

2.	CHAPTER TW0: STRESS EXPERIENCED BY THE FEMALE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PREHISTORIC PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL MILIEUS	24
2.1	INTRODUCTION	26
2.2	CAUSES OF STRESS IN THE FEMALE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PREHISTORIC PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL MILIEUS	27
2.2.1	Stressors at macro-level in society and culture	28
2.2.1.1	Low status of females in patriarchal societies	28
2.2.1.2	Conflict between females for male approval	29
2.2.1.3	Power struggle between males and females	29
2.2.1.4	Exclusion of females from prestigious tasks	30
2.2.1.5	Dispensability of female life	31
2.2.1.6	Marginalisation of females during rituals	31
2.2.1.7	Female gathering considered inferior to male hunting activities	34
2.2.2	Stressors at meso-level in the family, peer-group and during initiation rituals	35
2.2.2.1	Females overloaded with tasks	35
2.2.2.2	Child rearing a female responsibility	37
2.2.2.3	Obligation to neglect children	38
2.2.2.4	Being under pressure to commit infanticide or undergo and perform abortions	38
2.2.2.5	Being compelled by men to move frequently in search of better hunting ground	39
2.2.2.6	Insufficient leisure time	39
2.2.2.7	Stressful marriages	40
2.2.2.8	No initiation rites of passage for girls	42
2.2.3	Stressors at micro-level within the female self	43
2.2.3.1	Physical vulnerability	43
2.2.3.2	Enslavement to bodies	44
2.2.3.3	Expectations regarding fertility	44
2.2.3.4	Obligation to avoid pregnancy and childbirth	45
2.2.3.5	Conflicting physical self image	46
2.2.3.6	Lack of identity	46
2.2.3.7	Low self-concept	47
2.2.3.8	Lack of assertiveness	47
2.3	MANIFESTATIONS OF STRESS IN THE FEMALE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL MILIEUS OF PREHISTORIC SOCIETY	48
2.3.1	Withdrawal and shyness	48
2.3.2.	Feelings of hopelessness	49
2.3.3	Anxiety	49
2.3.4.	Frequent crying or desire to cry	50

2.3.5	Aggressive behaviour	50
2.4.	COPING MECHANISMS	51
2.4.1	Knowledge and utilization of female power in the domestic sphere	51
2.4.2	Positive perception of marginal participation in rituals	52
2.4.3	Transformation of distress into eustress	52
2.4.4	Restriction of number of children	53
2.4.5	Knowledge of fertility worship	54
2.4.6	Wearing charms as a panacea against stress	55
2.4.7	Control of males through withholding services	55
2.4.8	Assertion of female otherness	55
2.4.9	Acceptance of social and family status quo	56
2.4.10	Causing domestic disputes as a power ploy	56
2.4.11	Acceptance of male involvement in the domestic milieu	57
2.4.12	Perception of the domestic sphere as a milieu of cultural growth	57
2.4.13	Avoidance of typically male aggressiveness	57
2.4.14	Experience of an easy transition to female adulthood	57
2.4.15.	Development of a feminine psychology	58
2.4.16	Female support groups	58
2.4.17	Experience of harmony within society and with the natural world	59
2.4.18	Music, dance and singing	60
2.4.19	Creation and wearing of jewellery as an antidote to stress	60
2.4.20	Awareness of society's exaltation of youthful female beauty	61
2.4.21	Knowledge of female power in matriarchal societies	61
2.5	SUMMARY	62

2.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Howell and the Editors of *Time-Life Books* (1966: 170-175), the roots of current emotional patterns, such as stress lie in early society. He maintains that early hunter-gatherers were biologically equipped to cope with their lives by means of their stress reaction, which, in the case of women and girls, was only partially ‘burnt off’ in appropriate ways during the daily struggle for survival. However, males relieved their stress with hectic physical activity such as the hunt.

The early hunter-gatherer educational milieu was stressful for female participants in particular, since it was directly linked to daily life, which was a continual struggle to survive amidst hostile surroundings (Quilici 1972: 13, 65). Early hunter-gatherer females educated the young in the primary educational milieu informally. Secondary formal education may have been given in the form of rituals and initiation ceremonies, mainly for boys, although also for girls (Bronowski 1973: 40; Herzog 1984: 74). Girls and small boys learnt from real-life example and experience in the company of female members of society who were involved in domestic and gathering activities.

Female participants of early educational milieus would have responded to stressors by means of the *fright, flight or fight* syndrome (Lucas 1972: 6; Hanna 1990: 4; Howell *et al.* 1966: 173; Beard 1968: 36; Herzog 1984: 72). Children were prepared for *fear* during ‘brief but tension-filled’ ceremonies, such as initiation rites (Herzog 1984: 74). In other words, stress may not only have featured in early society, it was even deliberately harnessed and used in the educational process. Moreover, this form of organized trauma still exists in contemporary traditional societies (Interview 16). Ardrev (1961: 29) suggests that human evolution would not have occurred if it were not for stress phenomenon:

A rock, a stick a heavy bone - to our ancestral killer ape it meant the margin of survival. However, the use of the weapon meant new and multiplying demands on the nervous system for the co-ordination of muscle and touch and sight. Therefore, at last came the enlarged brain; so at last came man.

Although females may not have always been directly involved with the world of weapons and hunting or specifically trained to be combative, early females would have experienced stress in a gender unique way owing to their social status, biology and psychology as nurturers and bearers of offspring (Mazel 1992a: 122).

Social position would have been a particular stress factor in tribal society where females 'had a very low status, being seen, like the child, as a minor' (Kruger 1992b: 61). This negative attitude towards girls and women would have been prevalent in the educational situation of daily life and in rituals, where adults exemplified traditional tribal ways for the young. This oppressive perception would have also underpinned stressors at macro, meso and micro-level making it difficult for females to cope with the burdens of female daily life.

Although the female participants in the educational milieu of early society may have succumbed to negative manifestations of stress, it is possible that they were able to harness their feelings of pressure and stress, when faced with stressors. They may have been able to turn their *distress* into *eustress* and, therefore, adapt to their environment and facilitate both personal and social growth and creativity. If this were not the case, then their society would not have lasted for the longest part of human existence, that is from ± 700000 - 8300 BC (ninety-nine percent of human time on earth), and survive today among certain tribal groups. Examples of these are: the San or !Xu (who have been living in southern Africa for 20,000 years), the Aborigines of Australia, the Indians of the Amazon and tribes of New Guinea and the Arctic (Burns 1988: 211; White & Brown 1973: 23; Quilici 1972: 13-14; Shostak 1987: 172; Van der Post 1983: 215).

By examining stress experienced by females in the earliest societies of *Homo sapiens sapiens* who first appeared $\pm 90,000$ years ago, one's understanding of the roots of today's problem is enhanced. Shostak (1987: 173) tells us how her interviews with eight !Xu woman were motivated by her desire 'to learn what it meant to be a woman in their culture'. In this way, Shostak hoped to better understand what it meant to be female in her own culture.

Whilst considering factors, which may have exacerbated stress, the following paragraphs will outline possible stressors that confronted early women and girls as well as manifestations of stress and distress. This chapter aims to uncover adaptive coping strategies for maintaining *eustress* and 'healthy tension', that were probably taught to successive generations of prehistoric women and girls (Burns 1988: x).

2.2 CAUSES OF STRESS IN THE FEMALE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PREHISTORIC EDUCATIONAL MILIEU

Life events and daily threats such as death, disease, war, migration, social, environmental, nutritional or economic pressures, as well as natural disasters would have made life extremely difficult for early females. These and other stressors in society, in the family situation or in the

personal self may not have been so easily handled because of negative social or self-perception due to socio-psychobiological gender-related factors such as stress prone biology, unassertiveness and low social status (Musikanth 1996: 20). Contemporary research has placed female biochemistry at the root of the problem with psychological and social spin-offs predisposing females to stress (Mazure *et al* 2002: 16-17; Hegelson & Fritz 2000: 1032-1057; Nolen-Hoeksema 2000: 504-511).

2.2.1 Stressors at macro-level in society and culture

In early society, stressors facing the female participants in the educational milieu were embedded in culture and society, which bestowed power on male participants. Marginalisation of female participants in the educational milieu may have related causes of tension in the lives of prehistoric women and girls (Rosaldo 1974: 19). Women and girls were encouraged to lead and value egalitarian lives of caring, nurturing and partnership but only within the domestic sphere. They were thus expected to conform to rules of separateness and imbalance of power. They were also forced to respect male aspirations regarding being typically masculine. This involved being socially successful according to male norms and in control (Gray 1992: 5-6; Gray 1999: 7).

2.2.1.1 Low status of females in patriarchal societies

According to Bamberger (1974: 264-265), a study of both present and past hunter-gatherer societies indicates that privilege always resides in the hands of male participants. Wadley (in Mazel 1992a: 124) believes that 'hunter-gatherer women could only change their status substantially in the subsistence area by becoming hunters and by manufacturing weapons and tools' (traditionally male activities). This may have led to chronic stress, which would have contributed to an inability to cope with other stressors including that of being the 'subjects of male aggression' (Mazel 1989a: 125).

Even in the primary educational milieu, where children were brought up in the female world of gathering, boys tended to take a leadership role. Van der Post (1983: 214) observed:

...on the edge of the bush, a mile from our camp, we overtook a brave little procession composed of three of the four children, all up to their ears in thorn and grass. A little boy, grubbing stick in hand, led the procession with a bundle full of roots, tubers, caterpillars, and succulent grubs in his hand.

Men were made to seem stronger and perfect in early society. For example, male defecation is a secret kept for a time from the opposite sex in some contemporary primitive societies (Lucas 1972: 13).

