

Modern Marriage in Sierra Leone

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN AFRICA



MONOGRAPHS UNDER THE AUSPICES OF
THE AFRIKA-STUDIECENTRUM • LEIDEN

Editorial Board:

J. F. Holleman, *Leiden*

Ali A. Mazrui, *Kampala*

I. Schapera, *London*

MOUTON • THE HAGUE • PARIS

BARBARA E. HARRELL-BOND

Modern Marriage in Sierra Leone

*A Study of the
Professional Group*

MOUTON · THE HAGUE · PARIS

ISBN 90 279 7871 9

Cover design by Jurriaan Schrofer

© 1975, Mouton & Co. B.V., Herderstraat 5, The Hague, The Netherlands

Printed in the Netherlands

To Stephen, Deborah, David

Foreword

Concerning the Congo (now Zaire), a Belgian official once remarked, 'We used to think that the African mind was an empty vessel and all that we had to do was to pour European civilization into it'. Barbara Harrell-Bond's opening chapter reminds us that what became the Sierra Leone Colony served for much of the nineteenth century as a veritable laboratory for an attempted operation of this kind.

A sheer accident of history brought to the Colony's shores boatloads of Africans, liberated from slave ships. They spoke a hundred or more different languages and dialects and for obvious reasons they possessed no common culture. Thus there was – to use contemporary jargon – an immense problem of 'rehabilitation'. It was constructively tackled, and among the Creoles was developed a solid sense of community, with Christian evangelism and education being the principal instruments. Thanks in particular to the missionaries' zeal, these Creoles not only grew in prosperity but became themselves a major 'civilizing' force. By the indigenous population upcountry they were regarded as 'black Europeans', and they did in fact constitute little oases of westernized civilization in the other West African territories to which they themselves moved as traders, evangelists, and educators. Indeed, in the Anglophone countries as a whole it was the members of these 'old' families living in or emanating from Freetown who were looked upon as the principal arbiters of civilized manners.

Dr. Harrell-Bond's book is concerned with marital relationships and their effect on family organization among both Creole and Provincial professional people in Sierra Leone. The term 'Provincial' refers to people descended from the former Protectorate's indigenous inhabitants, and I have recalled the historical antecedents for two inter-related reasons. First, despite all the European civilization 'poured'

into the liberated Africans, it failed signally to bring about a complete cultural metamorphosis. In other words, the Creole community that emerged did not in fact become simply 'black Europeans'. On the contrary, it developed both a language and a culture of its own.

In consequence, unlike most studies involving 'culture-contact' what Dr. Harrell-Bond had to deal with was the inter-play not of two, but of three fairly distinctive traditions, as well as a measure of Islam. This is methodologically important because investigations into marriage involve questions of social status and mobility and so must naturally pay regard to the role of reference groups. Unlike some contemporary studies of African urbanization, Dr. Harrell-Bond's information was gained mainly by participant-observation. The intensive method of fieldwork is still the distinctive hallmark of social anthropology, but it is idle to pretend that one can deal adequately with urban phenomena by personal contact alone. Case studies have to be brought together in terms of a conceptual framework wide enough to encompass factors extrinsic to the fieldwork situation itself. It is, therefore, greatly to Dr. Harrell-Bond's credit that she provides the requisite perspective in language that is as straightforward as the description of everyday events.

Dr. Harrell-Bond uses her fieldwork material effectively to illustrate the causes of marital disharmony. She explains that in the traditional system great importance is attached to the procreation of children, and to have a large number of wives and many children is a mark of male prestige. The modern view, in which many professional men as well as the wives concur, is that polygyny is a backward practice. Nevertheless, although both parties consequently regard monogamy as the right type of marriage, this does not stop many husbands having extra-marital affairs and fathering 'outside' children. When wives object to this practice, the resulting quarrel, nowadays, is increasingly personal to the husband and wife alone. Harrell-Bond, however, draws attention to the context of this marital conflict. She analyses it in terms of the difference between traditional and Western values. This enables her to show that the conjugal relationship concerned is largely a reflection of the clash between traditional and Western culture.

Outwardly, at least, a good deal more was familiar than was strange in the society studied by Dr. Harrell Bond. It consisted largely of Africans who had resided overseas, in some cases for many years. Dr. Harrell-Bond herself raises by implication some interesting prospects for the future of African marriage. She writes:

'Today ideas about the husband's role in monogamous marriage require men to support the household, relieving wives, in theory at least of economic responsibility. A 'good husband' will not rely on the fact that his wife is contributing to the maintenance of the home, but will make it clear that she is free to spend her own earnings as she chooses. However, since most men spend money on their relatives, on women outside the marriage, and incur financial obligations for the support of illegitimate children, wives often feel it is necessary to insure their own security by investing their money outside the marriage, in their own families, or by saving it.'

This passage is worth pondering because there is evidence from other countries as well as Sierra Leone of women being prepared 'to go it alone'. In fact, almost all African women want a husband and so I am not referring here to spinsterhood. What I do mean is that women have an increasing desire to be economically independent; that they deliberately make this decision and try to equip themselves for money-earning. In other words, the women's attitude is pragmatic. Those who are 'westernized' may marry for 'love'; but they have also emotional reservations and have made their practical preparations in the event of 'love' turning sour.

In the West, there are many advocates of the so-called companionate type of union. Ideally, husband and wife should share each other's interests and take part in joint activities. This, as explained, is the aim as well of some of the Freetown elite; but, as yet, such a view is not widely held. The African traditional society divides men from women and this has been regarded as the basis of male domination. Does this mean that despite all the advance Sierra Leonean women have made in the professions, their matrimonial status may remain as it is?

The answer depends largely on whether the wife has an income of her own, because the traditional separation of man and wife is not disadvantageous in itself. At the cultural level of society where it applies, there are well-known cases of women traders doing well enough to build themselves fine houses, provide young relatives with a university education, and even take over family affairs. One of the reasons is that these almost illiterate women have in fact more room for manoeuvre than an educated wife whose conjugal relationship, though 'joint', is only so in a nominal sense.

A good deal also depends on the husbands' attitudes. In opting

through monogamy for the conjugally-based nuclear family, they have secured a better springboard for individual achievement than the traditional family provides. This is the case because in professional circles a man's prestige requires that his household should be kept up to date, his guests appropriately entertained, etc. An educated wife can perform these functions, but what does a husband do if she is economically in a position to please herself? He may have to make greater concessions than he had bargained for in order to gain his wife's co-operation.

What Barbara Harrell-Bond does is to explain a complicated matrimonial situation in simple language. True, in the facts given, there may be nothing new to people already familiar with Freetown and Sierra Leone. However, if they study carefully what she has written, they will perceive that this is not the whole story. For what Dr. Harrell-Bond does, metaphorically speaking, is to thrust her hand into the existing picture of a jig-saw puzzle, to sort out the individual pieces and to show that a different picture might be created if the pieces were re-fitted in a different order.

