



INTRODUCTION
AND
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

The researcher grew up daring to believe that she did not have to be 'just a housewife'. She wasn't going to marry, stay at home, have children, look after her family and household. Her mother also aspired that she should 'stand on her feet'. These feelings were reinforced when at the age of 17 when she moved away from parent's home to pursue her graduate program at the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Baroda, a department known for its expertise and rigorous training in the area of human development and gender studies. As she moved from an undergraduate to graduate degree, it got affirmed that she must 'become something' in her life. She thought that she had to prove more to herself, than to anyone else, that she was doing something 'meaningful'. After completing her graduate degree, she enrolled for the Doctoral program where she took different life span courses as part of her course work. By then she was 23, when her parents also initiated their search for a 'right' partner for her. She asked them to find a family who would "permit" her to work outside home after marriage. That was a challenge in a *Baniya* community, which is considered more conservative in their beliefs and practices. Her parents briefly shared the negotiations that were taking place in arranging a marriage alliance and the researcher got apprehensive each day about her career aspirations. Many questions about her life after marriage arose. 'Will she be expected to stand with a cup of tea in a tray and wait for the husband in the evening? Will she be expected to cover her head? Will she be allowed to work outside home after marriage? Will she be able to wear jeans? Will she be able to voice her opinion openly?' And gradually in one corner of her heart she started to resent the idea of getting married.

During her interactions with many women of similar age and background, she found that parents of these women encouraged them to pursue higher education and many of them moved to hostels. Those women had become independent, confident, developed strong career aspirations, drifted from many stereotypical gender roles, and those staying in hostels got used to staying alone, mending their own life without the interference or directions from others. Those who got married and were staying with in-laws shared their conflicts in terms of the more conventional expectations of their in-laws and how they lived a 'masked' life to ensure the existence of their 'real' self. Some of them shared how they had to forgo their career aspirations and took a job to balance the household work and their need to 'do something in life'.

That was the time when the researcher decided to study the lives of these women. With social change, increasingly women have started to aspire for higher education. With education, power to think and express their own selves, women have started asserting their existence as 'autonomous' beings. They want to create a space beyond the one defined by their social structures and network of relationships (Parikh & Garg, 1989). Nevertheless, in Indian society marriage is considered a social duty for every individual and an important aspect of women's identity. Then what happens to the autonomy of these women after marriage?

How does the convergence of traditional gender roles expected from a married woman and autonomous gender roles associated with higher education (and employment) influence the identity development of women? In the process, what conflicts are encountered by the women and how are they resolved? Which support systems are available and what coping mechanisms are used by the women?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter begins with defining the concept of identity, focusing on personal and social identity. The relationships between culture and identity and gender and identity are examined. This is followed by a review on marriage and higher education as two significant life events that influence the identity of women.

Identity Defined

Over fifty years ago Erikson introduced the concept of identity to psychology. Erikson (1950) defined identity as “the accrued confidence in the inner sameness and continuity of one’s meaning for others” (p.235). Blasi (undated) further articulated that identity is a complex concept that “consists of a new unity among the elements in past and the expectations about one’s future, with a sense of sameness and continuity” (p.4). In the process of constructing one’s identity, an individual appraises oneself, one’s past, culture, ideology and the expectations of society. Further, the process of integration and questioning occurs around certain fundamental areas, such as one’s future occupation, religion and political ideas. This leads to a “flexible but durable commitment in these areas, that guarantees one’s integration in society and a basic sense of loyalty and fidelity as well as deep, subconscious feelings of rootedness and well-being, self-esteem, confidence, and a sense of purpose” (Blasi, undated, p.4). Thus, in the process of identity formation, an individual defines oneself in terms of the values that they cherish, categorical attributes which are usually related to the roles and statuses occupied in society and personality traits (Camilleri & Malewska-Peyre, 1997). In short, identity is a social-psychological construct (Thorne, 2004; Adams, 1998). The basic premise is that the identity is constructed from both private and public sources. The private source refers

to the person's *own* ability to make sense of the stimuli and experiences in various settings. The public source refers to the interactions with others in various social settings. Each person makes sense of the multiple experiences, thus positioning oneself as an individual in a social setting. Thus, identity is primarily conceived as an internalized process rather than a performance (Thorne, 2004). Identity development is a reflective, yet socially situated process.

Personal and Social Identity

Identity consists of aspects that are collective and related to social group membership in the form of roles and statuses occupied in the society and aspects that are personal and more individuating. Social identity, as defined by Tajfel (cited in Brewer, 2001) is that part of an individual's self-concept whose values and emotional significance are attached to a social group. Oyserman, Bybee and Terry (2006) define social identities as "...aspects of self-concept based not in individual traits and goals but on group-based traits and goals." They note "...social identities incorporate community expectations about the occupations and academic attainment of in-group members..." (p.189). Social identity to a great extent is assigned to an individual. There can be many sub-identities depending on the number of groups to which an individual belongs.

