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VOOR TAAL-, LAND- EN VOLKENKUNDE

77

A. F. MARKS

MALE AND FEMALE  
AND THE  
AFRO-CURAÇAOAN HOUSEHOLD



THE HAGUE - MARTINUS NIJHOFF 1976



**MALE AND FEMALE  
AND THE  
AFRO-CURAÇAOAN HOUSEHOLD**

*To Hans  
Ninette  
Jacco  
and Jeroen*





Widow with two of the five grandchildren living with her.

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The English translation was prepared by

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. *The Subject of Research*

The subject of the present study concerns the relationships between men and women and the composition of household groups among the lower Afro-American strata of the society of Curaçao. The material on which it is based was collected in Curaçao in the course of a 15-month period of fieldwork in 1965 and 1966. The research was conducted as part of a broader project aimed at furthering our present knowledge of the societies of Surinam and the Antilles. The Netherlands Antilles in particular have been apt to be neglected as a potential source of information on human societies in general in the past. Recognition of this fact has led to a greater interest in sociological research on this area in the period following World War II, however. A number of social phenomena of particular interest were gradually earmarked for scientific research, while a list of research projects already in progress and proposals for future research was put forward in a publication by Speckmann and Van Renselaar in 1969 (Speckmann and Van Renselaar, 1969). The numerous phenomena which attracted special attention included several in Surinam and Curaçao, as elsewhere in the Afro-American area,<sup>1</sup> which were considered as contrasting with the familiar conditions in Europe. These phenomena came to be regarded as problems, moreover, the magnitude of which varied according to the place and group concerned. The phenomena we have in mind here are the high frequency of illegitimacy of birth and the instability of man-woman relationship in the Negroid population strata. In Surinam these phenomena were studied by W. F. L. Buschkens (Buschkens, 1975). As regards our own research on this subject, we were able to orientate ourselves by the literature on these themes pertaining to other Afro-American areas.

We have not attempted any detailed comparison of the findings set out in this literature in the present study. Nor have we seen fit to draw constant parallels between our own material and the phenomena discovered in other social contexts. As a systematic application

of the comparative method would have proved too laborious an undertaking, we have restricted ourselves to giving a number of references to the relevant literature in the discussion of the theoretical backgrounds of the empirical material in our text.

Our study deals with a variant of a specific sociological type, designated in the literature as "the West Indian family". Before going into the theory concerning the West Indian family and into the facets of the Curaçao variant of this family type, we should first:

- (a) define the concept of "the West Indies"; and
- (b) indicate a number of general traits of the West Indian forms of domestic coresidence and man-women relationship.

## 2. *"The West Indies"*

The term "West Indies" or "West Indian Society" is often mistakenly used as a synonym for "the Caribbean area". In original English usage the name referred exclusively to the British possessions in the Caribbean Sea. It later came to have a much wider application, however, and as a result eventually embraced the French and Dutch islands as well, though still far from denoting the entire area in and around the Caribbean Sea.

One objection that may be raised to the use of the term "West Indian" is that, originating as it does from the colonial period, it is the reflection of a Europe-centric orientation, while furthermore the phenomenon of the so-called "West Indian family" is also to be found in societies that are not strictly speaking classifiable as part of the West Indian area. The designation "Caribbean area" for the total area in which the phenomena which form the subject of our study occur raises different problems again, on the other hand, its range of reference being at the same time too broad and too restricted. For whereas on the one hand the Guianas, parts of Brazil and areas of the United States may also be classed as part of the territory of the West Indian family, on the other hand such countries as Honduras and El Salvador, although they may be considered as geographically belonging to the Caribbean area, do not display the phenomena which are relevant to our purposes as a subject of study.

Just as the term "West Indies" was originally geographically restricted to the English territories, the term "West Indian family" — which originally referred specifically to the Negro family of Jamaica — is in actual fact limited. In our search for better sub-

stitutes for the designations "West Indian area" and "West Indian family", our preference goes to such terms as "Afro-America" and "Afro-American family". Hence we shall use these terms from here on.

The use of a single term with reference to this particular area is not meant to suggest cultural homogeneity, but is intended rather to reflect a typological characterization of certain societies, examples of which are found outside the Caribbean area as well. Each of these societies has its individual colonial history, its distinctive international (political, economic and cultural) relations, including those with the (ex-)mother country, and its own specific, local socio-economic and political characteristics, while it should further be noted that there may exist major internal differences within the national boundaries of each of the areas in question as well. Whereas some of the areas are culturally relatively homogeneous, others display marked cultural diversity. So one might point, by way of example, to the relatively homogeneous island of Barbados on the one hand, and the much more diversified societies of Surinam (displaying distinct differences between Bush and urban Creoles, among other groups) and Brazil — about which Bastide wrote that the white sugar economy went hand in hand with a "black" (African) culture, while the black coffee economy strongly encouraged the acculturation of the Negro to the "white" (Portuguese) culture (Bastide, 1957, p. 84 ff.) — on the other.

Curaçao should be assigned an intermediate position. Here no clear distinction can be drawn between an urban and a rural Afro-American population as in Surinam, while it is also impossible to divide the island geographically into socially and economically different regions as found in Brazil. Even though the island is small, the high degree of internationalization and modernization of its economy and its political relations have rendered the demographic structure and the social, cultural and political life of Curaçao quite complex.

The point of departure for the typological characterization of Afro-American society is the plantation, so much so that Wagley labelled the Afro-American area "Plantation America" (Wagley, 1957, p. 3 ff.). It should be noted in this connection that although plantations were of course also found elsewhere, the characteristics listed by Wagley are sufficiently distinctive for us to speak of "Plantation America" as a clearly separate "culture sphere". Wagley distinguished the culture sphere of Plantation America from that of Euro- and Indo-America on the basis of a number of criteria, such as the nature of the physical environment, the density of the autochthonous population, the degree



of complexity of the autochthonous society, the provenance of the post-Columbian immigrants, the nature of European settlement after 1500, and the subsequent developments in a variety of different fields. Each separate culture sphere is characterized by a specific social type as a result of the interplay of these factors. Euro-America bears a pronounced European stamp and is populated by a people of somatically predominantly Caucasoid stock (e.g. Argentine, Chili, Uruguay, Southern Brazil, the northern U.S.A. and Canada). Indo-America displays obvious Indian somatic and cultural traits (Mexico, the Andes countries and northern Chili). Plantation America is quantitatively predominantly populated by dark-skinned peoples of African extraction and possesses a culture that is markedly influenced by the plantation economy combined with the former conditions of slavery. It was precisely the impact of the plantation and Negro slavery on the development of the societies of these areas which induced Wagley to opt for a "semantically" divergent designation for the relevant culture sphere from the terms used with reference to the other spheres.

The socio-economic organization of the area is primarily a product of the plantation-type "monoculture" of sugar, cacao, coffee, cotton and tobacco. The societies are marked by a rigid vertical social classification which evolved on the basis of this organization in the course of the colonial history. A group of originally European land-owners, officials, officers, merchants and members of the free professions, though numerically inferior by far, has occupied of old the topmost rungs of the social ladder, while a servant, labourer and artisan group of African provenance has always been at the bottom end of the scale of social statuses. At the same time mixed, intermediate social strata developed in most areas, which may at times fulfil something of a bridge function but tend to identify themselves more with the upper than with the lower strata. The conduct of these strata<sup>2</sup> often goes back to an old "seignorial complex" or "seignorial behavior pattern" (Hoetink, 1958, p. 125). An aversion to manual work and a low estimation of the Negroid somatic complex are some of the corollaries of this.

The relative dichotomy between black and white has continued to the present day to be an important factor in the system of social stratification, even though a broad spectrum of skin colours evolved in the course of time and traditional views concerning the aesthetic and social value of particular somatic traits have not remained unchanged.

The whole of the area is at present undergoing a process of political, economic, social and cultural modernization of varying speed and intensity. There are signs everywhere of adaptation to changed national and international conditions, to new modes of economic production and organization, and to altered views on race, man and society. We should add here that it is especially among the new middle strata of government officials, school and university teachers and politicians that we find people striving to establish a modern, Western-type national identity (Norris, 1962, p. 93). They are displaying a tendency to abandon old frames of reference, and the lower strata have fixed mainly on them as a reference group in connection with the present economic, social and political mobility.

All the above developments constitute part of a process of integration of different population groups originally divided along ethnic lines, a process that is making only halting progress. One of the principal reasons for this, according to Wagley, is the low degree of integration of a by and large intrinsically dichotomous society. The upper strata have of old been economically and culturally outward-looking and have maintained a considerable social distance from the lower categories, using repressive mechanisms arising from the possession of social, economic and political power in this. Even so, the attitude of the upper strata has not failed to exercise a certain suggestive influence on the development of negative feelings with regard to the rating of the Negroid somatic complex among the lower strata. The implication of this is that there is question of at least some sort of integration. The development of a complementary behavioral code and of norms in relation to the seignorial and the slave behavior patterns also constitutes a form of socio-cultural integration.<sup>3</sup>

The social cohesion of the lower strata is in many cases impaired by feelings of inferiority. In addition, former living conditions such as those prevailing under slavery as well as the contemporary conditions of urban slum life with the attendant frequency of individual migration are major anti-cohesion factors (Clarke, 1957, p. 92; Solien, 1961, p. 1264 ff.).

The middle strata which have evolved in the area are often insufficiently consolidated to be able to display any great measure of internal cohesion and too marginal to be able to form a clear link between high and low. The function of social and cultural link is determined to a large extent by the scope for inter-stratum mobility. Lipset and Zetterberg postulate with respect to this question, for

instance, that mobility increases with growing prosperity. Growing prosperity further implies an expansion and transformation of the middle strata, the members of which are increasingly recruited from among the lower classes. The mobility and growth of the middle strata tend to encourage an increasing consensus of values, what is more, which in its turn again may stimulate mobility. This way there is less polarity between the classes than is the case in a dichotomous situation, because they are interconnected by all kinds of ties, among which kinship ones are especially important (Lipset and Zetterberg, 1959, p. 27).

Where mobility, kinship relations extending beyond stratal boundaries, and increasing cultural integration seem to be suggestive of harmonious social solidarity and cultural homogeneity, it should be pointed out that these phenomena may also be conducive to the development of an exceedingly variegated totality of social and cultural patterns.<sup>4</sup> Mobility may have a disruptive effect on kinship relations, while an consensus of values may give rise to serious social (competitive) tension and conflict. Especially in cases where the population was originally divided along ethnic lines, integration and social mobility may lead to violent conflicts, in which a renewed consciousness of differences in ethnic origin may come to form a factor that adds extra fuel to the flames. The Dutch sociologist Speckmann has pointed to this sort of developments with respect to Surinam (Speckmann, 1966, p. 63).

Closely connected with the opportunity for cultural integration — which though formerly also present has of late been growing — presenting itself to the Negroid population of Afro-American societies, and dependent on the competition for employment, material possessions and influence among the members of this group internally or between the various population groups severally, social tensions may grow and lead to conflict. Such tensions may thus be intra- as well as inter-ethnic and are marked by a high degree of individualism, social irresponsibility and economic self-interest. Examples of the latter type of tensions are found in Surinam, where the Creoles tend to be anti-Hindustani, for instance, and in Curaçao, where the Afro-American groups are inclined to be hostile to the Portuguese. Numerous examples of the former type of tension, with all the attendant consequences for the man-woman and parent-child relationships, are found in the slums of Afro-American towns.

The juridical emancipation of the Afro-American lower classes is

an accomplished fact everywhere. Nonetheless, the economic and social conditions of life have not always adapted themselves to this new status. The Afro-American's social and cultural distance from his past varies in proportion with the degree to which these conditions survive as before. Where they have remained virtually unchanged, old ideas regarding intra- and inter-ethnic relations, personal dignity and similar such questions have also remained relatively unaltered, with the strength of the African consciousness varying from one area to the next. So there may be more "*négritude*" in one place than in another (Coulthard, 1962, p. 58 ff.), while there are similarly gradations in the degree of Africanism.<sup>5</sup>

The historical process of the integration of the Negroes in Afro-American societies should be viewed in terms of:

- (1) the adaptation of African patterns to the conditions of slavery prevailing in the Afro-American colonies;
- (2) adjustment of the patterns evolved under the conditions of slavery to the conditions of freedom after Emancipation, drawing an essential distinction between freed slaves in urban centres and those conglomerating on or around plantations or in fishing villages in rural areas;
- (3) the subsequent adjustment to more proletarian conditions in the slum areas of towns where the process of modern industrialization is in its first stages; and
- (4) adaptation to urban modernization with the concomitants of rising employment, growing economic and social mobility, increased participation in the economic, social, political, municipal or national life, and quantitatively and qualitatively improved educational facilities, partly as a result of a consciously pursued education policy.<sup>6</sup>

The stage of development of the greater part of the Afro-American area can be fixed somewhere in the transitional phase between (2) and (3), while a considerably smaller part has attained phase (4). The area of our research, Curaçao, may be classified with the latter. The adaptation process is manifest, minor local variations apart, from the nature of the man-woman relationships and the composition of household groups. So one should guard against forming too stereotyped an idea of the Afro-American family. We have reconstructed it here on the basis of the literature, which pertains for the greater part to the Afro-American family in phases (2) and (3). The domestic group

in Curaçao constitutes a special variant of the Afro-American family type in consequence of the island's relatively advanced modern social context.

Before proceeding to give a typology of the Afro-American family and a number of minor variants thereof, we would observe that the "ideal culture"<sup>7</sup> of the Afro-American area not infrequently implies the direct opposite of the characteristics listed below. We would also draw attention to the fact that the recognition of certain distinctive traits of the Afro-American family and their designation as social problems are not solely those of visiting Europeans, but correspond in many cases with those of the persons concerned themselves.

### 3. *Characteristics of the Afro-American Man-Woman Relationship and Household Group*

Speaking in broad generalization, the interrelated characteristics of the Afro-American man-woman relationship in the lower strata may be defined as follows:

- (a) the coresidence of a man and woman as sexual partners often takes place in the form of a concubinage;
- (b) the relations between a man and woman are often weak and the period of their coresidence is not infrequently brief;
- (c) sexual and economic relations without coresidence are frequently found;
- (d) there are variations in the institutionalization of the different forms of man-woman relationship such as marriage, concubinage and non-coresidential unions;
- (e) the percentage of illegitimate children is high in comparison with the figures for European countries;
- (f) the husband-father as a coresident member of the household group is often lacking;
- (g) the mother, or in some cases the grandmother, plays a key role in the management of the household's affairs and in the children's upbringing;
- (h) household groups are composed only in relatively few cases exclusively of a man and woman and their joint offspring or adopted children.

Summarising, one may posit that in many cases neither pregnancy nor birth constitutes an immediate cause for the formation of a house-

hold group in which the husband-father participates socially and economically. Where a man does become a member of the procreational household group, he is not always able or sufficiently prepared to fulfil a role as breadwinner in a way that is considered adequate, however. He often occupies a marginal position in a group in which the mother-wife is relatively independent on a low social level. She frequently provides for the group with her own earnings as a market-vendor or housemaid or with financial aid from her children or other relatives. By far the great majority of authors on the Afro-American family have further observed that the non-coresidential relationship, popularly termed the "visiting relationship",<sup>8</sup> entails far fewer mutual obligations than concubinage. Concubinage in its turn should not be regarded as the equivalent of marriage. The existing studies show it to display generally less stability than legal unions.

As regards the differences in institutionalization of the various man-woman relationships we would observe that the element of differential appreciation of the different forms of relationship by the environment is of especial importance. A number of mutually related components are distinguishable in the phenomenon of institutionalization. So one may list side by side: expectations as regards behaviour, durability, control and appreciation. None of these components is capable of offering a satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon of differential institutionalization by itself. So, for instance, the criterion of durability, no matter how important, is anything but absolute, as the possibility of termination of the union has come to form part of the pattern of expectations in connection with various forms of relationship. In addition, differences in the degree of social control with respect to the various forms are difficult to determine. What is important here is the "choice" made by the partners in relation to the social context exercising the control. The control in connection with the realization of monogamous marriages involving the idea of mutual sexual exclusiveness and independent neolocal settlement seems to be exercised in particular by the broader, modernizing social environment of the national-urban society, for example. Marriages, concubinages and other kinds of man-woman relationship in the pre-modern phases (phases (2) and (3)), however, are more obviously moulded by particular adaptive facets of the culture of the originally African groups on the one hand, and the double standard of sexual morality and the differential appreciation of skin colour as applied in the higher strata on the other. At the same time, the proletarian monosexual peergroup

is of great importance in modernizing social contexts particularly in phase 3, because membership thereof renders it imperative for both men and women to establish and maintain a certain reputation as a sexual partner, the norms regulating behaviour in connection with which are incompatible with the status of respectable married couple. Consequently one often finds socially and economically mobile persons taking a certain distance from this peer group, in some cases after initially behaving contrary to their own views and inclinations under the pressure of such a group for some time.<sup>9</sup>

We would stress here that concubinage in the pre-modern phases should not be indiscriminately labelled "deviant" and "unrespectable". For concubinage among the Negroid population may serve quite well as basis for a family, lacking as it does only the legal sanction of marriage. Where such man-woman relationships prove fairly unstable, this should not be ascribed solely to a total cultural deprivation as a result of slavery. Nor can it be posited that marriages made by manumitted Negro slaves in former times were *ipso facto* more stable than concubinages. It is equally unfeasible to take such marriages at face value as indicators of a high level of acculturation to the "white" culture at an early stage.

Side by side with stable or durable marriages we find permanent concubinages in the abovementioned phases. The definitions of the behaviour of men and women living either in concubinage or under the terms of legal marriage may well (have) be(en) virtually identical under the influence of similar African backgrounds and mutually comparable social and economic circumstances.

The formalization of a relationship in a marriage might be the outcome of a need for legitimation which could not be met by the couple's own ethnic category. It is not unlikely, however, that there were also some legally married couples who were inclined to take social advantage of the juridical legitimacy of their union. At the present time this is the case to an appreciably higher degree in consequence of the social mobility and acculturation in many areas. A difference in the durability of the various types of union has become more pronounced in the process.

If one takes the term differential institutionalization to refer to the development of certain social rules the force of which is a function of the comparative differences in their social appreciation, it will become clear how the Afro-American man-woman relationship, including such forms as the casual affair, the visiting relationship,

concubinage and marriage, may come to be interpreted as varying in institutionalization. In parts of the Afro-American area the relationship between a given man and woman has shown a tendency to pass through a developmental process progressing from lesser to greater institutionalization with advancing age, in the sense that it passes through a succession of the forms of relationship mentioned above (cf. especially R. T. Smith, 1956, p. 108 ff.). However, factors of various kinds — which will be brought up for discussion further down in the present study — tend to complicate greatly the process of change in conjugal relations. Speaking in broad generalization one might say that social, economic and political developments are all contributing towards the realization of the cultural ideal of marriage. A redefinition and a change in the relative appreciation of the various forms of relationship are seen to go hand in hand with the process of mobility and acculturation.

Variations on all of the above-listed characteristics of the Afro-American family occur between the different parts making up Plantation America. So the percentages of illegitimate births vary from 30.9 % for the Antillean population of the island of Curaçao in 1965, through 67.3 % for the urban Creoles of Surinam (Buschkens 1975) to even higher percentages for the population of Jamaica and Haiti. The percentages of legally married persons and persons living in concubinage vary more or less correspondingly, though in this connection the respective age-groups should be taken into account as an important differentiating factor, as was indicated in passing above. Given the difference in duration or stability between matrimonial and concubinal relationships and extra-residential forms of relationship observed by so many contemporary authors, a close correlation between illegitimacy of birth and weakness of the ties in man-woman relationships seems probable for many societies. The social control on biological reproduction exercised both by the community at large and the family varies from one area to the next. We would observe in this connection that formerly (and in some areas undoubtedly still today) an objective lack of opportunity for ecclesiastical and/or juridical legalization may have been responsible for the high frequency of illegitimacy. There was sometimes an enormous distance between the ordinary people and the representatives of the church or officials of the Registrar's Office, while visits to the outlying districts by the latter were few and far between.

Where man-woman relationships are of short duration and large



numbers of women are compelled to earn their own living and that of their children, the children will inevitably have to be sent frequently to live with relatives or other, non-related persons, or to be looked after and raised mostly by their maternal grandmother in their mother's home. Where partnerships are stabler the phenomena of adoption and the "grandmother-dominated family" will be less common. Here the husband-father clearly fulfils a more dominant function, and matrifocality, i.e., the emotionally and functionally pivotal position of the mother (although the concept may be used in various other senses besides<sup>10</sup>) is less in evidence. Where the rule of neolocality applies there is a tendency to restrict the domestic group to a limited category of kin. Most authors recognize the existence of this rule. The realization of a relatively stable monogamous marriage is coupled with a tendency towards settlement of a limited family group comprising the mother, father and their own or adoptive children. Man-woman relationships of other kinds, on the other hand, seem to favour the development of domestic groups of more diversified composition.

The domestic groups known to us from the different studies often come about in a rather haphazard way and display little uniformity of composition. M. Kerr writes, for instance, that the Jamaican family

"... sometimes . . . consists of mother, father and own children only, but more often it contains a collection of people tied by kinship or sometimes only by proximity." (Kerr, 1952, p. 56.)

Lewis Davidson observes in one of his publications, as cited by Simey, that not a single one of a total of 270 household groups studied by him was composed of a man and woman and their joint children (Simey, 1946, p. 84).<sup>11</sup> Such groups may comprise what is termed in Europe the limited family, but in addition also relatives of different kinship degrees and belonging to different kinship categories (consanguineal or affinal, patrilineal or matrilineal kin), as well as non-related persons of various age-groups and either sex. There is also a connection between the commonly observed *ad hoc* character of the composition of the group and the absence of broader forms of kinship organization, such as the lineage or the clan, which might influence the structure of domestic groups. M. G. Smith, in a study on land tenure in Jamaica, tried to prove the existence of corporations composed along patrilineal lines, while similar attempts were made by N. Solien (M. G. Smith, 1956; N. Solien, 1960). Davenport and R. T. Smith have conclusively demonstrated the general lack of inte-

gration of domestic groups in wider corporative kinship contexts, however (Davenport, 1961, p. 432). Smith says:

“. . . the kinship system is bilateral and not very extensive. The most important relationships within it arise out of coresidence, cosiblingship and the coincidence of neighbourhood and kinship ties.” (R. T. Smith, 1963, p. 34.)

There are a number of assumptions underlying the picture of the Afro-American family as sketched above. We shall try to work these out in further detail below. What we wish to draw special attention to at this point is the fundamental correlation between the inferior social position and the material poverty of Afro-American population groups on the one hand, and the nature of man-woman relationships and the composition of household groups among them on the other. This correlation emerges with varying degrees of explicitness throughout the literature. In our study we shall demonstrate the correlation with respect to Curaçao at greater length.

The first chapter contains an analysis of selected literature pertaining to the Afro-American family and a discussion of a number of the more important concepts. Chapter II deals with the social developments in Curaçao. Chapters I and II combined present the aggregate of ideas we have formed with regard to the Afro-American family as a type and the Curaçao variant of this type on the basis of the survey of the literature and our practical experiences in the field. We considered it necessary to establish a link between the historical and the contemporary perspectives — which in some studies are viewed as mutually exclusive — for the explanation of the phenomena in question, as will become apparent from the critical remarks and the drift of our arguments in these chapters. In chapter III we give an explanation of the method adopted by us in the fieldwork phase of the research, while in chapters IV, V and VI the material collected in the course of our exploratory research is presented. Chapter IV contains a discussion of headship, the construction of a headship typology and a tabular representation of the composition of domestic groups differentiated according to type of headship. Here a high percentage of married heads and limited family structures — the explanatory framework for which in terms of social and economic mobility and modernization, i.e., of an acculturative social process, is delineated in the preceding chapters — emerges. In chapter V a number of aspects of this process in relation to headship are elaborated.

Special attention is given in this connection to economic activities, the size of incomes and the sources of income, material possessions, educational level, aspirations and participation in a number of social organizations. Chapter VI goes into the relationship between men, women and children with special reference to contraception, child-rearing and sex. In the same chapter a descriptive survey is given of a number of social relations in and around the household group.

In the concluding summary of premises and findings our ideas concerning the Afro-American family as developed in chapters I and II, together with the material of our research will be once more briefly reviewed in relation to one another.

## CHAPTER I

### THE STUDY OF THE AFRO-AMERICAN FAMILY

#### 1. *Some authors and hypotheses*

The existing studies on the Afro-American family reflect in their contents and conclusions not only the differences in the national contexts within which the relevant phenomena were investigated. A difference can also be seen between the perspectives from which the problems were examined and whence attempts at explanation of the phenomena in question were made. It is by no means our intention to subject the entire literature to a detailed analysis. For a bibliography and reviewal of the principal sources — though admittedly not a very up-to-date one — I would refer the reader to the observations of V. Rubin (1957), H. Hoetink (1963) and R. T. Smith (1963). Of the publications which have appeared since 1963 we would mention in particular Otterbein (1964), Randolph (1964), M. G. Smith (1965), Greenfield (1966) and Wilson (1969), although this list is far from exhaustive.

The selection made by us in the following was determined largely by considerations of relevancy with respect to our own research. So we considered a discussion of the fundamental controversy concerning the problem of the historical influence of the native African continent on Afro-American phenomena especially important, for instance. We shall further pass in review a number of authors who have devoted their particular attention to the survival under contemporary conditions of Afro-American forms of the man-woman relationship and household group composition to supplement our discussion of those concerned primarily with historical explanations. Among these first-mentioned, R. T. Smith occupies a prominent position with his theory of the cyclical development of the Afro-American family of rural British Guyana. We shall further refer to two critics of R. T. Smith's, namely H. Hoetink and M. G. Smith. In addition to the above authors we shall also discuss others such as O. Lewis, whose fame has spread beyond specialist sociological circles.

As we pointed out above, a general dichotomy obtains with regard to the approach towards the Afro-American family, with the one category of sociologists trying to explain the phenomena to be observed from the point of view of historical circumstances, and the second placing greater emphasis on the contemporary conditions of life of Afro-American groups. In most cases we have what is simply a selective emphasis on one or more factors isolated from a comprehensive whole, so that what one finds in some of these studies is not so much mutual contradiction as supplementation and rectification of each other's views. The addition of a futuristic element, or the conceptualization of the future society and the place within it of the different population groups, furthermore constitutes a valuable supplement to the description in which the historical and contemporary perspectives are combined. For this reason we shall devote some attention to the most recent political developments in Curaçao in the next chapter.

The principal authors accentuating historical factors are M. J. Herskovits and F. Frazier. Herskovits based himself on the assumption that the different forms of man-woman relationship and family organization were influenced to a high degree by the African cultural heritage of the slaves. "Basic African realities" were given shape wherever circumstances permitted in the New World. Herskovits' Africanistic studies are in no way to be regarded as family sociological research reports, for the rest. He concerned himself primarily with the study of community cultures (1937, 1941, 1947), and in the process hereof established a link between family forms and types of man-woman relationship observable in Haiti and Trinidad and among the Bush Negroes of Surinam on the one hand, and the structural elements found in African societies on the other, relating his findings to the local context to only a slight degree. The key role of the maternal figure was identified as a perpetuation of the African pattern, where the position of the husband-father figure with respect to the domestic group was also marginal, or "... institutionally remote, humanly somewhat secondary . . .", by reason of the polygynic structure. The latter's importance lay rather in a broader kinship context, such as the lineage or clan (Herskovits, 1947, p. 16).

The complication provided by the diversity of the slaves' cultural origins aside, it is by no means a simple undertaking to explain matrifocal tendencies and similar such phenomena in a contemporary situation, in which neither polygyny nor a broader kinship organization

with corporative traits is found, on the basis of conclusions formulated in this way. One might well ask, in this connection, whether the conditions under which the slaves lived did not preclude a continuation of African organizational forms from an early period. Frazier, in his study, arrived at the conclusion that the slaves were almost completely stripped of their African culture as a result of the circumstances prevailing on the plantations (Frazier, 1939, p. 21). Matrilocality and male marginality according to him were the products precisely of a lack of male functions and status in a wider familial, socio-economic and political context. With reference to this he points to the tendency of the Negroes to realize American family patterns wherever the social and economic circumstances permit. Close-knit man-woman relationships are established and stable household groups, in which men are the effective bearers of authority, formed wherever men are enabled by a regular income from a "decent" job to act as "economic provider". In Frazier's view the functionally and spatially peripheral position of the male can be traced back to his historical position as a slave without the right to legal marriage, without status and without an economic basis for his personal responsibilities.

No two approaches are considered to be as diametrically opposed in their implications as those of Herskovits and Frazier, although we should hasten to add that Frazier's pronouncement that the Negro slave was ". . . *nearly completely stripped*" (our italics) of his cultural heritage testifies to his awareness of possible African influences, while Herskovits for his part was far from blind to the cultural havoc wrought among the slaves by the institution of slavery. This subtle distinction notwithstanding, there is even so an unmistakable controversy between these two authors, with Herskovits interpreting the Afro-American phenomena as evidence of, among other things, a continued effort to preserve African matrilocality, while Frazier considers matrilocality and male marginality as products of adaptation to the powerlessness to put American (originally European) values and norms with regard to man-woman relationships and household group formation into practice, a powerlessness that was imposed by the social circumstances. This inability was determined by the cripplingly inferior and precarious social and economic position in which the Negro was placed. As indicated above, however, we tend to feel that one should guard against reproducing Herskovits' ideas too much in terms of exclusively African explanations, while one should similarly not overlook the possibility that Frazier may have erred too much on

the side of underestimation of the survival of African cultural elements. Reasoning in terms of adjustment to the circumstances prevailing under the different conditions of life imposed by slavery, freedom, proletarianization and modernization, accompanied by an increasingly active participation of the Negroes in the social life, we consider the supposition warranted that where there was a low degree of acculturation, different African cultural elements continued to play a role, not only in music, dancing, magic, religion and language, but also in relations between the sexes and kinship relations. The changes observed by Frazier in cases where men secured "decent jobs" may well have something to do with an increased degree of acculturation to and participation in the wider, modernizing social system. That is to say, the values to which the Negroes subscribed before securing decent jobs need not necessarily have been the same as those which became normative for them as soon as they began finding regular work and enjoying stable incomes. Frazier seems to have taken the Americanization of the African Negroes to occur at too intensive a rate at too early a stage of their history, whereas Herskovits has correctly pointed to the reverberations of African ideas in Afro-American patterns.<sup>12</sup>

As regards the adaptation of the African Negroes to the conditions of slavery, emancipation, and so on, it should be remembered that there is a decided difference between moral standards with respect to man-woman relationships in polygynous societies and the double standard of morality that evolved in connection with these relationships in early Europe and the Afro-American areas. Monogamic unions are also frequently found in polygynous societies, where only the more well-to-do and socially prominent are in a position to realize the ideal of having more than one wife at a time. Women at any rate never marry more than one man at a time. In early Europe and in Afro-American societies monogamous marriage is seen to be the only genuinely accepted institution. Both males and females are married to no more than one partner at a time, with the male possessing the privilege of entertaining pre- and extra-marital relations alongside his conjugal relations inside a monogamous marriage. The chastity of young girls and of adult women of one's own social class or one's own ethnic group is supposed to be respected, however. Hence a sharp distinction should be drawn between the polygynic moral standard and the double standard. There is no more than a superficial likeness between the two. Now, there have been instances of the realization

of the polygynic moral standard by Negroes in the Afro-American area, while perhaps isolated cases of this may still be observable in places today. It is furthermore not impossible that polygynic values continued to influence the behaviour of men and women even in cases where manumitted and emancipated slaves concluded monogamous marriages before one of the Christian Churches. The present tolerance of some wives with regard to their menfolk's promiscuity may also go back to this African influence. The difference between the polygynic and the double standard makes substitution of the former by the latter difficult, however. Where a shift from the polygynic standard to the double standard of morality did occur in the acculturation process of the African Negro in the Afro-American situation, certain sociological forces which either reinforced the polygynic morality or prepared the way for acculturation to the values of the contemporary monogamic man-woman relationship and household formation, were at play.<sup>13</sup>

A number of authors have adopted Frazier's standpoint and verified this each in his own way, either in historically oriented analyses such as that by Dom B. Matthews (1953), or in studies that place greater emphasis on contemporary factors such as that by R. T. Smith (1956). In these the possibility of African cultural elements and adapted forms thereof coming into play as well was either ignored or made insufficiently explicit. An evaluation of the differential influences of Africa and of the local situation remains extremely difficult, however. As far as we are able to judge, it is in many cases possible to speak of these matters only in terms of probability, possibility and presumable inevitability.

