation, and that stresses me because obviously if I get into the exam not feeling not as competent as everyone else and knowing that I just browsed through the work, I never had the time to sit down and study.</p>	<p>No time for work nor school Jack of all traits, master of none</p> <p>Stressful, husband studying</p> <p>Impacts negatively on the child</p> <p>Guilt feeling</p> <p>No time</p> <p>Work pay for studies Study leave not enough</p> <p>No proper preparation for exam Stress</p>	<p>F2</p> <p>MS2 F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>WS2</p> <p>MS3</p>
Keo	Is there anything you do Hope to create that time, that is not there. To balance family roles and studies.		
Hope	I think for people who got family around them is much much better because in my case my	Support networks of extended family for other	

	<p>parents are in Lesotho, so I don't have any family around here. So my closest sister is in Pretoria, and I live in Midrand. So if anything crops up I actually have to drive to Pretoria to come and drop my daughter for her to assist me.</p> <p>Otherwise wherever I go I find myself having to juggle around with my daughter in the car because there is no support system at all. But for those people who got family around them they are better off because they can make use of the extended family, which unfortunately I don't have.</p> <p>The people who are helpful to me are emm.. people who I knew through my daughter, making friends at school. The thing is that the other mothers are not studying at all but they are very understanding because at times especially my neighbour who would normally say you know what I'm taking my child to the movie let me also take your daughter as well so at least it gives you time about 3hours to stay home and study.</p> <p>That is why when I finish exams I usually take all those children (laughing) take them to the movie. It's a way of saying thank you.</p>	<p>students</p> <p>Family demands: No extended family nearby Drive to Pretoria for assistance or carry child everywhere in the car</p> <p>Daughter's friends' parents also assist</p> <p>Neighbour also assists a lot with child to movie Read for 3hours Appreciation</p>	<p>C2</p> <p>F2</p> <p>C4</p>
Keo	Ok, what about in-laws		
Hope	Because there is no support system. We mostly meet during funerals and so on.		
Keo	But do they understand when you say you are studying		
Hope	<p>They don't understand and I feel our culture is very unfair. They don't understand they actually give names that you are, you think you hold certain position, you are of a certain standard of education, you don't want to socialize with them. And yet they don't understand that you are trying your level best to improve yourself so that they benefit.</p> <p>Actually for me the in-laws make things worse. No matter how much I tried to explain they still don't understand as a result there's a, I think communication breakdown or relationship breakdown. But I reached a stage where I said I need to focus on what I want to achieve. After</p>	<p>Culture's demands</p> <p>In-laws don't understand</p> <p>Communication breakdown</p>	<p>F4</p> <p>F4 F3</p> <p>S4</p>

	all they are never never there for me. So I just have to think of myself and achieve my goal.		
Keo	Ok, the next question will be what are the things about being a student at this time of your life that you find most exciting or interesting. May be you could compare it with when you were young.		
Hope	<p>When I went to the university for instance I did my junior degree in 1976/8 so I went to the university because I had passed matric and it was natural progression, but I didn't put as much effort as I am putting now as a more mature student. I was just an average student who was going along with parties and all that. I don't have time for all that now. I am much more focused because I know I need to you know to obtain this emm.. degree.</p> <p>But is quite exciting to be in class with people who are still dating, excited about being taken to the parties and you try and relate to them you find there is very little (laughing) to discuss , it's a very big gap and they also don't understand they think that you are antisocial and yet you are not. The little time that you have you try to spend with the family. Because they don't have any other responsibilities you know. The time that they have for them is for pleasure.</p>	<p>Difference between younger and mature student: Junior degree=natural progression</p> <p>No much effort like at my age now Young students: dating; parties</p> <p>Very little to share with young students Mature need time with family Young use time for pleasure</p>	<p>MS3</p> <p>MS3 S4</p> <p>MS3 MS3 F2 MS3 MS3</p>
Keo	What are the things about being a student at this time of your life that you find most difficult to deal with as a mature student.		
Hope	<p>As a mature student emm.. the pressure that you get from work, that really is deliberate where you feel that someone does not wish me luck, someone deliberately does not want you to succeed. And without necessarily saying that but as mature person you see that it's being done deliberately.</p> <p>All the hustles, all the problems will start during will start during the last week of the exams. Through out the year there hasn't been such. Once the exam starts, the hustles start, the pressure, the unnecessary harassment. When you come back from exams things are normal.</p> <p>And where you find that as a mature student there's a lot of jealousy, you can't put your finger to it but you see, to an extent hat you are</p>	<p>Work=pressure</p>	<p>WS4</p> <p>WS4</p> <p>WS4</p> <p>WS4</p>

