

## CHAPTER 5

### MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY IN A CHANGING SOCIETY: A CASE STUDY OF ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA TO MARRIAGE

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One can assume that industrialisation/modernisation implies the substitution of an ever increasing number of ways, methods, techniques and ideas for the old. The process equally involves an attempt to minimise the discrepancy between efforts and results in a people's struggle at gaining greater and more efficient control over their environment (physical and social). It is therefore obvious that the process of modernisation/industrialisation must involve basic structural and institutional changes within the social framework of the society concerned. In fact this has been observed in the case of most societies/countries which have evolved from the subsistence type of society to what is now known as modern urban industrial societies.

However, the fact that the process has been observed in the case of industrial societies and is being observed in the currently industrialising/modernising societies does not necessarily imply that the course, sequence and content of these structural/institutional changes necessary for industrialisation/modernisation are the same or ought to be the same. Although the general trend is towards the modern industrial urban society, it should be stressed that the notion of currently industrialising societies with the industrialised ones is a dubious one indeed. Industrial societies themselves take diverse structural and institutional forms and are themselves highly dynamic, i.e. they are highly unstable in the sense that there is no static final industrial stage. Despite this diversity of structural and institutional forms, industrial societies (whether of the East or the West) exhibit similarities in their core structural institutions although they may differ greatly in the ideological, political and economic basis supporting these core structural institutions. Thus, in the development process of the currently modernising societies in Africa towards the modern urban industrial type of social organisation, we must expect convergence towards the development of core structural institutions common to all industrial societies although we do not expect, the newly developing countries (for obvious reasons) to recapitulate, step by step, the path to industrialisation followed by their predecessors. "The common structural features of industrial societies are undeniable and extensive. They form the solid factual basis for the generalisations . . . concerning the conditions, concomitants and consequences of industrialisation. Yet short of the imposed order of a single world society, . . . it would be unsound to predict that social structure among industrial societies, present and future, will converge to a point of homogeneity." (Moore, 19:111) If the industrialisation process necessarily involves the development of certain necessary core structural features, it follows that some or most of the crucial institutions of industrialising societies must undergo fundamental changes and take on modernising structures and functions. However the process whereby these crucial institutions take on

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modernising functions in the development of the core structural features necessary for modern industrial societies, vary greatly from society to society, depending upon the nature of the particular institution undergoing change, the amount of value and emotion invested in it, the degree of its linkage with other institutions of the society and the form the modification process takes. Thus, the degree and extent to which different institutions are modified or changed (partially or totally eradicated) is highly variable from institution to institution and from society to society.

One of the distinguishing features of traditional African societies is the crucial role of the kinship group in the organisation of life and living conditions of the society. It influences economic organisation and work roles; it affects the stratification, the prestige and reward system; in some cases kinship forms the basis of political and religious organisation. It therefore becomes obvious that during the process of substitution of new and more effective institutions and ideas for the old, the kinship system becomes one of the institutions that must, and does, undergo substantial changes. Thus, the fact that the family must undergo basic structural and functional modifications during the modernisation process is in no dispute. However, the type of changes and the eventual structural and functional modifications to expect from industrial African kinship systems remains a debatable one, an area in which there has been a lot of diffused and confused thinking. Some schools of thought, following the Western European experience, argue that the institutions of family and marriage in developing countries are bound to change in the direction of the Western type of conjugal isolated nuclear family system. This argument is mainly based on the factors of increasing education, desire for high standard of living, acquisition of Western values, changes in attitudes and consumption patterns, increased urban population and a high degree of social and geographical mobility, leading to increasing achievement consciousness and radical change in work roles and in the stratification and prestige systems. These factors are no doubt important and do affect the structure and function of the kinship system. However, the modifying and modernising effects and influences are not the same on all kinship systems. It is the view of the author that the modifying effects of these factors on a particular kinship system are to a great extent influenced and limited by:—

- (a) The degree of linkage of the kinship system with other institutions of the society and the type of changes simultaneously going on in these and other related institutions.
- (b) The amount of emotion invested in the particular institution (in this case in the institutions of family and marriage).
- (c) The nature and type of geographical and social mobility accompanying these changes.
- (d) The time factor—since these vary from one African society to another, one should expect variations in their modifying effects on the different kinship systems in Africa.

The effect of the above may tend to produce a type of family structure consistent with industrial social organisation but the real structure, function and relationship of the new family system with the wider kinship in particular and other institutions of the society in general are likely to be highly variable. Thus although industrial social organisation requires changes in the family approaching the conjugal, nuclear family type, the question still remains, is there only one type of nuclear family, that is the isolated conjugal unit of the Western type or is it possible to have different forms of nuclear/conjugal family units with divergent structural forms and different degrees of linkage with the wider kinship network?

An important factor likely to increase the variety of family forms and attitudes to marriage in Africa and, at the same time make the new forms bear some resemblance to the Western family is the fact that the systems are not allowed to develop naturally but are developing within a rigidly imposed frame, some of the component factors being:—

- (a) The type of education given in the different African countries which tends to present Western values as the “ideal” or the model to those being educated.
- (b) The imposition of a particular form of marriage by the Christian Churches on their adherents, especially the condition of church marriage as a qualification for membership into certain prestigious religious organisations as well as full membership as “communicant” in some Churches.
- (c) Failure of most African Governments to publicly recognise the legal status of marriage contracted under customary law.
- (d) The pomp and show associated with Church and Ordinance marriage.
- (e) The present system separating home and school very early in the life of the child, by placing children in boarding schools from as young an age as 5 till the end of their educational career. This in particular, tends to isolate the child from other members of his kinship group most of whom he may never know or have anything to do with.

Despite these factors, there are strong elements in traditional African kinship systems which mitigate very radical and extreme changes in attitudes to the family and marriage.

- (1) Although the kinship group may lose almost all its economic functions, it still remains strongly charged emotionally. It is a source of great emotion to the average West African who may find it very difficult and sometimes impossible for him to divorce his own status from that of his kinship group.
- (2) This is further complicated by the fact that education, social and geographical mobility may create “elite groups” but do not necessarily result in rigid class stratification in most African situations.
- (3) The frequent movements between city and country side is another factor. The kinship group, being identified with a particular geographical area—the home—the place where the ancestors were buried and where one hopes to be buried eventually) invokes a lot of emotion to the average West African irrespective of education and social status. There is clear differentiation between place of work/residence and home town; and home town is intricately connected with the kinship group.
- (4) Another factor mitigating a radical break and complete isolation of the conjugal family from the wider group is the fact that, at death, one remains the property of one’s kinship group who (not undertakers) are responsible for funeral and burial arrangements, preferably in the native home town.

It is a common knowledge in Ghana that people of very high education and high social status, are sent back home for burial at death even if they have been away for a long time. Examples of this are not hard to find. This particular factor also compels individuals, no matter where they are working and irrespective of their education and social status, nevertheless to keep an interest (however marginal) in the home town and consequently with the larger kinship group either

by paying regular visits home, playing host to kinsmen in town or often by investing in houses, farms, etc. under the care of kinsmen at home.