On the other hand personal identity pertains to the personal traits, characteristics and behaviors that an individual uses in self-description and that distinguish him/her from others in the same social group (Reid & Deaux, 1996).

While an individual has a personal identity, one's values are partly those that prevail in a group. Also, the social role that an individual performs derives its content and meaning from aspects of personal identity. Therefore, these two aspects of identity cannot be

considered as opposite; rather they are like two poles on the same axis, with a variable emphasis on one or the other depending on the situation. Tajfel (cited in Camilleri & Malewska-Peyre, 1997) believes individuals feel that they resemble the members of the 'in-group', creating a feeling of 'we' which is a necessary condition for the development of 'in-group' identity and thus a positive personal identity. Social identity theory (Tajfel cited in Banaji & Prentice, 1994) states that individuals strive to maintain or enhance self esteem by membership in social groups that permit either positive or negative identification. The recent theoretical perspective of Stryker (cited in Banaji & Prentice, 1994) on identity considers how societal norms that are attached to social category, position and role designations get translated into individual identities. In other words, the membership in a particular social category and the roles influence identity.

To summarize, identity is:

- a socially constructed concept that is dynamic in nature.
- a sense of what is true, real and genuine about oneself.
- a confluence of personal and social identity.

Culture and gender are two important mediators of how individuals define themselves.

Culture and Identity

Identity and culture are relative. Identity is constructed within a culture, and culture is maintained by the identities (Hallowell, 1971). Different cultures may emphasize the construal of different identities.

Usually a distinction is made between independent self in individualistic cultures and interdependent self in collectivistic cultures. In the former a positive sense of self guided by personal success, distinct personal attitudes and opinions and abstract traits is

encouraged (Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2002). The independent self is a product of socialization geared towards self-reliance, independence, creativity and self-actualization. Children are allowed a great deal of autonomy and are encouraged to explore their environment. The self that develops is independent or separated self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Consequently, Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeier (2002) note '...the judgment, reasoning and causal inference are oriented towards the person rather than the situation or social context because the decontextualized self is assumed to be stable, causal nexus' (p.5).

Whereas, in collectivistic cultures, the self is defined more in terms of relationships called relational or interdependent self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The self is constituted towards addressing the needs and goals of the in-groups, cooperation, social norm and duty as defined by the group. Thus, group membership is central to the identity of individuals. Individuals with interdependent self try to fit in with significant others, to fulfill obligations and become part of various interpersonal relations (Misra & Giri, 1995). This is also evidenced when social context, situational constraints and social roles are considered in causal reasoning and judgments (Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2002).

Landrine (1995) has referred to the collectivistic type of self as indexical, which is created and recreated in interactions and contexts, and exists only in and through them. However, for referential or independent self, relationships are secondary. Referential self is the product of individualism and has the right to privacy and autonomy, can change others and situations to meet one's needs. Triandis (1995) has also distinguished between public, collective and private self. Public self refers to cognitions concerning the

generalized others' view of the self; collective self is found in some collective such as a family; and private self refers to cognitions that involve traits, states or behaviors. The former two selves are sampled more in collectivistic cultures and the latter one in individualistic cultures. Social identity correlates collectivist self and personal identity correlates individualist self. Numerous studies with different societies have been conducted in last more than a decade, to sample the construction of independent and interdependent self.

However, it has been argued that both the types of self-independent and interdependent can coexist in cultures and individuals (Triandis, 1995). This has been elaborated in the next section, considering the Indian culture.

Concept of identity in India

In the context of Indian philosophy, self consists of *atman* which is a purely and deeply spiritual entity and process. The *atman* is the realization of one's true or essential self that through a lifelong and effortful process can be attained as individual progresses through the four stages of life (*ashramas*) namely, *brahmacharya*, *grahastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa*. *Grahashta* is considered as an important stage in the life cycle that is marked by the roles and responsibilities of a married individual. The last stage, *vanaprastha*, corresponds to spiritual emancipation, *moksha* that results after non-attachment from material and non-material world. *Moksha* is the most important of the four social values postulated in Indian social and moral philosophy. Followed by *moksha*, is the value of *dharma*, i.e., to perform the duties that pertains to one's life stage. *Dharma* consists of righteous actions and obligations to other people in a social hierarchy. Social responsibility and obligations that could also involve self-sacrifice within relationships

follow from an individual's *dharma*. The other two values *kama* (pleasure) and *artha* (wealth) are also considered to additionally guide the conception of self and in turn actions of individual (Mascolo, Misra & Rapisardi, 2004; Misra & Giri, 1995). According to Hindu ethics, an individual is believed to suffer or prosper because of his or her past actions (*karma*). An individual is the master of his/her destiny. An individual can improve with his/her own effort and personal endeavor (*purusartha*), and attain *moksha* (liberation) which is the ultimate goal for everyone (Sinha & Tripathi, 1994).

