

**A woman's sell-by date: The experience of ageing amongst  
a group of women in Stellenbosch**

by

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# Declaration

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## Abstract

Using a qualitative approach, this case study explores what a selected group of white, middle-aged, Afrikaans-speaking, middle-class 'women' residing in Stellenbosch can reveal about South African society and its current construction of 'ageing'. I follow the conceptualisations and theoretical understandings of Simone de Beauvoir, Karen Horney and Erik Erikson on the experience of middle age and ageing, and theorists such as Judith Butler, Adrienne Rich and Kathryn Pauly Morgan on gender and the beauty industry. In addition, I follow the theoretical understandings of Pierre Bourdieu to theoretically frame the *habitus* of this group of individuals, which represents a large part of this study. Based on semi-structured interviews, this study investigates the 'experience of ageing' and questions whether the study group's *experience* constitutes a 'sell-by date' for them, branding them *inadequate*, to others and themselves, on a physical, psychological and social level. The participants' adequacy or inadequacy is measured by the 'male gaze' – the conventional, gender-specific, patriarchal discourse followed by their *habitus* – or by their own conceptualisations of their future bodies. Based on the participants' narratives, this study group is clearly positioned within a discourse that follows conventional, patriarchal thinking. The women's thinking exposes a *habitus* which interpellates specific behaviour and leaves narrow parameters for free 'choice'. They practise body alteration, conventional gender roles, experience happiness and regrets, and fear their future 'dependent' bodies – all within the boundaries of this *habitus*. The presentation of the 'experience of ageing' of individuals of a specific race, class, language, gender and locality does not only reveal *their* experience of ageing, but also shows concealed age, class, gender and race hierarchies that exist in the South African context. What becomes clear, to a degree, are the positions held by this group of women, mainly within their *habitus*, in terms of hierarchies in South Africa. This group's *habitus* positions them, as middle-aged women, at the bottom of many social hierarchies by means of conventional stereotyping. Yet, they are situated at the top of many class hierarchies, within or potentially outside their *habitus*, where they have increased access to certain products, forms of leisure and care. Within the parameters of their *habitus* they are branded, by them and by others who have taught them how they *should* look and behave, when and how they should make certain 'choices', and how they should live in middle and old age. This group of participants is labelled as *inadequate* when they enter middle and old age, and this label marks them with a 'sell-by date'.

## Opsomming

Hierdie studie volg 'n kwalitatiewe benadering, wat 'n geselekteerde groep wit, middeljarige, Afrikaans-sprekende, middel-klas 'vroue', almal inwoners van Stellenbosch, deur middel van 'n gevallestudie bestudeer om te ontbloot wat hulle kan aantoon van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing se hedendaagse konstruksie van 'veroudering'. Ek volg die konseptualisering en teoretiese begrip van Simone de Beauvoir, Karen Horney and Erik Erikson rondom die ervaring van middeljarige en veroudering, en teoretici soos Judith Butler, Adrienne Rich en Kathryn Pauly Morgan rondom 'gender' en die skoonheidsindustrie. Verder volg ek die teoretiese verstaan van Pierre Bourdieu om die *habitus* van hierdie groep individue te raam, aangesien dit 'n groot deel van hierdie studie uitmaak. Gebaseer op semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude, ondersoek hierdie studie die 'ervaring van ouderdom' en bepaal of hierdie studiegroep se *ervaring* 'n 'verkoop-teen datum' verteenwoordig, wat hulle brandmerk as *onbevoegd*, vir ander en vir hulself, op 'n fisiese, sielkundige en sosiale vlak. Die deelnemers se bevoegdheid of onbevoegdheid word gemeet deur die 'manlike blik' (*male gaze*) – die konvensionele, 'gender'-spesifieke, patriargale diskoers wat hulle *habitus* volg – of deur hulle eie konseptualisasies van hul toekomstige liggame. Gebaseer op die deelnemers se narratiewe, volg hierdie individue duidelik 'n konvensionele, patriargale denkwysse. Die vroue se denkwysse stel hul *habitus* ten toon en dui die 'interpellasie' van spesifieke gedrag aan wat beperkings stel op vrye 'keuses'. Enige veranderinge aan die liggaam, konvensionele gender rolle, ervaring van geluk en spyt, en vrese oor hul toekomstige, afhanklike liggame word alles beoefen binne die grense van hul *habitus*. Die doel daarvan om individue van dieselfde ras, klas, taalgroep, gender en woonarea se 'ervarings van ouderdom' te bestudeer lê nie net hul ervaring bloot nie, maar ook verskuilde ouderdom-, klas-, gender- en rashiërgieë in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Wat tot 'n sekere mate duidelik blyk is die posisie wat gevul word deur hierdie groep vrouens, meestal in hul *habitus*, in terme van hiërargie in Suid-Afrika. Hierdie groep se *habitus* posisioneer hulle, as middeljarige vroue, aan die onderste punt van baie sosiale hiërargieë, deur middel van konvensionele stereotipering. Tog, word hulle ook geposisioneer bo-aan meeste klashiërargieë, binne en moontlik buite hul *habitus*, waar hulle beter toegang tot sekere produkte, soorte ontspanning en sorg later in hul lewens het. Binne die grense van hul *habitus* word hulle gebrandmerk, deur hulself en deur ander, omdat hulle geleer is hoe hulle *moet* lyk, optree, hoe en wanneer hulle sekere 'keuses' moet maak en hoe hulle moet lewe tydens hul middeljarige en later lewe. Hierdie groep word as onbevoegd bestempel, wanneer hulle hul middeljarige betree en veral daarna; hierdie etiket brandmerk hulle met 'n 'verkoop-teen datum'.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*A woman's sell-by date: The experience of ageing* is a study inspired by Simone de Beauvoir's (1972) *The coming of age*. Her work on physical, psychological and social ageing reveals a lot about society's negative mediation of ageing, especially for women in Western contexts. I wanted to explore what a selected group of white, middle aged, Afrikaans-speaking, middle-class 'women' living in Stellenbosch would reveal about South African society and its construction of this group's ageing. The individuals involved in this study are not representative of the larger South African society; nonetheless, I wanted to study this group in order to see whether their race, language, gender, class and locality in Stellenbosch (South Africa) have had any influence on their experience of ageing on a physical, psychological and social level. My reasons for studying individuals of a specific race, class, language, gender and locality are not only to reveal their experience of ageing, but also to show the hidden age, class, gender and race hierarchies that exist in the South African context. Simone de Beauvoir (1972:297) says that, for women, 'beauty' and 'old age' are hardly ever perceived as being synonymous.

I have never come across one single woman, either in life or in books, who has looked upon her own old age cheerfully. In the same way no one ever speaks of 'a beautiful old woman': the most one might say would be 'a charming old woman'. (ibid.)

Theorists such as Judith Butler (1990:25-33) argue that 'women' are governed by *performativity*<sup>1</sup>, heterosexual schemes that 'gender' women, through practices within their specific *habitus*<sup>2</sup>. These schemes shape 'female' behaviour, gendering those considered 'female' to perform in specific ways, mainly because these specific ways are considered to be 'female'. Heterosexual schemes place, what they conceive to be, 'young beautiful women' at the top of most social hierarchies and exclude those women who do not correspond to this group, deeming them *inadequate*. Judging this

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Butler (1990:25)

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Bourdieu (1977:85)

'adequacy' is not just physical, since De Beauvoir (1972:297; 543) mentions the 'crisis' and feelings of 'uselessness' which accompany old age, especially for women. She argues that women often have a sort of identity crisis, as they start to recognise their physical deterioration during middle age. This often leads them to feel unhappy and nostalgic about the past, since it represents a more youthful and active period.

According to Susan Bordo (1992:13), a body is a metaphor for culture. The body symbolises the metaphysical commitments of a specific society. De Beauvoir (1972:543) argues that women often feel 'useless', because of society's perception of old age, especially since 'older' people are often pushed to the margins of society and conceptualised as abject bodies, for example, they retire, live in old-age homes and are perceived as unattractive. Heterosexual schemes<sup>3</sup>, such as Adrienne Rich's (1980:632) *compulsory heterosexuality* and Laura Mulvey's (1990:33) *male gaze*, according to Butler (1990:25-33) then constitute young, 'beautiful' women with 'best before bodies' (in other words, before the body becomes 'old' and reaches its 'expiry date') as adequate. This 'expiry date' implies that heterosexual schemes measure a woman's value according to certain standards of what constitutes an adequate performance for a woman at certain times in her life. If she fails to perform in a preferred way (the way that these schemes desire), then she will be viewed as an 'expired' body that has reached its 'sell-by date'.

Following Simone de Beauvoir (1972), I have formulated my main research question as follows: *Does this study group's 'experience of ageing' constitute a 'sell-by date' for these women, branding them inadequate to others and themselves, on a physical, psychological and social level, as they reach middle and old age?*

What follows is, firstly, a brief study rationale and contextualisation of the *habitus*, or collective societal background that this study group shares, based on their shared class, race, language, gender and positionality in Stellenbosch. Secondly, I

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<sup>3</sup> Judith Butler (1990:25-33)

address the research questions and objectives of this study, and lastly, I provide an outline of the dissertation.

### **Study rationale and context**

What follows is the rationale behind this study, which places this study group of participants within a specific context. Based on their interviews, I conclude that the participants in this study group fall within a specific age group (40-65), and are of the same race (white), language (Afrikaans), class (middle to upper class) and location (Stellenbosch). The rationale behind this case study was to explore the individuals of a specific *habitus*, not studied significantly in terms of experience of ageing.

I wanted to study 'women' who were currently in their middle ages, especially because of Simone de Beauvoir's (1972) work in the *Coming of age*. As mentioned above, she delves into society's mediation of ageing, especially in Western contexts. I wanted to address how 'women' 'experience ageing' at a point in time that is often perceived as the 'middle' of one's lifetime. I wanted to explore how, at this stage of their lives, their 'adequacy' as 'women' is measured within these schemes that perpetuate gender stereotypes. I use Erik Erikson's (1980:129-131) life cycle framework in order to conceptualise middle age; this framework demonstrates his eight-stage theory of psychosocial development. The two final stages of the life cycle overlap in terms of age, that is, 'Middle age' / Adulthood and 'Old Age' / Mature Age. Erikson associates '*Adulthood*' with ages ranging from thirty to sixty five (middle age) and '*Mature Age*' with ages of fifty years and older (old age). I combine these two final stages to conceptualise 'middle age' as ranging between forty and sixty five. These ages are not fixed and are not specifically driven by age, since the different stages can be influenced by a diverse range of variables. In light of this overlap, I combine the two final life stages when conceptualising *middle age*. Middle age can be seen as the stage which precedes 'old age', but which follows the 'young adult' stage.

I specifically wanted to study middle-class women since the ‘experience of ageing’, according to literature such as De Beauvoir (1972) and Ernst Bloch (1953), relates to class and affordability. Class stratifications can reveal race and language hierarchies, as Melissa Steyn (2005) has argued, since the middle to upper class has access to more products and services than the poor. These include, for example, the ability to live comfortably in middle and old age, afford age-defying products and treatments, to choose whether to retire or not and being cared for in later life. I wanted to explore the role that class plays in the way in which someone experiences her ageing.

Stellenbosch consists of middle to upper class suburbs, which are predominantly occupied by white South Africans, as well as three large working class and poorer lower class suburbs, mostly populated by black and coloured South Africans. In choosing Stellenbosch as my site of research, I found it fitting to conduct this study amongst white, middle-class women, since the ability or option to defy certain physical as well as psychological, social or circumstantial ageing processes is linked to class. I found access to participants of other races, situated in middle-class Stellenbosch, very difficult. I decided to study white, middle-aged, Afrikaans-speaking, middle-class women exclusively, mainly because of my own race, class and language positionality within Stellenbosch. I attempted to locate women from different races at the outset of this study, but found that white, Afrikaans-speaking middle-class participants could be contacted more easily than middle-aged and middle-class participants from other races. This difficulty is mainly due to the socio-demographics of the town of Stellenbosch, which often situates black and coloured women within lower-class employment and areas of residence.

I do claim, to a certain extent, to have indigenous knowledge of the Afrikaner *habitus*. I may have a better understanding of this group’s traits than someone outside this group, because I share traits and characteristics of the Afrikaner *habitus* similar to the women involved in this study. Yet, a *habitus* can take on many different forms and does not develop in a vacuum. There are always certain traits and characteristics of class, race and language – and, very often, of patriarchy – associated with Afrikaners.

Nevertheless, I still wanted the participants to inform me as to how they conceived of their class, language and race. It was established in the interviews that the participants viewed their *habitus* as mainly patriarchal and more Western than African. The participants confirmed their *habitus* by characterising themselves as being white, middle-to-upper class and Afrikaans. The participants address the patriarchy and class of their *habitus* when they talk about their beauty in Chapter 4, the division of labour in Chapter 5 and retirement in Chapter 6.

Age, race, language, class and gender are key concepts in this study, which needs to be understood both conceptually and theoretically. To contextualise this study, I follow Pierre Bourdieu's (1977; 1990) work on the *habitus* and Melissa Steyn's (2005) study of white, South Africans. Bourdieu (1977:85-86) is a key theorist, especially when we consider the *habitus* and the different ways in which stratification occurs between *habitus*, as well as within a *habitus*. The *habitus* presupposes a group's collective history, making them the products of the same objective conditions. It is clear that not all the individuals within a given group will have had the exact same experiences, but Bourdieu argues that it is more likely for two members of the same age group, social class or race, to have encountered the same experiences as those from completely opposing classes or races. The individuals that are being studied here all identify themselves as middle to upper class, although they have different reasons for labelling themselves as such. They volunteered their age and identified themselves as 'white' women who speak mainly Afrikaans. I therefore conceptualised this group of individuals as part of the same *habitus*, since they all defined themselves as part of the same group.

Since the history of the individual is never anything other than a certain specification of the collective history of this group or class, each individual system of dispositions may be seen as a structural variant of all the other group or class *habitus*, expressing the difference between trajectories and positions inside or outside the class. (Bourdieu, 1977:85)

Bourdieu (1977:85) argues that every individual is a specification of a certain group or class, situated within a certain *habitus*. This group shares a certain history, but every

individual's trajectory varies. Yet, these individuals vary only as much in their trajectory as their *habitus* allows, since their *habitus* ultimately determines their behaviour. Bourdieu (1990:101) further argues that every *habitus* has a specific way of functioning, which uses a certain set of logic when conducting particular tasks. The choice to employ these practices is often made under pressure in response to similar choices, which obey similar logic. A certain logic is expected within a certain *habitus*, and consequently followed by the individuals who are members of that *habitus*. In this *habitus*, time is broken into fragments, and certain choices are expected at certain times, all of them following a certain logic; for example, getting married at a certain age, because that is perceived to be 'appropriate' in a given *habitus*.

Bourdieu's (1990:53) *habitus* explains the social nature of the attitudes and techniques of the body. The habits, traditions, techniques of the body and customs that are unique to a certain society are captured within the *habitus*, for example, certain groups who share a collective history might practise similar traditions, religions and enjoy similar sports, food and music. A study of the way in which societies learn techniques that are particular to them and why people imitate behaviour, can provide insight into the ways in which a society is organised. The behaviour that a society displays is in no way the product of obedience to any rules, but it is arranged in a collective manner.

Steyn (2005) has been a prominent scholar of South African 'whiteness' over the past few years and has focused on the collective history of white South Africans who live in South Africa at present, but who are not necessarily Afrikaans-speaking. She has extensively studied the narratives of this group (mostly in published form), and analysed what their 'talk' represents about ideas on race, class, loss of political power and where they are located, or the *habitus* of white individuals in a post-apartheid South Africa.



In the South African context this meant that a sense of identification with others “like them” in heritage was maintained, and also a strong economic bond with the West was cultivated, operating from a dominant position within the local context. These connections became part of the mechanisms of control over the disenfranchised African majority. As “brokers” for the Western capitalist project, white South Africans were able to maintain an excellent - first world - lifestyle and see that as the “norm”: white people elsewhere formed the reference group in comparison with whom they set their expectations. (Steyn, 2005:126)

According to Steyn (2005: 125-126), the predominant group of ‘white’ South Africans have a complex positionality within the ‘modern’ South African context, especially within the broader historical context of colonialism. She argues that the diasporic dimensions of this ‘whiteness’ heavily rely on their link to other centres of whiteness, such as European ‘whiteness’. Today, in a post-apartheid South Africa, whites have become much more aware of their positionality in the country, which makes them feel increasingly insecure about their position in South Africa (ibid.). This is mainly because they are a minority in the country. White South Africans are positioned at a European and African intersection, which Steyn (2005:126) argues leads them to ‘draw to white people elsewhere’. She argues that there are common ‘expectations of privilege’ in middle to upper class that unite diasporic white groups through shared Eurocentric norms and ideals. White South Africans then expect ‘privilege’ for themselves and other whites, rarely seeing themselves or other whites as anything but a part of the middle class. South African ‘whiteness’, according to Steyn (2005:127-128), accepts Western norms and draws on Western ideals and discourses, deeming them superior to African norms, traditions and practices. This feeling of superiority, she argues, is because of white South Africans’ diasporic association with other white groups in the West and this diasporic association always prefers Western practices above African ones.

The claims in the previous paragraph support what Frantz Fanon (1952:18-22) has said about the ‘black man’ in many parts of previously colonised parts of Africa. The ‘black man’ experiences feelings of inferiority, because of the white man’s dominance and employment of Eurocentric norms, which have been regarded as

superior in most societies that have been colonised by whites. The white man speaks to the black man as an adult would speak to a child. He emphasises that the black man is only viewed as 'acceptable' if he articulates his words and acts more like a white man. According to gender theorists Magdala Peixoto-Labre (2002) and Kathryn Pauly Morgan (1991), Western norms propagated by the media and by means of globalisation, such as beauty and cultural norms, have placed white, young, bodies at the top of most social hierarchies. These norms are part of the process which subjugates those who differ from these norms. These two theorists add to Steyn's argument that white individuals, situated within post-colonised areas in Africa, still have diasporic associations with Western, Eurocentric ideals.

In this study, the study group's race, class, language, gender and positionality in Stellenbosch, South Africa, place them within a specific *habitus*, where they share a certain collective history. This history, according to Steyn (2005:127-128), draws on Western ideals and discourse. The participants share similar constructs, which according to Bourdieu (1977:86) already makes the members of this group more likely to have experiences in common, for example, the way that they experience ageing.

This study cannot be generalised to any other person in Stellenbosch or anywhere else, of the same race, language, gender, class or age-group. I do not intend to replicate any of my findings to any other group of 'women' or individual women who fall within the same *habitus* as these participants. Nor do I intend to generalise any of my findings to any other women in Stellenbosch who fall within these parameters.

### **Research questions and objectives**

The aim of this study was to explore a study group's 'experience of ageing' on a physical, psychological and social level. Firstly, I aimed to explore the eight participants' view of their physical appearance at present, addressing their recognition of their physical ageing over time. The objective was that this would allow me to

explore their relationship with physical ageing and methods of 'body alteration', such as beauty regimes. I wanted to study their relationship to the beauty industry, focusing on the industry's mediation of ageing. The aim was to explore this mediation as a construction of their *habitus*.

Secondly, I aimed to explore this group's psychological and social experience of ageing. Erikson (1980:103-104) identifies and describes two final stages of a person's lifetime, which are the Adulthood and Mature Age life stages, conceptualised above as 'middle age'. During these two final life stages in the life cycle, in order to develop 'successfully' on a psychological and social level, one needs to achieve 'Generativity' whilst avoiding 'Stagnation'. To achieve 'Generativity' an individual either has to become a parent or 'give back' to society in some sense during Adulthood in order to feel content. Following Erikson (1980) I questioned the participants' individual family lives and everyday roles, in order to see whether they are achieving 'Generativity' or 'Despair'. Another objective was to see how or whether the participants are developing towards Karen Horney's (1950:158) 'Self-actualisation' and are reaching 'Integrity'. This was explored by studying their levels of contentment and regret. During Mature Age, individuals again need to achieve 'Integrity' and avoid 'Despair' in order to self-actualise, which means letting go of your neurotic needs and adapting yourself to your triumphs and disappointments. The aim was therefore to explore the study group's middle age life stage, questioning their experience of ageing on a psychological and social level.

Thirdly, the objective was to address their later lives, which include their views on care, retirement and leisure. The aim was to explore their thoughts on retirement and leisure, trying to capture their views of mid and later life. Their views on care and their later lives, were questioned, trying to capture their conceptualisation of their future bodies and old age.

## Outline of dissertation

What follows in Chapter 2 is an overview of the literature I have used in order to conceptually and theoretically frame this study. I mainly follow the conceptualisations and theoretical understandings of Simone de Beauvoir (1972), Karen Horney (1950) and Erik Erikson (1980) on the experience of middle age and ageing. I also use the work of theorists such as Judith Butler (1986; 1987; 1990; 2004), Adrienne Rich (1980), Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Kathy Davis (1991; 1997) and Kathryn Pauly Morgan (1991) on gender and the beauty industry. In addition, I follow the theoretical understandings of Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1990) to understand the *habitus* of this group of individuals, which represents a large part of this study.

In Chapter 3 I discuss the methodological scope of this study. I show the triangulation of methods that were used in order to collect data and analyse this snowball case study of eight participants. The *findings* and *analysis* of the data are intertwined in Chapter 4 to 6. In Chapter 4, I address the physical experience of ageing and the participants' own recognition of physical ageing. The participants' relationship with physical ageing is explored by discussing how they employ and view body alteration methods, such as beauty regimes and plastic/cosmetic surgery. In Chapter 5 I address the participants' past and present life stages and discuss their reflection on their everyday roles and levels of contentment. Here I aim to show how the individuals view their own psychological and social development towards contentment and self-actualisation. In Chapter 6, I flesh out the participants' views on their later lives and their thoughts about retirement, leisure and care, which will expose hidden issues relating to class. In the last section of this study, the participants share their fears of old age and dependency, and conceptualise their own future bodies as burdensome. Chapter 7 provides the conclusion and recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framing

### Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the literature and theoretical contributions that are relevant to this study; that is, literature on the physical, psychological and social experience of middle age and ageing, gender and the beauty industry. As stipulated in the introduction, the *habitus* is a vital part of this study and its approach to ageing, gender and the beauty industry. This chapter consists of a literature review as well as a theoretical framework; both parts will underscore the lack of research on the study group's specific *habitus*. Their *habitus* is at the core of this study, namely white, Afrikaans-speaking, middle aged, middle-class women living in Stellenbosch. This review shows the need for the study of individuals from a specific *habitus*, since most of the current available literature on women, ageing and the beauty industry is based on a Western *habitus*. I follow the work that theorists such as Erik Erikson, Karen Horney and Simone de Beauvoir have produced on ageing, Judith Butler's extensive theoretical insights on gender, as well as beauty industry theorists, such as Adrienne Rich and Kathryn Pauly Morgan.

### Middle age and ageing

The study of ageing has enjoyed huge sociological prominence, spanning from youth studies to gerontology. This review on ageing aims to conceptualise ageing and middle age in order to understand the participants of study within the context of other studies about ageing and middle age. Robert Rubinstein (1990:129-130) argues that when studying the last stages of life, one needs to consider the age grades which precede them and take into account that 'age' is not the only construct being studied, but that 'lives', in their entirety are what should be studied, since there are many factors involved when one tries to represent a person's life course. Ageing must be considered as something which happens simultaneously on different levels, especially the biological and the social. The manner in which a certain life form will age cannot

be predicted accurately because of differences in genetic endowments, environmental influences, gender, race, class and other choices individuals make during their lifetime. He argues that one needs to study individuals as units, on the premise that there are many more variables at play when studying the ageing experience of individuals than just chronological age. This, he calls, the life course approach.

Janet Belsky (1997:60; 68-70) argues that there are two types of physical ageing: primary and secondary. Primary ageing, is the inevitable process of ageing, which happens as time passes chronologically. Secondary ageing indicates the physical deterioration of the body, mainly due to outside influences, such as exposure to sunshine, smoking and drinking alcohol. Belsky argues that individual variability is the most important principle of 'normal' ageing. She argues that each body system varies and that any generalisations about a person's ageing rate would be difficult. There are some biological functions which, she claims, decline regularly over time, but ageing rates still differ greatly from person to person. This claim supports Rubinstein's argument for adopting the life course perspective when studying individuals.

As stated in the introduction, I use Erik Erikson's (1980:129-131) life cycle framework in order to conceptualise middle age. This life cycle describes his eight-stage theory of psychosocial development. According to Erikson (1980:127-131), all age periods are psychosocial crisis stages where a specific psychosocial crisis is underway. Tension is created during all of these stages, during which one can either experience the one extreme or the other. Achieving one or the other will lead to either developing 'normally' within this age period, or developing 'abnormally'. Erikson argues that during these two stages that have been combined to conceptualise middle age (40-65); people are prone to measuring their accomplishments and failures, a process that affects the individual's progressive development towards their next life stage. During the combined 'middle age'/ Adulthood and 'old age'/ Mature Age stage, the psychosocial crises' are between: 'Generativity and Stagnation' in '*middle age*' and 'Integrity and Despair', during '*old age*'. Erikson (1980:103) says that during the '*middle age*' stage the middle-aged

individual has a strong tendency towards parenting. This, however, can also relate to other altruistic outlets, such as a career. Successfully achieving ‘Generativity’ depends on one’s ability to ‘put something back into life’, for example raising children or creating something through your work, which will fulfil this orientation. On the other hand, stagnation will result if one does not contribute to society or the greater world in some way or another during this stage. When individuals reach the stage of ‘old age’, their orientation develops toward either ‘Integrity or Despair’. According to Erikson (1980:104) ‘Integrity’ is achieved if one is at peace with one’s accomplishments. During this stage one achieves ‘Integrity’ if one accepts the stage one has reached and feels content. If one fails to achieve this, one tends to develop towards the crisis stage, which is ‘Despair’. During this stage, one regrets wasted opportunities. The following table illustrates the two relevant psychosocial stages of development and the relevant life stage.

<b>Erikson’s psychosocial crisis stage</b>	<b>Life Stage</b>	<b>Relationships</b>	<b>Issues</b>
Generativity vs. stagnation (30-65; middle age)	Adulthood	Children Community	‘Giving back’ Helping
Integrity vs. despair (50+; old age)	Mature Age	Society The world	Meaning and purpose Life achievements

Table 1.1 Erikson’s middle age and old age crisis stages

Arber, Davidson and Ginn (2003:3) focus on many aspects of the ageing process, specifically linking it with issues of gender differences. They conceptualise ‘age’ as a marker of several processes. Firstly, age can be distinguished as a physical process, which includes the deterioration of the form of the physical body that causes visible signs of physical ageing and increased frailty. Secondly, ageing is linked to social, economic and psychological changes, such as taking on different roles in the home and community, isolation or decline in income. Lastly, age can be defined as ‘chronological’, since it ties a person to a specific life stage.

According to Rubinstein (1990:113), the cultural biologisation of old age has become a stereotype, which labels older people as abnormal or abject individuals. In a study on ageism, Mowl, Pain and Talbot (2000:189) argue that 'older' people are stigmatised by their physical characteristics – a stigmatisation that is especially prevalent in Western societies. Ageing becomes synonymous with mental and physical decline, economic and physical dependency, and isolation. Older bodies are shunned and restricted to move only in certain spaces and locations, to play specific sports, and to wear certain clothes. Belsky (1997:60) repeats this idea when she says that ageing is most often linked to 'decline' and physical losses, for example, the appearance of wrinkles on the skin and grey hair. Mowl, Pain and Talbot (2000:190-192) argue that forms of ageism are acted out in certain social contexts by family, friends and strangers. It is possible, and important to some individuals, to defy signs of physical deterioration in order to avoid dealing with the stigma of ageing.

Johnson and Williamson (1980:86-87) have contributed significantly to the study of attractiveness, ageing and sexuality, and they grapple with the issue of appearance as an indicator of youth. Youth gives people access to power, since youth is most often associated with positive attributes. As some people start to enter middle age, others start to notice their ageing. This, they argue, leads to a lot of anxiety over one's appearance, which urges individuals to try and reverse the 'natural' ageing process. They suggest that there is a double standard of ageing and attractiveness, since women are often pressured much more to appear young than men. Most cultures value women based on their appearances, forcing them to fear the physical deterioration that accompanies ageing.

Hancock et al. (2000:3) confront the issue of the 'body' as manifold in *The Body, culture and society: An introduction*. They view the body as a site of political, social, economic and cultural intervention in terms of medicine, disability, work, consumption, old age and ethics. Hancock et al. (2000:5) argue that the body has become more flexible and more transformable through various technologies, such as beauty products and plastic surgery. The body is now more plastic – something seen



to be sculpted and stylized to fit various forms. The conceptualisation of the sociological 'body' that Hancock et al. (ibid.) introduce exposes different ways in which the body can be interpreted, contested and experienced. Hancock et al. (2000:81) argue that the 'old' body often resists being governed and tries desperately to keep old age at bay. Many 'old' bodies try different techniques, such as surgery or resisting old age homes, in order to resist the effects of ageing. These strategies are used in order to gain some sort of self-control and constantly reinforce the undesirability of old age. These 'old' bodies often feel that they have lost certain forms of power, since their bodies are deteriorating. They try to differentiate themselves from those who they believe are actually 'old'.