	<p>even being asked why you are doing that, why you are studying. I don't know is the same thing with other courses but with MBA it's a serious problem.</p> <p>Because there are people who are doing economics and so on but they don't have the problems that we are faced with and why particularly, you know to an extent that here at work they were trying to say people should never be allowed to do MBA of all the other masters programs. But there was no you know rational, so that's where you see the whole pattern.</p>		
Keo	What conflicts then stand out for you and how do you deal with these conflicts. They could be intra, interpersonal and so on.		
Hope	You know depending on the nature of the conflict, there are those that happen that I would ignore. I just don't have the energy to deal with them even though I can see they are wrong, especially those that I feel I'm being provoked deliberately. But there are those that you cannot really ignore, that you have to deal with them. In such case you can delegate the function to somebody else.	Delegate duties to inferiors	C4
Keo	Ok, do you have examples of such conflicts especially those that you would work with them?		
Hope	Emm.. for instance somebody just not turning up for work taking advantage because I'm away and the person decides I'm not going to work., always giving excuses. There are records that are kept here.	Handling conflicts at work	WS4
Keo	What dreams do you have for the future		
Hope	<p>I want, I'm specializing in microfinance and I would like to see myself in that field in 2-3 years time. Because I feel it is one field that I could be able to use to assist South Africans. The position that I have now I can do that if I had, I had authority to do that.</p> <p>But unfortunately, it being government dealing with personal issues of those under you not focusing on the work that you are supposed to do. So I find that my hands are tight. All the ideas that I have , I find that I am not able to implement that because of the many other issues that we are dealing with. By the time you get to the end you are so exhausted you are not</p>	Assist South Africans	F4  WS4

	able to produce.		
Keo	So with this, are you intending to be a consultant or what.		
Hope	<p>I'm, this is my first encounter with the government and I do not intend to work for government. I think it was the worst career move I've ever made in my life. I am just glad for one thing that the job that I'm doing I'm able to make contribution to people to get incentives, which is what really gives me that satisfaction, and when I move to private sector I will make sure that people have access to financial services especially those people who are most disadvantaged.</p> <p>So if I can be able to get into that field, because I believe its something that will make me happy and the scope is so wide for the next 10 ,20, 30 years , South Africa will still be needing micro finances. So I will be able to work even when I'm 60</p>	Private sector	WS2  S4
Keo	I think it's about it, but is there anything that you think we might have left out in the discussion		
Hope	<p>Yes, this studying puts a lot of strain on relationships at home. I mean it's something that we try to, something that we even avoid discussing.</p> <p>But you can see that the relationship is not as good as it was. I mean, so even communication has broken down, you .. you live together in one room but you don't really you know communicate and do the things that you used to because you are tired, you are irritable, you are angry, you just want to be left alone and it puts a lot of strain you know in the family.</p>	<p>Studying=strain on relationship</p> <p>Communication breakdown</p> <p>Tiredness</p>	F2  F2 MS3 MS2 MS2 MS3
Keo	Any thing from the children side		
Hope	<p>My eldest daughter understands and she is very happy for me emm.. because even when I write she is always wishing me luck and she will say mommy how was it. The only thing that she says is that she wont wait until she is my age to do MBA. The little one says, oh! you and your studies, I'm going to visit friends.</p> <p>I have made arrangements with so and so that the mother must come and pick us up and take us to somewhere else because you, you are studying. So she has grown to be a very</p>	<p>Eldest child understands, but won't wait till old to study</p> <p>Youngest visit friends when she sees me studying, but now independent and understands that studying makes you better person</p>	C2