2.2.1.2 Conflict between females for male approval

According to Lamphere (1974: 109), women tend to compete and conflict when social power and authority are in the hands of men because each individual tries to influence and impress the male authority figure to gain favour. In societies where the female members are restricted to the domestic sphere and men hold all the power and authority, often antagonism and rivalry arise. In extended tribal societies, especially polygamous ones, female participants feel pressure due to friction between co-wives, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law who 'compete for goods and services' from the male head of the family, or seek influence within the group for themselves and their particular children. Although they all take part in the same educational and domestic activities (child rearing, food gathering etc.), adult female participants and girls who emulate them in the primary and secondary educational milieu, do not experience 'female bonding' found in societies where authority is shared by both genders (Lamphere 1974: 97, 105, 107, 109). In egalitarian societies, Lamphere (1974: 109) maintains that:

Women do not need to play the game of subtle influence and behind-the scene manipulation. In such societies, women are able to form strong co-operative ties with their female kin and other women in carrying out everyday activities.

2.2.1.3 Power struggle between males and females

Mazel (1992a: 123) maintains that stress experienced in early hunter-gatherer society was due to striving for parity with men, on the part of the female participants. Yet, he views this conflict as the main stimulus for social growth, along with 'stress between age groups and within and between lineages', especially in the case of the Thukela Basin, South Africa (7000-2000 BP) hunter-gatherer society (Mazel 1992a: 123).

Although female participants in the early hunter-gatherer educational milieu may have struggled for social power, they remained essentially without it (Rosaldo & Lamphere 1974: 8). This is seen in hunter-gatherer groups that survived until current times, such as pygmies, San and Australian aborigines. Even in these otherwise egalitarian groups, women do not have social power. There are no chiefs, the old do not have authority over others, the heads of families

discuss every problem, and women take part in meetings, yet the latter are never the real leaders (Quilici 1972: 69-70).

According to Turnbull (1986: 21), the Mbuti (pygmy) society of Zaire, may not even consider motherhood exceptional or gender-specific. Among the Mbuti the struggle for authority based on gender is held in perpetual tension, to the point that gender is actually variable, except in the physical realities of the female reproductive system. Although the first menstrual period (and potential motherhood and womanhood) is marked by the *elima* festival, individuals lead a socially and psychologically genderless life thereafter. In the words of Turnbull (1986: 21):

much Mbuti life is lived in a kind of gender limbo, for even the division of labour according to gender is by no means rigid and exclusive at any age level. Obviously, motherhood is the one supreme and absolute exception to gender-specific behaviour, but I rather suspect the Mbuti would say that fatherhood is an exception as well.

Even 'falling in love' is devoid of the warmth of affection, and physical attraction is manifested equally between all, regardless of gender (Turnbull 1986: 22). Men do not hold all authority and power in Mbuti society, but then no one does. Egalitarianism, thus, in a sense, deprives women and girls of control even in their uniquely female procreative function, where the suffering and strain is undeniably theirs to bear (Sanday 1981: 22-29).

2.2.1.4 Exclusion of females from prestigious tasks

Despite having power in the gathering and domestic sphere early females had a limited public role. In contemporary hunter-gatherer pygmy society, only men may constitute the council, whose 'mutual agreement determines every decision regarding the group' (Quilici 1972: 10).

Only male participants in the educational milieu of contemporary hunter-gatherer society engage in the complicated mental activity of tool and weapon making. Amongst the San, South American Indians and Polynesian tribes, these artifacts are also a symbol of authority, as in the case of the Aborigine boomerang. The situation was probably the same in the past, when the male participants made tools and weapons out of wood and flint, quartzite, quartz, lava, obsidian, bone and antler (Howell *et al.* 1966: 116). Although evidence suggests that women were probably expected to use these tools for digging, cutting and chopping, they were not allowed to partake in the important task of making them (Howell *et al.* 1966: 121). On the other hand, in parts of contemporary Polynesia women are expected to make nets from palm leaves

and hold the nets, while men drive the fish into them and draw them onto the beach. However, these onerous feminine tasks are given little importance (Quilici 1972 24-39).

According to Beard (1968: 53), women and girls in prehistoric society, were not allowed to make certain ceremonial garments. The male participants learnt to make these 'lest they be contaminated by the touch of women'. Females made all other clothing. Being partially excluded from this traditionally female task may have been a cause of stress and feelings of marginalisation.

2.2.1.5 Dispensability of female life

Not only were the female participants nonessential members of society, they were disposable (Van der Post 1983: 89). Van der Post (1983: 89) relates the story of a male member of a San tribeon trial in Botswana for murder. Apparently, it had been a ritual (and, therefore, acceptable) murder, involving a man's killing of a child, his own sister, to make medicine for the clan (Van der Post 1983: 89). Ironically, it was only by means of her death that this particular female participant in the educational milieu was allowed to take part in a ritual. Usually, she would not have played any significant part in the ceremonial life of the tribe.

2.2.1.6 Marginalisation of females during rituals

Female participants were excluded from experiencing important initiation rituals in early society. Initiation rituals were the only formal or secondary education milieu for boys in hunter-gatherer society. In primitive tribal societies, boys are removed from the domestic milieu by means of a series of elaborate initiation rituals, which formally taught them to reject the world of their mother and 'to seek manhood outside the home'. The education of boys was a 'natural process', which involved following in their elders' footsteps. However, girls gradually become adult almost only by emulating their mothers and other females in the informal primary educational milieu. *Rites de passage* were virtually non-existent. There may have been simple rituals to herald the start of menstruation, but none of the important ceremonies that marked the transition to manhood for boys. Female initiation may have only involved a short ceremony to celebrate the biological and domestic female role by emphasizing physical development, fertility and child bearing. Although this celebration may have venerated fertility, it endorsed women as separate and inferior. Male initiation rituals were much more elaborate and important and excluded all female influence (Rosaldo 1974: 28).

This deprecatory attitude towards the inclusion of females in important rituals must have caused tension in primitive tribal girls and women. Moreover, Whitehouse and Wilkins (1986: 121) maintain that pubertal rites for a girl at the onset of menstruation would have been embarrassing for her. They cite the example of the first menstruation ritual of the *!Xu*, which involves older men holding branches over their foreheads, to represent the horns of gemsbok, whose mating behaviour the men mimic and ridicule. The rest of tribe follows, dancing, singing and laughing at the newly fertile state of the girl concerned.

In tribal South America, a female is excluded from participating in rituals. She is not even allowed to know about male rituals. She faces possible death, if knowledge is obtained of secret male rituals. Girls in tribal primary and secondary educational milieus, would probably have felt the strain of an oppressive education, which mostly consisted of sanctions and restraints (Bamberger 1974 276-290). According to Bamberger (1974: 277):

The transmission of cultural values, to boys in the form of esoteric lore, to girls in terms of lifelong prohibitions and restrictions on their behaviour, constitutes the major focus of adolescent initiation in tropical South America.

Early girls and women were also banned from ceremonies that emphasized hunting, the all-important male activity (Howell *et al* 1966: 149). Even today, adult initiated male members of the tribe have secret ceremonies amongst the Tierra del Fuego aboriginal Indians, as well as inhabitants of tropical forest of the Northwest Amazon and central Brazil. Occasionally, a female member of the Yamana-Yaghan (Fuegian) tribe may be allowed to enter the *Kina* a male ceremonial lodge, if she is considered trustworthy, but this is not generally a feature of primitive tribal societies.

According to Howell *et al.* (1966: 99), women were even peripheral to mating dance rituals that were ‘a way of courting...showing off (male) bravery to impress prospective mates’. Rituals and ceremonies were symbols of male predominance and female subjugation in early tribal society. According to Bamberger (1974: 274), the masks and instruments of all-male rites are:

...cultural manifestations of male authority (representing) restrictive measures invented to frighten and coerce women into socially acceptable behaviour...(to be) patient, know how to keep a secret and not be curious...

Researching the Tukuna, a tribe occupying the Amazon basin, Nimuendafú, Bamberger (1974: 273) tells of the ‘killing, quartering, smoking and making into mush, for a village feast, of the

body of a girl who secretly watched a forbidden ritual'. Bamberger maintains that gang rape is often meted out as punishment for female members of the group, who attempt to discover male secrets (Bamberger 1974: 275).

Although hunter-gatherer women and girls were under terrifying pressure to keep out of male ritual life, there were times when they were included. These were peripheral to the main ceremonies. For example the Spanish-Levantine cave paintings of 4500-11500 years ago, depict women performing what appears to be a ceremonial dance. However, they are portrayed circling around a male figure (Prideaux & the Editors of *Time Life Books* 1973: 151).

Van der Post (1983: 240) describes a ritual where girls and women are deliberately made to wait for male participants. Van der Post (1983: 240) also observed the secondary role played by women in the greatest of all the San dances: *The Fire Dance*. Here, women and girls grouped together, sang, lit the fire and remained seated beside the flames during the dance, which the men performed around the women and the fire. During this ritual, Van der Post noticed that some female participants 'moan and tremble', indicating a need for a male dancer and healer to draw out the spirit 'causing her unrest' (Van der Post 1983: 241-242). This was, perhaps, a ritualistic manifestation of distress experienced by female participants in this secondary educational milieu of rituals and ceremonies..

According to Howell *et al.* (1966: 158-159), only men of early society could create cave paintings and figurines in accompaniment to tribal ritual, as a way of coping with the anxieties of life. Cave artists painted animals to gain power over them and ensure their fertility. It is also possible that the painting and sculpture of fertility symbols were aimed at controlling what was considered the principal female role. Women were, thus, further denied control over their own destinies (Prideaux *et al.* 1973: 139; Bronowski 1973: 54).

Prehistoric women and girls most probably played a secondary role in music rituals. For example, in the case of the San, only men and boys are allowed to perform on certain instruments played at important or stressful times, such as after the hunt, at dawn or during a famine (Van der Post 1983: 225).