Arber et al. (2003:39-41) argue that social relationships are essential during old age, since assistance with daily tasks becomes more and more important as an individual becomes physically and psychologically more frail. In a study undertaken by Moen, Dempster-McClain and Williams (1992:1612-1614) on the idea of 'successful' ageing, the authors argue that ageing is inextricably linked to poor health and disability. However, people age in complex ways, which include their psychological, social and biological ageing. Many individuals may experience multiple health problems later in life, whereas others may age 'successfully', that is, they have few or no serious health problems. Moen et al. argue that when older individuals occupy multiple roles, such a situation increases their overall longevity and health. This is difficult for many elderly individuals, since ageing has become culturally linked to the reduction of roles. Ageing becomes associated with social isolation, mainly due to decreased social integration and a decline in societal involvement.

According to Arber et al. (2003:158) the ability to maintain and form new social relationships during old age is often linked to marital status and material resources. These relationships with family, friends or partners add to the quality of life and are important for independence and well-being in later life. They intersect their study of gender and ageing with socio-economic status in order to see how 'class' affects the respondents' identities, social relationships and social well-being. Moen et al. (ibid.)

argue that affluent individuals have the resources to live 'comfortably' in old age, for example they can retire, employ a nurse and take trips. Often, the elderly poor may not be able to retire and may suffer from poor health due to lack of rest, finances and access to good health services.

Arber et al. (2003:31-33) argue that formal employment is often seen as the male's primary domain, since employment is viewed by many as central to a man's identity. Women have consequently been left out of retirement studies. Arber et al. (2003:5) assert that there is a clear sexual division of labour in most societies, an environment which often places the women at home instead of the formal workplace. This division often leads to the women caring for frail members of the family on their own and often impacts on the women's level of happiness and satisfaction.

Arber et al. (2003:31-32; 149) have made a significant contribution to the field of retirement studies, as they assert that retirement brings new lifestyles that are mainly centred on leisure. These new lifestyles are often depictions of leisure which the media represent as ideal lifestyles for middle aged individuals. While some retirees follow 'hedonistic lifestyles' during retirement, others may end up leading financially difficult and isolated lives. Arber et al. (2003: 43-44) stress that the way in which people talk about retirement is often based on cultural knowledge of this life stage, which they have gathered over time from others' experiences. Johnson and Williamson (1980:65-66; 69) also study retirement and leisure. They argue that leisure is to be considered the ideal of the post-industrial age. To them, the importance and identity that people attach to their work has shifted, since people start to look more to the leisure they can experience during retirement in the future. They found that many people are willing to stop their formal employment if they had the financial means to do so.

Bloch (1953:907-908) contributes to the field of study on leisure as he conceptualises forms of 'free time' and 'hobby'. He argues that formal employment, instigated by capitalist structures, has diminished individuals' overall happiness. He asserts that modern forms of leisure or hobby have been corrupted by capitalism,

leaving only a few 'spots' of leisure that can still be produced and enjoyed without capitalism. As he suggests, capitalism ruins leisure, yet, in turn, modern forms of leisure need capitalism in order to function, for example retirement.

### **Ageing and middle age: A theoretical interpretation**

The literature review above on ageing and middle age assisted me in conceptualising middle age and ageing and has shown how these constructs will be used throughout this research study. Karen Horney (1950) and Simone de Beauvoir (1972) are two theorists whose contributions to the field of ageing and development will be pivotal in my analysis of the 'experience of ageing' of this study group.

Erikson's crisis stages as well as Karen Horney's (1950:158) 'theory of neurosis', associated with the 'experience of ageing' and adult development, will be used when assessing the participants' self-actualisation. Horney also follows Abraham Maslow's (1943) view that everyone strives for self-actualisation, where the 'self' can let go of any neurotic needs it has. Horney sets out ten neurotic needs, which she views as essential for those individuals struggling to 'succeed' in life or to develop 'normally' during Erikson's life stages. These are not just needs but also coping strategies to develop 'successfully', which include the need for affection and approval, for a partner, for power, to exploit people, for social recognition, for personal admiration, for personal achievement, for self-sufficiency, for perfection and to restrict life practices within narrow borders.

In order to develop 'successfully' during various life stages, Horney emphasises the 'self' and the need for the self-actualisation of the self. She argues that the 'self' needs to liberate itself from any neurotic needs it may harbour and must reach self-actualisation in order to feel truly content, no matter what chronological age or life stage it has reached. Self-actualisation can therefore also be seen as a stage or a need that has to be fulfilled; something which all individuals must strive for in order to live a 'successful' or happy life. In Erikson's theorising of the life cycle, he

stipulates that *self-actualisation* has to be realised during the 'Adulthood' and 'Mature Age' life cycle stages in order to achieve successful development. The theories of Horney and Erikson will thus be applied to this study, especially when analysing the individuals that are being studied and their level of contentment during middle age.

Simone de Beauvoir has greatly contributed to the field of ageing and gender, specifically in her work *The Coming of Age*. While she focuses on many aspects of ageing, I will focus on her work on 'the discovery and assumption of old age', people's relationship to time during old age and issues of class and enjoyment in later life. De Beauvoir (1972:296-297) argues that the discovery and assumption of old age is a sudden discovery that happens as your appearance deteriorates, making you feel like a stranger in your own body. The body has aged, but the mind still feels the same.

So long as the inner feeling of youth remains alive, it is the objective truth of age that seems fallacious: one has the impression of having put on a borrowed mask [...] (Simone de Beauvoir, 1972:296)

De Beauvoir (1972:283-284) asserts that the effect of age seems to be untrue, as you suddenly discover your 'old' appearance during middle age. She theorises intensely about the 'recognition process' of ageing and provides the example of a woman standing in front of a looking-glass, seeing her own reflection and realising that she appears 'old'. This reflection represents the image that others see; this is often not the image you see of yourself. Butler (1987:58) adds to this discussion when she states that we gain recognition both through '...our bodies and our work'. According to Butler (*ibid.*), subjects need other subjects to provide 'reciprocal recognition'. People then need other people to recognise them, in order for them to truly recognise themselves. De Beauvoir (1972:296) argues that, because of this discovery of old age, women experience an 'identification crisis'. In most patriarchal societies, women are valued mostly for their youth and beauty. When these characteristics start to deteriorate, the women seek affirmation from others that they are still young and valuable by employing various means to appear younger.

De Beauvoir (1972:36; 297; 450) argues that people's relationship to time changes as they age, since they realise that their future is becoming shorter and the briefness of their lives becomes more apparent. She formulates as follows:

For some for-itselfs, on the contrary, their project implies the refusal of time and an intimate solidarity with the past. This applies to most old people: they refuse time because they do not wish to decline; they define their former I as that which they still are – they assert their solidarity with their youth. Even if they have overcome the identification-crisis and have accepted a new image of themselves...each in his heart preserves the conviction of having remained unalterable: when they summon their memories they justify this assertion. They set up a fixed, unchanging essence against the deterioration of age, and tirelessly they tell stories of this being that they were, this being that lives on inside them. (De Beauvoir, 1972:362)

She continues that 'old' bodies often recollect the past, since what guided their thoughts are the memories they have made up till now. They experience an intimate solidarity with time; they still view themselves, even though they recognise that they are old, similarly to the way they were in their youth. Using their experiences from memory, they justify this assertion. As one ages, everything one does represents the past, since one acts according to experiences of the past. The present becomes identified and understood through experiences had in the past. When people are young, they do not think about time as much, since the future and its possibilities seem endless. As they age, the future becomes shorter and their relationship to time becomes more prominent. According to her, one must accept one's ageing in its entirety, physically, psychologically and socially, in order to fully feel content.

De Beauvoir (1972:449; 541) explores issues of class and enjoyment in old age, as she considers the decline of and dependence on one's class situation. Class can either promote or lead to the deterioration of one's health and enjoyment in later life, in terms of leisure, retirement, and so forth. Financial affluence can help an individual in old age to better cope with certain aspects of ageing, even though De Beauvoir (1972:541) contends that this 'enjoyment' is not very great and does not last long. She argues that the body and mind deteriorate and become frailer as a person enters later life, which ultimately defines them as being 'useless' to society.

If culture were not a mere inactive mass of information, acquired once and for all and then forgotten, if it were effectual and living, and if it meant that the individual had a grasp upon his environment that would fulfil and renew itself as the years went by, then he would be an active, useful citizen at every age. (De Beauvoir, 1972:541)

De Beauvoir (1972:543) asserts that old age exposes all the problems with modern civilisation, since it often equates old age with being 'useless'. Youth is valued above all else, shunning those who are old to the periphery of society to live and exist only in certain spaces. De Beauvoir (1972:297) argues that women, because they are mainly valued for their beauty and youth, are perceived by society as being more 'useless' during old age than men and thus have a certain 'sell-by date', which comes to pass in old age.

Following this representation of the 'old' body as useless, Georges Canguilhem (1991:184; 188) argues, in *The Normal and the pathological*, that people can only assess what is 'abnormal' if they already have a relationship to that which they constitute as 'normal'. The normal represents that in society which is deemed 'preferential' in terms of behaviour and practice. Acting or practising that which is viewed as 'preferential' will lead to more stability and rewards for the practising individual. His argument is very similar to that of Michel Foucault (1975:174-175) in *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*, where he asserts that surveillance is a mechanism of disciplinary power, which constitutes hierarchy. This hierarchy operates as a disciplinary measure of power, which rewards or punishes individuals' 'correct'/'normal' or 'incorrect'/'abnormal' behaviour.

## **Gender**

This section reviews literature and theoretical points of view in the field of gender studies. Theorists such as Judith Butler, Simone de Beauvoir, Kathy Davis, Laura Mulvey and Adrienne Rich are some of the most prominent gender theorists that have

written extensively on gender, sex and the body. I will, therefore, utilise their conceptualisations and theoretical understandings of gender, sex and the body.

According to Rubinstein (1990:109), gender is one of the most important variables when studying the experience of human ageing. He argues that, in the past, studies of gender and age have included tacit and 'given' assumptions of gender and sex and that ageing has become so linked to biology that the cultural aspect of it has become neglected and sometimes rendered invisible. These 'fixed' terms are precisely what Butler and De Beauvoir constantly try to deconstruct and question. Butler (1990:128-130) argues that gender, as a term, presupposes meaning which appears to 'always have been there' in the first place. In other words, when a sex is applied to a body, because that body is biologically classified, say as 'male', that body has to automatically take on a 'masculine' gender.

Both Butler (ibid.) and De Beauvoir (1949:35) argue that gender has neither beginning nor end, but that it is an act, rather than something which individuals inherently 'are'. Butler debunks the notion that gender, sex and sexuality are automatically given or assigned, for example a 'woman' must act in a 'feminine' way and must desire 'men'. She argues that both sex and gender are terms imposed on the body to identify it based on its biological appearance alone. A body with a vagina is usually viewed as 'female', automatically constituting them feminine and therefore also attracted to men. These terms are unnatural, according to Butler (ibid.) since they try to define the biological body and try to confine it to 'fixed', predetermined notions of what that body should be. Simone de Beauvoir, as cited by Butler (1986:37-38) in: "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*", claims that 'woman' is a term which is always in development and which is always reinventing and remaking itself. De Beauvoir describes the body as a 'situation', constituting the body as material and culturally interpreted, dependent on the social context wherein it exists.

Kathy Davis (1997:74; 155) goes even further and denounces the dichotomy between man and woman, going against the notion of only two genders. She argues that the dichotomies which exist between two genders should be dissolved, rather

seeing 'gender' as a process. She compares this to ideas about gender which change very quickly in representations of fashion. As trends change, gender roles and representations change, providing fashion discourse with a lot of power. This process is similar to what De Beauvoir (1949:281) speaks of when she argues that 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'. Gender, sex, or any process of identifying a body as different from another body because of certain criteria should be a fluid process, which should not be limited to just 'male' or 'female'.

Woman? Very simple, say the fanciers of simple formulas: she is a womb, an ovary; she is a female – this word is sufficient to define her. In the mouth of a man the epithet 'female' has the sound of an insult, yet he is not ashamed of his animal nature; on the contrary, he is proud if someone says of him: 'He is male!' The term 'female' is derogatory not because it emphasizes woman's animality, but because it imprisons her in her sex; and if this sex seems to man to be contemptible and inimical even in harmless dumb animals, it is evidently because of the uneasy hostility stirred up in him by women (De Beauvoir, 1949:35).

De Beauvoir (ibid.) claims that a 'woman' is defined in very simple terms and that these terms are usually stipulated by men. There is a formulaic way in which the term 'woman' is used, which constrains her to act in certain ways. De Beauvoir argues that women should not be limited just because they are mostly defined in terms of their sexuality. Such a simplistic definition of women subjugates them, since the term used for 'man' is much less constraining and 'insulting'. She argues that a woman acquires her consciousness within the society of which she is a member. This consciousness is imposed by this society, usually a patriarchal one.

De Beauvoir (1949:281) continues by saying that 'civilization' creates 'females', making them into something which 'men' merely describe as 'female'. This is formed within a 'heterosexual scheme' which equates sex with gender, according to Butler (1987:58-60). Butler (ibid.) continues that sex and gender are both unstable since they are sets of discontinuous attributes and attempts to impose unity on either would be futile. The heterosexual scheme, or what Adrienne Rich (1980:632) calls 'compulsory heterosexuality', claims its subjects as hetero-normative and subjugates 'female'



gendered subjects to be heterosexual, ultimately interpellating them to adhere to what Morgan (1991:32) calls the “interlocking patterns of compulsion” or Mulvey’s (1990:33) “male gaze”.

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire. (Mulvey, 1990:33)

Mulvey (ibid.) argues that the male gaze, similar to compulsory heterosexuality, subjugates women as a female figure: women are viewed, by the male gaze, as a passive subject. The male gaze represents *anyone* who interpellates ‘women’ as beings that are passive and inferior to men. Rich (1980:638-640) argues that there are various ways in which men, and any other person who reinforces the subjugation of women to heteronormative schemes, maintain their power over women in order to strengthen and uphold compulsive heterosexuality. These strategies of compulsory heterosexuality include: men denying women their own sexuality by means of clitoridectomy, chastity belts, and punishment for having a lesbian sexuality; rape, wife beating, incest and the socialisation of women that men’s sexual drives are a kind of ‘right’; the use of women as ‘transactions’ or gifts, such as bride-price, arranged-marriage and geishas; men’s influence in withholding women from society’s knowledge centres and as a result, 60% of the world’s illiterates are women; sex-role stereotyping which steers women away from particular scientific, more ‘masculine’ pursuits.

I follow Judith Butler’s (1990:128) theory of *performativity* when conceptualising the body, which stipulates individuals’ *always-already* gendered body:

[...] gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (Butler, 1990:140)

Butler (1990:132; 136) criticises the construction of 'stable bodily contours', according to which the 'naturalized' body becomes a terrain that is 'discrete' and hetero-normative. She states that the 'deregulated' body is seen as dangerous, since it disrupts the boundaries of what a 'body' even is. Butler (1990:139) also looks at individuality by addressing 'styles of the flesh' or ways of approaching the body, which in her view are limited, because these styles have defined bodies over a long period of time.

The regulatory system of gender, according to Butler (ibid.), is a strategy seen to 'humanize individuals', so that they are not punished or so that they fit into the metropolitan standards of what is 'normal'. This 'humanization' becomes an act that is performed so frequently that it becomes ritualised. This gendering becomes normal to the body over time, since it is practised with such regularity. The body later does not recognise its own gendering or its gendering of other bodies, because of this ritualised process. Bodies then perform their gendering over and over and thus constitute themselves as *always-already* gendered bodies.

Johnson and Williamson (1980:67; 71) write extensively on the meaning of formal employment for men and women, since they argue that women have largely been left out of studies that consider work. This, they argue, is mainly because women are not associated with formal employment as much as men. Formal employment is often viewed as a secondary role for women, while in many cultures it is considered central to a man's identity. The division of labour is influenced by sex/gender role distinctions, segregating the genders and presupposing their work priorities, associating women with the home and men with formal employment. Johnson and Williamson (1980:87) argue that, similar to the way in which they have been

considered in terms of work, women are often considered with higher value when they are married and able to bear children. They argue that married women have a higher status than single women, because they attain the same status as their husband, making them less 'threatening' to the social order. Within this framework, a woman is given an 'exchange value', since she trades her beauty and bears children for her husband in exchange for higher status.

Considering the gendering of women and work, Rubin (1975:165-166) contributes to this field by writing mainly about the political economy of sex/gender.

[...] it is important – even in the face of a depressing history – to maintain a distinction between the human capacity and necessity to create a sexual world, and the empirically oppressive ways in which sexual worlds have been organized. (Rubin, 1975:168)

This economy exists within every society and has a different way of dealing with the political exchange of sex/gender roles and definitions. She argues that the sex/gender system is a social product, which needs to be understood in terms of its production process. Rubin (1975:178) also argues that societies are considered patriarchal when they enforce the taboo against 'sameness' between men and women and divide their labour based exclusively on biological differences.

### **The beauty industry**

This section reviews literature and theoretical contributions that have been made to the beauty industry, including Western beauty ideals and norms, employed and practised by 'women' in mostly patriarchal societies over the last few centuries. The focus here is specifically on the beauty industry, which has played a huge part in the process of normalising and cementing 'feminine' beauty ideals and norms. I follow the work of gender and media studies theorists such as Susan Bordo, Kathy Davis, Kathryn Pauly Morgan and Magdala Peixoto-Labre. Their theoretical and conceptual

understandings of 'femininity' are crucial in the study of the production, reproduction and surveying of women's bodies via the beauty industry.

Davis (1991:25) describes the beauty industry as a 'fashion beauty complex', a cosmos which includes various procedures, technologies and rituals drawn upon by individual women in their everyday lives. The beauty and cosmetic industry visibly construct femininity on a daily basis, and perpetuate a standard 'beauty' for women, while most 'ordinary' women are rendered "drab, ugly, loathsome, or fearful bodies" (ibid.). She continues that the double-edged treatment of women by this fashion-beauty complex is ultimately the result of capitalist patriarchy.

Susan Bordo (1993:165-167) addresses the body and how 'femininity' is repetitively reproduced through different forms of culture. She says that all the mediums and rituals through which we attend to the body, is through culture. Certain rules and hierarchies are inscribed daily upon the body, which makes the body a representation of the cultural space wherein we find a specific body. Culture is not only displayed on the body but also controls and regulates it by means of cultural norms, which are practised in implicit and explicit ways in any social context.

Viewed historically, the discipline and normalization of the female body – perhaps the only gender oppression that exercises itself, although to different degrees and different forms, across age, race, class, and sexual orientation – has to be acknowledged as an amazingly durable and flexible strategy of social control. (Bordo, 1993:167)

She argues that there is a preoccupation with appearance that affects women on many levels; this preoccupation is problematic since it reduces any possibility for rethinking hierarchical gender power relations. Measuring up to an ideal femininity has, in some cases, become a full-time pursuit for many women. This is why Bordo (ibid.) pleads for a new political discourse about the female body that can better understand and dismantle certain mediums of social control utilised in everyday social interactions. Similarly, Bordo's (2002:455) work on fashion and photographs represented in the media has shown the power that the mass media holds within

everyday culture. She argues that pictures are never just pictures, but that they represent an underlying structure of power and regulation.

Looking specifically at the twentieth century and particularly at Western feminine beauty ideals and norms, I follow Allan Mazur's (1986:281-283) argument that women have, throughout history, been pressured to conform to narrow ideals of what constitutes a 'beautiful feminine body'. He stipulates that the erotic industry in particular has influenced the way in which men view women and their bodies. Mazur (ibid.) claims that men are usually more interested in women on a visual level than women are in men, a hypothesis that would place more pressure on women to conform to ideals of beauty, since their inability to achieve such ideals decreases their social opportunities. He makes it clear that men use a range of criteria to evaluate a woman's appearance, which varies from society to society. Yet, cultural ideals have increasingly become 'Western ideals', which has led to this 'feminine beauty ideal' becoming much more universal.

Mazur (ibid.) emphasises the role of clothing in creating the ideal image of a woman. Throughout the centuries, clothing has played a big part in how women are viewed, for example sometimes clothing can expose breasts, legs or midriffs and sometimes it can cover up almost every inch of a woman's flesh. According to Mazur (1986:284-285), the 1920s produced a look that left women 'cureless' and almost boyish. The emphasis was on the face and the legs; the face was enhanced with cosmetics, while the body, except for the legs, was mostly covered-up. This style was very short-lived, Mazur argues, mostly because of its lack of conventional female sexual characteristics. He argues that the 'breast' was to overwhelm the 'leg' in post-war U.S., where photographers and publishers started to promote saucy, muscular women with large breasts. The 1920s were the age of the flatter breast compared to the fascination with bosoms that was to come in the 1960s.

Mazur (1986:290) notes that pageants such as the Miss America pageant have drastically changed since the 1920s, because women's measurements have changed dramatically throughout the twentieth century. The finalists usually had the same

figures and measurements as the Hollywood stars had during a certain time period, for example Greta Garbo's bigger breasts and smaller hips in the 1930s and Lana Turner's measurements in the 1940s. Mazur (1986:291-293) states that waistlines in pageants have become smaller since the 1950s in these pageants, which created an ideal image of what the perfect female torso was.

With the increasing popularity of *Playboy* magazine in the 1950s, big breasts were emphasised and became the ideal of feminine beauty for that time. The magazine promoted this image by using stars such as Marilyn Monroe as playmates who posed naked in the pages of the magazine. Mazur argues that Monroe was just in time to pose for *Playboy* magazine in the 1950s, since her breasts were still accepted. The Playmates of the post-Monroe years sported much larger breasts that increasingly became viewed as ideal.

The 1970s brought *Penthouse* magazine, which was the first magazine in the USA to show women's pubic hair. This led to later photography of exposed female genitalia. *Penthouse* started photographing thinner and smaller breasted women than *Playboy*, especially to 'mitigate the gaudy display of private parts.' A shift was taking place in the representation of the female body: flesh below the waist was exposed for the first time. *Playboy* magazine also decided to go this route by using taller and skinnier Playmates, in order to compete with *Penthouse*.

A relatively new but substantial part of the beauty industry is the plastic/cosmetic surgery industry. Davis (1991:23; 25) defines plastic/cosmetic surgery as a service for the 'improvement of facial and bodily features'. Throughout history women have tried to improve or change their bodies in various ways, whilst experiencing great pain in order to fit into a particular society's femininity norms, for example Chinese foot binding and the wearing of corsets. The beauty system seems to be a system that women have spent a lot of time and money on throughout the years and across various cultures and contexts, for example hair appointments, gym membership, expensive beauty products and facelifts, to name just a few. According to Davis (1991:25), the body is styled to become a representation of something such

as femininity. The body is not inherently feminine; it is trained to become feminine, through various beauty regimes, cosmetic surgery, waxing, etc. This feminine ideal is a mere fabrication of what a woman's body should be or should look like. The plastic/cosmetic surgery industry, as well as other beautification methods, provide numerous possibilities for body alteration.

This is what Kathryn Pauly Morgan (1991) explores in most of her work, as she analyses the rising trend in cosmetic surgery over the last two decades. She provides insights into the world of cosmetic surgery, the apparent 'choices' and reasons women provide for their 'need' for technologies that change their bodies. She battles with many questions throughout her work, which include whether cosmetic surgery or any other means of altering the body (shaving leg hair, exercising) are means of oppression or liberation for women; what kind of body is the norm and what implications it has for 'abnormal bodies'.

Morgan (1991:39-41) argues that the 'need' for enhancing your body is advertised everywhere in the media, and that this 'need' for a perfect body is a fabrication. Women are pressured to believe that they have 'problem areas', which they need to fix in order to be socially accepted. The fashion-beauty complex pathologises women's 'natural' bodies and urges women to actively 'choose' to alter their bodies through cosmetic surgery. She argues that an ideal is created of what a woman 'should look' like when their bodies are moulded, manipulated and cut to appear 'normal'. The practice of corrective cosmetic surgery has become normalised and an 'uncut' body has now become pathologised. According to her, the cosmetic industry and its followers, stigmatise women who do not use cosmetic, in their opinion 'necessary', procedures, for example, labia surgery.

Today, the body has become a site of many challenges and opportunities, especially for cosmetic surgeons, hairstylists, trainers, dieticians, manicurists, nail technicians and electrolysisists. Morgan (1991:36-39) argues that the reversal of the ageing process is an existential project, whereby the body is exploited by means of surgery, anti-wrinkle cream and exercise to surpass its given limitations of life

expectancy. The body becomes a raw material, which can be moulded and transformed, provided one has access to these services.

Morgan (1991:28) asks why the cosmetic surgery market has grown so rapidly, in spite of all its risks, for example loss of sexual pleasure in the case of vaginal 'rejuvenation surgery', skin loss, bleeding, rashes, infection and even death. She argues that cosmetic surgery forms part of the 'technologizing of women's bodies' within Western cultures. Cosmetic surgery has now become such a reality, that people often view cosmetically enhanced bodies as 'real'. As a result, the real and the unreal become conflated and the 'unreal' may even become desired, for example when men prefer fake breasts to 'real' ones. The new 'real', the cosmetically enhanced body, becomes an unattainable ideal for women who do not use such technologies. These women are consequently viewed as unreal or abnormal, whereas cosmetically enhanced lips, breasts and buttocks signify 'real beauty'.

Morgan (1991:32) asserts that all 'women', as women, share certain patterns of societal pressure, particularly compulsory heterosexuality, motherhood and attractiveness. Patriarchy gears all three these compulsions towards the needs of the 'male gaze', as Mulvey (1990:33) argues. This male gaze is the catalyst which interpellates women to act and appear feminine and heterosexual at all times. This catalyst is influenced by anyone, not only men, who constantly reinforce gender inequality and stereotypical behaviour for women. Women are pressured by various institutions, such as the state, the media, family and friends, into feeling guilty if they are not mothers, attractive or heterosexual.

Morgan (1991:33-34) investigated the narratives of women who 'choose' to have plastic surgery and looks at its effects on the position of women in society. Many women said that they used surgery to obtain a certain status, regain control of their lives, transcend hereditary predestination (a mother with many wrinkles), portray their strength, advance themselves professionally, avoid ageist bias, avoid cruelty, win a beauty contest, achieve personal happiness and fulfilment, deny their status as grandmothers, etc. She argues that beauty, or what is regarded as beautiful in certain



contexts, can benefit a woman and give her access to various forms of power. This power is not available to those who are regarded as ugly, old, fat, homosexual or barren.

The narratives mentioned above focus on women who have gained power and liberation via the fashion-beauty complex. The women argue that surgery gives them an identity, and that this identity is something which they say they have chosen for themselves. Thus they 'choose' to have a specific surgery, for example a breast augmentation. Morgan (1991:34) argues that many women increase their social and economic status through cosmetic surgery, since they make themselves more attractive for men. These men will then give them more opportunities to increase their status. Thus, women who do have surgery in pursuit of beauty say that they actively 'choose' to obtain certain values associated with beauty – values which offer them better opportunities in life and wider acceptance from society as a whole. Morgan continues that women who 'choose' to have surgery, often view themselves as rational choosers. They pay a lot of money for what they want done and are critical consumers when it comes to cosmetic services. Yet, she argues, women are coerced into using various technologies, via the media, men and other women, since women's bodies have always been viewed as ultimately inferior to those of men.

Magdala Peixoto-Labre (2002:124; 127-128) argues that women are socialised within compulsory heterosexual frameworks, where women are taught to be the objects of male desire. The idea that men might find women more attractive if they removed their pubic hair interpellates women to believe that they find it pleasurable to employ certain beauty practices. Moreover, advertising creates the desire for women to change their bodies by fabricating dissatisfaction for women with their 'natural' bodies, for example finding their body hair revolting. She argues that women might consider it feminine to remove hair from their armpits, legs and genital areas, because of this fabricated dissatisfaction. Women 'choose' to enforce the hairless norm, because ultimately there is no other choice. These beauty norms have become so powerful that women face stigmatisation from others, and also from themselves, if

they do not engage in and perpetuate these norms. So, women 'choose' to have cosmetic surgery or to beautify their bodies according to certain feminine beauty ideals, but at the same time constrain their bodies to normalised entities regulated by the male gaze. This fabricated 'normative femininity' has motivated women to turn to self-surveillance, according to Peixoto-Labre (ibid.).

Morgan (1991:34-36) argues that women who 'choose' to alter their bodies in different ways, because they think that it will increase their status or acceptance by society or men, believe that they are voluntarily 'choosing' to do this. In actual fact, they are making themselves more vulnerable to these norms, since the independence that they seek is merely camouflaged and their 'choice' is actually just another form of regulation. Women make 'choices' to have surgery or to shave their pubic hair, to become more liberated, but then end up being more dependent on surgeons, beauty products and on the male assessment of their bodies. These women again play into the approval of the male gaze.