	independent little girl, she makes arrangements with her friends. I'll just hear a call that you know we have made arrangements we are taking your daughter somewhere to the ice ring (laughing). But she also understands that for you to be something you've got to study.		F2
Keo	So we are instilling a culture of learning in a way.		
Hope	Yes.		
Keo	Any other thing perhaps projects that take some of your time for studies.		
Hope	<p>Not really, not many things. You find time and again. Is just that MBA seem to have stigma to an extent that I'm wondering if I was studying something else would people treat me the way they do now.</p> <p>Because even friends that you think you had, that friendship has broken down now. because people think that since you are studying you interact with your own group. They don't realize that the people you interact with are your syndicate members you need them and they need you.</p> <p>These ones who sit for the whole afternoon Saturday and Sunday and gossip they don't add any value you know. Studying keeps you away from petty politics (laughing).</p>	<p>Studies broke friendship</p> <p>Syndicate members important for studies</p> <p>Gossiping friends do away with and petty politics</p>	<p>F4</p> <p>C4</p>
Keo	Yes. The other roles for women, the woman chores are you able to carry them out.		
Hope	No. I am not able to that is just that I have a very good helper who is doing that. I can't even do the grocery, I don't even know what is in my house. You know, she has everything. I wouldn't be able to cope without her. And this is why I try to make sure that whatever happens our relationship is good. Because another thing my daughter loves her very much they are like buddies (laughing).	<p>Helper</p> <p>Maintain good relations with helper</p>	<p>C4</p> <p>C4</p>
Keo	Anything about the impact of studies on your job. Any positives and negatives.		
Hope	Yes, the positive is that what I'm doing here is product development. It means incentives development, and as the government of South Africa, I'm sure you have heard that we are trying to focus on the second economy. So whatever incentives we are trying to develop are really geared towards second economy, which is what we are doing in microfinance. So	<p>Studies relevant to work</p> <p>Workers don't accept my inputs from my studies</p>	WS2

	<p>there is, I see them blending very well together. That is the positive aspect of it.</p> <p>The .. negative aspect of it is when I can see what I have learnt at the university and I'm trying to apply it at work and there is total resistance, <u>rona</u> (we) we've been working this way, now this one thing she is doing in MBA she's coming to tell us what to do, no way you know. And that's, that's those are the contradictions that we come across all the time.</p>		WS4
Keo	Another thing , we spoke about impact on the children and on the father. What positives do you have for the father as you study together.		
Hope	As we study together we , I think both of us we discussed it sometime back that as we, ever since we started studying and meeting other people who are executives in their own way, we have sort of broadened, I think we were living in our own small cocoon, so it has actually broadened you know the.. what can I say . we wouldn't have met those people if we weren't studying. So it has actually helped us to get into contact with people that we would have never been exposed to.	Meeting other people, executives	S3 S3 S3
Keo	I,m sure we have covered everything but is there anything extra you can say about the positives and negatives of studying.		
Hope	<p>With me is the guilt, when I think of my children especially the one who is still at home. It's there everyday. I mean like today I was in Johannesburg the whole morning, when I finished I went to pick up some documents at home, by the way they didn't go to school today.</p> <p>She was in the bathroom, she said what are you doing, instead of saying hallo, what are you doing here this time (laughing) you are never here, you are never here this time (laughing) what's wrong.</p>	Guilty feeling	F2
Keo	But then what strategies do you put in place to reduce this guilt.		
Hope	When I am there , like when we close, I always try to make it a point that I take them out. Emm.. children like to go for shopping, all those little things that they enjoy, when I'm available I try to do those things with them. I typically ran to the movies, their boring	Take kids out for fun, when work closes	C4

	<p>movies.</p> <p>I go with them even though I fall asleep (laughing) in the movies. Just to be there with them, we buy popcorns, we make noise, we do lot's of things together. Sometimes we don't even do shopping, we just go to the malls together and hang around sit, eat, look at people and start laughing, just to be together.</p>		
Keo	Any other thing, on the job.		
Hope	On the job you are always late with projects. Otherwise if you try to do everything and submit in time, there is so much stress. So you have to try and strike the balance.	Late to submit work projects Stress Strike balance	WS4
Keo	And then at school are you always up to date with assignments and so on.		
Hope	<p>We try our level best but, you find that you submit in time but the content is not what you would want to submit but just because of the timing. You have to ..because when they say you must submit 12:00 on a Monday, that assignment has got to be in at that time. So sometimes you submit when you are not you know really happy with your work. So you really compromise.</p> <p>One skill that I think we all need is time management. And not only that, for me one of the ..weaknesses that I didn't know that I have I only realised now that I'm doing MBA, is reading. I cannot read fast. I never new that I could not read because you get all these thousands and thousands of articles that you have to read and analyse and you cannot make good analysis if you don't read.</p> <p>And I cannot read, as a result even when you have exams once we have a case study I always have a problem, because the case studies are long, I cannot read fast enough analyse and start writing. Most of the time when we have something like 3hour exam, by the time the first hour is over , when other people start to write I'm still trying to analyse and summarise.</p> <p>But I think may be is because of my degrees because I did BSc in pharmacy. Most of the time you were .. you were, calculating working with mechanisms, reactions and write formulas. So at that time I never ever really</p>	<p>Submit projects even when not happy with the content Compromise</p> <p>Time management</p> <p>Speed reading</p>	<p>WS4</p> <p>WS4</p> <p>C4</p> <p>MS3</p> <p>MS3</p> <p>MS3</p>