Women and girls usually watched the all-male San games, with small children imitating the movements of the men and older boys (Van der Post 1983: 220). Women did, however, have special games of a less aggressive nature (Van der Post 1983: 222). This may have alleviated stress, except that the game was restricted to the all-female and domestic domain and considered inferior to male games.

Hunter-gatherer women and girls had to share fertility dolls and statuettes with men and boys, an area where they might have preferred a sense of complete control and competency. For example, among the Landuman of Rioi Nunez (Amazonian Indian tribe), a doll called *dikori* serves several roles, although originally carried by a girl who is still childless. The doll is given a name during an important ceremony and treated with ritual respect. Moreover, it remains the sacred possession of childless women (a stressful reminder of being barren), then it becomes a toy for general use (Quilici 1972: 102).

Without much recourse to rituals as a coping mechanism, the female participants of early tribal society would have felt that their lives were determined entirely by external influences. These women and girls would never have had the chance to develop an internal locus of control. They would have learned to be helpless. According to Burns (1988: 40-41), individuals who are victims of the condition of *learned helplessness* will experience stressors negatively and manifest signs of distress (Burns 1988: 41).

2.2.1.7 Female gathering considered inferior to male hunting activities

White & Brown (1973: 86) points out that even though gathering provided most of the food, a high premium was placed on male hunting skills. Yet gathered wild plant foods generally comprised most of the tribe's diet (65 percent in the case of the contemporary Kalahari *!Xu* (Shostak 1987: 171). According to Rosaldo 1974: 19):

Although female gathering rather than male hunting may provide the bulk of a group's nutritional requirements, male as opposed to female activities are always recognized as predominantly important, and (primitive) cultural systems give authority and (prestige) value to the roles and activities of men.

Rosaldo quotes the example, in some parts of New Guinea, of prestige being placed on yams (sweet potatoes), which only men grow and which are distributed at feasts, as opposed to those which women grow (Rosaldo 1974: 19). Lee (in Mazel 1989b: 124) points out that, although the San 'are often said to be egalitarian, gender relations are not equal, and plant gathering is a low status job compared to hunting'. Van der Post (1983: 212) describes the celebration offered to returning (successful) hunters, as compared with the quiet return of the female gatherers:

Marshall (in Mazel 1989b: 124) mentions that 'San women dance their praise of hunters, but women are not greeted in this manner when returning with vegetables'. Although San children

observed by Van der Post all gathered food such as ‘roots, tubers, caterpillars, grubs, berries, even rare groundnuts’, the child who brought a bigger animal, such as a tortoise, received the most praise and reward. This more hunter-like contribution was considered superior (Van der Post 1983: 214).

Solemn ceremonies were held before and after each hunt including a dance of thanks among the San people (Van der Post 1983: 228-230, 235). This enabled them to ‘call on unbelievable reserves of spirit and energy’ and cope with ‘strain of the hunt, the signs of the fatigue from running all day under a cloudless sky in a high temperature’. Apparently less ritual was involved in preparation for the female pastime of plant gathering, yet women worked long hours in the heat, exposed to the dangers of the bush.

Prehistoric women and girls may have been expected to help men and boys in the long pursuit of wounded animals, as is the case of the pygmies of Central Africa, whose way of life dates from the Stone Age. These females had to face stress and danger, but were not granted the prestige of the male hunters (Quilici 1972: 7-9).

Judging from archaeological evidence, Prideaux *et al.* (1973: 72) maintain that in addition to techniques used by contemporary hunter gatherers, such as Canada’s Netsilik Eskimos, early women helped men in the spearing of salmon in Dordogne in France’. Without changing their social status, this task was merely an addition to the long list of chores for the female participants in the educational milieu. Moreover, only women and children had the task of cleaning and drying the catch.

2.2.2 Stressors at meso-level in the family, peer-group and during initiation rituals

As is the case with the stressors discussed above (macro-level), those females in the primary educational milieu of daily life spent at the base camp, out and about gathering, or in the more formal milieu of rituals and ceremonies that emphasized the female role, were grounded in a negative perception of this role. This may have predisposed negative female reactions to stress (Herzog 1984: 74).

2.2.2.1 Females overloaded with tasks

As members of an extended family that they were expected to nurture, female hunter-gatherers learnt, taught and performed many tasks, while facing the stressors of a hazardous daily struggle for survival and life events, such as death and birth. The male participants would have had the

physical chase of the hunt to release their tension, whereas females may have possibly remained chronically under stress without such frequent and vigorous exercise (Howell *et al.* 1966: 27; White & Brown 1973: 55, 127-130)

Generally excluded from hunting-related activities, primordial women and girls focused on gathering with many other tasks assigned to them. Quilici (1972: 85) maintains that hunter-gatherer women and girls did all the domestic chores. These would have including shelter making, care for the ill and protecting fire and water (McGee & Kroeber in Beard 1968: 57; Morris 1999).

Girls and women, in primitive hunters-gatherer families were not only seen as nurturers of children, but were often in charge of the ill. (Vazey 1985: 32). Van der Post (1983: 209) gives an example of how a female gatherer in San society, was expected to always be aware of her role as a 'nurse' to young and old alike. Furthermore, female participants in the primary educational milieu were expected to bury the dead, which involved particular ceremonies and music. Although the latter may have helped them cope with this task, it may have been yet another gender-related and onerous nurturing duty to perform, teach and learn (Beard 1968: 75).

In societies, where knowledge of fire-making did not yet exist, most likely the women had the vital task of preserving natural fire, by carrying burning coals in a ball of clay or looking after it at the base camp (White & Brown 1973: 11, 20, 27, 143; Howell *et al.* 1966: 93). This momentous assignment may have been particularly stressful since the survival of the group depended on fire (Quilici 1972: 17-18). Contemporary examples of such societies would be: the Andaman Island communities of Indonesia, classed among the Asiatic pygmies, and the Badjaos, sea-nomads who wander between Mindanao and Sulu Seas, in the Philippines. According to Quilici (1972: 17-18), the latter:

...always have fire within reach, and family groups may be seen wandering about the lagoons or sailing their canoes with one or more of them, always the women, holding a burning piece of wood in the right hand.

In China's Choukoutien caves, where *Homo Erectus* dwelled 400,000 years ago, archaeologists found a hearth with ashes piled 22 feet deep, 'an indication that the fire there had been nurtured for generations' by females who were stationed there whilst caring for the young, ill and old (White & Brown 1973: 24, 30).

Women, mothers and daughters were also responsible for much of the water control in prehistoric society (Howell *et al.* 1966: 181). Water, which, like food ‘makes existence possible’ - is kept by contemporary San women ‘in a large number of ostrich eggs buried in marked places in the desert’. In the primary educational situation, the San mother usually has the responsibility of administering water with a stick ‘straw’ passed into her child’s mouth (Quilici 1972: 19-21). Van der Post (1983: 209) observed rows of ostrich eggshells, usually used as water containers, along the sides of the shelters where the female participants slept, securely placed in the sand and plugged with grass. The burden of this precious charge must have been stressful in itself and exacerbated by the many other responsibilities placed on the female participants, including the demanding task of child-rearing (Van der Post 1983: 209).

2.2.2.2 Child rearing a female responsibility

Bearing and caring for the young were the main responsibilities assigned to older female participants in the educational milieu. These functions were carried out in addition to many chores. In reference to contemporary Aboriginal women, Vazey (1985: 32) asserts that ‘the place assigned to them and the responsibilities demanded of them (were) primarily as producers’ of children.

Unlike animals, human babies who have to be carried and held while nursing are also dependent on their mothers for many years. Early females bore the brunt of carrying small children as well as other objects such as skins for blankets or tents (Howell *et al.* 1966: 132).

Female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieu in the earliest of societies were cast in the strenuous role of mother and wife from childhood. Such early adult responsibility, before a girl was emotionally ready, may have also been a cause of negative emotional stress for these children. If a child grows up too quickly, he/ she will not learn life skills, which ensure adequate stress management such as: the handling of negative emotions; the development of a realistic and positive self-concept, or the building of healthy relationships (Gray 1999: 276). Van der Post (1983: 214) tells of the maternal anxiety of a small San girl, who:

... was already a little mother to her companions because, although she followed the boy in front dutifully like a wife, she made sure by constant backward glances and affectionate exhortations that the youngest of all, who was in the rear, stayed close to her.

2.2.2.3 Obligation to neglect children

Although older and younger female participants experienced the continual pressure of being held responsible for girls and young boys, the toughness of daily life and struggle for survival would have forced them often to ignore children in their care. As a result, children in early tribal families were left to cope with, ignore or suppress physical and emotional pain, without help from others. Moreover, boys were ‘abandoned’ by female guardians at an early age, armed with small bows and arrows and expected to manage the rigours of hunting with older (stronger and more agile) boys and men. This may have caused inner tension in their female caregivers, who had been instilled with a sense of maternal protection, in accordance with their accepted psychobiosocial role. After all, they would have, most probably, looked after very small children with great protectiveness and tenderness, especially in the evening, around the hearth (Quilici 1972: 63-64).

2.2.2.4 Being under pressure to commit infanticide or undergo and perform abortions

Calculated indifference towards children, on the part of female caregivers, often extended to infanticide in primitive society. Although children were regarded as the ‘earthly manifestation of heavenly fertility’ (and centre of the life-world of the female participants in education), it was considered essential to keep down numbers at times due to scarcity of food or the difficulty caring for many children (Margolin 1988: 50). Thus, babies were sacrificed to ensure the mother’s continuation as a functional member of the group. Some unhealthy babies were killed. Owing to a need for selection of the fittest within the group, others were slaughtered as a result of the loss of the mother in childbirth and a lack of a willing caregiver. Others died when their mothers were abandoned by a mate. The Indians of Eastern Brazil, the Eskimos, the San and the Ituri pygmies all, until comparatively recently, resorted to infanticide in cases of extreme necessity, as indicated above (Quilici 1972: 63-65; Margolin 1988: 50).