Althusser (2001:157; 159; 161) argues that an ideology, such as beauty norms, cannot exist if no subjects have accepted that specific ideological discourse, in other words individuals who perpetuate these norms. He argues that people are *always-already* subjects who practise certain rituals, making ideology *always-already* part of practice. Being *always-already* subjects and adhering to a certain ideology oblige subjects to take up certain regimes. Individuals become subjects through various disciplinary powers or direction, including observable and unconscious interpellation. This theory can be applied to the fashion-beauty complex, since both women who do and those who do not engage in the beauty industry are vulnerable to various forms of interpellation, especially within patriarchal discourse.

The next chapter will look at the methodological tools that were used during the course of this study to gather and analyse data.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Introduction

This study is an exploratory research study that aims to provide insight into eight individuals' experiences of ageing. The literature review clearly shows that white, Afrikaans-speaking, middle-aged, middle-class women living in Stellenbosch have not been studied in relation to their experience of ageing. This study combines aspects of ageing, gender and the beauty industry. The individuals who make up the study group will be addressed throughout this study as a 'Participant' or collectively as the 'participants'.

In order to generate the data needed for this exploratory study, I use a case study design. This chapter focuses on the methods of data collection and analysis I used to gather and analyse the data. Firstly, I will provide an overview of the research design and intersectional research approach I took, as well as briefly describe the *participants* as a means of presenting the case study. Secondly, the triangulation of methods I used in order to gather the data will be discussed and evaluated. Thirdly, I present the method of analysis I used to analyse my data, namely a thematic analysis process. Lastly, I consider some of the ethical considerations and problems I encountered during this study.

### Research approach and design

In this study, the approach was to collect data in a qualitative manner from a group of specifically white, Afrikaans-speaking, middle aged, middle-class women in Stellenbosch. The participants were not chosen based on their marital status or any other constructs mentioned above. I follow a qualitative research paradigm, given that I found it important to understand ageing and its many aspects through the eyes of the middle aged woman herself. Ferreira (1988:205) argues that the qualitative researcher needs to represent the participant's day-to-day talk, problems and

concerns as closely as possible. Clifford Geertz (1973:417; 448-449), in his work on Balinese cockfights, argues along similar lines when he captures the main purpose of qualitative research in his explanation of his intimate involvement with his subjects. He predominantly practises ethnography, but asserts that close contact with the subjects, by learning from them what they want to say, instead of leading them with specific questions, reveals and provides an inside perspective of the subjects being studied. The use of a qualitative research design was essential in this study, since it provides a closer look at the eight participants' experiences of ageing from their point of view. It allowed the participants to reveal issues they have with ageing, instead of a situation where I would predetermine such issues by using a survey or a questionnaire with loaded questions.

I use an intersectional research approach, since it is methodologically important that the participants' *habitus* are taken into account when analysing the data. Intersectionality, according to Davis (2008:72), shows that individuals cannot be studied with a single approach, but various constructs need to be considered when studying a phenomenon such as ageing, for example, race, class, gender and language. Davis (2008:71) argues that we must acknowledge the differences between women when studying their behaviour. All the participants in this study are 'women', yet, I want to emphasise that 'women' cannot be viewed as an essentialised category. She argues that not all women can be included within one feminist approach or solution to gender inequality. Gender, sex and the body are very important concepts in this study, since the study group consists of 'women' only. This group of 'women' must be understood in terms of what is meant by their gender, sex and bodies, as stipulated in Chapter 2. This study will show how the category 'women' is fluid and that a group of participants of the same *habitus*, 'women', living in Stellenbosch, and of the same age group, race, class and language, cannot be essentialised or generalised. However, it will also show how individuals who share the same *habitus* become interpellated to act in similar ways and have similar experiences. I use intersectionality as a methodological tool to highlight how women differ and how their differences

influence their positions in everyday life. It will become apparent, through the data, that the participants are not completely homogeneous in their opinions or experiences.

What follows is a brief overview of the participants in this case study, and includes their backgrounds and socio-demographic profiles. They differ in terms of their educational backgrounds and occupations, where they live in Stellenbosch, their family lives and reasons why they categorise themselves as belonging to a certain class. This is only a brief introduction to situate the participants and show how a seemingly homogeneous group (individuals from the same *habitus*) can be compared, while also revealing their different life trajectories and the existence of *habitus* within *habitus*.

### *Situating the subject*

This section briefly outlines the profiles of the eight participants, which include their age, education and occupation, history, where they live in Stellenbosch, family lives and their social class. Their names are kept anonymous and have been replaced with a pseudonym.

**Participant A**, 61, single, lives in a ‘retirement village’ in Stellenbosch. She started working formally at the age of seventeen and never went on to study for a degree. She worked at a multinational company in Stellenbosch for most of her life, where she was in charge of salaries and payments. She left her job at the age of fifty-seven, because she felt that the workplace had become ‘too young’. She now works part-time for a friend of hers in the retirement village, where she helps him with marketing for his business. She has never been married and is currently single. She does not have any children. She classifies her socio-economic class, when she was still working full-time, as middle-class. Now she says that she is a bit ‘poorer than before’.

**Participant D**, 62, married, has lived in Dalsig in Stellenbosch for twenty years. She is a trained diplomat and was one of the first women to be allowed into this

profession in South Africa. She studied Political Science and French at university and started working at the Department of Foreign Affairs in her final year of study. In the past she chaired many committees on heritage protection and is currently busy with projects involving art and museum restoration. She has been married for forty years and has two daughters. She describes her socio-economic class as 'tops', gesturing that it definitely falls in the 'upper middle class' bracket.

**Participant H**, 52, married, lives in Uniepark in Stellenbosch. She studied physiotherapy at Stellenbosch University. For the first nine years after she graduated she worked in hospitals but now has her own physiotherapy practice. She is married and has two children, a son and a daughter who are both currently in high school. She says that if she thinks about people's class and the people around her, she would classify herself as 'at least upper middle class'.

**Participant K**, 48, divorced, has, for a year, been in charge of managing a Dutch Reformed Church in Stellenbosch. She claims that she basically does everything for the Church except preach. She studied Afrikaans, French and English at University and mostly taught French during her years as a formal teacher. She has lived most of her life in Pretoria and in Brits, but moved to Stellenbosch in 2006. She got married when she was twenty-three years old and has two daughters, now in their twenties. She and her husband divorced after fifteen years of marriage. She says that she has been in a relationship with a man now for three years. She contends that her socio-economic class could be described as being the same as many other professionals who can be described as 'upper middle class'. She says that teachers are undervalued and underpaid and since she was a teacher for most of her life, she technically falls below middle-class, but still views herself as 'upper middle class'.

**Participant L**, 41, married, has lived in 'Die Boord' in Stellenbosch for the past twenty one years. She works at Stellenbosch University. She studied Teaching in Paarl, but never went on to teach formally. She says that she did not become a teacher because she got married and had children. She wanted to finish 'that part' first (getting married and having a family), before starting work, which she did when her

first son reached the age of six months. She has two sons, one in high school and another who is twenty years old and is no longer in school. She classifies her socio-economic class as 'middle-class'. Her reasons for this classification are that her husband is a teacher and that teachers' salaries are not exactly 'astronomical'. She asserts that with her and her husband's salaries combined, they do have to play a bit of 'survivor', meaning that everything can be paid at the end of the month, but that it is a bit of a struggle. She does not see herself as a very materialistic person who needs to buy a lot of expensive goods for herself or her house, but says that she and her husband rather save money to go overseas every five years.

**Participant M**, 56, married, lives in Dalsig in Stellenbosch. She studied teaching and says that she grew up in the era where women stopped working once they had children. She got married right after she finished her studies and started teaching until the birth of her first child. She and her husband have three children. She later worked at a high school in Stellenbosch as a part-time teacher on and off for twenty years. She also gave extra classes after school in Mathematics and Accounting. She currently works part-time, and is in charge of managing and renting out three houses that she and her husband own in various parts of the Western Cape. She describes her socio-economic status as middle-class and explains that she thinks all people in South Africa who are able to have a drink at a coffee shop in the morning are part of the higher classes.

**Participant R**, 42, single, lives close to the Van der Stel sports fields, where she has lived for the past twenty years. She does secretarial work for one of the departments at Stellenbosch University. After finishing high school, she went to study at a college where she got a certificate in secretarial work. She spent most of her life at home with her parents, since they were both mentally ill and she took care of them. She has never been married and does not have any children. She is an only child and most of her close and extended family members have passed away. She describes her socio-economic class as 'definitely not top class', but more middle-class, since she says that she can only just make ends meet.

**Participant W**, 60, married, lives in Paradyskloof in Stellenbosch. She studied teaching at Stellenbosch University and taught school for a year before she got married. She also worked in the civil service for a while and later worked for herself at home as a beauty therapist for ten years. She is currently retired. She is married and has four children: three sons and one daughter. She classifies herself as part of the middle class and says that she feels very lucky to be a part of this class.

Chow, Wilkinson and Zinn (1996:ix) argue that gender, class and race ‘matter’ significantly when one attempts to understand the social location of different groups in society. They argue that an approach such as an intersectional approach is essential when trying to comprehend any social context and how such a context has been socially structured and influenced. It is vital to look at any group’s *habitus* in terms of their race, gender, language, and class before making generalisations or drawing conclusions about their behaviour.

On the surface, this study group’s participants may fit into what Fanon (1952) or Steyn (2005) have theorised about white people, specifically those located in Africa: they argue that these individuals mainly employ and practise Western ideals and Eurocentric notions, instead of African traditions and norms. It is important to contextualise the women in this group in terms of their positionality in South Africa and Stellenbosch in terms of their gender, race and class at this point in time. This group’s positionality in terms of gender, language, race and class places them in a certain space and continuum that is not unique, since there are many white, middle-aged, middle-class women who were living in Stellenbosch at the time of this study. Their positionality as white, Afrikaans-speaking, middle-aged, middle-class to upper-class women in Stellenbosch needs to be taken into consideration when their ‘experience of ageing’ is considered. Similarities and differences emerge between the participants’ experiences and dominant themes in the narratives, the diaries and what I observed amongst the participants. In this study I intend to show how similarities, especially when we look at the production and reproduction of social norms, exist amongst individual participants of the same *habitus*.



### *A snowball case study*

I used a case study design, as shown above, in order to collect data for this study. The case study participants were chosen by using a non-probable snowball sampling method. Black and Champion (1976:89) describe a case study as ‘a depiction either of a phase or the totality of relevant experience of some selected datum.’ Babbie and Mouton (2001:281) describe a case study as ‘an intensive investigation of a single unit’. The single unit in this case is a small group of women from a specific race, language, class and age-group, living in Stellenbosch. They argue that a case study explores many different variables within such a single unit. The unit of study is often studied in relation to its context, which in this case is this group’s *habitus*. As Babbie and Mouton (ibid.) argue, this case study takes multilevel social systems into consideration, for example, the study group’s *habitus*, the beauty industry, etc.

A case study design was very flexible in terms of the methods I could use in order to gather the data for this study. That is, firstly, primary data in the form of in-depth interviews, participant diary-keeping, observations and secondly, the use of secondary data in the form of articles and books that relate to this study. Babbie and Mouton (2001:282) insist on using various methods when conducting a case study, since this will ultimately strengthen the descriptions made by the researcher of the participants. It is possible to conduct this type of research in basically any setting, which made the process of data collection much faster. Black and Champion (1976:89-92) argue that the basic difference between a case study and a survey is that a case study usually has more intensity and depth. This was my objective with this study, since I wanted to study a small group of women from a specific race, language, class and age group, living in Stellenbosch, and capture their intimate experience of ageing.

I used a snowball sampling method to select the participants. Black and Champion (1976:307-308) argue that snowball sampling is extremely helpful when studying small groups and it is relatively manageable, since it can be a quick way of locating participants of study without recruiting participants yourself. I relied on informants to choose my participants for me, creating a non-probable snowball

sample of participants. I contacted four informants to help me identify participants. These informants are contacts, not close friends, family or academics. I asked all of them to provide me with one or two participants, who would be willing to be a part of this study and would meet the criteria for selection.

The informants had a significant influence on the manner in which the participants were chosen and determined who the specific participants would be. This method can be limiting, since it only provides the researcher with participants of a group with rather similar characteristics. Nonetheless, it was the goal of this study to locate participants from a specific group. Each informant provided me with one participant, since each participant provided me with another participant. I contacted and interviewed this contact or ‘Participant 1’. After the interview with ‘Participant 1’, I asked her whether she could refer me to a contact of hers to interview, hence ‘Participant 2’. I did not interview any of the informants as part of this study. Table 1.2 below shows how the participants were chosen:

<b><u>Informant</u></b>	<b><u>Interviewee 1</u></b>	<b><u>Interviewee 2</u></b>
<b>Marie<sup>4</sup></b>	Participant L	Participant R
<b>Debra</b>	Participant A	Participant K
<b>Johanna</b>	Participant D	Participant W
<b>Andrea</b>	Participant H	Participant M

Table 1.2 Snowball sample representation

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<sup>4</sup> The names given in this table are all pseudonyms.

## **Methods for data collection and data analysis**

The following section provides insight into the triangulation of the qualitative research methods I used to collect the data for this case study. These techniques include a pilot test, semi-structured and in-depth interviews, participant diary-keeping, observations and secondary data. I will also discuss the methods I used to analyse the data for this study, namely a thematic analysis process.

### *Pilot test*

I used a pilot test to assess whether the semi-structured questions I prepared for the interviews with my participants were clear, concise and relevant to my dominant research question. I posted an advertisement online where I invited individuals, who met the relevant criteria I used to obtain participants for this study, to only answer the questions they understood and to leave out those that they did not understand. I specifically used one of the online participants' feedback, since this provided guidance when I prepared my final semi-structured questions. The pilot test allowed me to understand which questions were vague and which were clear. I did not include any of the information this online participant provided in my study, since a pilot test conducted via the internet might not be accurate.

### *In-depth interviews*

I mainly used in-depth interviews, which were of a semi-structured nature, in order to gather my data for this study. Ferreira (1988:205) argues that the qualitative researcher needs to provide a framework of themes that the subjects can respond to in a free and open manner. Marshall and Rossman (2006:82-83) call in-depth interviewing a 'conversation with a purpose'. The researcher needs to loosely structure their question topics and allow the participant to frame and structure their own responses. I used themes to guide my questioning, all of which link to my

research question. These kinds of interviews are very powerful, since they allow the researcher to obtain a huge amount of data in a short amount of time. In-depth interviews can be limited, as a method of data collection, as with any other research method, by a participant unwilling to share all the information that might be relevant to this study. That is why it is important to note that one only needs to report on the statements made by the participant during the interview, since that which is hidden or unsaid cannot be accurately reported or explained by the researcher in the study. (Adler and Adler, 1994:379-380)

All eight of the participants, including a retired plastic surgeon living in Stellenbosch, Dr. M, were interviewed only once and the interviews lasted between one and three hours. Dr. M was interviewed in September 2009, while the eight participants of this study group were interviewed during the time period of 15 March to 22 April 2010. I interviewed the participants at their setting of choice and interviews were conducted in Afrikaans, which is their mother tongue. The interviews were conducted at their place of work, their private home or at a coffee shop in the vicinity of Stellenbosch, where I would pay for their beverage as a way of remuneration. In all my interviews, I made the research participants fully aware that I was using an audio and video taping device in order to record and later transcribe the interview. I transcribed all of the interviews and translated the direct quotations, from Afrikaans to English. I made a verbal agreement with everyone whom I interviewed that their names would not appear anywhere in my research, and that I would use pseudonyms. All the research participants agreed that the information they volunteered can be used for this research project.

#### *Participant diary-keeping*

I provided each participant with a diary, in the form of a blank A6 notebook, following my interview with them. I wanted them to provide detailed descriptions of their daily beauty and exercise routines. The participants had to keep a diary for a week, wherein

they had to write on a daily basis, detailing their beauty regimes and exercise and diet routines. This activity gave me great insight into their beauty, diet and exercise regimes and the reasons why they 'choose' to practise these activities. All of the diary entries differed, since the participants organised and responded to this task in different ways. Some of the entries were very thorough and others very cryptic. The participants were very willing to participate in this activity. I told the participants that I would contact them a week from the time of the interview to collect the diary. Some of the participants posted the diaries back to me, or I collected it from their place of work.

### *Observations*

I joined a 'women-only' fitness centre in Stellenbosch for four months in 2009, where I exercised and made observations. Joining the fitness centre was merely intended to put me in touch with women whom I planned on interviewing for this study. I chose to join a 'women-only' fitness centre, since I thought that it would expose me directly to women of all ages, and that it would be easier and more probable for me to engage with women between the ages of 40 and 65 than in a unisex fitness centre. The women who used this fitness centre were of all ages, especially students in their early twenties and women of forty years and older. After making observations at this fitness centre for four months, I decided to rather follow a snowball sample, since I found it difficult to approach the women while they were busy exercising. I ended up only making observations. I got to know one of the managers of the fitness centre very well and she acted as one of my informants.

### *Secondary data*

I compiled a broad review of literature previously written on aspects of ageing, gender and the beauty industry. I used these secondary data documents to conceptually and

theoretically understand my data. These sources of data are all set out in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

## **Analysis**

In order to analyse the qualitative data generated in the interview process, I use a thematic analysis process. Marshall and Rossman (2006:114) argue that this process involves the 'organising of data, generating concepts, themes and patterns; testing the emergent hypotheses against the data, searching for alternative explanations of the data and writing the report.' As Marshall et al. (2006:114-119) suggest, I started my process of analysis by firstly reading through the transcribed, noted and diarised data in order to generate themes and patterns in the data. This was a very complex and creative process, since I often had to find that which is implicit in order to explain certain aspects of social life, for example, looking at what the participants perceive as normal and conceptualising the abnormal. I constantly tried to link emerging themes to my research question in an effort to only retain data that were relevant. The participants often veered of the path of the research question, which is why I did not engage with all of the themes that the participants spoke about in their interviews, since it was not relevant to the research question. The patterns that have emerged have been analysed by using theory.

To complete the analytical process, I have used the participants' direct quotations, where they relate to dominant themes or patterns found in the data, in the writing of my report. The process of using the raw data in the form of direct quotations best conveys the dominant similarities and differences found amongst this group of participants. I used a variety of secondary data in the form of theories that can explain certain aspects of specific phenomena in this study. The theory is applied to the data and acts to better explain the data in the report itself. The data were never adapted to fit the theory. The writing of the report has allowed me to make meaning

out of that which started as eight narratives of raw data, diary entries, observations and secondary data.

### **Ethical considerations and research problems**

This section addresses the ethical considerations and research problems I faced over the course of this study. Occasionally, while interviewing participants, I found it difficult when participants paused for extended periods of time before answering a question or while answering one. Even though the main focus of my data collection was verbal communication, non-verbal communication was a valid source of data to investigate, since it can often determine the tone of verbal communication. At times, some of the participants seemed like they wanted to skip certain questions and gave me an abrupt or incomplete answer. James Scheurich (1997:62; 69) contends that, when conducting an interview with an informant, it is of a verbal and non-verbal nature; the interviewee might hold back information about many things that he/she chooses to hide or disguise. In a sense, the interviewee can hold the power when using such silences. Observations of silences, pauses and non-verbal activity can be a sign of dominance and the informant's way of resisting what is being asked of them. It was an immense help to me that that I recorded the interviews with the participants both on audio and video, since I was able to review the participants' reactions to certain questions. However, I could not always give an 'absolutely correct' interpretation, since it is still my interpretation of the non-verbal activity that the interviewees communicated. In my attempts to analyse the meaning behind each non-verbal activity, I tried to make sense out of that which was undetermined. It must be said that a major problem for me was the fact that I was never exactly sure what any of the participants' non-verbal communication meant.

Adler and Adler (1994:379-380) argue that when trying to capture and study the 'outside world', it can be difficult to separate the researcher's conscious and unconscious assumptions. The validity of observing and interpreting the outside world has been very much criticised since observers rely on their own ideas and perceptions when analysing

the data that they obtain during observation. Researchers can become very participatory or biased when they work in close proximity with participants. All the theoretical descriptions that are noted must therefore be backed up by actual data, quotations and video or audio evidence. I only used the data from the participants' narratives that I had evidence of via my video or audio recordings of the interviews, observations or diary entries.

Lastly, I found it difficult to separate my 'interviewer' and 'social individual' role at times. All of the participants were very open and friendly to me and often commented that luckily I do not have to concern myself about ageing, because I am still very young. Some of the participants would encourage me to join into conversation with them regarding certain topics, but I felt I had to resist such interaction because I did not want to lead the topic framework more than what was needed.



## Chapter 4: Timely beauty: Altering the ‘expired’ body

### Introduction

This chapter explores both the relationship the participants have with their ageing bodies and different methods of ‘body alteration’, for example beauty regimes. The participants’ image of their bodies as ‘old’ is mediated by various systems of regulation. These systems include the fashion-beauty complex, a variety of body alteration methods, and patriarchal discourse, which constantly promote ‘best before bodies’. These systems deem ‘young’ bodies as ‘best before bodies’ and ‘old’ bodies as ‘expired’. Tension exists between, on the one hand, the participants’ perception of what they ‘should look’ and feel like at a certain age, and on the other hand, how they really look and feel. Their interactions with others, who have also been influenced by regulatory systems, shape these participants’ own perception of their appearance and age. This chapter shows this group’s relationship to systems of regulation, such as compulsory heterosexuality and the male gaze, which mediate their recognition of their bodies in relation to time as ‘old’ and ‘expired’ bodies.

### Everyday beauty: ‘Best before bodies’

The participants acknowledge that they now look (physically) different than they did in their youth. Most of the participants said that just because their appearance is ‘older’, it cannot be assumed that they feel ‘older’ or feel and act a certain age. According to most of the participants, there is no standard way of feeling or acting for certain ages. This is how some of the participants describe the stigma attached to certain ages:

...you know, thirty...thirty was just horrible, to turn thirty to me was just like... ‘now you are old’... thirty just felt really old (Participant D, 62, married).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> All the original Afrikaans *participant* quotes can be found in the Appendix A, p. 136

But it was two years ago, when I was thirty-nine, and forty was coming closer and closer. I was in a complete depro...it also just sounds so old..(Participant L, 41, married).

Participant L argues that after she turned forty, many people started telling her: 'You are as old as you feel'. She would reply: 'Yes, I also feel like that, but I don't look eighteen anymore'. She says that she feels eighteen years old, the same way she has felt for most of her adult life, but because she turned forty and physically looks different from when she was eighteen, she feels pressure to feel and act forty. Some participants express their perception of their bodies' ageing, as follows:

Yes, of course, more wrinkles...I don't feel old though (Participant W, 60, married).

To me I haven't changed at all, but obviously when I look at photos (Participant A, 61, single).

When I was 20, from my perception, I was tall and slender... I was very confident with my physical appearance, and I easily walked around on the beach in my bikini...if I think now, you look in the mirror, or you think you are still young, you almost still feel the same, but then you hear people calling you 'tannie'. [...] Say I'm wearing a bikini, when I'm there at home... then my daughter has such a cute thing that she says: "Mamma...nee" (Participant H, 52, married).

Yes, I can see my body has changed, you can see the physical deterioration of the body (Participant R, 42, single).

I colour my hair now, because I promised my daughter I would colour my hair until she's out of matric. (Participant M, 56, married)

Participant H says that she first realised she was 'old' when someone called her 'tannie' (an Afrikaans term for an 'older' woman), even though she said she did not feel like a 'tannie', or her idea of what a 'tannie' is. Similarly, she was made aware that she looked 'old' when her daughter saw her wearing a bikini by the swimming pool at their home and responded with: "Mom, no!" After Participant L turned forty, it took her a while to get used to the idea that she was viewed as part of a group of 'old' women. She complained that all the advertisements propagate that over forty you

have to use a particular cream, you have to eat 'All-Bran Flakes' for better digestion, etc. Her perception is that the whole world expects people to 'fall flat' and be 'old' once they turn forty. She says that turning forty carries a stigma, especially since the media promotes it as an age where the physical body starts to noticeably deteriorate.

Participant K argues that she takes better care of her physical appearance than her married friends, especially because she is divorced and there is a possibility that she might remarry one day. Participant H, a married woman, as well as some of the other married participants in this group, argue that it is better to be married when handling the physical deterioration process of ageing, because one's partner experiences the same effects. Some of them argue as follows:

I stay fit and I don't have problems with my figure, maybe also because I'm divorced, when you are divorced you look at the world as 'maybe I'll marry again'. I see many of my friends who have been married for 20 years...they really let themselves go, and their husbands get 'boeppense'(Participant K, 48, divorced).

I think if you have a husband who's also getting old, then it's easier. I think women who are single might feel that they could marry or get a boyfriend again, so I think it's more difficult for them, you have a husband who is getting a 'boep' and who is also turning grey, you know the husband can't point a finger, because he also looks older (Participant H, 52, married).

Maybe you think differently about things when you are single or divorced compared to married women, because then, luckily, you grow old together, maybe you are looking for a partner or I don't know, it's probably more difficult (Participant W, 60, married).

Participant W noted that it must be more difficult for single or divorced women to grow old, because they are still looking for a partner. These participants are saying that unmarried women must find it more difficult to grow old, mainly because they are alone and still looking for a partner. Participant K asserts that women have always been defined in terms of their sexuality and that being sexually attractive is important when trying to find a 'mate'. She recognises this value-judgement and tries to

physically maintain herself in order to appear sexually attractive to a potential partner.

The single and married women have different viewpoints on the experience of physical ageing, but what they have in common is the importance of the presence of systems that regulate their views, such as compulsory heterosexuality and the *male gaze*, as discussed by Mulvey (1990:33), Morgan (1991:32) and Rich (1980:632). This male gaze is the catalyst which interpellates women to act and appear feminine and heterosexual at all times. This catalyst is influenced by anyone, not only men, who constantly reinforce gender inequality and stereotypical behaviour for women. The male gaze plays a significant role in women's recognition and experience of their physical ageing; this is the case for both single and married women. There is a need for affirmation, since the participants argue that they need 'him' to recognise them; this affirmation is the reason why they either maintain themselves or are allowed not to worry too much about their appearance. Like most of the other participants, Participant K argues that she functions on two levels: firstly, she acknowledges her physical deterioration on a daily basis and secondly, she tries to fight it as best she can by employing various methods of body alteration.

I often get compliments that I look younger than what I am (Participant A, 61, single).

You become more aware of ageing, even though you're not quite there yet... you are intensely aware of it (Participant K, 48, divorced).

Participant K experiences her physical deterioration very negatively and over time she works hard to fight it, in particular by using a range of beauty products, eating healthier and exercising more. For many of the participants there is a constant battle against time, since they always refer back to the state of their bodies 'before' and how much better that body was, compared to their present 'older' body. The notion that a young 'best before body' is preferred, especially emerges when Participant A experiences the term 'younger' as a compliment and automatically perceives 'older' as an insult.

So long as the inner feeling of youth remains alive, it is the objective truth of age that seems fallacious: one has the impression of having put on a borrowed mask... (De Beauvoir, 1972:296)

De Beauvoir (1972:296-297) declares that old age arrives without warning, making us feel like our faces are disguises, and we suddenly realise or think that we have borrowed it from someone else. She (ibid.) argues that as time passes and our appearance deteriorates, we still feel 'young' or similar to the way we have always felt. Reaching a point in time, when you are forty or fifty, the feeling that you are suddenly 'old' is mediated by others who also perceive that certain ages bring about certain feelings or determine specific behaviour.

Johnson and Williamson (1980:86-87) argue that appearance implies a lot of power, which forms a foundation for interactions that take place between people. They note that as people reach middle age they start to recognise their ageing image, mainly because other people notice it. This creates a lot of anxiety for many people during this life stage, as they feel they are not associated with youth anymore. Johnson and Williamson (ibid.) argue that women are particularly affected, since many cultures place emphasis on the young and slender appearance of women. They argue that there is a double standard of ageing, noting that women's value decreases as they age, something men do not necessarily have to worry about. Women are often so afraid of the ageing process that they will try any treatment that may reverse its

effects. This fear, they argue, supports the idea that ageing should be feared and youth valued.

Similarly, Mowl, Pain and Talbot (2000:190-191) argue that others usually detect 'bodily signs of ageing' as the main indicators of being old. But they argue that many 'older' people do not separate their physical and psychological ageing, since the 'feeling old' part of ageing is all in the mind. This Rubinstein (1990:129-130) argues is a process of ageing which must be considered as something that happens on different levels simultaneously, especially the biological and social levels. It must be taken into consideration when studying the ageing experience of individuals, looking at chronological age. Similarly, Janet Belsky (1997:60; 68-70) argues that individual variability is the most important principle of 'normal' ageing, in that every person's individual ageing is dependent on various factors. Most of the participants associated physical ageing with negative characteristics, such as grey hair and wrinkles. The notion that time had affected their physical bodies in a harsh or negative way, and caused its deterioration on a daily basis, was shared amongst most of the participants when they talked about their bodies in relation to time.