All these are factors to be taken into account when dealing with the future of marriage and the family in Africa and to guard us against wild generalisations based purely on the western experience with little or no consideration for the nature and effect of the structures undergoing change on the modernising factors. Phrases such as "the breaking down of the African extended family system," "the crumbling of the extended family" or "the erosion of the family," assume or imply the unconditional eradication of the present kinship system in Africa with the substitution of possibly the Western type of conjugal isolated nuclear family (Caldwell, 1966). Statements such as these lose sight of the real situation and tend to distort facts, especially in view of the situation that modern family formation in West Africa is first and foremost embodied in customary law and not in Ordinance or Church law. This implies that in almost all marriages in West Africa (especially when the woman is African) the rights and obligations invoked in marriage and at the family level are basically those prescribed by customary law regarding rights and obligations implied in marriage. This explains why in areas of conflict and delicate matters such as child maintenance, divorce, etc., appeal is not usually to Ordinance or Church law, the doctrines and concepts of which are foreign, but to the social institutions of the society, which in most cases in West Africa tend to be kinship based. Thus an increase in the number of marriages contracted in Church or under the Ordinance in West Africa does not necessarily imply fundamental changes in attitudes towards the values and obligations inherent in traditional family and marriage institutions. The increase may simply mean that such marriages have become more fashionable or more prestigious, or that more people can afford the expense involved in such Church or Ordinance weddings. A crucial test of change in attitudes to the family and marriage patterns will be a change in the number who proceed to Ordinance Church wedding without first of all passing through the customary procedure of legitimising marriage that is without having first fulfilled kinship obligations. The evidence in West Africa is that scarcely any marriage gets to the Church or Ordinance stage without being preceded by marriage under customary law. This implies that marital unions in West Africa are still first and foremost legitimised by the prescriptions of custom; however the couple may wish subsequently to fulfil their religious obligation or satisfy their social status aspirations by a wedding. In so doing, however, they add elements not in the original marriage and which may or may not be intended, but which may nevertheless have important consequences within the particular socio-cultural milieu for the future status of the marriage. The essential point to note here is that marriage under customary prescriptions allows and enables the couple to cohabit and even have socially recognised children. The Church or Ordinance wedding may or may not follow later on. Thus marriage under the customary law cannot be equated with the engagement in the Western sense since the former legitimizes cohabitation and procreation and the latter does not; hence the prevalence of customary marriage preceding Church/Ordinance weddings in West Africa. It is equally worthy to note that in areas of conflict, appeals are mostly made to customary prescriptions relating to marital role performance and responsibilities rather than to provisions under the Ordinance, even though the couple may be aware of their right to do so. Under such conditions, even though the kinship group or parents may play little or no part in the choice of marital partners or in the actual expenses involved in contracting the marriage, marital unions in West Africa hardly remain completely "nuclear oriented." On the other hand, recognition is given to each partner to fulfil his/her obligation to his/her own kinship group or

the right to ask for assistance from his/her kinsmen, thereby infiltrating the marriage situation with extended family ties. This is in contrast with the Western concept of marriage where the individual is expected to "marry out" of the family and create his/her own isolated family unit.

However, in order to have an idea of what may become of the situation as described above, it is useful to study a group which is likely to subscribe to the most progressive ideas, attitudes and behaviour in society. University students can be assumed to be one such group since, as an emergent "educated elite" they may, in future, not merely influence the rate and direction of social change but also control decision making positions and are those most exposed to external influence. It is with this in view that a study of the "Attitudes of Students of the University of Ghana to marriage" was carried out in 1970. The discussion that follows is based on only a section of that study. It should be noted that the respondents were not merely expressing attitudes to issues of no immediate relevance to them. Marriage was an important and pressing issue to them. The majority of them were merely waiting for the completion of their education to contract a marriage. Apart from educational and financial problems, marriage was the next issue of importance that worried the respondents and it would not be far fetched to assume that most of them might have been giving the subject some serious thought and might have formed some specific ideas on the issues. Thus, the discussions that follow are not based on mere ideals about marriage but on the views of people who have given the problem some thought and who plan to be married immediately after graduation or within 5 years from the survey. Those interested in the methodological aspects of the study will find the necessary information in the appendix. The study is based on completed questionnaires from 833 Ghanaian students resident in the 5 Halls of Residence of the University of Ghana in 1970.

#### **Marital Status and intention to marry :**

Of the 833 respondents, only 14 per cent were married. Table 1 below shows the distribution as to when respondents intended to marry.

The majority of the students who were single at the time of the survey intended marrying immediately after graduation or within 5 years; this included 75 per cent of the female respondents. Only 2 per cent of the respondents intend never to marry. Thus the subject matter of the survey was not only of interest to the majority of the respondents who were single, but 84 per cent of them had definite ideas as to when they planned to get married.

It is interesting to note that whereas the greater proportion of single male students were not married mainly because of financial reasons, and to some extent because they had not completed their studies, 40 per cent of the single female respondents were not married because they wanted to complete their studies and only 13 per cent were single because of financial reasons and 12 per cent had not yet found a suitable partner.

#### **Educational level of partner :**

Table 3 below shows the distribution of respondents by the desired educational level of intended partner.

Table 3 confirms the popular notion that while men would normally not mind marrying women with little or no education, the opposite is the case with the women. While there is no significant difference between the men's Halls as to the educational level of the desired spouse, comparison

between the sexes reveals interesting differences. As high a proportion as 73 per cent of the female respondents wanted to marry University Graduates and Higher Professionals as against 17 per cent of the males who wanted wives of this educational level. On the whole the proportion of respondents who desired spouses of specified educational level decrease in the educational qualifications, implying that education is at least an important consideration of the respondents' choice of marital partner.

**TABLE 1**

*Distribution of when respondents intended to marry by Hall of Residence (%) (unmarried only)*

| <i>When do you intend to marry?</i>        | <i>HALL OF RESIDENCE</i> |                |                      |               |              |              |
|--|--------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
|  | <i>Legon</i>             | <i>Akuafio</i> | <i>Common wealth</i> | <i>Sarbah</i> | <i>Volta</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| After graduation/within 5 years            | 46                       | 59             | 56                   | 51            | 75           | 54           |
| 6-10 years                                 | 21                       | 9              | 15                   | 12            | 4            | 14           |
| After 10 years                             | 6                        | 4              | 4                    | 8             | 3            | 5            |
| When partner is ready Economic viability   | 2                        | 7              | 3                    | 7             | 3            | 5            |
| When God wills/when I get suitable partner | 2                        | 9              | 2                    | 2             | 4            | 3            |
| Never                                      | 2                        | 1              | 2                    | 3             | 1            | 2            |
| Undecided                                  | 18                       | 11             | 11                   | 17            | 10           | 14           |
| Nil  | 3                        | -              | 7                    | -             | -            | 2            |
| Total                                      | 100                      | 100            | 100                  | 100           | 100          | 100          |

**TABLE 2**

**Reason for Intended Time for Marriage by Hall of Residence (%)**

| Reason for intended time of Marriage                | Hall of Residence |            |              |            |           | Total |     |            | N   |
|---|-------------------|------------|--------------|------------|-----------|-------|-----|------------|-----|
|   | Legon (M)         | Akuafu (M) | C'wealth (M) | Sarbah (M) | Volta (F) | M     | F   | Both Sexes |     |
| Economic/Financial ...                              | 53                | 52         | 60           | 51         | 15        | 54    | 15  | 51         | 366 |
| Would have completed course (educational programme) | 18                | 19         | 16           | 20         | 51        | 18    | 51  | 21         | 151 |
| Lack of suitable partner ...                        | 10                | 9          | 9            | 9          | 14        | 10    | 14  | 10         | 72  |
| Would be mature then ...                            | 9                 | 7          | 10           | 8          | 10        | 9     | 10  | 9          | 64  |
| No reason assigned ...                              | 10                | 13         | 5            | 12         | 10        | 9     | 10  | 9          | 64  |
| Total ...   | 100               | 100        | 100          | 100        | 100       | 100   | 100 | 100        | 100 |
| Number ...  | 164               | 134        | 156          | 191        | 72        | 645   | 72  |            | 717 |