Time has passed neither Plantation America nor the anthropological and social sciences by unnoticed. So in the course of time scholars were confronted with economic, social, cultural and political situations and changes which directed their attention to the circumstances under which certain elements of the Afro-American family were either preserved or differently "profiled". In the socio-cultural sciences at first a series of a-historical theories, but after that hypotheses taking the historical aspects and dynamic changes more fully into account again were developed.

Possibly the least historically oriented in the series of authors succeeding Herskovits and Frazier is Simey. He, like Henriques, established a close link between the Negroid somatic complex, occupational class and economic level on the one hand, and the family



types found among Afro-American population groups in Jamaica on the other. In this connection he distinguishes between:

- (1) the "Christian family" with a religiously and legally confirmed marriage and a "patriarchal order";
- (2) the "faithful concubinage", also possessing a "patriarchal order" and lasting at least three years, but possessing no legal status;
- (3) the "compassionate family", lasting less than three years and based on *ad hoc* membership; and
- (4) the "disintegrate family", comprising a woman and her children and not based on any form of lasting relationship between a man and woman.

(Simey, 1946, p. 82 ff.)

Henriques created a slightly different typology, substituting Simey's "compassionate family" with the "maternal or grandmother family", and using instead of "disintegrate family" the term "keeper family" to refer to the domestic group consisting of a mother and her children and in which the woman has a non-resident male as sexual and economic partner (Henriques, 1953, p. 105).

Greenfield points out that these fourfold classifications are no more than modifications of mere details of the original Herskovits-Frazier typology, which distinguished between the family based on the mother-child tie and that organized around a union between a man and a woman (Greenfield, 1966, p. 23).

The views of the above-mentioned authors are rather static in character, but were seemingly tenable within the Afro-American system of rigid social stratification. R. T. Smith, on the other hand, has striven after greater dynamism in the conceptions of the Afro-American family through the introduction of the time factor (R. T. Smith, 1956, p. 108 ff.). He also took the effects of the social and economic situation on "mating patterns" as his point of departure. This rather more fruitful point of departure was adopted furthermore by Clarke (1957), Braithwaite (1960), Solien (1960), Blake (1961), Cumper (1961), Davenport (1961), Mintz (1961) and others.

Smith based his study of the Afro-American family in British Guyana on Talcott Parsons' structural functionalistic theory (Parsons, 1952, p. 132), which he interpreted as follows:

"Parsons has pointed out that the functional prerequisites of a system of instrumental activities involve a differential distribution of facilities and responsibilities, and this is invariably accom-

panied by a differential distribution of rewards, and hence some system of social stratification. This means in effect that for any social system to 'work' there has to be some sort of leadership or managerial functions allotted to certain individuals, and these individuals will therefore have to be given greater privileges, or wealth or esteem. This distribution of functions and rewards gives rise to some system of ranking in every society. However, the system of differential distribution of rewards can be organized around various types of value orientation, but as soon as an ethnic differentiation is introduced into the system there seems to be a tendency for this line of differentiation to align itself with others. Certainly, in the West Indies, ethnic and class distinctions do not coincide, but they are very closely correlated." (R. T. Smith, 1956, p. 193.)

A few pages further down he recapitulates his theses as follows:

"... there is a shared scale of colour-values couched in terms of a polar distinction of black and white and ... it is around the polar distinction that real social classes crystallize. These social classes form functionally differentiated groups within the total social system, and they each have a distinct sub-culture, whilst sharing common cultural elements corresponding to their unity as a total social system.

... What enables us to visualize the socially black group as a group, is the fact that it is functionally and culturally differentiated in the total social system; a fact which is clearly visible in the economic occupational system."

(*Op. cit.*, p. 196.)

In accordance with this theoretical conception Smith viewed the three village communities in which he studied the Afro-American family of British Guyana as variants of a "lower colour-class sub-culture", saying:

"In the villages studied, the model of the total social system tends to repeat itself, but since the village is only a section of the total society, it does not have the same degree of internal differentiation."

And he goes on:

"There is a variation in the degree of internal differentiation between the three villages."

(*Op. cit.*, p. 223.)

Smith thus considered the Negroes as being culturally integrated in the society of Guyana. As a stratum with its own sub-culture, they formed part of a society in which social mobility was severely restrict-

ed. The dynamism introduced into the conceptions of the Afro-American family by Smith does not lie in the changes in the social structure, meanwhile, but rather in a cyclical development of the family in the lower classes precisely as a consequence of the relative rigidity of the social stratification, and hence as an element of a given structure that is more or less static. Smith pointed out that the different types of man-woman relationship (visiting relationship, concubinage and marriage) and the correlate forms of composition of domestic groups are simply phases in the development of individual conjugal relations and household groups within a particular stratum rather than permanent formations directly linked with internal differences in social and economic status in the Afro-American group as a whole.

Schematically represented the phasing looks as follows:

In the first phase there is biological reproduction without co-residence of the partners.

In the second phase coresidence takes place and a "normal" family is formed with monogamous legal marriage suggesting itself as the cultural ideal. Smith furthermore arrives at the conclusion, in contrast to Davidson for Jamaica,<sup>14</sup> that there is a high frequency of occurrence of the nuclear family group.

Marriages are concluded at a later stage, representing the third phase, mostly after a period of concubinage.

The final phase that can be distinguished is that in which the father figure ceases to occupy an important position in consequence of either death, or physical or increasing "psychological" absence, and the household tends towards the type of the grandmother group, consisting of the mother with her daughters and, where present, sons, daughters' children, and sometimes other, more particularly matrilineal relatives. This latter phase displays obvious matrifocal traits. Smith says:

"The coalition of mother and children tends to harden vis-à-vis the husband-father, and whilst the woman remains technically inferior in status to her spouse, she comes to exercise power within the group, which encroaches on his authority . . . The diminution in the amount of power attaching to the authority of the husband-father is keenly felt by males . . . The fact that they so frequently contract liaisons with other women must be viewed in relation to this fact. The power of the wife-mother is often buttressed by the accretion of extra members of the household group, who are frequently her kinsfolk. The incompatibility between the ideal status of husband-father and the

reality of the power distribution as between him and his spouse often leads to separation . . . The fact that a woman's power in the household group derives from her status as a mother and her relationship to her children, is correlated with the fact that women extend their period of effective motherhood by taking over their daughters' children or adopting other children when their own period of childbearing is over. The widespread desire to have children and the opposition to birth control, is connected, at least to some extent, with the social importance and prestige of the mother role."

(*Op. cit.*, p. 148.)

Now what is it that determines this phasing in the direction of matrifocality in man-woman relationships and household group formation? The gist of Smith's explanation is as follows: in rural areas as studied by him there is a rigid social stratification in force, status within which is determined to a large extent by ascriptive criteria such as family status, skin colour, type of hair and shape of the lips and nose. Social mobility is slight, the husband-father's occupation is of little consequence for his family's status, and his income is uncertain, so that few men have the assurance of being able to (continue to) act as breadwinner. There is no economically productive private property and the husband-father barely fulfils the role of head of the family. His marginality hinges on this. He has too restricted a basis for authority. The vacuum that is thus created is filled by the mother-wife, who consolidates her position by putting her children, and more particularly her sons, under an obligation to her.

The weakness of the conjugal tie is a function first and foremost, according to Smith, of the lack of consanguineal kinship solidarity between husband and wife. The degree to which a certain conjugal solidarity may be achieved is dependent primarily on moral and legal rules, the application of which is determined by the nature of the Negroes' social and economic status in the society.

"There is a sense in which the conjugal tie is always a potentially weak one in every society, for in a matrix of close kinship relations, it is the only non-kinship relationship, and it has to be buttressed by moral and legal rules which are compatible with other features of the social structure. These may be stronger or weaker in each case depending on the way in which the elementary family is integrated into wider structures . . .

(In) sofar as the conjugal tie can be considered 'weak', its weakness is . . . correlated . . . with the relative unimportance of the

jural position of the father in relation to the children..."  
(*Op. cit.*, p. 258.)

Weakness of social and economic position determines the membership of a particular social sub-system, which brings forth certain forms of behaviour and relationships deviating from the values and norms considered as the ideal (including, among other things, monogamy and paternal authority), and vis-à-vis which a certain permissiveness has evolved.

"It is a feature of the primary value system of Guyanese society that the ideal family type is that consisting of a man and a woman, unrelated by kinship and married according to the rites of the Christian church, who share one dwelling with their own offspring. No one would dispute this as the ideal pattern and the person wishing to improve his status by advancing in the class hierarchy . . . would certainly try to conform to this pattern in setting up a household group.

However, the value system is differentiated with respect to the social sub-system with which we are dealing and it becomes both permissible and expected that persons will deviate from the ideal in certain fairly specific ways . . . There is a moral system within a moral system so to speak, and although the overall moral system is accepted as being 'right' for the sub-group, at the same time people will say that because they are black people they do things in a different way."

(R. T. Smith, 1956, p. 149.)

Thus membership of the social sub-system in question involves the above-mentioned relative "unimportance of the jural position of the father in relation to his children" and weakness of the man-woman relationship. Matrifocality is a corollary of this. Only where opportunities for social mobility are created in a given society (which was not the case in British Guyana) is it possible for a person to "cancel" his membership of the social sub-system in question and to establish closer conjugal and paternal ties in conformity with the norms of the overall society. The relative lack of mobility in Guyana does much to perpetuate the cyclical development in man-woman relationships and the household group among the lower classes. Certainly young women of the "lower colour-class" are eager to marry and form a household group of their own. Men with sufficiently large and secure incomes to support a family in accordance with the norms of the coresidential union or marriage are scarce, however. These norms involve among other things that a common law or a legal wife should not have to work for wages.

“... for since the man has accepted responsibility for a spouse and her children, it is a reflection on his ability to fulfil the responsibility if she continues to work.”

(*Op. cit.*, p. 139.)

Women are inclined to weigh against the uncertainty with regard to the quality of the economic support by a man their own ability to work for wages and the relative security of living in their parental home. As a result they may often put off the moment of marriage.

Young men may have different reasons from women for deferring matrimony. They consider it their duty to continue to contribute towards the costs of their mother's household for a prolonged period of time. In addition they are expected in the framework of their “peer-group life” to make certain expenses that are incompatible with the financial responsibilities entailed by coresidence or marriage.

Deferment of coresidential relationships in no way implies putting off having sexual relations, which latter obviously often result in pregnancy. Pregnancy as a consequence of non-coresidential relations does not oblige a young man to marry. He is expected to help support his children, however, which may encourage the continuation of the non-coresidential tie with the woman concerned up to the moment they both decide to form a household group together (usually on the basis of a concubinage). Such a “common law marriage” (the term used by Smith in virtue of the legitimation of concubinage by the “moral sub-system” of the social stratum in question) may be converted into a legal and religious marriage at some later date. Although in the final analysis this happens because of the desire to realize at least one important value, namely that of marriage, in one's lifetime, it nonetheless takes place as a result of a special development involving an inherent threat to the relationship between the partners. The road that leads to the realization of marriage, “almost certainly the most stable union” (Kruyer, 1968, p. 36), not infrequently ends up in a greater weakening of the union among the lower “colour strata”. This phenomenon is intimately linked with the aforementioned weakness of the “jural position” of the male, or (which amounts to the same thing) the relatively strong position of the female in the household group. Smith points out that the conclusion of a marriage after a period of concubinal coresidence is in many cases an outcome of the consolidation of the woman's power and the correlated loss of the man's authority in the household group.

“The conversion of a common law marriage into a legal marriage often serves to validate this new power distribution and the care with which men address their legal wives as ‘mistress’ is illuminating in this respect.”

(*Op. cit.*, p. 148.)

The cases in which pregnancy of the girl leads to the breaking up of a non-coresidential relationship may be considered as variants of the cyclical development described above, marked by the following phases:

- the perpetuation of a non-coresidential relationship,
- the contraction of a concubinage,
- the eventual conversion of the latter into a legal marriage as a result of the development of a close-knit matrifocal group, whereupon the couple’s children may recommence the cycle from the beginning.

There is a high likelihood here of the young woman having children by more than one man, this in turn considerably reducing her chances of marriage. This does not necessarily mean to say that she will be forced to give up her ideal of marrying altogether, but she will not be able to achieve this goal until after she has had at least one concubinage with a likely husband-to-be.

The ideals of marrying young and as a virgin which obtain in the overall society and to which the lower “colour strata” are adapting through the mechanism of the cyclical development, are capable of realization in certain sporadic cases in which the young man in question may be able and willing to fulfil the obligations imposed by legal marriage from the beginning of his relationship with the girl concerned. In these cases there is no question of any relatively uncontrolled relations unattended with coresidence developing. On the contrary, the mutual relatives of the two parties are involved in the entire process of the development of the relationship in consequence of the observance of formal “courtship patterns”. Institutionalization of this procedure likewise is closely bound up with the desire “. . . to improve (one’s) status by advancing in the class-hierarchy . . .” and *ipso facto* with the opportunities for mobility offered to members of the lower strata by the total society.

Smith lays claim to universality with his theoretical system of structural functionalism. This latter assumption coupled with the last-mentioned conclusion, whereby opportunities for social and economic

mobility are considered conditional for the realization of values accepted as such by all members of the society, constitutes the bedrock of Smith's generalizing suggestions. He is of the opinion that the forms of adaptation encountered by him in the lower strata of Guyanese society, including the features of matrifocality, permissiveness with regard to deviation from the norms, concubinage, marriage at a fairly advanced age and high frequency of illegitimate birth are to be found also in other places where relative lack of social and economic mobility is conducive to the development of a social sub-system that is destined to occupy an inferior position in the social and economic hierarchy. He refers to studies of societies without a plantation economy or Negroid population in support of this generalization (Smith, 1956, p. 247 ff.).

Wilson's study on Scotland<sup>15</sup> offered him an appropriate opportunity for corroborating his hypothesis on account of the fact that there is "... practically no similarity of historical background" here. Scottish society is viewed in more or less the same way as that of British Guyana as a society with a

"gradient of statuses with persons tending towards one of two sets of polar values and polar types. On the one hand there is the 'lower status' pole, and on the other the 'white-colour higher status' pole. Persons tending towards the 'lower status' end of the scale can be separated off into a group characterized by a whole series of factors of which occupation is the most significant.

... there is a basic dichotomy in social values between the two main status groups, ... occupationally differentiated, recruited mainly by birth, and tending to cluster in territorial units. It is characterized by its own internal value system which gives it a solidarity lacking in the higher status groups, and it is the nature of these values that we find so strikingly similar to those in our Guianese villages ... no emphasis on 'getting on' ... stress on the present ... no emphasis on planning, saving, or working towards long term goals ...

Both groups (the 'lower status groups' in Scotland, and the Negro groups in British Guyana, M.) occupy low status in a stratified society, though of course in Guiana, skin colour presents a more permanent and distinguishing badge of status and inhibits mobility to a greater extent. Nevertheless, the Scottish community displays the same general characteristics, and even though upward mobility is theoretically possible for the lower status group, it does not present an acceptance of low status and a development of solidarity which lays stress on this acceptance and



discourages upward mobility . . . (In the higher status groups) the occupation of the husband-father becomes of prime importance in determining the status of the family as a unit, . . . on the other hand the necessity for children to try to improve on their acquired hereditary status means that elementary families tend to liquidate themselves in the shortest possible time. In the lower status groups the situation is quite different, and whereas the upper status woman feels that she must not interfere with her married children, the lower status woman often takes over the upbringing of her daughter's children almost completely . . . Of particular interest . . . is the strong emphasis laid upon the bond between mother and daughter, and the social importance of 'mum' . . . So far as marriage is concerned the lower status girl places great emphasis on 'fate', good looks, and luck in finding a partner and is but little concerned about status compatibility as are higher status individuals . . . Illegitimacy is both more frequent and less severely condemned in lower status families . . . Nearly one third of all first born children in the community are either illegitimate or premaritally conceived, but the pressure to conformity results in many girls getting married before the first child is born so that the illegitimacy rate is much lower than it would otherwise be . . . It would be wrong to assume complete identity between the Scottish family structure and that formed in British Guiana. In the Scottish case the total social situation is much more culturally homogeneous, and legal marriage is much more widely accepted as the normal framework for conjugal unions and childbearing . . . analysis does bring out the correlation between a lengthened matri-line and the maternal-grandmother role on the one hand and low status involving a negative emphasis on status mobility on the other. It suggests that the general principles which enter into the structuring of Guianese Negro households may be operative here, but a great deal more research would have to be done on this type of urban community before an adequate case could be maintained."

(*Op. cit.*, pp. 247-251.)

Smith's theory did not fail to elicit criticism. We shall briefly discuss two of Smith's main critics here and add some remarks of our own to their observations.

Smith's suggestion in the above quotation regarding the universality of matrifocality among persons of inferior social and economic status drew criticism from H. Hoetink, among others, although the latter explicitly endorses the idea of universality of matrifocal tendencies as such. M. G. Smith's criticism focused more directly on the a-historical drift of R. T. Smith's reasoning and the preponderance given thereby

to economic factors. Hoetink draws attention more specifically to a variant of Smith's functionalism, namely the ecological-functional approach to the Afro-American family of A. Manners and J. H. Stewart (Manners and Stewart, 1953, p. 123 ff.; Hoetink, 1963, p. 39). These authors discovered strictly paternalistic traits in the household groups of coffee workers in Puerto Rico, who even so live under circumstances that are comparable to those outlined by R. T. Smith for British Guyana. Here the unfavourable living conditions did not seem at all to be undermining a very strong cultural factor, namely the influence exercised by the Spanish family type, whereby the male was the lord and master of his home and exercised the right of control over the members' activities outside the home as well. Hoetink points out that for an explanation of this phenomenon the "face-to-face" character of the relations between coffee workers and their white masters deserves priority of consideration. There was much less obvious evidence of this kind of relation existing in the sugar-growing areas, where a poor labourer class displayed the same traits as those sketched by R. T. Smith for British Guyana in their familial, conjugal and sexual relations. In this connection it is also important to note that the sugar workers were of much purer African extraction than the coffee workers, among whom there was a greater admixture of Spanish blood. In putting forward this view, Hoetink plainly introduced an additional variable into the discussion, namely the reference of lower-class behaviour to the high-prestige patterns of socially superior categories. We should note, however, that a more thorough comparative study of the conditions under which adaptation and acculturation take place is necessary before we are able to say when and how the behaviour of the socially and economically weak lower strata is influenced by that of the higher strata. The pattern considered ideal in Curaçao, for example, cannot be said to deviate markedly from the Puerto Rican Spanish one, while here, too, there was question of personal relations existing between masters and slaves in former times (Hoetink, 1958, p. 121). There are even so distinctly matrifocal tendencies observable among families living in poor social and economic circumstances in this island as well. We may well ask in this connection whether perhaps the special religious influence of the former Spanish colonists constituted an important factor in the development of the family pattern among the lower strata of Puerto Rican society. In contrast to this area, the society of Curaçao, presented a picture of religious division, with the higher strata adhering to the Protestant faith,

lacking the urge to convert the Negroes to their religion and regarding this religion as a symbol of distinction rather than a body of guiding principles for human behaviour, while the Negroes became Roman Catholic converts of varying degrees of fervour. Whatever the possible differences existing between Puerto Rico, Curaçao and British Guyana, this in no ways alters the fact that the double standard of morality was in force as part of the behaviour pattern of the higher strata in all three areas. The "adoption" of this standard by the Negroes on the whole confronted these with no mean problems.<sup>16</sup>

We shall pass over in silence for the moment the second point of Hoetink's criticism, namely that claiming that Smith has left unanswered the questions of "How little mobility must there be for matri-focal tendencies to be thus strengthened?" and "Is there any difference in degree between subjective feelings of powerlessness and objective restrictions on mobility in this respect?" The fundamental criticism which we shall set forth in greater detail below provides a more appropriate context for its discussion. The second principal critic, M. G. Smith, deserves our prior attention.

M. G. Smith's findings are similarly of great importance for the formulation of hypotheses concerning the Afro-American family as well as for the development of methods and techniques of research. In contrast to R. T. Smith's exclusively rurally oriented study, M. G. Smith directed his attention also to the urban population (M. G. Smith, 1962). He studied the family in three rural and two urban population agglomerations in the British West Indies. In the three rural communities he found corroborating evidence for the concept of a cyclical development from the visiting relationship through concubinage to the legalized union. Marriages tended to be contracted at a fairly late stage in the individual's life, with the other two phases in the development of the "mating-pattern" being regarded as less prestigious "precursors". In the urban centres, however, this scheme did not appear to agree with the observed facts. Although all the above forms were present, the individual life cycle definitely did not on the whole run its course following the phases outlined above.

These differences led him to explain the formation of household groups and man-woman relationships from the Negroes' opportunities for integrating marriage into their culture during and after slavery. We should point out once more the difference of view with respect to Afro-American society between R. T. and M. G. Smith. The latter pointed with more obvious feeling for historical processes than

R. T. Smith to the institutional differences between groups which were to a certain extent socially and culturally oriented towards their own individual ethnic heritage in accordance with the principle of the plural, ethnically "divided" society (M. G. Smith, 1960, p. 771 ff.). He thereby more explicitly left open the possibility of the Negroes' socially organizing themselves partly under the influence of African cultural elements, thus calling into question the almost complete cultural and social integration of the Negroes in the overall society. M. G. Smith's greater attention to historical facts also led him to conclude, contrary to R. T. Smith, that demographic and economic factors are of only relative importance for the analysis of the structures of household groups. Differences in family structure according to him are the product rather of culturally conditioned differences in man-woman relationships (M. G. Smith, 1965, p. 250). The demographic situation (which he reduces to the ratio between the sexes, incidentally) actually is of very little importance, according to M. G. Smith. We should mention in this context that his statistical illustration of "mating-patterns" and so on (*op. cit.*, p. 202) is not altogether convincing, as he bases his opinions on a rather ill-chosen definition of female headship. He classified a group as "female headed" if the husband-father did not show up for four days a week (*op. cit.*, p. 13). The economic situation is scarcely mentioned by M. G. Smith. He demonstrated that the structure and size of the household group, the "generation span", the age of the head and the statistical ratio between "male heads" and "female heads" are connected rather with the degree of urbanization of the society in question. Otterbein rightly points out with reference to this that a selective rural-urban migration of females (it being not uncommon for unmarried mothers to leave their children behind in their village when themselves moving to the city) may make for a considerable distortion in the statistical representation of the differences in the conjugal situation and household group structures between urban and rural areas (Otterbein, 1964, p. 75).

However critical one may be of M. G. Smith, it is an indisputable fact that he has added an important dimension to our knowledge of the Afro-American family with his analysis. The time factor, applied by R. T. Smith only in relation to a more or less static social position within an integrated social system, acquired a much greater historical dimension with M. G. Smith. He extended this factor to apply to the total society, which is in a continual state of flux, be it with major variations in the speed and magnitude of the changes. Urbanization

of the lower strata is one element of the process of change, involving an erosion of former social statuses as a result of changes in the physical and social environment. His analysis focused the attention first and foremost on a conception of Afro-American society in terms of ethnic plurality, urbanization and acculturation.

The above observations have the following implications for our approach: Where a process of change takes place at an especially fast rate and the "mating-patterns" show greater variability in their ordering in an urban environment than was found to be the case in more rurally oriented studies on the Afro-American family, one should place less reliance on detailed analyses of individual life cycles as reflections of the total social situation. One should then go rather by statistical profiles in which specific traits and changes are expressed, without, however, neglecting case-studies. The question of interpretation should not be lost sight of in this process, however. Seemingly similar phenomena, which are hence considered quantifiable, are not infrequently seen to have a different meaning in different social contexts.<sup>17</sup>

Briefly recapitulating R. T. Smith's ideas and the criticism thereof, we are able to observe that Smith:

- (a) took an a-historical, structural functionalistic conception of society as point of departure, in consequence whereof he assumed a high degree of cultural integration into Guyanese society for the Negroes of British Guyana;
- (b) distinguished a cyclical phasing in man-woman relationships and household group formation which owed its existence on the one hand to the "pressure" of shared social values such as that of monogamous marriage and household group formation, and on the other to the Negroes' socio-economic inability to realize these values without taking recourse to special adaptive mechanisms; and
- (c) was able to suggest important points of similarity ("general principles") between familial forms in lower social strata with little opportunity for mobility in widely different societies on the basis of his structural functionalistic conception of society. He drew parallels more particularly between Scotland and Guyana.

Hoetink's critical remarks are especially interesting in that an illustration of an entirely different development of the family under comparable economic circumstances show up the weak points in

Smith's views, although not quite all the inferences of this criticism for the theory of acculturation are drawn. Hoetink does not fully discuss the problems surrounding the "adoption" of the behaviour patterns of higher strata by the members of lower ones, while further he fails to adequately elucidate the differences in the acculturative character of the interstratal relations.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, we should stress that Hoetink's intention in criticizing Smith was not to contradict the correlation between familial form, matrifocality and similar such phenomena on the one hand and the weak social and economic position of members of the lower strata in British Guyana and Scotland on the other. His approach represents a first attempt at a more historically oriented acculturative rather than an a-historical structural functionalistic analysis of Afro-American and Scottish society. We should pause to reflect that Hoetink did not mean to attack Smith's structural functionalism *per se*, however. His observations were aimed rather at restricting the applicability of Smith's theories to areas which have a great deal in common "historically" and culturally, and within which monogamous marriage and the limited family group are accepted norms. This tends to throw a slightly different light on the correlation referred to above. Hoetink's views, as set out in an article published in 1961, largely correspond with our own views as expounded below.

M. G. Smith's merit lies in the explicit stress he has placed upon the plural character of Afro-American society, although he seems to have attached too little importance to the economic aspect in his theory. This latter circumstance may possibly be accounted for by the nature of the subjects of his research, studying as he did the Afro-American family in a rural setting on the one hand and analysing the family in the urban (proletarian) context which normally seriously erodes historical institutionalization on the other. The economic level in the latter type of environment was not on the whole higher than in the rural areas, whereas the mating patterns did present a different picture altogether. Perhaps the great significance accorded to urbanization *per se* as a variable is to be ascribed to this. M. G. Smith's conclusions may be considered valid as far as Afro-American acculturation phases numbers 2 and 3 are concerned.<sup>18</sup> The analysis of the situation in phase 4, that is, in this particular case, the situation in Curaçao, compels the observer to accentuate the importance of social and economic developments, however, so that a prominent role should be assigned to these variables in any theoretical generalization.

Bearing in mind the important arguments by which R. T. Smith has deepened our insight into the nature of the Afro-American family, we shall now proceed on the basis of the above to:

- (a) subject the connection between comparable traits of the family in the lower strata of British Guyanese and Scottish society to closer scrutiny; and
- (b) in connection with this, and by referring to a number of other authors, attempt an outline of a more feasible conception of society and culture than that put forward by R. T. Smith.

The African cultural heritage of the Negroes, their historical experiences, their acculturation and adjustment in the Afro-American area and their confrontation in recent years with their socio-cultural, economic and political environment have given rise to a varied culture, which is not to be viewed as a less differentiated reflection of the wider socio-cultural context. This places the "general principles" which are believed by Smith to be structurally relevant in Scotland and British Guyana in a slightly different light, as was suggested above. Where R. T. Smith's theories have proved not altogether tenable and his universalistic interpretation of structural functionalism not completely valid for parts of Puerto Rico, how are we to explain the similarities between Scotland and British Guyana, in both of which countries a low social and economic status and minimal social mobility seem to go hand in hand with strong matrifilial tendencies, concubinal relationships and frequency of illegitimacy of birth? In our view there are two considerations worthy of our attention here. It should be borne in mind in the first place that the concept of matrifocality is not an unequivocal one.<sup>19</sup> We would point in this connection to the distinction between matrifocality as an African phenomenon and matrifocality as a product of adjustment to the socially imposed lack of ability to put certain desired behaviour patterns into practice. What we have here is an example of a merely superficial resemblance between genuinely African and Scottish cultural elements, as well as one of similarity between Afro-American and Scottish processes governing the distribution of functions between husbands, wives and relatives, depending entirely on the socio-economic circumstances. It is on this similarity that our second consideration is based, namely concerning the relationship between the "dominant culture" and its "sub-cultures". The relationship of a "sub-culture" with an originally African background to the "dominant culture" in Afro-American societies is in certain

respects comparable to that between the labourer "sub-culture" and the "dominant culture" in Scotland. If we define culture, following W. H. Goodenough, as the organization of reality in terms of the perception (observation and conceptualization) of the surrounding reality, and of ideas concerning cause and effect, concerning what is necessary and fitting in that reality and concerning the individual's prescribed social behaviour with respect to this, it becomes obvious that Scottish culture is in no way to be described as a homogeneous whole of which the worker culture constitutes a fitting variant (W. H. Goodenough, 1963, p. 258). There is not simply question, as structural functionalism would have it, of a more or less homogeneous culture for the realization of which the "rewards" are unevenly distributed according to function, thus obliging the poorly rewarded groups to make all kinds of sub-cultural adjustments in confirmation of the total unity and harmony. Even though reference to the values and behaviour patterns of the higher strata plays an important role in the behaviour of the lower strata, each group in a given society has its own particular optical angle which to a large extent conditions its perception, conceptualization, and so on, with respect to the society as a whole. The Scottish worker culture thus becomes comparable to that of the Afro-American groups in Guyana, with both sub-cultures developing as products of the orientation of the group in question within their own individual reality, which differs from that of the higher groups. Both constitute, at least in part, cultures in their own right and occupy a place as such vis-à-vis other cultures within the total social context. So one may speak of a certain autonomy in the culture formation of the socially and economically lower groups, with the perception of the surrounding reality being influenced by both historical backgrounds and the contemporary situation in the social, economic, political and cultural (including, among others, the educational) fields. This gives rise to a different conception of the relations between social classes, or, where applicable, colour strata, from that put forward in Smith's work. Both in Scotland and British Guyana a certain affinity is found between the cultures of the lower and the higher status groups. While there is, moreover, an obvious historical affinity between the cultures of the higher strata of the two areas mutually. With respect to British Guyana, however, there is a special historical factor operative, namely the African provenance of the lower strata. For both groups — the labourers in Scotland and the Negroes in British Guyana — vertical mobility



involves acculturation to the related cultures of the higher groups<sup>20</sup> on the one hand, and increased ability to fulfil similarly defined roles (as breadwinner, or as husband-father, for example) on the other.