	<p>work with essays.</p> <p>You look at the structure, you look at .. you can actually tell from all those reactions, you can interpret what is happening in the body, you see. So I never learnt at an early age how to read long essays.</p>		
Keo	So are you saying that tertiary institutions should do something for mature students? what recommendations would you make.		
Hope	<p>It becomes very difficult because we have all these challenges but there are some of us who don't really have these challenges, who are playing lazy, who do not want to learn, and who will always have .. bring excuses like somebody was dead and all that, as a result the university gets tired of all the excuses we make and just club us under one you know roof and say thou shalt do this.</p> <p>So it becomes difficult for the university. But this one of speed reading, that the university of Pretoria is doing I think a good one. But I think is not sufficient, because you have to do it for a period of time before you can start applying it. Because now we do it for something like two weeks and we're expected to apply it. When you come back you revert back to your own habits.</p>	<p>Difficult for universities because Some students are lazy</p> <p>University is doing speed reading but not sufficient time</p>	<p>MS4</p> <p>MS4</p> <p>MS4</p>
Keo	Any further recommendation for the universities		
Hope	I think there should be more understanding especially when they come across lots of students, and come across all the challenges facing emm... mature students. And they should try and find out as much as possible about the students, I think is important. Is just like when you are selling a product unless you understand your clients very very well things won't work well for you	Universities must understand mature students challenges	MS4
Keo	But what do you think makes us cope as women		
Hope	Is the determination, is the determination more than anything else. Especially when you are told that you are stupid, you are not capable and you want to prove people wrong that you can. You know is the determination.	Determination Proving people wrong	C4
Keo	Is there anything with regards to culture.		
Hope	I don't know really, may be because I was privillaged. When we were young my mother	Don't know about culture	

	<p>was a staff nurse, she stopped working, and our dad managed to provide for us when our mother was not working. So and she was not working, she still had helpers for home and garden. So I don't really remember her having any amount of pressure. All I saw her doing was to attend to the women's things, go to tea parties, (laughing), address their you know women things time and again.</p> <p>But what I remember my mother when I was young, is her sitting on the veranda with other women, waiting for our fathers to come back. She was very relaxed woman.</p> <p>I remember seeing her coming to school when there were activities. Those were the days when the schools close. I used to be excited knowing that my mother is there, because I used to be number 1 or 2. I tried to attend such things at my child's school but most of them I don't attend.</p>	<p>Mother stopped working but never have this much pressure</p> <p>Mother could attend our school meetings</p> <p>I can't attend my child's school meetings</p>	<p>F4</p> <p>F2</p>
Keo	It's interesting that your mother could afford to stay home but now a days		
Hope	There is no way, there is no way both of you have got to work, unless you come from very rich families where they will provide for you. But it's very rare.	Both parents have to work these days	MS3
Hope	Another thing is that God helps me to cope. If it were not for Him it would be very difficult to cope.	God helps her cope	C4

## Interview 9

Interviewer: Keo

Interviewee: Alice

Time: 13:00

Date: 27-07-2005

Duration: 45 minutes

Age: 31

Marital status: Married

Number of dependent children: 2

Degree for which enrolled: Masters in Public Management

Location of living quarters/house: Pretoria North

Keo	Why are you studying		
Alice	I am studying because emm.. I want to upgrade my personal profile and it will also make contribution to my current work programme and future ones	Studies Job	S2 WS2
Keo	Ok. Now tell me about the high points and low points in your experience of being a student at your age, what is it that you like, what is it that you don't like.		
Alice	You mean my age, I'm thirty...one and I think there are still full time students at my age. I don't think I can be regarded old enough in the full time class but I'm not because I am working. But for me studying at this age, I think it's a good age for studying.  For high and low points I think basically I would say I am at the right age to study either full time or part time but all in all I'm enjoying my studies because it's going to have good impact on my personal profile and also at my work environment.	Self right age to study  Studies  Self  Job	MS2 WS2
Keo	Mature student, you are a mother, wife, student and worker. What stands out for you as a mature student, juggling all these roles? What are your experiences? How does being a student impact on your work, family and vice versa.		
Alice	I think it is not very bad, it's about how you manage your time. And one thing I am good at is time management, though I will also say emm with regards to my work, my studies impacts positively because I am learning new things every day but some of them I have to implement them practically at work and then the challenges most of the time when you get home you have to do, you have to prepare food for your family, kids have got homework you need to help them with homework.	Time management  Positive impact  Implementation  Family demands	C4  WS2  F2