**TABLE 3**

**Desired Educational Level of Partner (%)**

| Desired Educational Level of Partner           | Hall of Residence |            |              |            |           |             |       | N   |
|--|-------------------|------------|--------------|------------|-----------|-------------|-------|-----|
|  | Legon Men         | Akuafu Men | C'wealth Men | Sarbah Men | Total Men | Volta Women | Total |     |
| Graduate/Higher Professional                   | 15                | 15         | 18           | 21         | 17        | 73          | 23    | 195 |
| "O Level & Professional qualification ...      | 17                | 21         | 39           | 23         | 25        | 1           | 22    | 190 |
| "O" Level/"A"Level ...                         | 17                | 13         | 4            | 14         | 12        | 1           | 11    | 91  |
| Middle school & professional qualification ... | 10                | 5          | 12           | 7          | 9         | 3           | 8     | 67  |
| Middle school level ...                        | 4                 | 5          | 2            | 2          | 3         | —           | 3     | 22  |
| Illiterate ...                                 | 1                 | 1          | 1            | 1          | 1         | —           | 1     | 8   |
| Anybody ...                                    | 12                | 8          | 6            | 8          | 9         | 6           | 8     | 69  |
| Undecided ...                                  | 11                | 18         | 6            | 10         | 11        | 3           | 10    | 86  |
| No Information ...                             | 13                | 14         | 12           | 14         | 13        | 13          | 13    | 107 |
| Total ...                                      | 100               | 100        | 100          | 100        | 100       | 100         | 99    | —   |
| Number ...                                     | 185               | 174        | 178          | 206        | 743       | 90          | —     | 833 |

## REASONS FOR CHOICE

|  | Hall of Residence |        |          |        |       |       |       |         |
|--|-------------------|--------|----------|--------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
|  | Legon             | Akuafu | C'wealth | Sarbah | Total | Volta | Total | Neutral |
| Respectful/controllable Good housewife ... ..  | 24                | 12     | 27       | 24     | 22    | —     | 20    | 163     |
| Simply interested in that category ... ..      | 10                | 13     | 19       | 20     | 16    | 38    | 18    | 151     |
| Unnecessary if socially presentable ... ..     | 14                | 21     | 7        | 10     | 13    | 12    | 13    | 106     |
| Graduate will supplement income ... ..         | 6                 | 6      | 9        | 5      | 6     | 13    | 7     | 59      |
| Graduates are expensive flirts                 | 8                 | 7      | 6        | 8      | 7     | —     | 7     | 54      |
| Need for equal or higher educational level ... | 3                 | 4      | 2        | 3      | 3     | 4     | 3     | 27      |
| Already married ... ..                         | 4                 | 7      | 1        | 3      | 4     | 1     | 3     | 28      |
| God will provide ... ..                        | 1                 | 1      | —        | 1      | 1     | 1     | 1     | 7       |
| Undecided ... ..                               | 4                 | 3      | 4        | 10     | 5     | 3     | 5     | 45      |
| No reason assigned ...                         | 26                | 26     | 25       | 16     | 23    | 28    | 23    | 195     |
| Total ... ..                                   | 100               | 100    | 100      | 100    | 100   | 100   | 100   | —       |
| Number ... ..                                  | 185               | 174    | 178      | 206    | 743   | 90    | —     | 833     |

"O" Level = Secondary School Level, usually 5 years in Secondary School

"A" = Two years post "O" Level in a Secondary School

Middle School Level = Elementary school, usually 8-10 years; may be equalled to up to Grade 8 in the American system.

It is interesting to note that a fifth (20 per cent) of the male respondents wanted wives with lower educational qualifications because such wives are very subservient, controllable, respectful and generally good housewives. This in fact does not differ much from the traditional idea of male dominance in marriage in West Africa. No woman wanted a husband of a lower education in order to control and dictate conditions in the family! Equally worthy of note is the fact that as many as 13 per cent of the respondents felt the educational level of the partner is not crucial provided the person is socially presentable. While seven per cent respondents as against 13 per cent of the females want to marry University Graduates because of financial reasons, seven per cent of the males felt that women University Graduates were expensive, arrogant and flirts. Only three per cent of all respondents and four per cent of the women wanted to marry University Graduates because it is good to have a spouse of equal or higher qualification.

### Marriage expectations: Qualities expected of a Spouse

Marriage being a potentially life long union, it is important to ensure that one can have a trusted partner to make the union peaceful, enjoyable and lasting. For this reason most people have a picture of an ideal partner. On the other hand a question on qualities expected of a spouse will enable us to compare respondents' expected qualities with those traditionally sought by parents for their children.

Twenty-seven per cent (27%) of the respondents chose beauty or physical attraction as the most important quality expected of a spouse. This is made up of 28 per cent of the males and 21 per cent of the females. This was followed by modesty or sobriety (22 per cent), fidelity or



high morals (16 per cent), made of (as should be expected) 16 per cent of the males and 22 per cent of the females. While traditionally physical attraction was not considered the most important quality in a spouse, it is not surprising nor is it a contradiction that respondents (27 per cent) gave this quality their priority. In a society such as that of the University of Ghana, one can hardly know the background of another until an acquaintance has been entered into. The same goes for the wider society. With increasing social change, not only has traditional marriage been undergoing gradual change, but the marriage market has also been widely extended and the system of choosing marriage partners modified. Young men and women meet at dances, Cinema Halls, etc. In such a market situation the first thing that is likely to draw people of opposite sex together is physical attraction. It is after people have been brought together through physical attraction that they have the opportunity to look for moral and other qualities that are not visible until close contact has been established between people for some time. This is not necessary under traditional conditions where it is not difficult to establish contact with others. Thus the first important factor affecting the choice of marriage partners is that of heterogeneity, which brings together individuals who are relatively strangers to each other. Attraction becomes important as a means of establishing contact before even having the opportunity of studying the other person. This explains the stress on physical appearance on the part of our respondents and the little or no attention traditionally paid to this quality as an important item in the choice of marriage partners. It is interesting to note that very few (eight per cent) looked to "home background" as the most important quality in a spouse. This is another evidence of changing attitudes to qualities expected in a spouse, since home background would seem to be one of the most important qualities (if not the most important) in traditional marriage. Another quality much valued by traditional standards but which was not given much consideration by our respondents (only six per cent) as of primary importance to the choice of a partner is industry. It is not surprising that our respondents paid little or no attention to fecundity two per cent (which is crucial to traditional marriage) as the most important factor in marriage. It may surprise those who argue that with increasing education, and industrialisation, romantic love becomes the most important basis of contracting marriages, to note that only five per cent of our respondents mentioned romantic love or sociability as of prime consideration in the choice of marital partners. In fact, contrary to what most people might expect, no woman mentioned this quality as the first to be considered in choosing a partner and in fact romantic love/sociability ranks eight for males and seventh for females out of nine categories of qualities mentioned. We consider this finding very crucial to the whole argument of changing attitudes to marriage as industrialisation proceeds. On the whole it would appear male respondents were interested in modesty, beauty and fidelity in that order, while female respondents tended to stress sobriety, tolerance and fidelity in that order. Fecundity and sociability/romantic love were of little or no importance to both sexes. This shows a rejection of not only a quality (fecundity) considered crucial to traditional marriage but also a rejection of a quality (Romantic love) considered as the basis of modern industrial conjugal family system.

When one compares qualities respondents desire in their spouses with qualities they think their parents would like to see in their children-in-law, two interesting observations could be made.