The above arguments are based on briefly the following considerations:

- (a) It cannot be said of any society that the moral system of any of its component groups, or social classes, may be regarded as a simplified "sub-system of the larger system", which latter supposedly forms a harmonious whole.
- (b) Following W. H. Goodenough (*op. cit.*) it should be observed that aside from "borrowing" of cultural elements from other groups within the society, norms may also spring autonomously from the situation in which a given group finds itself. These norms will not in that case have the character of mere compensatory adaptations, but may exist "in their own right", as it is sometimes put.
- (c) There are different, historically determined influences operating on the process of culture formation for each individual group or class. Afro-American society may be conceived of as historically divided into ethnic groups. Consequently culture formation in the different groups or strata should be viewed partly against the historical backgrounds of ethnic diversity and inter-ethnic relations.

The process of acculturation should be assigned a prominent place in the explanation of Afro-American phenomena. R. T. Smith rightly contends that religious as well as civil marriage is held up as the ideal among the lower Afro-American strata. Deferment of the realization of this ideal and the manner in which conformation to the accepted norms takes place should not be indiscriminately traced back to the differential distribution of means within a closed system, however. The cyclical development of the family and the belated conclusion of marriage are based likewise on particular views with respect to man-woman relationships and sex that are conditioned by different historical and contemporary factors for each group. Where there is a high degree of cultural, economic and political integration of the Negroes into the social system one may generally expect to find earlier marriages coupled with changes in the above-mentioned views. So we are able to observe a relatively advanced stage of acculturation in Curaçao, where rapid, far-reaching modernization attended with increased

urbanization, education, employment and participation in the political life — in a word, growing social and economic mobility and integration in a wider context — has brought about a sharp drop in the illegitimacy figures and an increase in the marriage rate, together with a fall in the average age at marriage. We wish to stress once more that the fusion of the Negroes with other ethnic groups into a national Afro-American society in no way automatically implies a high consensus of values or social harmony. Modernization, in spite of the uniformity of education and the integration of the Negroes into social, economic and political organizations at the national level, is attended also with the pluralization of ideas, values, goals, and so on. If there is any consensus with respect to particular values at all, such consensus does not *ipso facto* give rise to socially harmonious relations either. Especially in cases where consensus with respect to specific values engenders rivalry between individuals and groups, or where a particular value proves to be inconsistent with the experiences with regard to interpersonal relations, violent tensions and conflicts are likely to arise at the micro and macro level. We might consider in this connection the competition for social, economic and political influence, or the effects of modern egalitarian ideologies and increasing social mobility, which one might contrast with the inequality of social treatment.

The subject of behaviour as conditioned by both historical and contemporary factors, the theme of the relatively autonomous culture formation of the respective strata, and the individualizing effects of incipient economic modernization are discussed at length in a number of books and articles written with reference to Oscar Lewis' publications. Lewis has won considerably wider fame than the majority of the above-mentioned authors due, in part, to the consummate artistry with which he has painted detailed pictures of his "cases". Theoretically and methodologically he has laid himself open to serious criticism, however (*Current Anthropology*, 1967; Valentine, 1968; Albrecht, 1970; Medina, 1969; Casasco, 1969; Goetze, 1971).

Before discussing a few of the reactions to Lewis' publications we shall give a brief summary of the essence of his ideas. Lewis' works all pertain to man-woman relationships and household groups among people living under socio-economic conditions of the kind that are frequently encountered in the Afro-American area. He deals more specifically with relationships and group formation under conditions of proletarianization in urban slums, of which he gives some graphic

descriptions. He subsequently formulated his theory of the "culture of poverty" on the basis of detailed "cases", defining this culture as follows:

"... a sub-culture with its own structure and rationale, as a way of life that is passed down from generation to generation along family lines."

(Lewis, 1968, p. 4.)

The culture of poverty develops in slums in cases where one type of economy is supplanted by another, or where life in a rural economy is replaced by life in an urban setting with a (still) underdeveloped capitalistic system. The study of the content of the culture of poverty is essentially restricted by Lewis to the findings of his research on conjugal partnerships and family life. He invariably encounters feelings of inferiority, a weak sense of social responsibility, male indifference to the interests of wives and children, and frequent changing of sexual partners in connection with inferior social status, low wages and economic insecurity. Where there is a regular job and a steady income, on the other hand, he encounters the above traits less frequently, although he emphatically asserts that none of the traits in question is exclusive to the lower strata. Lewis views the "culture of poverty" as a coherent whole in his above definition of this sub-culture. In a later publication, however, he sketches it rather as a statistical profile, as a configuration of specific traits on the basis of a certain degree of computability, in connection with which a low degree of family and community integration is observable.

"Even within a single slum there will probably be a gradient from culture of poverty families to families without a culture of poverty. The profiles of the sub-culture of poverty will probably differ in systematic ways with the difference in the national cultural contexts of which they are a part... Traits that reflect lack of participation in the institutions of the larger society — or an outright rejection, in practice if not in theory — would be... for example illiteracy, provincialism, free unions, abandonment of women and children, and lack of membership in voluntary associations beyond the extended family."

(Lewis, 1969, p. 3.)

We would once more observe in passing that a statistical representation of culture is not free from danger, as it is only too apt to overlook the dependence of particular phenomena on values, norms and views which are specific for both individuals and groups. One

should resist the temptation of lumping seemingly similar phenomena occurring in different groups, strata or societies together in configurations for the sake of comparison, as though these groups, strata or societies shared the same culture and only the difference in socio-economic ability to put the shared values into practice were responsible for the difference in frequency with which particular phenomena are found. Lewis' method, whereby a number of cases of which in-depth studies have been made are put forward in such a way as to suggest that they are representative, with the reader being left in the dark as to the nature of their selection and the investigator's influence on the cases, seems to us in the final analysis also to go back to this methodologically false presupposition.

Goetze takes the above-cited definition of the culture of poverty as point of departure in his discussion of Lewis' views. He terms it "Tyloristic", as it seems to suggest that in the process of adaptation to urban conditions the slum dwellers have as it were written a behaviour "score", which is subsequently transmitted from one generation to the next. Like Casasco and De Medina before him, Goetze is inclined to view the slum as a transit station rather than a place of permanent settlement, however. This implies that the individuals living here are continually orientating themselves towards a weakly integrated multiplicity of urban behaviour patterns inside and outside the slum. Consequently it is incorrect to speak of a coherent "slum culture" without any further qualification. Urbanization entails primarily the transfer of poverty from the country to the city, the symbol of more unlimited personal opportunity. It is the urban socio-economic setting that conditions behaviour. The traits of this behaviour develop under the impact of the special conditions of life in the city. To this should be added that these urban conditions act on behaviour that has a certain historical causality as well. What Goetze offers us in his criticism of Lewis, in fact, is an elaboration of M. G. Smith's ideas. In order to gain an understanding of the effects of the urban environment on behaviour, it will be useful to examine Goetze's arguments. These display an explicit affinity with those of Goodenough, whom we have already mentioned above. Goetze draws a distinction between *Privatkultur* as the individual perception of reality and of the causal connections between the component elements thereof, as well as of objectives and modes of behaviour, and *Arbeitskultur* as the convergence of *Privatkulturen* arising from the interaction of individuals. The *Arbeitskultur* in turn influences the

different *Privatkulturen*, modifies their inherent generalizations and causes these to become mutually attuned, in consequence whereof a behavioral totality of views, norms, conventions and rules develops.

Slum areas, which may be defined as transit stations with floating populations, constitute collectivities of numerous *Privat-* and *Arbeitskulturen*, or social orientation models with for the most part little internal cohesion or stability, which serves to explain the often observed individualism and egocentricity and the personal and social insecurity here.<sup>21</sup>

Hence one should not equate the conditions in a slum area with those prevailing on the plantation or in the village in a rural setting, which are marked by a relative isolation tending in the direction of self-sufficiency. A definite distinction should be drawn, we feel, between old-established lower-class neighbourhoods in and around cities and new slum areas that have sprung up as a result of migratory movements in connection with rapid economic changes. The slum is a general, material aspect of proletarianization, as a consequence of which new inhabitants orientate themselves to the urban environment in a mainly heterogeneous way. For many, however, the slum ends up being a place of more or less permanent settlement rather than a transit station after all, and this encourages the development of a specific "slum culture" with its own forms of social control. So in some slum areas close kinship and friendship ties may evolve and various forms of association, such as, for example, burial societies, savings societies and other mutual benefit associations may develop. This may result in the regulation and stabilization of man-woman relationships in the form of an adaptive cyclical development (Buschens, 1975, p. 265) or involving a strong emphasis on legal marriage as the only accepted institution (Brenneker, 1960, p. 35). While it may be observed (last but not least) that one also finds people identifying themselves wholeheartedly with their own neighbourhood here.

Both recent and historical developments in the wider society definitely exercise an influence on the developments and processes in Afro-American lower-class urban areas. The *machismo* (virility) complex observed by Lewis as a male response to social deprivation, and designated by him as a "trait of the culture of poverty", should be explained partly from the historically important double standard of morality, for instance. The developments with respect to the individual's opportunities for social, economic, political and cultural mobility and participation in the urban society at large exercise an

influence on changes in references and perceptions and, finally, the image formed by the individual of his society and his own place therein. Depending on the nature of these developments, the individual either alienates himself from or remains strongly attached to the old patterns of behaviour. Obviously both historical and contemporary developments are highly significant for the foundations underlying the man-woman relationships and household group formation. We have already cited R. T. Smith with reference to the question of the relation between the integration of the man-woman relationship on the one hand and that of the limited family into the wider society on the other.<sup>22</sup> G. J. Kruyer formulated the precarious balance of interest which affects the stability of man-woman relationships and the composition of household groups as follows:

“The man-woman relationship is of a complicated nature, with sexual, psychological, social and economic aspects. It leads to various forms of cooperation and also contains elements of conflict. Out of these two forces, cooperation and conflict, evolve the actual patterns of relationships as they are to be found in reality. These patterns differ from society to society.”

(Kruyer, 1968, p. 1.)

Stability in the man-woman relationship is a function of a precarious balance between harmony and conflict, and between personal and familial, social and economic interests and needs which are partly convergent and partly divergent. The cultural orientation of the parties with interests in the union furthermore changes with the history of the country and of the ethnic group in question as well as with the biography of the individuals concerned. Hence the man-woman relationship should be examined on the basis of a model incorporating the elements of both harmony and tension. The degree of harmony or tension is determined to a large extent by the convergences or divergences of the cultural orientations, or the *Privat-* and *Arbeitskulturen* of men and women. These orientations one may subsequently proceed to classify, in broad generalization, as African, “old” Afro-American, proletarian and modern “Western”. It is impossible to view the convergence or divergence of the cultural orientations, or the unity or conflict of interests of men, women and household groups independently of the social, economic, political and cultural developments in the wider society. It should be clear in this connection that any reference to systems (either systems as a whole or parts thereof) of values and norms coming face to face with or interpenetrating one

another as more or less autonomous entities when speaking of acculturation must necessarily be false (J. Rex, 1959, p. 114 ff.). The relative social, economic and political status of the "culture bearers" and the nature of the cultures concerned as regards similarity and compatibility on particular points are important factors in this process. The acceptance of values varies from mere lip service to internalization of interpretations differing per group and per individual. There is no absolute correlative connection between emancipation, mobility and acculturation. Mobility in the sense of the improvement of social and economic position may take place more or less independently of the "adoption" of cultural elements from higher social strata, or without any change of reference group (such as, for example, a shift of cultural orientation from traditional social categories to persons and groups with more modern ideas). Not all socially mobile persons will subscribe uniformly to particular values. People living under similar circumstances may cherish different, and sometimes less current values or even values that are disapproved of by others. This makes for considerable complexity in the simple acculturation model.

A model in which harmony and tension, convergence and divergence are represented as mutually exclusive or alternative conditions should be rejected as utterly inadequate. Harmony and social tension are mutually interpenetrative. Stability in a social relationship should be interpreted as a balance of diverse interests. Cultural divergencies between a man and woman (for instance, with regard to sexual freedom for males) may give rise to tensions which need not necessarily culminate in open conflict, however, for fear of endangering other interests (economic ones, for example). On the other hand, consensus of values may also be conducive to tension. The end about which people agree does not necessarily say much about the means they will employ. The objective formulated in agreement with the conjugal partner (such as the interior decoration of the home in conformity with the demands of the married state) may occupy a different position as regards priority in the respective scales of values of men and women. It is reasonable to suppose that every individual will aim at maximal gratification of his desires. People do so in such a way as to achieve a certain balance of gratifications in the different social contexts in which they participate, however (Blake and Davis, 1964, p. 479). Such contexts would include the family of orientation in which a person has grown up as a child and towards which he may still have certain obligations as an adult, the family of procreation

in which one fulfils the role of parent, the neighbourhood in which one lives, the occupational group to which one belongs, and the "peer group" of which one is a member, to mention a few. In our introduction we distinguished between the various kinds of social context whence control is exercised on the behaviour of individuals in connection with the differential institutionalization of the different man-woman relationships. If we place the process of the institutionalization of marriage within the framework of acculturation and social mobility, we come upon the conceptual pair of respectability and reputation. The concept of respectability (called "*decencia*" in Curaçao) rests on the social control exercised by the wider society in which people are participating more than ever before as a result of rising employment and increased education. The concept of reputation, on the other hand, is considered to bear some relation to the control exercised by the "peer group", that is, the group of people of the same age and sex as ego and as such the group of one's social and economic peers. The control of the "peer group" involves that men and women are partly influenced by divergent though extremely important contexts in their behaviour. Control by the wider society, on the other hand, more unequivocally embraces the behaviour of both men and women as complementary patterns of a conjugal unity. The importance to the male of either reputation or respectability was considered by Wilson to be dependent upon the degree to which he participated in the wider society. So Wilson says:

"A young Caribbean 'peasant' cannot become 'respectable' in part because he cannot participate economically or politically in the total societal system within which 'respectability' is the chief value. He is not literate and thus cannot enter the bureaucracy or the political or legal hierarchy. He is unskilled and hence cannot begin to climb the economic status ladder to achieve an income that will permit him to assume the signs of respectability. But at the same time he is politically, legally and economically under the rule of the total society, and those who impress this rule on him are alien — of a different 'class' and/or a different nationality."

(Wilson, 1969, p. 82.)

and:

"It is surely not accidental that the very activities most central to the achievement and maintenance of manhood and reputation are those proclaimed illegal by the total society."

(Wilson, 1969, p. 81.)



While a man's reputation is determined first and foremost by his virility, his numerous pre- and extra-marital affairs and his conduct as a "*macho*" (the male of any species of animal), "*gayo*" or "rooster", respectability may be achieved through the realization of a complex of values in force in the larger society rather than the peer group.

Increased social, cultural economic and political participation as a result of the development of education, trade unions and political parties (and, moreover, participation in a local context that may itself have assumed greater importance as a consequence of decolonization and internal political modernization) tends to enhance the individual's sense of dignity vis-à-vis other groups in the society, as well as his self-respect and respectability. One may reasonably expect the effects of this to make themselves felt on the fulfilment by males of obligations towards wives and children as well as on the frequency with which so-called "free unions" — which may entail few obligations but are rich in consequences — concubinages or marriages are contracted. The value system of women, with their greater religiosity, is more attuned to respectability than that of men, according to Wilson and others. The principal matrices of their social relations are formed by the household group and kinship relations. One should not lose sight of the fact, however, that their relations with female neighbours and friends may definitely also assume the character of "peer group" structures influencing their attitude towards men. The emphasis frequently placed on monogamy by women in their relationship with a man is not indicative simply of a more complete internalization of Christian norms regarding marriage than is the case with men. For after all, they would certainly not aspire to have more than one husband in terms of either the polygynous or the double moral standard either. Wherever their actual behaviour falls short of the ideal of monogamy this is in many cases attributable to personal, conjugal or economic insecurity. The woman's desire for her partner to be monogamous also is often closely bound up with her economic dependence on him. Women's tolerance or condemnation of their partner's extra-marital affairs can on the whole be considered as being conditioned by a variety of interrelated factors, however, such as:

- (a) the reverberation of African principles;
- (b) the influence of the double standard of morality;

- (c) the quality of their partner's fulfilment of his role as husband-father;
- (d) their partner's status in the society;
- (e) the degree to which their reactions to their partner's behaviour, such as by quarrelling, running away or taking lovers, are inspired by their "peers"; and
- (f) the degree to which their conduct is influenced by modern considerations of respectability.

It seems a likely supposition that the difficulties presenting themselves in connection with the realization of the principles of either polygyny or the double standard in the Afro-American situation rendered women more sensitive than men to the values of monogamy. This may to a large extent have served to aggravate the frustration caused them by male behaviour and to condition their reactions to this behaviour, partly under the influence of gossip of neighbours and women friends. The likelihood of serious conflict between the sexes is implicitly present in the differential orientation of men and women to such values as respectability and reputation. In a process of upward social mobility this likelihood will diminish as the male partner, too, lets himself be guided more and more by considerations of the respectability of monogamous behaviour (often consciously alienating himself from the socially "backward"). This process should be viewed in terms of the integration of the conjugal relationship with the maternal group consisting of mother and children.<sup>23</sup> Where there is no high degree of economic, social and cultural modernization, and there are as a result few opportunities for mobility and for the participation of urbanized Afro-Americans in the wider social context, the values of the "total society" will not become institutionalized among them and the marked instability of their man-woman relationships will continue.

"... the premarital requirements of a man's reputation that he marry a virgin, or the extra-marital requirement that his wife remain faithful become redundant or non-applicable. He has not publicly invested his reputation or honour in her if she is a 'concubine', 'sweetheart', 'friend' or 'common law wife', which means she is relatively free to engage in relations with other men and her 'keeper' does not thereby lose his reputation... There is the possibility of distinct, though overlapping, value complexes, one for men and another for women."

(Wilson, 1969, p. 77.)

## 2. *Definitions of a Number of Concepts*

By way of conclusion to the present chapter we would give a more accurate definition of the concepts of visiting relationship, concubinage, marriage, the extended family, the household group, the limited family, the "broken home" and matrifocality.

### 2.1. *The Visiting Relationship, Concubinage and Marriage*

The literature on the Afro-American family contains many references to frequent sexual relations without legalization and without co-residence between men and women. This phenomenon is referred to as the "friending" or "visiting relationship". It generally involves some exchange of economic goods and services as well as a certain degree of stability (lasting for at least three months, for instance) (Stycos and Back, 1964, p. 127). The man contributes towards the household's expenses and in exchange receives sexual favours and sometimes also certain services, such as the preparation of one of his meals, the washing and mending of his clothes, and so on. The single woman is usually economically dependent on him and runs the risk of being abandoned as soon as she becomes too great a financial burden on the man as a result of a new pregnancy or some other form of increase of his expenses, or on being caught "recruiting" additional contributor-lovers.

As regards the latter point it may be observed that this relationship (like concubinage) leaves the woman a degree of latitude in the observance of norms which are considered as applying to the man-woman relationship in accordance with the custom in force. This is because of the non-formalized character, low social prestige and economic insecurity of the relationship. At a low social and economic level the virility ideals of the "*machismo*" complex become manifest in the male's actual behaviour; they are confirmed by his reputation, whereas the views on female behaviour are not realized to any significant degree in women's behaviour. After all, under the conditions of the double standard of morality, too, pre- and extra-marital chastity is prescribed for women. We should note in this connection, however, that it is not only the circumstances of their life that compel women to make certain compromises on the point of respectability. The observation of a dual cultural orientation (Braithwaite 1957, p. 543) implies a measure of contradictoriness that also renders observance of the rules of respectable behaviour difficult. Whether or not she is married, it is considered natural, desirable and sometimes

even biologically essential for a woman to be sexually active and have children (Clarke, 1957, p. 95; Blake, 1961, p. 97). As was mentioned above, in the discussion of R. T. Smith's cyclical development theory, sexual relations are not put off until after the conclusion of marriage. R. T. Smith observed a certain tolerance with regard to infraction of the norms in this connection. Rodman speaks of a certain "value-stretch" where there is question of a weak social and economic position, and increasing "commitment to the norm" where there is an improvement in this position (Rodman, 1963, p. 205 ff.). Only where there is an improvement in the social and economic chances of realizing the complex of respectability values do sex and parenthood appear to become more directly linked with marriage for both men and women, and is pre- and extra-marital activity inclined to decrease.

In many cases the male partner in a visiting relationship remains a member of his household group of orientation or of another group of procreation throughout his sexual (and economic) relationship with the woman in question. In this particular situation he is an extremely marginal figure in the life of the woman and her household group. He enjoys considerably more freedom to establish additional sexual relations than his "friending" partner. As was pointed out above, a woman's economic dependence on a man may be slighter if she, too, continues to live in her own household of orientation. In that case her parental household may support her (and, where present, her children), or enable her to go to work outside the home by taking care of her children. It goes without saying that these circumstances may exercise a decided influence on the nature, duration and development of the visiting relationship.

The visiting relationship of a young, childless woman is on the whole based on a different complex of motives from those of an older woman with children. Friendship with a young man seems to offer young women considerable affective as well as sexual gratification (Blake, 1961, p. 86). In addition we find references to the unwariness with which some girls rush into sexual relationships (*op. cit.*, p. 51). Older women with children but without a male breadwinner frequently enter into new, uncertain affairs from obviously economic besides sexual and, possibly, affective considerations. The uncertainty of the visiting relationship between a young girl and boy may in many cases stem from a conflict of individual interests between the two, or from a conflict of interests between their respective mothers where the girl's mother, upon her daughter's becoming pregnant may be trying

to push marriage, thereby posing a threat to the boy's financial support of his mother, for instance.

With regard to the insecurity of the visiting relationship of the older woman with children it can be said that this is a product especially of:

- (a) the inferior status of most unmarried mothers (Wilson, 1969, p. 77);
- (b) the problem of the obligation for the male partner to provide for another man's children, which not all men may feel it their duty to fulfil;
- (c) the threat to the man's claims to the exclusive sexual right to the woman posed, for instance, by any relations she may still be entertaining with old lovers for the sake of obtaining financial support; and
- (d) the threat to the woman's honour in the case of the presence of one or more grown daughters to whom her lover may feel sexually attracted.

The above factors also apply in concubinal relationships. Here as in the case of the visiting relationship, the man may often be the procreator of children by other women, which may drastically reduce his economic value. The relatively loose tie between the man and the woman also tends to encourage partner exchange, in conclusion. Unless there are at least some prospects of marriage, women's preparedness to enter into or continue some relationship that may often prove disillusioning usually decreases with increasing age and the prospect of financial support from their children. As we saw above, the eventual conclusion of a marriage is not always based on a warm feeling of conjugal solidarity either.

We have taken the term *concubinage* to refer to a coresidential man-woman relationship that has not been legalized (and/or solemnized with a religious ceremony). This kind of conjugal relationship differs from the visiting relationship not only on the point of coresidence, but also on that of stability and sociological character. The meaning of this term goes back to ancient Roman Law, which has so thoroughly imbued Western European thinking. The word "*concubonis*" or "*concubitus*" means literally "lying down". It refers to the sexual character of the relationship, which is not *per se* a lasting social relationship.

It stands to reason that a certain stabilization should come about

where a measure of frequency, relative permanence (extending over two or three or more years, for example) and coresidence occur. In this case the partners will evolve a more distinct code of behaviour as well as a sense of responsibility towards one another and their joint offspring.

Concubinage was a frequent phenomenon in the ancient Roman Empire, where it possessed one characteristic trait: it was a relationship between a man of higher and a woman of lower social class (Kooy, 1967, p. 28). Here one may conceive of a class as being composed of a number of biologically and sociologically reproductive social units, or families, of more or less equal social status. In connection with this latter feature, classes are inclined to impose certain demands with regard to legitimacy. For marriage, or the legalization of a union whereby status is conferred on the joint progeny and the transfer of offices, titles, money and property is regulated in accordance with the formal law of inheritance, one condition above all others had to be met: the partners had to be of the same social rank.

A certain class purity of the family and family property is a goal pursued in all stratified societies. The legalization of unions between persons of different social class is not therefore considered desirable (at least by one of the two parties, namely the socially superior one). This sociological conception, which is far removed from Christian religious or universal ethical norms, was formalized into a law, whereby mixed marriages were proscribed, by Emperor Augustine. Concubinages were permissible and recognized only if they conformed to certain principles on which marriage, too, was based: they had to be monogamous and aimed at permanence, while neither of the partners was supposed to be married to another person. The concubine and her children were accorded a special status under the law of inheritance. "*Liberi naturales*" or natural children were clearly distinguished from other categories of illegitimately begotten children, such as „*adulterini*" or adulterously begotten children, "*vulgo quaesiti*" or children without a known father, and „*incestuosi*" or incestuously begotten children (de la Try Ellis, 1957, p. 210).

This is not the place for a detailed analysis of the historical sources or the substance and the development of European views on marriage, sex, virginity, concubinage and other similar matters. For this the reader is referred to studies such as those by I. Reiss (1960) and G. Kooy (1967). What is important to note is that the actual practice among the European aristocracy eventually normally came to involve

that men entered into legal marriage, but besides — and in contrast to the severe restrictions on their wives' liberty — were free to indulge in escapades with women from the lower classes, with whom they might also have more or less permanent or sometimes even coresidential relationships. Although it was difficult to entirely justify this state of affairs from the point of view of Christian morality, the social circumstances were conducive to it, and so it came to receive a certain recognition, thus making it possible for fathers to bestow a certain amount of unconcealed care and attention upon their illegitimate offspring. Social recognition of the visiting relationship sometimes provided both the "concubine" and her children with a social and economic opportunity for upward mobility. Hence illegitimacy of birth did not inevitably entail a social stigma. A person's social rating was doubtless dependent partly also on the social status of the person making the evaluation, so that he was rated differently by members of his father's class than by his mother's social peers.

It is to be supposed that the above-mentioned trends were to a certain extent a function of the size of the aristocratic elite. This social localization of the phenomenon did, however, exercise an influence on the behaviour of those who came to have considerable social and economic mobility under the later developments in Europe, namely the members of the bourgeoisie. Up to late last century it was quite common for wealthy merchants and administrators to keep mistresses. Affection was as a rule localized in the extramarital relationship, while the matrimonial relationship was mostly characterized by rather more formal behaviour. Marriages were often made (partly) from rational considerations. Whereas in the bourgeois "*mariage de raison*" as well as in the chivalrous romance (the source of the romantic complex) the affection was often invested in someone other than the marriage partner, the lower bourgeoisie, who could exercise individual romantic partner choice, was more inclined, under rejection of adultery, to direct the affections to the future marriage partner, thereby integrating affection, marriage and sex into a normative triad (Kooy, 1967, p. 25). The majority of those leaving the mother country for the "West Indian" colonies did not come from the lower bourgeoisie, the settlers of these colonies being for the greater part government officials, military and naval officers, slave traders and plantation owners. While there was a more or less regular partial turnover in the former two categories, the latter two comprised mainly permanent settlers who saw themselves placed in a situation that

offered absolutely free scope for the double standard of morality. The colony had to cope with a shortage of European women and an "over-supply" of female slaves, Negro women from the lowest social strata who lent themselves not only to economic but also to sexual exploitation. Undoubtedly the preference of these men went to a lasting matrimonial relationship with a European woman, and many colonial governments did in fact strive to create a balance in the white sex ratio. But as long as white partners for these men remained in short supply, conditions remained favourable for the flourishing of non-legalized coresidential relationships with local women from a different ethnic group.

The society of Curaçao was generally speaking characterized by:<sup>24</sup>

- (a) the development of a fairly rigid stratification;
- (b) the preservation and elaboration of the double standard of morality, with the European woman becoming the exclusive property of her husband while the latter was himself free to have as many casual or regular sexual relations with women of inferior social rank as he liked, alongside his "respectable" monogamous marriage;
- (c) the consolidation of the *mariage de raison* or marriage of convenience to safeguard the social and business interests (including those of purity of race and class) of the powerful white families, whom isolation in a spatially confined environment rendered mutually dependent. This did not of course imply the absolute exclusion of "*mariage d'inclination*". It was quite normal for the affections to be projected into other relationships outside marriage, however;
- (d) the spread of non-legalized relationships, which in the case of white men usually took the form of visiting relationships, though they sometimes culminated in coresidence;
- (e) the flourishing of concubinage and the visiting relationship among a Negro population with a low social and economic status and with social homogamy<sup>25</sup> of partnerships.

Van Lier observes with reference to Surinam:

"Concubinage . . . is found wherever there are juridical, social or economic barriers preventing legal marriage but where a liaison of more than a temporary nature develops. Slavery created a number of barriers, both of a juridical nature — the slave possessed no legal personality — and of a social one. There was



a wide difference between the status of the female slave and that of her owner. The status of the white colonists and that of released slaves and their coloured descendants also differed widely enough for this to constitute an obstacle to marriage between them. In a society in which such obstacles existed and in which the number of white men exceeded by far the number of white women, while there was a coloured population with a large number of marriageable young women, it is not surprising that concubinage became the most prevalent form of sexual relationship."

(Van Lier, 1971, p. 74.)

We should emphasize here the above-indicated difference between the visiting relationship and concubinage in order to make for a proper understanding of the Afro-American phenomena. Even where there was no shortage of European women, coresidence of European men with coloured women occurred. In this situation it was mainly single men who entered into this form of union besides the more popular visiting relationship, however. Married men tended more to restrict themselves to the visiting relationship as a variant of extramarital activity in an environment that offered a copious supply of women of low social status. The high frequency of the visiting relationship was more especially a function of the rigorous stratification of the society. This was to some extent true also for concubinage in Curaçao, where non-legalized coresidence of a white man with a white woman was subject to more severe social censure than coresidence of a white man with a coloured woman.

The visiting relationship was in all probability the most common form of sexual relationship for the master, the slave and the free Negro in Curaçao. It was usual for masters here to contract legal monogamous marriages and entertain frequent extramarital relations besides. To the slaves marriage was prohibited, and no regular relationship between a man and a woman was recognized. Although in later times slaves were treated with slightly more consideration, in the earliest period slave-owners might buy or sell men, women and children individually as though no social ties existed between them. As far as the Europeans were concerned, male slaves were of no economic or social significance to their partners. A union between a male and female slave had no juridical, ethical, social or economic implications whatever for the slave-owner, aside from possessing economic value as a basis for the "production" of more servile manpower for the labour market. Slave-owners did have economic and social responsibility for any children

born of their female slaves, however, the status of these children being determined by that of their mothers.