Others' perceptions of what women 'should look' like and what ages or appearances are too old or 'expired' are part of this discourse where the male gaze determines which bodies are 'best before'/'young and idealised bodies' or 'expired'/'old and feared bodies'. These perceptions clearly shape the participants' perceptions of their own age and alert them to the fact that they do not appear 'young' anymore. A woman with wrinkles and grey hair is then immediately perceived as an 'expired' body. The participants still feel young, but through interpellation<sup>6</sup> by the male gaze, they are made aware of how others see them and this realisation mediates their perception of how they 'should' feel and act. To them, their 'older' bodies have become a kind of 'insult', leading them to yearn for their younger, 'before

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<sup>6</sup> Althusser (1971:157-158)

bodies'. What follows is a discussion on the body alteration methods these participants employ in order to achieve these 'best before bodies'.

### **Beauty regimes**

The first method of body alteration that will be discussed is the daily beauty regime of the different participants. I asked the participants about their daily beauty regimes and requested that they keep a diary of the beauty products, make-up and beauty treatments they use in a given week, enquiring as to the importance of these practices. Some of the participants reflect on their beauty regimes as follows:

[I]t adds value to every woman, and it's important that every woman... looks well taken care of. If you look after your skin, it will show. I always say, when you are old, you'll get the face you deserve (Participant D, 62, married).

I wash my face in the evenings and I put some cream on and of course sunscreen... it's just to put your own mind at ease (Participant W, 60, married).

I look after my face and hands, because it's important to look beautiful, young, and as good as possible... Yes, I spend a lot of money on creams, you buy all sorts of products... that wrinkle, decrease wrinkles, anything that can take away any little wrinkle (Participant L, 41, married).

Yes, I try to make a lot of effort, what is bad about the situation is that no matter what you do, you'll never have a spotless face again. You can use whatever product...and you have stretch marks from having children...its like a car that just gets more scratch marks...and when you start using some of the better and more expensive products you start to realise its not all just a hoax, it really works (Participant K, 48, divorced).

Participant L argues that it is important to 'look after' yourself and that a woman *should* try and maintain her physical appearance for as long as possible. She commented that every woman owes it to herself and the people around her, in her case her husband and children, to 'look after' her appearance. She says it is 'disgusting' when certain areas of a woman's body, like her feet, are not taken care of, and that a woman should be ashamed if she ever 'let herself go'. For her, her beauty

regime is very important and she uses a lot of beauty and age-defying products and treatments, including day cream, night cream, eye serum, facials, line and wrinkle re-plumping cream and a lot of make-up. She states that the make-up helps her to look good, even though she says that she has recently turned forty. She says that when her family goes camping with other families, she would continue her beauty regime, something that some of the other women that come along with them usually will not do. She feels that the media have a huge influence on the products she buys and the way in which she implements her beauty regime. She says that her friends and other people around her, who also 'look good', motivate her to 'keep up' her beauty regime.

Participant D follows a strict beauty regime that she feels enhances her quality of life and says that you can do anything if you feel good about yourself. Her beauty regime includes regular baths in an oil mixture, daily use of night cream, eye cream and day cream. She cleans her face and neck with cleansing products (a cleanser and a toner) and uses perfume both at night and during the day. She also applies a thirty factor sunscreen every day; and her daily make-up routine includes base, eye shadow, blusher and lipstick. Participant D stresses Participant L's point of 'maintaining' one's appearance. She says this maintenance adds value to a woman and argues that women who neglect their regimes will end up with the face they deserve.

Participant H writes in her diary about her daily beauty regime, which includes moisturiser, eye cream, sun block, eye make-up, lipstick and washing her hair everyday. Most nights she uses a moisturiser and often a facemask. She says that she puts on make-up every day in the week and over weekends when she is going out, but not when she is at home with her family. One week she went for the following additional beauty treatments: a cut and blow-dry for her hair, a lash and brow tint, leg waxing and a manicure.

In her diary entries, Participant R discusses the issue of time, and how she never has time for her beauty regime, even though she would like to put more effort into it. She speaks about how she wants to cut her hair, how she wants to go and see



the plastic surgeon again about the possibility of a breast reduction and also feels that she needs to use a 'mask' on her face once, but finds no time to do so.

Participant K says that her beauty regime includes a lot of moisturiser and tissue oil, since her skin is now much drier, and the texture is different compared to when she was younger. She says that her skin's quality has changed drastically since she turned forty-seven. She argues that it makes her wonder about how 'bad' her skin will age in ten years' time. Participant K says that no matter how much you look after your physical appearance, your face will never look the same as it did when you were young. She believes that there are more expensive products that better 'maintains' your appearance than cheaper products do, or as best it can be maintained. Many of the other women echoed this view, especially Participant A and R. They believe that more expensive products work better and they will invest in more expensive products, particularly at their age, in order to combat ageing more successfully. Participant A said that she's not trying to be 'fancy', but that she really thinks one needs a proper skincare range at her age.

Participant M and W were the two participants who seemed to use the smallest amount of beauty products and whose beauty regime was the least rigid out of all the participants. Participant W said she does not use a lot of make-up or other beauty products, but that she uses moisturiser and sun block to put her 'mind at ease and to prevent more damage to her skin. Participant M similarly argued that she has a very minimal beauty regime. She says that she wants to apply mascara, but that she cannot wear it because it makes her lashes too long resulting in her lashes coming into contact with the lenses of her glasses. Consequently, Participant M does not wear any other make-up, except for lipstick. However, she still views the act of 'wearing make-up' as the norm, just like Participant W, who uses certain products to put her 'mind at ease', insinuating that beauty regimes or the use of certain products portray the way things should be. These two participants never expressed that they were opposed to using beauty regimes, but provided other reasons why they did not have set beauty regimes. Even though they have quite simple beauty regimes, they still accept beauty

regimes as the norm. It emerged that most of the participants practise their beauty regimes on a daily basis. Some of the regimes are very detailed and ritualised, since the same products are used every day and for the same reasons. Many of the women scrutinise other women who do not seem to follow beauty regimes and 'neglect' their appearances.

Bordo (1993:169) claims that in the nineteenth century the most prominent 'feminine' beauty ideal was that of a delicate, sexually passive, charming 'lady'. Similarly today, women are governed by these ideals to adhere to certain constructions of femininity. With an increase in the amount of visual imagery used by the media, ideals of femininity are transmitted more rapidly. This is part of Butler's argument (2004:41-42) when she speaks of the power of gendering. Gender and sex, as terms, operate within everyday social practices; at times they seem like standard practice, for example applying lipstick, but act as tools of normalisation. She states that gender is not something which one has or is, but that it can normalise and assume both masculine and feminine roles and performances, which dub them 'natural'. This discourse restricts and limits other fluid identities and strengthens the binary between male/female and masculine/feminine. Beauty regimes are constructed and given meaning within this discourse, which then creates an ideal femininity. The participants view these gendered practices as normal and perpetuate it by employing these rituals, which establishes it as the norm. Dr. M, a retired plastic/cosmetic surgeon living in Stellenbosch points out that:

Centuries ago the attitude of men towards women were completely different than today and the characteristics women had then was only that of procreation, it has changed so incredibly, because our Western idea of beauty... is the classic one of form, symmetry of form, for example the Venus de Milo. So this is now our idea of beauty of the human body. This is something we can strive for in the cosmetic surgery, that kind of beauty (Dr. M, 2009).

There is now this thing about the youth, because you have to look young, because when you look young... in the eyes of the TV and others, looking young equates to clever and sporty etc... That's why people get their eyes done, so that they can look young again (Dr. M, 2009).

He argues that white, South African women's beauty is valued in terms of a Western model of beauty. This model is, however, not necessarily limited to only white women, but are increasingly influencing black women. He says that the young 'female' body is a body that is desired above all other bodies. These bodies consequently receive more respect than 'older' bodies. In order, then, to obtain this respect or to be desirable, one can alter one's body by means of body alteration, for example, beauty regimes and surgery, to achieve this particular kind of bodily beauty. Dr. M presents the notion that the body, any body, can be moulded to become something else, something which measures up to Western beauty ideals. This notion then already assumes that certain bodies are not beautiful and that they are supposed to be 'fixed' in some way in order to be acceptable.

If women are valued mainly based on their appearances, as Dr. M suggests, under how much pressure is this group of participants to look the way others expect them to look? Signs of 'looking old', according to Western beauty ideals, need to be corrected in order for women to be accepted within a heterosexual scheme, within this scheme they are constantly branded with a label that says good enough 'before' a certain date and time, constituting them as 'best before bodies'. De Beauvoir (1949:35) contests the notion that women should be limited, mainly because they are defined in terms of their sexuality. By defining women in such simplistic terms, they are subjugated to 'man', since the term used for 'man' is less constraining. A woman acquires her consciousness within the society of which she is a member, her *habitus*. This consciousness is imposed by this society, which is usually a patriarchal one.

The process of gendering, via media imagery is an implicit process that becomes engrained in a person's specific *habitus*. This gendering might not be unique to their *habitus*, but the participants practise and perform Western ideas of what beauty regimes they should engage in. The participants feel 'guilty' when they

'neglect' their beauty regimes because of laziness or time constraints. Some of the participants' beauty regimes were not as thorough, or as specific, as others, but still exist as something which is viewed as a 'normal' practice that women engage in and *should* engage in. They specifically follow a discourse that promotes Western beauty practices, which distinguishes them from other women, who are not a part of the same *habitus*. This discourse explicitly excludes certain forms of beauty, which leaves the participants desperately trying to achieve the only form of beauty they know.

### **Exercise and diet**

The second method of body alteration under discussion is the participants' exercise and diet routines. When discussing their exercise and diet routines I asked them whether they employ specific routines in order to alter their physical bodies. Many of the participants said that they specifically noticed, as they aged, that their bodies became less mobile, their buttocks and breasts sagged more and more, and they gained weight more quickly than before. They try to combat these 'problems' as best they can, especially by exercising and sometimes by adjusting their diets. The narratives of Participants K and R revealed that these individuals find it very important to 'maintain' their bodies, similar to how it was when they were younger or 'before' they got 'old'.

...when my first child was born, I wore number thirty six clothes... but I said never bigger than thirty eight... (Participant K, 48, divorced)

It's important to do it, if you don't stay busy and exercise or eat right, your body will deteriorate just so much quicker than in your twenties.(Participant R, 42, single)

Participant L says that she tries to eat very healthy, small portions, and jogs several times a week for 1-2 hours at a time in order to manage her weight. She says that it becomes increasingly difficult to lose weight after forty. Even though she knows that she does not have any excess weight, she does not want to gain any 'unnecessary'

weight. It is very important to both participants L and K that their dress size stays constant. Participant L said that when she shops she only gets one dress size when trying something on. She wants to remain a size 8 and will not 'let herself go' by wearing or even trying on a size 12 or 14. Many of the women were of the opinion that they had to 'maintain' their bodies much more now than they had to before, and that exercise and diet alterations help them to stay physically similar to the way they looked before. Many participants said that their weight gain increased after they turned forty and exercising seems to be the best way to prevent this 'problem'. Participants H, L and W highlighted that they would not have been as active as they currently are if it were not for their husbands or friends. They said that their husbands are very active people and that they motivate them to 'keep up' and maintain their bodies.

My husband is very active and runs a lot, so if it wasn't for him, I would not have done a lot of things, like jumping off a bridge and whitewater rafting and absailing...so there are many things that I did because I met him, otherwise I would have never done it (Participant L, 41, married).

Participant L and her husband jog together regularly and she said that being active, together with her husband, makes her feel younger. Some of the participants are involved in walking groups and walk two to three times a week with friends, who they also say motivate them to continue. Some of the participants feel that they should maintain their figures, similar to what they were before, and often need motivation to continue their exercise routines. Their routines might not be completely voluntary, but rather something they need to be motivated to do by others.

The all-women's fitness centre that I was a member of, for my observations, implicitly reinforces and reaffirms bodily beauty and slender norms. Even though this gymnasium is just one institution in Stellenbosch, the mere existence of this gym relates much more than just health concerns. The gym often had competitions to see who lost the largest amount of weight during a given period of time. They had this competition just before summer, and a lot of slender women in bathing suits

advertised these competitions on the posters. Institutions such as this one promote health, but also the slender ideal.

Mazur (1986:294-295) argues that the need for an exercise routine or altered diet is something which has been fabricated by the media, which motivates people, on a grand scale to be regulated in terms of the shape and size of their body. Ever since the 1960s, mass slenderisation has been taking place within the mass media as well as in beauty pageants. She argues that during this time magazines and advertisements started to represent the emancipated women as a slender and stylish figure. Bordo (1993:99) echoes this when she speaks about 'Hunger as Ideology', which reviews the media ideology that perpetuate ideals of thinness and weight loss for women. The participants' 'choice' to maintain their bodies is not something all of them necessarily want to do, but because they want to remain thin or loose weight, and thus be more valuable within a discourse that dictates this kind of appearance, they feel that they *should* exercise or alter their diet. With the participants, I discussed, and continuously probed them, on issues relating to their health; for example, I asked whether they had any previous illnesses that might have affected their body image in some way. Yet, the participants mainly focused on their exercise and diet routines, since none of them have suffered from any serious illnesses, such as cancer. A possible reason for this might be that this group has not yet reached the age where chronic illnesses are more common.

### **Dressing practices**

The third method of body alteration that will be addressed is the dressing practices of the participants. It emerged that time and changes over time in terms of dressing influence how the participants experience their ageing and leads them to explore their own ageism. During my interview with Participant D, she commented on the outfit of a woman standing close to us:

You know, yes... look at how this woman dresses... yes, body image is not everything, but you have to dress according to your age... (Participant D, 62, married)

She pointed out that the woman looked too old-fashioned and that it was not necessary for women 'that age' to dress that way. Some of the other participants expressed their current dressing practices as follows:

When my mother was this age, forty or fifty...I think the clothing has become more comfortable, it has been made easier too, not to look young, but we also now wear jeans and trainers. Everyone wears the same and you dress more comfortably, you are more mobile, you don't dress like old women, almost like those 'church clothes' that people used to wear. It's not those dresses with the stockings that make you feel like you're older... I don't feel like I can't do something, just because of my age. (Participant M, 56, married)

I definitely went more towards clothes in black, I don't want to stand out anymore... firstly, I don't have the body anymore and secondly... you want to be more in the background. (Participant R, 42, single)

Participant H said that she currently wears fewer tight, body-fitting clothes, whereas she used to wear these kinds of clothes when she was younger. She said that she likes to look modern and finds it unnecessary for women her age to look old-fashioned. She said that dressing this way makes you look even 'older' than you are. Participant R said that she has started to wear darker colours over time, since her body does not 'allow' her to wear bright colours anymore. According to Participant L, when a woman turns forty or older, it becomes more important for her to look stylish than to try to look fashionable. She says that one could easily look 'stupid' or like someone who tries really hard to 'look young'. Similarly, Participants D and L argue that women should wear 'age appropriate' clothes, and should never attempt to look 'too young'. These participants strongly disapprove of women who do not dress 'age appropriately', especially when they are 'trying to look too young' by dressing in clothes only young people are 'supposed' to wear. This notion demarcates 'older' women; it allows these women only to choose certain items of clothing and scrutinises them when they dare to choose 'young people' clothes.

Participants W and M claim that clothing today has become much more 'ageless'. Participant W said that her mother looked like a 'tannie' in the way she dressed, whereas Participant W said that older women now have more options when choosing clothes, for example, they can also wear jeans and 'tekkies' (trainers), just like younger people do. She says that one can still look young without dressing 'too young'. Participant M emphasised that the old-fashioned clothing her mother wore made women of her age look older and feel older at the same time. When the women were asked if their dress sense had changed over time, some responded as follows:

A lot more modern, young... when I still worked...we always wore skirts, it was very conservative ('koekerig')... now I am a lot more 'with it'; now that I'm retired I wear three-quarter trousers in the winter and the summer (Participant A, 61, single).

I was a lost case when I was young, I can't tell you how conservative I grew up... I'm now trying to change my clothes to more modern outfits... I think its an exciting time for Afrikaans women, because we grew up so conservatively... now only do we start taking chances with clothes and dressing more 'young' (Participant K, 48, divorced).

Even though certain ages and their negative societal constructions influence the way in which these participants view their situation in time, some of the participants, like Participants A and K said that they currently feel much 'younger' than they did when they were chronologically 'younger'. Some said that they grew up very conservatively and mostly related this to the way they dressed and thought about their femininity, sexuality and sensuality. It became clear that for many of these participants, feeling 'young' and being physically perceived as 'old' can also exist together.

Bordo (2002: 455) contends that fashion is never *just* fashion and pictures are never *just* pictures. Both have a profound impact on people's perceptions of what is real and what is to be accepted as the dominant standards of appearance. She argues that women have become much more susceptible to these images as time passes, since the line between what is real and what is unreal has become very blurred. The mass media have become so dominant that people measure their appearances against



the unattainable standards of the unreal. Mazur (1986:284) similarly claims that the rise of the mass media (including photography, and the advertising and film industries), mass clothes retailing and advertising has greatly influenced our perception of beauty. He argues that as clothes have become more revealing; our judgement of feminine beauty has increased. Fashion and clothing styles often change, and these changes consequently influence feminine beauty ideals, since the feminine body is so closely linked to fashion. Davis (1997:155) supports this position when she argues that fashion has an incredible influence on the representation of gender. Ideas about gender can often change as quickly as trends do, since fashion discourse has a lot of power and influence. She argues that our fashion and gender identities are both fluid, since the mass media propagates a certain discourse surrounding fashion and gender that can easily be changed.

What emerges is the notion that middle aged women should wear certain clothes, maybe something a bit less tight, something that will blend in more, but something that still looks modern and stylish. The dichotomy between young and old is exposed here and an age-appropriate way of dressing becomes evident. When one is young, one is expected to 'dress young' or one is 'allowed' to dress young. Participants W and M assert that 'older' women now have more choices, regarding their clothes, than their mothers did. There is a sense here that these participants already know that there is a 'certain place' for them. They *shouldn't* try to look 'too young' and *should* dress in a way that is 'appropriate' for their age in order to be perceived as 'stylish', 'normal' middle-aged women.

The participants emphasised that, at their age, they have to dress according to a certain code, and consequently scrutinise others 'their age' who deviate from this code. As time passes, these women have stepped into different roles and different ways of dressing themselves in order to be accepted as 'normal'. This norm has become more 'comfortable' in a way, according to these women, since they argue that women 'their age' now have more options when it comes to dressing 'their age'. So the 'norm' has been changed in terms of what women can wear at certain times in

their lives. It has been made more comfortable for these women, but it still has boundaries that may not easily be crossed. Mowl et al. (2000:192) echo this, arguing that women have much more pressure on them to hide signs of physical ageing, which often leads to others' disapproval when they try 'too hard' and look 'too youthful'.

Their dressing practices reveal their own perceptions of what they think is age-appropriate for themselves and for others, which exposes their own ageism. The participants make a clear distinction between clothes that are 'too old' or 'too young', and consequently what they, and others their age, are allowed to wear. They limit their own agency by scrutinising women who wear clothes that are 'too young' and by sticking to only wearing 'age-appropriate' clothes, since they participate in a system which regulates their behaviour at different ages of their lives.

### **Plastic/cosmetic surgery**

Plastic/cosmetic surgery is the last form of body alteration to be addressed as part of the discussion on methods of body alteration. I discussed plastic/cosmetic surgery with the participants, trying to explore their views on and desires to have surgery. I asked Dr. M at what age most of his previous clients had cosmetic surgery, in order to assess whether my participants were likely to consider and or engage in plastic/cosmetic surgery. Dr. M emphasised that most of his clients were women in their middle ages, who wanted to reverse the physical effects of time on their bodies.

It is often people in their middle ages, if we talk about women especially... these women realise all these signs of ageing, then they wonder whether it can't be fixed. Then they come and see me and tell me about the things that bother them. If they breastfed, then they have sagging breasts and want to fix it, and their faces aren't pretty to them anymore and they look deteriorated, then they want to get work done... what happens with these women... they are beautiful... they have blossoming skin and they are built well, but after they have had a couple of babies, their breasts aren't as pretty anymore, and their bodies aren't so pretty anymore, and their faces have a couple of marks... even in your thirties you start to get wrinkles around your eyes and mouth... it is a part of the normal ageing process (Dr. M, 2009).

He says that the physical ageing process of the body happens 'naturally', but that this process can somehow be reversed or delayed through surgery. The deteriorating body can thus be 'fixed' to look beautiful and young again, as he explained above. Plastic/cosmetic surgery is, as he describes, a way for his clients to reverse the effects of time on the body, for example, in the form of wrinkles and sagging breasts. The clients are usually dissatisfied, especially during middle age, with their deteriorating bodies, since this is often the time when they really start to notice severe physical changes. Some clients decide to use certain plastic/cosmetic surgery procedures to 'correct' deteriorating parts of their bodies. When the participants reflected on plastic surgery and whether they would ever consider such procedures, some replied:

I have thought about how it would look..(Participant M, 56, married).

No, I have never, in the first place it's too much money... sometimes you think that you wish you could have some liposuction, because you become so discouraged (Participant L, 41, married).

No, it's too expensive and the medical aid won't cover it. I have seen how some people look after having surgery... If I had money I would work on other parts of my body, for example my arms because I have these fat arms and I also have a large stomach.. (Participant A, 61, single).

The whole idea interests me, I always watch this stuff on television, how it works, I have thought about maybe doing something when I'm older... something that others won't notice. But I'd be too embarrassed to do something big... but I think if you do something that others won't notice, then I will consider it (Participant H, 52, married).

I'm very much for it... but it doesn't always work. But if it's done by a really good doctor, yes..(Participant D, 62, married).

I am currently thinking about having a breast reduction, but it's the money yes, it will be at least R40 000... in my case, it's a health concern, but if people have things they want to have done, they should do so (Participant R, 42, single).

There are different reasons why the participants would consider surgery. In all my conversations with the participants, except for Participant W, it became clear that

they have all humoured the idea of getting some sort of cosmetic procedure. Some of the participants said that they would joke with other people about getting procedures like liposuction or Botox, but that the idea of actually going through with it seemed very much out of their financial reach. Participant R was the only one in this group who actively wanted to have a cosmetic procedure done as quickly as possible (breast reduction surgery), but she is struggling to finance the procedure. Participant K said that she would like to get her breasts lifted, but that she also does not have money at this stage. Similarly, Participant A said that she would love to get work done on different parts of her body, like her overweight stomach and her arms, but that money is the issue. It emerged that while the idea of changing their bodies through cosmetic means was acceptable, the main concern was affordability.

Some participants, like Participant H, said they would feel embarrassed if, after such a procedure, anybody was to find out that they had had cosmetic surgery. She said that if she could find a way to have surgery without others knowing, she would get something done. Some of the participants said that they believe that women who get plastic/cosmetic surgery mainly do it because they want to appear more attractive to their husbands.

I think a lot of women do it for their husbands... I understand men who are doctors and their wives feel like the whole day their husbands are busy dealing with young, beautiful women. Thank God, I don't have to worry about that (Participant W, 60, married).

No, I haven't yet... I'm not concerned about my face, um, but maybe something like your breast... it would be nice to have them done... say in 2 or 3 years if I have an extra R10 000, then I will do it... for myself. It depends on the way you think... your perception of how the man in your life see you. If he is very critical, or it can make the relationship stronger, this sounds very superficial, but yes I think... it depends how much emphasis such a person places on appearance (Participant K, 48, divorced).

Participant W believes that many women have plastic/cosmetic procedures done for their husbands in order to somehow 'improve' their physical relationship. Participant K confirms this by saying that she thinks that the need for having surgery depends on

the extent to which the 'man in your life' wants you to get surgery or how the surgery might improve the relationship. She says that 'if' she had the money she would have surgery, in order to improve her physical relationship. So the issue of affordability is evident here, irrespective of the reason why she wants to have the surgery. Dr. M said that white, Afrikaans-speaking women are generally embarrassed and much more careful to have plastic surgery, specifically because they are so conservative.

In the 70s I did a facelift for R120... at the beginning it was only for the really rich people, but now it is within reach of the middle class... I think that in general we Afrikaners... maybe it's not like that anymore, but at a certain stage they had more of an aversion to plastic surgery, it was more done in secret, whilst the English speakers would do it and show everybody... so we are very conservative (Dr. M, 2009).

He argues that plastic surgery today is within reach of the middle classes, a group which these participants form part of. Even though many of the participants are interested in altering their bodies by means of surgery, they mostly argued that they cannot afford the surgery. In the way they spoke about plastic/cosmetic surgery, it emerged that it was not just an issue of affordability, but it was something that was not really within the realm of the possible. They talked about getting certain parts of their bodies altered, because they felt that their physical appearance was deteriorating or because it would help their physical relationship with their male partner. Yet, what emerged was a feeling that these kinds of procedures are not for women like them, situated in the middle class, having other priorities on which to spend their money. So, it very much supports Dr. M's claim that middle-aged, middle-class Afrikaans women are often too conservative to have cosmetic procedures.

Morgan (1991:28; 30-30; 35) claims that women's embrace of the cosmetic industry, or other forms of body alteration, is a contested political terrain, where women's bodies are called into question. She uses a Foucauldian analysis to argue that technological procedures, such as facelifts or Botox, normalise and survey women's bodies. Morgan says that plastic surgery is part of a system that wants to create a 'femina perfecta', or the perfect woman. She states that people have become both

technological subject and object, and can transform their own bodies thanks to 'biological engineering'. According to Morgan, women say they want plastic surgery because they seek some kind of self-fulfilment or self-transcendence. This, she argues is not something that should be seen as powerless or empty conformist ideals. In fact, one can associate some forms of agency with these 'choices' of women getting plastic surgery or any other form of beautification. However, Morgan argues that the 'choices' that these women make 'independently' are very paradoxical. Women make 'choices' to have surgery or to eat less and do more exercise at certain ages to become more liberated, to feel 'better' about their bodies, to make it appear similar to when they were 'young'. This approach ends up making them more dependent on surgeons, beauty products and on the male assessment of their bodies.

Hancock et al. (2000:3; 8) argue that the modern body has become worshipped as a youthful and beautiful body, one which has made 'strangers' of older people. The ageing body is represented as a body which can no longer produce or reproduce and it stigmatises older people as 'deteriorating' and useless bodies. They argue that the body is no longer just there to be mechanically maintained, but that it has become a body associated with certain lifestyle choices and identities. This body can now be shaped by using beauty products, dieting, exercise and cosmetic surgery, and this behaviour is the result of a culture obsessed with appearance, youth and narcissism.

Most of the participants seemed to entertain the thought of changing parts of their body by using various methods of body alteration. They share the notion that there is a 'better' body, or 'look' to be had and that the altering of bodies is 'normal'. The participants want to maintain their appearances and stay young for as long as possible, because that is what they expect themselves and other women to do.

## **Conclusion**

Most of the participants in this study group did not feel old until they were called 'old' because of their appearance. When they recognised how others viewed them, they

felt that they 'should feel' and maybe act 'old'. De Beauvoir (1972:283-284) says that within everyone is an 'Other', much like the Hegelian 'Other', which is the person other people see. The 'Other' is part of you, so if they see you as 'old' and call you 'old', you must recognise it, because that 'other' is a part of you. Many women seek affirmation that they are still beautiful and young in the eyes of others; be it a man, other women or family members. In an approach that is similar to De Beauvoir's, Butler (1987:58) argues that we gain recognition both through 'our bodies and our work'. According to Butler (ibid.), subjects only thrive amongst those who are able to provide 'reciprocal recognition'. She argues that subjects do not only understand themselves through work, but need acknowledgement from other subjects who confirm them and their work (Salih, 2002:28). The participant's 'self' recognises its physical ageing through others and objects, for example photos, mirrors, husbands and daughters.

This recognition, for this study group, is realised because of the *male gaze*, which values women based on their physical appearance and forces women to use body alteration methods, keeping their bodies 'best before bodies'. The male gaze acts as the other, which the 'self' needs to overcome. Yet, it is already a part of the self, because of years of interpellation. This study group has been interpellated by the discourse that their *habitus* follows to behave in a certain way. There is a tension between, on the one hand, how you should look and feel at a certain age, and on the other hand, how you really look and feel. Others shape how one feels and inscribe you to feel 'old' because you look 'old'. The recognition of the self's physical ageing is usually a negative experience, because of the way the male gaze has interpellated 'old' as an insult and 'young' as a compliment, within the participants' specific *habitus*.

According to Morgan (1991:35) and Rich (1980:638-640), women conform to ideals of female beauty, because they are interpellated to do so by regulatory regimes<sup>7</sup> that keeps women in line with the desires of the male gaze; women

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<sup>7</sup> Foucault (1975:170-175)

sometimes follow this regime out of fear that perhaps they 'won't find a partner'. Yet, Morgan (ibid.) argues that technologies that operate within this regulatory regime, such as body alteration methods, coerce women into believing that their bodies have to look a certain way for them to be considered 'normal'. This system has, according to Mulvey (1990:33) ranged in its oppression of women from physical brutality to the undermining of women's consciousness. This oppression is not always so evident or obvious, since it is not just applied by men, but also by women – in fact, anyone who constantly reinforces norms surrounding gender and sex, regardless of their gender, race, class or sexual identity. The perpetuation of compulsory heterosexuality by institutions in the media or individuals or groups is what strengthens and helps maintain this system over time.