San women, expected to remain sterile during periods of drought, had to kill their unborn children. Van der Post (1983: 239) comments that the San had small families and mentions infanticide.

If a women had conceived in a fall of rain that was not maintained and bore a child in a period of drought which threatened the survival of all, immediately at birth, the child was taken from her, before, as Dabe confirmed, ‘it could cry in her heart’, and was killed by the other women.

Van der Post (1983: 239) mentions 'the anguish and bitterness with which those who love children performed this deed'.

Possible evidence exists of infanticide committed some 30,000 years ago in Siberia. In a grave at a site called Malta, archaeologists found the skeleton of a four-year-old girl, decked with an ivory 'diadem', an ivory bracelet and a necklace of 120 ivory beads. Nearby were other objects of bone and stone, funeral gifts to a cherished child possibly killed in an act of female infanticide (Prideaux *et al* 1973: 44). Margolin (1988: 50) argues that infanticide was entrenched in the customs of early society.

2.2.2.5 Being forced by men to move frequently in search of better hunting ground

It may have been particularly stressful for female family members to move often with the tribe in search of better hunting grounds. Not only would they have had to carry babies and possessions, they would have had to care for older children, the elderly and the ill during the journey. They would have had to set up shelters, gather food and find water in frequently unfamiliar places (Prideaux *et al* 1973: 15).

The actual moving, as well as the shock of having to acclimatise to a new environment, may have been oppressing. Females also had to guard the hearth in a new place, while the men were hunting. Constant worry and anxiety regarding their vulnerability to animal and human predators must have been the lot of the female family members of early society (Howell *et al.* 1966: 151-152).

2.2.2.6 Insufficient leisure time

Due to their perennial task overload, it is doubtful whether early women and girls would have had much rest and relaxation. Prideaux *et al.* (1973: 54) state that:

Men would have plenty of leisure time... probably swapped tales, played games with polished and decorated bone, whilst women busied themselves with chores...

Men had to face the danger of the hunt, but thereafter; received much praise and glory and the right to relax and enjoy preparing for the next hunt during the long hours in between hunts. Female participants, considered a support system to family members were not granted such rights.

2.2.2.7 Stressful marriages

San rock art usually depicts the male participant in the educational milieu as a child, husband, hunter and fighter with his women always in close support (Van der Post 1983: 31). Women and girls in prehistoric society were expected to value themselves only in the light of their affiliation to male family members. A song of the San women involves a wife's anguished waiting for her hunter to come home (Van der Post 1983: 223). In marriage, the wife was of secondary significance to her husband. Marriage may have been a source of stress for the female participants in the patriarchal hunter-gather primary and secondary educational milieus.

In the words of Collier (1974: 93):

Marriage in a society with patrilocal extended households is a traumatic affair for everyone, but particularly for a bride who has to leave her own family to live with her husband's relatives.

According to Collier (1974: 93), the hunter-gatherer husband's family regards his wife as an outsider, who might upset the current group set-up. Thus they delegate her to the lowest level of the female social structure. Collier stresses her possible distress at this subordination, which may be exacerbated by physical abuse and jealousy on the part of her mother-in law who is her rival in seeking her husband's support. Other wives may also quarrel with her over domestic matters. This squabbling, moreover, gives the male members of society another reason to consider women as irrational and, therefore, inferior.

Marriage in primitive societies might be a cause of stress to women and girls because the bride's personal needs are not always considered. Marriage is arranged when the bride and groom are babies or small children, according to communal needs. What is important is the union, through marriage, of groups in need of strength and support in times of adversity (Quilici 1972: 57).

While growing up and learning to take their role in early society, girls were forced to accept the harsh reality of arranged marriages. In the case of the Peuls of the Niger basin, a girl still waits from birth until 15-18 years before she is taken to her husband's house and loses whatever personal identity may still remain to her. Then, she faces additional stress of having to prove to be a fertile wife, before the actual wedding takes place. After returning to her family's house, she gives birth to her first child. Thereafter, she is allowed to settle forever in her husband's house (Quilici 1972: 58). Respect follows, only after proof of her fertility and the production of

numerous offspring, which, in the primitive world, ensure the survival of the group (Quilici 1972: 61-62). Co-operation was ensured between groups by forcing female members to leave the security of their own tribe for a new life with a strange group. In the words of Howell *et al* (1966: 99):

When the bands part to struggle through the winter ahead (It is the) females of one band (who)will follow the males of another.

Although African pygmies do not sign family contracts, and marriages are monogamous, decisions concerning marriage are made by the men. Female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus are considered mere possessions and a source of wealth. Their personal feelings do not play much of a role. For example, a pygmy man will often donate one of his female relatives to the group from whom he has selected his own wife, to compensate for their loss of a working member. In some tribes, a man may reimburse the family that is relinquishing one of its 'active young' women, by working for it a while (Quilici 1972: 58-59). Even among today's San, a man must repay his wife's parents by helping them for many years, until they eventually join his tribe (Walters 1989: 8).

Polygamy (several wives for one husband) was another aspect of early tribal marriage that may have been a source of stress for female participants involved in the educational situation of daily life. Polygamy is either still, or was until recently, practised in Africa, the Amazon jungles, the archipelagos of Oceania and the Aborigines of Australia (Quilici 1972: 59-61). Polygamy is and was stressful for the wives regarded as mere reproductive receptacles by husbands who desired to continue the family line through as many sons as possible. The fact that sons, and not daughters, were valued would have also been a likely cause of stress. Polyandry (several husbands for one wife) was practised by the Eskimos until 1940, due to a high ratio of men to women of marriageable age. The latter would have experienced the pressure of always being expected to conceive and continuous pregnancy or childrearing (Quilici 1972: 59-61).

Marriage meant a lack of personal control for the hunter-gatherer wife, expected to be the weaker partner who was ever-waiting for, and depending on, the return of her (superior) husband from hunting. In San families, a wife is expected to stay with her husband (not the rest of group), when old age may mean desertion by the tribe (Van der Post 1983: 251). Van der Post (1983: 251) describes how San women unassertively suppress their feelings and accept their traditional fate since they 'had to do it to others before them'.

Although the San wife observed by Van der Post remained with her husband until her last breath, she was made to sleep in separate shelters, during the earlier years of her marriage (Van der Post 1983: 209). In New Guinea, the men and women often have separate sleeping quarters. According to Rosaldo (1974: 27) separateness allows men and older boys to control fellow group members and to keep distant 'from intimate interaction' and unmediated involvement. They are, thus, allowed to be 'sacred'; and 'develop an image and mantle of integrity, worth, and superiority over women' (Rosaldo 1974: 27)

2.2.2.8 No initiation rites of passage for girls

Unlike boys, girls in early society did not receive elaborate initiation rites as the culmination of social education, which complemented the family education. The future of the tribe was considered as dependent only on men, who were, thus, made to take part in initiation rituals that tested and moulded their characters. They also had to learn historical traditions in minute detail and language, religious and moral customs (Quilici 1972: 66-67; Ortner 1974: 78, 80).

Women and girls may have played a part in certain rituals but these were usually peripheral. Kruger (1992b: 61) mentions this exclusion of women and girls from the only 'genuine education' provided by the initiation school. These ceremonies, where useful skills, traditions and customs' were mastered, included tool making and hunting, which often took the form of ritual dance' (Howell *et al.* 1966: 91; 98). Girls learnt in an informal primary educational milieu, which was:

...little more than the simple formation of habits by way of example set by the parents in their daily lives which were regulated by accepted tribal ways.

(Kruger 1992b: 61),

Marginalisation from formal education may have been a cause of inner tension in the female participants of the primary educational milieu (Prideaux *et al* 1973: 75; Ortner 1974: 78; Quilici 1972: 66-67; Kruger 1992b: 61; Rosaldo & Lamphere 1974: 14-15).

Another reason for stress may have been the aggressive anti-female attitude prevalent in the secondary educational (ritual) milieu where boys were considered purified of the ignominious female influence that they had felt since birth. Thereafter, their socialisation was transferred to the hands of men (Quilici 1972: 66-67; Ortner 1974: 78, 80; Kruger 1992b: 61; Rosaldo & Lamphere 1974: 14-15).

2.2.3 Stressors at micro-level within the female self

Whether, and to what degree, a female member of primitive tribal society actually experienced stress in response to stressors at macro and meso-level, would have largely depended on factors, at micro-level, within her biopsychosocial self (Vrey 1979: 89-91, 193 112-115). For, early female self-identity was tribal identity and not the contemporary westernised concept of the individual self. Furthermore, negative perceptions of this socially determined self (with psychobiological roots) may have caused stress in the individual female (Lucas 1972: 9, 13-14; Whitehouse & Wilkins 1986: 161). Physical factors, personality differences and self-concept formation would have played a role in the stress response of early women and girls involved in raising children. These factors might have been stressors in themselves (Rosaldo 1974: 18; 25, Prideaux *et al* 1973: 1).

Contemporary research has identified a psychobiochemical predisposition to stress in females. This may also be applicable in early women and girls who are psychobiologically the same as those of later eras. Whether centuries of social subordination has caused this present-day diathesis is debatable and a conclusive argument requires empirical evidence of the brain chemistry and psychology of hunter-gatherer females. Nevertheless, these psychobiological factors may have been interdependent on the negative social perception that underpinned various stressors that faced females at macro or meso-level as described above and many micro-level stressors dealt with in the following paragraphs.

2.2.3.1 Physical vulnerability

Differences in physical make-up, endurance and strength may have contributed to stressful sexual discrimination in ceremonial and other activities (Rosaldo 1974: 19). Cro-Magnon skeletons found in Les Eyzies in 1868 show that early adult men were decidedly taller than women (Prideaux *et al.* 1973: 1).