The slave was subject to the regulations of commercial law as a commodity on which the owner might take out a mortgage and which he could exploit economically as a source of labour or as an object of trade wholly for his personal gain. His individual paternity was of no account to the master. For the Negro himself, on the other hand, paternity and the role of sexual partner could be of no mean importance, even though legalization of these was out of the question. Promiscuity is in no way to be regarded as the most common form of relations between the sexes among the Negroes. Marriages were found among the manumitted from an early period, although it may reasonably be supposed that he desire to distinguish oneself from slaves and other persons one considered as socially inferior also played a definite role in these cases.<sup>26</sup> The progressive emancipation and acculturation of the coloured classes as a result of the rapid economic growth of contemporary Curaçao have increasingly promoted marriage as a symbol of newly acquired status and wealth. The extravagance with which weddings are normally celebrated at the present day constitutes a means of publicly underscoring the couple's claims to status. In this process the attitudes with regard to conjugal behaviour have changed. Increased social and economic mobility in connection with the process of acculturation to a modernizing culture is contributing, as our Curaçao data show, to a rise in the number of marriages and to a stricter control with regard to conformity to the norms of more exclusively monogamous matrimonial behaviour.

The history of the Negro population of the Afro-American area is that of a series of adjustments, as was explained in our Introduction. In this process cultural elements which have survived from earlier phases are seen again and again to be incorporated, after total or partial reinterpretation, in subsequent ones, with the reservation that elements from African tribal cultures have progressively lost in influence through the consecutive phases of slavery, emancipation, proletarianization and acculturation to modern conditions. This is definitely the case where emancipation did not involve the isolation of Negro groups from the rest of Afro-American society. No matter how dislocated the original African culture may have been in the beginning, the slaves even so evolved certain forms of social organization during slavery and freedom in which elements of a polygynous morality may have continued to have a structural effect. Where this

was the case a degree of social differentiation among the Negroes was conditional for the realization of this morality and *ipso facto* for a tolerant attitude of wives towards co-wives. It is not improbable that this historically determined attitude is still significant in some Afro-American groups even to this day. In the developmental process of the Afro-American society the intra- and extramarital behaviour of other groups, in this particular case the higher social strata, also had a definite effect on the social organization of the Negroes, however. This brings us to the problem of the adoption of the double standard of morality — an important element of Freyre and Hoetink's so-called "seignorial behaviour pattern" — by people living in essentially different circumstances from those of the higher status groups. The values of marriage, including premarital virginity of the female, and the relation between the legally married woman and her husband's mistress are altogether different matters to the Negro and to the European in the history of the Afro-American area.<sup>27</sup> Marriage, concubinage and the visiting relationship were, as they still often are today, different matters for black and white — whether viewed separately or in relation to one another. In broad generalization one might say that among Europeans marriages were concluded fairly early in life between young men and virgins of more or less equal family status. The husband-father occupied a powerful, status-conferring position in the household group. Concubinages between whites were rare, whereas visiting relationships and incidental sexual relations with black women were frequent. Relations in the case of concubinages and the visiting relationship were clearly stratified, with the male partner as a European possessing high status while the coloured woman belonged to a socially inferior category. Hence the latter posed no real threat either economically or socially to the status of the white master's legal spouse.

As we saw above, marriages among Negroes were on the whole concluded later on in life and were frequently preceded by a visiting relationship and concubinage, so that virginity at marriage was practically ruled out for women belonging to this group. Even where marriages were concluded relatively early in life, the rules of behaviour and the balance of authority here might still be quite different from those obtaining in white marriages. The fact that the visiting relationship and concubinage were commonly phases in the development of individual man-woman relationships<sup>28</sup> points to a cardinal difference between whites and Negroes, furthermore: among the Negroes all

three forms of man-woman relationship were characterized by social homogamy, with both partners being of more or less equal social standing. In the case of a married man or a man living in concubinage having visiting relationships, this implied that the latter's mistresses might definitely pose a threat to his wife's or concubine's economic position and social status. As we observed earlier, there was some degree of social differentiation among the Negroes in the Afro-American area observable at an early stage of the history of Afro-American society; this may have made for elements of a polygynous morality or a double standard being put into practice. It is not, however, a likely supposition that Afro-American conditions admitted of sufficient social differentiation among the dark masses, or offered the Negroes enough social and economic security for a polygynous morality or (after acculturation) a double standard to be realized in their sexual relations without giving rise to serious problems. Sexual relations among the Negroes were not comparable in their social and economic aspects to those among the whites. Although the possibility cannot be excluded that elements of a polygynous morality in addition to those of a double standard continue to exercise an influence on the behaviour of men and women to this day, the male's desire to have sexual relations with more than one woman, whether prompted by polygynous considerations or by considerations inspired by the double standard of morality, will not as a rule have pleased his coresidential partner in the Afro-American situation. We are inclined to believe on these grounds that besides the Christian churches exerting pressure to encourage conformity to a strictly monogamous morality, there were also important sociological forces at work in the past, causing the more exclusively monogamous man-woman relationship to assert itself as the most appropriate type for the Negroes in the Afro-American area. For a long time the Negro male was almost without exception in a hardly better position to earn an income than the female. The Negro woman was dependent on the man for economic support during her biologically reproductive period, however, when her capacity for work was reduced and her support by her male partner was generally considered more or less normative. After Emancipation these women no longer had a master who was economically responsible for them and their children to fall back on. They therefore probably adopted a competitive attitude towards other women where the financial assistance and support of a male was at stake. The rich variety of magic tricks to which a woman may resort to try and bind her partner to herself and the home, which

one encounters throughout the Afro-American area, may testify to this urge. The tension-laden relationship between men and women with their divergent needs and desires, together with the matrifocal tendencies to which this gave rise, constituted important elements in the cyclical development of the Afro-American family as described by R. T. Smith. In British Guyana it was common for the male to have frequent pre- and extramarital sexual relations, and here, too, they constituted a threat to the social and economic position of female partners. The value by which the cyclical development is determined is the value accorded to monogamous marriage. The evaluation of monogamous marriage was influenced to an important degree by the relative social and material security this form of union affords women. It is our contention, therefore, that on improvement in the standard of living, together with a possible increase in the social and economic differentiation among Afro-American groups, such as occurred in Curaçao under the impact of the rapid modernization of the economy, will not on the whole favour the realization of the double standard. The differentiation among the Afro-American lower classes never assumed the same proportions as the social and economic inequality with the connected sharp distinction between black and white which formerly characterized the society of Curaçao as a whole. The industrial development of Curaçao has furthermore changed the cultural orientation of its society, in which the Afro-Americans have since come to have part. There has emerged a more explicitly egalitarian ideology, together with an emphasis on greater equality between the sexes, a drop in the average age at marriage, a sharp rise in the relative number of marriages, a substantial decrease in the number of illegitimate births, a change in the power structure of the household group and different ideas concerning child care and child rearing. From an objective viewpoint all this would seem to imply also a decrease in the "supply" of sexual partners for pre- and extramarital relationships. Although our material permits only of our pointing to these developments as a trend, we nonetheless feel justified in positing that:

- (a) the African cultural heritage of the Negroes of Curaçao with regard to man-woman relationships is at present exercising hardly any manifest influence any longer at all;<sup>29</sup>
- (b) the double standard of morality has never had a chance of developing as a socially approved principle among the Negroes; and

- (c) the monogamous morality, which socially mobile Afro-Americans have come to associate with "the new system", has gained in influence, which in our view implies that the Afro-American people are less inclined, as a consequence of the past and present social and economic conditions of life, to adopt the principle of the double standard as a justification for pre- and extramarital relations.

The above does not presuppose an essential break between the cultural past and present of Afro-American groups. We are inclined rather to think in terms of a historical development stimulated by the modernization of society. The reverberations of the past in the present provide a basis for another tendency besides the above-mentioned dual cultural orientation, however.<sup>30</sup> For the "*machismo*" ideal, or the high value set on virile behaviour, was formerly, as it still sometimes is today, part also of the female conceptual and emotional pattern with its "distinct, though overlapping" complex of values vis-à-vis that of the male.<sup>31</sup> This view prompts us to make three concluding remarks, viz.:

- (a) one should take care in one's description of the Afro-American family not to view the woman too much as an unwilling victim. She never was, nor is today, a mere passive object, just as the male never was nor is exclusively exploitative;
- (b) the picture of the acculturation process in conjunction with the economic development of a given society is more subtly shaded than Frazier's theory, among others, would lead one to believe; and
- (c) one of the "products" of this acculturation process is the nature of the man-woman relationship in the Afro-American marriage, which is comparable in many respects to European or American marriage, though possessing a certain distinct individuality as regards particular views, values and attitudes.

## 2.2. *The extended family, the household group, the nuclear family, the "broken home" and matrifocality*

We have used the term "extended family" to refer to the aggregate of consanguineal, affinal and, where applicable, fictive kinship relations insofar as the persons so distinguished are, in fact, recognized as kin and as actual kinship relationships have developed on the basis of such recognition in a given culture. Where such distinctions as "close"

or "loose" kinship ties (Bott, 1964) and distant or close kin are used, other than strictly genealogical factors may often be involved. Coresidence under the same roof or on the same patch of ground is not conditional for the use of the term "extended family".

The domestic group or household group constitutes a component element of the kinship system on the basis of the principle of locality. At the same time, however, the household group may recruit its members from non-kinship circles as well, or may even be composed completely of non-related persons. In no society is this latter phenomenon encountered as the most common type of structure, however. Locality constitutes a structural principle that is subordinate to that of kinship. Household groups generally come about for the purpose of fulfilling a number of important social functions, of which those of biological and social reproduction are doubtless some of the more important.

It should be noted with regard to the functions of household groups that there are a number of different classifications in force, aside from a number of possible, more subtle sub-classifications (such as, for instance, on the basis of the relevance of these functions for the husband-father, the wife-mother and children or for a wider social context). Following Murdock we may list the following principal functions: the sexual, the procreative, the socializing, the economic, the nurturing or cherishing, the recreative and the status-assigning functions (Murdock, 1949, p. 2 ff.).

Comparatively simple, stable societies display relative uniformity in the nature of the man-woman relationships and household group composition. The structural principles in societies of multi-ethnic origin with urbanization and proletarianization and with inferior and insecure social positions for some of the major population groups and, as a result, weak social and cultural integration, are less unambiguous, however. We have already quoted Simey, Kerr and Goetze<sup>32</sup> in this connection; here it became apparent that in these kinds of circumstances ad hoc solutions frequently have to be found for the fulfilment of essential functions, such as the economic, the nurturing and the socializing ones. Afro-American societies with a relatively unchanging traditional structure, like that of British Guyana, on the other hand, display a certain crystallization of patterns in the form of a cyclical development. Societies undergoing especially drastic social modernization, such as that of Curaçao, furthermore display a more advanced institutionalization of monogamous marriage and the nuclear family

group, together with a weakening of the dual cultural orientation. In the latter case there is no question of total substitution of traditional values and ideas by more contemporary ones. On the contrary, a synthesis often occurs, such as, for example, that of the idea of the biological necessity of childbearing and the view that this should take place within the bounds of marriage. The same process seems to be taking place with respect to the elements of the ideal pattern of male behaviour and the rules of monogamous marriage. So one of our higher-class informants expressed the view that the fact that wealthy Curaçao men often keep mistresses abroad (here he referred to, among other things, the phenomenon of imaginary "female cousins" in Surinam) was ascribable to a combination of the following factors: improved transport, increasing lack of opportunities at home as a result of the changing social conditions, and changing ideas concerning the permissibility of extra-marital relations. A compromise between the male behaviour ideal and marriage was made, according to him, by shifting the setting for the realization of this he-man ideal to somewhere outside one's own society with the tacit knowledge of the legal spouse. This opinion does not represent an accurate reflection of actual reality in general, but it does in our view typify a number of specific tendencies observable also among coloured groups of relatively high social status and among socially mobile persons in the society of Curaçao. People like to stress the harmony by which family life and the conjugal relationship are marked, while speaking of extra-marital relations in deprecatory tones. We were interested to see how a number of our higher-class informants expressed the opinion that incidental extra-marital sexual relations were morally justifiable, while at the same time declaring regular relationships with mistresses to be unacceptable to wives and children.

We have already defined the nuclear family above as the household group composed of a man and woman and their joint offspring and/or adoptive children. We explained at the same time that "elementary or nuclear families based on marriage and on common law marriage" (R. T. Smith, 1957, p. 102) are frequent in the Afro-American area. Smith pointed out that the most elementary kind of family or household group is that formed by the mother and her children, at the same time rejecting the idea — like R. N. Adams, as will be discussed below — that the nuclear family constitutes the universally basic structure, *op. cit.*, p. 94), of which latter view G. P. Murdock, among others, is a proponent. We shall briefly elucidate his viewpoint and



that of Adams and a few others, since the outcome of the debate has a direct bearing on the value of the concept of the "broken home".

Murdock based himself on the assumption that the nuclear family is universal (Murdock, 1949, p. 2 ff.). He believed that the group composed of a man and woman and their joint offspring and/or adoptive children could be distinguished as an independent, separate entity or as a molecule of such more extended kinds of group as the "extended" or "joint families" in all of the approximately 250 societies he referred to in his argumentation. He applies four special criteria, which are linked with the above-mentioned series of functions. In his view the universal "nuclear family" comes about as a result of marriage, biological and social reproduction, coresidence and the economic cooperation of the marriage partners. Murdock's view has come under attack in particular by Stephen in a comparative study of the family (Stephen, 1963, p. 13 ff.), Gough in an article on the Nayar (Gough, 1962, p. 76 ff.) and Spiro on the basis of studies on the kibbutzim in Israel (Spiro, 1962, p. 64 ff.), who pointed out that neither coresidence nor economic cooperation between partners in a kinship unit with the composition of a family that can be conceived as a separate entity are universally observable, these criteria being invalid precisely in the case of polygyny and that of the extended family. For in the polygynous situation there is often no coresidence comparable to the European type, while women are relatively independent as regards the management of their household affairs. In the extended family there is frequent cooperation among men as among women, but men and women are not directly economically complementary to each other as marriage partners as in the case of the elementary family.

Murdock's definition of the universal family structure is rather ethnocentric in character, and when applied to different situations may easily engender ideas of social pathology that lack all empirical foundation. It has become evident that certain functions considered by Murdock as being universally fulfilled by the nuclear family may in actual reality be fulfilled by forms of social organization other than the man-woman-children group. This is, in fact, also Adam's viewpoint, who at the same time rejects marriage as a criterion for the definition of the family. After all, marriage (or even a coresiding partner-cum-father) is not always a precondition for the existence of a coresidential group, for economic cooperation (production, the joining of incomes, joint ownership and consumption), for reproduction

with biological procreators from outside the group or for the initial socialization of children inside the group. Marriage may be viewed as a social mechanism for regulating relations between the sexes which need not necessarily entail permanent coresidence, economic cooperation and so on. The family (whether or not it has come about on the basis of marriage) should be considered as a sociological group coming into being as a result of the biologically and socially reproductive capacity of human beings, and which may lack a husband/father. The most elementary kind of kinship group making up a household, which as such is universal, therefore, is that of the maternal dyad, i.e., the group composed of a mother and her children (Adams, 1960, p. 31 ff.).

If one takes this entity as point of departure there is not always justification, in terms of universality, for using the term "broken home" in cases where the husband-father figure is absent. The conjugal dyad is much less close-knit, from a universal viewpoint, than the maternal one. The paternal dyad (or father-children relationship) owes its existence to the fusion of the maternal and the less closely knit conjugal ones. Presumably the conjugal (and paternal) dyad is strongest during the time there are dependent children. Its presence becomes less imperative after that, when it continues to exist under the influence of cultural values rather than from objective, functional necessity, as R. T. Smith has pointed out as well. Hence Adams emphatically qualifies matrifocal tendencies as universal. Even in paternalistic families this tendency seems to be present in the emotional and domestic life of the group, a fact that finds expression also in Bales' distinction between male instrumental and female expressive leadership (Bales, 1953, p. 19).

Adam's viewpoint is perfectly applicable to the Afro-American situation. He confirms the conclusions of many other researchers as regards the strengthening of the mother's position upon her children's reaching adulthood (R. T. Smith, M. G. Smith, Blake, Clarke, Stycos and Back), and similarly recognizes women's need for independence of men, whereby they seem to be anticipating the latter's inadequacy in fulfilling a number of tasks.

Where the maternal dyad exists by itself, certain essential tasks that are inadequately fulfilled are taken over by other persons. Thus the (maternal) grandmother, or an aunt or woman friend may take charge of the children's upbringing if the mother herself is prevented from doing so by the necessity to go to work. This is where the grand-

mother family and the phenomenon of adoption become prevalent. The economic function of breadwinner in these cases is fulfilled by the woman herself, or by her parents, brothers or her own sons and daughters.

Adams also establishes a connection between the prevalence of a strong maternal dyad and the total structure of the society. In a situation where the man's economic and social position confers little if any status upon his wife and children, the children stand to gain little else besides their life from the father-partner. The woman obtains some slight security for old age through her children. In proportion as a man is able to secure a certain status for his wife and children and is in a position to fulfil the functions of a husband and father he becomes more indispensable to them. But where the latter factor does not obtain, the maternal dyad is especially functional, in Adam's view. Where the elementary family structure is deemed normal for the household group and the husband-father is assigned certain tasks accordingly, the conjugal and paternal dyads become more closely integrated with the maternal one as the social and economic conditions of life improve. At the same time the mother's aspirations for a strong matrifocal position diminish. Adams considers the integration of the conjugal with the maternal dyad, resulting in a strengthening also of the paternal dyad, as possibly the most effective way of building up intergenerational relations and ensuring the fulfilment of important functions for societies with a polygynic as well as those with a monogamic system. The socio-economic organization of the society in question is of course also important in this context. An economy based on the "corporate family" is not as conducive to neo-local settlement of independent nuclear family groups as an economy based on more individual labour. It is finally this latter form of economic organization that is most commonly encountered in the Afro-American area. Where the individual lacks all opportunity of earning an income, or may earn only an extremely precarious and low one, other forms of distribution of tasks offer extremely functional alternatives, according to Adams.

The decrease in matrifocality in situations where there is an amelioration of the social and economic conditions releases children to some extent from the moral and economic obligations towards their mothers, thus making it easier for them to form independent household groups of their own. But just as there is not necessarily an absolute correlation between higher incomes and a rise in nuptiality among

Afro-American population groups, there is likewise no question here of a consistent inverse ratio between an increasing frequency of marriages and a diminution of financial claims of mothers on the incomes of their grown-up children. Improvements in the standard of living are often coupled with greater female dependence on partners, among other reasons as a result of the increasing wage differences between the sexes. However, not all males have acquired the habit of spending the greater part of their incomes on one particular woman and her children by him. And where a man may not be opposed to this in itself, the control exercised by his "peer group" will sometimes prevent him from following his own inclinations. Where a man does act in accordance with his wish to spend his money only on his partner and children, his wife may even so still stand a good chance of increasing her material comfort by asserting traditional rights to her children's incomes. The inverse ratio between nuptiality and matrifocality (assuming for the moment that the latter is equally measurable) may further be distorted by the fact that the increased institutionalization of marriage as a result of improved social and economic conditions may lead to an increase over previous periods in the number of marriages concluded in situations of economic weakness. This is then a consequence of a wider social control on the immediate social environment by the society at large. As a result a person may not be able to afford any loss of respectability vis-à-vis his neighbours and relatives in consequence of his relatively weak economic position. It may therefore sometimes be necessary for married women to make themselves partially dependent on their children for the acquisition of certain social and economic attributes of the married state.

In the above we have already said much about the phenomenon of matrifocality. This phenomenon is a universal one in consequence of the exceptional closeness of the maternal dyad. Although it is encountered at least as a structural tendency everywhere, the degree to which it becomes manifest varies in accordance with the nature of the socio-cultural context. It may reasonably be supposed that matrifocality will appear with greater emphasis as the institutional correlate of polygyny, especially if this is coupled with the settlement of maternal dyads in separate, scattered residential units. Extended families offer possibly greater scope for the development of ties that are not as exclusively centred on the mother in consequence of the immediate presence of a relatively wide circle of both male and

female kin. In neolocally settled elementary families there is perhaps a greater chance again of matrifocal tendencies being strengthened. This latter is normally the case where the husband-father is prevented by social and economic circumstances from fulfilling his responsibilities. With respect to the elementary family in the United States, Wentworth-Rohr has devoted an article to the phenomenon of "momism", while as regards the Dutch situation some researchers have referred to the "fatherlessness" of modern youth because of the male's frequent failure to establish an identity and his placing himself in a marginal position with regard to the direct socialization process and the daily course of affairs in the domestic group as a result of his occupational orientation outside the family (R. Wentworth-Rohr, 1956, p. 101 ff.; R. J. Menges, 1969). As far as matrifocality in the Afro-American area is concerned, we would refer the reader back to the discussion of matrifocality in British Guyana and Scotland.<sup>33</sup> The progressive increase in matrifocality in R. T. Smith's conception of the cyclical development of the household group is in complete accordance with the arguments set out above. Like Clarke, with the eloquent title "My mother who fathered me" (Clarke, 1957) for her book, Smith points to the fulfilment of the instrumental leadership as well by the woman on account of the physical or functional "absence" of the man, which is experienced as a form of deprivation. Here a stronger emotional tie develops between the mother and her children, while after middle age the man totally loses whatever authority he once possessed in virtue of the dependence of the woman and her younger children. The mother or grandmother becomes the most respected figure in the household, although the regard shown her is not lacking in a certain ambivalence either on account of the children's strong obligation towards her. The husband/father does not on the whole rate highly as a father in practice. As one elderly Curaçaoan informant put it:

"A woman was of no consequence as a wife. As a mother she was everything to me. You count for a great deal as a husband and a son in Curaçao, but as a father you don't count for anything. That is how it was and how it is, though times are changing."

Despite the widespread recognition of the marked matrifocality of the Afro-American household group in general, the husband-father is invariably represented as the legitimate bearer of authority. The society as a whole is "male"-oriented.<sup>34</sup> The mother or grandmother

usually only acts as a stand-in for a male authority in the latter's absence. Authority is a male prerogative and where the husband/father fails to observe his duties or is absent from the household altogether one can observe the male authority devolving in part upon the son.

The implication of the above is that matrifocality as such is in no way to be regarded as an exclusively Afro-American trait. Only where the point at issue is the "degree of" matrifocality is there any justification for representing matrifocality in the Afro-American area in the light of an unusual phenomenon. In that case special attention should be given to the way in which matrifocality manifests itself and to the factors reinforcing these matrifocal tendencies. In this connection Hoetink points to:

- (a) the mother's central, dominant position and permanency;
- (b) the marginality of the paternal figure and the circumstance of his entertaining sexual relations outside the union;
- (c) the strong likelihood of a particular woman having children by more than one man; and
- (d) the prevalence of the grandmother family. (Hoetink, 1961, p. 82 ff.)

Structurally the phenomenon is stimulated by the weak social and economic position of the male in a society in which neolocal settlement of elementary families is normative and where work is done on an individual basis. The history of the Afro-American area presents a unique picture, moreover, of which a rough sketch was given above along the lines of an acculturative process, and in which the adaptation of polygynic principles and the double standard of morality to the social and economic conditions among the Afro-American population played a significant role.

The recognition of the universality of the phenomenon of matrifocality does not necessarily imply that its assessment and the evaluation of its specific nature have even begun. As regards attempts at simple statistical mensuration of matrifocality aimed at determining how many of the household groups surveyed do or do not have a man living in, we consider the conclusion justified that the presence or absence of the paternal figure cannot be an adequate criterion. Determination of the numerical proportion of the total number of groups constituted by household groups without a resident husband/father cannot possibly provide a sociologically valid picture of matrifocality, seeing that there is not exclusively question of matrifocality

in cases where the husband/father is absent in the Afro-American situation. On the contrary, the phenomenon is encountered in an especially concentrated form in cases where the man is both spatially and emotionally part of the group, and the other members of the group are mobilized against him by the woman. Where one is inclined to view matrifocality in this way it is much more relevant to institute an investigation into the differences in emotional attachment — its relative intensity and nature — of the children to the father and the mother respectively, and then to correlate the results of such an enquiry with the structural characteristics of the society and the family. This kind of study will then provide an appropriate framework for an analysis of tasks, task fulfilment and power relations within the household group. Only then will one be able to make pronouncements about the degree of matrifocality — the emotional and functional pivotal position of the female — in Afro-American household groups that are at all well-founded. Here constant reference will have to be made in one's observations to both the emotional and functional dependence of the woman on a resident partner, and that of the man on his wife.

Matrifocality is an important concept in family sociology. Both the survey of the literature and the fieldwork have brought home to us the complexity of the concept, so much so that we venture to suggest that the continued, specialized study of matrifocality deserves every encouragement. E. Abraham-Van der Mark has attempted an appraisal of matrifocality in Curaçao in which the predominantly statistical analysis has remained restricted to a large extent to power relations with respect to all kinds of activities in and around the domestic group (E. Abraham-Van der Mark, 1970). Her findings provide some eminently suitable premises for further research and the formulation of new hypotheses. A specialized comparative study of matrifocality of the kind proposed above is beyond the scope of the present study as well, however.

## CHAPTER II

### CURAÇAO

#### 1. *General*

In the present chapter we shall give an outline of both the historical and the contemporary context in which the lower-class family of Curaçao has evolved. This description of the area of our research will at the same time serve as an elucidation of the thesis put forward in our Introduction, namely that the society of Curaçao is to be regarded as a special variant of the Afro-American type of society.

Both on the point of surface area and population Curaçao is the largest of the six Netherlands Antilles. It is even so a small area, covering as it does only 470 square kilometres, with a length of 60 km. and a width of 4-10 km. It is located at 12 degrees north latitude and 69 degrees west longitude, at a distance of 70 km. from the coast of Venezuela on the fringes of the Caribbean Sea. On 1st January, 1966, it counted 136,289 head of population, of whom 115,261 were Antillean (*Department*, 1967, p. 16).

Dutch is the official language, but the local language Papiamentu is spoken and understood by all classes. This latter language is a composite of Portuguese, Spanish, English, French, Dutch and African elements. The lower strata have mostly a weak command of Dutch, even though this is the medium of instruction. A number of increasingly influential movements aimed at securing a more prominent place for Papiamentu in the official and cultural life have sprung up over the past years.

There are several theories about the origin of the regional language. Some are inclined to view this in terms of the development of a lingua franca to serve as medium between the different ethnic groups on the island; others tend to trace its origin to the African coast itself, as this was for many years the scene of the slave traders' operations.<sup>35</sup>

The island's geological core consists of volcanic rock, and the gently rolling hills in the central and eastern parts derive their red colour



from the worn diabase in those places where erosion has left insufficient topsoil for the usual growth of low scrub, tall cacti, *divi-divi* or "trade wind" trees with their south-westerly inclination, or Curaçao's two evergreens the *palu di Dios* (tree of God) or *watapana* and the poisonous *palu di Diabel* (Devil's tree) or manchineel. The western part of the island, with among others the 370-metre high Mount Christoffel as its highest peak, shows considerably more relief than the east. The entire area is best qualified, as far as the natural environment is concerned, by the adjectives dry, arid and barren, although the fairly abrupt wet season regularly clothes the island as by magic with a temporary carpet of verdure, and although Curaçao must have presented a picture of generally greater lushness in the earlier days, before the large-scale drainage of ground water for the benefit of the Shell oil refinery (Henriquez, 1965, p. 262 ff.). Long before the advent of the Shell company, however, irreparable damage had been done to the island's natural vegetation by the commercial exploitation of the native dyewood trees for the dye manufacturing industry in Europe. The resultant aggravation of soil erosion has done much to increase the island's barrenness and aridity. The natural water supply has of old been extremely precarious in this area, thus preventing the development of a large-scale, viable agricultural or horticultural industry here. The annual rainfall of approximately 550 mm. does little to improve this state of affairs, as this precipitates in a relatively brief space of time (the months of November, December and January) and then swiftly runs out to sea again or evaporates in the intense heat (the mean temperature being 27.5 degrees centigrade). The northeasterly trade wind and the connected effects of surf and currents on the shape of the island have also for centuries contributed to its infertility. Over the ages myriad marine polyps have grafted a wide calcareous belt onto the volcanic core. The island's northern coast, against which the surf comes pounding ceaselessly, features limestone cliffs with coral fossils and sheer faces full of indentations and caves produced by the action of the sea. On the lee or southern side there are many large and small bays and inlets with beaches of loose coral stone. It is here that the few natural harbours on the island are found, of which Annabai and behind it the Schottegat form the largest and most important. These harbours constitute the sole of nature's gifts to Curaçao. The only town, Willemstad, lies on Annabai; its residents comprise approximately 75 % of the total population. The town is cut into two by the bay. The two resulting parts — Punda in the east

and Otrabanda in the west — are connected by a pontoon bridge that can be swung aside. A permanent bridge has recently been opened, however.

Some of the inlets on the south coast, a number of which lend themselves for exploitation as tourist resorts, have developed from runnels or gullies cut by the rainwater swirling away into the sea. The geological process of the elevation and subsidence of the earth's crust has caused part of the silted mouths of these gullies to be raised above the level of the sea, thus giving the island its tiny cases of verdure, called *hoffinan* (gardens), such as Knip, Santa Martha, Santa Cruz, Groot-Piscadera, Zuurzak, Zuikertuintje, and so on. In some of the smaller inland valleys, too, the rain combined with the effects of products of erosion have created the necessary conditions for laying out gardens, such as that of Barber, Cas Cora, Montagna and Santa Rosa. They are smaller in number and size than the coastal ones, however, and, like these, require constant care and attention to keep their fertility at a constant level. Lack of proper care over the past few decades, when industrialization created greater job opportunities, has resulted in the loss of many a patch of fertile soil for Curaçao, scarce as this already was. The scant garden patches on the north coast (San Pedro and Hato) are the least fertile of all. A successful attempt at a more profitable method of working the soil with the aid of modern irrigation techniques was made recently in the vicinity of Hato airfield, however.

The Island Administration is also running an extensive experimental farm, but the Antillean population does not seem to show any great enthusiasm for working the soil with spade and hoe. Agriculture has never developed on a commercial basis here. Insofar as horticulture ever played a role in the earlier economy it is associated with slavery, and as a result is held in discredit.<sup>30</sup> Agriculture and horticulture at present are likely to yield profits only if practised on well equipped medium- or large-scale farms. Because of the relatively high average wage level in the area, high labour intensiveness will prove unremunerative.