In Indian society, identity of individuals is seen as an identity of adjustment rather than one of self-choice. Personal autonomy is devalued in India and familial goals and values are highlighted, and that the explanations of motivations for behaviors are expressed in the logic of caste rules and kinship ideologies (Mines, 1988). Since childhood individuals are socialized towards obedience and duty, sacrifice for in groups, focus on common elements with in group members, behavior is intimate, reflects hierarchy, social support and interdependence (Hui & Triandis, 1986). In Oriya, Miller (1991) found that the conception of self of Indians tended to focus on one's duty, social role expectations and interpersonal relationships. Similar results are reported in a recent study by Mascolo, Misra and Rapisardi (2004) where Indians from Delhi described themselves in terms of their intimate relationships. They reported themselves as introvert and respectful or obedient, "well-mannered" behavior towards others. These findings reflect the shared value of inhibiting rather than expressing the self to others in India, especially in hierarchical relationships.

With social change, one can witness an increasing tendency towards autonomy among Indian adults. The emphasis on the social whole is being replaced by increase in

establishing private goals and making personal decisions that affect the outcome of their lives. Mishra's study (1994) revealed greater emphasis on personal happiness, economic gain and personal benefits by the highly educated and urban younger generation, belonging to Uttar Pradesh in India. This is illustrated in the context of disagreements which arise during mate selection in Aggarwal's study (2000), which reports an orientation towards growing awareness of personal responsibility among the young boys and girls towards their own lives. A similar pattern is also evident in Mines's study (1988) who examined the life histories of men and women in Tamil Nadu. Mines found that with increasing age, Indians reflect an increase in autonomy and responsibility for the outcome of their lives. Thus, there is significant evidence of the existence of personal autonomy in the life course of Indian adults. However, Sinha et al. (2001) argue that there is a need to examine the behavior and intention of Indians because a seemingly individualistic behavior such as getting a good job in another city may encompass a collectivistic intention to fulfill one's *dharma* and serve the interests of the family and immediate groups. Their results endorsed a shift towards addressing personal interests with higher education, urbanization and industrialization.

Mascolo, Misra and Rapisardi (2004) argue that no single conception of self exists among individuals and cultures. The experience of self is multifaceted and complex as it represents individual experiences as well as in relationships with others. They advocate the model of *encompassing* self for Indians where the self is embedded in relationships and subsumed by others. However, with increasing higher education and urbanization, the individual conception of self for Indians also includes academic and professional achievements, a sense of agency and ambitions.

The preceding discussion reveals the complexity of the conception of self among Indians. Evidently, multiple identities including familial and personal goals exist among Indian self and depending on the situations and guided by '*dharma*' of an individual, one identity may become more salient.

Gender and Identity

Tichenor (2005) conceptualizes gender as a structure that operates simultaneously at three levels: institutional, interactional and individual level. At the institutional level, kinship systems are an important context within which gender relations are located (Dube, 1998). At the interactional level, the behavior of men and women is governed by its appropriateness in a specific social context. At the individual level, gender constrains men and women as they attempt to construct meaningful identities. For instance, in India, social norms prescribe two clearly differentiated gender schemas for men and women. Traditionally in Indian culture, for both boys and girls, the pressure is on acceptance, on fulfilling one's duty (*dharma*) according to one's caste (*varna*), conforming to society's dictum and forgoing individual interests. Individuals are expected to follow "prescribed" life paths, which is especially enforced for girls (Bhogle, 1999).

Thus, in every culture gender plays a significant role in determining the attitudes, beliefs, intentions, norms, roles, and values learned by an individual. From early childhood, children learn these through imitation and observation, as they participate in everyday routines and initial activities. During these interactions, individuals construct and reconstruct the meaning of gender which is embedded in and legitimized by cultural ideology (Skinner, 1989).

For an Indian woman, her identity is defined in her relationships to others (Bhogle, 1999). She is always understood and explained in terms of others. Just as Kakar (1988) notes that 'She is a daughter to her parents, a wife to her husband (and daughter-in-law to his parents), and a mother to her sons (and daughters)' (p.45). Seymour (1999) in her intergenerational study of mothers, daughters and grand mothers in Orissa, found that the women saw themselves through the prism of changing roles and responsibilities so that their identity and personal development could not be understood separately from roles and role transitions. Kapadia (1999) also reported that the self-esteem of women is located in the achievements of their significant others and in their success in carrying out their role prescriptions.

Thus, marriage and motherhood are considered as important life events that contribute to a woman's identity in India.