Female physical weakness and defencelessness and their subsequent treatment might have caused tension and strain. Not only would hunter-gatherer women and girls have been easy prey for marauding animals and humans, they were vulnerable to physical abuse by stronger group members. They were probably 'bullied into shape' by males in particular (Prideaux *et al.* 1973: 1). Gowlett (1984: 153) describes a prehistoric cemetery set aside for victims of violence, including women and children.

2.2.3.2 Enslavement to bodies

Another physical stressor facing an early woman or girl would have been her subjection to her psychobiological functions for most of her life. The natural processes surrounding reproduction took up a large part of her energy, time and emotional and bodily activity. Female physical development and the experience of puberty, menstruation, premenstrual moods and physical symptoms, sexuality, pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, childbirth, early parenthood, menopause and aging are stressful for females today. This was also most likely the case in the past. Often accompanied by physical and mental discomfort and danger, female psychobiological realities would have interrupted the early tribal female's normal routine of socially circumscribed fixed responses to daily stressors and given rise to feelings of helplessness and distress (Eli Lilly 1998: 3; European College of Neuropsychopharmacology 1999: S204).

The female psychophysical self may have contributed to marginalisation and stigmatisation of hunter-gatherer women and girls. Their small physique, as well as the psychobiological functions, may have imposed various restrictions on social activities. According to Mazel (1989b: 124), the San feared that 'female fluids, such as menstrual blood, breast and uterine fluids' were damaging to health.

In early tribal society, girls and women were not allowed to go beyond the limits of their psychobiological identity, which restricted them to childcare and secondary domestic status. On the other hand, men and boys were allowed to transcend their physical selves and explore a prestigious cultural world of technology and religious or artistic symbols that surrounded hunting and warfare. Males were allowed to participate in esoteric practices and rites (magic) to control natural forces, as in the case of the rain dances of the Aborigines or the trance dances of medicine men in Africa and Oceania, Central and South America (Quilici 1972: 94; Ortner 1974: 74-79, 85, 87).

2.2.3.3 Expectations regarding fertility

Another stressor arising from the early female physical self was her need to prove fertility, as integral to her social and familial identity. According to Rosaldo (1974: 32):

A women who is a wife and mother is benign', but is perceived as dangerous 'when she fails to bear children'.

Pressure to be fertile was evident in fertility worship in the form of prehistoric goddess statues discovered in various parts of Europe, such as the well-rounded statuettes archaeologists call *Venus*. Some 60 have been found scattered from France to Siberia. All were made 20,000 to 27,000 years ago and most display the same motherly figure. Examples are the Czech clay Venus, the ivory French Lespugne Venus, the stone Willendorf Venus found in Austria, the Gagarino Venus, carved from a mammoth tusk and discovered in Siberia and Italy's Chioizza Venus of sandstone (Prideaux *et al.* 1973: 99). Most experts agree that these fertility symbols are images of the mother as goddess, revered by early society as the source and protector of all good things (Stange 1993: 57).

Womanhood was idealized. However, this was only in terms of fertility, reproduction and as an object of erotic desire and sexual appetite. This was exemplified in the statues, which often distort, exaggerate and focus on female bulges and genitals. They have disproportionately huge breasts and belly, sometimes with rolls of fat, shapeless or missing arms, legs and necks, and featureless or covered heads (Prideaux *et al.* 1973: 96-99). These fertility figurines suggest that individual female identity was subservient to the sexual identity. Yet, according to Prideaux, *et al.* (1973: 97) these early artists were capable of producing naturalistic art, for example when documenting human experience or portraying male genitals. Thus, the question is raised why the female anatomy was deliberately exaggerated to emphasize fecundity regardless of other individual traits (Prideaux *et al.* 1973: 151).

2.2.3.4 Obligation to avoid pregnancy and childbirth

Fertility and motherhood was venerated by early society. Nevertheless, in some tribes pressure to remain infertile occurred during periods of short food supply, for instance. Women and girls of childbearing age suffered having to choose between fulfilling their natural and socially esteemed role of reproduction and childrearing or making sure that they did not become pregnant and thus risk having their baby killed (Van de Post 1983: 238). According to Prideaux *et al.* (1973: 151), contemporary hunter-gatherer women with too many children practise infanticide, crude forms of birth control and abortion. These distressing measures were probably practised in prehistoric times too. Cave-art paintings of a single child suggest that families were small and possibly not only due to a high infant mortality rate. An example is one of the Spanish Levantine paintings, which depicts a woman strolling with her (possibly only) child.

2.2.3.5 Conflicting physical self image

Although the female body was revered by male participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus for its potential for fertility and motherhood, it was also feared and abhorred for the physiological secrets it withheld from men and boys, who did not naturally experience the reproductive life cycle. Based on studies of Guatemalan women, Paul and O’Laughlin (in Rosaldo & Lamphere 1974: 13) maintain that on the one hand, even women see their bodies ‘ as competent and skilful in areas of work, but as being changeable, mysterious and a source of danger in the sphere of sex and reproduction’. Thus, physical identity presented a conflicting image for early women and girls.

2.2.3.6 Lack of identity

Early men and boys were allowed individual and differentiated roles in a competitive and hierarchical society (especially during initiation tests when young men were expected to prove their masculinity among peers). In contrast, women and girls were conceptualised collectively and not valued as individuals. They were dispensable and interchangeable, as revealed by the exchange of women and girls between cultures and tribes in the New Guinea Highlands (Rosaldo 1974: 28-29, 33; 74; Lucas 1972: 14; Boyd 1980: 8; Butts 1973: 29).

If differences among early women and girls were perceived, early cultures dismissed them as the product of typically irrational, unsystematic and idiosyncratic female behaviour, thought, feeling, temperament, personality and appearance. However, traditional hunter-gatherer society viewed men and boys as rational, goal-directed and capable of adhering to valued traditional customs (Rosaldo 1974: 29-30).

Although innate gender differences made early females primarily responsible for raising children and caring for the family and males suited to hunt and fight, females were not respected for their gifts. They were not regarded beyond their psychosociobiological role as sisters, wives, mothers and daughters who depended entirely on their biological functions and relationship to men. Early society looked down upon widows and childless women (Rosaldo 1974: 18-19). Females were not supposed to have any individuality and were continuously involved in domestic tasks at the whim of those they nurtured (Rosaldo 1974: 28-30)

2.2.3.7 Low self-concept

Marginalised in the secondary educational milieu and taken for granted, exploited or abused in the primary educational milieu, female participants would have developed a low self-esteem. This could be viewed as a vulnerability factor at micro-level as well as a symptom of stress (Hull 1999: 88). In the words of Rosaldo (1974: 25):

Growing up as a subordinate must be difficult, and if one's mother has accepted a derogatory self-image, identification with the mother can hardly be unproblematic. Such women ... often have a weak sense of self

Being an anathema to men and boys would have exacerbated feelings of worthlessness on the part of women and girls. Consequently, prehistoric art shows an acute awareness of sexual difference. Influenced by the works of Sigmund Freud', André Leroi-Gourhan undertook a massive inventory of cave art. He found that only a small part of it seemed to be concerned with ritual on behalf of the hunt. In his view Cro-Magnon art was shaped instead by a strong awareness of the different sexes. Male and female each had their own symbols, animals, objects and so on (Prideaux *et al.* 1973: 73, 135).

Unable to understand or release negative feelings of inferiority and rejection, female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus of prehistoric society may have manifested stress disorders (Gray 1999: 264 281 -282, 284,322).

2.2.3.8 Lack of assertiveness

Socially conditioned to be powerless and unassertive, female participants in early educational milieus were taught to care more about others' needs instead of their own (Gray 1999: 297-298). According to Gray (1999: 276, 286), when children and adults suppress their feelings and do not know what they feel, want or need, they 'disconnect from their true self' and become 'vulnerable to the wants of others'. By distancing their feelings and accepting the status quo of their secondary social status, early women and girls may have displayed characteristics of the *Mode Z personality*, defined by twentieth century American psychologist, Lawrence Le Shan who studied holistic medicine and the link between disease and personality (Burns 1988: 79)

According to Le Shan, the *Mode Z disposition* has difficulty in knowing and expressing wants and needs, as well as releasing negative emotions such as anger. This results in feelings of guilt and worthlessness (Hull 1999: 87; Burns 1988: 79). To solve their negative feelings, Mode Z personalities work hard and increase their stress levels. Unable to ‘burn up’ their stress, they begin to ‘burn out’. This leads to manifestations of stress disorders including physical disease (Burns 1988: 30, 79).

2.3 MANIFESTATIONS OF STRESS IN THE FEMALE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL MILIEUS OF PREHISTORIC SOCIETY

Although primitive women and girls may not have been consciously aware of their stress, early participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus may have displayed manifestations of stress (Gray 1999: 316).

2.3.1 Withdrawal and shyness

Inhibited, withdrawn and shy behaviour has been observed in contemporary female hunter-gatherer society such as the San and the Paliyan and Naiken bands of South India (Gardner 1991: 98; Bird-David 1991: 25). This suggests that prehistoric female participants in informal and formal educational milieus might have manifested similar ‘reticence’ in ‘behavioural conventions ... (and)...emotional state...’ (Bird-David 1991: 25). Socially conditioned to suppress their ‘negative emotions and demanding desires’ early women and girls may have remained under stress, and merely gone into ‘survival mode’ rather than develop intimate relationship skills to help them cope (Gray 1999: 322).

Van der Post (1983: 210) gives an example of reserved inclinations in women and girls as opposed to the confident behaviour of men and boys. He describes an old San lady, whom he met in the Okovango as:

...shy as a young girl, immediately looking away from us when she caught our eye, and then glancing coyly back out of the corner of her slanted eyes when her curiosity became too great.

Van der Post (1983: 137) also describes his first encounter with members of the so-called River San in the Okovango swamp who manifest interpersonal distancing in relationships with others. Van der Post states (1983: 162):

A young woman of the purest classical San colour and features stepped out and, paddle clasped to her firm breasts, looked with shy inquiry about her... Both the other women in her group also were 'shy, almost frightened.