The participants often feel guilty when they neglect to use certain products or utilise certain beauty procedures. Even those who rarely use beauty products view beauty regimes as something women should employ and engage in. Similarly, their diets and exercise routines echo the same attitude of 'should' as the beauty regimes. They are often motivated by others to engage in exercise, something some said they would never have done if it were not for external motivation. Nobody in the group has had plastic/cosmetic surgery, but they all, in spite of some saying they cannot afford it, argue that they would like to 'fix' certain parts of their bodies they are unsatisfied with, because of ageing.

The fashion-beauty complex constantly cements a way that women 'should look' and keeps them dependent on others' perception of their appearance. Many women might try to embody the opposite of what the male gaze prescribes in an attempt to rebel against this order, but they are often viewed in a negative light by other women, as reiterated above by the participants. So, it is almost as if most women are caught within this paradigm, where they are often scrutinised by feminists if they follow the male gaze and by men and other women when they do not. The idea of the old body as 'expired' has certainly been supported by the participants' observations about their own and about others' ageing bodies. By engaging in this



system of body alteration and seeking to achieve a 'best before body', they make themselves more vulnerable to these norms, since the independence that they seek is camouflaged; their 'choice' is actually just another form of regulation. In a capitalist patriarchal system, which mainly exists in the West, women are perceived as inferior to men. Within this system we find the fashion-beauty complex, which portrays the 'ideal woman' as a single category of young, white women. The discourse that the fashion-beauty complex has followed has convinced women that they are merely engaging in this complex because they want to be feminine and not because they are being pressured to do so. This is why many women perceive that they are making the choice to liberate themselves by practising body alteration methods. (Morgan, 1991:33-36)

The fashion-beauty complex reinforces the idea of beauty regimes and not only portrays women as ideally feminine, but according to Morgan (1991:36), it also represents the perfect woman as a young, white, Western, Anglo-Saxon body. Western media images display a gendered, racial, classed, stereotypical discourse, which upholds 'Caucasian standards'. Similarly, Peixoto-Labre (2002:123; 127) asserts that, because of these standards, capitalist consumerism is closely linked to women's quest for perfect bodies. She argues that Western media promote a specific feminine beauty ideal which normalises a white, heterosexual, Anglo-Saxon cultural representation of women. This ideal normalises women's bodies, essentialising 'women' as entities and excluding the possibility of other forms of bodily beauty, for example, old, overweight, black, etc. Davis (1991:23; 25) also argues that the representation of women, specifically in Western media, not only represents femininity in a certain way, but also as having a specific race (white) and age (young). In the absence of a variety of images of women in the media that contradict this construct, older and non-white women are branded with a "sell-by date", which identifies their bodies as 'abject' and useless bodies.

These participants have an advantage because of their class status: they are able to 'look good' and 'look good for longer' at their age. Being 'allowed' access to

the fashion-beauty complex and the ideal of femininity that it offers is limited, since age-defying products and cosmetic surgery, joining gyms, exercise equipment, healthier foods and 'modern clothes' are not available to everyone. Even though many of the participants argued that they cannot afford surgery, the participants are in a better position than the lower classes to think about the possibility of altering their bodies in this way.

Body alteration becomes either possible or plausible for most of these participants because of their class *habitus*. Most of the participants occupy a class position which allows for certain body alteration procedures like beauty products and gyms, because they are affordable; they have better access to the fashion-beauty complex than women who are not situated in the higher social classes. Even though some participants might argue that they would not have plastic surgery or that they do not employ much of a beauty regime, they are still part of a class *habitus*, which makes access to the fashion-beauty complex easier relative to other class *habitus*.

The positions and trajectories of these participants' lives, specifically in relation to their physical bodies, have been shaped by their class *habitus*. Accessibility to the fashion-beauty complex becomes confined to the middle to upper classes and excludes those from the lower classes, as Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) class *habitus* suggests. These classes are excluded mainly because they lack the funds to afford this participation. Accessibility to certain kinds of products or clothes has changed women's access to 'looking young', or 'looking young for longer'. The fashion-beauty complex allows for the oppression of 'women' and their 'natural' bodies and excludes those 'women' who cannot afford to be part of this system. This exclusion represents hidden race and class structures embedded within South African society. Lower-class, middle-aged women, in Stellenbosch are then even more excluded from the male gaze, than these white, middle-aged, middle-class participants. Mainly, due to the fact that they cannot afford access to the fashion-beauty complex that is regulated by the male gaze. They become even more 'undesired' than these white, middle-aged, middle-class participants who are deemed 'expired' bodies, within this discourse.

The next chapter will focus on the participants' life cycle<sup>8</sup> as they reflect on their psychological and social development through time. The focus here is on their everyday roles during their current and previous life stages, as well as their current contentment and regrets.

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<sup>8</sup> Erikson (1980:128-131)

## Chapter 5: Past and present: The role of time and contentment

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the participants' psychological and social development relating to their life cycle. According to Erikson (1980:17), "society consists of individuals in the process of development from children to parents." The life cycle is composed of different life stages that individuals enter and exit and these stages signal an individual's growth. In each life stage, for each person, there is a certain crisis which needs to be overcome in order for her to develop and move on to the next life stage. Erikson (1980:103-104) describes Adulthood and Mature Age, which I have conceptualised as 'middle age' in two parts. Firstly, it is a stage which concerns development towards 'Generativity', a stage that emphasises the individuals' need for parenthood or 'giving back' to society in some sense. Secondly, the individual needs to achieve 'Integrity', which means adapting oneself, at this stage in the life cycle, to one's triumphs and disappointments. If this is reached, he argues that the individual's personal development towards a healthy personality will be 'successful'. He propagates a specific life cycle, which is broken up into time periods, which predicts certain behaviour at certain stages and times in their lives. Bourdieu (1980:101) similarly argues that people are 'expected', by themselves and others, within their *habitus*, to act in certain ways at certain times in their lives.

The participants' 'choices' and behaviour over time, will be the point of focus here. Firstly, I shall look at their everyday roles, performed in the past and the present, and how these roles differ between the different participants, because of marital and family status. Constructions of guilt and value emerged in relation to the participants' roles within their family, work and community. Secondly, the focus is on the participants' present contentment – their happiness and regrets. This section investigates their view on their social and psychological development over time, and emphasises what they deem important at this stage of their life cycle.

## Everyday roles: Assessing guilt and value

In this first section, I focus on the everyday roles that the participants presently engage in or have previously engaged in. These roles are centred mainly on family, but also include career and community involvement. In all the roles the participants perform on a daily basis, they struggle with issues related to guilt and the assessment of their own value. The participants were asked to reflect on their present and past everyday roles in various institutions such as their family, work and community.

I didn't want to get married, because I was so independent... and he wanted to do research. I said I didn't want a nine-to-five husband and he didn't want a bimbo sitting at home... then I decided: 'Why not?' I come from a pastor's family, and oh, I always worked at the desert table, everyone always said that it doesn't suit me, but it was my community duty. (Participant D, 62, married)

Just mom, buying food, cooking... giving support... It's still like that.. .my son and his children still come home and mom has to fetch them at the airport... I'm still at home when my husband arrives at home, it's nice like that... yes, I wanted to stay at home, I only taught school for a year and six months before they went to school. I wanted to do most of the work. Of course there are days when you think, 'Ag vaderland [oh my gosh], I want to do my own thing'... it never even occurred to us; the children were just a part of our lives. (Participant W, 60, married)

Then it's making breakfast, sometimes I put the food on the table, sometimes they take for themselves... then I go walk the dogs... by that time I have almost forgotten to make food... but I will never completely stop working, because a woman never stops working. A part of a woman's work is running the household, so that work always remains, up until the day you go to the retirement resort. Then still, till you end up sick lying in some room, it remains your responsibility to do that work (Participant M, 56, married).

Participant D did not want an 'ordinary' life with an ordinary husband. She never wanted to get married, but decided that an unconventional husband, like the man she dated in high school, would be sufficient for an unconventional life. She says that she and her husband's everyday lives were very different from those of anyone else they knew, since they travelled a lot or her husband was abroad half of every month on work assignments. She says that the lifestyle they led prepared her to adapt to changes, especially when her children were grown up and had left home. She says that

she has always been 'friends' with her children, instead of necessarily just being a 'mom'. She remembers saying to her eldest child, when she was still a toddler: "This is the first time I'm raising an eldest child, you have to help me." Only participants D and H, from the group of married participants, said that they had not been completely behind the idea of getting married at a young age.

The five married participants got married in their early twenties and they all had more than one child. Participant W highlights her role as mother when she describes her everyday roles. She says that she was the one taking care of the children and that she and her friends never even thought of an alternative lifestyle. According to her, it never occurred to them and was not an option. It was the norm that the mother would stay home and take care of the children, while the husband was the breadwinner. Participant M focuses on the duties she performs daily as a mother, saying that she drives her daughter around to sports practice and school, puts out breakfast on the table every morning and performs most of the household chores throughout the day. She says that performing all of these tasks sometimes makes her forget to prepare dinner for her family in the evening.

Participant M believes that she will never stop working; she says that, as a woman, even if you stop working in paid formal employment, you will still have the responsibility of running the household until the day she goes to a retirement home. Once there, it will still be her duty to do certain household chores and take on certain roles as a woman and a wife. Participant D shared that she always worked at the pudding table at church bazaars, because she believed it was her duty as an active church member and as a pastor's daughter. Others always commented that working at the pudding table did not suit her personality. Clearly, there is an idea that certain activities or roles seem to apply to a certain individual because that individual is a 'woman', a female member of the community.

Participant W solely took care of the children during the day without ever questioning why she was the one to do this. She said that it was just the way things were done at that time. Participant W appeared frustrated talking about the times

when she had to care for the children, in their early years, all by herself. She argues that: “Of course there are days that you think, “Ag vaderland [oh my gosh], I want to do my own thing...” Similarly, Participant M says that sometimes her day is so busy that she even forgets to prepare dinner. She automatically assumes that she had the responsibility to prepare dinner, even though she confided in me that she hates cooking. Participants L and H agree:

I think in most cases it's like that: you are the one holding everything together... I was always the one making all the decisions... I'm also the one who takes them everywhere... I'm always the one who has to call, or who must ask or organise. Sometimes it feels like 'can't you all do anything for yourselves?' I sometimes get fed-up with the whole business. So, it feels like the mom... has to do everything... someone told me you are like a sandwich, at the top are your parents whom you must start to look after and at the bottom are your children whom you must care for and then you are the filling in the middle... (Participant L, 41, married)

Some days, it feels like, the older you get, the more you are on everyone's case, and I'm always busy telling everyone what to do. I see sometimes how much it irritates them, then I want to say 'Oh, then try to cope on your own'... Sometimes you feel like you want to remove yourself completely and you want to do your own thing. So, it's a difficult balance to know how much you can push your family to do things. Or should you just leave everyone alone and see how they fare? (Participant H, 52, married)

Participant L and H both see their 'mother' role as central to their families' everyday existence, organisation and operation. They both articulate that they have very active roles, especially logistically, because they undertake most of the responsibility of driving the children to certain places, calling and organising and remembering things their family members have to do. Participant L, who is currently forty-one years old, argues that at this stage of her life she feels like the filling that holds everything together in her family's life. Not only does she take care of her children, but also of her frail mother. Both participants L and H admit that their duties as mothers can, at times, become too much to handle and that they have felt like removing themselves, if only for a day, from their sometimes daunting and overwhelming responsibilities. These duties and responsibilities are, of course, not written in stone, but in the words

of Participant W, 'it never even occurred to us; the children were just a part of our lives'.

The five married participants fit into seemingly conventional ideas of family life: they got married relatively young, gave birth to two or more children and basically did most of the domestic work, in terms of having the responsibility of organising the household and looking after the children. The main responsibility of looking after the children did not only fall on the shoulders of these participants when the children were babies and toddlers, but it extended into the children's adolescence and student lives. According to Participants L and K, such responsibility has an impact on how they value their personal worth, mainly because they have performed their role as mother for such a long period of time. They discussed the ambivalent feelings they experienced when they think about their children leaving the home.

You know, I can already see now with my eldest son who finished school now, that you start to feel a little bit unnecessary, you feel like people don't need you so much anymore... you are being pushed more to the sidelines... not at work; here everything is still just going on, but at the moment at home it's definitely like that... your nurturing role is not so much there anymore... I think now that they rather now come to you for advice, 'Mom, what do you think I should do?'... On the other hand, you start to have more freedom, because you can do more of what you want. My husband and I will do more things that we want for ourselves, so it's a mixed feeling... (Participant L, 41, married)

Yes, I have to say I observed my mother; she was very traumatised, because she was a housewife. Her children were her life. So early on I realised... that I had to keep my career going. That would take away a lot of that trauma... now I don't feel guilty...I can practise my career to the fullest... now I really enjoy it when they come and visit. (Participant K, 48, divorced)

Participant L asserts that she has more freedom, now that her eldest son has left school, and time to engage in activities she and her husband have always wanted to do. Nonetheless, she feels that her value has declined in some way because of this change. As grown-ups, her children do not 'need' her as much anymore, and she is starting to feel sidelined. Participant K says she first noticed this feeling that 'mothers' get when her mother was really traumatised after she and her siblings had left home.



She decided that she wanted to keep her career, despite having children, so that she would not be as traumatised when her children left home. Similar to Participant L, Participant K is now starting to enjoy her freedom, given that her children have left home. She says that she can enjoy her career, which takes up much of her time, without feeling *guilty* that she is not at home taking care of the children. Participant K addresses these issues of assessing guilt and value when she cites her reasons for getting divorced, and her thoughts on many other women her age who have or are getting divorced:

In our age group there are so many women who are divorced...and we arrived at the conclusion that we come from a time where our mothers were housewives and our fathers were the breadwinners. The father was an excellent breadwinner, and at the same time, the mother was an excellent housewife. Then came an economic period when women started to work. So we tried to be such good breadwinners as our fathers, but also as good a housewife as our mothers. In general, our husbands thought that they were helping, but they really didn't. They would play with the children for an hour in the evenings when they came home... but they wouldn't really do half of the work... not like men today who also iron and do some housework... You worked so hard, like a machine... you did all of that and had a career... you had so much pressure on you, that you didn't have a lot of time to spend on your relationship (Participant K, 48, divorced).

Participant K's emphasis is on the conventional gender roles that she and women her age group have performed and participated in over the years. In particular, she focuses on married women. She sketches many images of male and female gender roles and situates herself and women her age within a specific paradigm. This paradigm describes conventional gender relations within patriarchal societies. Within this paradigm, or *habitus*, she learned how to behave 'correctly' and which roles are gender-specific within this paradigm. She observed the way her parents acted, and inferred that the man was the breadwinner and the woman was the housewife. According to her, these were roles which they performed very successfully. She says that, drawing on these roles, women of her generation entered the labour market with the expectation to perform both conventional gender roles simultaneously – to be the good housewife and a successful breadwinner. The men, however, were only

expected to be the successful breadwinner and had no added pressure to excel or engage in other household or child-rearing responsibilities at this stage of their life cycle.

According to Participant K, it was not easy to excel at being a good housewife and being a breadwinner, while still having to work on a relationship with your husband. She argues that the pressure of doing everything at home, like cooking, washing, playing with the children and having a full-time career, was nothing compared to the one hour her husband played with their children when he came home from work. Participant K says that there was a lot of pressure on women of her generation during this life stage, but she sees a change in the gender roles developing with couples today. She observes that men today are doing a lot more to contribute to domestic tasks than they ever did in the past. Participant A talks about her age and the life stage she has reached and says that her experience of this life stage is different from married women, in that she lives alone and does not have any children:

You know, I have a lot of friends who have never been married, and we have the same kind of conversations, whereas married people have different conversations altogether, because they have children and so forth...Married women are just different, I won't be able to talk to them about children, because I don't have any, I have a cat... (Participant A, 61, single)

Participant A noted that single women are different from married women, in her case she argues it is because she does not have children, like she believes most married women do, and she lives alone. She argues that married women predominantly talk about their children, which is something she does not know how to relate to. Participants A and R, who are both single, spoke mostly about their value in terms of community and work-related involvement. Participant R focused a lot on her worth in terms of her work. She said that her work gives her a sense of purpose and value. Her colleagues and her work in general are the focal points of her life, since she does not have a family or many friends outside of work. Participant A is retired, and mentioned her small role in the church, which she said makes her feel important and gives her the sense that she is still valuable. Besides the church, she said that she does not really

perform any other role in the community. Since these two participants have no children or husband, and most members of their extended family have passed on, they focus on roles other than that of family. The single participants do not have the same frame of reference as the married and divorced participants and find other role central to their lives at this point in their life cycle.

The issue of *guilt* was raised quite frequently during interviews, especially with the five married participants who have children. The divorced woman, Participant K, also spoke of some feelings of guilt she had, like working in formal employment while having younger children. These feelings were usually expressed when the women talked about their duties as mothers, wives or as members of the community. They would feel guilty that they forgot to cook for their family, that they worked while the children were small, that they did not handle work at home and at the workplace as well as they should, or that they did not do enough for the community. Participant D, who did not want to get married and live a conventional life, says that her role was rather that of friend, as opposed to mother. She followed a different trajectory in terms of lifestyle, compared to the other married participants. However, she was the main caretaker of the children, while her husband was away on work.

Erikson (1980:103) argues that during the 'middle age' stage in the life cycle, an individual needs to achieve 'Generativity' in order to develop 'successfully' and find contentment and 'Integrity'. According to him, the individual has to 'put something back into the world' or guide the next generation, in order to reach 'Generativity'. This occurs usually by either raising children or creating and producing knowledge through the work you do. The five married participants and one divorced participant achieved 'Generativity', because they raised children, whereas the single participants found their 'Generativity' mainly through their work or community involvement. Many of the married participants measure their value in terms of their family roles, since they mostly focused on their families, which often lead to feelings of guilt or ambivalence. Many participants argued that they felt guilty when they did not perform certain roles, like cooking or being there for their children full-time. Some participants had

ambiguous feelings when their children left school or home permanently, saying that they felt more free, but also less valued.

Most of the married participants have reached 'Generativity', as Erikson would suggest, because they all had children. Their 'Generativity', however, entails issues of gender role performance within their specific *habitus*<sup>9</sup>. Even though these participants are married, the responsibility for most of the household tasks as well as rearing the children fell on their shoulders. The five married participants and one divorced participant have reached 'Generativity' in a different way than their husbands. Their husbands spend less time on domestic tasks and their 'Generativity' is often reached through work. Consequently, the married participants' development towards 'Generativity' within their *habitus*, becomes highly gendered. Just because the single participants did not have any children, does not situate them in a different *habitus*: as their ideas about conventional gender roles in regard to 'regrets' will show later in this chapter.

Johnson and Williamson (1980:67; 71) argue that interpretations of the meaning of 'work' have predominantly been influenced by sex/gender roles. According to them, conventional work roles place the man in paid formal employment as the breadwinner of the family, while a woman is usually identified with the family and the organisation of the household. The woman's household activities can be interpreted as unpaid informal employment. Often when women work outside the home in formal employment, their retirement is valued as less significant as their husband's, since it is commonly assumed that after she retires, she will return to her 'primary' role, which mainly includes domestic work. They argue that even as women started to work outside the home in formal employment, their role was still viewed as supplementary to their familial duties, while formal employment was seen as central to a man's identity.

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<sup>9</sup> Pierre Bourdieu (1977)

Women often leave formal paid employment when they have children and return to part-time employment while their children grow up (Arber, Davidson & Ginn 2003:3). Many of the married participants claimed that they performed the central role in their children's lives while simultaneously organising the household, whereas their husbands worked in full-time formal paid employment. Many of the married participants stopped working after they had children and later returned to work, often part-time, when their children had become less dependent. They said that they did not ever question their role as mother or wife. Even those who did question conventional living, like Participant D, ended up looking after the children, more so than their husbands.

Johnson and Williamson (1980:87) assert that throughout history, women have been deemed 'more valuable' if they had a husband and could bear children. They were viewed as less of a threat to the social order, an order usually dominated by men, if they conformed to these views. Rubin (1975:165) argues that the sex/gender system is responsible for arranging biological sexuality into commodities of human activity, for example those born with a vagina. According to her, the sex/gender system is society-specific, and every society's biological commodities (humans) are transformed by social intervention into gendered individuals. The sex/gender system produces gender, which also leads to the division of labour and patriarchy, based on the society's stratification of gender and sex roles.

Every society also has a sex/gender system – a set of arrangements by which the biologically raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner, no matter how bizarre some of the conventions may be. (ibid.)

Rubin (1975:168; 178) argues that the division of labour by sex or gender is a taboo. This taboo classifies men and women as separate categories – a classification that reinforces a biological distinction and constructs gender. All societies deal with sex and gender in different ways and the sex/gender system is the product of the way in which a society organises its sex and gender roles. Patriarchal societies imply the

dominance of men over women in most of the organising sectors of the society. Patriarchy and the division of labour are thus considerable influences on the formation of gender and sex role hierarchies in societies.

Morgan (1991:32-34) says that women are constantly regulated by the social order of patriarchal societies to conform to narrow gender roles, such as being a mother and a wife. In certain contexts or *habitus*, gender roles become 'fixed' and predetermined roles are presupposed of a specific gender. According to Butler (1990:25-30), fixed gender roles are acts of *performativity*. She argues that gender is a fabrication always inscribed on the body, the product of a discourse that is derived from 'stable bodily contours' or bodily identities that are seen to be primary and fixed. The participants in this study, as individual performers, are influenced in the way they experience their psychological and social ageing by their *habitus* that has always gendered them in specific ways. This gendering becomes normal to the body over time, since it is practised repeatedly. Because of this ritualised process, the body does not realise its own gendering or its gendering of other bodies, making everyone a part of the heterosexual scheme that constitutes the 'male gaze' discussed by Mulvey (1990:33). Bodies perform their gendering over and over and thus constitute themselves as *always-already* gendered bodies.

Women's experience of ageing can reflect their psychological and historical circumstances (Moen et al., 1992:1614). Women of every age, race and class reflect the characteristics they learned in their unique *habitus*. Expected sex/gender roles are inscribed in these *habitus* and determine certain trajectories for women. Arber et al. (2003:4-5) state that specific roles and behaviour are learned in specific contexts (*habitus*) and that the process of 'doing gender' is a daily act realised and reproduced through social interaction.

The participants are of the same race, class, gender and all speak the same language. That is not to say, however, that these characteristics confine them to set forms of behaviour. Following Steyn's (2005:25) argument that white South Africans often associate with forms of diasporic whiteness, especially by the way they speak,

one can argue that this group's *habitus* is shaped by many of these Western ideas and by patriarchal discourse. These Western ideals were also noted in Chapter 4 in a discussion of the participants' views on beauty norms and the body. The way in which gender roles are appropriated amongst these couples situates them in a patriarchal society or *habitus*, as Rubin (1975: 178) suggests above, since they mainly perform very conventional 'female' gender roles in their families.

The pressure of performing gender specific role can definitely be recognised when looking at the participants who are married/ divorced, and have children. Many of the participants feel that they are the ones holding everything together in their family's lives. Conventional standards relating to gender roles in a family have pressured these married and divorced participants to value themselves accordingly at this certain time in their life cycles. They feel guilty when they do not fulfil their 'duties' as mothers, wives and female members of the community, and this guilt makes them assess their value in a negative light, deeming themselves 'not good enough' as women, because conventional standards, situated in the discourse their *habitus* adheres to, determine their roles based only on their gender.

### **Timely contentment: Towards self-actualisation**

This subsection looks specifically at the participants' view of their level of contentment at this point in their life cycle, as it relates to Erikson's 'Integrity' life stage. Firstly, I investigate their level of happiness with themselves and their lives as they reflect on their psychological and social development over time. Secondly, I examine their level of contentment as it relates to the regrets they have when reminiscing about the choices they made in the past that concern their family lives and career. Their level of contentment at this stage of their life cycle will determine their development towards what Horney (1950) calls *self-actualisation*, or the 'letting go' of neurotic needs. Horney (1950) and Erikson (1980) have both focused on the importance of self-actualisation during the middle aged stage of the life cycle in order to develop

‘successfully’. Self-actualisation is perceived as vital during the middle aged life stage, since it allows the participants to develop sufficiently towards ‘Integrity’ and avoid falling into ‘Despair’.

### *Reaching happiness*

I asked the participants about their levels of happiness and whether they consider themselves satisfied with their lives and the choices they have made up to this point. Time naturally played an important role in their answers, as the participants considered their past, present and future happiness.

Where I am now in my life, I have a happy life, I have enough money, I’m not divorced, my children are doing okay, so I can imagine there are a lot of people that have a really hard time at this age – if you aren’t financially stable, you’re divorced, you are on your own, your children give you trouble... I think a lot of women in our age group... aren’t content, because they worry about their children (Participant H, 52, married).

She imagines that other women in her age group, who are not married, who do not have enough money or whose children give them problems find it difficult to have the same feelings of happiness and contentment that she has. In a way, she conceptualises what a ‘happy life’ is and what ingredients one needs to reach that level of contentment. These ingredients are very conventional and include money, a husband and well-adjusted children as part of a successful life. Participant W echoed these sentiments when she said that she is very happy about the fact that she has never been divorced, and considers it a very isolated and depressing situation. Many of the participants referred to the past when they talked about their current social interactions with people, how these interactions affect their happiness, and how they have changed over time. When the women were asked about their current social lives, and to compare them to the past, the two single participants and the one divorced participant revealed that they lacked self-confidence when they were young. As a result, they did not speak to or interact with people as much as they do now. Their



self-confidence has improved over the years and they have learned to form relationships and communicate with others. Participant K feels that over time she has become more extroverted and confident to talk and build relationships with people, as does Participant R:

I think I'm a bit more open and I can talk more easily with people, and I have more self-confidence than before, I went out much less in my twenties... you become content with who you are and become easier to talk to..(Participant R, 42, single).

Now, I am much more social. When I was young, I was much more introverted... and for some reason very self-conscious, so with age you become less self-conscious, you have more self-confidence... No, no, I'd say it's better than before. Very few things upset me; a divorce makes you very tough. There is a way out of everything... you are a lot less nervous, and you don't easily think that the world is going to collapse around you... you have lived through so many things... it's an easy part, this. (Participant K, 48, divorced).

I am a much more interesting person now than I was in my twenties... and I am also not that angry at life anymore... I was very angry at the world when I was younger... I was angry about things I thought shouldn't be the way they were, angry because my parents were so much older than me and they couldn't do young things with me... angry because I didn't have many friends... but age can be liberating... (Participant A, 61, single)

Participant A says that she had very little confidence when she was younger, because she was overweight. Her 'hang-ups' prevented her from studying at a university and from being social, because she was too shy to be around many other people. She now feels that over time she has gained confidence and has become relaxed. She finds ageing very liberating and is now able to enjoy herself socially more than before. Participants A and K especially focused on their anger and nervousness when they were younger, things which they said have become easier to deal with as they grew older. According to Participant A and K, they were very unstable during their youth, especially in terms of their psychological happiness and satisfaction with their lives. They emphasise that now they feel like they can deal with much more than they could in the past, mainly because of the way they have developed as a result of their

experiences. Overall, the unmarried participants feel that they are much more social and self-confident now compared to their twenties, when they were hardly social. The married participants seemed to have a very different trajectory in terms of their current social lives compared to before. Unlike the three unmarried participants, many of the married participants said that they were currently much less social than they were when they were younger. Many commented that, when they were younger and their children were small, they tended to socialise a lot with other couples who also had small children.

I became much more anti-social... I think it's an age thing, because when we were younger, around thirty, we always went to friends over weekends... every weekend... you're not angry at anyone, you just aren't feeling up to it... you don't feel like putting the effort in anymore... I just wanted to sit and relax... (Participant L, 41, married)

Before I was married I was very social... after we got married, our friends were mostly married couples... over the years, you definitely have less friends.. you have to put the effort in if you want to keep your friends... I'm always up for it [socialising], but my husband sometimes looks for excuses... time is often an issue. (Participant H, 52, married)

Their social interaction with others, according to Participant M and W, started to fade as soon as their children grew older. Participant H says that a lot more effort has to be put in at this stage of her life, when she is trying to keep friends she had before, since she feels that she only wants to spend time with her family. Participant L says that at the end of the week, because she has so much to do, she only wants to relax at home with her family. She does not feel as motivated to socialise as she did in the past. All the married participants spoke about friends they have now or had before or friends they had lost, because they neglected to keep in touch. None of the married participants spoke of making new friends or trying to establish new relationships with people. Many reported being too tired or lazy to keep in touch with their friends. The divorced and single participants did, however, say that they enjoy establishing new bonds with people and that their social interactions have escalated as they grew older. This is something that appeared to be very important to the unmarried participants

and significantly affected their levels of confidence and happiness. Participants M and A experience happiness as something they choose to practise daily. They argue that living for the future will not bring them any kind of happiness or satisfaction with their lives, since it turns the present day into a waste.