1. Fecundity as a quality ranks lowest for respondents as well as lowest for qualities respondents felt parents look for in prospective spouses for their children.
2. Although respondents felt parents look for qualities that ensure security in marriage of their

TABLE 4

Distribution by Halls showing Qualities, In Order of Importance, Expected of Spouse

|                         | 1st Quality        |     |     |     |     |     | 2nd Quality        |     |     |     |     |     | 3rd Quality        |     |     |     |     |     | 4th Quality        |     |     |    |     |     | 5th Quality        |     |     |     |     |     | Cumulative Total   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                         | Halls of Residence |     |     |     |     |     | Halls of Residence |     |     |     |     |     | Halls of Residence |     |     |     |     |     | Halls of Residence |     |     |    |     |     | Halls of Residence |     |     |     |     |     | Halls of Residence |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                         | L                  | A   | C   | S   | V   | T   | L                  | A   | C   | S   | V   | T   | L                  | A   | C   | S   | V   | T   | L                  | A   | C   | S  | V   | T   | L                  | A   | C   | S   | V   | T   | L                  | A   | C   | S   | V   | T   | L   | A   | C   | S   | V   | T   |
| Modesty/Sobriety/Piety  | 17                 | 19  | 23  | 23  | 26  | 22  | 26                 | 22  | 26  | 21  | 22  | 24  | 15                 | 20  | 15  | 10  | 16  | 15  | 17                 | 16  | 18  | 11 | 17  | 15  | 17                 | 16  | 17  | 12  | 24  | 17  | 77                 | 90  | 89  | 75  | 98  | 84  | 78  | 77  | 82  | 79  | 64  | 77  |
| Beauty/Handsome         | 24                 | 24  | 35  | 27  | 21  | 27  | 21                 | 11  | 19  | 18  | 4   | 16  | 19                 | 14  | 11  | 13  | 13  | 14  | 12                 | 18  | 12  | 14 | 16  | 15  | 16                 | 14  | 11  | 8   | 17  | 12  | 39                 | 59  | 53  | 54  | 67  | 53  | 50  | 60  | 36  | 50  | 48  | 49  |
| Fidelity/High Morals    | 16                 | 16  | 17  | 15  | 22  | 16  | 11                 | 12  | 7   | 13  | 15  | 11  | 7                  | 13  | 15  | 11  | 15  | 12  | 13                 | 17  | 8   | 11 | 14  | 12  | 14                 | 15  | 9   | 13  | 9   | 12  | 44                 | 52  | 52  | 51  | 38  | 49  | 42  | 44  | 46  | 64  | 41  | 49  |
| Good Home Background    | 16                 | 5   | 5   | 5   | 9   | 8   | 12                 | 12  | 9   | 10  | 2   | 10  | 7                  | 16  | 10  | 14  | 18  | 13  | 19                 | 6   | 11  | 8  | 5   | 8   | 8                  | 9   | 12  | 9   | 5   | 9   | 42                 | 44  | 46  | 64  | 41  | 49  | 40  | 34  | 34  | 48  | 68  | 42  |
| Education/Understanding | 13                 | 12  | 9   | 11  | 4   | 10  | 8                  | 19  | 12  | 13  | 17  | 14  | 13                 | 9   | 15  | 12  | 9   | 12  | 19                 | 11  | 16  | 18 | 7   | 15  | 12                 | 4   | 12  | 19  | 16  | 13  | 33                 | 34  | 40  | 39  | 27  | 36  | 8   | 19  | 11  | 19  | 12  | 17  |
| Industry/Serviceability | 2                  | 6   | 4   | 5   | 2   | 4   | 9                  | 13  | 10  | 8   | 11  | 10  | 13                 | 12  | 12  | 17  | 10  | 13  | 14                 | 8   | 10  | 18 | 20  | 14  | 13                 | 12  | 12  | 11  | 16  | 12  | 101                | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Tolerance/Not Jealous   | 6                  | 7   | 2   | 6   | 14  | 6   | 6                  | 3   | 7   | 7   | 15  | 7   | 13                 | 7   | 9   | 9   | 10  | 9   | 13                 | 13  | 10  | 7  | 9   | 10  | 6                  | 11  | 11  | 13  | 3   | 9   | 101                | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Romantic/Sociability    | 6                  | 6   | 4   | 5   | —   | 5   | 6                  | 6   | 10  | 8   | 10  | 8   | 10                 | 4   | 11  | 9   | 6   | 8   | 13                 | 13  | 10  | 7  | 9   | 10  | 6                  | 11  | 11  | 13  | 3   | 9   | 101                | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Fecundity               | 1                  | 5   | 1   | 3   | 2   | 2   | 1                  | 3   | 1   | 2   | 4   | 2   | 3                  | 6   | 1   | 5   | 3   | 4   | 1                  | 1   | 4   | 3  | 1   | 2   | 5                  | 6   | 7   | 6   | 3   | 6   | 101                | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Total                   | 101                | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100                | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 101                | 99  | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 99                 | 100 | 99  | 99 | 100 | 102 | 100                | 100 | 102 | 100 | 100 | 155 |                    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Number                  | 163                | 155 | 170 | 193 | 81  | 762 | 156                | 152 | 168 | 191 | 748 | 151 | 152                | 162 | 187 | 79  | 131 | 116 | 141                | 142 | 187 | 76 | 663 | 85  | 125                | 112 | 167 | 58  | 547 | 155 |                    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |

TABLE 5

Distribution by Sex, showing Qualities, in order of Importance, Expected of a Spouse

|                          | 1st quality |     |     | 2nd quality |     |     | 3rd quality |     |     | 4th quality |     |     | 5th quality |     |     | Cumulative Total |     |     |
|--------------------------|-------------|-----|-----|-------------|-----|-----|-------------|-----|-----|-------------|-----|-----|-------------|-----|-----|------------------|-----|-----|
|                          | M           | F   | T   | M           | F   | T   | M           | F   | T   | M           | F   | T   | M           | F   | T   | M                | F   | T   |
| Modesty ... ..           | 21          | 26  | 22  | 24          | 22  | 24  | 15          | 16  | 15  | 15          | 17  | 15  | 16          | 24  | 17  | 82               | 98  | 84  |
| Physical Attraction ...  | 28          | 21  | 27  | 17          | 4   | 16  | 14          | 13  | 14  | 14          | 16  | 15  | 12          | 17  | 12  | 79               | 64  | 77  |
| Fidelity/High Morals ... | 16          | 22  | 16  | 10          | 15  | 11  | 12          | 15  | 12  | 8           | 13  | 8   | 10          | 7   | 10  | 51               | 67  | 53  |
| Good Home Background     | 8           | 9   | 8   | 11          | 2   | 10  | 12          | 18  | 13  | 12          | 14  | 12  | 13          | 9   | 12  | 49               | 48  | 49  |
| Education/understanding  | 110         | 4   | 10  | 13          | 17  | 14  | 12          | 9   | 12  | 9           | 5   | 8   | 9           | 5   | 9   | 50               | 38  | 49  |
| Industry/hard work ...   | 4           | 2   | 4   | 10          | 11  | 10  | 149         | 10  | 13  | 16          | 7   | 15  | 12          | 16  | 13  | 50               | 41  | 49  |
| Tolerance ... ..         | 5           | 14  | 6   | 6           | 15  | 7   | 9           | 10  | 9   | 13          | 20  | 14  | 12          | 16  | 12  | 39               | 68  | 42  |
| Sociability/Romance love | 5           | —   | 5   | 7           | 10  | 8   | 8           | 6   | 8   | 11          | 9   | 10  | 10          | 3   | 9   | 37               | 279 | 36  |
| Fidelity ... ..          | 2           | 2   | 2   | 2           | 2   | 4   | 2           | 4   | 3   | 4           | 2   | 1   | 2           | 6   | 6   | 14               | 12  | 14  |
| Total ... ..             | 100         | 100 | 100 | 100         | 100 | 100 | 100         | 100 | 100 | 100         | 100 | 100 | 100         | 100 | 100 | 100              | 100 | 100 |
| Number ... ..            | 681         | 81  | 762 | 667         | 81  | 748 | 625         | 79  | 704 | 586         | 76  | 662 | 489         | 58  | 547 | 681              | 81  | 762 |

children, the respondents themselves did not mention security as one of the qualities they would be looking for. Another quality respondents omitted but mentioned by ten per cent as important for parents is National/Ethnic origin of prospective spouse. This implies that the respondents tend to look at a wider marriage market than they think their parents would do.