It is for these reasons that I hope Dr. Harrell-Bond's book will reach a wider public than anthropologists and sociologists alone. For these members of her own profession it provides an invaluable piece of documentation for comparative purposes. But in the unindustrialized countries today, there are also almost countless agencies at work on 'social development'. These social administrators and community developers, too, are in need of first-hand information. Dr. Harrell-Bond's book may provide not only this, but insight into Third World social problems in general.

Kenneth Little

Preface

This study was part of a project originally designed by members of the Department of Anthropology, University of Edinburgh. The project included three separate studies of marriage relationships among professionals and their spouses in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Scotland.¹ For these studies 'professionals' were defined as those persons who had earned a university degree or equivalent professional qualification and their spouses.² I was employed to conduct the research in Sierra Leone. Although it was intended that the findings of the three studies would be comparable, each investigator was given considerable scope to adapt the research design during the course of the fieldwork. My own early observations led me to believe that the most useful approach in Sierra Leone would be to conduct an exploratory study of marriage among the professional group relying mainly on the traditional method of the anthropologist, as the participant-observer. In addition, a survey was made of the entire professional group in Sierra Leone. These interviews provided additional information on the composition and social background of the professionals and their marriage relationships as well as checking on the reliability of the information obtained through observations. I also conducted a survey of the university students.³ The methods employed in collecting these and other kinds of data are described in Appendix A.

1. The Ghana study is reported in Opong (1973).

2. Other defining criteria for the population to be studied were also laid down in the initial design. These included salary level, position of the family in terms of the developmental cycle (Goody 1966), etc. Why the Sierra Leone situation made it impractical to limit the focus of the study to the original design is discussed in Chapter One and Appendix A.

3. See Harrell-Bond (1972) for a discussion on some methodological issues raised by these surveys.

While the freedom to adapt the focus of the research and the methods used doubtless enhanced the results of the separate studies, the aim to collect strictly comparative data was not achieved. Campbell and Levine (1970) have recently discussed this problem of comparison, a perennial concern of anthropologists. They note that attempts to use the comparative method in social anthropology have mainly depended either on enumerative cross-cultural surveys like those of Murdock (1949) and Whiting and Child (1953) or upon ethnographic reports which have attempted to describe all aspects of a culture. Today, as they note, the trend is towards more specialized fieldwork which produces publication on a much narrower range of data. They also point to the shift away from descriptive ethnography to the newer goal of attempting to test hypotheses. 'Ironically', as they put it, 'the attempt to be scientific in this manner sometimes reduces the scientific values of the end-product'. Data collected for such narrowly specified purposes do not provide material for comparisons and, moreover, the potential for collecting data for comparative analysis on unanticipated topics is diminished. While comparison has always been a basic aim of anthropological research, perhaps studies of marriage and the family are especially prone to dangers of premature attempts to collect comparable data. Certainly, the relatively few studies of urban marriage relationships and family life in West Africa suggest that the need for detailed ethnographic studies should take precedence (Gutkind, 1962, p. 166).

The fieldwork in Sierra Leone was carried out over fourteen months in 1967-68. Although the majority of the professionals live in Freetown, the capital of the country, many are working in towns scattered over the country. During the course of the research I had opportunity to travel widely in the country, which greatly aided my understanding of the society. Since completing this research I returned to Sierra Leone for an additional eighteen months to conduct a study of family law.⁴ This book has benefited greatly from the additional research experience in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone, according to the 1963 Census, has a population of 2,180,335.⁵ This population is made up of eighteen indigenous tribes and the Creoles, descendants of the liberated African slaves who were

4. This study was supported by the Afrika-Studiecentrum, Leiden, Holland.

5. This and the other population figures are from 1963 *Population Census of Sierra Leone*, Central Statistics Office, Freetown, 1965, Vol. I and II.

settled in the colony of Freetown on the peninsula in the eighteenth century.⁶ Of the 60,000 or so persons on the peninsula who are non-Sierra Leonean, about 4,000 are from the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe or other western countries, and 3,000 from Lebanon or Syria,⁷ the rest from nearby African countries.

Freetown, the capital, had, in 1963, a population of 127,907 and it is the largest city in the country. There are twelve other towns which have populations of over 5,000. Most of the Sierra Leoneans, however, continue to live in small villages of less than 1,000 inhabitants.

Sierra Leone has an extensive network of roads, many miles of which are paved, and the road system is constantly being extended. People travel by numerous privately-owned lorries and 'poda-podas' (small vans fitted out as buses) as well as by private motor cars. In addition, since the turn of the century Sierra Leone has had a railway connecting the south and parts of the north with Freetown.⁸ Besides an international airport at Lungi, there are eight landing strips in the country accommodating small planes, with regular scheduled flight services. . Telephones connect almost all main towns.

The climate of Sierra Leone is tropical. Only a few areas average less than 80 inches of rainfall is each year and in most parts of the country the mean annual rainfall over 100 inches. The Western Area and parts of the south average over 140 inches of rain every year. The rains come during the period from May to October.

The fieldwork for the research reported here was initially supported by the Department of Anthropology, University of Edinburgh. I wish to express my thanks to the members of this department, particularly Professor Kenneth Little, Professor James Littlejohn, and Dr. Mary Noble, who encouraged me and offered many helpful suggestions. I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of the Institute of Mental Health, Bethesda, Maryland (National Institute of Mental

6. The composition of the indigenous population of Sierra Leone is complex, several groups having migrated there more recently than others.

7. In Sierra Leone white people are referred to by Africans (and by themselves) as either 'Europeans' or 'expatriates'. The former term is perhaps more common and it makes a distinction between people of strictly European origin and other white people living in Sierra Leone who come from India, the Lebanon and Syria.

8. The railway is narrow gauge and is in need of such extensive repairs as to warrant a recent government programme to phase it out progressively with the expansion of the road network.

Health Fellowship No. 1 F03 MH 34, 176-01 [CUAN]), the American Association of University Women, Washington D.C., the Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, and the Afrika-Studiecentrum, Leiden, Holland, all of whom provided support at various stages of the writing of this book.