Although a few of the large plantation mansions have fallen into ruin, the landscape of Curaçao is still characterized, aside from its unusual vegetation and colour of the soil, by these stately homes found scattered all over the island, many of which are still occupied. Their architectural style can be qualified as only remotely Dutch. Although saddle roofs are a characteristic feature, they normally are parallel

with the road. Their design and construction have been adapted to suit the climatic conditions, while the most frequent colours are pure white and yellow. These country homes are usually built on some hill-top, as though to allow the owners to survey and direct their properties from on high. Especially in the old days they were surrounded by a goat corral, a storage shed, stables, outbuildings and slave huts. The still remaining huts, the so-called *wardia* or *mangasina*, have characteristic slanting outer walls, called *muraja di saja* (petticoat walls), consisting of a layer of clay plastered over a polework frame. They used to be covered with dung on the inside. The roof was thatched with corn- or palm-leaves. Many of these huts have disappeared or become dilapidated or had their original construction altered by the addition of a verandah or porch and numerous small wooden rooms built in a row at their rear. The thatched roofs have now almost universally been replaced by tin or galvanized iron roofs.

The advent of the oil refinery at the beginning of the present century has wrought more fundamental changes in Curaçao's outward appearance, however. Although the old division of the non-urban land into plantations is still visible by the remains of the so-called stone slave walls, at present the phenomenon of ribbon development along the few existing roads and the growth of slums — all bearing such exotic names as Fleur de Mari, Cher Asile and Sint Helena, etc. — in and around the town are much more typical of the residential pattern of Curaçao. The wooden shanties found in the latter sometimes have an outer covering of tin and are often built on the model of the traditional hut, with the front door in the middle giving access to the main room, flanked by a small bedroom and a storeroom. Here too, one frequently finds a variety of additions and extensions.

Ribbon development and slum growth are both an outcome of increased urban employment. People who are economically or otherwise oriented towards the town like to live directly on the main road, or else tend to move to the urban centre to settle as industrial proletarians in the slums. Some go on living in the *cunucu* (country), but may rent a *cuartu* (small room) in town to live in during the working week. Increased prosperity has led to a growing number of coloured people settling in brick houses, the style of which deviates from the traditional style of house, and which are much more spacious. As a result of all these changes, as of course also of the proneness to decay of the ordinary kind of house, only a small percentage of the population is living in houses older than fifty years.

As regards marriage in Curaçao, the rule of neolocality of settlement is held up as the ideal. Home ownership is symbolic for male independence. In the old days a man would usually build a new dwelling with the assistance of relatives, friends or neighbours before marrying. Although this is still the custom today, modernization of the economy has come to form a major obstacle to this, as it has made people more fastidious on the point of housing. Furthermore, the costs of building materials have risen and people have become increasingly dependent on trained, skilled carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, joiners, and so on, for the construction of modern homes. In the process of these changes practice of renting a house has become more widely adopted, even though people still prefer to own a home of their own on account of the greater security with regard to having a roof over one's head this offers.

By way of conclusion to this general description of Curaçao, we would observe that there has never been a tendency — either at present or in the past — towards the formation of residential clusters in the *cunucu*. Only a few old fishing villages such as Lagoen, Westpunt and the rather unique Boca San Michiel can be regarded as such. People mostly lived, as they still do today, scattered in separate, fenced off yards, not infrequently without any immediate neighbours and sometimes in the immediate vicinity only of kin (such as parents), with whom people may in rare cases share a yard. People like to live *cu distancia* (at a distance) and *liber di hende* (undisturbed by others), a preference that typifies the Curaçaoan and is fostered certainly no less with respect to neighbours in crowded urban areas. Community centre organizations are making attempts to modify this radical individualism and to strengthen the sense of social responsibility. It should be borne in mind here, however, that Curaçaoan individualism is even so marked by a strong sense of mutual dependence. It is connected with the desire to be regarded by the other person as a man of respectable standing with *netchi* (decent) habits. Too great an encroachment on one's privacy by others may result in an unfavourable picture of some hidden reality being presented to the outside world through *redashi* or malicious gossip, a picture that may be highly exaggerated or distorted by envy or malice.<sup>37</sup>

We should consider the distance which people like to keep from others as well as from the "old system", and the often scathingly derisive and malicious gossip as closely connected with the social ambitions which the Afro-Americans of Curaçao have come to cherish

in the course of their emancipation (which did not begin abruptly with the official declaration of emancipation in 1863, but did receive an extra strong impulse from 20th century industrialization and modernization).

## 2. *Some Developments in the Early Society of Curaçao*

There are several writings one may turn to in order to gain an idea of the way in which Curaçao society developed. Much of what we found in such historical publications as travel accounts and mission reports had already been incorporated in Goslinga's socio-historical study on slavery and emancipation in Curaçao and in Hoetink's analysis of the traditional social pattern of that island (Goslinga 1956; Hoetink 1958). We have drawn the outline below chiefly on the basis of the latter, making a selection of the data that are most relevant to our present subject, and adding critical comments wherever we saw fit.

### 2.1. *The Dutch Whites*

It is apparent from the above that the quality of the soil and the climatic conditions were all but conducive to the development of a flourishing plantation economy here. The Dutch never succeeded in profitably exploiting Curaçao through agriculture, in fact, and hence the citizens of the Netherlands have never shown much enthusiasm for settlement in this island.

The settlement of Dutch colonists began immediately after the conquest of this territory from the Spaniards in 1634, though the thought of anything like a Netherlands colony being founded in the Caribbean was far from people's minds.<sup>38</sup> The island was unsuitable for growing sugar, cotton or tobacco — all of them crops which gave rise to extensive mono-crop systems elsewhere in Plantation America — on a profit-making basis. It was not until after 1700 that a viable fruit-growing industry directed to the export market got underway in the small garden patches found here, as well as commercial fruit and vegetable growing for the local, urban market. The only agricultural enterprises that really flourished as a result of these activities were the small plantations with limited slave forces on the outskirts of the town. In remoter areas, and more especially in Banda'bao, the western part of the island, the plantations were larger, though this does not mean to say that they comprised any considerable stretches of fertile land over and above the garden patches that constituted part

of them. On the poorer soil some corn and small quantities of *divi-divi* pods used for tanning were produced. The dyewood trees which formerly grew here in great profusion also yielded some profit for a while. The stock raised locally consisted chiefly of cattle and goats (*cabritos*), the latter being far and away the most suited to the climatic and soil conditions of Curaçao. The planters never derived any great riches from any of these sources, however. Many of them undoubtedly suffered much hardship, especially after crop failure, unless they were able to draw extra income from trade, both legal and contraband, to Venezuela. Those who did succeed in amassing considerable fortunes derived this money mostly from trade, including contraband trade and the slave traffic. They kept magnificent country mansions for the sake of the prestige the possession of such properties conferred, thereby establishing the high status attribute par excellence: the unprofitable and sometimes even wasteful plantation with its slave force. Many a Dutch Protestant suffered economic and social ruin after acquiring such a prestige-conferring property. Curaçao never was a plantation colony in the real sense of the word, the island being first and foremost a commercial entrepôt, with Willemstad as factory.

Whether rich or poor, a white skin carried social prestige, and especially in the beginning there was no differentiation among whites.

“... vis-à-vis the slaves and manumitted ex-slaves they were all ‘lords’...; the affectation of a ‘seignorial behaviour pattern’ of aristocratic grandeur was a pleasant necessity in a society in which by virtue of their skin colour alone they belonged to the upper strata...”

(Hoetink, 1958, p. 19.)

Although the Dutch colonists were by no means all aristocrats, Hoetink points out that doubtless “genuine” aristocrats helped shape this “seignorial behaviour pattern” in its process of crystallization (*op. cit.*, p. 21). This is in some way a moot contention, however. Although the “seignorial behaviour pattern”, with as one of its component elements the double standard of sexual morality, undeniably constituted part of the life-style of the European aristocracy, we do not consider the argument that the development of this pattern in Curaçao took place under the guidance of this aristocracy justified.<sup>39</sup> As was argued above, the old aristocracy did exercise a certain influence on the behaviour patterns of the bourgeoisie, from whose midst many of the colonists sprang. Most of the members of the actual aristocracy itself (especially government officials and military and

naval officers) put in only brief stays on the island, however. Only few of those who settled here for good belonged to the European aristocracy.

The traditional rigid inequality in the beginning applied principally to Europeans as opposed to Negroes in Curaçao. It did not take long for status differentiation to crystallize within these categories internally as well, however. As the number of Dutch colonists grew, a differentiation into two classes of white Protestant emerged. Hoetink draws attention to this particularly with regard to marriages. Whenever a Dutch officer married a Curaçaoan girl, he would invariably marry into the upper class. If a sailor or ordinary soldier married locally, he would marry into the class below that, namely that of the poorer Protestants, where a shortage of marriageable girls consequently occurred. Marriages made by men from this lower Protestant class with Venezuelan women in turn as a result of this constituted a contributing factor in the catholicization of a proportion of the whites and in the spread of a certain Latin influence on a culture that was otherwise mainly Dutch.

In this insular society with the ever-precarious propensity for mixing up personal ties with hierarchical official or formal relationships, occupation came to play an important role in status differentiation. A strong status consciousness was attended with the usual tensions. A factor of special importance here, however, is a socio-structural development diverging from the pattern in Holland, and which manifested itself from the very first days of settlement, namely in cases in which persons of low social standing in Holland succeeded in marrying into the élite in Curaçao. The status of such persons in Dutch society was often difficult to place in the local structure, which fact created every opportunity for upward leaps on the social ladder.

Views on equity and justice, on social relations, morality and similar such matters also followed a different source of development in Holland from that in the Antilles, where the segments of which the population was composed and the conditions of life were after all totally different. Thus attitudes to sex underwent a different development. Likewise even the Protestant religion, no matter how deep-rooted it was on the whole, developed into a mark of social distinction vis-à-vis other ethnic groups rather than a guide on the path through life for its adherents in the Antilles. Notwithstanding, the Protestants looked upon themselves as the defenders of the authority of the mother country and the guardians of the Dutch culture.

Hoetink has given an outline of the family life of the Protestant élite as observable at the end of last century on the basis of John de Pool's *Del Curaçao que se va* (Of a Curaçao that is disappearing) (De Pool, 1935, p. 10 ff.; Hoetink, 1958, p. 52 ff.). The father possessed immense authority in his household group, which he buttressed with corporal punishments, for which purpose a strap was kept permanently at hand in a fixed place in the house. He maintained many and frequent social relations with friends and relatives, and sexual relations with lower-class coloured women.

“The white gentleman maintained sexual relations with women from the lower Negroid class . . . before as well as after marriage. The owner of a slave force could have such relations with attractive female slaves from his own plantation; . . . the choice of the city-dweller, who normally possessed but a few slaves, as a rule fell on some free Mulatto woman. While the relations with such Negro and Mulatto women were partly incidental, they were also partly institutionalized and cast into a more or less stable social form, so that eventually such a relationship might become a lasting one. The mistress kept by a white *shon* who visited her regularly lived with her children in the *cunucu* or on the outskirts of town.”

(Hoetink, 1958, p. 119.)

The chaste white spouse was socially tied to the domestic hearth. Despite the male propensity for spending much of the time away from home, a husband and wife usually formed a close-knit family unit together with their children. Within this unit the husband-father could exercise the strictest of discipline as guardian of his family's morals, while his wife was expected to feign ignorance of her spouse's extra-marital relations where these did not interfere with the family life. The way of bringing up children tended to perpetuate this state of affairs. Even though sons were forbidden to smoke or drink in their father's presence before their 25th birthday, they were free to indulge in sexual pleasure with girls and women from the coloured class from a tender age. Daughters were supposed to preserve their virginity until marriage and were closely guarded inside the house and carefully chaperoned outside.

“Boys were expected to be intensely preoccupied with the practice of sex from the age of puberty. They were taught that sexual activities were conducive to the preservation and improvement of their spiritual health and beneficial for their sexual potency. It was a kind of social obligation towards a boy's friends for



him to have sexual relations. Any deviation from this pattern might provoke accusations of impotency. Every man was eager to project an image of the victorious and irresponsible seducer of women vis-à-vis his friends, where the present-day European criteria of maturity should not be applied to the word 'man' here. The frequent sexual relations which the single man from the upper classes of society often had with lower-class women from his 15th or 16th year on in any case were not subject to social censure by members of his own group and not infrequently were encouraged by his relatives."

(Hoetink, 1958, p. 56.)

The Curaçaoan Jewish (Latin) patterns were identical to this, which may be an indication that the Dutch Protestants were not impervious to the strong influence exercised by their partially Latin environment when building their culture in Curaçao. Additional Latin influence was supposedly exercised by Venezuela on the mainland, with which especially lower-class Protestants entertained relations. One should not overlook the fact, however, that the man-woman and parent-child relationships outlined above were also to be encountered as a familiar phenomenon in 18th and 19th century Europe, while they were further found in such Afro-American areas as Surinam and Jamaica, where Latin influences were non-existent. The old European pattern closely resembled the Latin one. In the colony these two ran parallel to each other rather than the one radically changing the other.

## *2.2. The Jewish Group*

The Jews first appeared in Curaçao at a very early time, namely in 1651. They came for the greater part from Brazil and Portugal. Originally concentrating on agriculture, they soon turned to trade. Although a few of them remained in the agrarian sector, they formed a small minority who never attained to riches here, in contrast to the Sephardic traders, who soon economically outstripped the Dutch Protestants (living in geographical isolation in Otrabanda, where they were separated from the Jews and Mulattoes by Annabai, and in Punda). They attained a level comparable to the position of the Dutch Protestants in the local stratification, although the latter never associated intimately with them. Besides the cultural difference, no doubt the Jew's economic position constituted a factor in this, which, because of its political and social implications and the threat it posed to the position of the Protestants, did much to perpetuate the sharp division between Protestants and Jews. This social chasm between

Protestants and Jews is still perceptible to this day, even though political equality between Jews and Protestants became a fact in consequence of the 1842 Emancipation Act, which provided considerable scope for the extension of their influence. The soil and climatic conditions had originally made them turn to trade, while their knowledge of the language and culture of the Latin American mainland stood them in good stead in the expansion of their commercial activities. It is probably also the social segregation of the Jews which stimulated their independent, economically innovative activities to which Curaçao owes so much of its prosperity. The image presented by the Sephardic Jewish community to the outside world continued for a long time to be one of an isolated, pious, wealthy, rigorously exclusive group within which, however, a schism occurred mainly along religious lines, as opposed to the situation among the Protestants. There is no ethnic group which one may argue with greater justification to have determined the plural character of the society of old Curaçao. Despite its social isolation, the Jewish community today plays an important role in the culture and the cultural life of Curaçao by virtue of the undeniably high social position and great wealth of this white group.

As regard the family pattern, it was observed in the concluding lines of the preceding section that this was virtually identical to the Curaçao Protestant one.

### 2.3. *The Afro-American Population Group*

The importation and exportation of slaves constituted an important economic activity for many years. Under Director Stuyvesant's administration (1643-1664) the slave trade was energetically stimulated, to the extent that Curaçao became the focal point of the West Indian slave trade. The Dutch West Indian Company (W.I.C.) acquired the monopoly of this trade in 1662, whereupon it signed an *asiento* or contract with a commercial house in Madrid on which the Spanish crown had conferred the exclusive right of transporting slaves to the Spanish controlled West Indian territories. The term *asiento* is also used to refer to the suppliers' agents in Curaçao.

A new W.I.C. was founded in 1674. This company allowed private traders to carry on some local trading in slaves, but reserved the right of importing slaves to itself. In 1730 the African slave trade was opened up completely to the public, however, after it had proved impossible to stamp out illegal trafficking in slaves any way and

England had entered the arena as a powerful competitor following the Peace of Utrecht. The last time a slave ship officially called at a Curaçaoan port was in 1778 (Hoetink, 1958, p. 67 ff.).

Up to that time large numbers of slaves were imported especially from Congo and Angola, most of them for redistribution from this depot. The number remaining in Curaçao was even so large enough to cause the Negro population to develop rapidly into a quantitative majority in the island's population. We would draw attention here to the unusual circumstance that the permanent surplus of births over deaths rather than the regular importation of new slaves is to be considered as the factor responsible for their multiplication. Curaçao clearly distinguished itself from other colonies on this point.

Hoetink points out that the cultural differences which originally existed among the imported slaves soon disappeared. There was rapid identification with the conditions obtaining in the slave force among the Negroes. The reason for this is probably to be sought chiefly in the lack of opportunity to organize socially as Africans. The physical environment offered no possibilities of escape to forests capable of sheltering and isolating fugitives, the sparse *mondi* (scrub) providing concealment for but a few days on end at most. Nor were there any greater opportunities for developing African-type social relations on the plantations, the slave forces here being generally quite small — a force of 120 head was considered quite large here. As a result the relations between whites and blacks were relatively personal. They were not as a rule marked by sadism either. The comparative mildness in the treatment of slaves was encouraged by among other factors the short distances between plantations and between the plantations and the town. This way people were able to exercise control over each other's activities, while Government officials in town, to whom many of the slave owners were related or whom they knew as friends, likewise kept an eye on the doings of owners. These officials were charged by the Dutch Government with the enforcement of the humanitarian norms of the times, among other tasks. Thus the central Government as well as the white community of Curaçao itself exercised an influence on the relations between black and white. Hence the plantations here certainly were not like private little kingdoms with autocratic potentates. Another significant factor here is the permanent settlement of masters on the island, as a result of which absentee ownership of plantations was rare or non-existent. So there was hardly question of the existence of an economically rationalized type of production

apparatus supervised by special, contractually appointed plantation superintendents in Curaçao. Consequently the master-slave relationship was much less unequivocally dominated by the principles of strict economic efficiency, which prevented excessive exploitation. There was further a marked difference in treatment between domestic and plantation slaves. As it was precisely the plantation system that remained limited in its development, the category of slaves that was worst off did not assume significantly large proportions. The relative mildness that characterized the relations here was even so not enough to prevent two major slave uprisings occurring in Curaçao, namely in 1750 and 1795. The unfavourable economic circumstances in which masters often found themselves may have imposed an additional restraint with regard to serious maltreatment of slaves, as cruelty to and mutilation of slaves would have caused a further devaluation of the master's economic property. By the same token the same circumstances might sometimes induce whites to grant a proportion of their slaves freedom, which partially exonerated masters from the obligation to provide for such slaves, but resulted in death from starvation for many of the Negroes.

In consequence of the conditions outlined above there was mutual cultural influencing between Negroes and Europeans.

“This influence (of the Negroes on the whites, M.) should be viewed in the light of the numerical superiority of the Negroes in the midst of the isolated whites, of the efficacy of a number of their customs, adjusted to tropical conditions as they were, and of the role of social transmitters played by the concubines and nannies in this respect.”

(Hoetink, 1958, p. 65.)

From the white side an influence was exercised especially through the way the social relations were shaped by them, as reflected by the Negroes' criteria for social classification within their own group and by the specific development of their sexual morality. For in the process of adaptation to Curaçaoan conditions the Negroes evolved social distinctions within their group which were engrafted on discrimination on the basis of colour and status in the Curaçaoan context. There was an obvious connection between these latter criteria. The slaves could be distinguished into domestic slaves, artisans and field or plantation slaves on the basis of type of work. As regards somatic complex, a relatively large proportion of light-skinned persons were to be found in the first of these categories, a slightly smaller proportion in the

second and the smallest proportion of all in the third. These persons were privileged through their white fathers to lead a somewhat more pleasant kind of life. This way somatic traits, economic activity, material wealth and culture (in the sense of manners and customs and intellectual development) grew into a set of mutually related criteria used by coloured persons, both slaves and freemen, for the social classification of the Negroes. These criteria were most rigidly applied, so it would seem to us, by those of the slaves and freemen who might consider themselves as belonging to a relatively high colour-stratum. This cultural "property" was doubtless not shared alike by all coloured persons.

The distinction between slaves and freemen did not originally coincide with that between dark- and light-skinned. For there was a relatively high number of dark-skinned freedmen on the island at an early stage as a result of widespread manumission by white masters in times of economic crisis. It was mainly at a later stage that light-skinned children of white fathers came to prosperity as free persons under the patronage and protection of the latter. Hoetink distinguished two groups in this category of well-to-do mulattoes, the one being formed by children of Jewish fathers and inclining in consequence of its marginal social position and descent towards a cultural orientation to Latin America, and the other — which assumed significant proportions considerably later than the former (namely after 1870) — comprising the offspring mainly of Protestant fathers, so that it continued to identify itself more closely with the "Dutch culture sphere" partly under the influence of the activities of the Roman Catholic mission, which had been expanded to their fullest potential by that time (Hoetink, 1958, p. 84). These coloured groups also kept slaves. The fact that they were not treated as social equals by the other groups and were themselves descended from slaves even so provided no guarantee for any mildness of treatment of their bondsmen — or the dark-skinned poor in general, for that matter — that compared at all favourably with the treatment of Negroes by white masters. The harshness generally observed in the treatment of Negroes by coloured persons was probably a function of the enormous insecurity of the latter's social position, though this was sometimes slightly mitigated by the institution of godparentship. Both the coloured masters and the slaves and other poor Negroes belonged to the Catholic Church, where godparentship or *compadrazgo* constitutes an important feature. Poorer Negroes were as a rule eager to have some well-to-do Mulatto

act as *padrino* (godfather) or *madrina* (godmother) to their children.<sup>40</sup>

Descent from a white father combined with light skin-colour were of great significance for a person's social mobility. A more fundamental upward social thrust of the dark-skinned groups, namely from the status of chattel to person, occurred under the impact of the French Revolution, and furthermore as a result of relations with other parts of the Caribbean area and of the activities of persons from both Curaçao itself and the Netherlands. The juridical emancipation of the slaves became a fact in 1863, whereas the social and economic emancipation of their descendants received a strong impulse mainly in the course of the present century as a corollary of the boom in the oil industry, which exerted a strong influence on the cultural development of the Negroes.

Before proceeding to give some details of the family of the Negroes as it used to be, we would pause to draw attention to the activities of the Roman Catholic mission, which exercised such a distinctive influence on the cultural development of the coloured population groups.

The changed social function of the Protestant religion was undoubtedly important in encouraging the members of the latter to be more tolerant towards the Roman Catholic mission, thus enabling it to extend its activities among the slaves and freedmen. The coloured population at present is virtually a hundred percent Catholic and thus has come under the Church's authority en bloc. The structure of the educational system and its virtual monopolization by the Roman Catholic mission has been a major contributing factor in the cultural advancement of the Afro-American population groups, especially in more recent times, stimulating integration within their own group as well as in a wider social context. We would make two observations with reference to the supposed influence of the Roman Catholic mission here. These concern in the first place the function of Roman Catholicism as a symbol of racial and status difference. In the same way as the Protestant religion became socially distinctive vis-à-vis other ethnic groups, the Roman Catholic religion came to be associated with a dark skin-colour in people's minds. So a number of our informants absolutely could not believe that a dark-skinned midwife (from Surinam) who accompanied us on our visits to their homes was a Protestant, for instance. Pointing to the colour of her skin, they would declare this to be a social impossibility. The second observation concerns the above-mentioned dual cultural orientation. Even though

virtually the entire coloured population is Roman Catholic, much of the old belief in spirits, or the so-called *zoombinan*, still lives on to the present day. This is reflected by, among other things, certain ideas concerning life after death, which deviate markedly from Christian beliefs. Whereas according to the Christian belief the spirit of a deceased person abandons the latter's relatives and friends for the rest of their lives, many members of the Afro-American population group believe that this spirit may return to them and cause them harm (Van Meeteren, 1947, p. 127). Further evidence of a dual cultural orientation is provided by the fact that besides prayer and faith in God, people are still quick to take recourse to magic practices to influence fate. Magic (*brua*) is used in a wide variety of relationships and situations, such as in connection with pregnancy, birth, illness, death, love and even lotteries, and in contrast to religion is seen to be cumulative rather than syncretistic wherever cultural contact occurs. New magic practices may be adopted if a particular group's own magic repertoire does not cater for certain new situations, for instance. Or borrowing may take place as a means of acquiring alternatives for practices originally evolved by the group itself where these have not proved immediately effective.<sup>41</sup>

Religions, on the other hand, represent more highly integrated and complex systems which are often less compatible mutually either in their parts or as a whole.

There is not on the whole a pronounced Christian influence observable in the local sexual morality. As was pointed out earlier, man-woman relationships in early Afro-America showed little in common with Christian principles. We suggested above that a preference for a monogamic morality on a reciprocal basis in Negro circles was at least partly a product of the social and economic circumstances of life, which prevented the realization of either polygynic principles or the principles of the double standard of morality. So it is not uncommon for people to be opposed to the legalization of a concubinal relationship that is monogamous and in every respect satisfactory even at the present day, on the grounds that a marriage concluded before the law and the church demands a higher social and economic status than that they possess. In such cases people may be heard to say: "*casamentu no to pa nos*" (marriage isn't for us), or "*casamentu no ta pa tur hende*" (marriage isn't for everyone). The sayings "marriage is not for us" and "*le mariage c'est pour les blancs*" may be heard also in English- and French-speaking areas. It is obvious

that such views are at variance with the sacramental character marriage seems to possess for the Christian churches.

The fact that the Roman Catholic mission's efforts met with response from the Negroes is due mainly to the latter's social and cultural dislocation, their powerlessness in the confrontation with the supreme power of the whites, and the comparative kindness of the "good white *shon*", as they called the priest who came offering them an opportunity of the projection of happiness into the hereafter. The contacts between missionaries and Negroes were by no means always personal. Many priests could get in touch with the slaves only through the medium of coloured lay priests or "sacristan". The intermediation of these lay priests was on the one hand a contributing factor in the conversion of the Negroes, while on the other it was responsible to a large extent for the syncretization of religion. The lay priest still plays an important role at the present day, although he or she is now gradually disappearing. He plays an especially prominent part in the *ocho dia* or wake held for deceased persons, in which he has to conduct the spirit of the deceased to heaven and make sure that it will remain there. The fear lest a dead person carry off his nearest and dearest on earth in many eyes is not unfounded.

Despite the above, there are obvious ambivalences to be observed in the attitudes towards the church and its servants. These would seem to us to stem from the following, aside from the socially distinctive character of religion:

- (a) the reverberations of non-European, i.e., African and locally evolved religious ideas and sentiments;
- (b) the lack of relevancy of a universalistic faith to the highly particularistic and deprivative conditions of life;
- (c) the authoritarian attitude of the white clergy, past and present, criticism about which one often hears from informants;
- (d) the present secularization of the contemporary society.

In the above we touched upon a number of factors that had an integrative effect on the population of Curaçao. Hoetink, following Freyre, viewed the integration of the Negroes into the broader society of Curaçao in terms of the complementary nature of the white "seigniorial behaviour pattern" and the black "slave behaviour pattern". Analogously to our remarks with regard to the internal social classification in the coloured group, we would observe here that the two categories themselves — that of the masters and that of the slaves



— would most likely not have endorsed the idea of complementariness of these two patterns equally wholeheartedly. The formula of complementariness may be too suggestive of a high degree of socio-cultural integration and harmonization.<sup>42</sup> One should furthermore bear in mind that this complementariness applied to only a small proportion of the dealings between the two groups, namely the part where lay their plane of contact (work) and where the Negro had to express his respect for the white man. Hoetink further observes that the uppermost layers of the coloured group took over the “seignorial behaviour pattern” (*op. cit.*, p. 125).

When subjecting the nature of the complementariness of the patterns to scrutiny, one should on no account lose sight of the distinction between the mere following of certain rules of behaviour and genuine dedication to the norm.

Outside of the complementariness of the patterns there was full scope for cultural diversity. Accordingly when we use the phrase “the culture of Curaçao” we are by no means referring to an all-embracing and integrated system of values, norms and behaviour patterns in the same way as R. T. Smith did with respect to the society of Guyana. We have taken the term Curaçaoan to refer to all of the social and cultural characteristics of each of the various groups living in the island, irrespective of the differences between groups and notwithstanding elements of foreign provenance.

In spite of the cultural diversity arising from the differences in ethnic origin and differences in social and economic status within the society of Curaçao, the Negroes of Curaçao identified themselves with the island’s society at an early stage. Even though Negroes still sought refuge in Venezuela or other parts of the Caribbean as late as last century, we know from official records that many were eager to return to Curaçao. Owing to particular historical developments in the society of the island combined with the increased momentum of the social and cultural developments in consequence of the prosperity of the present century, no “back to Africa” movement is found here. We did not come across any trace of pride in African provenance or African cultural elements among the coloured population in the course of our research, but were confronted rather with a collective identification with Curaçao. To the modern Afro-American of Curaçao Africa is no more than a continent of *macacu* or apes; and “Lubumba” and “Kasavubu” are modern terms of abuse, as are the words “Neger” and “Neger stinki” with reference to Curaçaoan conditions. Urban

Afro-Americans often speak contemptuously of “*cunucu*” or country dwellers by referring to them as ignorant, uneducated, but even so Curaçaoan people.

In the foregoing we put forward the thesis that the culture of Curaçao was diversified, notwithstanding mutual influencing between ethnic groups, as a result of:

- (a) the differences in ethnic origin of its population groups; and
- (b) the differences in the position in the socio-economic organization whence the society was viewed.

Further narrowing down these points with special reference to the coloured group we are able to state that:

- (a) the original differences between Africans soon disappeared in Curaçao;
- (b) the differences in the positions of the Negroes as domestic slaves, artisans, agricultural slaves and freedmen influenced the way in which people came to view social life in Curaçao; and
- (c) people oriented themselves to different reference groups for their behaviour according to their different positions. These groups covered a range extending from that of people of more or less the same rank, through the next coloured group up on the Curaçaoan scale of social statuses, to the group of the white masters.<sup>43</sup>

By way of supplementing the above points of cultural diversity we might draw attention here to a fourth complicating diversificatory factor. The cultural diversity of the Afro-Americans may have been greater than points (a), (b) and (c) would suggest, since people in similar positions did not belong to a homogeneous social community whence a more or less unambiguous social control was exercised over their behaviour. People lived too widely scattered over the island and entertained too few ramified and lasting relations with other persons for this. As a result a large number of “*Privat-*” and “*Arbeitskulturen*”<sup>44</sup> may have sprung up, in which individual experiments may have been made with the principles of the polygynic system or the double standard of morality, and even with the principles of promiscuity in the relations between the sexes. Now it seems likely to us that a more distinct regulation and stabilization of these relations ensued as a consequence of the development of transport facilities and communication media, of urbanization attended with the con-

centration of coloured Curaçaoans in larger groups, of the increased participation of Afro-American groups in the broader society in the wake of the industrialization of the economy, the democratization of politics and the spread of education, and of the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in monogamous marriage.

By way of conclusion to the section on the Afro-American segment of the population of Curaçao in former times we would reproduce here the picture painted of the Negro family by Hoetink *et. al.*

Hoetink observes that the nucleus of the domestic group of the coloured Curaçaoans was formed by the mother and her children, which phenomenon he connects with African origin on the one hand (Hoetink, 1958, p. 101) and with the precariousness of the conjugal partnership and the economic conditions on the other (*op. cit.*, p. 103).