Marriage: A significant event

*"Sada chirian de chamba ve, babal assan ud jana,
Sadi lammi udari ve, babal kehrhe desh jana,
Tere mehlan de vich vich ve, babal dola nahin langde,
Ik itt putt dewan, dhuje ghar ja apne.
Tere bagan de vich vich ve, babal dola nahin langda,
Merian kattan potrian, dhiya ghar ja apne.
Mera chhada kasida ve, babal das kaun kadhu,
Merian kadhan potrian, dhuja ghar ja apne."*

*"Father, we are like flock of birds, we shall fly away,
Our flight will be so long, we know not to which country we will go.
Father, my palanquin can not pass through your palace,
(because the door is too small).
Daughter, I shall remove a brick*

(to enlarge the passage for your palanquin)

You must go to "your" home."

(Punjabi song translated in English, Chanana, 1998)

In the form of a Punjabi folk song sung at the time of *doli*, the time of separation from parents, the girl accepts her 'given' future of marriage. With a heavy heart she bids farewell to her parents and parental home, at the same time there is subdued thrill at the prospect of going to her husband's house.

In India, marriage is considered as a social and religious duty and necessity. It is generally made imperative for every individual to marry and have children. In Hindu families, girls are brought up with the notion of a temporary membership within the natal home (Dube, 2001). Different rituals practiced in different parts of India convey the preoccupation with the desirability of marriage for girls. For example, *Gangaur* in parts of Gujarat, characterized by collective worship, singing and playing, is to obtain a good husband. Marriage signifies good fortune and a state of bliss. The terms used for a married woman while her husband is alive are *saubhagyavati* or *suhagan*, which means 'the fortunate one'. Women's dress and behavior is supposed to reflect the new status. Special symbols and insignia commonly used by married women are *sindoor*, *bindi*, *mangalsutra*, toe ring and bangles (Dube, 2001; Ganesh, 1999). Thus in the patrilineal Hindu context, marriage results in transformation of a woman's identity. Dube (2001) provides extensive literature on socialization of girls where there is considerable emphasis on the way a girl carries herself, the way she sits, stands and interacts with the other. Girls are taught to speak softly, avoid abrasive language, learn to practice self-restraint and avoid being argumentative. Girls should learn to bear pain and deprivation,

eat anything that is given to them, and acquire the quality of self-denial. The cooking, serving and distribution of food are important constituents of a prestigious and valued role for Hindu women. This role contributes to women's self-esteem, offers them a genuine sense of fulfillment and is central to the definition of many female kinship roles. The socialization of girls lays stress on the capacity to 'adjust' in any environment and especially with affines after marriage, does not consist of acceptance alone, but includes acquisition of negotiatory skills, and therefore sanctions maneuvering and manipulation to facilitate assimilation in the family (Ganesh, 1999). Socialization practices may differ in families but the fact that the girls will eventually marry and leave her parent's home is never forgotten.

Unlike girls, for boys no deliberate training is involved to prepare them for marriage. Although marriage is a significant event in the lives of men, it is not considered as a destiny. This is also reflected in the folk songs, wherein marriage for boys signifies gain and pleasure, whereas for girls it is a threat of loss, sorrow and separation (for example, Bengali folk songs, Katyal & Chanda, 1998). This socialization pattern reflects what Mukhopadhyay (1994) termed as 'patrifocal family structure and ideology', characterized by structural features (patrilineality and patrilocality) that reinforce the centrality of sons versus daughters, gendered family responsibilities, merging of individual goals and collective family welfare, regulation of female sexuality by arranged marriages and restricted male-female interactions, and female standards that emphasize 'homely' traits (e.g., obedience and self-sacrifice) conducive to family harmony.

To summarize, marriage is regarded as an ultimate goal for girls in India. Family remains a powerful context within which girls are socialized for roles and relationships after

marriage. Thus, marriage continues to remain an indispensable aspect of women's identity. However, with globalization and commercialization, there has been an increase in educational and employment opportunities for women. Gradually women have started to describe their identities in terms of their own educational and professional achievements. The next section reviews the linkages between higher education and identity of women.

Higher education and identity of women

Under the combined effects of industrialization, urbanization, migration and employment, significant changes are taking place in the family structure and function, and in the socialization process of individuals (Banerjee, 1999) of middle and upper middle class families in India. Moreover, with social and economic reforms including the educational policies for women, there has been an increase in the enrollment of women in higher education (Chanana, 2001). Increasingly parents have started to encourage their daughters for higher education. This has resulted in more number of women graduating each year. As reflected in Table 1, there is a sharp increase in the enrollments in graduate and doctoral program. In 1950-51, 40,499 women had enrolled for undergraduate courses, 2,425 for graduate courses and 202 for doctoral program. In five decades, the enrollment in graduate and doctoral program has increased by almost ten times. In 1993-94, the enrollment in undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programs went up to 1,694,546, 193,907 and 22,788 respectively.