I also want to express my thanks to several other persons who contributed intellectually to the study: Professor John Beattie, now of Leiden University, Mr. Edwin Ardener and Dr. Alan Milner of Oxford University, Professor Adam Podgorécki, Warsaw University, Mr. G. W. Grootenhuis, Director of the Afrika-Studiecentrum, Dr. William Young, late of Fourah Bay College, Dr. Jerry Windham, then lecturing in sociology at Njala University College; Dr. James Spradley, Macalester College; and Professor Edward Bruner, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois. Appreciation goes to several others who helped me in particular ways: Dr. A. K. Turay, a linguist from Njala University College who assisted me with the orthography and shared most generously many insights drawn from his own research; Mr. Peter Gorbach, Department of Social Medicine, Oxford, who served as statistical consultant; Dr. Joe Kennedy, a social psychologist who directed the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone, for spending many hours advising me on the construction and testing of the questionnaires; Dr. H. M. Joko Smart, Fourah Bay College, who spent much time discussing his own research on the law of inheritance; Mr. Albert Metzger, then a member of the Judicial Department, who gave most generously of his time to teach me about the law in Sierra Leone and later read drafts of Chapters Five and Six, giving me many helpful criticisms; Roy Kennedy who served as editor; Gillian Ball who typed the manuscript; and Peter MacIntyre who prepared the index.

It is impossible to name and thank properly all those in Sierra Leone who gave assistance, but some must be singled out: Dr. Edward Blyden III, then the director of the Institute of African Studies, who appointed me Visiting Research Fellow at Fourah Bay College and provided housing, office facilities and every other necessary assistance during my stay; Mr. Jonathan Hyde, who spent much time discussing the research; Mr. Jim Blair who helped in innumerable ways during my fieldwork and Mr. Samuel Clarke, my assistant. I also wish to thank the administrations of both University Colleges for permitting the administering of the questionnaires to the students. The staff of the Ministry of Social Welfare must be especially recognized for their

dedicated support throughout my stays in Sierra Leone. Other Ministries also gave much-needed assistance: the Ministries of Health, the Interior, Education and Public Works. I also want to thank Omari Golley, Dr. and Mrs. Davidson Nicol, Mr. Joe Kowa, Mr. R. B. Kowa, Paramount Chief Foday Kai, Dyke Harding, Victor Kanu and John Labor for giving me generous help of various kinds while I was in Sierra Leone. I made a film during my fieldwork and many people were involved in this project. I especially thank the staff of the Film Unit of the Ministry of Information and the persons who took part in the actual filming. The residents of the village of Juhun, Jaima Bongor Chiefdom, where most filming was done, deserve special thanks.

My greatest debt is to the many people, necessarily anonymous, who co-operated by permitting me to question them about their own experiences, attitudes and opinions in the most intimate areas of their lives, their marriage and family relationships. The extent to which this book accurately reports the situation as regards marriage among the professionals is a testimony to their patience, tolerance and the sincerity with which they admitted me into their confidences.

The experience of conducting research in a foreign culture necessarily has a profound impact on the personal life of the anthropologist. Certainly the lives of my children and myself have been greatly enriched by our knowledge of family life in Sierra Leone. Having spent so much time there, we will always look on Sierra Leone as a second home. It is just not possible to convey the warmth of hospitality which Sierra Leoneans extended to us, but may I especially thank Mr. Augustine Sandi who was the first of many to invite me to join his family at their table to share their food.

Table of contents

Foreword by Kenneth Little	vii
Preface	xi
List of tables	xxi
1. Introduction	1
2. The historical background	21
<i>The founding of the Colony</i>	21
<i>The establishment of the Protectorate</i>	25
<i>Independence</i>	30
3. The composition and social background of the professional group	35
<i>Tribal composition and education</i>	35
<i>Age and birthplace</i>	36
<i>Marital status</i>	37
<i>Religious affiliation</i>	39
<i>Education</i>	40
<i>Occupation and social status</i>	48
<i>Social status in the village and in town</i>	51
<i>Monogamy and social status</i>	54
<i>The households of the married professionals</i>	56
4. Stereotypes of traditional and western marriage and family life	61
<i>Stereotypes of traditional and western marriage and family life</i>	66

XVIII *Table of contents*

<i>Choice of a marriage partner, courtship and marriage ceremonies</i>	67
<i>Marriage relationships</i>	71
<i>The role of the wife</i>	75
<i>Children and family relationships within the home</i>	76
<i>Relationships between married couples and their relatives</i>	79
<i>Summary</i>	81
5. The legal setting of marriage	84
<i>Marriage law</i>	86
<i>Divorce law</i>	97
<i>Property settlement and child custody</i>	104
<i>Inheritance law</i>	107
<i>Maintenance law</i>	114
<i>Adoption</i>	118
6. The status of children born out of wedlock	124
<i>The scope of the problem: how many children are born out of wedlock?</i>	125
<i>The social position of the child born out of wedlock</i>	130
<i>Attitudes towards husbands' extra-marital affairs</i>	139
<i>The legal status of children born out of wedlock</i>	144
<i>The attempt to eliminate illegitimacy</i>	149
7. Choosing a marriage partner	157
<i>Criteria for selecting a spouse</i>	159
<i>Relations between the unmarried: courtship</i>	174
<i>Engagement</i>	187
<i>Marriage ceremonies</i>	192
8. The organization of domestic life and family relationships	196
<i>The organization of domestic work</i>	197
<i>The organization of family finances</i>	206
<i>Financial obligations to relatives</i>	208
<i>The segregation of financial matters</i>	218
9. Marital conflicts and their resolution	223
<i>Relatives</i>	234
<i>The role of the wife and the authority of the husband</i>	240
<i>Resolving conflicts</i>	244

10. Attitudes towards sex, family limitation and the use of contraceptives	250
<i>Attitudes towards limiting the size of the family</i>	250
<i>The use of contraceptives</i>	254
<i>Beliefs and attitudes influencing the use of contraceptives</i>	256
<i>Attitudes towards women's sexuality and their influence over men</i>	264
<i>Attitudes of men towards sexuality</i>	270
11. Prospects for marriage among the professional group	279
<i>Does the nuclear family 'fit' Sierra Leone Society?</i>	289
Appendix A: Methods	296
<i>Learning the language</i>	298
<i>Use of local resources</i>	300
<i>Data collected</i>	301
<i>Questionnaires administered to university students</i>	306
<i>Questionnaires administered to the professionals</i>	307
<i>Questionnaires administered to primary-aged children</i>	310
<i>Essays by secondary school pupils</i>	310
<i>Attitude scale</i>	311
<i>Interviews with experts</i>	311
<i>Official records and other statistical data</i>	312
Appendix B: Questionnaires administered to samples of students and professionals	314
References	333
Index	341