There was a high incidence of partner exchange and promiscuity among both slaves and free persons. Hoetink cites a report of the Court of Policy — which body he considered decidedly biased, for the rest — from the 1820's in this connection. This informs the reader that among slaves

“... the men have two to three wives at a time, and women rarely keep house with the same man for very long.” (*op. cit.*, p. 103).

He does assume, however, that stable partnerships also developed among both slaves and free persons, with the free living in slightly more advantageous conditions than slaves in this respect. This is especially true for the lighter-skinned ones among them. This difference between dark- and light-skinned is reflected in the following quotation with reference to officially concluded marriages:

“On 1st January, 1833, of the 2701 ‘coloured’ freemen and 135 of the 3830 ‘black’ ones were married.” (*op. cit.*, p. 101).

These figures plainly show the correlation between social and marital status. Socially and economically marriage seemed to be capable of realization more especially by those of lighter skin, while darker-skinned persons restricted themselves more to casual relationships, visiting relationships (*bibà*) and concubinages (*companjà*). We would draw attention here to the special, simple “*matrimonia clandestina*” (Goslinga, 1956, p. 133), or marriages among slaves and freemen solemnized by missionaries strictly only before the church in the previous century, and popularly referred to with the derogatory

"*stampel cueru*" (skin brand, which as such is evocative of the slave status). It will be clear from the above that only a proportion of the 81 % illegitimate births in the year 1864 (Dominicans, 1945, p. 19) resulted from incidental sexual relations. It should be noted, moreover, that a fall in this percentage to 62 was observable in the first thirty years after Emancipation. We should further add that Willemstad's status as a port furthermore influenced this figure negatively. Although there are no exact data available, we may safely assume that these figures were lower for the *cunucu*. In this connection we would point to a statement of Brenneker's, according to which the legitimacy of sexual relations in some parts of the country districts was subject to strict control (Brenneker, 1960, p. 35). In keeping with the social integration and the acculturation of the ex-Africans in the society of Curaçao, legal marriage eventually came to be viewed clearly as the correct form of man-woman relationship by them. But the satisfaction of certain requirements of a social and economic nature was conditional for its conclusion. Following Herskovits, Hoetink also attaches considerable importance to African polygyny as a basic pattern for the family life in the darker strata of society, however. Thus he is inclined to see certain correspondences between African matrifocality and the nuclear group of mother and children in Curaçao, as well as between African polygyny and the Curaçaoan *companjà*, while he can also see certain common traits between the *companjà* of the dark-skinned Curaçaoan and that of the *shon* in the framework of the mutual influencing between ethnic groups. As we have no detailed information at our disposal, it is impossible for us to go into these historical questions at any depth, although we would refer the reader back to our discussion of the problems in connection with the possibilities of realization of the principles of the polygynic and the double as well as the monogamic standards by dark-skinned persons in the Afro-American area.<sup>45</sup> Of course this does not exclude the possibility of influence from African elements. For the very existence of the above-mentioned problems and even the negation of African elements serve precisely to make their influence evident. We are of the opinion, however, that the greatest of caution should be exercised with regard to the comparisons drawn by Hoetink. The passage from the report of the Court of Policy gives no indication whatever of any vigorous assertion of polygynic principles, while there was in all probability no justification either for speaking of differences in status between the several wives or sexual partners of one particular man according

to the order in which they were acquired. In our view any difference in status between a first wife and the wives coming after her stemmed more likely in most cases from a difference in the legitimacy of their relationship with the man in question. Perhaps the tolerance evinced by some wives with regard to their husbands' mistresses warrants the conclusion that this may be due to some slight effect of African views. It is not unlikely either, however, that the element of virility, which women also admire, may also partly explain this phenomenon. While it may further be argued that too much violent protest on the part of wives against unfaithfulness of their husbands might induce the latter to desert them, which could place the wife in a most unfavourable economic position. In such cases wives may therefore be inclined to turn a blind eye on the successful competition of other women. We would observe in conclusion that it has become apparent in the course of our research that women's tolerance is determined at least in part by conformity to a tacit code of behaviour by their husbands' mistresses. The mistress must at all times show respect for her lover's wife through her behaviour.<sup>46</sup>

In a number of passages of his study Hoetink suggests that the children's upbringing in the matrifocal household of the Afro-American population group is conditioned first and foremost by the economic insecurity of life, saying:

“. . . a woman could rightfully expect the most effective guarantee of support in life to come from her children.”

and

“The behavioral norms imposed on the growing child in this group were in line with its future role within the family structure: girls were expected to show greater self-control than boys, while the latter were furthermore obviously more spoilt.”  
(*Op. cit.*, p. 104.)

We should point out in this connection that besides important economic factors of course the pattern of the double standard of morality also exercised a decisive influence on the way children were brought up by virtue of the emphasis it placed on the virginity of girls and the virility of boys. As has already been mentioned above, virility as a value was not subscribed to by men only. Boys had this inculcated into them by their mothers and girlfriends as well as their

fathers and male friends. This emphasis on virility is not undividedly advantageous to mothers, however, as it involves that they must allow their sons a certain degree of ostentation among their friends of both sexes, while in addition fatherhood is a corollary of this virility. The material responsibility of males for their progeny occupies an important place in the Curaçaoan people's thinking, so that a boy's virility obviously poses a potential threat to his mother's economic position. So our research on numerous occasions brought us face to face with quarrels between mothers and sons, or girls and boys and their mutual relatives, which could be traced to conflicts of interests and obligations of a social and economic nature. The value of virility is a source of ambivalences that invariably give rise to tensions. Thus a young man may often be confronted with a choice between several duties, while a compromise does not always seem acceptable to all of the parties involved.

This value of virility is responsible for the perpetuation of a vicious circle. Women in their attitude towards the opposite sex and in the upbringing of their children tend actually to evoke the threat to their economic position, which in turn is responsible for the accentuation of matrifocality. In their efforts to ensure a matrifocal attachment on the part of their children the boys' virility is emphasized, thus encouraging the continuation of the circle. The social and economic development of the society will furnish the only key to a break-through of the circle. The male's participation in the broader social context tends to intensify his struggle to achieve social respectability, realized in terms of conjugal fidelity and a wholehearted dedication to family life. The tendency towards changing the "old" conjugal model is an integral part of a wider process of social, economic, political and cultural change in which an egalitarian ideology is influencing racial and sexual relations. In this process the values of virility and matrifocality are gradually losing in influence.

Hoetink suggests with regard to the phenomenon of child adoption or *crià*, too, that there are historical explanations which go back to African traditions. In this connection he again quotes Herskovits, where the latter states that in Africa it was customary for people to entrust their children to persons who might be expected to offer these better social and economic opportunities in terms of both care and education (Herskovits, 1947, p. 290). Instead of launching into another exposition of Adams' theory, we wish to restrict ourselves to the observation that this theory may furnish a most satisfactory

explanation for the phenomenon of child adoption in situations where African influences are weakening. The institution of *crià* offered a solution to the problem posed by the care and education of children arising from the weakness of the Afro-Americans' social and economic position, which prevented them from adequately fulfilling the roles of husband/wife and parent prescribed by their culture. Where it was impossible for parents to care for and educate their children in their own family circle, they might decide to have the children looked after and brought up by others. The rapid economic modernization of the society of Curaçao has created better opportunities for the realization of marriage, neolocality of settlement and the paternal role of coresidential bearer of authority, educator and provider, however. As a result the phenomenon of child adoption is less frequently to be observed than was formerly the case.

#### 2.4. *The Social Stratification System at the End of the 19th Century*

After subjecting the main ethnic groups to a brief review, we shall now proceed to give an outline of the picture presented by the social stratification of the society of Curaçao at the end of the 19th century. The diagram of the stratification in that period drawn by Hoetink may be reproduced as follows: There was a colour bar cutting across the whole of the society, separating the white Protestants and Jews on the one hand from a number of coloured strata on the other. The white Protestants were divided into two classes: a higher and a lower one, although they could be regarded as a single, separate entity as distinct from the Jews on the basis of their religion, culture and economic activities. The Jews displayed no internal class stratification but were divided on religious lines. The well-to-do "mestizos" formed the top layer of the coloured strata. Next below them followed a small group of urban and a large mass of non-urban, socially relatively undifferentiated darker-coloured people. The urban ones among these latter were for the greater part craftsmen and servants. The non-urban ones included a number of ex-slaves who had remained loyal to their plantations and their former masters, as well as a number of independent farmers growing agrarian products either for their own consumption or for the market, and a number of starving unemployed (Hoetink, 1958, p. 105). Small groups of Negroes, chiefly ones who had been in possession of their freedom for a considerable length of time, had also settled independently in a few fishing villages, where

they lived in relative isolation in the few residential clusters which the island counts.

The social, economic, political and cultural changes of the 20th century have wrought fundamental changes in this stratification system. This process of change will form the subject of the remaining part of the present chapter. It only remains for us to point out here that by no means all people were affected equally by the developments discussed below, while improvement in economic position (expressed in terms of size of income and similar such criteria) is not *ipso facto* attended by drastic shifts in existing cultural orientations.

### 3. *Curaçao's Changing Social Structure in the 20th Century*

#### 3.1. *General Social Changes*

The 20th century brought with it a series of changes that had a far-reaching effect on the social structure found here at the end of the 19th century. The emancipation of the slaves in 1863 had a number of obvious economic consequences, as Van Dissel informs us in his *Enige opmerkingen over den stoffelijken toestand van het eiland Curaçao* (Some observations on the material conditions of the Island of Curaçao) (Van Dissel, 1918). The plantations, far from prosperous as they were to begin with, now lapsed into utter poverty as a result of the rising costs of labour, the pillaging of crops by starving people, and the further ravages wrought on the vegetation by the ever-growing goat herds. Not one of the series of economic activities on which people ventured subsequently, including *divi-divi*- and orange-growing, the exportation of fertilizers, the production of phosphate and sisal, and the manufacture of cigars, soap and candles, succeeded in stimulating the economy. Although the manufacture of straw hats and the shipping industry (especially repair work) proved of some slight material benefit to the lowest strata of the society, many of the emancipated left Curaçao to seek their fortunes as sailors or as labourers in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Panama or Venezuela. The exodus assumed such proportions that by 1919 approximately 3000 people, or ten per cent of the population of Curaçao, or 50 % of the Curaçaoan work force, were living abroad (Den Hartog, 1961, p. 94).

Hence the emancipation of the Negro slave had adverse consequences for the country's economy and social life. Many of the men who emigrated left dependent wives and children behind, some of



them giving only their mothers some slight financial support. According to some of our elderly informants, the imbalance between the sexes and the unfavourable economic circumstances also adversely affected sexual behaviour patterns. According to them there was an increase in non-coresidential unions or *corta oreja* (ear-cutting = female infidelity) and in *kambrada* or Lesbian relationships.<sup>47</sup> The establishment of the oil industry brought about a total change, however. Where the sugar crisis in Cuba was one of the factors responsible for the sudden slow-down in the exodus, the rapid rise in employment as a result of the setting up of the Shell oil refinery in Curaçao after 1915 was the prime cause. The economic development in its turn now came to exercise an obvious effect on the social and economic position and thus on the entire life-style of the coloured population. Many people remigrated from abroad to settle on their native island in jobs to which the stigma of slavery did not attach. There was a sudden reversal from emigration to immigration, not only on the part of Curaçaoan nationals living abroad but also on that of persons from the other Netherlands Antilles and further afield. In 1960 there were 42 different nationalities represented in Curaçao. One may posit that in general the immigration of foreigners exercised an important influence on local relations and has made a distinct contribution to the social mobility of the coloured masses. The oil industry together with the associated increase in shipping and trade turned Willemstad into a cosmopolitan centre with "*hopi raza*" (heaps of different races) and a rapidly growing population as a result of transmigration. The "metropolis" and the "metropolitan area" at present contain approximately 75 % of the total population and roughly two thirds of the coloured population of Curaçao.

Where formerly the many diverse forms of trade constituted a source of some wealth, the country's commerce and prosperity now both became dependent on a gigantic industrial monolith that has caused the almost total disappearance of what was left of agriculture and fishery. Many old occupations were rendered obsolete and came to be replaced by new ones. In table 1 a limited comparison is given of the occupations of male and female heads of household groups of our sample with those of their fathers and mothers respectively. This shows clearly that such occupations as operator, pipe fitter, welder, fitter and turner, watchman, mechanic, chauffeur, clerk, police or customs officer, waiter and salesman have increased in popularity with men, while occupations such as housemaid, dressmaker and

TABLE 1

**Occupations of Male and Female as Compared with those of the Fathers and Mothers of Male and Female Heads**

Occupation	Male Heads	Fathers of Male Heads	Female Heads	Mothers of Female Heads
Carpenter	6.7	9.5		
Cobbler	1.4	2.4		
Baker	2.1	--		
Butcher	1.7	--		
Tailor	--	3.3		
Bricklayer	1.0	4.8		
Electrician	0.5	--		
Operator	3.8	--		
Pipe fitter, welder, general fitter and turner	6.7	1.9		
Watchman	3.8	--		
Mechanic	5.7	0.5		
Painter	1.9	2.4		
Chauffeur	10.5	3.8		
Taxi driver	1.4	0.5		
Farmer	1.4	9.5		
Fisherman	1.4	5.7		
Clerk	7.2	2.4		
Police or customs officer	9.0	2.9		
Trader	1.0	4.8		
Waiter, salesman	2.9	1.0		
School teacher	0.5	--		
Sailor	1.0	13.3		
Waterside worker, peon	8.6	10.5		
Shopkeeper	0.5	--		
Other	10.0	8.6		
No occupation	2.9	3.3		
Unknown	1.0	1.4		
n =	210	210		
Hat-weaver			--	9.5
Housemaid			6.7	3.4
Dressmaker			14.0	10.1
Laundress			9.5	21.8
School teacher			1.1	--
Market woman, saleswoman			2.2	8.6
Domestic help			7.3	0.6
Other			5.6	1.7
No occupation			51.4	36.3
Unknown			0.6	9.5
n =			179	179

Statistics derived from the sample.

domestic help have become more common for women. The occupations of hat-weaver, laundress and vendor of farm or garden produce have been superseded by the former, although most of these activities (except hat-weaving) are still encountered incidentally. It is a curious fact that the institution of market-vending, which is so important for coloured women in other parts of the Afro-American area, never assumed significant proportions in Curaçao. One does come across people peddling vegetables and fish and all kinds of confectionery in markets and streets on a small scale, however, while the sale of both legal and illegal lottery tickets (*biljechi*) as well as only lottery numbers constitutes a mostly small, though in some cases considerable source of income for some men and women. There is a relatively sharp drop to be observed in the numbers of the various kinds of craftsmen, such as carpenters, tailors, cobblers, bricklayers and painters. Most of these were occupations which a person could change from one day to the next, for the rest, and which did not on the whole offer the same amount and regularity of income and relative social security usually guaranteed by jobs in industry or on the waterside. The occupations of sailor, trader, farmer and fisherman have also noticeably declined in popularity. One further point worth noting is the radical change in the category of "no occupation" for women, which is explained by the rise in the number of marriages and the prevalent norm decreeing that a married woman should not have to work for wages. It is not unlikely, however, that there were a number of cases of women stating themselves to have "no occupation" who would have filled in some activity or other had they been able to find work. The demand for jobs has risen markedly among women only in recent years, especially in connection with the economic downturn of the past few years.

The purchasing power of the lower strata has increased substantially over the past few decades as a result of the industrial modernization. The local retail trade has naturally also benefited from this. At the time of the great crisis a number of native traders were supplanted by Chinese, Arab and Polish Jewish immigrants and others, who bought up many of the existing small business at ludicrously low prices.

As a result of all these various developments Curaçao became financially increasingly independent of the Netherlands and began to orient itself more independently towards the United States, the Caribbean and Latin America. During the second World War, Curaçao

became important as an oil-producing country, which gave extra impetus to the struggle for independent development. Decolonization brought about a revitalization of the economic and cultural ties with the Netherlands, however, which prompted the framing of the Constitution of the Kingdom, uniting the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and Surinam into a tripartite Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Netherlands have invested considerable sums of money in economic, social and cultural development and modernization in conjunction with this. This has resulted in many Antilleans going to the Netherlands for study, while the education system in Curaçao itself was also further expanded. This in turn has led to some changes in the position of the Catholic mission in the Curaçaoan education system, although the mission has retained its undisputed dominance in the field of education. In 1967, 56 of the total of 71 primary schools were Roman Catholic, while 12 were public schools, two Protestant and one non-denominational. It should be noted in this connection that the standardization of public and denominational schools became a reality after an Antillean school conflict in 1946. The Antillean Government spends over 25 % of its revenues on education annually, while 30 % of the total population is attending day schools. It is a statutory principle that every child should be able to enjoy the advantages of an education, regardless of race, creed or class. There is no such thing as compulsory school attendance, but the number of children not attending school is negligible.

One of the most common reasons for not sending children to school stated by parents was that they were too poor to buy children decent clothes and shoes in which to let them go to school. Such serious poverty is no longer widespread, however, although there are still children who go to school properly dressed but inadequately fed. There is at present virtually no illiteracy in the lower age-groups of the population.

The different types of school found in Curaçao today are: the six-year A-level and the seven-year B-level elementary school, the eight-year U.L.O. (Advanced Primary School), and the M.U.L.O. (Intermediate High School) offering a complete 9 to 10-year education (*Encyclopedie*, 1969, p. 420).

There are additionally secondary education facilities provided by A-, B- and C-level high schools (H.B.S.), girls' intermediate high schools (M.M.S.) and grammar schools (Gymnasium), issuing certificates that are fully equivalent to the corresponding Dutch

diplomas. Technical education has also received a strong impetus in the post-war years, while progress has also been made at the tertiary education level, where facilities are now provided for clinical training in medicine and for legal training. Although Dutch is the official medium of instruction, it is by no means to be regarded as the national language. This linguistic diversity is making for a considerable degree of inefficiency, giving rise as it does to the major problem of children speaking Papiamentu at home being confronted from the time they first start school with a language that is foreign to them. Explanations given in Dutch are often only partially understood, and so understandably the progress of these children is impeded and they frequently have to repeat classes. Whereas in the Netherlands approximately seven children out of ten reach sixth grade without repeating classes, in the Antilles not even one in four succeeds in doing so.

The language issue has been a subject of research and fierce debate ever since independence, with the search for a national identity constituting an important element in this. The year 1968 saw the creation of the Antillean Identity Foundation or *Fundashon Identidad Antiyano*, which has also made the language issue a key point on its programme and is furthermore elaborating the ideas expressed by the first president of the Cultural Centre of Curaçao, A. Debrot, in a stencilled brochure entitled *Richtlijnen voor de culturele zelfstandigheid op de Antillen* (Guidelines for cultural independence in the Antilles).

The leadership of the independence movement in the Antilles seems to be taken over to an increasing degree by representatives of the coloured population as a corollary of the development of education. These leaders come for the greater part from the well-to-do "coloured classes" and are Western-educated and Western-orientated. There is also some, although so far not very regular recruitment of leaders from the lower strata, however, where many families are related to people from higher social circles in consequence of the ramification of genealogical ties. The impact of all these developments on the lower strata is difficult to evaluate notwithstanding, though there are obvious signs of a growing self-confidence coupled with a certain revaluation of the African somatic traits. Although the society of Curaçao is still very conservative in character, ideologically at any rate a tendency towards greater egalitarianism is developing.

What was the course of this comprehensive process of social, cultural, economic and political change in the present century? For the answer to this question one should turn one's attention first of all

to the foundation of the Shell oil refinery here in 1915, with more specific reference to the direct confrontation with highly industrialized Holland. The Protestants of Curaçao, tracing their descent to a Holland of several centuries back, and formerly the proud, self-appointed guardians of the authority and culture of the mother country, who in the mean time had become to some extent socially and culturally alienated from the Netherlands under the influence of an alien social environment and as a result of their relative isolation, were now, after many years of growing poverty, brought into painfully close contact with the Netherlands and the Dutch through the increasingly vital and frequent communications with that country. Even in the early days the power exercised in Curaçao by senior colonial administrators from the mother country was liable to give rise to tensions between these authorities and the local élite (Kasteel, 1956, p. 27). Under the impact of the rapid development of a modern economy and the concomitantly increasing complexity of the economic and administrative decision-making process, with its need for constantly greater specialization and expertise, the onus of decision-making came in many respects to fall mainly on a growing number of Dutch experts in Curaçao itself and on owners and administrators in London and the Hague. This served to exacerbate the existing ambivalence in the attitude of the local population, while the forced confrontation of members of other population groups with Dutch-imported industrial foremen, the so-called "*pletters*", was doubtless calculated to encourage an ambivalent attitude among them as well (Römer, 1964, p. 23).

One of the signs betraying the existence of such an attitude is the use of the term *macamba* for a Dutchman. This term may have a pejorative connotation or may be used simply as a designation, depending on the situation, and thus is not an unequivocal expression of contempt for the Netherlands, the Dutch or Dutch culture.

A not inconsiderable number of people would like to settle in the Netherlands, for example, while there are furthermore many from all strata of society who seem only all too eager to show off their command of Dutch in front of Dutch people.

The lower Protestant and well-to-do Mulatto classes have especially benefited by the increased affluence and the development of education, and are progressing towards upper-class status, even though the colour bar continues to assert itself. Considering the role the Jews have always played in the history of the island, it is not surprising that this ethnic group should have continued to prosper in trade, banking, insurance,

transport and other branches of commerce and industry. There is to this day little contact of a personal and intimate nature between them and the Protestants (Vermeulen, 1962, p. 34 ff.).

There has even so generally speaking developed a relatively strong sense of social solidarity in Curaçao as a result of the changes outlined above, uniting the coloured and the white population and causing them to oppose themselves as a distinct group to the Dutch and the many other immigrants.<sup>48</sup> This has become manifest in the *ju di Corsow* (child of Curaçao) concept, with which term all descendants of all the various groups composing the original population of Curaçao are designated, as well as in the development of Papiamentu as the national language, whereby one of the most effective cultural distinctives was created. Both these manifestations of greater internal unity and external distinctiveness are to be regarded as cultural expressions of an emancipatory change.

The demographic factor is of prime importance in this general process of emancipation and mobility. One should point not only to the immigration of large numbers of Dutch people and nationals of other countries in the island as a whole, but also, more specifically with respect to the Afro-American masses, to the rural-urban internal migration following the rapid rise in urban employment, which was responsible for numerous people coming under the direct influence of the modernizing urban centre. It became usual for those who had remained behind in the *cunucu* to be looked down upon as backward ignoramuses ("*Nan ta sabi nada, nan ta dom*": they don't know anything, they're stupid), although it should be noted that the construction of roads, ribbon development, improved transport and the spread of the mass communication media have drawn virtually the entire island into the city's sphere of influence at the present day. The demographic gravitation on the urban area also becomes clearly evident from the statistics published by Den Hartog. These show that the population of Banda'bao (the western part of the island) increased from 7,848 in 1939 to only 8,809 in 1957, whereas the urban area and Banda'riba, the eastern part which lies much nearer to the urban centre, experienced a substantial population growth, the urban area from 30,453 to 46,899 and the eastern area (a large portion of which may justifiably be classed as part of the urban agglomeration) from 24,048 to 65,490 (Den Hartog, 1961, p. 1002).

The Afro-American masses of urban Curaçao were furthermore directly confronted with the foreign immigrants, who included a large

number of dark people from the British West Indies. This confrontation with foreign labourers whose skins were just as dark as their own just at a time when the *ju di Corsow* concept was developing implied a relative rise on the social scale for them. The "native of the island" concept appeared to be so strong as to make the indigenous Curaçaoans, including those from the lower strata, generally look down on white Portuguese immigrants as well. The ease with which cultural contact with this latter group came about as a result of fluency in Papiamentu as well as the relative lack of prejudice towards Negroes on the part of Latin people in general may be significant factors in this, as this encouraged spontaneous contacts between Portuguese (mostly companionless males) and Antilleans. Where on the one hand this stimulated the development of close relations between the two groups (there are some coresidential relationships and sporadic marriages between Portuguese men and Antillean women), on the other hand the rapidity with which contacts were established gave rise to an acute sense of difference. The unfriendly saying that "One Portuguese is worth two Antillean workers" testifies that there is no great warmth in the relationship between Curaçaoan Negroes and Portuguese labourers, especially during the recent economic recession.

For the first time in their history there was no need for the lower-class Afro-Americans to regard themselves as the "dregs" of society. Now certain categories sprang up outside their own strata (and for some also within these — hence the plural form of stratum) whom they could regard as their social inferiors and towards whom they harboured all kinds of prejudices by way of buttressing their own new-found status.

The immigrants of diverse nationalities have become assimilated in varying degrees in the society as they found it. They should on the whole be described as forming more or less isolated segments of the population, however.

Table 2 sets out the percentages of the total population constituted by the different immigrant groups in 1960. A comparison of the 20.2 % of non-Antilleans with the low percentage of 4 in 1916 will give a clear idea of the extent of more recent immigration, which by 1960 had passed its peak.

Aside from the relative upward social mobility as a result of immigration, there is also question of social differentiation within the coloured lower classes. The Afro-American masses in Hoetink's stratification chart of the situation before the end of last century,



relatively undifferentiated somatically, economically, socially and culturally as they were have latterly become subject to greater vertical differentiation in consequence of increased urbanization, rising employment and the growing diversification of jobs and incomes, as well as differences in educational background. The cause of much of the not infrequently malicious *redashi* or gossip and the social distrust to be encountered among the lower strata of society can be traced to this

TABLE 2

**The Population of Curaçao according to Ethnic Origin and Occupation (as far as this is known and lends itself to statistical tabulation) in 1960**

Ethnic Origin	Percentage of Population	Economic Activity
Antilleans	79.8	
European Dutch	6.7	Shell Co., other firms, government, education, the liberal professions.
W. Indians (chiefly British)	4.1	labourers, domestic servants.
Surinamers	3.4	labourers, medical practitioners, midwives, teachers, govt. officials.
Portuguese	1.8	labourers, farmers, shopkeepers, street sweeps, icecream vendors.
Venezuelans	1.0	
Ashkenazim Jews, Syrians, Lebanese (Arab), Indians, Chinese	0.8	traders, shopkeepers, restaurant owners.
Remainder (North Americans, Canadians, South Americans, Dominicans, stateless and other persons)	2.4	
125,181	100.0	

Statistics derived from the 1960 Census.

increased social differentiation. The song "*B'a subi*" (you have climbed . . . and now you don't know us any more) as well as the term "*macamba pretu*" (black Dutchman) used with reference to coloured persons who, on rising to a higher social position, consciously alienate themselves on the point of life-style from those socially lagging behind them are evidence of this, just as was the fear of social reprisals from

members of their own stratum if caught in or near our house evinced by some of our informants. The standard reproach heard in such cases was: "*Kiko bo ta kere. Bo n'ta pareeuw*" (What do you think? You're not an equal (of those whites and better than us)). The mere pretension that one is better than one's fellows is just as likely to provoke savage gossip as a genuine rise on the social scale, which invariably arouses jealousy.

The multiformity of social differentiation, mobility and acculturation is a product more especially of the rapid economic modernization, on which subject we should therefore make a few remarks.

### 3.2. *The Economy of Curaçao*

The Curaçaoan economy is highly asymmetrical and hence almost as vulnerable as an agrarian mono-crop economy. Almost half the Antillean male working population of the island was employed in industry and waterside jobs in 1960. "Industry" in Curaçao means chiefly the Shell oil industry, however. In 1960 this industry was responsible for 98 % of the exports and 85 % of the imports of the Netherlands Antilles. Looking at the exports and imports exclusive of oil, such goods as machinery and other equipment, food products, alcohol and tobacco are seen to make up 60 % of the imports. The value of food and drink imports constitutes approximately 25 % of the total income of the Antilles. As against this, exports total only 5 %. In addition to a precarious trade balance, the country's balance of payments shows a perennial deficit, which rose by 10 % between 1954 and 1960, especially also as a result of capital exports (Memo, 1960; Mathews, 1966, p. 30).

There was a continuous economic expansion in the years between 1918 and 1958 — with a break at the time of the world crisis — of which the oil refinery was the chief motive force. The year 1958 marked a reversal of this trend, however. In that year the recession in the United States caused a fall in the demand for oil on the world market, where there was, moreover, growing competition. Shell saw itself constrained by this to rationalize the industry and introduce automation. Although there had already been staff retrenchments, the rate of unemployment was now accelerated. In 1954 Shell offered employment to about 10,000 workers, of whom approximately 41 % were Antillean. The number of employees dropped to 9,000 in 1958 and to 4,300 in 1965. It was estimated that this number might be further reduced to 2,000 in the near future. Not all nationalities were

affected equally by these cuts, the category of Antillean workers being in fact least hit. This category made up 50 % of Shell's total work force in 1958 and over 80 % in 1965.

Hence foreign workers were most seriously affected by the dismissals. They saw their percentage drop from approximately 40 in 1954 to 3 in 1965. The percentage of the European Dutch, who occupied mainly executive or other specialist functions, remained at a more or less constant 7, on the other hand, notwithstanding a slight drop here, too.<sup>49</sup> Despite the rise in the percentage of the total work force formed by the Antilleans, the retrenchments have far from passed them by unnoticed which has had serious economic and social repercussions for the lower strata, including as they do a relatively high number of dependants. The 1960 Census put the economically active members of the Antillean section of the population of Curaçao at 28.7 %, namely 42.9 % of the males and 15.3 % of the females. There are no major fluctuations to be expected for subsequent years.

“As regards the total population . . . the lowest percentage of economically active persons is found in the Antillean group. In comparison with other countries the percentage of economically active persons is exceptionally low . . . The situation in Curaçao can be said to be abnormal strictly only as far as the Antilleans are concerned . . . On computing the percentage per age- and sex-group and . . . comparing it . . . with corresponding data from a number of other countries (Jamaica, Haiti, Peru, Venezuela and the United States) . . . more especially the percentage of active persons among the elderly Antillean males and females is discovered to be strikingly low. Even in the active age-group (the 20-64-year olds) there is a significant disparity to be observed between the Antilleans and other nations and between them and non-Antillean ethnic groups in Curaçao itself.”  
(1960 Census, p. 39.)<sup>60</sup>

The workers and their dependants were hence economically hard hit by these developments. An important social consequence of this is a greater rise in the demand for work on the part of women. Where an unemployment figure of 3 to 5 %, expressed in percentages of the working population, is considered still tolerable, in 1960 these percentages in Curaçao came to 13 and 11 for men and women respectively. The figure of approximately 20 % job-seekers among the Antillean working population of Curaçao in 1966 can be broken

down into an average of 24 % of the female and 17 % of the male working population (Statistical Yearbook, 1966). The general worsening of the economic situation becomes evident also on comparing the nominal increase of 5.5 % in the national income between 1958 and 1960 with the real increase of only 2 % in consequence of rising prices. While further the 3 % population growth caused a 1 % drop in the real per capita national income below the 1958 level (Mathews, 1966, p. 33).