Table 1

Enrollment of women students in higher education in 1950-51 and 1993-94

Year	Undergraduate	Graduate	Doctoral
1950-51	40,499	2,425	202
1993-94	1,694,546	193,907	22,788

Source: Chanana, K. (2001)

Education as a means to procure good marriage alliance is being gradually replaced by the idea that education is crucial for security reasons after marriage (Chanana, 1996) and for the personality development of girls (Jha & Pujari, 1998). This was evidenced in a study with women faculty of four Indian Institutes of Technology in India, where parents felt that higher education would make their daughters 'self-sufficient', 'independent' and provide 'self-fulfillment' in life (Gupta & Sharma, 2003). Mukhopadhyay (2004) in her ethnographic study found that 'verbal assertiveness', 'independent thinking' and 'leadership' were encouraged in science and engineering institutions in India.

'Independence' of women was not only limited to the professional cadre. Seymour (1999) in her intergenerational study with women in Bhubaneswar, Orissa observed concern of parents towards academic success and employment of their daughters to make them independent.

School enrollment and educational attainment potentially influence the lives of women in numerous ways. Higher educational attainment is expected to enhance the autonomy among women. Social demographers define women's autonomy as control over material and non-material resources, self-confidence to control and manipulate their lives and

those of significant others, changed social and self-prestige and assertiveness, improved husband-wife communication, and participation in decision making at the familial level (Chanana, 1996). In other words, higher education leads to empowerment of women. On similar lines, Jejeebhoy (1995) has suggested that education influences five distinct but interdependent elements of autonomy. Figure 1 illustrates these elements of autonomy.

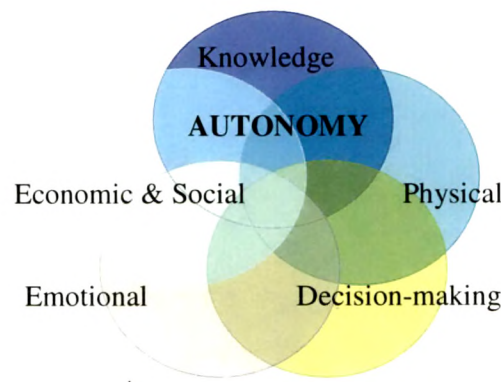


Figure 1. Interdependent elements of autonomy

Education enhances women's knowledge of and exposure to the outside world that facilitates their capacity to question and reflect on issues (Kabeer, 2005). Respondents in Clemens's (2004) study with urban middle class people in Hyderabad considered education as a pre-condition for becoming a valuable human being. Moreover, they believed that education facilitated intellectual development and improved the process of thinking making it more logical and rational (*knowledge autonomy*).

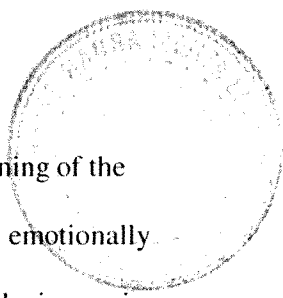
Education strengthens women's say in the family decisions and decisions concerning their own lives and well-being (*decision making autonomy*). Women can make their own decisions with respect to attending college, selecting majors and pursuing careers (Seymour, 1994). Chanana (1996) in her two generation study with Punjabi women in New Delhi found that women of the second generation were more educated and assertive.

Women also shared that education enabled effective communication between husband and wife and allowed greater decision-making power. Traditional roles are subject to challenge as women become highly educated and make contact with the outside world where they have access to ideas and skills beyond their local context (Thornton & Fricke, 1987). Women learn new alternatives to old ways and partake new opportunities.

Higher education may require many women to stay away from parents in another city (*physical autonomy*). Under the circumstances where parents are less able to observe, supervise and control their children, it becomes easier for them to redefine their values and behavior in non-familial contexts (Thornton & Fricke, 1987) because 'observability is a precondition of social control' (Jha & Pujari, 1998). Educated women develop self-confidence and face fewer constraints to physical mobility.

With higher education, there is an increasing tendency for employment (*economic autonomy*). Work outside home has become an important aspect of women's lives where they tend to aim at self-fulfillment and self-realization (Jha & Pujari, 1998) and enhance their ability for self-reliance. Women scientists in Gupta and Sharma's study (2003) reported a high degree of satisfaction through their profession which was also reflected in the statement of one of the respondents, "I find real enjoyment in my work". Women from All Women Institutes (AWI) cited self-fulfillment and economic considerations as the most significant reasons for wanting to take jobs and careers in their lives (Seymour, 1994). The 'self-fulfillment' for these women no longer involved 'serving others', instead it was concerned with personal interests and goals.

Education encourages a shift in priority from extended to the conjugal family (*emotional autonomy*) and promotes greater bonding or intimacy between spouses and between



parents and children and less self-denial among women. With the strengthening of the spousal link, women can become more independent of the extended family, emotionally and in some cases, residentially (Jejeebhoy, 1995). Linked to this view, is the increasing preference for nuclear households among women after marriage. The reasons include more freedom to take decisions, express one's opinion, desires, and live independently 'the way they want' to (Chakraborty, 2002). Urban, educated women are enlightened, economically active and assertive of their rights. Increasingly women are socialized to establish personal goals which have made them self-sufficient and independent with less tolerance for differences and decreasing attitude of sacrifice and compromise. Higher education and career establishment have become important goals in the lives of women. However, marriage being mandatory for every individual, especially a woman, the conception of their gender roles has not transformed enough to include their new role of an economic contributor. The following section reviews the impact of higher education and career orientation on married life of women.