List of tables

1. Sex and marital status of professionals	37
2. Level of western education of fathers of professional group and university students by tribal affiliation	41
3. Level of western education of mothers of professional group and university students by tribal affiliation	42
4. Occupations of wives of professional men	48
5. Occupational status and employment of married couples	49
6. 'What do you think it is that determines status and prestige in the city and the village?'	52
7. Attributes which students indicated as describing their father's family	53
8. Type of marriage of parents of professionals and students by tribal affiliation	54
9. 'How many half-brothers and sisters do you have on your father's side?'	56
10. Average number of persons per household	57
11. Age distribution of persons residing in professionals' households in the Western area	58
12. Marital status of males and females at time of marriage by type of marriage annually (1961-68)	96
13. Number of divorce petitions filed annually and decrees granted (1961-68)	97
14. The number of maintenance cases tried annually in Free-town (1961-68)	114
15. Number of children born out of wedlock in Western area (1961-68)	127
16. 'If a marriage does not produce children a wife should be understanding and allow her husband to have children outside'	144

xxii *List of tables*

17. 'A man's inheritance should be divided equally between all his children born within the marriage or outside'	152
18. The importance of love and parental approval in the choice of a spouse	172
19. Husband's assistance in household tasks	201
20. 'When I am old I expect my children to provide financial assistance for me'	211
21. 'The fear of my mother's curse is something I feel very deeply'	214
22. 'Which of these relatives do you expect to assist financially when you leave university?'	215
23. Students ranking of possible sources of conflict between married couples	223
24. Topics over which professional couples sometimes argue	224
25. Ideal number of children	251
26. 'What would you say was the best/worst thing about having a large family?'	253
27. Methods of contraception ever used	255
28. Methods of contraception currently used	256
29. Composition of the university sample	307
30. Sex and marital status of persons selected for interviews	308
31. Reasons for replacing persons included in the sample	309

Introduction

It is well-known that marriage and family organization in Africa have undergone a considerable transformation since the onset of the colonial era. The general trend towards monogamous marriage and the nuclear family among urban Africans has been amply documented.¹ It is assumed that these changes are connected with the growth of urban centres, the spread of western education and Christian religious ideas, and the modernization of the economic sphere. New symbols of prestige and status have emerged in urban Africa and the western type of marriage is a central one.

However, some writers, noting the problems and dissatisfactions of monogamously married couples, have reflected on the lack of 'fit' of western marriage practices in the African setting.² Others have commented with alarm on the disintegration of the traditional family, the central institution of African society.³ One Sierra Leonean professional woman put it this way: 'African marriage is at a crossroads, some people have the western form of marriage, some have the native, but many have neither. There is really no society. The old forms are gone but there is nothing to take their place, no morality, no principles upon which the individual can base anything.'⁴ On the other hand, other observers have pointed to considerable evidence that, despite the many stresses, the African family has adapted itself to the urban

1. Baker and Bird 1959; Little and Price 1967, 1974; Little 1959, 1973, all bring together a number of studies of marriage in Africa which document this trend.

2. Little 1959; Noble 1968; Longmore 1959, pp. 15-16; Wilson 1942, 64.

3. For example, see Phillips and Morris 1971, p. 1; Balandier 1955, p. 262; Chin 1959 as quoted by Gutkind 1962; and Longmore 1959, pp. 103-104, 106.

4. These comments were made in an interview.

2 *Introduction*

situation while retaining numerous rural characteristics.⁵

This book presents a description of marriage and family life among the professionals in Sierra Leone. In this introductory chapter I shall consider, in the light of relevant literature, some of the broad problems involved in a study of this kind, especially in the African (and particularly the West African) context. The topic of marriage among professionals, however, has not yet been extensively investigated in other African societies, so that this study has not been able to draw widely on such relevant materials. Hence it was felt necessary to present a relatively large body of description to offer a basis for future comparative work.

Although this study is about marriage relationships the emphasis will be on the behaviour of individuals, men and women: the role of husband or wife is only one of the many roles each plays in society. This emphasis upon the individual is in some contrast to many studies of this topic where the married couple or the nuclear family, rather than the individual, is taken as the unit of investigation. It is often assumed that in traditional societies it is the wider or extended family which provides the link or bridge between the members of the nuclear family and the larger society. Young and Willmott describe the approach of their own studies of the family in Britain in this way:

'We have . . . moved successively outwards from the married couple to the extended family, from the extended family to the kinship network, and from there to certain relations between the family and the outside world' (1957, p. 104).

With the assumed breakdown of the wider or extended family in modern, urban societies, it is also assumed that the nuclear family stands alone as an isolated, autonomous system, with an internal structure unaffected by outside influences. Elias and Scotson refer to this 'family-centred theoretical framework' as bearing a resemblance to 'early geocentric concepts of the universe according to which the earth was the kernel and the heavens the outer shell' (1965, p. 183). However, one may observe that the activities of persons who are part of a household are spread over a wide variety of social spheres, and conjugal role behaviour is just one aspect (although perhaps the most important aspect) of their lives.⁶ Thus, to understand the nature of

5. Gutkind 1962.

6. For a discussion of this question see Harrell-Bond 1967, p. 430.

relationships between husband and wives and their attitudes towards their marital roles it is essential to examine the social environment in which they live. In Sierra Leone it became necessary to explore aspects of the society which at first glance might seem quite remote from the immediate relationships between husbands and wives.

Of course, taking the view that the form of the family and marriage relationships are somehow a product of the type of wider society in which they are embedded makes it difficult to decide at what point to limit the scope of the study. Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter, in their study of family life in a coal mining community in England, emphasize this difficulty:

‘... phenomena like the relations between husband and wife, or the nature of leisure activities are viewed primarily from the standpoint of grasping their interrelations with the forms of activity and social relationships imposed by the coalmining work upon which the community is based. This emphasis will tend to obscure the fact that each of these particular sets of relationships is extended beyond the community, in both space and time. By itself, the community-study technique provides no way of measuring the significance of its findings against what may be crudely described as these “external factors” ’ (1957, p. 7).

In Sierra Leone the difficulty of limiting the scope of the study is compounded by the fact that many profound influences on marriage relationships stem from the effects of the imposition of colonial rule and the accompanying intrusion of foreign institution, ideas and values. For example, discrediting the traditional polygamous form of marriage and upholding the ideals of Christian monogamous marriage was a fundamental missionary emphasis. Monogamous marriage continues to be very closely identified with the notions of progress and ‘being civilized’. Although today the status of the professional depends on many attributes, it is hard to imagine that anyone could publicly flaunt at least the appearance of observing this practice and retain his social standing.