TABLE 6

Respondents Views on Qualities Parents Regard as Important in the Choice of Marriage Partners for their Children

| Qualities Important<br>to Parents | Halls of Residence |                |            |               |                |     |     | Total | Number |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------|---------------|----------------|-----|-----|-------|--------|
|                                   | Legon<br>men       | Akuafon<br>men | C/W<br>men | Sarbah<br>men | Volta<br>women |     |     |       |        |
| Character/behaviour ... ..        | 42                 | 32             | 33         | 40            | 37             | 27  | 36  | 299   |        |
| Family/home background ... ..     | 29                 | 28             | 28         | 22            | 27             | 24  | 26  | 220   |        |
| National/tribal origin ... ..     | 7                  | 15             | 17         | 9             | 11             | 11  | 10  | 98    |        |
| Security for child ... ..         | 4                  | 6              | 8          | 10            | 7              | 6   | 7   | 57    |        |
| Education/Economic status ... ..  | 4                  | 5              | 9          | 5             | 6              | 15  | 7   | 56    |        |
| Fecundity ... ..                  | 1                  | 5              | 1          | 1             | 3              | 2   | 2   | 21    |        |
| No Information ... ..             | 13                 | 9              | 4          | 11            | 9              | 15  | 12  | 82    |        |
| Total ... ..                      | 100                | 100            | 100        | 100           | 100            | 100 | 100 |       |        |
| Number ... ..                     | 185                | 174            | 178        | 206           | 743            | 90  |     | 833   |        |

TABLE 7

Effect of Named Quality on Choice of Spouse (%)

| Effects of desired quality on choice<br>of spouse | Halls of Residence |                |            |               |                     |                |     | Total | No. |
|---|--------------------|----------------|------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------|-----|-------|-----|
|   | Legon<br>men       | Akuafon<br>men | C/W<br>men | Sarbah<br>men | All<br>Male<br>Hall | Volta<br>women |     |       |     |
| Some are unavoidable ... ..                       | 31                 | 32             | 38         | 30            | 33                  | 20             | 31  | 261   |     |
| All are important ... ..                          | 20                 | 24             | 25         | 27            | 24                  | 28             | 25  | 204   |     |
| Depends upon circumstance ... ..                  | 4                  | 10             | 8          | 10            | 8                   | 14             | 9   | 73    |     |
| Qualities are variable ... ..                     | 12                 | 8              | 3          | 3             | 6                   | 4              | 6   | 52    |     |
| Undecided ... ..                                  | 2                  | —              | 1          | 4             | 2                   | 4              | 2   | 18    |     |
| Nil ... ..  | 31                 | 26             | 25         | 26            | 27                  | 30             | 27  | 225   |     |
| Total ... ..                                      | 100                | 100            | 100        | 100           | 100                 | 100            | 100 |       |     |
| Number ... ..                                     | 185                | 174            | 178        | 206           | 743                 | 90             |     | 833   |     |

It will be noticed from Table 7 above that while a quarter of the males did not give information as to what they would do in case they do not meet their ideal partner, the corresponding proportion for the females is 40 per cent

#### Effects of other considerations on the choice of a partner

It is common observation in West Africa and in Ghana in particular that many a prospective marriage partner is disqualified as a result of factors other than beauty or personal attributes.

These factors are mostly acquired attributes for which the individual cannot be blamed e.g. family background, religion, ethnic origin, colour, etc. On family origin 38 per cent felt this issue was important to the choice of a partner while 42 per cent felt it was not.

Ethnic origin seems to be less important to the respondents. While 34 per cent would be influenced by ethnic considerations, 48 per cent felt the origin of the prospective spouse is irrelevant in their decision to marry a prospective partner. On the other hand respondents seemed to be more nationalistic, than tribalistic, in the case, the ladies were even more nationalistic. Nationality of the prospective spouse will influence the marriage decisions of 42 per cent of all respondents but 52 per cent of the females; 40 per cent of all respondents but only 30 per cent of the females find national origin no barrier to the choice of marriage partners. The continent seems to present greater barrier to our respondents than the country of origin. This factor may prove a barrier to marriage for 46 per cent of all respondents but to 56 per cent of the females. For all respondents, apart from the continent of origin, religion proves to be the important barrier to choice of marriage partners. It is even more so in the case of the females. While the religious affiliation of the prospective partner will influence the decision of 44 per cent of all respondents, it will affect that of 63 per cent, that is more than three fifths of the females. Religious considerations seem to matter more to female than to male respondents; whereas only 25 per cent of the ladies will not take religion into consideration, this factor is irrelevant in the choice of a spouse for 41 per cent of the males. It is interesting to note that respondents placed more emphasis on family background than tribal considerations in their choice of a prospective spouse.

TABLE 8

*Effect of other factors on choice of spouse (%)*

| <i>Consideration</i> | <i>EFFECT BY SEX</i> |           |              |                |           |              |
|----------------------|----------------------|-----------|--------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|
|                      | <i>TOTAL</i>         |           |              | <i>FEMALES</i> |           |              |
|                      | <i>Yes</i>           | <i>No</i> | <i>Other</i> | <i>Yes</i>     | <i>No</i> | <i>Other</i> |
| Family Origin        | 38                   | 42        | 20           | 36             | 38        | 26           |
| Ethnic Origin        | 34                   | 48        | 18           | 37             | 36        | 27           |
| Country of Origin    | 42                   | 40        | 18           | 52             | 30        | 18           |
| Continent of Origin  | 46                   | 37        | 17           | 56             | 25        | 20           |
| Religious Origin     | 44                   | 41        | 15           | 63             | 25        | 12           |

**Step-parenthood:**

Very often boys and girls have children by chance rather than by choice. Forty-eight per cent (48% of all respondents but 46 per cent of the female) would not consider marrying a prospective partner who already has a child with another person. Of the 44 per cent who would not mind marrying such a person, 41 per cent will do so on condition that the person satisfies the

desired qualities expected in a spouse; 24 per cent will go into this type of marital relation on condition that he/she will not assume responsibility over the children; 8 per cent will do so if the genitor refuses paternity and 27 per cent gave no reason for their decision.

### Parental role in the choice of marital partners:

Thirty-nine per cent (39%) of the respondents felt parents insisted on having a say in the choice of marital partners of their children to ensure that the children secured good partners; another 29 per cent stressed parents' interest in ensuring durable marriages. Thus 68 per cent or over  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the respondents felt parents' fears of unstable or short lived marriages lead them to take interest in whom their children should marry. On the other hand 14 per cent feel parents do so as a duty demanded by custom. It is note-worthy that only 5 per cent of all respondents and 4 per cent of the females feel parents' insistence on having a say in the choice of spouses for their children is motivated by prospects of material gains in such marriages. This finding implies that an overwhelming majority of our respondents feel that it is the desire to see their children happily married rather than selfish motives that leads parents to insist on having a say in their children's marital decisions.

TABLE 8a

Why do Parents Insist on Having a Say in the Choice of Marital Partners of their Children? (%)

|                                    | Halls of Residence |        |     |        |                  |       |       | No. |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------|-----|--------|------------------|-------|-------|-----|
|                                    | Legon              | Akuafu | C/W | Sarbah | Total Male Halls | Volta | Total |     |
| To ensure good partners ...        | 41                 | 32     | 39  | 44     | 39               | 40    | 39    | 328 |
| To ensure a durable marriage ...   | 22                 | 29     | 39  | 28     | 29               | 28    | 29    | 243 |
| It is their traditional duty ...   | 18                 | 18     | 7   | 13     | 14               | 11    | 14    | 113 |
| Anticipation of material gains ... | 6                  | 5      | 6   | 5      | 5                | 4     | 5     | 45  |
| Tribal and geographical mobility   | 5                  | 6      | 4   | 4      | 5                | 10    | 5     | 43  |
| No Information ...                 | 8                  | 10     | 5   | 6      | 7                | 7     | 7     | 61  |
| Total ...                          | 100                | 100    | 100 | 100    | 99               | 100   | 99    | —   |
| Number ...                         | 185                | 174    | 178 | 206    | 743              | 90    | —     | 833 |

If respondents feel parents' insistence on having a say in their children's choice of marital partners is to ensure stable and durable marriage for their children, then how much say are they prepared to allow their parents on this issue? An important consideration here is the fact that under present conditions where both boys and girls spend a greater part of their youth away from home in institutions, parents no more have that advantage of keeping a close watch on prospective spouses of their children. This fact is recognized by both parents and children. Under these conditions, the child stands in a better position to know more about the prospective spouse him/herself and his/her home and family background than the parents. Despite this fact, it is interesting to note that respondents are still willing to allow their parents a considerable amount of say in the choice of their future partners, since both parent and child are interested in marriages that last and are peaceful. Thus 39 per cent of the respondents were willing to let their parents advise them on such issues and they are prepared to listen to their advice; 34 per cent have no objection

to their parents influencing their choice of marital partners—making a total of 73 per cent of all respondents willing to allow their parents to advise them or even influence their decision as to whom to marry. Contrary to what most people may expect (but a fact which supports our argument earlier in this paper), only 20 per cent of all respondents feel the practice is obsolete and objectionable and thus may look upon such acts on the part of their parents as constituting interference in their affairs.