	<p>You also need to prepare for the next day for them even if they don't have homework you need to read with them, you assist them with schoolwork before you do your own stuff.</p> <p>This means that you spend time cooking, you spend time preparing food, you spend time reading with your kids and make sure that they sleep before you can start your own.. instead of you resting, it means that you study in the night. But it also means that you can set up time to say every day this time I am reading.</p> <p>When time goes on you adjust. Even though you won't be as flexible as the other person would have been on this role so, in a way you become tired and not able to execute your roles at work emm... efficiently the following day if you are tired.</p> <p>But other than that I think it's a challenging role that you want to pursue your studies successfully you will persist and face the challenge. I think that's all.</p>	<p>Study</p> <p>Job</p> <p>Study</p>	<p>C4</p> <p>WS4</p> <p>C4</p>
Keo	<p>What are the things about being a student at this time of your life that you find exciting at this age of your life.</p>		
Alice	<p>I think its what can I say, I .. I ..learn things that I can come back and implement practically at work, rather than then when I learnt things in theory and end up being theory. But now it.. it becomes easy to prove the things that I have learnt whether they are implementable or not because then we used to learn things and then we were still going to go on for many years at work not even getting practical to implement theory part.</p> <p>But right now while working and studying at the same time you come back from that the following day especially if what you are studying is related to your work, let's say for instance you are doing project management you have got a project that you are running at work, you have got an example and got to experiment those things. That's the only, that's the most important part.</p>	<p>Job</p> <p>Comparison between young and old student</p> <p>Study + job =implementation</p>	<p>WS2</p> <p>WS2</p>
Keo	<p>Ok. So, what are the things about being a student at this time of your life that you find most difficult to deal with?</p>		

Alice	<p>The challenges are... are many because like I said before, right now when I want to study you find that I've got so many reports that I need to write here at work, and that makes my studies very difficult because I won't get time because at school we work with due dates and we also work with due dates here at work . you find that they are at the same time and it it becomes difficult to do both the things so and especially, since you are a mother you have to take care of your family.</p> <p>You prioritise your work other than your studies even though you know that your studies will make a difference in your life but difficulties come when you have too much load of work that you forced to complete in time.</p>	<p>Job challenges</p> <p>Study challenges</p> <p>Family</p> <p>Study</p>	<p>WS4</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p>
Keo	<p>Let's talk about the role of being a mother, why do we have to get so concerned about the family, the mother thing in us? Is it African?</p>		
Alice	<p>I don't think is an African issue. I think it depends on the personality. There are other women who leave the responsibility of their families with someone else. I think it's about, it's about personal preferences. You might find that those who are sacrificing their families, they know that there is big reward at the end.</p> <p>Some may go for studies and come back home to and spend more time with their families. Other women want to do both at the same time. Even though you've got assistance but your attention will always be needed in the family. Because the other person assisting even with the kids they are not as close to them as they are to you. Sometimes you find that even if you have someone assisting, in our tradition the husband want something that is being prepared by you.</p> <p>So it's about how you do things. The.. the planning in the family, how you plan your things, how you want things done in the family other than, even though there is cultural impact but I think it's about how you plan to run things in the family. You can do both at the same time but also it's challenging.</p>	<p>Personality of an individual</p> <p>Personal preferences</p> <p>Family</p> <p>Study=priority</p> <p>Study + family</p> <p>Helper</p> <p>Husband' demands</p> <p>Planning</p> <p>Study + family=challenging</p>	<p>C4</p> <p>F4</p> <p>F4</p> <p>F2</p> <p>F2</p>
Keo	<p>With this part of challenging, how do you get</p>		