The acceleration in the rate of investment in the public sector and the tourist industry has even so been ineffectual in preventing a rise in unemployment from approximately 13 % in 1960 (1960 Census) to approximately 20 % in 1965 (*Eiland Verslag* 1965). The number of 8,141 unemployed in 1966 (*Encyclopedie*, 1969, p. 94) can be considered as comprising virtually exclusively Antilleans, in view of the repatriation of many of the former immigrants, while the statistical reports note that those seeking employment belong primarily to the lower age-groups. The percentage of persons looking for work fluctuates around the 45 mark for the male Antillean working population between 14 and 19 years of age. The need for 20,000 additional jobs expressed in the ten-year plan for 1962-1971 has not been fulfilled. Especially industry, which was supposed to provide 10,000 of these jobs, have been behindhand in meeting this target. One of the consequences of this is the emigration of young workers to the Netherlands, with selection taking place not only on the basis of psychological eligibility but also on that of material responsibility with respect to wives and children. Where paternity of illegitimate offspring can be established, the young man in question is debarred from emigration. Though some might expect this to act as a form of pressure on young men to enter into legal marriage, the circumstances in which many find themselves simply render this impossible, which may in fact cause added frustration and hence more irresponsible behaviour and even greater neglect of illegitimate children.

The economic development of the island is inhibited to no mean degree by the lack of locally produced raw materials. Furthermore, anyone wishing to invest in the country must also take the relatively high wage level into account, the boom which lasted for several decades here having brought the average wage level to approximately 30 % of that of the United States and approximately 25 % above that of the E.E.G. countries, namely around 1000 dollars. This is exceeded only by Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands in the Caribbean area.

### 3.3. *Curaçaoan Politics*

The drop in employment and the level of living of the lower strata, combined with the continual rise in the cost of living stimulated by, among other things, the extravagance of the average American tourist with his leisure life in luxury hotels, has seriously shaken people's confidence in the competence and good faith of the government. The renewed sense of dependence on other people — both light Mulattoes and whites, who are less affected by the recession — for one's livelihood is forming a serious obstacle for the long-term emancipation. It has suddenly come home to people that their ability to control their own destiny is not as great as was once assumed in the period of affluence, notwithstanding the formally prescribed democratic procedures in political decision-making. People's preparedness to revert to conditions of primary familial solidarity in order to keep alive under adverse economic circumstances has not exactly increased over the past years. Individualism has increased rather than diminished, while people's claims to the right of a decent human existence have been formalized in the demands put forward through the medium of political and secondary socio-economic organizations. Small informal familial or neighbourhood mutual aid groups — groups of a usually *ad hoc* and temporary nature, of the kind that normally spring up spontaneously on such occasions as harvesting, death, birth, sickness, and so on, under the pressure of an otherwise unprotected situation among people of similar social status — are being replaced or supplemented by more formal organizations such as banks, insurance companies, burial societies, trade unions and political parties. Hence the recent proliferation of trade unions and political parties should be analysed in the light of the failure of the latter two forms of organization. People's growing awareness of their formal rights has been strengthened by the increasing inadequacy of their need fulfilment and the failure of these organizations in looking after the interests of their members and followers. The fact that the difficulty of the task facing these organizations was just as much to blame for their failure as their own inherent weakness is a matter of indifference to the population at large. All this has led to resistance to the continued functioning of the formal democratic political system on the traditional lines of stratified and personal power. This resistance amounts, in fact, to opposition to the traditional social order. This order, although the product of a totally different socio-economic situation, continued to operate solely as a historical legacy in the

functioning of the socio-economic and political life over the past few decades. Paula observes with respect to specific negative attitudes among Afro-American peoples (such as with regard to their own skin colour and their chances of improving their position in society, for instance) that the objective barriers (those of the old situation) have disappeared and made room for an "allround soundness" of the immediate environment. Negative attitudes still survive as subjective barriers in the human psyche, however, in spite of external conditions changing for the better (Paula, 1967, p. 67). Although there is a certain amount of truth in Paula's contention, this "allround soundness" of the immediate social environment nevertheless still leaves much to be desired. Compared to the former situation, the opportunities for social and economic mobility have undeniably improved vastly, at any rate until quite recently. The subjective barriers have nonetheless tended to inhibit the process whereby the Afro-American population is insisting with increasing force on active participation in the new, modern socio-economic and political life. As the subjective barriers diminished, the objective obstacles became more painfully evident. The developments under coloured leaders have led to the trade unions largely breaking away from the political parties, with many coloured persons coming to the fore as political bosses in the numerous newly formed parties and unions. Coloured persons are occupying an increasingly prominent position in business and government bureaucracies and in education as well. Especially the younger generation cherishes modern ideals, and young people in prominent positions are on the whole inclined to entertain less paternalistic notions with regard to the lower strata than most white people, who are now being forced to adjust to conditions in a society increasingly dominated by other ethnic groups.

The educated young coloured Antillean's creed emerged as follows from one particular group discussion, followed by various individual discussions:

"The Antilles must become a modern, prosperous nation without racial discrimination and with genuinely democratic conditions. To achieve this goal we shall orient ourselves towards ourselves, to Latin America, to the Caribbean and to the Netherlands. Every citizen of Curaçao — white or black, rich or poor, high or low — and not only the wealthy white bosses or those coloured persons sharing in the benefits accruing from economic profit and Dutch aid, must be involved in this process. We must have

our own identity if we are to avoid feelings of insecurity and growing unrest. This identity has not as yet been established. There is much imitating. There is much pretense. Curaçao is an island of much "shonnenschijn".<sup>51</sup>

Our national culture has remained utterly backward. More changes in the social conditions are called for. These are so far not forthcoming. Slavery no longer exists, all right, but Curaçao should at last have the welfare of the 90 % coloured population, and not only that of the 10 % whites and their henchmen at heart. The high illegitimacy rate is an outcome of slavery. Although there have been many changes, it is not enough. People no longer are satisfied with that they once used to have. There have been great improvements, but not enough. The social structure and the economic and political structure must change further. There is such a thing as the fundamental human right to a fair share in the country's prosperity and in all that remains to be done, as well as to respect. If this is not fulfilled, Curaçao will be heading for troubled times. The country's politics must change. An end must come to the situation whereby one man runs the country through graft and corruption or has the power to buy himself a plum job. Curaçao must have independence, a national identity and democracy."

The discontent in the island's political and socio-economic spheres that is given expression in the above passage has existed for many years. An outline of the development of the political parties in Curaçao may help to clarify the situation.

In the year 1936 a Catholic party — hence a party focused mainly on the Afro-American section of the population — came into being, in accordance with a good old Dutch tradition. In this party, called K.V.P. (short for "*Katholieke Volkspartij*" or Catholic People's Party) the well-known lawyer-statesman M. F. Da Costa Gomez, who came to possess a charismatic appeal for many of his followers, played a prominent part. The party entertained close relations with the K.V.P. in Holland. By way of reaction to the formation of this party, the progressive *Democratische Partij* (Democratic Party, abbreviated as D.P.) was founded in 1944. It felt a closer affinity with the socialist Labour Party (P.V.D.A.) opposition in Holland and expressed itself strongly in favour of independence for the Antilles. In 1948 Da Costa Gomez officially seceded from the K.V.P. with the N.V.P. (*Nationale Volkspartij* or National People's Party) after entering the 1945 elections with a programme of his own that was virtually identical to that of the D.P. but deviated from that of the K.V.P., for which party he

actually occupied a seat. These elections showed the denominational element to have little political relevance, while the voters were hardly confused by the similarity in programmes between the D.P. and Da Costa Gomez. The D.P. emerged victorious from the elections, while the K.V.P. went into opposition and changed the epithet "Catholic" into "Constructive", though this did little to boost its visibly waning popularity in the political arena. The K.V.P. no longer participated in the elections held in 1963.

Meanwhile, in 1948, a number of Protestants had been prompted by the political developments (of which the growing influence on politics of the Afro-American citizens of Curaçao reputedly constituted a principal one) to found the C.O.P. (*Curaçaose Onafhankelijke Partij* or Independent Party of Curaçao). This party, which, although advocating the independence of the Antilles, nevertheless favoured the maintenance of close political and economic ties with the Netherlands, was joined also by a number of Dutch-born persons, some of whom worked their way up to prominent positions in politics. The C.O.P. never gained wide support as a party, however, and in 1958 it fused with the oppositional N.V.P. by issuing a combined list.

This gave rise to a political structure that was a fairly realistic reflection of the overall situation, embodying as it did oppositions of a social and economic nature that could be linked with differences in somatic traits between the population groups in question as well. At the same time there was much political manipulation of personal and also of stratified ties, however. Especially the most recent developments in connection with the Curaçaoan party system have demonstrated how the absence of homogeneous parties along well-defined ethnic or stratal lines is a reflection less of a democratic breakthrough than of the predominance of relations of personal power and dependence between people from socially different circles, a situation that is lagging behind the accelerated ideological developments.

As the habit of falling back on relatives in times of need is coming to be repudiated more and more, increasing demands for wage rises as high as 10, 20 or 30 % and for greater social security are being made. People are striving to maintain and improve the economic and social conditions of life within a modern economic system, an industrial and commercial complex that is dependent on large-scale imports even for the staple *funchi* (corn flour). A retrogression to a much lower economic level is unacceptable to the people of Curaçao. Although no data on the basis of systematic sociological research into these



developments have so far been published to our knowledge,<sup>52</sup> the supposition that people are less inclined to place their social and economic fate in the hands of representatives of the powerful groups of yesteryear seems justified. People are being attracted in increasing numbers to secondary organizations with leaders from their own midst, and are no longer content to be dependent for a marginal existence on relatives and neighbours sticking together in times of need, as was formerly the case. This is indicative of a growing self-confidence (the Curaçaoan Negro has never been lacking in pride, for the rest, as evidenced by the fact that there has never been much, if any, begging on the island), and it is to be expected that this self-confidence will have a stabilizing effect on man-woman relationships and family formation, since marriage and responsible parenthood go hand in hand with self-respect and acceptable social and economic conditions for the Afro-American population of contemporary Curaçao.

#### 3.4. *Some more Specific Statistical Data*

After pointing out some of the major 20th century economic, social, cultural and political developments directly affecting the position of the Afro-American population groups in Curaçaoan society, we shall now pause to analyse a number of statistical data concerning fluctuations in the population, illegitimacy of birth and legal marriage in the recent past. We shall refer for this purpose to various statistical publications on the Netherlands Antilles and Curaçao including the 1960 Census and the Statistical Yearbooks, and such publications as the *Documented Paper for the Caribbean Conference on Demographic Problems* (1957) and *De ontwikkeling van het inwonertal in het recente verleden en in de naaste toekomst* (Demographic developments in the recent past and the near future) issued by the Bureau for Statistics of the Department of Social and Economic Affairs (1967).

The population of Curaçao on 1st January, 1966, totalled 136,289. Of these, 115,261 were Antilleans.

From the time of the foundation of the oil industry in 1915 until 1940 the populations of the Antilles and the island of Curaçao more than doubled. In the subsequent 25 years the population grew by roughly another 100 % (see table 3).

Obviously immigration had a major effect on this population growth, as is evident also from the sex ratio, which even came to 880 in 1946.<sup>53</sup> A relatively normal ratio of around 1020, with a rise to 1060

in the higher age-groups, was maintained by the Antillean group, however.

The economic downturn of the past years has brought about a surplus of departures of several thousand head per year. On the basis of this alone, it is not to be expected that the population will double

TABLE 3

**The Population of the Netherlands Antilles and Curaçao in Various Years**

Year	Population of the Netherlands Antilles	Population of Curaçao
1915	50,000	30,000
1940	107,891	67,317
1965/66	209,086	136,289

Statistics derived from: Depart. 1967.

in the 25-year period from 1966-1990, as this would call for an annual growth rate of 2.8 %, which would entail a net immigration rate of 0.8 %, or 1800 people annually, or 45,000 in total, considering the present 2 % surplus of births over deaths. This seems a most unlikely development, even though undoubtedly a population decrease is similarly not likely to occur, as the surplus of departures is not expected to continue at the present level. Doubts about a future doubling are prompted not only by the nature of migratory movements, however, since developments around the birth rate are clearly indicative of a decline in fertility. As becomes apparent from table 4, there is a decline in the crude birth rate observable from 1960 onward.

The year 1928 marked a peak of 38 in the birth rate. After that the figure remained at a slightly lower constant for many years, to drop far below the Latin American average of 40 in 1965.

TABLE 4

**The Birth Rate for the Antillean Section of the Population of Curaçao for a Number of Years after 1960**

Year	Birth Rate
1960	34.5
1962	33.0
1964	29.2
1966	23.8

Statistics derived from: Depart. 1967.

The decline is all the more surprising since the percentage of women in the fertile age-group rose from 19 % in 1962 to 20 % in 1966, while there is no obvious deterioration in health observable. Hence the decrease is probably to be attributed largely to conscious birth control.

The compiler of the Departmental report of 1967 observes that the average age at marriage shows no significant change, so that he can see no reason to suppose that the decline in the birth rate is attributable to a delay in the conclusion of marriages. Conscious birth control is undoubtedly the basic cause. A fertility rate of 100 (96 in the Netherlands) has even been fixed on as an acceptable minimum for the Antillean population.

TABLE 5

**The Fertility Rate for the Antillean Section of the Curaçaoan Population for a Number of Years and as Compared with the Rates of a Number of other Areas**

Year	Fertility Rate
1958	171
1960	173 . . . . . 102 for the Netherlands
1962	168 . . . . . 118 for the U.S.A. (1958)
1964	151 . . . . . 204 for Guyana (1958)
1966	119 . . . . . 182 for Trinidad (1959)

Statistics derived from: Depart. 1967.

A likely effect of the changes in the age structure (the fall in the death rate especially has caused an increase in the number of young people in Curaçao) may be a possible slight rise in the birth rate in the near future. The numerousness of the 0-14 age-group (44 % in Curaçao in 1967, as compared to 29.9 % in the Netherlands in 1960) will give rise to a slightly more rapid increase in the reproductive age-groups than overflow from these groups to the next age-group up. The natural population growth may reasonably reach a level approximating the present Dutch level of 12 by as early as 1975 if the current downward trend in the figures continues and the death rate of 5 per mil since 1955 remains constant. The change in the age structure may at the same time cause a slight rise in the death rate in the future (see table 6).

The fluctuation in the birth rate further becomes apparent, in conclusion, from a comparison of the population pyramids of the years

1960 and 1967, as below. Here we see a slight narrowing of the base occurring.

There was a continuous decrease in the percentage of illegitimate births from Emancipation in 1863 onward until 1952. As was stated

TABLE 6

**The Natural Population Growth per 1000 Head of the Antillean Population of Curaçao for a Number of Years**

Year	Natural Population Growth	Year	Natural Population Growth
1961	35.6	1969	18.5 (projection)
1963	32.2	1971	17.8 ( " )
1965	27.5	1973	17.1 ( " )
1967	20.7	1975	16.3 ( " )

Statistics derived from: Depart. 1967.

above, this percentage in 1864 came to 81, after which it dropped to 62 in the space of 30 years. Between the years 1915 and 1920 the figure oscillated around the 50 mark, to fall to 23.9 % in 1952 after that. At this point an upward swing occurred, which further accelerated noticeably in the 1960's, when it rose from 27.9 % in 1960 to 33.6 % in 1966.

Generally speaking the decline runs parallel with the trends in nuptiality.<sup>64</sup> A number of Dominican priests computed an increase in nuptiality from 3.6 to 9.4 for the years from 1915 to 1935, with the reservation that these figures apply exclusively to Roman Catholics, a reservation which nonetheless only strengthens our arguments in view of the virtually exclusive Roman Catholicism of the Afro-American section of the Antillean population. After 1935 a decline to 6.7 in 1944 is observable, however (Dominicans, 1945, p. 4).

It is further interesting to note the fall in nuptiality from 6.5 to 3.6 between the years 1870 and 1915, which is attributed to an initial wave of marriages after 1863, when Emancipation placed marriage within the juridical reach of the bulk of the people. This had necessarily to be followed by a decline, with the emigration of large numbers of men also deserving consideration as an important factor here. It is an interesting fact, moreover, that under these circumstances — and as opposed to the situation of the past few years, during which there was a more or less normal sex ratio — the decline in nuptiality

was coupled with a continuing decline in the number of illegitimate births. One of the contributing factors in this, aside from the rise in the number of legitimate births, may be the prolonged periods of forced female celibacy. The repatriation of former emigrants as well as the emigration stop in the wake of rising employment and affluence played a significant role in the rise in nuptiality after 1915. The decline which set in after 1935 has continued down to the present time, as indicated by the figures for the Antilles in the various Statistical Yearbooks (see table 7).

TABLE 7

**Nuptiality in the Netherlands Antilles for a Number of Years**

Year	Nuptiality
1938	7.3
1946	6.5
1956	5.8
1960	5.6
1965	4.8

N.B. In contrast to the Dominican figures, the nuptiality figures given here are stated per 1000 head of the total Antillean population instead of 1000 head of the Roman Catholic population.

Statistics derived from: Statistical Yearbooks.

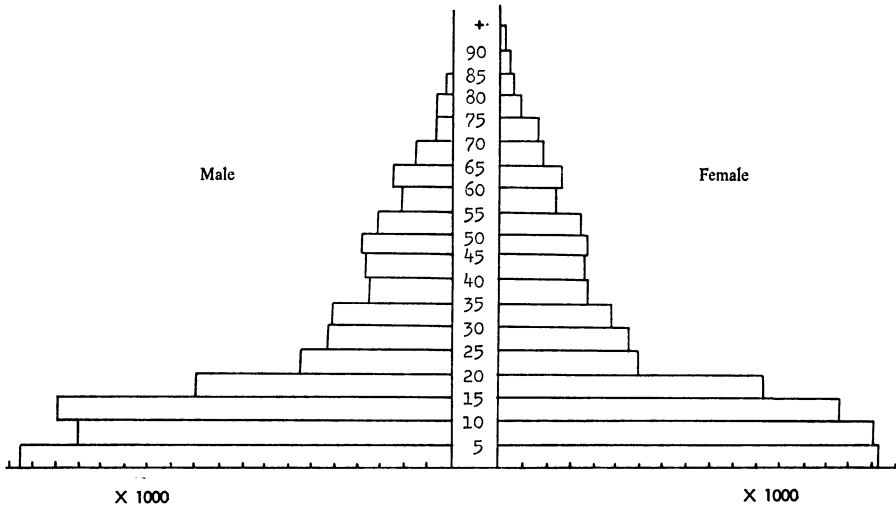
In view of the similarly continuing decline in the percentage of illegitimate births up to 1952, one is justified in regarding the fall in the marriage rate as a corollary of the increase in the percentage of young people which was first to be observed in the 1930's. Unquestionably the entry of the numerous 0-14-year-olds into the reproductive age-groups in the near future will give rise to an increase in nuptiality.

The decline in nuptiality is in no way indicative of any weakening of aspirations for the realization of marriage. The decline in illegitimacy after 1935 is to be ascribed rather to the increased institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage, which is illustrated also by the tendency towards a drop in the average age at the time of first marriage. This mean age in the period from 1940 to 1944 was 29.2 for men and 25.7 for women, while in that from 1955 to 1959 these averages were 28.1 and 24.3 years respectively (1960 Census, p. 27).

Contrary to what the concurrence of the economic deterioration and the rise in the illegitimacy of births would suggest, this latter rise

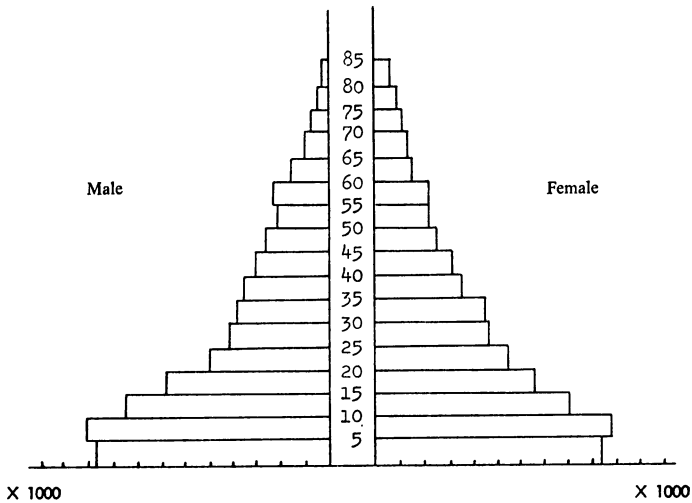
**Age and Sex Structure of the Population of Curaçao  
as on 31st December, 1960**

Statistics derived from the 1960 Census, p. 16.



**Age and Sex Structure of the Population of Curaçao  
as on 1st January, 1967**

Statistics derived from: *Encyclopaedie*, 1969, p. 92.



does not imply any additional decrease in nuptiality as a consequence of the recession. The changes in the illegitimacy figure merit a special observation that may help to clarify the position. Basing oneself on the assumption that the sharp decline in the birth rate of the past few years is due largely to conscious birth control, and taking into account that legitimacy of birth was on the increase among the Afro-American section of the population up to the moment of our research (cf. table 15, p. 136), whereas the recession had been a reality for many years at that time, one may justifiably conclude that the increase in the number of illegitimate births was an altogether relative increase. The fact that one should look especially (though not exclusively) among the higher social strata for conscious birth control, while illegitimacy should be regarded as virtually an exclusive "product" of the lower strata, ought not to be lost sight of. A biological reproduction figure that remained constant for the lower strata, and in which the ratio between legitimate and illegitimate births also remained at a constant, or even changed in favour of legitimacy, would admit of an increase in the percentage of illegitimate births for the total population where the overall birth rate showed a decline as a result of conscious birth control. Hence the official statistics do not give any information on what is actually happening among the lower strata. Here there was no narrowing of the base of the age pyramid observable as yet,<sup>56</sup> while there was no increase of illegitimate births evident either, contrary to what the data for Curaçao as a whole would seem to suggest. Although the economic developments are seen to be definitely conditional for the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage, there can be no question of economic determinism. Economic stagnation and deterioration were not attended with any reversal in the trend with regard to nuptiality and legitimacy.

Those of the Antilleans who fell victim to the aforementioned staff retrenchments saw a number of matrimony-stimulating measures introduced by Shell and other companies go lost to them, unless they were already married. Thus such conditions as free medical aid for legitimate members of the families of employees, housing for legally married employees and superannuation arrangements for the widows and orphans of married wage earners may have provided certain incentives towards legal marriage. These social measures no doubt did much to turn marriage into something more than an expensive status symbol for at least a number of people. Aside from marriage being a reflection of increased respectability, self-respect and affluence,

it thus came to offer a number of very real material advantages as well. These were now partially lost, which may have involved a diminution of the incentive towards marriage, even though we personally do not believe that the said provisions exercised a decisive effect on nuptiality.

One organization for which these developments entailed considerable extra work, but which was on the other hand rendered utterly powerless by the economic depression, among other factors, is the Child Welfare Department. This Department uses its powers to exert pressure on men sued by their partners for allowances for their joint children to contribute towards the support of such offspring. Many women are averse to approach the Child Welfare Department, however, since if the male partner is out of work it is impossible to obtain a reasonable allowance anyway, or the Department's mediation may provoke bitter arguments. There are also known cases of men throwing in their jobs to avoid having to pay part or all of their wages to their ex-partners. Some women prefer not to jeopardize their chances of irregular payments from the man in question, which they risk losing precisely by taking recourse to mediation by official bodies.

By way of conclusion to the present section on the society of Curaçao we would observe that there is evidence everywhere of an increasing interest in and preparedness to try to understand the life of the lower strata of society. Thus the Social Welfare Department has set up marriage guidance offices. There is no longer any discrimination against longstanding concubinages in the allocation of government housing. Family planning counselling centres are being opened to promote birth control. The 1960 Census for the first time incorporated an official category of "coresidential unions" (concubinages), while the Roman Catholic church has also abolished a number of traditional sanctions in connection with illegitimacy of birth and the concubinal union. The rule whereby illegitimate children could be christened only before sunrise or after sunset and never on Sundays, and without candles and a *padrino* (godfather), for instance, has been cancelled in two phases. There are a few diehards still who regard this measure by the church as downright encouragement of, or at least the removal of an obstacle to, procreation in non-legalized unions. Although the Curaçaoan is very sensitive to the social exposure which the said sanctions involved, we even so venture to express our doubts that their abolition will constitute a significant factor in the rise in illegitimacy. For sanctions or no sanctions, it is impossible to



keep the illegitimate birth of children begotten in unlegalized sexual relationships a secret for very long, while maternity for single girls (and increasingly also paternity for single boys) has undesirable social and economic repercussions. As has already been observed above, ecclesiastical norms in our view amount to little more than the moral sanctioning of a sociological process the determinants of which should be sought on the economic and social planes.<sup>56</sup> So not a single one of our informants appeared to take the church's sanctions against concubinal life, such as the denial of the right to go to confession and holy communion or to act as *padrino* or *madrina* (godfather or -mother), seriously in a religious sense. They did appear to be fully aware of the social implications, however, which are often pointed out to people living in *companjà* by their children, who tend to be frustrated in their social relations and their careers by their parents' marital status accordingly. Another frequent reason for eventually converting a concubinage into a marriage is provided by horror at the thought of being buried in a patch of unconsecrated earth, not so much because the earth is unconsecrated as because this is the place for burying criminals, prostitutes and similar such social outcasts. For children, too, having parents buried in the *Culebra Verde* (literally: Green Snake) or *Chiké* (pigsty) carries an enormous social stigma.

### 3.5. Conclusion

Our aim in the present chapter was to give a characterization of the society of Curaçao, taking as basis for our analysis Wagley's typology of the areas in which the Afro-American family has been studied. Although a comparison of Curaçao with specific parts of Plantation America was necessarily beyond the scope of our study on account of its more or less exploratory character, we considered a definition of the place of the island within the broader area desirable. This view is based on the supposition that certain specific characteristics of the society of Curaçao will have particular implications for the nature of the Afro-American phenomena found here.

Wagley classified his "culture spheres" on the basis of a number of criteria which are relevant also for differentiation within each individual sphere. These criteria were: nature of the physical environment, density of the autochthonous population and complexity of the autochthonous culture, the origin of the post-Columbian immigrants, the nature of European settlement after 1500 and, connected with this, the nature of the societies formed subsequently.

Of the specific traits of Plantation America listed by him there is one key one, namely the production of monocrops according to the plantation system, accompanied with such phenomena as Negro slavery, a rigid black-white dichotomy in the combination of tiny white majorities with huge black slave forces together with a low degree of social integration, as reflected by both the limited extent to which communities were formed and the nature of the man-woman relationships and household group formation. All these phenomena have been discussed above, with the restriction that the findings of our research with reference to the subject of the man-woman relationship and the household group among the Afro-American sections of the Curaçaoan population will need to be further elaborated in the following chapters.

It has become obvious in the foregoing that the nature of the physical environment was decisive from the outset in that it ruled out to a large extent the introduction in Curaçao of monocrops cultivated according to the plantation system, the most fundamental characteristic of Plantation America. As a result the society of Curaçao developed along different lines from those in many other parts of the area. Curaçao, with its strategic military as well as commercial position, developed primarily as a trading colony. Plantations here were on the whole unremunerative symbols of social prestige with relatively small slave forces. The in most cases personal acquaintance of the white master with the members of his slave force, the frequent affective relations between white ladies, gentlemen and children on the one hand and black Afro-American members of their domestic staffs, their mistresses and their nannies (*jaja*) on the other, and the control as regards treatment of slaves among Europeans mutually, with official encouragement of humaneness, have served to prevent an extreme polarization of races.<sup>57</sup> In contrast to Surinam, where according to Van Lier Europeans were driven by fear to commit acts of pathological cruelty in their isolated confrontation with huge slave forces (Van Lier, 1971, p. 70), racial relations here can be qualified as mild for the times. The limited size of slave holdings, the frequently personal character of interracial relations, and the obstacles which the physical environment itself put in the way of Negroes wishing to regroup as runaways on the basis of their own values are all of them factors exercising a decided influence on this process of adjustment and acculturation in Curaçaoan society. In the course of time cultural references consequently came to lie more intensively with local groups than in most other areas, thus causing the Negroes to become alienated

from Africa. This is not to say that there are no longer any Africanisms here in the culture science sense. But Africa automatically ceased being a concept after the decline in and finally the total stop on slave imports.<sup>58</sup> There are no signs of any back-to-Africa movement to be found in present-day Curaçao. The Afro-Americans assimilated partly derived cultural values, for the realization of which certain social and economic conditions — which were unfulfilled here — were prerequisite. The male in many cases was directed in his behaviour by a small circle of social and economic peers, inside which he was anxious to establish a reputation, rather than by the values of the wider social context, in which respectability operated as a guiding principle.

Emancipatory developments, or in other words, social mobility and a growing, active participation in the island's economic, social, cultural and political life — both of them processes that were actively stimulated by the rapid growth of an internationally strategic industry in the present century — were preconditional for the continued acculturation to contemporary cultural values, for the realization of these values and for the decline of the so-called dual cultural orientation.<sup>59</sup> The physical environmental factors which once made it impossible for slaves to run away are now contributing in a different way towards the institutionalization of the monogamous man-woman relationship and the family. Clarke's male evasion of responsibilities in Jamaica by roaming all over the country in a continuous trans-migratory movement finds no parallel in the much smaller island of Curaçao (Clarke, 1957, p. 93).

Even though the developments in the different wage brackets may have led to greater economic differentiation among males mutually as well as between males and females, thus making it easier for some to put the double standard of morality into practice, and though African polygynous principles have presumably exercised a certain influence, the social, economic, cultural and political developments outlined above have generally speaking stimulated the institutionalization of marriage and the family in addition to a corresponding drop in the illegitimacy of births. Although there is still an unmistakably large "supply" of women and girls lending themselves for casual sexual affairs, this supply has nonetheless decreased over the years. The girls and women in question are, moreover, generally speaking placed in an extremely weak social and economic position. The free disposal which a white master might formerly enjoy over any girl for his pleasure, according to some informants, has largely disappeared. The

coloured élite and middle classes are inclined to frown on or hush up extramarital relationships. While the lower classes are also increasingly coming to look upon a man's having concubines and extramarital children as a sign of failure to give the legal spouse and legitimate children their due.

The decrease in the number of *koeinan* (cottages the well-to-do Antillean might buy or rent for rendezvous with his mistresses) may be viewed as illustrative of the trend indicated above. Whereas their number was estimated at around 300 in 1940, people at present think it unlikely that there are more than fifty. As far as we can see, this decline is not attributable to the official regulation of prostitution through the establishment of a camp, the *Campo Alegre* or "pleasure camp", for this special purpose, as this was certainly not done for the benefit of *koei* owners. For the latter have of old drawn a sharp distinction between "*putanan*" (prostitutes) and sweethearts and valued the (temporary) exclusiveness of sexual ownership.

The large-scale disappearance of these love-nests fits in much better with the picture of contemporary change.

On account of all this, Curaçao occupies a place apart in Plantation America. Where M. G. Smith left open the possibility of survival of African cultural elements in many areas in modern times as far as Curaçao is concerned, strong African influence should on the whole be considered less likely than in other parts. Where some Latin influence on the culture of Curaçao certainly seems possible (one need bear in mind only the proximity of Venezuela and the presence of Portuguese Jews in this connection), it is apt to be overestimated as a cultural "source" for the structuring of social interaction. The lower strata of Curaçao lack a Spanish culture as frame of reference as in Puerto Rico, or a Portuguese frame of reference as found in parts of Brazil.