Based on her study of the San, Shostak (1987: 174-176) suggests that distancing behaviour towards others was to be expected among female participants in the prehistoric primary and secondary educational milieus. Social ineptness on the part of hunter-gatherer women and girls would have, most likely, led to relationship and interpersonal problems. For example, marriages are 'fragile' amongst the forest Paliyans of South India (Gardner 1991: 101, 103)

2.3.2. Feelings of hopelessness

The stressful effects of the harsh life led by the River San of the Okovango Delta are evident in most women encountered by Van der Post during his journey and described in his work, *The Lost World of the Kalahari*. Van der Post (1983: 177) speaks of one particular young woman as having 'a haunted face' and 'an expression of...total defeat in her eyes as if the end of her whole race was focused in her own person'. Van der Post attributes this distress to her being forced to remain childless in the interests of the survival of the small group, thus sacrificing her most potentially socially valued role (Van der Post 1983:177). According to Van der Post (1983: 178), her baby had been killed or she had not been allowed to bear a child.

A general air of helplessness is prevalent amongst Paliyans female hunter-gatherers of the forests of South India. For example, wives appear emotionally dependent on their husbands who protect them' (Gardner 1991: 98). This is also the case for Kubu women and girls in Sumatra, who are considered minors and whom society teaches to exhibit learned helplessness (Sandbukt 1991: 114).

2.3.3 Anxiety

A mother's face expresses worried concern in a San rock painting, which depicts a mother eland licking the face of her young. Van der Post (1983: 220) states:

Surely, it must be her first for her heart to cry so much for it?

Perhaps the stress manifested is that of anxiety at the thought of the inevitable harsh life that lies ahead for the primitive child. Anxiety is a debilitating stress disorder common today but perhaps not so in early society for whom life was simple and predictable (Gorman 2002: 34-42).

2.3.4. Frequent crying or desire to cry

General melancholy and sorrow, evident in a tendency to cry easily was observed in an old woman and man encountered by Van der Post. These cried 'as if their hearts would break and hid their heads in their arms' (Van der Post 1983: 21). The old man was no longer leading the life typical of male participants, so perhaps he was revealing his distress in sympathy with his old wife.

Van der Post observed distress during a trance dance ritual in women and older girls who sat in a group, singing beside the fire. They wept, moaned and trembled during the course of the dance. They showed symptoms of great fear and cried out in pain. The male trance dancer and healer's role was to draw out the spirit 'causing (female) unrest' (Van der Post 1983: 241). The tendency of women participants to faint during these rituals was a physical manifestation of stress, accompanying their tendency to cry easily (Walters 1989: 40; Williams 1990: 34). Thus, it appears that the manifestation of stress in the female participants of the educational milieu of early society was incorporated into traditional rituals and accepted as inherent in the early female psyche.

Van der Post (1988: 257) describes the sorrow and grief revealed in soundless sobbing after a San girl had accidentally spilt a spoonful of precious water from an ostrich-eggshell container. The intense pressure felt as a result of her fear of risking the group's survival, was too much to bear. According to Gardner (1991: 98), Paliyan hunter-gatherer women of South India reveal an inclination to cry very easily, when under pressure. For example, when they are harassed or insulted by strangers, they burst into copious tears.

2.3.5 Aggressive behaviour

Emotional tension resulting from the need to provide for the group's physical and material needs may have also manifested itself in aggressive behaviour among female participants in particular. Margolin (1988: 45) reports manifestations of aggression in women of the American Indian tribes. According to Margolin, folk tales, concerning the behaviour patterns of this former hunter-gatherer society, frequently represent women as 'depriving, inconstant, traitorous,

and at times physically destructive'. He suggests that this aggression was due to the pressure of finding food, shelter and protection for the group (Margolin 1988: 47).

2.4. COPING MECHANISMS

Although stress may have been a part of female human existence since it began, coping mechanisms also appear embedded in prehistoric culture. These occur as well-learned and accepted patterns of behaviour followed by women and girls for thousands of years in a threatening environment as a 'learned, but limited, repertoire of responses' to the threats of the external and internal environment (Lucas 1972: 9; Mazel 1992a: 128).

Women and girls held a stressful position in early societies determined by gender related factors that underpinned stressors that faced them at macro, meso and micro-level (Hall 1996: 42-43, 87). Female participants in the early formal and informal educational milieus may have displayed negative manifestations of stress but coped by using mechanisms learnt and taught in each successive generation (Burns 1988: 30).

2.4.1 Knowledge and utilisation of female power in the domestic sphere

Although, early women and girls were restricted to the domestic sphere and excluded from public aspects of tribal life, they had power within the domestic sphere. This may have made the subservient domesticity of their role, and their separation for extended periods from men and older boys, more bearable (White & Brown 1973: 135).

A sense of power and status could be derived from their control of their own area of food production and domestic tasks, despite being the subjects of male aggression and domination. In the educational milieu of the domestic sphere, their technology was simple, and they did not need male assistance in gathering (Mazel 1989a: 125). Moreover, although contemporary San men make the digging sticks, women and girls 'resharpen (them), using their husband's knives' (Marshall in Mazel 1989b: 124). They were, thus, able to:

control their working conditions and the distribution of the goods they produce(d), thereby (achieving) increasing levels of political and economic power

(Mazel 1992b: 123).

Traditional Australian aboriginal women were autonomous and ‘economically independent as food gatherers’. This helped them cope with ‘the fact that men saw them as inferior, but valuable objects for use in the marriage bestowal game’. They were ‘granted responsibility and authority in their own areas’ and ‘their identity (was) sustained by their nurturing role’ (Vazey 1985: 43, 44, 45). In other words female participants in early primary and secondary educational milieus had an internal locus of control that that was a buffer against negative stress, although they knew that men controlled society as a whole (Burns 1988: 40-41; Mazel 1992a: 128). According to Burns (1988: 40-41)

Locus of control refers to the degree of control, which individuals think they have over what happens to them. Persons who see themselves as having control over their environment are less likely to be affected by stress.

By adhering to society’s rules and activities prescribed for women and girls, the latter might have felt in control of their lives. However, this was a false assurance since tribal society considered women and girls inferior and excluded them from public life, including rituals, where male participants derived a sure sense of being in control (Mazel 1992a: 128).

2.4.2 Positive perception of marginal participation in rituals

Women and girls were allowed a peripheral (mainly singing) role in ceremonies. This may have been a form of stress release, although it was also an unpleasant reminder and reinforcement of the secondary (and limited) nature of their social role. Beard (1968:73) maintains that the stress of primitive life was ‘lightened’ for all members of the group by its rituals and ceremonies. This ‘softened’ the harshness of existence, and found ‘joyful expressions of the women’s spirit: with songs...chants...choruses’. Beard (1968: 73) points out that each gender had its own special music, which although, contributing to feelings of female marginalisation, also paradoxically glorified female tasks such as healing the sick and preparing corpses for burial. This may have been a panacea for stressful chores (Beard 1968: 75).

Certain rituals were available to assist girls with the onset of puberty, a social, physical and psychological stressor. Although female puberty was not accompanied by as much ceremony as male puberty, at least there were some rituals. For example, the Tukuna tribe (who live on the banks of the Solimões River, on the Brazilian side of the Amazon basin) have a rite involving the playing of secret flutes by men unseen by women and girls. This helps the girls cope with their altered physical state (Bamberger 1974: 273).

2.4.3 Transformation of distress into eustress

According to Beard (1968: 38), early women were capable of discovering (and teaching their daughters) ways to make their onerous chores and experiences more bearable. Beard suggests that they creatively created eustress out of distress, and were responsible for cultural progress and survival. Beard (1968: 41) states:

If primitive man was afraid of his shadow and rigorous in adherence to (tribal traditions), the female of the species, of a practical bent, went to work with a will and demonstrated her rich constructive genius. Woman launched civilisation...babies had to be washed and fed...women had to perform actions imperative to the care of life ... needed a practical, creative intelligence.

Although limited to the domestic sphere and considered inferior members of the group, primitive women could also perform her role with creativity. Moreover, she probably taught the skill of inventiveness, including art, to her daughters, as they decorated utensils and clothes in the same way that men and boys decorated their weapons (Beard 1968: 69). According to Beard (1968: 514), women and girls 'launched' civilisation and turned their burdensome life into innovatory techniques of which domestic life was the impetus.

Women, by means of ...domestic innovations, lifted her low-browed male companion above the wild beasts that he hunted ... activities connected with food, clothing and shelter, woman's first interest ... setting commerce in train...establishing systems of economy...

(Beard 1968: 514)

Despite their onerous existence, female participants managed to cope in the educational milieu of the domestic sphere and secondary educational milieu of rituals. They sought, found and taught ways of achieving emotional upliftment in creative domestic activities such as cooking, sewing and providing a safe haven for their families in caves and huts. According to Mazel (1989a: 124), with reference to the Tugela Basin hunter-gatherer society in South Africa, which lasted until about AD 1800, there was a 'movement towards gender parity' and 'a conscious struggle on the part of women to improve their lot'.

2.4.4 Restriction of number of children

Early women and girls may have turned feelings of distress at not being allowed, in times of tribal hardship, to fulfil their socially glorified role as bearers of children, into feelings of relief. Not being allowed to fall pregnant, give birth or keep a new-born baby, may have been

consciously perceived as a temporary remission from their usual ‘pediatrically-overdosed’ role as childminders, lactating mothers or cumbrous, slow-moving nomads (Dickson 1998: 7). Moreover, it meant that food needed only to be gathered and hunted for a few people. Female children learnt from an early age that a small community was close-knit, more co-operative and less stressful (Howell *et al.* 1966: 172).