If you are going to live for 'one day...', then you'll never be happy... then you have wasted today... (Participant M, 56, married)

I made the mistake of living for 'one day...'... I always said when I get married and have children.. .then I'll bake those cookies.. .but it's all choices... you have to choose to be happy... you must choose to be content. Since I've retired, it's very comfortable, because you are settled... now you can say 'no' when you don't want to do something... age is liberating... since you don't have to do something, you can choose... and I choose to go with the group. (Participant A, 61, single)

I won't say one phase of my life was better than the other... you become content later on. You are happy with what you have... (Participant W, 60, married)

Participant W says that happiness is something she has not experienced more in one stage of her life than in another. There is a sense of contentment, which, she argues, she reached at a certain point in life and this contentment has stayed with her. She feels that one becomes content with oneself and with one's possessions or circumstances. This contentment translates into a kind of satisfaction that she feels with herself and her life on a daily basis.

These participants spoke of the *choice* of happiness which one needs to make, consciously or unconsciously, at a certain point in life in order to feel content with oneself and the life one has lived up to that point. The majority of this group followed this train of thought, since many of them echoed a sense of contentment with their lives and with themselves at this moment in time. Participants D and L both emphasised the fact that, as time passes, one's attitudes towards certain issues in life need to change in order to reach a sense of happiness.

I sorted out all the rocks: those who supported you stay behind and those who use you are thrown out. We are now a crowd of buddies that hang out together... All the hang-ups that you had... I am very unsympathetic with people who walk around, who are sixty years old and say 'I am an orphan'... get real man, no... when you are thirty, you have to deal with all that stuff, otherwise you will never deal with it. (Participant D, 62, married)

Now I feel very mature, and I think I have found myself. I know exactly what I like and what I don't like. I will tell someone 'no'... you don't have to always please everyone anymore... you now have that independence that has developed... I think now I have become used to the fact that the deeper side of you has become stronger than your feelings about your body... (Participant L, 41, married)

Participant D says that you need to let go of the issues that haunted you in your youth and let them go before it is too late. She says that once you reach a certain point in your life and you have not confronted certain issues, then you will never be happy. In a similar vein, Participant L says that she was always fixated on her body as her most important asset, but says that as time has passed, she has come to value her deeper, more independent side. This side is the part of her being she now feels is her strongest asset. Now she can say 'no' to something she does not want to do more easily than she could before. This is an ability Participant A also alluded to when she spoke of her social and psychological development over time. These three participants have become less dependent on others' opinions, especially in terms of their abilities and the choices they make. They have become more confident and trusting of themselves as they have gathered more life experience. Participant K argues that as she has grown older she feels that she is not only losing her youthful appearance, but that because of this loss, she defines herself and others around her differently. She argues that because she cannot rely so much on her appearance anymore, she started to make a mind shift and now feels almost less feminine.

You realise, ok, it's now going to be lost [your appearance], but your wisdom and insight, working abilities and relationships will provide you with you a meaningful life. So, you lose one thing, but gain something else. But it's difficult to get used to the idea... I don't know if maybe you feel like you are losing a part of your femininity, and you just become more 'human'. More neutral... so you move to a phase where you are a more effective or interesting... person, but you are less defined as a man or a woman. (Participant K, 48, divorced)

This is not necessarily a bad thing for her, since she finds herself more interesting and effective at this age. She says that women are always defined in terms of their sexuality and with age, women become less feminine and become more 'human' in a way. She argues that her appearance, the feature that often defines a woman, starts to deteriorate as she gets older, and that this deterioration allows for the 'social' and 'psychological' person that is hidden and almost forgotten to surface. She insists that she now feels less defined in terms of her sexuality and better defined in terms of her psychological and social abilities, which she has learned to value.

### *Questioning the 'What if?'*

In this part of the chapter, I address the participants' regrets, in order to further explore their psychological and social development towards self-actualisation at this point in their life cycle. I explore notions of 'what if?' and look at the participants' longing for different universes, or lives they could have existed in or could have lived, if they had made different choices. Their regrets relate to time past and opportunities that they wish they had seized, which consequently affect their current feelings of contentment. All the women, except for Participant M, spoke about moments in their lives where they felt they made the wrong choice, consciously or unconsciously.

You have regrets about relationships... you realise you could have handled this or that differently. One of my boyfriends at university wanted to marry me, but I was too immature at that stage and I didn't want to get married and settle down, because I was only twenty years old. Afterwards, I realised he would have been a real soul mate for me... but I got a good husband in the end. So you think about how it would have been... your whole life has situations like this 'what if?' (Participant H, 52, married)

No, there is nothing that I would have done differently, I'm a contented person (Participant M, 56, married).

There are two opposite points of view here: while Participant H regrets many of the decisions she has made, Participant M is perfectly content with her life at this stage. Many of the participants, however, argue that today they would have made the opposite decision, in many respects, of what they had decided in the past. Participant H argues that the 'what if?' question bothers her now much more than ever before, as she assesses her life and her state of happiness. She says that she still wonders whether her university boyfriend, who wanted to marry her when they were very young, would have been a better soul mate for her. She asserts that she ultimately found a 'good husband', but that the question of 'what could have been?' still haunts her. These kinds of questions seem to trouble many of the participants in this study in different ways. Participants A and R are single and have never been married, nor do they have children or any extended family. Their main regrets relate to ideas of conventional living, which includes getting married and having children.

My parents, because I looked after them ever since I was sixteen, they were very weak... there was that whole generation gap and at a certain stage, actually still today, it bothers me that I missed out... I missed the husband and the children and the whole business that I didn't do... is this all that I'm here for? Those kinds of questions, that's what I wonder about sometimes... what would have been? ... now I am halfway and what about the other half? Then you think about when are you going to leave this earth... then you realise 'No, man! Not yet.' (Participant R, 42, single).

Um, I regret that I never went to study... I regret that there are certain experiences that I never had, like being married, like having a child... I regret that. But you can't fixate on those things... this is just the way it is. (Participant A, 61, single)

Participant R had to take care of her sick, weak parents for most of her young life and feels that she missed out on the life she thought she should have, a life where she was married and had children. She feels that she still has hope for the future and the possibilities it will bring, but is also scared to be alone for the rest of her life. She says that she finds herself thinking about the future and she hopes her happiness or life

satisfaction will still arrive. She speaks of the negative feelings she had at the age of forty, when she thought about the possibilities that she still had left, as well as the life that she lived up to that point. Similarly, Participant A regrets not getting married and having a child. None of the five married or divorced participants, who have children and have/had a husband, said they regretted marriage or having children. It seems like the single participants feel dissatisfied, because they did not have these experiences, including a husband and children.

Some of the married participants also regret not having certain experiences, but because they have rather conventional family lives, they instead yearn for the unconventional. Participant L got married and had children in her early twenties; she regrets not having more of a young person's life – a life stage she considers to be carefree and fun. Because she got married so early, she feels that she missed out on the lifestyle a lot of young people have:

Yes, I feel like I missed out a little bit on that time between twenty and twenty-five... but, on the other hand, I am very grateful for my children... I would have rather married later, because what I missed in my young life was that part between studying and living independently in an apartment... I have this idea of *FRIENDS* [the television series] in my head... you work but you have a fun lifestyle... you don't have all those responsibilities of motherhood and married life yet... so that's all, I have also told my husband about it, so he knows... (Participant L, 41, married)

I will always regret that I lost some part of my youth as a young girl, because of my upbringing... (Participant K, 48, divorced)

Participant L pictures this stage as a time when one should be carefree, which is very different to her experience, because she had a lot of responsibilities at this stage of her life. She adds that she has even told her husband about this regret. Similarly, Participant K feels that her youth lacked this freedom and carefree lifestyle. She says that her upbringing was exceptionally conservative and that she never really had the opportunity to be 'young'. Other regrets that were voiced included participants specifically regretting not practising a specific career or job:

I am very happy I am now at a point where I can say I have the career I was born for. I was very unhappily married... I would like to be happily married just once in my life (Participant K, 48, divorced).

Um, not really, I probably would have wanted to do a different kind of job, something creative... but you never know at this stage if you should start something new, if you'll find a job again... if you are over forty, you struggle to find new work, so, it's a problem (Participant R, 42, single).

I would have wanted to do a different job, maybe... maybe in nursing... but in any case, I can look forwards to when my husband retires one day, and we'll enjoy our leisure... no, in our time you only had two choices: teaching or nursing (Participant W, 60, married).

Participant K was a teacher for most of her career life, but now finds that she can finally follow the career she always wanted follow, being a pastor. Participant R emphasises that after turning forty, it becomes increasingly difficult to start a new career, since many businesses want to employ younger people. She says that she really regrets not having had a better and more creative job, but finds it too difficult to leave her job to start something new, since she has become very dependent on her monthly wages. Participant W argues that when she was a young woman, there were only two professions women could choose from: teaching and nursing. She decided to become a teacher, but later regretted not training to become a nurse. She says that it does not bother her all that much, because when her husband retires she will be able to spend time with him.

In order to achieve Erikson's 'Integrity', during the 'old age' life stage, one needs to be at peace with one's accomplishments. Failing to feel content with past experiences and accomplishments, one tends to fall into 'Despair'. At this stage, Erikson argues that people wish they could redo parts of their lives or could seize wasted opportunities. Horney's (1950:158) theory of neurosis is particularly useful here, since she argues that the 'self', during middle and old age, needs to let go of any regrets from the past in order to develop successfully and feel content. The 'self' needs to let go of its neurosis in order to achieve self-actualisation and be happy. Horney and Erikson both argue that self-actualisation needs to be reached during



middle to old age in order for individuals to obtain 'Integrity' and 'Generativity'. The theory of neurosis states that one has many needs, such as the need for personal achievement. When these needs are not met, it is easy for individuals to succumb to 'Stagnation' or 'Despair'.

For Participant H, a happy life is a 'conventional life' – one with children, enough money and a husband. The single participants also appear to regret not having experienced this conventional life, especially Participant R who had to look after her frail parents for most of her early adult life. Arber et al. (2003:5) argue that women carry out most forms of informal care for family members, and Moen et al. (1992:1616) support this claim, stating that when an unexpected, restrictive responsibility appears and limits one's participation in other activities, there can be a lot of strain on one's happiness.

The participants are now at a stage in their lives where they reflect on various things that they did or neglected to do. The element of choice plays a very important part. A conventional, 'normal' life seems to be the kind of life to which all of the participants aspire, no matter what their current marital status. The single participants regret not having a conventional life, with a husband and children, while some of the married participants regret getting married too young (or not to the right person), or regret that they did not have certain experiences or jobs because of their family or the choices available to them. Many of the participants felt that their experiences in the past have made it easier for them to deal with issues in the present.

The single participants noted that they were very self-conscious when they were younger and that over time, with the benefit of experience, they have become much more confident and independent. The single and divorced participants' feelings of happiness and satisfaction were very much affected and enhanced by their current social relationships, whereas many of the married participants did not list their current relationships with friends as something that enhances their current levels of happiness. In the case of these married participants, they listed their family as the major source of their happiness.

Moen et al. (1992:1613-1615) argue that the occupation of multiple roles during adulthood and later life increases longevity and promotes health. In later adulthood, role reduction, as opposed to role accumulation, is often the trend. The accumulation of roles is often interlinked with social integration. These authors agree that it is critically important to look at women's social integration in conjunction with their family status and their responsibilities within that sphere, since this integration often impacts on their level of satisfaction. Arber et al. (2003:150) say that people's ability to make social bonds with others in later life is often linked to their marital status and marital resources. Making social links and bonds with family and friends can have a substantial impact on a person's emotional well-being.

Most of the participants said that they felt content with most of their choices, but that there will always be the question of a life they imagine could be much better, begging the question: 'what if?' It emerges that the participants aspire to experience different universes or realities, in order to see what their lives could have been like. Most of the participants wish that they had had some different experiences and that they would have chosen different lifestyles, jobs, husbands, and so on, at certain times in their life cycle.

The idea is established that the participants feel that they *should* have certain experiences at certain times during their life cycle, in order to be happy and content. Even though most of the participants now feel that they have reached a stage in their lives where they feel content, they admit that they do have certain regrets, which bother them now more than earlier in their lives. De Beauvoir (1972:362; 450) argues that existing means 'existing in time'. Age changes people's relationship to time. As they age, their future concludes and their past starts to weigh heavily on their minds.

For some for-itselfs, on the contrary, their project implies the refusal of time and an intimate solidarity with the past. This applies to most old people: they refuse time because they do not wish to decline; they define their former I as that which they still are – they assert their solidarity with their youth. Even if they have overcome the identification-crisis and have accepted a new image of themselves... each in his heart preserves the conviction of having remained unalterable: when they summon their memories they justify this assertion. They set up a fixed, unchanging essence against the deterioration of age, and tirelessly they tell stories of this being that they were, this being that lives on inside them. (De Beauvoir, 1972:362)

Accordingly, she asserts that those who are considered to be ‘old’ bodies love to recollect the past, since they live more by memory than by hope. They experience an intimate solidarity with time; they still view themselves, even though they recognise that they are ‘old’, as similar to the way they were in their youth. Using memory, they justify this assertion. She argues that as one grows older, everything, including the present, represents something ‘recalled’: one compares and reacts according to the experiences one has had in the past. The present is identified and understood in the light of past experiences. She states that when you are young, time seems endless and the future infinite. You escape from time, because time seems to be at your disposal. As one grows older and time in the future becomes limited, one starts to reflect and rely on the past in the present. Therefore, in order to fully feel content, one must accept one’s ageing in its entirety – physically, psychologically and socially.

There is a strong link between this group’s *habitus* and the way they have developed psychologically and socially. Bourdieu (1990:101) argues that within the functioning of every *habitus* there is a certain logical way in which certain practices are realised and employed. The choice to employ certain practices is often made under pressure in response to similar choices that obey similar logic. Therefore, choices made at certain times and situations are not completely voluntary, since the pressures of what is the expected choice and logical practice within a certain *habitus* *always-already* interpellate individuals. This interpellation is a consequence of the discourse which their specific *habitus* is a part of.

## Conclusion

The participants settle or have settled in certain roles, such as mother, wife or single working woman. These roles are often gender-specific and derive from the patriarchal discourse in which they are situated. This discourse determines certain acceptable conventional gender roles, which became evident in the participants' narratives. When the participants step outside of their *always-already* gendered roles, for example their 'responsibilities' to cook or take care of the children, *guilt* and questions of their own value start to surface. These roles are what define their body and its purpose within their *habitus* which has repeatedly gendered them and their experience of their body.

This *habitus* exists in time and place, which can relate to this group's race, class, age, language, etc. Bourdieu (1990:101) argues that time is broken up into fragments, and one has to make certain choices at certain times in order to be content and self-actualise. In their *habitus*, time prescribes certain choices at certain times in their life cycle. When certain choices are not made at certain times in their lives, they have regrets and cannot reach self-actualisation. The choice that was 'expected' was not made. With time, most of the participants argue that they have either become more self-confident, social and independent, or that they have chosen to become content and let go of their 'hang-ups', or that they have become more of a social and psychological body, as opposed to a physical body. Time has also brought regrets which derive from their *habitus'* gendered interpellation of them as subjects, and this interpellation has led the single and married women to either yearn for or sustain conventional lifestyles. Within their *habitus*, they have not had many opportunities for different careers and have often valued family obligations above their careers.

Their level of 'contentment' is a product of their view of time within their *habitus*. They fantasise about the idea of a different universe because it sometimes falls outside their realm of what's possible within their *habitus*. In order for the participants to self-actualise and reach full contentment with their lives, during the middle aged life stage, as Horney (1950:158) suggests, they have to recognise that

they have made certain choices because of the way they have always been interpellated to do so by a discourse followed within their *habitus*. Once they accept this, they can try to make different choices in the future, which might result in fewer regrets. This, of course is very difficult, since a body is constantly shaped by a specific *habitus* and the dominant discourse that it follows.

The next chapter will deal with the participants' thoughts on their current and future life stages, as they think through issues of leisure, retirement and care in later life.

## Chapter 6: Towards later life: Leisure, retirement and care

### Introduction

In this chapter the focus is on the participants' views on leisure, retirement and care as they consider later life. Firstly, the emphasis is on the leisure activities the participants are currently practising or which they still want to engage in when they retire. These activities increase mainly because the participants now have fewer responsibilities and more time: their children have left home or they themselves have retired or work less. The participants have different views on the meaning of retirement, either linking it to being 'old' and isolated or relaxed and having more freedom. For the participants, the leisurely activities they 'choose' to engage in are not only related to time, but also convey hidden issues relating to class hierarchies. Secondly, this chapter will focus on this group's construction of later life as a stage to be feared, mainly because of the burden they might be to others who would have to care for them.

### Retirement: 'Old' or at leisure?

Participants L, K, H and R are still formally employed full-time, while Participants A, D and M are employed part-time. Participant W is the only participant who has fully retired from any paid employment. Most of the participants argue that they currently have much more 'free' time than when they had full-time jobs. They now have the time to do more (and different) activities or engage in activities at a more leisurely pace than they could before, when they were either working full-time or had children living at home. The participants spoke about *retirement* and *leisure* as if it was a known and acceptable concept. Participant K in particular noted that retirement is something normal, but something she might not be able to engage in:

I think many women our age are very poorly prepared to handle our finances. I think many of us hoped our husbands would do it... my husband allowed all my policies to expire behind my back... so, I have a big crisis, I have to work until I am seventy. I have financial plans now... but I can't afford to retire now... it's made me look after my health better, because I know I still have many years left... (Participant K, 48, divorced)

Participant K relied on her husband to secure their financial future together, which would have allowed her to retire at around sixty-five years of age, 'when most people retire'. She views retirement as a normal practice, but one she would not be able to engage in, because of her limited financial position. The participants were asked about their current leisure activities and how they felt about the idea of retiring or, if they had already retired, how they experienced it.

Oh, what I have time for now, are things that ten years ago I wouldn't have been able to do: going to art exhibitions in town, or when my husband is away I'll go listen to the symphony orchestra, just on my own. So yes, it's really a time thing. (Participant M, 56, married)

Participant M says that she now has the time to engage in activities she never had time for in the past, since she is no longer employed as a full-time teacher. She made the issue of time very prominent when she thought about her life and all her current activities. She now has the time to do everything at a slower pace, for example grocery shopping or other daily household chores, which she feels she had to rush in the past. She now has the time, even though she says she will never completely retire from her part-time job, to do the things she never had time for but always wanted to do, like going to a symphony orchestra performance or an art exhibition. Most of the other participants also talked about their current life stage as a more leisurely, relaxing time. Some of the participants' children have left home or they have decreased their employment from full-time to part-time employment, which allows them the opportunity to enjoy certain forms of leisure they never had time for in the past. Other participants also relate some of the activities they now have time for:

I also started reading, I never really read... I joined the library and now I read, and now it starts to be fun. I am discovering all kinds of things in the library. (Participant A, 61, single)

I feel like I try to read more, and I can read more now; I sleep more than when the children were at school, and more than when I taught school. It's about time; now I have time to read the newspaper... (Participant M, 56, married)

It's just once a month (the book club). We don't care a lot about the book we had read, but there is cheese and wine... that was a precondition, no tea... and tennis, that's a hobby of mine; I work in my garden... and I paint a little bit. I also like to cook. (Participant W, 60, married)

I am busy doing research about my grandfather's life; he was a very special man... and then I want to do a project on architecture... I am so afraid that I'll die. I am so scared; there are so many things that I still want to do... (Participant D, 62, married)

I started studying theology... (Participant K, 48, divorced)

Participant A says that she never really read a lot of fiction books in the past. Being employed part-time, she has much more time at her disposal, so she joined the library and now enjoys reading. Participant M also emphasises the amount of time she now has, using it specifically to read more. Participant W talks about her hobbies and focuses on the book club she and her friends started. She admits that the club is more about socialising and enjoying the cheese and wine than the books. Her other hobbies include painting, gardening and cooking. Participant D says that she is currently retired from formal employment and is doing research on her grandfathers' life, which she plans to turn into a book. When this is completed she wants to do a project on historical architecture, which she says is her passion. For her, death is a very scary concept, since she feels that she still wants to complete many projects. She is afraid that she will die before completing them all. Participant K is still working full-time, but has decided to study her real passion on the side, that is theology. She is able to do so, since her children have left home and she now has more time to focus on her new profession.



What emerged were the participants' ideas of leisure at a time in their life cycle when they are semi-retired or fully retired. They are now, or will be as they retire, able to live more leisurely and are able to practise certain hobbies, projects and studies. Participant H, who is still working full-time and still has her children living at home, expressed her thoughts on her future leisure plans during retirement:

I think when my children leave home, then I'll find other things to do. Then I definitely won't be working anymore, so I think my husband and I will travel more and we'll build ourselves a house in the Klein Karoo... maybe walk more, do things in nature, so when I imagine the future... I can definitely see us doing active things. (Participant H, 52, married)

She says that when she retires and her children leave home, she imagines her and her husband doing many leisurely activities such as travelling and hiking. Whether discovering new activities, because there is more time available, or practising activities they were previously interested in, at a more leisurely pace, the activities are mainly engaged in for enjoyment and not as a means to survive or to sustain themselves. Some of the participants also viewed retirement as an indicator of being old and isolated. Participant R described the isolation she feels over weekends when she is at home on her own. This often makes her think about retiring and how she would fill the many hours she would have at her disposal:

Because I am in a different position – I don't have a family or a lot of friends – my colleagues have become my friends... I think if I were in a position where I had to be at home, I would totally stagnate, because I wouldn't go out, it would be a big effort for me... especially after sixty... I would have to find something else to keep me busy... I would probably still have to do something work-related because the money won't be enough... probably part-time work... but definitely not sitting still. Some weekends I am at home alone... then I think wow, this is alone... when you turn forty you go through a bit of a dip, because you realise half of your life is over and what now?... Initially it is more negative... but you just have to go on... Either you go on or you stop, and you can't really stop... you have to stay busy, otherwise you'd get depressed. (Participant R, 42, single)

It seems nice to stop working, but not because you are too old to work, it just seems nice to stop working while you are still in the prime of your life... to think that you want to retire one day, it sounds like a 'has been'... you don't want to use those words, it sounds awful. I won't mind retiring, but don't tell me I'm retiring, it sounds too old (Participant H, 52, married).

No, I will always be busy with something, what is retirement? (Participant D, 62, married)

Participant R says that because she is single and lives on her own, she would not be able to retire completely from paid employment, mainly because she will not have enough money to sustain herself; the other reason is that she counts her work colleagues amongst her best friends. In her view, being retired means sitting at home and this will make her feel isolated and alone. Participant H argues that the word 'retire' has a stigma and denotes someone being 'old'. She is eager to stop working while she is still in the prime of her life and young enough to do many activities. In spite of this stigma, she says that she will definitely retire soon, even though she does not want to use the word 'retire', but prefers 'stop working'. Despite the stigma associated with retirement, she views retirement as something normal that she will consider within the next couple of years. Participant D says that she never wants to retire. She feels that she has many projects that she still wants to take on in her life. She always wants to stay busy and active, which is something she does not associate with retirement.

There is a clear distinction to be made here: whereas many of the participants, (K, A, M and W) sometimes associate retirement with a more active lifestyle, Participants D and R associate retirement with sitting around the house being old and feeling isolated. Participant H associated with both retirement as a time to enjoy leisure as well as a stigma. Arber et al. (2003: 43-44) stress that the way in which people talk about retirement is based on cultural knowledge of this life stage, which they have accumulated over time based on others' experiences. People relate ideas surrounding later life, for example activities that married couples engage in during retirement, their *habitus* and the ideas they have gathered throughout their lives

relating to marriage and later life. Consequently, they often mimic these ideas and act accordingly. Regarding the specific participants' life trajectory, they will view retirement differently – as a condition of being 'old', isolated and inactive or being at leisure. However, the participants all engage in new forms of leisure which they did not always have time for in the past, whether they say they are retired, semi-retired or that they will never retire.

Arber et al. (2003: 31-32; 149) argue that retirement brings new lifestyles, which are mainly centred on leisure. According to them, these lifestyles are often representations of leisure which the media represents as ideal for middle age. While some retirees follow 'hedonistic lifestyles' during retirement, other retirees may end up leading financially difficult and isolated lives. They argue that financial affluence is necessary to engage in society in certain ways during later life, which relates to issues of class. Johnson et al. (1980:65-66, 69) argue that the integration of work and leisure can be viewed as the ideal of the post-industrial age. They argue that there has been a shift in the importance people attach to work, in that people often retire when they are financially secure. Retirement is therefore not available to everyone, since it depends on financial resources. Bloch (1953:907-908) also claims that people strive for some form of entertainment or leisure after 'work', which requires financial comfort. Capitalism has favoured employment above leisure and has managed to ruin certain forms of pre-capitalist leisure. Bloch argues that 'hobbies' bring private, idle pleasure to the one enjoying the hobby. Capitalism is often needed to enjoy modern forms of leisure and retirement. People strive for leisure, but they can only achieve this once they have made the money needed to support this need.

Having the time to engage in leisurely activities, such as reading, going to art exhibitions, shopping, doing research, and so forth, exposes these participants' position within the class hierarchy. The participants classify themselves as part of the middle to upper classes, which places them in a financial position where they are able to consider the possibility of leisure or retirement. They have the opportunity to *choose* whether they want to study, do research, go travelling, sit quietly and read,

attend an art exhibition, an economics lecture or a performance of the symphony orchestra, or serve tea or wine and cheese at a book club event. Being at leisure is not just an issue of time for this group of participants. It is an indicator of class, which provides them with the 'choice of leisure'.

Moen et al. (1992:1612-1614) echo this notion by stating that only certain individuals have access to resources that allow them to live 'comfortably' and would consider leisure in old age, for example, retirement, employing a nurse, going on holidays, taking up golf, etc. Often, the elderly poor cannot stop working, which in turn results in them not being able to consider the idea of retirement. In many cases, the elderly may also suffer from poor health, due to lack of rest, finances and access to good health services. Similarly, De Beauvoir (1972:449; 541) argues that 'older' people can enjoy leisure only when they have the financial means to do so. She contends that the age at which 'decline' sets in is dependent on someone's class status. Someone from a lower class may experience fifty as 'old age', mainly because of their health and lack of access to good services. On the other hand, someone from a higher class may thoroughly enjoy their eighties, since they have the resources to maintain their health.

Some of the participants either think of retirement as an old, inactive, isolated stage of life, whilst others think of it as an exciting, active time with more freedom to enjoy leisure. The participants' view of 'retirement' is conceptualised as a 'normal' practice which people at their point in the life cycle start to engage in. It is something they can 'choose'. While some of the women mention the issue of money, isolation and being 'old' in their decision to retire or not, retirement remains an option or normal practice to most of them. This distinguishes them as part of a certain class, and enables them to 'choose' to enjoy certain activities at leisure or to fully retire from formal employment. According to De Beauvoir (1972:541), this 'enjoyment' is not very great and does not last very long, since the body and mind deteriorate and become more fragile as a person enters later life.

The next section will deal with the participants' fearful, burdensome view of their old-age bodies, as they consider care in later life.

### **The fear of old age: Care in later life**

In this last section of the chapter, I focus on the participants' views of the future and more specifically their insights on care in later life. This discussion involves their outlook on the future as they think of issues of care related to the physical, psychological and social problems that are often associated with old age. What emerged, firstly, are their fears about old age in terms of physical and psychological complications, and secondly, the way in which some of the participants view their social positionality during old age as burdensome. Participants W, M and D voice their fears about the state of their bodies and minds in later life. They are both afraid that either their body or mind will be affected in some way, while the other part will still be fully functional.

Yes... not being able to look after yourself. I think that will be horrible. Growing old and struggling to walk... that I can still handle... it must be horrible if your brain goes... No one looks forward to getting older, it's part of life, and obviously you are going to grow old, I accept that (Participant W, 60, married).

I'm hoping, like all of us, that we all die quickly, that we'll never get there. I think everyone kind of puts it out of their heads and hopes that it doesn't happen to them. You hope that you can still walk till the day you die (Participant M, 56, married).

Very much, yes, I am very scared that my brain will stay fine but my body will go. I am really afraid to grow older (Participant D, 62, married).

Participant W says that she can deal with ageing and growing physically weaker, but that she finds the combination of a weak body and a sane mind, or vice versa, very distressing. Participant M hopes that growing older will allow her body to engage in most of the activities she currently enjoys, especially walking. She stresses that individuals, of her age, often try to ignore the likelihood of their bodies deteriorating up until the stage where they cannot perform everyday tasks. Other participants focused a lot on the psychological fears they have about ageing, fearing mental illnesses or psychological weakening. These fears are mostly related to illnesses they had seen affect their ageing family members.

I know that my mom's family has a bit of Alzheimer's... my mom definitely has an Alzheimer's kind of thing, because her head is not completely right...so sometimes I see my mom forget, making me wonder, in the case when I forget something, that oh, is this the Alzheimer's? (Participant L, 41, married)

You saw how he was, and you fear that those same genes are in you and that you'll also become like that...My mom isn't like that, she's in her eighties and she's still on the go and her head is still fine, so you don't know which way it's going to go, but you always have those fears (Participant H, 52, married).