Balandier has developed the concept of the ‘colonial situation’, and this, he contends, must include more than a concern with ideological influences upon colonized societies. He argues for attention to the *totality* of the social situation, a concern which for anthropologists has been the tradition since Durkheim and Mauss. However, Balandier accuses anthropologists who are concerned with the phenomena of

4 *Introduction*

social change of having so far ignored the need to take account of the 'colonial situation' in the sense of considering it as a '... special combination of circumstances giving a specific orientation to the agents and process of change' (1970, p. 21). He notes that they have tended to treat these processes in isolation, looking at such things as the introduction of a monetary economy and a wage-earning class, the extension of education, or the efforts of missionary enterprises, without regarding them as '... comprising a single entity that provides the basis for a new and autonomous society' (1970). In order to have a comprehensive account of the situation created by colonial expansion, Balandier points out that it is necessary to go much further than is possible by using such notions as the 'clash of civilizations' or culture contact. He reminds us that in the case of these dependent people, these clashes or contacts occurred under very special conditions and it is this totality of conditions to which he refers as the colonial situation:

'This may be defined if we bear in mind the most general and obvious of these conditions: the domination imposed by a foreign minority, "racially" and culturally distinct, upon a materially inferior autochthonous majority, in the name of a dogmatically asserted racial (or ethnic) and cultural superiority; the bringing into relation of two heterogeneous civilizations, one technological-ly advanced, economically powerful, swift moving and Christian by origin, the other without complex techniques, economically backward, slow moving and fundamentally "non-Christian"; the antagonistic nature of the relations between the two societies, owing to the instrumental role to which the subject society is condemned; and the need for the dominant society, if it is to maintain its position, to rely not only upon "force", but also upon a whole range of pseudo-justifications and stereotyped patterns of behaviour, etc.' (1970, p. 52).

This study does not pretend to take complete account of the 'colonial situation' as Balandier defines it. It does, however, attempt to consider what seem to be the most important external factors which influence marriage and family relations – factors which reflect the special conditions of colonialism.

There is an enormous amount of literature, sociological, anthropological, and psychological, in the field of family and marriage. Moge (1971) has compiled a comprehensive bibliography of the sociological

literature in this area. Stephens (1963) is one example of an attempt to draw together a number of anthropological studies of the family and make some cross-cultural comparisons. For Africa, Mair (1969) has surveyed the anthropological literature on family and marriage. Little and Price (1967, 1974) brought together most of the studies of marriage in West Africa. Little (1973) discusses the role of urban African women and has referred to several more recent studies of marriage patterns in Africa. This study of marriage in Sierra Leone concentrates, however, on understanding marriage in this setting among a particular social group, the professionals. There are very few strictly comparable studies, although the relative absence of comparative references should not be taken to imply that marriage patterns among professionals in Sierra Leone are necessarily unique.

Although the study falls under the general rubric of 'elite' studies in Africa, the professionals do not include all those persons living in the country who could be considered part of the 'elite'. However, the use of professional level educational qualifications as one criterion of elite status in Africa is fully justified. While education is generally a means of social mobility, a university degree (or a 'B.A.' as Sierra Leoneans refer to it) has almost magical qualities which afford its recipient immediate access to the highest social positions in the society. Others have commented on this phenomenon in Africa of the status assigned to university degrees. Discussing recruitment to well-paid positions in the bureaucratic systems of government, Lloyd says:

'Rank at entry depends almost entirely on an educational qualification. Furthermore, . . . it is not the content of education which is important but its standard. For many a young man his struggle to achieve ends with his entry to a university – the university will ensure that most of its students will graduate. Graduation is, of course, an achievement; but henceforth it becomes virtually an ascribed status, as promotion by seniority tends to prevail' (1966, p. 19).

Lloyd continues by noting that it is impossible to understand the characteristics of the modern elite in Africa without knowing something about the educational system which ' . . . determines how open is recruitment to the elite and . . . the degree of corporate feeling among the elite' (1966). Kilson (1966) remarking on the importance of education in African social change, notes that normally education

6 *Introduction*

could be obtained by Africans '... without conjuring up fear among Europeans that its attainment would necessarily jeopardize their colonial prerogatives' (p. 38). He observes that education invariably altered the African's social position and way of life and so '... as a factor of social change, education necessarily contributed to the rise of a new system of social stratification' (p. 39).

The more general theoretical question of social stratification arises from this consideration of the exclusiveness and power of the professionals and of their relationships to the rest of the society, particularly in terms of the question of their influence on future change. I have already used the term 'elite' for the segment of society which includes the professionals, but Goldthorpe (1961) has quite rightly pointed out the limitations of this term. Lloyd (1966) considering this problem of terminology when describing the western-educated and wealthy men of contemporary African societies compares the components of both class terminology and the concept of the 'elite'. He concludes that while neither is completely satisfactory we must have some term, and 'elite' is probably less objectionable than most. As he says, 'Our search is for deeper understanding of the so-called elite and the trends in its development – not merely for the most appropriate label' (1966, p. 62).

The 'standard-setting' role or influence of the elite has been questioned by some who have looked at the problem of social stratification in urban Africa. Sinclair (1971) inquired into the perceptions of social stratification among the sub-elite in Sierra Leone whom he defined as including teachers, clerks, and other bureaucratic employees in middle grade posts which required a western education, but not up to university standard. From this research he suggests that it may well be more useful to consider the behaviour of these sub-elites rather than the elite themselves if one is interested in predicting trends throughout the society. He mentions that for West Africa others have also pointed out that the sub-elite may be an even more important reference group for the masses than the elite itself (Lloyd 1966; Krapf-Askari 1969).

In Sierra Leone education, particularly university education, has been closely linked with opportunity for social mobility since the beginnings of the Colony, much earlier than in most African colonies. Kilson traces this development historically:

'Law and medicine were the first liberal professions in which Sierra Leone Africans received full formal training. A Sierra

Leonean lawyer secured admission to the English Bar in 1854, and by 1890 twelve of his compatriots had done likewise. With the establishment of Fourah Bay College as an affiliated institution of Durham University in 1876, a major opportunity for the schooling of professionals opened up. The register of the College shows that before 1900 some nineteen African students studied law, and between 1900 and 1949 at least twenty-five graduates of the college became lawyers. Close to one hundred African lawyers were to be found in 1960 in Sierra Leone and a much larger number were studying law in Britain.

African doctors, clergymen, teachers, and senior civil servants have also been known in Sierra Leone for a considerable time. The first Sierra Leonean qualified in medicine in 1858 after training at St. Andrews University, Scotland. From 1858 to 1901 some twenty-five Sierra Leoneans (all Creoles) qualified as doctors; and from 1905 to 1956 some sixty-three qualified, all but five of whom were Creoles. About fifty Sierra Leonean doctors were practicing in 1960, and about one hundred students were training overseas in medicine' (1966, pp. 79-80).

Moreover, for a long time, economic position has been associated with the achievement of professional qualifications, and this association has been strengthened since the turn of the century when Sierra Leoneans began to be discouraged from attempting to compete in the commercial world, as will be described in Chapter Two. Women in Sierra Leone also had opportunities for higher education. Mrs. Hyde Forster, one of the first women to graduate from Fourah Bay College, received her degree in 1938. Individuals make enormous personal sacrifices to achieve an education and the prestige associated with it.