Impact of Higher Education and Career Orientation of Girls on Marriage

Higher education and career orientation of girls has implications on different aspects related to marriage that include the age at marriage, mode of partner selection, arranging an alliance and adjustments after marriage

Age at marriage

Schooling is associated with the postponement of marriage. In India, educated women generally marry at older ages than illiterate women (Banerjee, 1999). For example, Kerala with the highest female literacy rate also has the highest age at marriage for women (Gupta & Sharma, 2003). In Gupta and Sharma's study (2003) more than half of

the women from IIT married at the age of 25 years and above. Seymour (1999) in her study at Bhubaneshwar found that families that supported their daughter's educational aspirations delayed marriage till mid to late twenties. Explaining the reasons for the positive relationship between education and marital age, Jejeebhoy (1995) notes that with higher education a woman has a greater say in marriage decisions including whom and when to marry; greater control over resources as a result of premarital employment and lessened marriageability of educated daughters at an early age due to decrease in pool of appropriate grooms.

'Love' or arranged marriage

Traditionally, marriage in India is considered as an alliance between two families. In order to retain the institutional norms of family structure and practices, selection of partner is arranged and controlled by parents (Desai, 1993). In the contemporary time, the concept of marriage has undergone certain changes. Today young people marry, not so much for performing a duty, but also for companionship (Ahuja, 1993). Higher education and employment has also led to increase in contact with more people with similar backgrounds and interests, which has resulted in increase in self-selection. Moreover, in the upper middle class families, increasingly individuals are given freedom to select their own partners, with final approval from the parents. More than half of the women from IIT institutes selected their partners themselves (Gupta & Sharma, 2003). There are mixed perceptions about marriages arranged by parents and individuals themselves. Though education increases the likelihood for self-selection, yet the approval of parents is considered significant. For example, female respondents in Blumerg and Dwaraki's study (1980) believed that education made a woman more knowledgeable and willing to

express opinions about men and this has led to increased say in the partner selection. Nevertheless, they condoned self-selection without the approval of parents. Overall, however, young women are striving to have a greater say in their own marriages. As Shukla and Kapadia (in press) point out, in a 'collectivistic' culture like India, the marriage partner selection process has begun to reflect glimpses of 'individualism' in the sense of articulating one's own preferences which may or may not align with those of the family.

Marriage partner selection: A complicated search

The exposure to higher education and orientation towards career has made marriage arrangements for girls a complicated process (Seymour, 1995). Girls' parents express difficulty in finding a comparable educated groom of the right caste and background, or families who will support their daughter's career aspirations. Moreover, the autonomy that accompanies educated women is not perceived positively by many young men and their families who are often concerned that an older, highly educated, employed daughter implies a more independent, less docile and subservient wife and daughter-in-law (Seymour, 1995). Male respondents in Derne's study (1994) in Benares valued the domestic efficiency of a daughter-in-law and thus considered education as unnecessary and harmful to the development of a woman's housework skills. In the words of one of the male respondents, "After studying, women cannot manage the familial qualities which they need. They aren't able to act properly. If they became big B.A.s or M.A.s, we could never control them" (p. 95). In addition, well-educated women refuse to marry because of the fear that their independence will be lost after marriage if their partners are unable to tolerate their individuality (Varma, 2005).

Adjustments after marriage: A muddled path

The aspirations and plans of young girls have changed considerably in the last two decades, but a corresponding change in the expectations of males about women's roles has not occurred. Though Indian society acknowledges the right of girls to be educated and to strive for economic independence, yet their roles as mothers and wives are held paramount (Bharat, 2001). Husbands tend to look to their wives to fulfill their traditional roles of homemakers, even after a full day's work. Wives are expected to observe the etiquette of female-male deferential behavior within the structural hierarchy of marriage (Parikh & Garg, 1989; Roland, 1988). But having now attained an identity and a mind of their own, wives tend to become far more openly assertive in their opinions and show resentment to follow traditional roles (Roland, 1988). Even if the men may prefer an educated and working wife, but under the influence of patrifocal ideology, the gender asymmetry still persists. They want a professional wife, yet one who is an epitome of traditional values (Srivastava, 2001; Dube, 1998).