Yes, I think the underlying fear is there, especially from my mother and my grandmother's side (Participant R, 42, single).

These specific participants all fear that they will inherit their family members' psychological problems, for example Alzheimer's disease. The participants do not only have fears about their physical appearance deteriorating, as emphasised in Chapter 4, but fear that their bodies' mobility, agility and their psychological state of mind will change, making them lose control over their everyday lives. Their fear of a lack of control indicates their fear of future dependence and the burdening of others, which many of the participants highlighted as they thought about old age. For many of the participants being a 'burden' is a great concern:

So, you don't have a choice, I wouldn't like to be a problem for someone else in terms of caring for me. I don't like the idea (Participant H, 52, married).

Now I've told them (my family): you just go and put me in a resort, just come and visit me... I don't want to be a burden for someone else... now they have to go to the old-age resort, but they don't want to... then you think, I'm also going to be like that... I think getting old and going to the old-age home, you have to do it... otherwise you become someone else's problem (Participant L, 41, married).

Participant H and L refuse to become someone else's problem when they are old and frail. Participant H argues that there is no other 'choice', but to go to an old age home. Participant L says that she would rather have her children place her in an old-age home than having them look after her. She would rather be in a place where people, not her family, take care of her, to avoid her being a burden to any member of her family. Participant A similarly asserts that she does not like old people and that she feels they are difficult to talk to and handle. These participants' narratives automatically equate 'old age' with being a nuisance to those around them.

What emerged was the participants' view of 'old age' as something to be feared. They see old age as a social problem, and old people as confined to certain social spaces and a disruption for young people and their social organisation. The single participants had a slightly different view of later life than the married or divorced participants. Both participants A and R are single and do not have any children or many extended family members. This concerns them, since they are anxious that they will not have anyone to take care of them during old age.

Yes, it worries me, because... I don't know... I will probably have to go to a retirement home... because there are no children or family or things like that... so, yes, it really is a big worry... but you wonder, where will the money come from, who knows what kind of treatment you'll have to receive, because you know you can only afford the minimum (Participant R, 42, single).

What bothers me about getting old... you are alone and who's going to look after you? Not only physically, because someone can look after you in an old-age home, but who's going to look after your finances, who's going to buy those extra fruit for you in town? ...there are no children to do those things, like what I did for example for my parents... But I believe, because you are alone, things have to be in order, your testament... your funeral arrangements (Participant A, 61, single).

Participant R says that she is worried about where the financing for an old-age home would come from, since she has very limited funds and has no one to help her out financially. Participant A believes that she will go to an old-age home, but worries that no one would bring her some extra groceries she might need from town, when she is no longer physically able to do that herself. Participant A focuses on being organised in old age; because she is on her own, she wants all her arrangements, for example, her funeral arrangements, to be planned in order to avoid burdening someone else. Both these single participants have similar points of view in that both are concerned by the fact that there are no family members or children to look after them when they are old. The single participants would prefer a kind of arrangement where their children or family members, in the case that they had children, would take care of them in old age. This is something which many of the married participants, who have children, were not in favour of, since most of the married participants seemed like they would rather go to an old-age home than be a burden to their family.

Arber et al. (2003:151) argue that as individuals age and become physically and psychologically frailer, they often need the assistance of others to help them with daily tasks. At this stage they become more and more reliant on others. This assistance is most often provided by their close family and friends. Consequently relationships during later life become very important as dependence on others starts to become more important. Most of the participants argue that their fear of ageing used to be more unconscious, something which they often joked about with others, but it is something which they now realise is no longer far off.

It is also important to note the participants' issues with care in later life and their fears and concerns that in later stages of their lives they will no longer be able to



live as they do now. An aspect of one's life that is normally taken for granted, for example, walking without constant pain, is now viewed as problematic, given the loss of certain physical and psychological capabilities. Hancock et al. (2000:82) assert that as people start to near 'old age', they often distance themselves by using certain techniques from being a stereotypical 'old' person.

Keeping at bay the physical discomfort associated with illness and very old age through the adoption of specific techniques of the self and divorcing the self from the body were strategies to resist stereotypical constructions of old people as dependent, incompetent and obsolete bodies in decline. (ibid.)

From the interviews it is evident that the participants use certain methods to distance themselves, not just in terms of their deteriorating physical appearance, as seen in Chapter 4, but also in terms of their social 'nuisance'. They associate being old with being a burden. Therefore, many of them try to divorce themselves from being a nuisance to the people around them. Participant A wants to have everything organised, like her testament and other documents, so that her problems do not become someone else's. Similarly, some of the married participants emphasised that they would rather live in an old-age home where other people could take care of them in order to spare their loved ones this burden.

Canguilhem (1991:184; 188) claims that the pathologic can only be assessed in terms of a relationship to the norm; the norm for these participants is being 'young', since they have 'felt' young and looked young for most of their life. In order to understand the 'normal' and 'abnormal', one must look at what is preferential behaviour. Preferential behaviour or reactions to certain phenomena gives the individual the most stability, order or rewards, while behaviour that is not preferred or incorrect according to some people, creates disorder and punishments. The participants have experienced what it is to be 'young'. They now look to the future, fearing the reverse of their young body and mind.

The participants pathologise the idea of being 'old' by associating it with the loss of physical and psychological abilities. Ideas of old age were often expressed by

the participants, as they related stories of their parents' physical and psychological decline during old age. Their ideas of old age and its physical and psychological embodiments are derived from previous experiences and cultural knowledge. Their pathologising of their future bodies concerns them because they equate it with being incapable of caring for themselves and being dependent on others. Some participants, particularly the single participants, worry about who will care for them, whereas the married participants worry about their old bodies being a nuisance for their families.

Foucault (1975:174-175) asserts that surveillance (how, for example Participant L and H, pathologise themselves as a nuisance during old age) is a mechanism of disciplinary power, which constitutes hierarchy. The participants' view of old age as a pathology leads them to survey their own bodies as problematic and feared. By doing this, they perpetuate the stereotypes of old age which already exist, engraining their low ranking position within a social hierarchy. According to De Beauvoir (1972:543), old age exposes all the problems with civilisation:

If culture were not a mere inactive mass of information, acquired once and for all and then forgotten, if it were effectual and living, and if it meant that the individual had a grasp upon his environment that would fulfil and renew itself as the years went by, then he would be an active, useful citizen at every age.

Certain forms of culture equate the old-aged citizen with 'uselessness'. The youthful citizen, in turn, is deemed useful, because they are still active and needed by society. The middle aged participants look to the future and fear what will happen to them in old age. Many proclaim that they still feel active and 'useful', because of their physical abilities. The pathologies that civilisation/society creates surrounding old age are what creates the fears and problems the participants have with this life stage. It becomes clear that social relationships with others are important during later life. Those who do not have close relationships desire them, while those who have relationships fear burdening those they have relationships with. However, it becomes clear that later life and old age are equated with frailty and a need for care, the individual's status as a

nuisance and her social isolation. It is made clear by the participants that 'youth', whether it is 'very young' or 'young' in relation to middle age, is preferred to old age.

## **Conclusion**

The participants' different life trajectories influence the way in which they view the time they now feel they have left. Leisure is associated with retirement, even though some of the participants view this leisure as unproductive, old and isolated. Whether they view it as free time for leisure or free time for new projects or as a time for being 'old', they are more at leisure now than they were before. They also look to the future as many of them are making plans to retire or for new lifestyles. Whether the participants consider retirement or not, they have, or will have, more free time and the opportunity to 'choose' how they spend that time. They have the opportunity to choose leisure, because of the position they have within the class hierarchy. Most of the participants are situated within the middle to upper classes, a position that grants them access to leisure and the freedom to use their time at this stage of their life cycle to enjoy themselves.

This enjoyment, according to De Beauvoir, is short-lived; it can either lessen or make the consequences of physical and psychological deterioration worse. The participants voice their fears and the problems with the future regarding old age. They construct these fears around what they have experienced by watching other people in need of care in later life, whether drawn from personal or from a more general, cultural knowledge. The future is not only associated with leisure, but with isolation, being a burden and becoming a useless body. Similarly, the extent to which some participants pathologised retirement leads to the pathologisation of later life as a dependent, almost 'abnormal' phase. They want to distance themselves from old age and try not to be a nuisance to the people around them. Their experiences of youth and having all of their abilities still at their disposal are contrasted with a future they equate with deterioration and nuisance. For these participants, the old body is

perceived as useless and burdensome. It is believed to be a body which should be feared and which should only exist on the fringes of society.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

In this study, I explored a specific *habitus* of individuals: white, middle-aged, middle-class, Afrikaans-speaking women who live in Stellenbosch. The question raised at the beginning of this thesis was: *Does this study group's 'experience of ageing' constitute a 'sell-by date' for these women, branding them inadequate to others and themselves, on a physical, psychological and social level, as they reach middle and old age?* In posing this question, I wanted to reveal what this group's experience of ageing exposed about South African society, and how society constructs the ageing of this group today. In this final chapter, I will discuss my conclusions of this group's experience of ageing and reveal its implications, not only for these women, but also for South African society as a whole, especially in terms of age, class, race and gender hierarchies.

The participants view their current bodies very negatively, especially as they approach middle age. The recognition of their own physical deteriorating bodies was usually brought on by others who alerted them to this deterioration. Others' perceptions of their age have shaped the way they view themselves, in other words, individuals who, for example, look 'forty' or 'fifty' years old. The interpellation that these participants experience is brought on by the regulatory regime constituted by the 'male gaze', including the judgements of anyone who influences people's perception of female bodies and perpetuates gendered stereotypes of women in Western patriarchal contexts. The male gaze has influenced the fashion-beauty complex, which can be viewed as another catalyst in framing 'older' bodies in a negative light. The description of women, then, as 'old', based solely on their physical appearance, inscribes them with a 'sell-by date' that leads to the interpellation of certain bodies. In turn, this interpellation forces the women to view their own bodies as 'expired'.

The participants employ beauty regimes, exercise and diet routines, as well as dressing practices, and contemplate undergoing cosmetic procedures, all in order to ultimately extend the appearance of their 'best before bodies'. Not all of the

participants practise the same stringent regimes; yet, they all said that they view the employment of body alteration as a 'norm'. Their reasons for not practising certain body alterations often included a lack of time or money. Nonetheless, most of the participants viewed the alteration of an 'old' body as something which women *should do*. It becomes clear that the male gaze interpellates these participants into believing that body alteration is something which they should engage in, in order to 'fix' their bodies in some way. They strive to correct their bodies, which they have come to recognise through others as 'old' or 'expired'. They now strive to still appear young, beautiful and slim, and believe that it is normal to try to look younger whilst still dressing in a way that is 'age-appropriate'.

What becomes particularly evident here is this group's *class* advantage: they can afford the body alteration methods called for by the male gaze. The gaze represents only the different influences on these participants' choices to practise body alteration. Therefore, the same male gaze does not necessarily interpellate women from other *habitus* in South Africa, in the same way. These participants are *always-already* interpellated to adhere to the male gaze, which follows a patriarchal discourse. They will always be valued according to this gaze until they find a way to change their own and others' perceptions of female bodies as mutually exclusive, either 'best before' or 'expired' bodies. The participants' accessibility to the fashion-beauty complex, because of their class position, brings them closer to the 'best before bodies' that the male gaze demands. Within this discourse, they are given an advantage over women of lower-class *habitus*. Women from the lower classes, who are also scrutinised by a similar Western male gaze, are even more excluded and scrutinised by the male gaze than these participants who can afford to 'satisfy' the male gaze.

To satisfy the male gaze, the participants play along with this discourse, mostly unconsciously, as a result of years of interpellation. Of course, following this discourse gives them access to power, but the power is not real, since it interpellates all women to conform to narrow, gendered stereotypes, which further diminishes their ability to

‘choose’ what they want their bodies to look like at certain ages and merely postpones their inevitable ‘expiry date’.

The everyday roles that these participants engage in are the predominantly gender-specific conventionally ‘female’ roles of ‘mother’ and ‘wife’. These women experience guilt or doubts about their self-worth when they step outside these roles and these feelings indicate the influence of their *habitus*’ discourse – one that can be described as Western and patriarchal. This *habitus* exists in time and space and fragments time into ‘expected’ action periods. The *habitus* suggests that these participants behave according to certain logic, at specific times, to reach conventional ends, for example getting married before turning thirty. It emerged that the participants currently view themselves as more confident, happy individuals than they were when they were young. However, many of them regret choices that they have made or neglected to make at certain times in their lives. If they do not already have a conventional life, they strive for it and foster a desire to be married and have children. The discourse followed by their *habitus* has interpellated them to desire only the conventional, making them feel guilty when they do not obtain or perform these roles flawlessly.

The notion that certain times call for certain action - and these choices ultimately have to be conventional and gender-appropriate, in order to ‘successfully develop’ and self-actualise, as Erikson and Horney suggest – places a ‘sell-by date’ on women’s bodies. The participants’ *habitus* has fragmented their lives, which have taught them to make certain choices at certain points in their lives. Within the participants’ *habitus*, it becomes clear that women are valued in terms of conventional gender roles, which they choose at certain times. In turn, these roles inscribe them with a ‘sell-by date’, which only deems them ‘good enough’, according to others and themselves, when they employ ‘appropriate’ gender performances and make similar choices at certain times in their life cycle, as Erikson (1980:129-130) specifically argues.

The participants conceptualise their 'old', future bodies in terms of leisure, retirement and care. Many of the participants said they are presently more at leisure than in the past, either because they have retired or semi-retired from formal employment, or because their children have left home. Many of the participants looked forward to retirement as a time to enjoy even more leisure time with family and friends, while the other participants, who are also currently more at leisure, said that they perceive retirement as a time of isolation, stigma and inactivity. Even though many of the participants did not agree on retirement as either positive or negative, most of the participants had the *choice of leisure*. The choice to employ and practise leisure for enjoyment is not just about social relationships, but it is also a choice these participants are all *able* to make, mainly due to their *class habitus*. These participants, because of their class status, have an opportunity for enjoyment during middle and old age, this enjoyment, in the forms of leisure and retirement can thus be viewed as 'ideals' of this class. Leisure and retirement then become indicators of class and situate those who have these opportunities at the top of social hierarchies in the South African context.

The participants considered old age and later life a time of dependence. Even though, because of their class position, later life is a time of leisure and retirement, it is also a time that they fear. Later life and old age are viewed as times of physical, psychological and social inadequacy. As De Beauvoir (1972:543) has noted, the enjoyment of leisure during middle and old age is only temporary, since the 'uselessness' of old age is so overwhelming. Similar to the issue of leisure and retirement, class can influence one's later life in many ways and provides many of the participants with the opportunity to 'spare' their loved ones the nuisance of taking care of their 'expired' bodies. The participants have always feared being old, because others in and outside their *habitus* have feared and problematised it. Whether they have social relationships with people that will care for them during later life or not, they all regard old age as a burden and a time to be pushed towards the periphery of society. The participants' view of their own old-aged bodies exposes society's



problematized view of the 'old' as physically, psychologically and socially useless. Here, the participants actually apply their own 'sell-by date', since they themselves brand their future bodies as expired.

This group's 'experience of ageing' constitutes a 'sell-by date' for this group of women. This study cannot, however, suggest a 'sell-by date' for other women, of this or any other *habitus* in South Africa. It is not self-evident that South Africa can be regarded as a Western context. Yet, based on the narratives of this group of participants, they are clearly positioned within a discourse that follows conventional, patriarchal thinking. The women's thinking exposes a *habitus* which interpellates specific behaviour and leaves narrow parameters for free 'choice'. They practise body alteration, conventional gender roles, experience happiness and regrets, and fear their future 'dependent' bodies – all within the boundaries of this *habitus*. This and other *habitus* do not follow the same discourse, but the 'sell-by date' of these women could possibly relate to other women in South Africa, no matter their race, class or positionality. De Beauvoir (1949:35) claims that a 'woman' acquires her consciousness within the society of which she is a member. Her consciousness is imposed on her by this particular society. Similarly, Rich (1980:638-640) argues that there are various ways in which individuals reinforce the subjugation of women to heteronormative schemes, which maintains power over women, strengthening and upholding compulsive heterosexuality.

The presentation of the 'experience of ageing' of individuals of a specific race, class, language, gender and locality does not only reveal *their* experience of ageing, but also shows concealed age, class, gender and race hierarchies that exist in the South African context. This study does reveal, to some extent, the positions held by this group of women in terms of social class hierarchies in the South African context. This group's *habitus* positions them, as middle-aged women, at the bottom of many social hierarchies by means of conventional stereotyping. Yet, they are situated at the top of many class hierarchies, within or maybe outside of their *habitus*, where they have increased access to certain products, forms of leisure, care, etc. The participants'

'inadequacy' or 'adequacy' are measured either by the male gaze, the conventional, gender-specific, patriarchal discourse followed by their *habitus*, or by their own conceptualisations of their future bodies on a physical, psychological and social level. This group of participants is labelled by others and by themselves as *inadequate* when they start to reach middle and old age. Their 'sell-by date' is attributed by them and by others who have taught them how they *should* look, act, make choices and live in middle and old age.

### **Recommendations for further research**

By exposing the *habitus* of this group – white, middle-aged, Afrikaans-speaking, middle-class women, living in Stellenbosch – and their experience of ageing, another group's discourse on ageing becomes hidden. This research can be applied to various other races, classes, ages, language groups and social contexts. In order to get a more holistic view of the experience of ageing, one needs to study the way in which the gendering of women or men, who behave in a certain way, is realised amongst different ages, races, and classes in South Africa. I would recommend the study of middle-aged, middle-class women in a specific location, where the issue of race and class is given a much larger platform. A comparative study could be conducted, studying women of the same class (for example, of the middle class), that are of different races. This perspective could provide insight into a possible racial dimension of the experience of ageing during middle age. Similarly, comparing the experience of middle-aged 'women' and 'men' of the lower or middle class could offer a different gendered or class dimension to the one provided in this study. Another comparison could perhaps be made between middle-aged women who view themselves as feminists versus those who do not – a comparison that could provide insight into how the male gaze can actively be resisted and may be overcome by implementing various practices and strategies, such as activism.

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## Appendix

The original quotations of the participants, and Dr. M, in Afrikaans, have been reproduced in this appendix, sorted as they appear in the main text. All the interviews were conducted in Afrikaans, but translations appear throughout the thesis for the sake of presenting a more integrated whole.

### Chapter 4

#### Page 57:

Dertig was vir my verskriklik. Om dertig te word was vir my 'nou's ek oud'.  
Dertig het net regtig oud geklink. (Participant D, 62, married)

#### Page 58:

...maar dit was so twee jaar terug moeilik, veral toe ek 39 was en daai veertig het nader gekom. Ek was soos heeltemal in 'n *depro*... dit klink net regtig oud.  
(Participant L, 41, married)

...ja, natuurlik, ja, meer plooië... maar ek voel nie oud nie. (Participant W, 60, married)

Vir my het ek nog niks verander nie, maar obviously as ek na foto's kyk...  
(Participant A, 61, single)

Goed, toe ek twintig was, was ek in my eie persepsie lank en maer, jy weet, ten minste tien kilogram ligter as nou, baie *confident* oor my fisiese voorkoms; ek het maklik met 'n bikini op 'n strand gaan stap en ek was nie skaam nie... kortbroeke, enigets. As ek dink nou, jy kyk in die spieël, of jy dink jy's nog jonk, jy voel amper nog dieselfde, maar dan sien jy mense noem vir jou 'tannie'... sê nou maar ek het 'n bikini... as ek nou net daar by die huis dit aantrek, dan my dogter het so oulike ding wat sy sê, dan sê sy: 'mamma...neeeee'. (Participant H, 52, married)

Ja, ek sal sê die liggaam het verouder, fisies kan mens tog sommer sien hoe dit verouder... (Participant R, 42, single)

So, ek kleur nou maar my hare, ek het vir my dogter belowe ek sal my hare kleur totdat sy uit matriek uit is. (Participant M, 56, married)



*Page 59:*

...ek bly fiks en ek sukkel nie te veel met my figuur nie en eet nie uit frustrasie uit nie en... en miskien ook omdat ek geskei is... as jy geskei is kyk jy tog na die wêreld van 'miskien trou jy weer'. Jy weet, ek sien baie van my vriendinne wat nou al getroud is vir twintig jaar... hulle het hulself baie verwaarloos. Hulle raak in 'n totale 'comfort zone' oor hoe hulle lyk en hulle mans kry boeppense... (Participant K, 48, divorced)

...so, ek dink as jy 'n man het wat ook ouer word, dan is dit makliker, ek dink vrouens wat miskien *single* is en voel hulle moet miskien weer trou of 'n *boyfriend* kry, ek dink dis dalk vir hulle moeiliker as wat jy in 'n vaste verhouding is, jy het 'n man wat ook maar 'n boep gekry het en grys word, jy weet die man kan ook maar nie 'n vinger wys nie, want hy lyk ook maar ouer. (Participant H, 52, married)

Ek dink mens dink miskien anders oor goed as jy ongetroud is of geskei of 'n weduwee, dan's 'n ou se idee oor sulke goed seker anders as wat 'n ou getroud is en... want dan word julle gelukkig saam oud. Ja, ek dink so, as wat jy nou... jy soek dalk 'n maat, ek weet nie. Dis seker maar moeiliker. (Participant W, 60, married)

*Page 60:*

Maar ek kry nogals dikwels die kompliment dat ek jonger lyk as wat ek is. (Participant A, 61, single)

...mens word nou bewus van oud word, al is ek self nie daar nie... jy is intens bewus daarvan. (Participant K, 48, divorced)

*Page 63:*

Ja, definitief, want dit is goed wat waarde toevoeg tot elke vrou, en dis vir my belangrik dat elke vrou... haarsel kan versorg... dit is verskriklik belangrik vir enige vrou, dan kan jy jou vel versorg, want dan gaan dit wys. Ek sê altyd, as jy oud is kry jy die gesig wat jy verdien het. En 'n mens moet verskriklik baie lag. (Participant D, 62, married)

Ek was my gesig saans en ek sit 'n roompie aan en natuurlik sonskerm... dis eintlik maar net om jouself gerus te stel. (Participant W, 60, married)

Ek kyk na my gesig en hande. Dis belangrik om mooi, jonk en so goed as moontlik te lyk... ek dink tog dit help en dan spandeer ek – ja, ek spandeer nie – maar tog baie geld aan rome en jy weet 'n mens koop maar allerhande, wat's daai *wrinkle...whatever...decrease*, 'decrease wrinkles', alles wat enige *wrinkle*-tjie kan wegvat. (Participant L, 41, married)

Ja-nee, ek doen maar baie moeite daarmee, wat sleg is daarvan soos jy kan nou hoeveel moeite doen, maar jy kan nooit weer 'n vleklose vel hê nie. Jy kan watse produkte... en jy het rekmerke van kinders kry... dis soos 'n motor wat net krapmerke bykry... en dit is so as jy die goed begin gebruik: dan sien jy op jou ouderdom, daar is duurder en beter produkte wat regtig help. (Participant K, 48, divorced)

*Page 66:*

Euene gelede was die houding van man teenoor die vrou heel anderste as wat dit vandag is... en die eienskappe wat 'n vrou toe gehad het was net van voortplanting... hoe het dit nie ongelooflik verander nie... want ons Westerse idee van skoonheid... is die klassieke een van vorm, simmetrie van vorm en wat so pragtig is en uitgebeeld is byvoorbeeld deur 'n ander manier as die Venus van Milos. So dis nou ons idee van die skoonheid van die menslike liggaam. Dis nou so dat 'n mens in die kosmetiese chirurgie kan strewe na daai soort skoonheid, ...natuurlik, die kosmetiese chirurgie is nou al aanvaar. (Dr. M, 2009)

*Page 67:*

Daar is mos nou hierdie ding oor die jeug, want jy moet mos jonk lyk, en as jy jonk lyk... want in die oë van die tv ensovoorts, jonk is gelyk aan slim en sportief en so en so... en dis baie algemeen dat mans se oë ook gedoen word – dat hulle weer wakkerder en jonk lyk. (Dr. M, 2009)

*Page 68:*

...toe my eerste kind gebore is, het ek 'n 36 klere gedra ek het voorgeneem... nooit groter as 'n 38 raak nie. (Participant K, 48, divorced)

Dis baie belangrik om dit te doen. Ek sien sommer as mens nie besig bly nie of nie oefen of reg eet nie, dis net soveel vinniger wat jou liggaam verander as wat dit in jou twintigs was... (Participant R, 42, single)

*Page 69:*

...my man is baie aktief en hy hardloop en goed, so as dit nie vir hom was nie, ek het baie goed gedoen, soos van die brug afgespring en *ge-whitewater rafting* en *ge-absailing*... so daar is baie goed wat ek gedoen het omdat ek hom ontmoet het, anders sou ek dit nooit gedoen het nie. (Participant L, 41, married)

*Page 71:*

Jy weet, ja... kyk hoe trek hierdie vrou aan. (Participant D points to a woman in the same area where I am interviewing her) Ja, *body image* is nie alles nie, maar jy moet volgens jou ouderdom lyk... (Participant D, 62, married)

Toe my ma-hulle ons ouderdom was, al veertig of vyftig was, ek dink die klere drag wat makliker geraak het dit vir mense makliker gemaak om nie jonger te lyk nie, maar kyk ons dra mos nou ook jeans en tekkies. Almal dra dieselfde en jy trek gemakliker aan, so jy's meer beweeglik, so ek dink ook nie meer jy trek aan soos 'n oumens, soos daai soort van soos kerklere, wat die mense gehad het... dis nou nie die rokke met die sykouse dat jy nou voel dat jy ouer is of... ek voel nie daar's iets wat ek nie kan doen weens ouderdom nie... (Participant M, 56, married)

Ja, ag nee, ek het maar definitief meer gegaan na die swarte toe, um ek wil nie meer so verskriklik opsigtelik wees nie... ek het eerstens nie meer die lyf nie en dan tweedens ek voel nie meer sulke helder kleure pas by my nie. Ja, ek voel maar, mens wil meer in die agtergrond wees. (Participant R, 42, single)

Page 72:

Baie meer modern, jonk wil ek amper sê, toe ek gewerk het, sou ek nooit, wel die laaste paar jaar wat ek gewerk het het ek langbroeke gedra, maar ons het altyd *skirts* gedra... baie koekerig gewees, dink ek. Ek sien nou is ek baie meer by en vandat ek afgetree het dra ek hierdie driekwartbroeke in die winter en die somer... (Participant A, 61, single)

Ek was 'n *lost case* toe ek jonk was. Ek kan jou nie sê hoe konserwatief ek grootgeword het nie... ek's nou baie besig om my klere moderner en moderner te verander... ek sal regtig sê ek dink dis 'n opwindende tyd vir Afrikaanse vrouens, want ons het ongelooflik konserwatief grootgeword, so dis asof ons nou eers waag met klere en jonger aantrek... (Participant K, 48, divorced)

Page 74:

Dit is dan dikwels mense wat so in die middeljare is as ons nou oor vrouens praat... hierdie vrouens merk al hierdie tekens van veroudering, en dan wonder hulle of 'n mens dit nie kan laat beter maak nie. En hulle kom dan vir 'n onderhoude en vra vir sekere goed wat vir hulle hinder. As hulle borsvoeding gedoen het en hulle het pap borsies wat hang, dan wil hulle dit graag laat regmaak, en hulle gesigte is nie vir hulle mooi en verouderd lyk... dan wil hulle graag daaraan laat werk... want wat nou gebeur met hierdie dames waarin jy nou belangstel is hulle is pragtig as hulle nou so oud is soos jy, en hulle het blouende velle, en hulle is mooi gebou en hulle is pragtig, maar nadat hulle 'n paar babas gehad het is die boesies nie meer so mooi nie, en hulle lywe is nie meer so mooi nie, en hulle gesiggies het al 'n paar merke op en so aan en, jy weet, hulle oë en so aan, want jy weet, dit begin al baie vroeg, en in jou dertigerjare begin jy al klein rimpeltjies kry by jou oë en rondom jou mond en so aan. Dit is deel van die normale verouderingsproses. (Dr. M, 2009)

Page 75:

Ek het al gewonder hoe dit sou lyk... (Participant M, 56, married)

Nee, weet jy, ek het nog nooit nie. In die eerste plek dink ek ek het nie geld om dit te doen nie... ja, baie keer wens jy jy kan sommer bietjie gaan *liposuction*, want jy raak so moedeloos. (Participant L, 41, married)

Nee wat, dis te duur en die mediese fonds sal dit nie betaal nie.. .en ek het al gesien hoe lyk party mense wat dit gehad het... as ek geld gehad het sou ek aan ander dele van my liggaam gewerk het, byvoorbeeld my arms, want ek het hierdie verskriklike dikke arms en ek het 'n buik wat ook redelik groot is... (Participant A, 61, single)