A speech by a young man who had just graduated made in 1968 at a lavish party in honour of the occasion illustrated these attitudes towards higher education. He wore his black academic gown and white fur-trimmed hood and held his cap in his hand as he gave the speech. Nor did he remove his gown during the entire evening, even when dancing. Most of the guests were young people who had left school and were working. Most likely none of them would ever attend university. Although he consoled them by saying that everyone could make a worthwhile contribution, whatever his education, his patronizing tone made it amply clear that his achievements had set him far above them.

8 Introduction

'Master of Ceremonies, Distinguished Guests, I am very pleased to see so many of you here this evening. I am particularly delighted to see many female faces, charming, but alas tantalizing. It is with humility mingled with elation that I speak to you. Humility because when I compare my life a few years ago with my present position I can only feel humble by the side of the Almighty who has enabled me.

My sense of pride does not arise from the fatuous notion that the achievement of a B.A. is something extraordinary. I maintain that a B.A. is nothing unique or *sui generis*. Indeed it can be attained by anyone of average intelligence coupled, of course, with hard work, industry and assiduity. My feelings of elation derive from this: a few years ago, when my future seemed in doubt, when my whole career seemed hopelessly precarious, I became an object of ridicule, the target of humiliating gossips and contumely! I survived all this and, by Divine Dispensation, I am today what you already know I am. What is left, Ladies and Gentlemen, is for me to demonstrate that spiritual resilience which has enabled me to survive the onslaught of the past, and with my faith in God I am sanguine of success.

These are moments, you will appreciate, when one is inclined to be emotional but I assure you that I shall restrain myself. Indeed it is not the heights to which a man climbs but the depths from whence he came. And it is against this background that this rather elaborate activity has been designed.

. . . Remember that all of us cannot be Lawyers nor can all be Doctors; all of us cannot be B.A.s nor can all of us be Ph.D.s, all of us cannot be S. B. Joneses [a reference to a very prominent judge in Sierra Leone] nor can all of us be Davidson Nicols [at that time, Principal of Fourah Bay College]. But, we can make up our minds so serve our country well and to be thoroughly proficient in our various vocations. Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us lift up our heads from that depth of obscurity and ascend marvelously to heights of fame and achievement. Good sailing to us all.'

Since the data for this research derive from such a narrow segment of the society it is evidently not possible to extrapolate the results to the wider population. However, a more fundamental theoretical matter is raised by elite studies. One of the assumptions often made in such studies of elites is that the patterns which are found to occur

among them are predictive of trends in the society as a whole. In Nadel's terms, the assumption is that the elites are the 'standard-setting group' (1956). In Sierra Leone, as far as marriage and family relationships are concerned, I suggest that the direction of change generally in the society cannot be predicted so simply. One reason for this is related to the special characteristics of the present-day professional group.

Many professionals come from established Creole families for whose ancestors the Colony was founded. As will be shown in Chapter Two, the Colony was organized around western and Christian values. Those professionals who originate from the Provinces were exposed to years of indoctrination in missionary-run boarding schools or as wards in Creole households. Most of them lived abroad for many years while they were being educated. They were achieving their professional qualifications during the period of colonial rule, and during this period it was very much in their interest to conform to the patterns upheld by their colonizers as representing western civilization. After all, an African could only hope for educational or economic advance if he could demonstrate to his white masters that he had absorbed (or had the potential to absorb) their culture. The early missionaries placed great stress on Christian monogamous marriage and education, and religious and educational institutions were provided from the beginning of the Colony. It is understandable that Africans associated the achievement of the white man's culture with the adoption of the values of education and religion, the practice of monogamous marriage being the hallmark of conversion.⁷

Today, however, as a result of the pressure from the indigenous population, who are in the majority, a new group of persons is being prepared to join the professionally qualified elite. In this study these are represented by the university students. Many of these new recruits have had considerably more experience of traditional village life than have the present group of professionals. A significant proportion of them come from Muslim rather than Christian backgrounds. Moreover,

7. Today the role of Christianity in the suppression of the colonized is often remarked upon. One of my informants told me he remembered standing in the church singing a hymn which included the line, 'Take my silver and my gold, naught from thee would I withhold'. Over the sounds of the congregation singing he could hear the sirens of the ships in the harbour as the gold and diamonds of his country were indeed being taken away! See Beetham 1967, p. 42, for a general statement of missionary policy in Africa.

many attended secular as well as religious schools and were taught by African rather than by European teachers. In some cases they are even receiving most or all of their higher education within Sierra Leone, so fewer will have the experience of living abroad for several years. Further, these young people are being trained to enter professional (and, therefore, influential) occupations and positions of authority in the country during a period of world history when Africans have become more self-confident. The proliferation of African literature and the greater interest today in African studies may suggest to these young people that African traditional culture, too, has an intrinsic value. One need not, however, disagree totally with Turnbull when he says that it is '... obvious that the old [in the sense of the traditional] has gone for good and in the cities the Africans have come to look upon it with shame, so that it is no longer even a source of pride, let alone of moral or spiritual strength' (1963, p. 181). As we shall see, university and other young people who are aspiring to professional occupations express overwhelming preference for the pattern of marriage and family life which they see as modern or western and 'anti-traditional'. Nevertheless, as will be shown, many traditional attitudes which influence behaviour persist. Young people are often not fully aware of these, and therefore these attitudes are not so open to correction in the light of modern ideas. It seems likely that these new recruits to the professionals will have a profound impact upon the general character of marriage relationships among them, in the direction of re-emphasizing aspects of the traditional.

The patterns of marriage relationships and attitudes towards them which exist today among the professionals developed, especially among the Creoles, under the special conditions of colonialism. In the absence of at least some of these special external circumstances, these patterns may never occur again in quite the same way. This argument is, however, weakened when one considers how exclusive these educated people of high status have become and how they have managed to make acceptance into their ranks contingent upon almost the same criteria as in the case of their colonial rulers. This was demonstrated in the incidents following an attempt to revise the law relating to children born out of wedlock, which are described in Chapter Six. The opposition appealed to the Christian ideals of monogamous marriage to defeat the law, in order to retain their exclusiveness and control of power.

One of the general problems of research in social behaviour is the tendency to impose theoretical concepts and categories which do not fit the data. Anthropologists have hoped to avoid this tendency since their research is usually conducted in a foreign culture where the relevant domains and categories have to be discovered by intensive participation and observation. However, despite the advantages of such a precaution, interpretations of ethnographic data frequently reveal the bias of the investigator. Studies of marriage and family life are perhaps most in danger of this pitfall. Birdwhistell, referring to psychological and sociological studies of the family, has observed that with very few exceptions these studies have accepted what he terms the 'sentimental model' of family life:

'Statistics are made of units derived of this model; anecdotes are collected; and formalistic abstractions are derived from it. There is no reason to be particularly surprised about this. Family processes and structures are camouflaged in depth by sanctions that idealize them. Unfortunately, these processes are further obscured by studies, which, while focusing upon the family's pathologies, serve to *reinforce the sentimental model of the family by the assumption that the pathologyless family has the shape of the sentimental model*' (author's italics) (1966).