As to the more specific question of how much say respondents are willing to concede to their parents in the choice of marital partners, the proportion of respondents who would allow parents no say at all decreased to 17 per cent of respondents but to only 1 per cent of the females. On the other hand 69 per cent of all respondents but 90 per cent of the females would require parents advice, guidance, blessing and ratification before finally entering into marriage with the particular partner. An additional 4 per cent won't mind accepting the choice made for them by parents.

TABLE 9

Views on How Much Influence Respondents are Prepared to Allow their Parents/Relatives in the Choice of Marital Partners (%)

| How much say would you allow parents in the choice of your marriage partner | Halls of Residence |         |     |        |                |         |     | Total | No. |
|---|--------------------|---------|-----|--------|----------------|---------|-----|-------|-----|
|   | Legon              | Akuafio | C/W | Sarbah | All Male Halls | Volta F |     |       |     |
| Advice/Guidance .. ..   | 57                 | 44      | 67  | 57     | 56             | 85      | 59  | 494   |     |
| Blessing/Ratification .. ..   | 3                  | 24      | 6   | 11     | 11             | 5       | 11  | 87    |     |
| Accept parents' choice .. ..  | 9                  | 4       | 3   | 4      | 5              | —       | 4   | 37    |     |
| No say at all .. ..   | 20                 | 18      | 17  | 19     | 18             | 1       | 17  | 138   |     |
| No Information .. ..  | 11                 | 10      | 7   | 9      | 10             | 9       | 9   | 77    |     |
| Total .. ..   | 100                | 100     | 100 | 100    | 100            | 100     | 100 |       |     |
| Number .. ..  | 185                | 174     | 178 | 206    | 743            | 90      |     | 833   |     |

Table 9 shows that although both parents and children recognize the changing conditions under which marriages are being contracted, it is evident that parents, children and society at large still recognise the need for consents of parents before the union could become marriage. This tends to explain why almost all marriages contracted in Ghana (excluding foreigners) are first contracted under customary law, which necessarily implies consent and involvement of parents. This seems to be a fair compromise and fosters understanding and good relations between parents and married children.

**Parent-children relations on marriage:**

As to whether marriage should constitute a break between parents and their married children, 84 per cent of all respondents but 94 per cent of the female respondents felt marriage need not result in a break between them and their parents. However 13 per cent advocated a total break with their parents on marriage. It should be stressed that this proportion is smaller than that (17 per cent) which was not prepared to allow their parents any say at all in their marital affairs. Thus when it comes to the maintenance of relationships between parents and their married

children, it is only those who were to concede some say to their parents in the choices of their spouses but also some who, even though they would entertain no parental influence in deciding whom to marry, would nevertheless insist on some sort of relationship between them and their parents. This may be indicative of the fact that although there may be the tendency towards a sort of nuclear family, the trend is definitely not towards an isolated type. The married couple still consider themselves as an integral part of the larger unit which they must retain some sort of relation and contact.

TABLE 10  
Expressed Views on Parent-Children Relationship After Marriage (%)

| Should children break away from<br>parents after marriage | Halls of Residence |        |     |        |                      |            | Total | No. |
|---|--------------------|--------|-----|--------|----------------------|------------|-------|-----|
|   | Legon              | Akuafu | C/W | Sarbah | All<br>Male<br>Halls | Volta<br>F |       |     |
| No .. .. .  | 80                 | 79     | 86  | 87     | 83                   | 94         | 84    | 618 |
| Yes .. .. .   | 15                 | 18     | 12  | 11     | 14                   | 6          | 13    | 103 |
| Undecided .. .. .   | 1                  | 2      | —   | 1      | 1                    | —          | 1     | 7   |
| No Information .. .. .                                    | 4                  | 1      | 2   | 1      | 2                    | 2          | —     | 15  |
| Total .. .. .   | 100                | 100    | 100 | 100    | 100                  | 100        | 100   |     |
| Number .. .. .  | 185                | 174    | 178 | 206    | 743                  | 90         |       | 833 |

If children were not to break away totally from their parents on marriage, what type of relationship should then exist between parents and their married children.

Of the 701 respondents who felt the necessity of continuing some sort of relationship with their parents after marriage, 80 per cent of the men but 92 per cent of the females insisted on the same cordial relationship that exists between parents and children should remain, with both exchanging regular visits, gifts, etc. Another 11 per cent of the respondents went into more details to specify financial, material and other types of support to be given and received between the two parties. This implies that although these two categories of respondents (91 per cent) may stay outside the family of procreation, they would nevertheless be willing to involve themselves to varying degrees in the affairs of their families of procreation and expect cordial and reciprocal relations between parents and children after marriage. This finding does not support the view that the tendency of people to marry outside their town or tribe results in the disintegration of the extended family. Geographical and social mobility may make the individual independent of the family but it does not necessarily mean the individual does not respect his parents or elders. This is because the average West African still has a pride to belong to a group whose love and care he can always rely upon and a home to which he can always return. Friends may move with him in his place of residence but on death it is his relatives who will bury him. Despite all the changes we are witnessing, industrialisation has failed to create an institution providing intimate relationship to members who can rely on each other. Thus there has not yet been any suitable alternative to the extended family in West Africa. These are some of the considerations which still draw children to their parents and other relations even after they have settled in marriage. This does not mean respondents would keep close relationships with all members of the extended



family, or even with their parents. The degree of close relationship with the extended family is likely to depend on a number of factors, the most important being preference and proximity to connecting relatives, perceived similarities and differences in social status among relatives and the idiosyncratic combination of conscious and unconscious need and attitudes.

TABLE 11

Envisaged Type of Relationship to be Maintained between Parents and Children on Marriage (%)

| Type of Parents-Child Relationship  | Halls of Residence |        |     |        |                |       |       | No. |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------|-----|--------|----------------|-------|-------|-----|
|                                     | Legon              | Akuafu | C/W | Sarbah | All Male Halls | Volta | Total |     |
| Cordial/Regular Visits and gifts    | 75                 | 67     | 89  | 80     | 78             | 92    | 80    | 561 |
| Financial and material support . .  | 13                 | 14     | 9   | 9      | 11             | 5     | 10    | 72  |
| No Interference in domestic affairs | 9                  | 17     | 2   | 9      | 9              | 3     | 8     | 58  |
| No Information . . . . .            | 3                  | 2      | —   | 2      | 2              | —     | 2     | 12  |
| Total . . . . .                     | 100                | 100    | 100 | 100    | 100            | 100   | 100   | 100 |
| Number . . . . .                    | 149                | 138    | 153 | 186    | 627            | 76    |       | 703 |

**Types of marriage desired/envisaged:**

Apart from the 1 per cent who decided to remain in concubinage, and the 2 per cent who were indifferent to the type of marital bonds they entered, respondents who gave information on the type of marriage envisaged fall into the categories illustrated in Table 12 below.