Die hele idee interesseer my nogals. Ek kyk graag goeters op televisie en dan kyk ek nou wat, hoe dit werk en so... ek het al baie gedink aan dat mens iets sou kon doen, eendag as jy ouer is... iets doen wat ander mense nie sou agterkom nie. Maar ek sal *embarrassed* voel om iets groots te doen... maar ek dink as 'n mens ietsie kan doen wat nie opvallend is nie, sal 'n mens nogals dit kon oorweeg... (Participant H, 52, married)

Ek's baie daarvoor maar dis nie... dit werk nie altyd nie... maar dit moet deur 'n baie goeie ou gedoen word... (Participant D, 62, married)

Ek dink daaraan om borsverkleining, maar dit is die geld ja, dit gaan omtrent R40 000 kos...so maar ek is daarvoor ek sê nie mense moenie goedjies nie laat regmaak nie. In my geval is dit vir gesondheidsredes ook... (Participant R, 42, single)

*Page 76:*

Nee, ek dink baie vrouens doen dit maar vir hulle mans...ek verstaan nogals mans wat dokters is en hulle vrouens voel hulle is die heeltyd besig met mooi jong vrouens. Dank Vader ek hoef nie, nee. (Participant W, 60, married)

Nee, ek het dit nog nie gekry nie... ek sal nie baie oor my gesig bekommer nie, um, maar ek dink nogals iets soos 'n iets aan mens se borste... as ek oor twee of drie jaar van nou af, as ek R10 000 ekstra sou hê, dan sal ek dit doen... ter wille van myself. Dit hang ook baie af van hoe jy dink... jou persepsie van hoe die man in jou lewe jou ervaar. As jy dink hy is nou erg krities of dit kan die verhouding verbeter of so iets, dit klink nou baie oppervlakkig, maar ja, ek dink... dit hang af hoe veeleisend so persoon ook is wat voorkoms betref. (Participant K, 48, divorced)

*Page 77:*

In die sewentigerjare het ek 'n hele *facelift* gedoen vir R120... in daai dae was dit vir die regtige ryk mense. Vandag is dit binne die perke van middelklaspersone. Ek dink ons Afrikaners oor die algemeen... dis miskien nie

meer waar nie, maar op 'n stadium was hulle meer terughoudend oor plastiese chirurgie, dit half meer in die geheim gedoen het en terwyl die Engelssprekendes as hulle dit doen dan hulle wys vir almal... so ons is maar baie konserwatief. (Dr. M, 2009)

## Chapter 5

### Page 85:

Ek wou nie trou nie, omdat ek so sterk was... en hy wou navorsing gaan doen het, en ek het gesê 'luister, ek wil nie 'n nege tot vyf man hê nie, en hy wil nie 'n huis met 'n *bimbo* hê nie... toe besluit ek 'maar why not?', Let's give it a go. Ek kom uit 'n pastoriehuis uit en... ag, ek het altyd die poedingtafel beman en kan jy nou glo... nee, almal het gesê dit pas nie by my nie... maar dit was my gemeenskapsplig. (Participant D, 62, married)

Net 'ma', kos koop en gemaak en ja... maar ondersteuning... ek is nogsteeds daar as my man by die huis kom en dis vir my lekker... *yes, I wanted to stay at home, I only taught school for a year and six months before they went to school...* ja, ek wou by die huis bly. Ek het net so jaar of 6 maande voor hulle skool toe is vir so ruk weer skoolgegee. Ek wou maar die meeste gedoen het. Daar's natuurlik dae wat jy dink 'ag vaderland, ek wil my eie ding nou doen'... ons het nooit eers daaraan gedink nie... die kinders was maar deel van ons lewe. (Participant W, 60, married)

Dan's dit nou ontbyt gee, en dan sit ek soms die kos op die tafel. Ander kere vat hulle self... dan probeer ek gaan stap met die honde... teen die tyd wat ek klaar is met daai goete dan is die dag om. Dan't ek vergeet om kos te maak... maar ek gaan nooit heeltemal ophou werk nie. 'n Vrou hou nie heeltemal op met werk nie, want deel van 'n vrou se werk is om die huis te *run*, so daai werk bly altyd daar, totdat jy die dag aftreeoord toe gaan. En dan is dit nogsteeds, totdat jy siek lê in 'n kamer, is dit jou werk om die huis te *run*. (Participant M, 56, married)

### Page 87:

Weet jy, ek dink, maar ek dink dis in meeste gevalle so, ek voel dat ek's die een wat alles bymekaar hou, spesifiek in ons gesin nou ook... ek weet net ek was altyd die een wat besluite geneem het... ek is ook die een wat... vir hulle orals heen sal neem en selfs as hulle soos by 'n partytjie was laat in die aand sal ek die een wees... ek is nou altyd die een wat moet bel, of moet vra of moet reel of moet dit, dit voel vir my partymaal soos, 'jislaiik, kan julle nie iets vir julleself doen nie!' (she laughs)... ek raak ook *fed-up* vir die hele besigheid. Ja, so dit voel vir my nogals asof die ma nogals... half, ek moet half alles reë:, die bediende, die tuinjong... um, ja dit voel vir my soms asof ek soos die hele middelpunt is daar... (Participant L, 41, married)

Party dae voel dit ook vir my hoe ouer ek raak hoeveel meer is ek op almal se *case*, en ek's die heelyd besig om vir almal te sê wat om te doen. Ek sal soms sien hoe irriteer dit hulle en ek wil sê, 'ag man, *gaan* cope julle almal self man'. Soos kinders ouer raak wil hulle nie meer gesê word nie... partykeer voel mens jy wil jousef net heeltemal onttrek van die hele spul van hulle. Ek sal my eie ding doen... so, jy weet, iewers is nogals 'n moeilike balans oor hoeveel kan jy jou gesin druk om dinge te doen, of moet jy hulle maar net aan hulle genade oorlaat? (Participant H, 52, married)

*Page 88:*

Weet jy, ek kan nou al sien ek dink 'n mens, um, soos nou my oudste een wat nou uit die skool uit is, en so, jy weet 'n mens nou partykeer dan begin 'n ou nou so bietjie, weggegooi voel, jy weet daai van mense kry jou nie meer nodig nie... jy begin 'n bietjie té voel, jy word 'n bietjie op die kantlyn geskuif... ek sal nou nie sê hier by die werk nie, want hier is alles nog aan die gang, maar ek dink tog op die oomblik, soos by die huis dink ek, raak dit nou al so dat mens se kinders raak nou al groot en hulle raak nou meer onafhankliker en hulle het nou minder vir jou nodig... ja, jy is nie meer daai versorgingstipe rol wat jy gehad het nie... ek dink hulle kom vra baie keer net raad, soos 'wat dink ma moet ek doen' en wat... Aan die eenkant begin jy meer 'n gevoel te kry van vryheid, want jy kan nou weer meer bietjie doen wat jy wil, soos ek en my man sal nou baie meer goed doen wat ons wil. Ja, dis 'n gemengde gevoel... (Participant L, 41, married)

Ja, ek moet sê, ek het my ma dopgehou. Sy het nogal, sy was baie getraumatiseer, want sy was 'n huisvrou altyd. Haar kinders was haar lewe. So ek het haar nogal dopgehou en vroeg besef... ek moet my loopbaan behou. Want dit gaan 'n klomp van daai trauma wegvat. Nou voel ek nie skuldig as ek nie daar is nie, en ek kan my loopbaan ten volle uitleef... en ek geniet hulle nou as hulle huistoe kom. (Participant K, 48, divorced)

*Page 89:*

In ons ouderdomsgroep is ongelooflik baie mense geskei, ...ons het nogals baie tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat ons kom uit 'n tyd uit wat ons pa's broodwinners was en ons ma's was huisvrouens. En die pa was 'n goeie broodwinner en die ma was 'n goeie huisvrou. En toe kom ons in 'n ekonomiese tyd wat die vrouens moes begin werk. En ons het probeer om sulke goeie broodwinners soos ons pa's te wees, maar op die selfde tyd so 'n goeie huisvrou soos ons ma. En ons mans oor die algemeen het gedink hulle help, maar hulle het nie gehelp nie. So hulle was so half, um, ..hulle sou in die aand huis toe gekom het en vir 'n uur vir die kinders stories gelees het, of soms in die nag opgestaan het... maar hulle sou nie regtig die helfte van die werk gedoen het nie, soos vandag se mans wat nou sal stryk en huisskoonmaak en... Jy't verskriklik, verskriklik hard gewerk... maar soos 'n masjien... jy't dit alles gedoen plus 'n werk... jy het soveel druk op jou gehad dat jy nie baie tyd oorgehad het vir jou verhouding nie. (Participant K, 48, divorced)

Page 90:

Jy weet, ek het 'n hele paar vriendinne wat nooit getroud was nie, met die gevolg is ons het dieselfde tipe geselskap. Maar kom jy tussen mense wat getroud was, dan is die geselskap so bietjie anderste, want hulle het kinders en so aan... Getroude vrouens is net anderste, dis net so... ek sal nie met jou kan gesels oor my kinders nie, want ek het nie; ek het 'n kat... (Participant A, 61, single)

Page 96:

Jy weet, van waar ek nou in my lewe is, ek het 'n gelukkige lewe; ek het genoeg geld; ek is nie geskei nie; my kinders is okay; so, ek kan my voorstel daar is baie ander mense wat baie swaar kry in hierdie ouderdom – as jy *financially* nie *secure* is nie; jy's geskei; jy's op jou eie; jou kinders gee vir jou probleme, want baie mense se kinders gaan op *drugs* en is stout... Want ek dink baie vrouens in ons ouderdomsgroep... is nie *content* nie, want hulle *worry* oor hulle kinders... (Participant H, 52, married)

Page 97:

Ek dink ek is bietjie meer oop en kan meer lekkerder gesels met mense en het meer selfvertroue as vantevore. Ja, ek het baie baie minder uitgegaan in my twintigs, veral toe my ma nou so sieklik was... ek dink dis beter. Ja, mens raak maar, jy raak tevrede met jousef en jy raak makliker om mee te praat... (Participant R, 42, single)

Eintlik baie, soos wat ek gesê het. Ek is 'n baie interessanter mens nou as wat ek was in my twintigs. Ek is ook nie meer so kwaad vir die lewe nie; ek was baie kwaad vir die lewe toe ek jonger was. Ek was kwaad oor sekere goed wat ek gevoel het 'dit moenie so wees nie'; kwaad omdat my ouers soveel ouer was en nie jongmensgoed saam met my gedoen het nie; kwaad omdat ek nie baie vriende gehad het toe ek jonger was nie. Maar, daar't 'n stuk bevrediging gekom en dis wonderlik eintlik om op hierdie punt te wees waar jy sê eintlik maar 'ek is bevry van 'n klomp dinge'. (Participant A, 61, single)

Ek is nou baie meer sosiaal. Ek was, toe ek jonk was, baie meer introvert... ja, en om een of ander rede baie selfbewus ook. So, ek dink, saam met die ouderdom kom dat jy nie meer so... jy's baie minder selfbewus... jy't baie meer selfvertroue. Nee, nee ek sal eintlik sê dis baie beter as vroeër. Ja, ek is baie, baie min goed ontstel my. 'n Egskeiding maak jou ook baie taai. Daar's 'n pad uit alles uit; daars 'n plan met alles te doene en daar's 'n manier om elke ding te hanteer. Mens is baie minder senuweeagtig en jy dink baie minder die wêreld stort ineen as daar iets verkeerd loop. Jy dink 'o, ok, net 'n klein probleempie'. Jyt al deur so baie gegaan... nee, dis eintlik 'n maklike stuk lewe dié. (Participant K, 48, divorced)

Page 98:

Ja, ek het baie meer antisosiaal geraak. (she laughs) Weet jy, ek dink dit het meer 'n geval geraak van... ek dink meer dis 'n ouderdoms tipe ding, want ons het baie, jy weet, toe ons jonger was, hier dertig... daar rond... het ons gereeld as vriende baie naweke, jong, Vrydagaand gebraai, Saterdagdaand gebraai, elke naweek... jy's nie kwaad vir niemand nie, jy's net nie lus nie. Mens is net nie meer lus om daardie *effort* van onthaal by my huis nie... en ja, ek wil nou net sit en net *relax*... (Participant L, 41, married)

Goed, voor ek getroud was, was ek baie sosiaal. Ek het baie tussen jongmense rondbeweeg. Na ons getroud is was ons vriende maar almal getroude mense met dieselfde ouderdom en kinders. Dit voel vir my tog deur die jare of 'n ou se vriende al hoe minder raak. Ek dink mens moet eintlik maar moeite doen om mense ook oor te nooi en vriende te behou en vriendskappe te hê is 'n doelbewuste poging wat jy moet aanwend... Ek is altyd lus, maar my man is nie altyd lus nie, hy soek partykeer verskonings, maar as ek hom bietjie oorreed dan... tyd is 'n bietjie die probleem... (Participant H, 52, married)

Page 99:

As jy gaan lewe vir 'eendag' dan sal jy nie gelukkig wees nie, dan is vandag 'n *waste*. (Participant M, 56, married)

Ek het ook die fout gemaak dat jy leef vir 'eendag'; jy weet, eendag gaan ek dit en dit en dit doen of eendag... of ek het al gesê, 'as ek 'n man en kinders het, dan gaan ek dit doen, of hierdie koekies bak of so'... maar dis keuses, jy weet, jy moet kies om gelukkig te wees, jy moet kies om tevrede te wees... dis vir my lekker om nie meer so vas te wees nie. Finansiële is dit nie so lekker nie, maar as ek nou dink ek moet nou weer van agt tot vyf elke dag opstaan... Maar ek moet vir jou sê, vandat ek afgetree het is dit baie lekker, want 'n mens is *gesettle*, jy het jou goedjies... maar nou sê jy net 'nee ek doen nie dit nie', of 'nee ek drink nie dit nie'... en dit is ook 'n bevryding as jy ouer word, want jy hoef nie meer dit saam te doen nie. Jy het keuses, want ek dink as jy jonk is dan voel jy 'ek het 'n keuse, ja, maar ek kies maar om saam met die groep te gaan'... (Participant A, 61, single)

Ja-nee wat, dit het maar net aangegaan, 'n nuwe fase. Ek kan nie sê een deel was beter as die ander nie. Jy's later *content*, jy's *happy* met wat jy het... (Participant W, 60, married)



Page 100:

Ek het die klippe uitgesorteer. Die klippe het gebly en dié waarvoor jy staan of dié wat op jou rug ry en jou probeer misbruik, dit is heeltemal uitgesort. Ons is nou 'n *crowd buddies*. Al die *hang-ups* wat jy het, nie van jou ma het dit gesê en... ek is verskriklik onsimpatiek tenoor mense wat rondgaan en sê ek is 60 en hulle was 'n weeskind gewees... *get real man, no*. Nee, ek kan sulke mense glad nie hanteer nie, en die ding is ek distansieer myself heeltemal van sulke mense. (Participant D, 62, married)

Nou voel ek baie volwasse, en ek dink ek het myself ook gevind, ook ek weet presies waarvan ek hou en wat ek nie wil doen nie. Ek sal vir iemand sê 'nee'... jy's verby daai ding ook van waar jy net almal wil *please* en... ag, of jy dink net 'ag, *what the hell*', of jy't daai selfstandigheid, daai kant is nou ontwikkel en jou liggaam het nou 'n bietjie afgeneem, maar dan hanteer mens dit ook... maar toe ek dertig was was daai balans... dit was vir my die beste... ek dink ek het amper meer gewoonnd geraak daaraan dat 'n ou... dat die dieper deel van jou meer sterker is as wat jy voel oor jou fisiese liggaam... (Participant L, 41, married)

Page 101 :

Jy besef, *ok*, dit gaan nou verlore gaan, maar jou wysheid en jou insig en jou werksvermoë en jou menseverhoudinge gaan jou in staat stel om 'n sinvolle lewe te hê. So daar is 'n verlies aan een ding, en 'n aanwinst aan iets anders. Maar dis nogal moeilik om gewoonnd te raak aan die idee van... ek weet nie of jy dalk voel jy verloor 'n deel van jou vroulikheid nie, en jy word net meer 'n 'mens' nie. Jy weet meer neutraal... So, jy besef jy's besig om te beweeg na 'n fase waar jy 'n effektiewe, of 'n interessante of 'n ingeligte persoon is, maar jy gaan minder gedefinieer word as 'man' of as 'vrou'. (Participant K, 48, divorced)

'n Mens het wel *regrets* oor menseverhoudinge – goed wat verkeerd geloop het vroeër in jou lewe. Jy besef 'ek kon dit dalk anders gedoen het'. Daar was 'n kerel wat ek gehad het op universiteit, wat graag met my wou trou, en ek was nog baie onvolwasse op daai stadium en ek het nie kans gesien om te trou en te *settle* nie, want ek was 20 jaar oud. Ek besef agterna dat hy nogals 'n *soulmate* vir my kon gewees het. Maar ek het 'n goeie man gekry op die ou end. Ek het jare later getrou, so jy dink hoe sou dit gewees het... maar jy besef die hele lewe bestaan uit situasies van 'what if?' (Participant H, 52, married)

Page 102 :

Daar is niks wat ek anders sou doen nie. Ek is 'n tevrede mens. (Participant M, 56, married)

My ouers, want ek het vandat ek 16 is vir hulle gesorg, so hulle was baie verswak. So hulle was 43 en 44 toe ek gebore was. Daar was 'n hele generasieverskil en ek het op 'n stadium... nou nog pla dit my dat ek het gemis, ek het nou nie die man en die kinders en die besigheid gedoen nie. 'Is dit al waarvoor ek hier is?' Daai tipe van goed, dis maar waaroor ek partykeer wonder, maar... maar dit was nogal vir my 'n groot *issue* van 'hier sit ek nou al in die veertigs in...wat nou?'. Gaan ons nou aan? Wat sou gewees het? Dit is nou halfpad en wat nou van die volgende helfte. Sjoe, ek is nou oor die helfte en wanneer gaan mens nou weg van die aarde af, jy weet, en daai tipe van ding, en dan besef jy 'nee man dis nie nou al nie'. (Participant R, 42, single)

Um, ek is spyt dat ek nie studeer het nie... ek is spyt dat daar sekere ervarings is, dat ek dit nooit ervaar het nie, soos om getroud te wees, soos om 'n kind te hê, soos om 'n kind te noem, gedoop te word, daarvoor is ek spyt... maar 'n mens kan nie daarby vashak nie. Dit is so, dit is nou net so. (Participant A, 61, single)

*Page 103:*

Ja, ek voel ek het so bietjie uitgemis op daai stukkie, daai sê nou maar tussen vyf-en-twintig en twintig... maar aan die anderkant is ek dankbaar vir my kinders en so... ek sou eerder eintlik toe ek getrou het, eerder later, wat ek gemis het in my jonglewe is daai stukkie van ná *swot* en dan onafhanklik net bly in 'n woonstelletjie. Ek het altyd die idee van *FRIENDS* in my kop, nè. Ek het dit gemis, daai gedeelte van bly in 'n woonstel, almal het nou half werkende jong vriende en jy, jy weet jy werk, maar jy het 'n lekker lewe... jy't nog nie daai verantwoordelikhede van ma en daai getroude lewe nie... So, dis al wat ek, ag ek het dit ook al vir my man gesê, so hy weet dit... (Participant L, 41, married)

Ek sal altyd baie spyt wees dat ek 'n stuk van my jongmenslewe en om jong meisie te wees verloor het deur die aard van my opvoeding. (Participant K, 48, divorced)

*Pagen 104:*

Ek is baie bly ek is nou by 'n punt wat ek kan sê ek gaan nou die beroep doen waarvoor ek gebore is. En dan, ek was baie ongelukkig getroud, so ek hoop regtig ek kan met die man trou met wie ek nou uitgaan. Ek sal graag een keer in my lewe baie gelukkig getroud wil wees. (Participant K, 48, divorced)

Um, nie rîrig nie, ek sou waarskynlik 'n ander tipe beter werk wou gehad het. Iets wat meer kreatief was... so, ja, die enigste ding is seker maar hoe dit voel om iets anders te doen ook, maar mens weet nie nou op hierdie stadium of jy iets nuts kan aanpak, of jy weer 'n nuwe werk gaan kry nie... as jy na veertig is sukkel jy maar om werk te kry, dis 'n probleem. (Participant R, 42, single)

Ek sou miskien iets anders wou geword het... maar ek weet eintlik ook nie regtig wat nie. Nogal in die verpleeggrigting. 'n Ou doen mos maar goed saam met jou man as hy die dag afgetree is... Nee, nee, in ons tyd was daar mos maar net 'n keuse tussen onderwys en verpleging. (Participant W, 60, married)

## Chapter 6

### Page 111:

Wel, ek dink 'n ander deel van ons groep vrouens ook, ons is baie swak toegerus om ons eie finansies te hanteer. So, ek dink baie van ons het gehoop jou man doen dit, en ek het met groot skok besef hy het dit nie gedoen nie. Spesifiek ek, wel my man het so half agter my rug my polisse en goed laat verval, so ek sit in 'n groot krisis. Ek moet aanhou werk totdat ek sewentig is. So my kop is op aftree as ek 70 is. En ek het nou sulke planne, finansiële planne vir die toekoms, maar ek kan nie bekostig om aan aftree te dink nie. Ek dit maak ook nou dat ek na my gesondheid kyk. Ek het besef 'ok, daar's nog baie jare'. (Participant K, 48, divorced)

O, wat ek nou voor tyd het – wat ek nou probeer doen – is ek probeer 'n paar goed doen wat ek nou nie tien jaar terug sou doen nie, soos net gaan kyk na watter kunsuitstalling is in die dorp of as my man weg is na die simfonie-orke te gaan luister. Sommer net op my eie... soos sulke goed kry ek nou méér voor tyd... so, ja, dis absoluut 'n tyd-ding. (Participant M, 56, married)

### Page 112:

Ek het ook bietjie begin lees. Ek het nooit gelees nie... maar ek het myself nou gedwing. Ek het by die biblioteek aangesluit en ek lees nou, en dit begin nou vir my lekker raak. Ek ontdek nou allerhande interessante goed in die bib. (Participant A, 61, single)

Nee, ek voel dat ek probeer meer lees en ek kry meer gelees en ek slaap meer as toe ek skoolgehou het. Oor die tyd, daar is nou tyd om die koerant rustiger te lees. (Participant M, 56, married)

Kyk dit is nou net een keer 'n maand [boekklub]. Ons *worry* nie veel oor die boeke wat ons gelees het nie, maar daar's kaas en wyn. Dit was die voorwaarde – geen tee... en tennis, dis 'n stokperdjie. En ek maak tuin en uh... ja, ag, ek skilder bietjie. (Participant W, 60, married)

Ek is besig om navorsing te doen oor my oupa se lewe. Hy was 'n baie besondere mens in Stellenbosch... so, ek is besig om daar heelwat na te vors... en dan wil ek 'n projek oor argitektuur doen... Ek is so bang ek gaan dood. Ek is so bang, want daar's nog soveel goed wat ek wil doen. (Participant D, 62, married)

Ek het teologie begin swot. (Participant K, 48, divorced).

*Page 113:*

Nie regtig nie. Ek dink as my kinders uit die huis moet wees, sal 'n mens weer ander goed hê wat jou besig hou. Ek wil dan definitief nie meer werk nie, so ek dink ek en my man sal dan baie meer reis en ons wil vir ons 'n huis bou in die Klein Karoo... dalk meer stap, buitelewe-goed doen. So, as ek vorentoe kyk kan ek nie sê wat ons gaan doen of so nie, maar ons sal definitief aktiewe dinge kan doen. (Participant H, 52, married)

...omdat ek in 'n ander posisie is wat ek nou nie eintlik familie en baie vriende het nie, is my werksmense maar eintlik my vriende, so ek gaan sommer saam met hulle uit en ons gesels hier. Ek dink as ek in my posisie by die huis moes wees, sou ek heeltemal stagneer, want ek sal nie uitgaan nie. Jy weet, dit sal vir my 'n groot *effort* wees om uit te gaan en veral na 60 – ek glo ek sal iets anders moet kry om vir my besig te hou as ek nie meer werk nie, waarskynlik op daai stadium sal jy moet goeters doen, want die geld gaan te min wees, pensioen en sulke goed, maar ek sal definitief goed kry om my mee besig te hou. Dalk ander tydelike werkies wat jy kan 'n paar ure in 'n dag of in 'n week kan werk, maar definitief nie kan gaan stil sit nie. Mens kan net soveel keer gaan tuin skoonmaak en met die honde gaan stap en ek voel party naweke is ek heeltemal alleen by die huis, dan voel ek dit, dan dink ek 'sjoe, dis alleen'... (Participant R, 42, single)

*Page 114:*

Dit lyk lekker om op te hou werk, maar nie omdat jy te oud is om te werk nie: dit lyk nog lekker om op te hou werk as jy in die fleur van jou lewe is, om te dink, 'o, ek wil eendag aftree'. Dit klink regtig soos 'n *has been*, jy weet, jy wil nie daai woorde oor jou lippe sit nie, dit klink te aaklig. So, ek sal nie omgee om op te hou werk nie, maar moenie vir my sê ek tree af nie. Dit klink te oud. (Participant H, 52, married)

Nee, ek sal altyd met iets besig wees. Wat is aftree? (Participant D, 62, married)

*Page 116:*

Ja... om nie jouself te kan versorg nie. Ek dink dit moet erg wees. Oud word en sukkel om te loop en daai goed, dit kan ek nog *handle*; ek sal maar met 'n kiere of 'n ding... ek dink as 'n mens se brein gaan... dit moet sleg wees. Niemand sien uit daarna om oud te word nie; dis deel van die lewe en *obviously* gaan jy oud word. Ek het dit so aanvaar. (Participant W, 60, married)

Ek hoop nou maar soos ons almal, dat ons gou doodgaan – dat ons nie daar uitkom nie. Ek dink almal sit dit half uit hulle koppe uit, want jy hoop dit gebeur nie met jou nie. Jy hoop jy kan nog stap tot die dag wat jy doodgaan. (Participant M, 56, married)

Verskriklik, ja, ek is verskriklik bang my brein bly reg maar my liggaam gaan. Ek is bang om oud te word. Ek is regtig bang om oud te word. (Participant D, 62, married)

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Ek weet my ma-hulle en in ons familie is daar so 'n bietjie van 'n Alzheimer's tipe ding en my tannie het gehad en my ouma... en my ma het definitief 'n bietjie Alzheimer's want dié se kop is nie lekker nie... so dit sal my partykeer, omdat ek sien hoe my ma nou is en dan te kyk nou as ek soos iets vergeet het of so, dan dink ek 'o jinne, is dit nie nou al die Alzheimer's wat nou al begin nie?' (Participant L, 41, married)

'n Mens het gesien hoe was hy en 'n mens vrees dat daai selfde gene is in jou, sodat jy ook miskien so sal word. My ma is nie so nie, my ma is in die tagtig en sy's nog baie aan die gang en haar kop is nog goed. So jy weet nie na watter kant dit toe sal gaan nie, maar ja, mens het maar altyd daai vrese. (Participant H, 52, married)

Ja, ek dink die onderliggende vrees is seker maar daar, veral van my ma en ouma se kant af. (Participant R, 42, single)

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So mens het nie 'n keuse nie, maar ek sal nogal nie kan lank lê en 'n sorgprobleem vir ander mense raak nie. Ek hou nie van die idee nie. (Participant H, 52, married)

Nou't ek al vir hulle gesê, "julle gaan sit my maar net daar iewers in 'n oordjie..." (she laughs)... 'maar kom kuier net vir my asseblief en as ek vir julle sê 'moet nooit vir my kom kuier nie, moenie worry nie,' kom maar net weer." Ja, dis vir my nogal, ek wil nie hê ek moet 'n las wees vir iemand anders nie, um, ja, ek was nog altyd iemand gewees wat... my probleem is nie iemand anders se probleem nie. (Participant L, 41, married)

Ja, dit maak my bekommerd want ek weet nie: ek sal seker maar moet na 'n aftree-oord of 'n ding toe gaan en dan maar van daar af, want daar is nou nie kinders en familie of sulke goeters nie. So, ja, dit is maar wat 'n mens bekommerd maak. So, ek sal definitief, ek sal maar na so plek toe moet gaan... mens wonder, 'waar gaan die geld vandaan kom en weet watter tipe behandeling jy moet kry?', want jy weet jy kan net die minimum bekostig. (Participant R, 42, single)

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Wat vir my pla oor ouer word is dat 'n mens is alleen en wie gaan vir jou sorg, nie net fisies sorg nie, want iemand kan na jou kyk in 'n ouetehuis, maar wie gaan na jou finansies kyk, wie gaan vir jou die ekstra vrugtetjie koop in die dorp, daai soort goed. Daar's nie 'n kind wat dit vir jou gaan doen nie, wat ek nou byvoorbeeld vir my ma en pa gedoen het toe hulle ouer geword het. Maar ek glo omdat mens 'n alleenmens is moet dinge reg wees: jou testament moet reg wees, jou begrafnisgoeters en as jy 'n polis het, mense moet weet waar dit is, ensovoorts. (Participant A, 61, single)