Cohen (1971) comments on this problem in his study of marital instability among the Kanuri where he considers the value judgements which lie behind most studies of divorce:

'Unspoken yet present in the sociological material is a view of human nature, or at the very least, of the Western individual and his social psychological needs and dispositions. He and she are happier, more rewarded, less punished, less fearful, etc., if interpersonal relations in marriage can be maintained without serious disruption, breakage, and hostility. This presumption is so strong that one of the theoretical models used to explain marital relations equates husband-wife conflict to the escalation of hostilities preceding the outbreak of open warfare between nations' (p. 9).⁸

Cohen asks what would happen if everyone in a society divorced, not just once but several times. The material on Kanuri marriage presents such a high divorce society and, according to Cohen, it has been like

8. Esther Goody makes the same point in her discussion of the Sonja (1962).

this for quite a long time, and has prospered. If a Kanuri were writing about family life in American society, Cohen suggests, he would take quite an opposite point of view from the western observer. The Kanuri would ask how it is that the husbands and wives who fight, dislike each other, and who are attracted to other mates, remain married while the Kanuri simply break things off. Cohen points out that observers of both societies would be asking the same question, '... how does this unfamiliar human experience compare with my own? How can I explain these differences ...?' So although it is almost impossible to write about marriage and family life and avoid making comparisons with categories and concepts drawn from our own cultural experience, perhaps we may usefully borrow Cohen's analogy that such a study serves, among other things, as a mirror in which to see ourselves.

In Sierra Leone monogamous Christian marriage has been a symbol of high status among the western-educated for a very long time. The several studies cited above raise a number of questions about urban African marriage. For example, is the present trend of marriage and family life among urban Africans predictive of the future of family life in Africa? Are the attempts of urban Africans to follow the western model of monogamous marriage as unsuccessful as some writers have suggested? If they are, do we conclude that the problems observed are simply an indication of a transitional phase of urban life in Africa, which in time will settle down to some satisfactory established pattern? And, if, as some have concluded, western patterns are so ill-adapted to the African situation, how do we explain that they have been adopted as such a significant symbol of prestige? In addition to being ethnographic, this book attempts to comment on the basic problem which underlies all these questions: just what are the chances in Sierra Leone for the emergence of the conjugally-based or nuclear family as a domestic unit in its own right?

There were found to be 754 persons in Sierra Leone who held professional qualifications. A sample of 160 was drawn for the interviews by means of a random number table. Among this sample there were 125 extant unions from which the data regarding marriage relationships were drawn. When I refer to the 'professionals' or 'professional group' I refer to all 754.⁹ Since the sampling frame was

9. I use the term 'group' in its loosest sense, as defined in the *Concise Oxford*

complete (as will be discussed in Appendix A) and the sample was drawn with attention to statistical procedures, the results may be taken to refer to all the professionals. However, in this study, I have used statistical procedures at a very low level of sophistication. The weight has been placed upon descriptive statistics. More elaborate statistical procedures of analysis such as those involving tests of significance are inappropriate to such a study. There would be no sense in scattering the book with significance tests since those differences to which I refer as significant are so wide that their statistical significance may be assumed.

The terms, 'traditional' and 'western', which are used in this study, require some explanation. I use the term 'traditional' to describe an attribute which has characterized the society for a considerable length of time. I more closely restrict the term to refer to a pattern of social relations, attitudes, practices, and organization of family life which may be observed in Sierra Leone today. While by no means confined to them, it is most completely represented by the non-literate indigenous peoples living in the rural areas of Sierra Leone.¹⁰ Professionals and other western-educated people, when discussing this way of life, refer to it either as the 'traditional' or 'native' way of life. The behaviour of professional married couples is very much influenced by traditional attitudes and practices.

As for the term, 'western', it has been widely used in the literature about family life to refer to the new form of monogamous companionate marriage which urban Africans are adopting. The problems of accurately defining either 'western marriage patterns' or 'companionate monogamous marriage' are so obvious as to require no comment.

Dictionary. However, it might be argued that the professionals have some characteristics of a group in the narrower, sociological sense. Although they are not all personally acquainted with one another, they almost all know *about* one another. They have, to some degree, a sense of unity, common goals and shared norms.

10. It should be noted that when references are made in this book to such concepts as 'non-literate' or 'educated', it is in relation to western education that they are used. Islam has had a far-reaching impact in Sierra Leone. All over the country children are being taught to read Arabic. This teaching has been discounted by the western-educated elite as having no practical value, only a religious function. However, in my later research in Sierra Leone (1971-1973), I learned that a very large proportion of the so-called non-literate people of Sierra Leone were writing their indigenous languages in Arabic script.

14 *Introduction*

However, educated Sierra Leoneans themselves describe their marriages and pattern of family life as 'western'. In Chapter Four these so-called western marriage practices, as perceived by educated Sierra Leoneans, are discussed in some detail. As will be shown there, when referring to marriage and family life, the terms, 'western' and 'traditional', have been dichotomized; all that is progressive and modern is associated with being 'western'. Throughout the book then, when mention is made of a 'traditional' practice, I will be referring to a phenomenon which is a general part of indigenous culture and is observable in practice today. However, at times I will use the term to refer to the *stereotypes* of that mode of family life, and these cases will be specified. When the term 'western' is employed it will be used in the sense of the popular stereotypes of companionate monogamous marriage as perceived by Sierra Leoneans.

This problem of imposing idealized concepts of the family and of marriage behaviour became apparent from the outset of this study. In the Preface it has been noted that the original design of this study in Sierra Leone was intended to be part of a comparative study of marriage among professionals in three countries. With this consideration in mind, the design laid out the defining criteria for 'professionals' on the basis of educational level and income.¹¹ It was also planned that the samples of couples investigated would be chosen in terms of their position in the development cycle of their family. This required that some couples would be included who had no children. (It was stipulated that these couples must have been married less than two years, as previous knowledge of marriage in West Africa suggested that marriage of any longer duration which had not produced children would already be 'in danger'.) The remaining number would be couples having children under thirteen years of age. The notion of the developmental cycle and its implications for understanding family behaviour has been developed by Goody (1966). It was hoped that the three studies could examine the extent to which factors relating to the development cycle of family life affect the division of labour between husbands and wives.