Parikh and Garg (1993) have observed a complex mechanism of marriage among management (MBAs) students. The young men and women MBAs related to many aspects of western ethos, such as equality, negotiability and autonomy, but as soon as they are married, the emotionally internalized and deeply entrenched traditional roles reasserted themselves. This is also corroborated by Aggarwal's study (2000), where the respondents adopted a conventional way to resolve the conflict, "When a girl wants to work after marriage and boy's parents disagree". As expressed in their own words, "If the boy is good then the girl will be convinced that it is for her own good, and she will have to compromise because it is '*sansar's parampara*' (a tradition) that girls compromise".

Education and career of women, while on one hand empowers them, also challenges the cultural norms. Women experience a conflict between demands of 'traditional' role imposed by the family and society, and a 'modern' role based upon self-aspirations. The conflict does not generally manifest as long as the woman agrees to subordinate all other roles to the dominant family roles. For example, as long as she subordinates her education to the role expectation of "marriage", as far as she does not put her career above her duties as housewife, wife and mother (Jha & Pujari, 1998). If she chooses the traditional role, which involves obedience, conformity and following the path charted out first by her parents and then by her husband, it will not only mean sacrifice and futility for others, but it will also involve the guilt of wasted potential and creativity. And if she chooses self-goals, it will evoke and lead to accusations of neglecting the family (Parikh & Garg, 1989). Thus, there is a complex mechanism that operates in women's lives. Maintaining harmonious relationships and being moral (in the sense of caring) are of high priority in women's own conceptions about themselves. If anything goes wrong in this realm, they experience guilt, which is governed more by the concepts of customs and practices, than by the real inward call of conscience. A married woman spends her life for her husband, his family and their own children. Increasingly the educated married woman is trying to adopt new roles which may truly reflect her self. In the process, however, she may experience criticisms from family and society.

According to social identity theory (Burke, 1991; Thoits, 1991), disruptions in the identity process, both within and between salient identity roles (e.g., parent, spouse, employee), may result in distress. The social identity process is a feedback system involving the comparison of one's identity standard with inputs received from the social

environment (Burke, 1991). Many women try to solve the multiple identity labyrinths by adopting an attitude of compromise, that is, they adapt themselves sometimes more to the one, sometimes to the other role expectations. Kastersztein (1990, cited in Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre, 1994), has called this as “circumstantial identity”, where the girls shift from traditional to modern roles, and vice versa, depending on the situation. This behavioral technique allows her to survive in a multicultural environment while avoiding permanent conflicts and quarrels with parents and others. Theoretically, it may sound comfortable when women adopt multiple roles. The actual conflict arises on the practical plane, where the success of multiple roles depends to a considerable extent on the attitudes of family members, the cooperation of husband and the amount of household help available. Subramanyan’s study (1998) with women scientists in India found that employed women were responsible for most of the household tasks. Older women resisted the help of husbands, but the younger women were more ambitious with future plans for career and expected the contribution of husbands in housework and childcare. Ramu’s study (1989-90) on single and dual earner families in India found that women irrespective of their employment status, performed crucial chores such as childcare and housework. Most of the men do not even extend a helping hand in household chores as these are considered as feminine tasks. Similar findings were reported in a study by Bharat (1995), where working women were expected to balance their home and career lives. But this behavioral attitude is not uni-dimensional. Ironically, married employed women resent the help of their husbands in housework. This is because being an efficient and competent housewife is the core of the self-concept of most women and any compromise in this regard would undermine and devalue their own self of being

feminine (Ramu, 1989-90). These internal dynamics relate to the concept of gender which is a fundamental element of social institutions such as kinship, politics and culture (Harding, 1986). Determined by social practice, Claes (2002) believes "... its patterns are specifically social" (p. 387). Herein, the combination of the changing ideals and expectations for women, as well as their relationship to the social settings of the home, school and work place, create anxiety, uncertainty and doubts about the self. Moreover, there are hardly any social ethos which can help provide support to women to resolve these psychological dilemmas.

The review clearly depicts the complexity with which educated women construct 'real' and 'authentic' aspects of their identity. Importantly, it reveals the multi-dimensional nature of gender relations operating in Indian society. The present study is an attempt to unravel specific identity characteristics of educated women in the context of social and economic change. Specifically, it attempts to explore the interface between the process of higher education and the institution of marriage governed by patrilineal kinship rules.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Important social changes have occurred in the twentieth century in India which have challenged the existing gender roles and are altering women's lives. The factors of urbanization, industrialization, and other social, economical and cultural changes, have provided opportunity for higher education and greater mobility to women. Increasingly parents encourage their daughters to pursue higher education and for most women, with such education comes a desire for employment and careers outside home. Higher education and associated career aspirations develop values of independence, self-enhancement, personal space and self-expression. Educated women with a distinct sense

of identity, have become more expressive and assertive of their opinions and views, both inside and outside the family. Nevertheless, in Indian society, marriage is a significant event that is accompanied by changes in roles and responsibilities that have implications for the identity of women. Encouragement for higher education and career adjoins the emphasis on preparation for marital roles during the socialization process.