	to deal with the challenging thing?		
Alice	<p>I think, talking on behalf of myself it's all about time management and the understanding of especially, the understanding of your husband.</p> <p>In our tradition husbands don't do some of the things but with, time, time is changing. When time is, how can I put it, with time change it's about something that you can discuss with your husband in the family,</p> <p>he can assist you with emm.. those things that you can, together with the person who will be assisting in the house if you can be able to finance that, if you don't have partner should assist you while you are pursuing your studies.</p> <p>Because you are not going to study for the rest of your life, it's just maybe for two years and then after that you can concentrate on your family. And there will be time ?? I think there's a solution your partner can help you. And you can also teach your kids to do some of the things, that while you are doing something they will also be doing something. When you cook they must cook .</p>	<p>Time management</p> <p>Family Husband' understanding</p> <p>Helper</p> <p>Study Not for the rest of your life Family Husband and children to assist</p>	<p>C4</p> <p>F4</p> <p>F4</p> <p>C2</p>
Keo	How do children feel about you studying		
Alice	<p>I think my kids are happy with it because while I'm studying they are also doing their work and .. and it encourages them, it gives them a sense that studying never stops, you never stop to learn, there is no age limit, and is for the good of your self .</p> <p>And I also tell them why I'm studying because maybe my study is not going to have impact only at work or my personal profile also at my financial status, and that financial status will contribute to the family. So all in all I will say there's positive impact.</p>	<p>Study=positive impact on children</p> <p>Study=personal profile, financial status</p>	<p>F2</p> <p>S4</p>
Keo	How does the husband take it?		
Alice	He feels positive about it because I don't have a nanny and he assists while I'm studying.	Family=husband feels positive	C2
Keo	What are your dreams for the future		
Alice	I think my dreams are still yet to come. I'm not very sure about that to be honest I'm not sure. I think they are still yet to come.	Future	
Keo	Is there any thing else you would like to add,		

	colleagues at work, community, negatives and positives.		
Alice	<p>I don't really concentrate on the community but emm.. my family and my in-laws are happy about it because they know it is not only for the good of myself but also for them. And one thing that I would say to women they shouldn't be discouraged to study because they are working, they've got kids.</p> <p>It's how they manage their families, husband can give support. Sometimes even if you don't have support you.. you can just manage your time and that can influence people who are not giving support to learn to give you support.</p> <p>And.. I would say with regards to my colleagues I'm getting support because sometimes you find that you can't finish something that you were suppose to finish at work you can ask colleague to do, they will also help you with ideas with regards to your studies. So I think, and they also encourage us to study.</p>	<p>Family and in-laws=happy</p> <p>Community</p> <p>Family</p> <p>Support</p> <p>Job = support</p>	<p>F3</p> <p>C4</p> <p>C2</p> <p>WS2</p>
Keo	At work?		
Alice	yes		
Keo	Do they pay for you at work?		
Alice	They do if related to your job description	Job	WS2
Keo	What recommendations would you give perhaps to institutions themselves concerning mature women?		
Alice	I don't know. For the fact that they have made provision for afternoon classes it's good because if not we would have to be full time students and we wouldn't be able to cope with work, family and I just think so far so good.	Study	MS3

## Interview 10

Interviewer: Keo

Interviewee: Mavis

Time: 13:00

Date: 29-07-2005

Duration: 45 minutes

Age: 43

Marital status: Married

Number of dependent children: 2

Degree for which enrolled: Diploma in Public Admin

Location of living quarters/house: Pretoria East

Keo	The study is about how women cope with the multiplicity of roles. That is the juggling of roles and we call these women mature women students simply because she is a woman, she is she is a mother, wife, employee or employer. The questions are simple and straightforward. Let me start with this one: why are you studying?		
Mavis	Basically I'm studying because I want to improve on my.. my knowledge and also I mean to know a lot of things. So that even if in future I want to get a better job, I should be well prepared and well qualified. That's the main reason why I'm studying.	Self=knowledge  Job	S2  S2 S2
Keo	All right. Now give me the high points and low points in your experience of being a student at this point in your life, being a mother and everything else.		
Mavis	Ok, are you talking specifically about the difficulties that I am encountering?		
Keo	Yes, difficulties and exiting things		
Mavis	Ok. Basically there's nothing about excitement while studying at my age, being a mother, being everything. What.. what one needs to do in order that study should excite you is that you need to get enough time to study, but with us as mothers we don't have enough time to study because still we have to look after the children, in the afternoon we have to make, prepare food for the family. We need to help children with their homework. There are so much at stake. But still I'm trying so hard to study in between.	Self  Time  Family  Determination	F2 F2 F2 F2 C4
Keo	Emm are there any strategies or methods that you use in trying to cope with this juggling?		
Mavis	Yes, yes, what I usually do whenever I arrive home, I start by preparing meals for the family, help kids with their studies. Thereafter, after everybody has gone to bed is then that I start with my studies, even though it is difficult. Some days what I do, I go to bed with them together and wake up early in the morn.. early hours of the morning at around may be 2am or 1am so that I can go on with my studies.	Family demands  Difficult  Study	F2  C4
Keo	Now that you wake up early in the morning, what impact does this have on your job?		
Mavis	It's really, it's really having negative impact because when I arrive at work I'm usually very tired because I wake up early in the morning so I don't have that much energy. But still based on that I'm trying so hard to leave the office	Negative impact on job  Strain	WS4  C4