2.4.5 Knowledge of fertility worship

The glorification and worship of female fertility was an integral part of early society. This implied that female participants in educational milieus would have developed a certain amount of self-esteem in the course of their daily learning and teaching about life, despite their socially inferior status.

In contemporary hunter-gatherer societies, once a woman, who lives with her husband’s family, has given birth to her first child, she is empowered, despite her usual lowly position in the group. For in her child lies the embryo of a separate family to that of her mother-in-law. The well-being of her child, future children and the establishment of her own household becomes her primary concern. This provides her with a socially revered purpose in life and a sense of self-worth. She feels in charge of one aspect of her destiny (Collier 1974: 93).

Motherhood is a source of special honour among primitive people whose survival depends on not having too many offspring. Van der Post (1983: 211) tells of a San woman with a baby, carried in a skin on her hip. She was the only member of the group with a child, which was her first. According to Van der Post, whilst she breast-fed the baby, ‘there was a ‘ look of unimpeded tenderness on her face (which) was so intense that she might well have had a halo around her Mongolian head’.

Fertility worship was often in the form of statuettes, which were probably an indication of ‘interest in and veneration for’ female qualities’ (Howell *et al.* 1966: 152). They were often household good-luck charms or tiny goddesses, ‘small enough to be carried around by different tribes’. Alternatively, they were likely to be stuck into the floor or walls of the house, as in an archaeological site in the Ukraine, where seven figurines were found lying beside the walls (Howell *et al.* 1966: 163).

A Botswana early San rock painting of a tall female giraffe with an elegant Modigliani neck is another example of the esteem granted to fertility and motherhood. The painting carefully

depicts 'the tenderness of a solicitous mother...looking...towards a baby giraffe standing shyly in the right of the picture' (Van der Post 1983:187).

Deference to female participants in the form of statuettes, stone carvings and rock art would have been socially sanctioned mechanisms for coping with stress, for early women and girls, who faced a taxing and otherwise ignominious existence in the primary and secondary educational milieus of life and ritual (Howell *et al.* 1966: 163)

2.4.6 Wearing charms as a panacea against stress

It is likely that wearing of jewellery and amulets, as protection against harmful forces was common amongst early women and girls. Lucky-charms found at various archaeological sites, provide evidence of a desire for talismans against fearful and stressful elements in the prehistoric environment (Howell *et al.* 1966: 130; 152). Good-luck pieces made of smoothed and polished mammoth tooth trimmed to an oval shape and of nummulite (a marine invertebrate, fished for several hundred million years), which was shaped and polished by a Neanderthal were discovered at a dig at Tata, Hungary. At the same site, a skull of women was discovered with 'quantity of shell ornaments carefully arranged around it'. This was perhaps worn to ward off distressing elements (Howell *et al.* 1966: 130, 152).

2.4.7 Control of males through withholding services

Lamphere (1974: 99) maintains that, in those societies where most authority lies in the hands of the male participants, female members will assert themselves by holding back with regard to their usual nurturing and care of family members. Female participants in the primitive educational milieu managed, thus, to find a way of obtaining male acquiescence by withholding food or sexual services to oppose male control (Lamphere 1974: 99).

2.4.8 Assertion of female otherness

Another approach followed by female participants in the early educational milieu to create an internal locus of control and reduce stress could have been by emphasising their differences from male participants. In this manner, women and girls would have actualised a sense of rank, order and value. For example, in some contemporary primitive societies women may gather in menstrual huts, to relax or gossip, thus creating a world free from control by men and where women prevail. In societies, where there is a separate social life in the male public life of the hunt, female participants win power by asserting their mysterious differences. For instance, the

ideas of purity and pollution, so often used to circumscribe female activities, may be used as a basis for assertions of female solidarity and strength. Female dissimilarity generally made early women and girls an enigmatic source of apprehension. Yet, those who are feared often hold power as a result. A New Guinea man will observe his wife's wishes, for fear that in her anger she will serve him food while she is menstruating or step over him, letting blood drip, while he sleeps (Rosaldo 1974: 36-38)

2.4.9 Acceptance of social and family status quo

Acceptance of the status quo as for the good of the group would have decreased stress in female participants in the early educational milieus. A conscious refusal to change the prevailing social order or see a problem therein would have made the women and girls feel superficially relaxed and content with their lot in life. Female participants did not allow themselves to consider personal feelings. By working together in distinct roles as hunters and foragers, males and females formed a successful economic team rooted in biological reality (Roos., Beyers & Marchetti 1999: 101).

The structure involved a three-way interdependence: one or a few males assumed responsibility for one or a few females and their children; females owed special duties to males and children, and children felt a special commitment to older group members. This status quo was accepted by all as essential to survival of a close-knit and supportive community, where participants felt cared for and valued in their roles (White & Brown 1973: 130-131, 135, 149; Quilici 1972: 46-69, 66, 69, 71; Van der Post 1983: 48; Roos *et al* 1999: 101).

2.4.10 Causing domestic disputes as a power ploy

If they desired, early girls and women were able to create a conflict situation in the domestic situation in order to 'divide and rule'. According to Collier (1974: 94), brides in patriarchal extended family hunter-gatherer societies often seek attention and power by refusing to be obedient and obliging. The tribe's survival and strength depend its unity. Thus, if after quarrelling over domestic matters, young wives and mothers leave the group with their children, they end up a powerful political force, which causes a leader to lose power together with the loss of group members. In this case, a choice is made to be defiant and gain control of female life in an aggressive manner.

2.4.11 Acceptance of male involvement in the domestic milieu

In some contemporary societies, like the Tasaday and Ilongot tribes of the Philippines, the Arapesh of New Guinea and Mbuti pygmies of Africa, the mutual and complementary involvement of men and women in the primary educational milieu, promotes a sense of equality. This eases feelings of inadequacy on the part of women and girls and minimises male authority. Yet differentiation still exists in other aspects of tribal life in these societies, such as sleeping arrangements, hunting and prestigious ritual activities, performed by men and boys (Rosaldo 1974: 39-41).

2.4.12 Perception of the domestic sphere as a milieu of cultural growth

Female participants may have been aware of the importance of the domestic milieu for cultural growth and survival. This would have given them a feeling of prominence and self esteem and made them less stress-prone (White & Brown 1973: 30). Within the sheltered realm of the base-camp, the group would have generally bonded and grown as a community. Group awareness, skills and trust would have evolved among individuals in the midst of the threatening natural world. Thus, all tribe members would have considered the place, where women and girls took care of children and domestic chores, as the focus of social life and culture, existing alongside the separate culture of the hunt (Howell *et al* 1966: 184-185).

2.4.13 Avoidance of typically male aggressiveness

The non-aggressive spirit of co-operation in the domestic milieu would have also been an antidote to stress for the female participant. According to Linton (in Rosaldo & Lamphere (1974: 7), women and girls were 'restricted' from stress provoking and aggressive activities of hunting and would have exhibited gentle and caring tendencies in the domestic milieu. Women and girls learnt 'emotional intelligence' by being taught to manage their potentially stressful social position. At best, this may have helped them to feel inner peace; at worst, it may have led to unassertiveness (Ferguson 1998: 40; Quilici 1972: 13; White & Brown 1973: 136; Leakey & Lewin 1982: 9, 198). Linton (in Rosaldo & Lamphere (1974: 7) speculates that:

Gathering and the socialisation of children, both women's activities, required co-operative and communicative skills ...and so would have had an important impact on the creation of early social and cultural patterns.

2.4.14 Experience of an easy transition to adulthood

The transition to adulthood for girls in early society was not as traumatic as male initiation rituals. Apart from a small initiation celebration of biological development, a girl was introduced to womanhood without effort simply by having a mother and other female kin to emulate. She did not have to prove her femininity, independent identity or worth. Female manners and activities were acquired in a way that seemed easy and natural. . By observing her family, the young girl would see exactly how her future life and relationships would be (Chodorow 1974: 45-46).

2.4.15. Development of a feminine psychology

Coping involved practical attempts to perceive their femininity positively from a feminine perspective apart from male oriented negative social perceptions. This reveling in femaleness rooted in natural female psychobiology may have reduced the stress experienced by female participants in the prehistoric primary and secondary educational milieus. However, this positive self-perception may have been seriously undermined by the negative appraisal granted women and girls in the broader spectrum of the extended family and society.

Due to expectation of the adult role, the education of girls in early society was different to that of boys although initially they both dwelt in the same primary and domestic educational milieu. Boys were physically part of this essentially female milieu, but psychologically apart, since their future departure for the all male hunting, ceremonial and public sphere was a given. However, girls were taught their main perspective on life by older female participants in the primary educational milieu, which was also to be their future adult milieu. Moreover, the feminine frame of mind tended towards relationship building and harmony, rather than aggressiveness and antagonism, a definite antidote to stress (Linton in Rosaldo & Lamphere 1974: 7; Jordan, Kaplan, Baker Miller, Stiver, & Surrey 1991: 19). Despite being second-class citizens, women and girls learnt to develop a sense of self by appealing to other people's feelings and by being nurturing, receptive, responsive and kind. As daughters and future wives, they learnt to gain respect, power and position through their personal relationships, albeit only within the domestic sphere (Rosaldo 1974: 26; Jordan *et al* 1991: 16-17)

2.4.16 Female support groups

Like the female members of the contemporary Semai tribe of the mountains of peninsular Malaysia, early girls and women would have found comfort in 'the support and nurturance' of the other members of their particular social sphere. By feeling comfortable in the nurturing

female world of the primary educational milieu, early girls and women would have felt some relief from stress (Sponcel & Gregor 1994: 186).

Early women felt close to their children and other female participants in the primary educational milieu. They had access to emotional support and a sense of belonging, not available to men and boys, who were physically and socially more distant from their children and families owing to their hunting, ceremonial and political activities. Women formed informal support groups of their own providing temporary respite from the control of men and the pressures of life (Rosaldo 1974: 26-27).