Figure 2 depicts the complexities experienced in the identity of woman when faced with the gendered expectations of the society and the new cultural milieu designed by her own aspirations associated with higher education and career. How do aspirations associated with education and the employment align with the traditional gender roles performed in the family by married Indian women in today's urban context?

Based on the above discussion, the **research objectives** are as follows:

1. Describe the constant and changing aspects of identity as experienced by a woman after marriage.
2. Study the impact of higher education on women's identity, and its influence on adjustment in marriage.

The specific research questions are:

1.
 - (a) What changes in identity are experienced by women after marriage?
 - (b) What strategies / mechanisms are used by women to cope with these changes?
 - (c) What are the emotional consequences of the same?
 - (d) Which aspects of women's identity remain unchanged after marriage?
2.
 - (a) What is the role of higher education in development of women's identity?
 - (b) How does higher education of women and the associated changes in identity intervene in the process of adjustment after marriage?

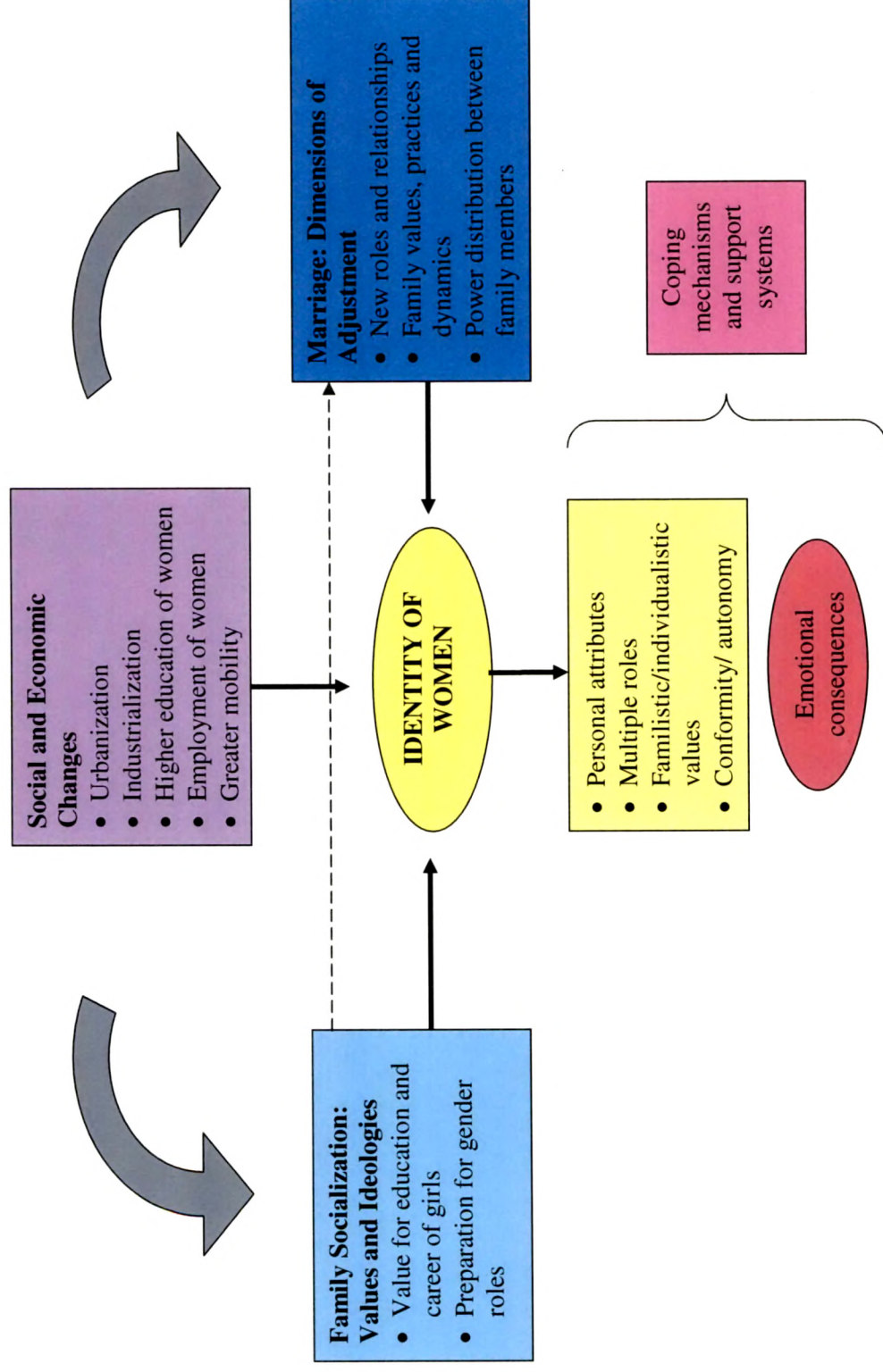


Figure 2. Conceptual framework of the study.