TABLE 12

Distribution of respondents by type of marriage envisaged

|                               | Halls of residence |            |         |            |             | Total | No. |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------|---------|------------|-------------|-------|-----|
|                               | Legon men          | Akuafu men | C/W men | Sarbah men | Volta women |       |     |
| Customary + Christian wedding | 57                 | 40         | 50      | 52         | 84          | 53    | 441 |
| Customary + Ordinance         | 9                  | 13         | 15      | 13         | 10          | 12    | 100 |
| Christian                     | 2                  | 5          | 3       | 5          | 5           | 4     | 33  |
| Customary/Moslem wedding      | 4                  | 3          | 2       | 1          | —           | 2     | 17  |
| Customary only                | 20                 | 25         | 24      | 18         | —           | 20    | 167 |
| Common law/concubinage        | —                  | 2          | —       | 2          | —           | 1     | 8   |
| Indifferent                   | 1                  | 4          | 1       | 2          | —           | 2     | 17  |
| No Information                | 7                  | 8          | 5       | 7          | 1           | 6     | 50  |
| Total                         | 100                | 100        | 100     | 100        | 100         | 100   | 833 |

The distinguishing feature of Table 12 is that all the different types of marriage ceremonies are preceded by the customary legitimisation of the union. None denied the importance of custo-

mary marriage as the basis of marital union contracted. Despite the modern preference for social weddings, individuals feel obligated to contract customary marriage first to seek the approval and consent of parents and the social sanction of the union. It is only then that the union becomes marriage. All other ceremonies are additions to satisfy specific individual, religious or social demands. These in fact can be done (as is usually the case) any time (after the customary rites have been performed) the couple feel ready for it. Meanwhile they are recognised by society for purposes of cohabitation and procreation. The implications of this particular observation have been discussed earlier on in this paper. It is noteworthy that about one-fifth (19 per cent) of the respondents would not go beyond customary marriage; this statement is applicable to the males only. On the other hand all the females would like to crown the customary type of marriage with the more glamorous and the more prestigious Church and Ordinance marriage. This goes on to support the fact in most cases that it is mainly the females, either from the desire to be known as "Mrs" or for social prestige, who pressure the husbands into the more expensive social weddings. It is evident that neither the Churches nor the new trends towards modernisation have succeeded in displacing the customary type of marriage.

#### The working woman and her role in the family:

A majority of the respondents (87 per cent of all the 98 per cent of the female) agreed that women should engage in gainful economic activities outside the home in addition to their biological and social responsibilities as wives and mothers. Reasons for views expressed on working women reveal interesting features. Nearly three quarters (71 per cent) wanted women to work for financial reasons; other reasons given are that the wife must be engaged in full time household duties and take full charge of the care of the children; that since women claim equality of the sexes, they must equally work to share in the household expenses.

TABLE 13

*Respondents' views on whether wives should work outside the home*

| <i>Should wives work?</i> | <i>HALL OF RESIDENCE</i> |               |            |               |              |              |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
|                           | <i>Legon</i>             | <i>Akuafu</i> | <i>C/W</i> | <i>Sarbah</i> | <i>Volta</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| Yes                       | 86                       | 84            | 91         | 81            | 98           | 87           |
| No                        | 10                       | 10            | 7          | 13            | 1            | 9            |
| Undecided                 | 2                        | 3             | 1          | 4             | -            | 2            |
| No information            | 2                        | 3             | 1          | 2             | 1            | 2            |
| Total                     | 100                      | 100           | 100        | 100           | 100          | 100          |

### What are your reasons?

|  |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Financial                              | 68  | 66  | 86  | 65  | 70  | 71  |
| Full household duties/care of children | 16  | 15  | 9   | 21  | 9   | 15  |
| Equality of Sexes                      | 7   | 10  | 1   | 6   | 5   | 6   |
| If wife has saved enough               | 1   | 1   | -   | 1   | -   | 1   |
| Don't know                             | 2   | 3   | -   | 2   | -   | 2   |
| No information                         | 6   | 5   | 4   | 5   | 16  | 5   |
| Total                                  | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

### Working Wives and household budget:

An overwhelming majority (93 per cent of all respondents and 96 per cent of the females) agreed that wives should contribute to the household budget. However 3 per cent of all respondents (4 per cent of the females) were against wives contributing towards household expenditure. It is however interesting to point out that more respondents were in favour of wives contributing to household budget (93 per cent) than were in favour of wives working (87 per cent). Those who felt wives should contribute to the household budget justified their stand on the grounds tabulated in Table 14.

**TABLE 14**

*Why should wives contribute to household budget (%)*

| <i>Why should working wives contribute to household expenditure?</i> | <i>HALL OF RESIDENCE</i> |               |            |               |              |              |
|--|--------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
|  | <i>Legon</i>             | <i>Akuafu</i> | <i>C/W</i> | <i>Sarbah</i> | <i>Volta</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| To supplement husband's income                                       | 45                       | 43            | 44         | 42            | 68           | 46           |
| For sense of co-operation and oneness                                | 33                       | 34            | 42         | 39            | 17           | 35           |
| For the proper care of the children                                  | 6                        | 12            | 7          | 4             | 9            | 7            |
| For equality of sexes  | 6                        | 7             | 5          | 11            | -            | 6            |
| No information   | 10                       | 4             | 2          | 4             | 6            | 6            |
| Total  | 100                      | 100           | 100        | 100           | 100          | 99           |
| Numbers  | 170                      | 150           | 173        | 195           | 78           | 775          |

Working women were not only expected to contribute to the household budget in general but to contribute to, or assume responsibility over specified areas as illustrated in Table 15 below.

**TABLE 15**

*Distribution of ways in which wives can contribute to household expenditure*

| <i>Ways in which wives can contribute to household budget</i> | <i>HALL OF RESIDENCE</i> |                |            |               |              |              |
|---|--------------------------|----------------|------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
|   | <i>Legon</i>             | <i>Akuafio</i> | <i>C/W</i> | <i>Sarbah</i> | <i>Volta</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| Clothing of wife and education of children                    | 25                       | 20             | 41         | 19            | 33           | 27           |
| Kitchen utensils provisions, etc.                             | 30                       | 31             | 9          | 27            | 9            | 23           |
| Supplementing "Chop money"                                    | 20                       | 18             | 17         | 26            | 23           | 21           |
| Contingency/Emergency cases                                   | 2                        | 6              | 2          | 3             | 1            | 3            |
| Car maintenance   | 1                        | 4              | 1          | —             | —            | 1            |
| Decision should be left to spouses                            | 6                        | 11             | 18         | 10            | 23           | 12           |
| No information  | 16                       | 10             | 12         | 15            | 10           | 13           |
| Total   | 100                      | 100            | 100        | 100           | 100          | 100          |

**Husband and Domestic Duties:**

In traditional society, the performance of domestic chores is the complete responsibility of the wife. The survey reveals a clear shift of attitude from the traditional definition of a husband's role. This may, in fact, be explained by the fact that not only do a majority of the respondents expect the wife to work, they equally expect her to contribute her quota of the domestic budget. Although there is general agreement on husbands helping in the house (83 per cent of all respondents) the females were more vociferous on this issue (13 per cent of the females). However 4 per cent of the females and 12 per cent of all respondents were against husbands taking part in household duties. The reasons to justify their answers are as interesting as they are revealing. Those who favoured the practice feel such a help relieves the wife, fosters co-operation, understanding and love and that both spouses are responsible for the upkeep of the household. On the other hand those who are against the practice pointed out that the practice of men engaging in household duties is not "African," that wives must serve husbands and that such practices would not only make wives lazy but also make them "bluff."

**Basic roles expected of Husbands and Wives:**

Respondents isolated nine main areas of responsibility expected of husbands and wives. These areas are tabulated and ranked in Table 17.