	very late, to cover up the time that I have lost. I come early in the morning at work, leave work late of course then prepare for the family again. I mean this is a difficult routine that I'm doing, very much difficult but still I'm coping.	Family responsibility Difficult routine	MS3
Keo	This being a difficult routine, is there anything you can suggest perhaps to the employer or the universities regarding emm.. mature women students, in other words these mother students.		
Mavis	Yes, what I can suggest is that they need to give us I mean full study leave. What I'm saying by study leave I mean full days not a question of they give you half day, half day. If they can give us, may be it depends on what you are studying. They can give you may be 3 study leave with full pay, that will make your life easier. You know that during the day you will go on with your studies and in the afternoon you concentrate on the family and the children.	Possible solution: Full study leave Full pay  Job Family	WS4  C4
Keo	Ok. Now what does the.. the family say. How, how does the family react to you being a student, the children, their father?		
Mavis	My children are very much supportive, because I mean they know that I want to study and also my husband he is supportive but sometimes it's getting irritable he needs my full attention.	Support system: Supportive children Supportive husband Husband needs attention	C2 F2
Keo	So you say the children are supportive.		
Mavis	Yes, also my husband he is supportive but you know how men are sometimes he needs my attention of which I cannot give to him but they are trying so hard. They are supportive but sometimes it is very hard to my husband but my children don't have problems.	Family demands	F2
Keo	Now what happens when he needs your attention and is like you are not there?		
Mavis	Sometimes I have to leave my studies and give him the attention to save the marriage of course. So I sacrifice my studies sometimes for his emm.. for his attention.	Family demands	F2
Keo	So those are some of the conflicts that you come across in the family as a student.		
Mavis	Exactly, and a mother.		
Keo	Any other thing that you haven't mentioned and you would love to mention, about juggling all the roles, at work, at home, in the community, at church. Impact that you get from all these and how do you handle all that.		
Mavis	In actual fact the fact that I usually bump into, sorry I'm I beg your pardon. In most cases, because I am also an active member of the	Church duties	MS3

	<p>church, the church is also part of the thing that need my attention, so weekends I need to go to church, I need to prepare some of the things as I belong to some of the organization in the church.</p> <p>So usually what I do, I really divide my... my time in a manner that out of 5 working days of which includes the, my normal working days, my school days, my kids attention days, my husband's attention days, within that period of time, that 5 days, I also have some few hours that I'm dedicating to the church. That is how basically I survive but it's still very difficult.</p>	<p>Divide my time</p> <p>Very difficult</p>	F2
Keo	Ok. Is there any positive impact that you see may be from friends and so on by your being a student.		
Mavis	I don't understand the question.		
Keo	Any positive impact of being a student onto your relatives, your in-laws. The positive side of it.		
Mavis	Yeah, the positive side is that I mean my brothers didn't go to school as such but after I started studying, I set an example in the family, so most of them, most of my family have started studying also. Even though they left school many many years ago but now I mean I serve as example to them.	<p>Study</p> <p>Brothers started studying</p> <p>Exemplary</p>	<p>F3</p> <p>F3</p>
Keo	It's really a good thing. What dreams do you have for the future?		
Mavis	Concerning studies?		
Keo	Concerning studies. What do you want to achieve after your programme.		
Mavis	Basically after, emm.. after my program, I just want to gain knowledge that's the basic thing. I'm not looking at the thing that one day I will be a chief director, I will be a whatever, I just want to gain knowledge so that I can fit, I can fit in all the fields, fields of life. It doesn't matter wherever, knowledge is main thing that I want to, I want to have experience in.	<p>Knowledge</p> <p>Fit in all fields of life</p>	S2
Keo	Good. Is very important actually to be able to be up to date		
Mavis	Ja [yes], with everything. Actually I want to fit in all the areas of life, I want to fit.	Knowledge	S2
Keo	Is there any other thing, you have indicated that there is nothing exciting about being a student and all the other roles at the same time.		
Mavis	Ja [yes], multitasking is very difficult, I mean you have to dedicate yourself. I mean to at least	Multitasking=difficult	MS3