2.4.17 Experience of harmony within society and with the natural world

Primitive women not only found a stress-reducing, harmonious environment within the female primary educational milieu, they also created harmonious links with nature. According to Quilici (1972: 23-24), early people had an intimate relationship with plants and animals as a result of their daily hunting and gathering. This rapport was demonstrated in rock art and in ceremonial dancing and singing, which often imitated animals.

At one with the natural world early women and girls may have been able to accept and endure hardship and suffering, including physical pain, stoically as a given. Bushman paintings in many parts of southern Africa depict what are generally considered to images of females with 'legs splayed and genital emissions' (Hall 1996: 43). The woman or girls in the pictures appear to be bravely alone with what could be umbilical cords dangling from their wombs. Other pictures show females crouching over the ground. Other drawings resemble internal female organs. A Bushman painting in the Clanwilliam district of the Western Cape, South Africa, depicts what is generally considered to be a scene of childbirth. The woman or girl in the picture appears to be bravely alone and crouching above a small mound as she bears a child still tied to her by its umbilical cord (Townley Johnson 1991: 73).

Female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus managed stress. Shostak (1987: 171-180) illustrates this in her interviews with Nisa, a Kalahari *!Xu* women. She told 'a story with echoes of our ancient human past, reflecting themes tens of thousands of years old'. Shostak (1987: 180) describes Nina as:

... a woman living in one of the most remote areas of the world, facing life with courage, humour, spirit, and dignity who, despite repeated tragedy, carried on with a sense of entitlement to enjoy what was yet to come.

2.4.18 Music, dance and singing

Early girls and women would have found relief from stress in listening to music. Van der Post (1983: 244) describes the ‘full look of peace’ upon the faces of San women who were listening to a man playing music to them. Women and girls played certain instruments as well. Van der Post describes how, after giving some water to a small group of weak and hungry San, who had not drunk anything for days, a San woman produced and plays a lyre, for the purpose of saying ‘thank you’. This was probably an attempt on the part of the female musician to return the group to a state of homeostasis after their stressful ordeal (Van der Post 1983: 225)

The gentle dancing and singing games of San women and girls provide another example of their tendency to create harmony and balance within their world. They often imitate the movement and sounds of animals during a sort of rounders game and dance, which may be a way of coming to terms with negative feelings. Van der Post (1983: 224) observed that they generally sang a lot together:

... they would all sing together, beating time with the grass, and stroking the stems with the tips of their fingers like the strings of a guitar. The melody was charged with all the inexpressible feelings that come to one at the going down of the sun over the great earth of Africa.

(Van der Post 1983: 224)

2.4.19 Creation and wearing of jewellery as an antidote to stress

Van der Post (1983: 224) describes ‘beads and necklaces like gold upon’ the San female singers in the previous paragraph. Jewellery making and wearing may have provided a sense of ease for women and girls in hunter-gatherer tribes since other artistic endeavours, such as rock art, were denied them (Van der Post 1983: 218-219). The wearing of jewellery by women and girls

in the early educational milieu would have glorified feminine beauty and provided a sense of self-worth. Van der Post (1983: 211) speaks of this ‘delight in femininity and wild beauty’, which required extra work to decorate ‘themselves and their womanhood’. Some young San women Van der Post met all wore ‘a glittering headband ... many necklaces of crimson roots and amber woods’ and sparse garments that included, a leather wrap and shoulder satchel decorated with ‘ostrich-shell beads’ (Van der Post 1983: 211).

2.4.20 Awareness of society’s exaltation of youthful female beauty

The revering of feminine beauty may have provided serenity and self-acceptance to the female participants in the educational milieu. Moreover, although they were not allowed to take part in the ritual of rock art, they were sometimes featured therein, in the form of idealised examples of femininity. Van der Post describes an exceptionally lovely depiction of a girl, wearing a dress of draped skin, a circle of beads below her left knee and walking with a flower in her hand (Van der Post 1983: 211). Of a similar painting, Van der Post (1983: 32) says:

Somewhere in a cool gorge on the edge of water sparkling like broken glass in the hissing sun, a white lady, self-possessed, with a flower in her long hand, walks with a high step down a steep wall... .

Deference and idealisation of girlish loveliness may have facilitated poise and coping with the stressor of female marginalisation, but it could have been a stressor in itself. It may have led to the denigration of female old age. This is evident in a San rock art depiction of what could be a frightening old woman. The painting depicts what could be a violent, shriveled and white-haired old woman (Hall 1996:86). Another San rock illustration portrays an aging female with an exaggerated jaw (Townley Johnson 1991: 81).

2.4.21 Knowledge of female power in matriarchal societies

Apart from being esteemed for youthful beauty, female participants in the educational milieu were granted other forms of special status that may have compensated for their general lack of status. Some tribes, like the Tuareg of the Sahara, followed a line of matriarchal or of matrilineal descent. Power and property prerogatives lay in the hands of women and families and were defined according to the female line. Only female ancestors were remembered and particular importance was attached to rites connected with the lives of girls including their gradual initiation into the community. Young husbands had to live with wives’ families, who watched closely to make sure the wives were well treated. Moreover, sons belonged to their

mother's family and they were taught by maternal uncles (Quilici 1972: 60-61; Margolin 1988: 412).

Quilici (1972: 47) believes that among the pygmies, in particular, women have the same importance in the family as men. They are loved and respected until old age. The Tuareg of the Sahara also hold their wives in the highest possible esteem. Bamberger (1974: 280) maintains, however, that men are still of primary importance even in these matriarchal societies and that the matriarchal element just eases the tension a little.

2.5 Summary

In chapter two, the researcher has mentioned a few symptoms of stress that were manifested by women and girls in contemporary hunter-gatherer society. These were behavioural manifestations such as withdrawal and shyness, frequent crying or desire to cry and aggressive behaviour. Emotional manifestations such as feelings of hopelessness, anxiety were also discussed (Cf. paragraphs 2.3.1-2.3.5). Female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus of prehistoric hunter-gatherer society may have also manifested stress since psychobiologically and socially, female hunter-gatherers today are the same as their early ancestors.

Primitive females may have known ways to cope with stress. The researcher described strategies that involved a positive perception of natural and nurtured psychobiological and social female identity. Females knew and used their power in the domestic sphere and adopted a positive perception of their marginal participation in rituals. They transformed distress into eustress and were comforted in the knowledge of society's worship of female fertility. They asserted their female otherness and saw the domestic sphere as a milieu of cultural growth. Moreover, they remained true to their feminine selves and avoided typically male aggression. They saw their easy transition to female adulthood in a positive light even though more was made of the initiation of boys to manhood and thus they developed a feminine psychology. Relief from stress was found in female support groups, an awareness of society's exaltation of youthful female beauty and the knowledge of female power in matriarchal societies (Cf. paragraphs 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.4.5, 2.4.8, 2.4.12, 2.4.13, 2.4.14, 2.4.15, 2.4.16, 2.4.20, 2.4.21). Coping mechanisms included passive non-resistance to the rules set by society and a peaceful acceptance of the world in general (Cf. paragraphs 2.4.9, 2.4.11, 2.4.17). A practical way of managing female stress was restricting the number of children borne, although this could also cause stress. Other practical measures to help them cope with stress supported an attitude of happiness. These involved creative pastimes such as playing music, singing, dancing and

making and wearing jewellery and charms (Cf. paragraphs 2.4.6, 2.4.18, 2.4.19). Some coping mechanisms involved wily and calculated behaviour such as controlling males by withholding services and causing domestic disputes as a power ploy (Cf. paragraphs 2.4.7 & 2.4.10).

Ironically, the female identity that early female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus perceived positively was the basic reason for their vulnerability to stress. Females were marginalised and disempowered. Their social status was low; they were excluded from prestigious tasks and marginalised during rituals. Female life was considered dispensable, yet female gathering was considered inferior to male hunting. There were no initiation rites of passage for girls (Cf. paragraphs 2.2.1.1, 2.2.1.4, 2.2.1.5, 2.2.1.6, 2.2.1.7, 2.2.2.8). Female oppression led to a negative and unrealistic self-concept at times. Females experienced a conflicting physical self-concept; they lacked an individual sense of identity and had low self-esteem (Cf. paragraphs 2.2.3.5, 2.2.3.6, 2.2.3.7). Moreover, marriage was stressful because women and girls had no say regarding choice of partner. Nor did they have any rights during the years of marriage when they were expected to be fertile irrespective of their wish whether to fall pregnant and bear children (Cf. 2.2.2.7, 2.2.3.3). They were expected to be subservient to male decrees in society and in the family, even if it meant going against their natural feminine instincts. They became destructive to their own kind and fought with males in a struggle for power and acceptance by a male dominated society (Cf. paragraph 2.2.1.2, 2.2.1.3). They were forced to neglect their children at times, had to commit infanticide and sometimes abort. They were compelled to move frequently in search of better hunting ground and had to avoid pregnancy and childbirth (2.2.2.3, 2.2.2.4, 2.2.2.5, 2.2.3.4). They were burdened with the workload and subservient role that accompanied their female reproductive and domestic role. Females had a heavy domestic workload, were responsible for bringing up the children and had insufficient leisure time (Cf. paragraphs 2.2.2.1, 2.2.2.2, 2.2.2.6, 2.2.2.7, 2.2.3.3). Even the female physical identity was a stressor. Women and girls were physically vulnerable to attack and disease. In addition, their lives were controlled by their reproductive biology and psychology (2.2.3.1, 2.2.3.2, 2.2.3.8).

Nevertheless, prehistoric females tried to perceive their natural and nurtured female identity as nurturer positively and realistically. On the other hand, society fundamentally and overwhelmingly denigrated this identity. Despite attempts to find peace, power and happiness, women and girls may have remained vulnerable to stress in early hunter-gatherer society, which refused to change its attitude towards the female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus.