**TABLE 16**

*Distribution of respondents' expressed views on husbands' participation in household duties (%)*

| <i>Reason for expressed view</i>               | <i>HALL OF RESIDENCE</i> |               |            |               |              |              |
|--|--------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
|  | <i>Legon</i>             | <i>Akuafu</i> | <i>C/W</i> | <i>Sarbah</i> | <i>Volta</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| Relieves wife of much work                     | 38                       | 30            | 49         | 31            | 35           | 37           |
| Co-operation fosters understanding             | 22                       | 21            | 21         | 31            | 31           | 25           |
| Both spouses are responsible for the household | 17                       | 30            | 10         | 15            | 25           | 18           |
| Wives must serve husbands                      | 5                        | 6             | 6          | 8             | 4            | 6            |
| The practice is not "African"                  | 4                        | 1             | 4          | 3             | -            | 3            |
| Wives must not be made to become lazy          | 2                        | 1             | 1          | 1             | -            | 1            |
| Wife may bluff if husband offers help          | -                        | -             | -          | 1             | -            | *            |
| No information                                 | 11                       | 12            | 9          | 9             | 6            | 10           |
| Total  | 99                       | 101           | 100        | 99            | 101          | 100          |

The ranking of roles expected of spouses present interesting differences between male and female respondents. While both sexes agree that the most important duty of the spouse is to ensure the welfare and security of the family, they disagree as to the relative importance of the remaining roles. Male respondents regard performance of domestic chores or maintenance of the household as the second most important duty of a wife while the females place this in third position and stressing comfort and companionship as the second most important role of a husband which role the males place in third position. While males stress sexual satisfaction as the fourth most important role of a wife the women place this sixth, ranking it lower than the entertainment role of the wife and the husband's financial leadership roles. The different ranking by the sexes implies that the different sexes have different scales of priority of the role performance of spouses. This can create serious problems especially in this particular case where there is quite a wide gap between the males' and females' ranking of the sexual satisfaction role.

In this paper, we attempted to highlight some aspects of marriage and the family in a changing society. We stressed the point that statements such as "the breaking down of the extended family system" or the "erosion of the family" are exaggerations of the real situation. Industrialisation is bound to bring structural changes in the institutions of marriage and the family. However, the trend seems to indicate that although there is a development of some sort of nucleated family system, the form may not necessarily be that of the isolated nuclear family types of Western

**TABLE 17**

*Rank order of roles expected of husbands and wives*

| <i>Basic Roles<br/>expected of wives<br/>&amp; husbands</i> | <i>HALL OF RESIDENCE</i> |               |            |               |              | <i>SEX</i>  |               |              |
|---|--------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
|   | <i>Legon</i>             | <i>Akuafu</i> | <i>C/W</i> | <i>Sarbah</i> | <i>Volta</i> | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| Welfare and security of family                              | 1                        | 1             | 1          | 1             | 1            | 1           | 1             | 1            |
| Domestic affairs household maintenance                      | 2                        | 2             | 2          | 2             | 3            | 2           | 3             | 2            |
| Comfort and companionship to spouse                         | 3                        | 3             | 3          | 3             | 2            | 3           | 2             | 3            |
| Sexual satisfaction   | 5                        | 4             | 5          | 6             | 6            | 4           | 6             | 4            |
| Entertain spouse's visitors                                 | 6                        | 5             | 7          | 5             | 4            | 6           | 4             | 5            |
| Wife to be responsible for cooking meals                    | 4                        | 8             | 4          | 4             | 7            | 5           | 7             | 6            |
| Husband to be head of major finances                        | 8                        | 7             | 8          | 7             | 5            | 8           | 5             | 7            |
| Procreation   | 7                        | 6             | 6          | 8             | 8            | 7           | 8             | 8            |
| Wife must obey husband                                      | 9                        | 9             | 9          | 9             | 9            | 9           | 9             | 9            |

Europe and America. There are inbuilt mechanisms and social structural and psychological factors which mitigate complete eradication of extended family relatives. May be it would be a good idea to begin thinking of forms of nuclear family of different degrees of linkage with the wider kinship system.

The data on students' attitude to marriage presented here show that education and modernisation have not succeeded in bringing radical changes in the students' attitudes to marriage and family relations. However the recognition of the need for wives to work for various reasons has also led the students to redefine the respective roles of husbands and wives towards household duties and household finance.

## APPENDIX

This paper is based on a Survey of "Attitudes of Students of the University of Ghana to marriage."

The survey was restricted to Ghanaian students resident in the University of Ghana during the academic year 1969/70. A questionnaire with a long letter explaining the aims of the survey was left in the "pigeon hole" of every Ghanaian student resident in Legon. Completed questionnaires were either to be left at the Porters' Lodge or to be collected by a second year Honours Sociology Student.

The survey took place in the second term when almost all the first year, third year and some of the second year students were busy preparing for an important examination. It was however assumed that if the subject matter of the survey was interesting enough, a large enough a number will complete and return their questionnaires to justify analysis; this being the case, it was also important to make room for a slight over representation of the 2nd year students who were relatively free in that most of them were not taking any important examination that year.

We did not take a sample of students because, apart from the problems involved in drawing a representative sample it was felt that it would be necessary to take a sample large enough to have a minimum number of completed questions worth analysing. Since the number of students in residence was relatively small (2,215) it was decided to send a questionnaire to everybody, hoping that a large enough of the questionnaires will be returned to justify analysis. An analysis of the 833 questionnaires used in the analysis of the data presented in this paper shows that for all practical purposes, the 833 students who completed their questionnaires can be taken as representative not only of the University as a whole but also of the different Halls of residence and the year in residence.

**This assumption is supported by the following:**

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1. Total Student population in 1969/70  | 2,501 |
| Total number of Foreign Students.....   | 176   |
| Total number of foreign non resident students plus Ghanaian non resident students | 154   |
| Total number of 2nd year Sociology (Honours) students                             | 20    |
| Total number of resident Ghanaian Students  | 2,215 |

From Table I, it could be argued that the 833 students who completed and returned their questionnaires can be taken as representative of their Hall since the distribution of residents in a Hall as percentage of all students (column 5) is very close to the distribution of respondents in a Hall as a percentage of the total number of students who returned their questionnaires (column 6) since the allocation of students to a Hall is random and not based on any specific characteristics such as age, course of study, etc.

Another way of looking at the problem of representation is to analyse students by year of residence and compare the proportion of students of a Hall in each year of residence with the proportion of students in each year of residence as percentage of a total number of students who completed and returned their questionnaires. The results of this analysis are presented in Table II.

**TABLE I**

**Distribution of Ghanaian Students resident in the University of Ghana 1969/70**

| <i>Hall of Residence</i> | <i>Total No. of Ghanaian students resident</i> | <i>No. of Students interviewed</i> | <i>Respondents as % of students in Hall</i> | <i>Residents as % of student population</i> | <i>Respondents in a Hall as % of total student respondents</i> |
|--------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Legon                    | 506  | 185                                | 36.6  | 22.8  | 22.0   |
| Akuafio                  | 506  | 174                                | 34.4  | 22.8  | 21.0   |
| C. Wealth                | 409  | 178                                | 43.5  | 18.5  | 21.0   |
| M. Sarbah                | 543  | 215                                | 39.6  | 24.5  | 26.0   |
| Volta                    | 251  | 81                                 | 32.3  | 11.3  | 10.0   |
| Total                    | 2,215  | 833                                | 37.6  | 99.9  | 100.0  |

**TABLE II**

**Distribution of students by Year of Residence**

| <i>Year of Residence</i> | <i>Number of Students in University</i> | <i>No of Respondents from year of residence</i> | <i>Respondents as % of students in Year of Residence</i> | <i>Students in year as % of Total student body</i> | <i>Respondents in year as % of students who returned their questionnaires</i> |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|--|---|
| 1st Year                 | 816                                     | 319   | 38   | 37   | 38  |
| 2nd Year                 | 652                                     | 288   | 44   | 29   | 35  |
| 3rd Year                 | 591                                     | 192   | 32   | 27   | 23  |
| 4th Year                 | 156                                     | 34  | 22   | 7  | 4   |
| Total                    | 2,215                                   | 833   | 37   | 100.0  | 100.0   |





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