My initial inquiries did not lead to couples who conformed to these requirements for inclusion, i.e. extant unions with no children in their

11. As noted in the Preface, 'professionals' were defined as persons who hold university degrees, or equivalent professional level qualifications, and their spouses.

first two years of marriage and those with children under thirteen years of age. I conducted intensive interviews with a pilot group of couples during the first five months of fieldwork and although these couples, at first sight, *appeared* to conform to these criteria, more careful examination revealed complexities. Husbands were often supporting one or more children born to them before they contracted the present marriage. Other couples had cohabited for some time before marriage and had had children during this period. A large number of married couples had not actually lived together for periods of several years, although they would not admit to being estranged. Many husbands maintained more or less permanent relationships with women other than their wives, although their official residence was with their wives. The wide variations in family types and conjugal relationships which I encountered early in the fieldwork made it obvious that it was crucial to drop the original defining criteria for inclusion. I decided to interview a sample of the entire professional group without prejudging the nature of their conjugal relationships. However, had I been able to find families for the pilot study who conformed to the model prescribed, the research might well have continued without my encountering the wide variations in marriage types which are practised. After all, professionals have strong vested interests in preserving the myth that their marriages conform to the 'sentimental model' of western monogamous companionate marriage.

While this book is about marriage among the professional group, data were drawn from several other sources besides married couples. Some of these additional sources helped to build up the picture of the position of the professional in relation to the wider society. Other data provided more depth of insight into family organization by examining it from another perspective. For example, I compared the views of the roles of parents as held by primary-aged children of professionals with my own observations and with statements made about these roles by married men and women. Again, the case materials from the files of the Department of Social Welfare dealing with family disputes, together with discussions with specialists in the nature of family life, such as lawyers, family case workers, teachers and clergymen, yielded information about the nature of conflicts which occur between married couples. This topic is a very difficult one to investigate through first-hand observation. A number of essays were collected from students in the upper forms of secondary school, and these essays were a rich

source of information about the images or stereotypes of African and western marriage patterns.

The most important of these additional sources of data were the interviews with a sample of university students from Njala and Fourah Bay University Colleges. I lived on the campus of Fourah Bay College and so it was with the students that I became acquainted first. My informal discussions with them convinced me that including them would be extremely valuable. The professionals were defined as persons with university degrees or equivalent professional qualifications, and the students were just about to enter this group. While most of the students were unmarried, marriage is a topic with which they were very much concerned and about which they held very definite opinions. I learned a great deal from the students which helped me to frame questions for interviews with married couples. More important, I was interested in exploring the differences between their attitudes towards marriage and the actual behavior I was observing among married couples. Moreover, certain important differences were found between the social background and experiences of the students and the professionals. These, together with the divergences between the attitudes both groups expressed and between the expectations of the students and the behaviour I observed among the married couples, do suggest some important trends in marriage relations.

Of course, we cannot assume a direct relation between attitudes or expectations about marriage and behaviour either now or in the future. Nevertheless, it is fairly obvious that behaviour and values do interact and that where large discrepancies exist some modification of either behaviour or values or of both will occur. Only a later study, after they are married, can establish the relations between the attitudes or values these students expressed and their behaviour as married men and women.

Understanding the relation between attitudes or values and behaviour among the professionals is a complex problem. For a start, we cannot be sure that the attitudes expressed by professionals actually represent their values, since a personal interview with a white foreigner hardly constitutes a completely neutral situation. On the other hand, if we assume that the attitudes professional men and women expressed *do* represent their values about marriage and family relations, how are these people dealing with the disparity between their values and their behaviour? This problem is especially complicated when trying to

understand the wives of professionals. The status of these women is inextricably bound up with the role of the wife in a monogamous union. Their values regarding marriage are even more westernized than those expressed by their husbands. To retain her position in society as well as within her own family, it is absolutely imperative for the wife of the professional to make a success of her marriage. At the same time, however, numerous forces within the society impinge on marriage relationships, and render her task extremely difficult. How does she reconcile the difference between her values about marriage and the situation in which she finds herself? This matter will be taken up again in the final chapter.

Reporting the results of research in such a sensitive area as marriage relationships places a heavy responsibility upon the investigator to conceal the identity of his informants. I have presented a considerable number of case studies, material from local newspapers and verbatim statements made by informants.¹² In this way I have tried to convey a more intimate picture of the lives of the people concerned than would have resulted from a bare report of the findings together with some statistical tables. In all instances I have changed the names and sometimes even the occupations of persons in the material used. However, the professionals in Sierra Leone are a very close-knit group and they know a great deal about one another and so, despite such precautions, it was often necessary to drop certain illustrative material to protect the anonymity of individuals.

Anthropologists are often asked how they can know if their informants are telling them the truth. Sometimes Sierra Leoneans implied that it would be impossible to do such a study since they knew informants would deliberately attempt to mislead. It is possible to build a number of checks for consistency into questionnaires but it is never possible for an anthropologist completely to win the confidence of every informant (even if that in itself were an assurance of reliable information). Knowing what areas of the inquiry people are likely to misrepresent (whether deliberately or not) is useful, and provides insight into their values. Discovering these areas requires that the

12. The reader may think that some of these case materials and verbatim accounts are unduly long. However, they have been selected because they illustrate the complexities of various matters better than other forms of description could.

anthropologist should have considerable familiarity with the culture. Sometimes one discovers such misrepresentations through simple good fortune. For example, in an interview one woman reported the two children in the household as her own by birth. By chance the very next day I happened to interview her husband's illegitimate son and he told me that his father's wife had never had children of her own but had reared her sister's two daughters. From other sources I found this information was general knowledge in the community. Nevertheless this woman found it difficult to admit it to me, an outsider. This also points to another important consideration. The investigator must, in addition to being familiar with the values of the society, have a deep awareness of the perception others have of him as an outsider conducting research. It is, for example, almost impossible completely to eliminate the tendency for the informants to give the answers they think will please the interviewer. And, of course, there is the fundamental problem of the subjectivity of the observer himself. As Dollard long ago pointed out, 'Since this self or ego is formed by society it is obviously impossible to liberate it totally from the biased view of the world transmitted by that society . . .' (1937, p. 39). He emphasized the vital need for the investigator to sharpen his awareness of himself. In addition to encountering problems which are general in anthropological research, this study was conducted during a period of extreme political tension. The field work was begun during a period of military rule and a *coup* occurred during the first five months of research. It was not possible to measure or control the effects of these special circumstances on the research.

The reader may wish to begin by turning to Appendix A where the methods employed in this research and the kinds of data collected are described. In Chapter Two a brief sketch of the history of Sierra Leone since it first came under the influence of Europeans is presented. Here we see how the establishment of the Colony for freed slaves as an attempt at a unique social experiment, together with the changing social policy of the colonial government towards the indigenous population of Sierra Leone over the years, led to the present composition of the professional group. We shall see how this historical development laid the foundation for the intense political rivalry we find today. The composition and social background of the professional group are described in Chapter Three.