	two roles. I mean being a mother, being an employee, being somebody dedicated to the church, I mean is difficult but still I'm I can still say I'm coping because I'm still alive and kicking and I'm at work even though it is stressful but I'm coping.	Stressful	MS3
Keo	What do you think makes women to cope?		
Mavis	Women naturally are stronger species of the world to be quite honest. They are stronger. I mean there's no man that you wind that he will be able to do multitasking as women are doing. We're having very tough but we are going there. Is the strength that women have.	Women are stronger species	
Keo	Any other thing that you would suggest to the universities about mature students, that you find you are not happy with it , the universities to improve on it.		
Mavis	Ja [yes] I think more especially on distant studies, I would suggest that universities should have at least special classes for dedicated mothers, parents women and everything because I mean if they are going to treat us the same as full time students, I mean is very much difficult. Full time students have more than enough time to study where as at the same time we do not have enough time to study.  If possible, may be they could come up a kind of special classes that can cater for those who are working as myself, I think that will be much easier. Or special programmes in a much specialised manner to cater for different groups.	Study Universities Full time students	MS3
Keo	But concerning the lecturers do you have free or good access to the lecturers?		
Mavis	Not really we have to make appointments, you have to struggle, I don't have good access to lecturers to be quite honest and it's really a struggle. I mean the people who have good access to the lecturers are the full time students because they are at the campus on a daily basis. With us you have to phone, send emails and they don't respond to the emails.	Study demands Lecturers	MS3
Keo	So you said the children are supportive		
Mavis	They are very much supportive together with my husband as I said earlier on. Even though is African sometimes you can't handle it. I mean after giving the children attention, now I have to give myself attention, sometimes there isn't even time for him, I need to study.	Family demands  No time	C2  F2 F2
Keo	Can you just explain a bit giving the children		

	attention, any other thing again you have to talk about.		
Mavis	Ja. My children are both doing the extra mural activities, the little one three times a week I have to fetch her from school round about half past six seven. And the elder one I have to fetch her from the friend's house, they are doing this big project, they want to start a business. So twice a week I need to go and fetch him there because at that house they've got all the equipments. So I've got 5 days dedicated to the children beside their school work, extra activities , ja ,extramural activities.	Family demands Fetch children from extramural activities	F2
Keo	And then are you able to attend school meeting or the teachers just know you to be one of the problematic mothers who don't attend meetings.		
Mavis	I attend meetings, based on the fact of the time. If the meetings are usually after seven I'm able to attend them, because my last appointment with the kids is seven o'clock appointment. If the meeting is earlier on I have to leave work at five go fetch my little kid from, from whatever activity from there to the meeting. So I usually don't afford to attend six o'clock meeting but after seven I usually go to meetings.	Family Kids school meetings	F2
Keo	Any other thing about being a student at your age that you find most difficult to deal with. Any additional information.		
Mavis	Emm.. additional information I can say, being a student at my age you know sometimes we usually forget things even if I mean I've studied if I need to put those things on paper I usually forget them because there are so many things in my head so I need to go back and you know re write or redo whatever I did earlier on. But still at the end of the day I'm still coping and I'm , I'm getting there.	Study Forgetful	MS4
Keo	Any differences between now and when you were a young student.		
Mavis	Jo! There are I mean there are so many differences when I was a young student, I used to have my own time. I didn't have kids. I mean I was full time on books. Secondly, I used to have access to the library I mean round the clock, like in the morning until 5 pm. But with this nowww, I mean the time when I leave the office most of the libraries are closed. And weekend is only few hours, they open may be from 8am to 1pm. And during 8-1 I still have to do some domestic chores in the house so after	Study Differences between younger and older students Library	MS3 F2

	1pm the libraries are closed as compared to earlier on when I was still.. still a student I was enjoying all the benefits of a student.		
Keo	Now in the African culture does your husband help with the domestic chores, children and so on?		
Mavis	My husband is really African man, he doesn't even involve himself in there in the domestic chores, he doesn't. So is only my kids who are helping me out.	Family Husband very African Does not do house chores	C2
Keo	But since we are becoming western can't we just approach the husbands and ask for help.		
Mavis	If I have to be personal, with my husband is easy to approach him but he won't do it. He is very diplomatic.	Family	F2