The island does not lend itself to joint classification with non-Latin Guyana on account of the commercial, industrialized, urban and maritime character of its society. In accordance with findings in other urban parts of the Afro-American region, the man-woman partnership in Curaçao shows no inclination towards a cyclical development of the kind demonstrated by R. T. Smith for rural Guyana.<sup>60</sup> The different forms of man-woman relationship (visiting relationship, concubinage and marriage) are seldom successive phases of a progressive continuum either in one and the same partnership or in the life of one and the same person.

The multifarious and rapid emancipatory developments have greatly augmented the Afro-American's sense of dignity, which is contributing along with the 20th century economic, social, cultural and political conditions to the realization of such values as that of monogamous marriage at a relatively early age.

Vis-à-vis Jamaica Curaçao distinguishes itself by the more insular character of its society as well as by its physical environment, the level of economic development, and similar such characteristics. This is coupled with differences in adjustment to contemporary Western socio-economic and political conditions, implying a difference in orientation also in fields other than the economic and political ones.

The changed participation in the society has made for a more responsible attitude towards wives and children and a decrease in the number of concubinages and extra-marital relations. As a result there is question in many cases rather of an increasing alienation from old patterns than of a simple evolution of traditional patterns in urban proletarian conditions. The process of acculturation to contemporary culture traits is as yet far from complete, however. There has, moreover, been an intensification of the confrontation between past, present and future as a result of the immense speed with which the social changes have taken place. We find a reflection of these problems in the recent political developments.

Acculturation, internalization of values and norms, and social control may stimulate or accelerate the institutionalization of man-woman relationships more or less independently of economic developments. Moreover, economic deterioration does not as a matter of course bring about a retrogression to previous phases of adaptation and acculturation. There is no such thing as a straightforward, absolute correlation between economic developments and the fluctuations in nuptiality and illegitimacy.

Tracing some sort of pattern in the turbulent life of Curaçao turned out to be no simple task. It is possible to draw a few, though not many conclusions on the basis of case-studies, which must invariably remain extremely restricted in number for any given period of research. The researcher is then often obliged to take recourse to mostly statistical configurations of phenomena in order to be able to indicate certain connections and tendencies.

The survey of the literature on the Afro-American family as well as our own observations, combined with the results of interviews and preliminary case-studies in the not infrequently confusing complexity

of living reality in Curaçao have provided us with a basic framework of ideas on the Afro-American family as a type and the Curaçao variant of that type, as expounded in the introduction and the two preceding chapters, to begin with. In the following parts we intend to give an elaboration of the quantitative and qualitative data relating to man-woman relationships and household group composition in Curaçao as encountered by us in the course of our field research.

## CHAPTER III

### THE RESEARCH

#### 1. *Method of Data Collecting*

The data were gathered by a combination of different methods. To begin with, we strove to acquire an insight into various kinds of man-woman relationship through information drawn from free interviews, during which at the same time the technique of so-called participant observation was applied. Introductory meetings with our informants were arranged through the intermediary of medical personnel, midwives, teachers and other persons who had regular contacts with members of the lower strata in virtue of their occupation, these persons as a rule constituting the foreign researcher's first contacts. A few teachers with lower class origins aside, none of the above representatives of the higher and middle strata had any socially activated genealogical connections with the lower classes. These teachers with lower-class backgrounds came from families, moreover, which in terms of income, father's occupation, type of accommodation and parents' civil status all belonged to the so-called "upper lower" echelons.

These first links with Curaçaoan society provided the foundation from which we were able to proceed independently to enter into relations of a frequently more lasting nature with informants belonging to the lower social categories. Some of these men and woman continued to function throughout our stay as key informants and "resonators" whose responses and reactions to any questions or situations we might put to them not infrequently helped to put these in a clearer light.

After these first contacts the number of our informants was extended normally via relatives, friends, acquaintances and neighbours. It should be noted here that quite a few of our informants had obvious misgivings about acting as contacts when first approached about this. Where people might be able to list and elaborate a whole series of examples of all the various types of man-woman relationship and household group situation at a moment's notice, they often shrank

from acting as go-between from fear of social reprisals wherever their services as such were liable to be construed as unwarranted interference in other people's personal affairs.

This was our first acquaintance with a certain general reserve among members of the lower strata, who are anxious to keep up an image of a "*netchi bida*" (decent life) and "*decencia*" (respectability) in the face of "*redashi*" (malicious gossip) by keeping prying strangers at arm's length. Although precisely this emphatic effort in word and deed to put a screen around one's private life is apt frequently to provoke the wildest rumours, the tendency to do so is understandable enough in the light of the process of social mobility and acculturation. In the preceding chapter we even saw this tendency reflected in the residential pattern of the island.<sup>61</sup>

Despite all the above difficulties, we were nonetheless able to establish "rapport" with a great many men and women representing various types of relationship and household group formation. As soon as such contact was finally established most of the usual reticence disappeared and information was freely given. Although a foreigner and an "outsider" to Curaçaoan life and society is less likely to constitute a social threat, there is even so generally no great immediate readiness to confide private matters to the Dutch researcher. The Curaçaoan's life is his *privá* and none of anybody else's business.

Often a considerable amount of time and effort had to be invested before people's confidence could be won to a sufficient degree to make for reasonable openness in the interviews. Unfortunately some people never completely overcame their reserve with respect to such crucial questions as actual income, motives of behaviour, sexual career and the possessions of *ju djafó* (children by mistresses). Although this reserve was especially in evidence among persons whom one might class on the basis of such criteria as income, occupation, housing, etc., with the so-called lower middle class of clerks, teachers, and so on, there were but few persons in whom it was completely absent.

The Curaçaoan, conscious of the symbols of mobility as he is, prefers as much as possible to keep to himself anything that is likely to be regarded as an attribute of low status (as having associations with slavery for some). This reserve on the part of our go-betweens and the general reticence with respect to particular matters from which one cannot possibly derive any "standing" are intimately linked with the lower-class Curaçaoan's status pretensions and his desire to live "*liber di hende*" (without interference from others) and "*cu distancia*"



(keeping his distance). As though by way of illustration of mobility, but at any rate as an indication of what is generally held to be proper behaviour for married persons, we encountered in many cases definitely greater frankness about sexual relations entertained and illegitimate children begotten prior to the legalized union than people were prepared to show with respect to extramarital relations and the resultant offspring. Sometimes a different truth with regard to a given group situation and man-woman relationship from that advanced in a particular interview was revealed incidentally or through information from key informants upon subsequent rechecking. In other cases we were able to draw up a quite reliable case history of relationships, extramarital affairs and illegitimate children straightaway, however.

Here we would like to make a number of remarks about our role as researcher. Even in our most regular and cordial contacts we never entirely lost the status of a Dutch European, a *macamba* and a *homber sabi* (man of learning), though this did gradually diminish. This status unquestionably influenced people's social interactions in our presence. Thus a number of informants found the thought of our actually going to live among people belonging to the lower strata absolutely irreconcilable with the image they had formed of us and which seemed acceptable to them. Everyone of our contacts bore some sort of hint of a confrontation between different races and social statuses. There was no element of hostility in any of these meetings, however, and sometimes virtually the whole neighbourhood would turn out to welcome us. Especially after the lapse of some time we were able to elicit information of a more intimate nature from many of our informants. People had by then come to understand our intentions and to realize that as social outsiders we occupied an independent position, so that we posed no social threat in the form of gossip, and so on.

The quantitative interview method was adopted about two thirds of the way through. For this we were able to draw upon a total of 23, mostly young, teachers of both sexes, some of whom had gained some interviewing experience in connection with the 1960 census.

Ten of these continued to lend their services throughout the entire survey, the remaining 13 leaving the corps at different times under stress of circumstances of various kinds. As a result of this, and because some of the interviewers were able to work only part-time, the two weeks originally scheduled for interviewing grew into a full month.

Owing to the important place that had necessarily to be assigned generally to questions concerning sexual career, and so on, in our survey, we inserted a number of questions relating to this at the end of the questionnaire, although we were convinced that our interviewers would strike only limited openness on this point. Definitely reliable information was obtained on the subject of immediate group situations and legal unions, as also concerning non-legalized coresidential relationships. The replies to questions about non-legalized non-coresidential unions, about man-woman relationships prior to the present partnership and about extra-marital affairs and children should be treated with some reserve, however. By way of supplementing the information on this subject derived from the free interviews and the survey, and in order to obtain more detailed information on such questions as contraception, and so on, we interviewed a hundred mothers at various baby health centres. As regards these interviews it should be noted that they yielded mainly data concerning women from the lowest strata, if judged by the criteria of income, housing and occupation, with maternity itself affecting our selection as well because of the age-determined fertility factor.

How far the social position, somatic complex, age and sex of the interviewers influenced the results of the survey is a question that defies satisfactory answering. The correspondences between answers in the questionnaires of both dark and light-skinned interviewers and the consistency of the results with our own observations give some cause for confidence in the data obtained, however.

The survey was given as thorough an introduction with the local population as possible. Our plans in this connection were announced to prospective respondents on three radio stations, and via the press and a personal communication. The aim, the guarantee of a confidential treatment of all data obtained, and the political neutrality of the investigation were constantly stressed both in these announcements and by the interviewers.<sup>62</sup> The interviews with persons who, in response to the interviewer's question accordingly, stated themselves to be the head or were designated as such by any other members of the household group present, were of an average one hour's duration.

## 2. *The Sample*

### 2.1. *The Method of Sampling*

The survey was held among the residents of districts known to be

inhabited predominantly by people of low social status. No scientific stratification research had been carried out in Curaçao to date, so that a certain degree of inaccuracy in the delimitation of the different social strata was unavoidable. Hoetink's stratification scheme<sup>63</sup> provided the historical point of departure for our classification, on the basis of which, and by making due allowance for the effects of the social and economic changes of the present century, a contemporary stratification of the society was arrived at. Needless to say, of course, the distributive order of Curaçaoan society has been subject to accelerated and multivariable changes and growing complexity as a result of the rapid social changes of the past fifty years. Hence one cannot possibly set to work here with the same simple stratification model as might have been used in the past. At any rate, there was no clear-cut, well-defined and complete picture of the social stratification to base our study on.

We have acted on the assumption for the present research that in consequence of the principle of spatial social segregation, certain districts would harbour especially high concentrations of household groups whose heads would satisfy the following criteria. He or she was required to:

- (a) be a native of Curaçao and possess predominantly Negroid somatic traits;
- (b) be a Roman Catholic;
- (c) have nothing (much) beyond a primary school education;
- (d) have an income of not (much) more than NA. fl. 500.— a month; and
- (e) be employed chiefly in manual work.

The sample, drawn in Lagoen, Westpunt, Barber (Banda'boa), Montanja' Rey, Montanja' bao (Banda'riba), Cornet, Cher Asil, Monte-verde, Mari Pompoen, Steenrijk (Punda), and Daimari, Charò, St. Helena, Wishi, Domi and Baraltwijk (Otrabanda) on the basis of data from the citograph of the public registrar's office, which are grouped according to street, district or quarter, confirmed our supposition as to the social composition of these districts. We feel justified because of both this and the broad geographical base of our sample in regarding the latter as sufficiently representative. Where the section of the population that is to be considered as the universe on which our research was focused was estimated at roughly 80,000 persons, our sample population of 2486 head constituted slightly over 3 %

of this universe. The various criteria will be briefly discussed below from the perspective of the extent to which they were met by our sample population.

### 2.2. *The Criterion of Curaçaoan Nativeness*

The citograph data on the wards and districts enabled us to eliminate a number of non-natives of Curaçao, such as Arubans, Bonaireans, Windward Islanders, British West Indians and Surinamers. Their percentage of the total population of the area covered by the sample came to almost 8. Of the remaining population we picked out every sixth address, thus providing a working sample of 431 household groups. The number of refusals to cooperate (either from the outset or halfway through the interviews) was 19, or 4.4 %. The most commonly given reason for such refusal was that it was improper to question people about their *privà*, while in a few cases the trustworthiness of the assurances of political neutrality was called into question. Sometimes a quarrel might arise between a husband and wife about whether or not to answer the interviewer's questions, the issue in some of these cases being decided in the interviewer's favour by the wife, whereupon the interview was conducted with her in defiance of the protesting husband.<sup>64</sup>

Of the remaining 412 sample units, another 23 proved useless because of the foreign nationality of the head (14 in total),<sup>65</sup> or of glaring inconsistencies in the answers (9 in total). The eventually remaining sample comprised 389 units, of which 66.8 % were resident in urban or suburban areas, and 33.2 % in the western and eastern parts of the island. This corresponded roughly with the unofficial estimates of the localization of the Afro-American population. The trans migratory movement from the rural to urban areas discussed in the preceding chapter was reflected in the difference between the percentage of urban-born heads of household groups and that of the, on the average much younger, urban-born members of these groups, namely 52.4 and 65.6 respectively, in our sample.

The number of town-born persons tends on the whole to decrease with ascending age-group. So, for instance, 78.1 % of the 26-30-year-old heads were born in town, 12.5 % in Banda'bao, and 9.4 % in Banda'riba, as against the corresponding percentages of 42.1, 34.2 and 21.1 for the 61-65 age-group.

### 2.3. *The Criterion of Religion*

On the point of religion the sample was virtually wholly homo-

geneous, 98.2 % being Roman Catholic, while the remaining 1.8 % were nominal Protestants, Seventh Day Adventists or Methodists. Meetings of a voodooistic character were taking place increasingly more in secret and presumably also with increasingly smaller attendances.<sup>68</sup> We were fortunate in being able to attend one or two such meetings. The ceremonies here seemed inspired by African rites, with people getting into a trance and singing songs with African rhythms and in a mixture of French, Guéné (a form of African in which the words are no longer understood in their original meaning), Spanish, Papiamentu and Dutch. The trances were individual and often tinged with an element of eroticism. Although the number of persons involved here was relatively small, the proceedings bore a slightly orgiastic character. According to information at our disposal, such orgiastic elements are found in none of the rites of African origin in other areas, such as Surinam or Brazil, so that one may justifiably speak of a uniquely Curaçao phenomenon here. The rites and trances in Curaçao bore no trace of any dramatization of elements of cults centred around certain deities or spirits as found in the traditional Brazilian *candomblé* (Bastide, 1960, 397).

The trance bears an unmistakable stamp of escapism from personal frustrations, either romantic, social or economic. The participants were all members of the lowest strata. A few people informed us that they occasionally attended meetings only for the sake of entertainment.

Few Curaçaoans outside the lower strata seemed to be aware of the existence of this kind of religious manifestation. According to statements by our informants these meetings formerly were of much more widespread occurrence. These manifestations were denounced by many as foolish and superstitious and as "sheer tomfoolery". Needless to say, religious activities of this kind were not engaged in exclusively by non-Catholics, the majority of the participants being, in fact, Catholics.

The high percentage of Roman Catholics in Curaçao is in no way indicative of a high degree of religiosity. Contacts with priests were seen to be sporadic and church attendances low. Women were discovered to go to church more often than men, who not infrequently merely walked as far as the church only to remain talking with others outside. Women especially were seen to step up their church visits in the event of death. So 25.7 % of our respondents stated themselves to go to church five times a year at most, and almost 60 % attended a maximum of thirty times, and often only on special occasions rather than by way of regular visits. A factor preventing some from going to church was

the lack of decent clothes, as going to church also involved some social ostentation.

#### 2.4. *The Criterion of Educational Level*

The educational level in the sample only rarely extended beyond the most elementary form of primary education, i.e., G.L.O. (see table 8). There was little differentiation between male and female heads as far as primary education up to the first grades of junior high schools was concerned.

TABLE 8

**Level of Education Attained by Heads of Household Groups,  
Split up According to Sex**

Level of Education	Heads	
	Male	Female
B-level G.L.O. completed	56.7	52.0
B-level G.L.O. not completed	27.6	32.4
First Grades Junior High School completed	2.4	5.0
First Grades Junior High School not completed	0.5	2.8
Upper Grades Junior High School completed	2.9	0.6
Upper Grades Junior High School not completed	7.1	2.2
Other	2.9	5.0
n =	210 — 100.0	179 — 100.0

The number of men with something beyond a primary education were slightly in the majority, though few had completed a secondary education. Especially because of the costs of education (including the forgoing of wages) and parental anxiousness to have extra income from the earnings of children or extra help in the house, children's schooling was in quite a few cases prematurely interrupted, a trend encouraged by the lack of a compulsory school leaving age in the Antilles. Lack of what parents themselves considered adequate clothing (especially footwear) provided another factor prompting some of them to withdraw their children from school. On the whole, however, parents clearly fostered definite ambitions with regard to their children's education.<sup>67</sup> It should further be noted that, as was said above, men had a slight advantage over women on the point of additional training, as some 27.1 % of them had enjoyed some form or other of this. In easily nine out of ten of these cases this represented specialized occupational training received at the firm they were working for. Of the women only 6.7 % had received some kind of further training (especially sewing courses).

Illiteracy is on the wane in Curaçao. Although 10.7 % of the total population was still illiterate in 1960 (1960 Census, p. 32),<sup>68</sup> this percentage represents the average of a range extending from over 38 % for the 60 and over age-groups to 2.7 % for the 15-19 group. Hence there is a sharp decline in illiteracy observable. This offers a good illustration of the markedly stronger participation of the lower strata, among which illiteracy is highest, in the broader social context.

### 2.5. *The Criteria of Occupation and Income*

The total range of occupations has already been briefly discussed in the preceding chapter.<sup>68</sup> It will therefore suffice in the present one to go in slightly greater detail into the wage levels among our respondents.

Of the male respondents, 23.8 % were not regularly economically active, the same percentage for women coming to 71.5. Women's wages were on the whole considerably lower than men's. Table 9 sets out the incomes derived from economic activity by both men and women. One may infer from this that a number of men who had no regular jobs derived some income from casual work, seeing that very few, if any, drew incomes of less than NA. Fl. 200.— a month. Of the male respondents, 84.3 % were drawing wages of NA. Fl. 500.— or less, while the average wage at the time of research may be estimated at NA. Fl. 300.—. Only few female respondents earned incomes of more than NA. Fl. 100.—. The wages of a charwoman or

TABLE 9

**The Monthly Income from Economic Activity set out According to the Sex of the Heads Concerned**

Monthly Income from Economic Activity	Heads	
	Male	Female
none	11.0	67.6
50—100	9.0	24.6
100—200	10.0	5.6
200—300	25.7	1.1
300—400	15.7	0.6
400—500	12.9	—
500—600	4.3	—
600—700	1.4	—
700— +	7.1	—
Unknown	2.9	0.6
n =	210 — 100.0	179 — 100.0

maid at the time of research were approximately NA. Fl. 80.—, which may be considered the equivalent of about one third the wages of an unskilled labourer.

One should not conclude too hastily from these data that the groups represented by women in our sample were necessarily proportionately worse off economically than those with a male representation. For the position as regards *household* incomes was slightly different.<sup>70</sup> One should take into account here a difference in the number of sources of income, a difference in the size of the group dependent on the household income, and even a difference in the percentage of the principal breadwinner's income contributed by him to the household.<sup>71</sup> We shall restrict ourselves to reproducing below three series of data with a direct bearing on the level of income. To begin with, as table 10 shows, female respondents had on the average more sources to draw on for the defrayal of their household expenses than male heads.

TABLE 10

**The Number of Sources of Household Income, Set Out According to the Sex of the Respondents**

Number of Sources of Household Income	Heads	
	Male	Female
1	56.2	39.7
2	29.0	41.9
3	12.9	15.1
4	1.4	2.8
Unknown	0.5	0.6
n =	210 — 100.0	179 — 100.0

In the second place, as is clear from table 11, 86.2 % of the groups with a male and 90.4 % with a female head enjoyed household incomes of up to NA. Fl. 500.—.

And thirdly, the even so more disadvantageous position of the average female head is accentuated by the difference in the average size of groups. Household groups with a female head comprised on the average 7.6 individuals, while male-headed groups with a slightly higher income from a smaller number of sources comprised an average of 5.4 members.



TABLE 11

**The Household Income of Heads of Household Groups Split up According to the Sex of the Heads**

Household Income	Heads	
	Male	Female
...— 50	1.9	1.1
50—100	8.9	21.8
100—200	17.1	29.6
200—300	30.5	21.2
300—400	17.6	10.6
400—500	10.5	6.1
500—600	2.4	2.2
600—700	4.3	1.1
700— +	4.8	1.1
Unknown	2.4	5.0
n =	210 — 100.0	179 — 100.0

*2.6. The Sample and the Size of Groups*

The 389 household groups were seen to count 2486 persons in all, thus making the average size of groups 6.4. This figure is higher than that arrived at for the Antillean section of the population of Curaçao in the 1960 Census, where it was 5.4. This higher average for our sample is not surprising, however, if one considers that the sample was drawn from among the lower strata, whereas the official census figure included Protestants, Jews and upper-class coloured persons, whose household groups are generally smaller as regards number of children. The distribution of group sizes in the sample is indicated in table 12.

As we saw above, the average size of groups displayed some variation per sex of the head of the household group, the male heads representing groups of 5.4 and the female heads groups of 7.6 members. This difference in average size is reflected to some extent also in the generational composition. Groups embracing only one or two generations were for the greater part represented by men in the sample, while those comprising more generations were for the greater part female-headed.

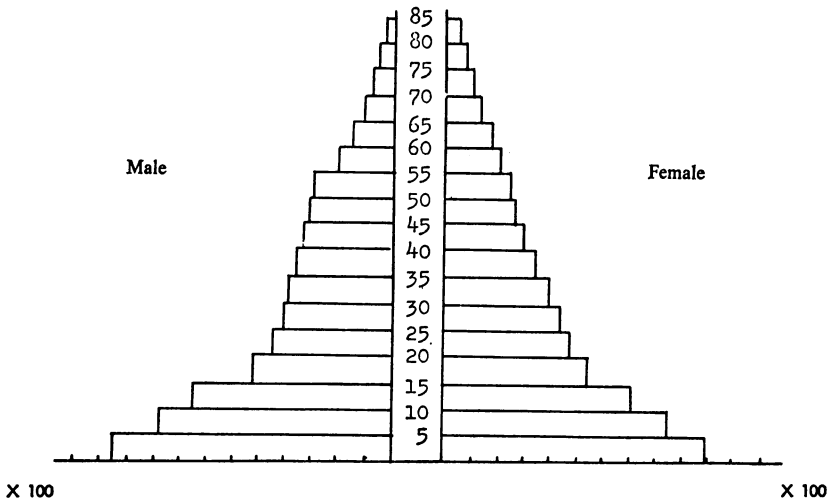
Table 13 sets out in tabular form the generational composition of groups according to the number of generations represented. Not only were female headed household groups larger, but their composition was also more complex, which accords with what has already been said about the Afro-American family above.<sup>72</sup> The strong representation

TABLE 12

Distribution of Household Group Sizes in the Sample

Group Size	Number of Groups in Percentages
1	5.4
2	10.3
3	10.0
4	8.7
5	10.3
6	11.6
7	8.0
8	7.7
9	6.7
10	6.2
11	6.4
12	4.1
13	1.5
14	0.8
15	1.3
16	0.3
17	0.3
18	0.3
19 +	0.3
n =	389 — 100.0

Age and Sex Structure of the Sample Population



of the third generation here is indicative of the trend towards the renowned grandmother family. This generation was, in fact, seen to include chiefly grandchildren of the head.

TABLE 13

**The Number of Generations per Household Group, Split up According to the Sex of the Head**

Sex of Head	Number of Generations				n =
	1	2	3	4	
Male	12.9	69.5	17.1	0.5	210
Female	7.8	54.2	34.6	3.4	179
Both	10.5	62.5	25.2	1.8	389

With reference to what has been said regarding the characteristics of the Afro-American family above, and basing ourselves on the theory of Adams,<sup>73</sup> which was also discussed earlier, we are able to observe that female headed household groups as a general rule show a different composition from male headed ones. This will become more apparent still if one collates the preceding table with table 14, in which the civil status of the heads of households is split up according to sex. By far the greater majority of male heads here are seen to be legally married and to represent groups of only one or two generations, an outcome of the trend towards the realization of marriage and the family. This circumstance provides the basis for further headship typological differentiation of household group composition among the Afro-American section of the population of Curaçao.

TABLE 14

**The Civil Status of Heads of Household Groups Split up According to the Sex of the Heads**

Civil Status	Heads		
	Male	Female	Total
Married	87.1	40.8	65.8
Unmarried	8.1	35.2	20.6
Separated	1.4	7.3	4.1
Widowed	3.5	16.8	9.5
n =	210 — 100.0	179 — 100.0	389 — 100.0

By way of conclusion to the present section we wish to discuss two more matters in relation to our sample. These are the age and sex structure of the sample population and illegitimacy of birth among them.

### 2.7. *The Age and Sex Structure of the Sample*

It is apparent from the age and sex pyramid reproduced above that the narrowing of the base of the population pyramid for the total Antillean population of 1-1-1967 had not (yet) become evident for our section thereof.<sup>74</sup>

The sex ratio of the sample was comparatively high at 1138, which has some connection with the relatively short life expectancy of men in the lower strata, while the emigration of young Antillean males may also be affecting this to some extent.

Although the *Statistisch Jaarboek* (Statistical Yearbook) of 1966 applies to the whole of the Netherlands Antilles, it is clear from this that the average life expectancy for males in all age-groups is three to four years lower than for females (*Statistisch Jaarboek* 1966).

### 2.8. *Illegitimacy of Birth and the Sample*

The percentage of illegitimately born persons of the sample was 31.5. That this percentage turned out to be slightly lower than that indicated for the Antillean population as a whole (1966: 33.6) is explained by the fact that a few quarters of Willemstad, such as Fleur de Mari and Buena Vista, for example, where the prevailing social and economic conditions are extremely poor and relatively many foreigners have settled, furthermore, have not been included in our sample. It is to be expected that proportionately high percentages of illegitimacy of birth will be found especially in these quarters.

A faint reflection of the drop in illegitimacy prior to 1952 is discovered upon comparison of the figure for the category of older heads with that for the total sample population. The illegitimacy figure for these heads turned out to be 39.3.

Of the illegitimately born persons in our sample, 54.0 % had been formally recognized by the mother, 20.7 % had been legitimated after birth, and 7.3 % had not been formally recognized, while 3 % stated themselves to have been recognized by their father, no information being available on the remaining 15 %.

Table 15 sets out the ratio between legitimate and illegitimate births per age-group. The continuous shift towards a higher percentage of

legitimate births among the younger members of the sample population is plainly apparent here.

TABLE 15

**The Percentages of Legitimate and Illegitimate Births per Age-Group of the Sample Population**

Age-Group	Satus of Birth		n =
	Legitimate	Illegitimate	
0—10	74.4	25.6	826
11—20	68.2	31.8	669
21—30	68.4	31.6	291
31—40	61.2	38.8	214
41—50	62.3	37.7	183
51—60	59.9	40.1	137
61—70	64.8	35.2	105
71—80	61.7	38.3	47
81—90	61.5	38.5	13
91—..	(1)	—	1
Total	68.5	31.5	2486

Kendall's Tau — 0.10

$\chi^2 = 95.9$  with 18 degrees latitude.

Curaçaoan culture, with its specific historical and sociological development of man-woman relationships in the various population strata, and with the slight importance attached here to Christian morality for deciding what is right or wrong in sexual behaviour, has always assigned sex a fairly uncomplicated place in the lives of its bearers. Not only had 20.7 % of the illegitimate births in our sample been later legitimated, but the legitimacy of birth of a much larger proportion still had been effected only a few months, and in some cases a few days, before their birth. The 68.5 % legitimately born had far from all been conceived in wedlock, which does nothing to alter the fact that for many the importance of legitimacy is increasing in proportion with rising social status and greater affluence.

Antillean law requires formal recognition of an illegitimately born child by its mother so as to give legal force to the parent-child and family-child relationship. Non-recognition is often attributable to ignorance or nonchalance rather than conscious repudiation of the child.

Paternity is seldom officially established in the case of illegitimate

births, which is sometimes due to the mother's refusal to allow the child's father to recognize it as his own. Some mothers of illegitimate children stated themselves to be unwilling to grant the fathers any "claims on the child". When such a child reaches adulthood and starts earning its own income, it will be the mother and not the father who will reap the fruits of bringing it up and looking after it. The father is only entitled to a share of his children's assistance if he has remained faithful to his wife and children.

At the time of research, several voices were heard advocating the abolition of compulsory recognition by the mother of children born out of wedlock and urging acceptance of the registration of the birth as the sole requirement, under the motto of "*mater semper certus, pater incertus*". Recognition or non-recognition is of no significance whatever in the day to day life of the lower strata. The distinction between legitimate and illegitimate is becoming all the more important, on the other hand. It has a significant bearing on the careers of the children concerned, while also exercising some influence on the pressure which the parents of a pregnant girl may exert on the father of her child and his relatives in order to get him to marry her.

#### CHAPTER IV

### HEADSHIP AND THE HOUSEHOLD GROUP

On the basis of the survey of the literature and of our own observations in the field we drew the conclusion that the development of modern social and economic conditions of life is exercising a regulative effect on man-woman relationships and household group formation among Afro-American population groups. The institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in monogamous marriage implies a relative increase in the number of marriages concluded at a relatively early stage of the development of individual partnerships on the one hand, and a proportional increase in the number of conjugal family groups on the other. The integration of the conjugal with the maternal dyad resulting from these developments is also making for a weakening of the emphasis on matrifocal tendencies. This is having far-reaching repercussions for the ways in which a variety of functions are fulfilled in the household group and is exercising an effect on the leadership and external representation of household groups. Whatever the degree of institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in monogamous marriage among the Afro-American section of the population of Curaçao, obviously far from all parents are married or forming a conjugal dyad. As we have explained above, since marriage mostly goes hand in hand with the setting up of a nuclear family group, different kinds of man-woman relationship correspond with differently structured household groups. The latter is coupled with a difference in the division of tasks and functions, involving other individuals and groups, who are mostly related to the female head by kinship ties.

To make for an efficient arrangement of our material on the structure of household groups, it was necessary:

- (a) to construct a headship typology;
- (b) to determine the distribution of the headship types so arrived at in our sample; and

- (c) to mutually compare the different kinds of group structure which, as we shall see further down, correspond with these different types.

Before discussing points (a) to (c) in greater detail, we shall make a few general observations with respect to headship.

### 1. *Headship*

The question as to who should be designated as head of a particular household group appeared to be anything but easy to solve. In some cases the person introducing himself as head to the interviewer saw his claims to this title disputed in the latter's very presence, internal tensions thus coming into the open. In other cases the members of a group might disagree among themselves about whom to appoint as spokesman. In yet other cases again, two or even more members would insist on granting the interview jointly, thus further increasing the confusion as to the formal external representation and informal effective internal headship. Headship did not seem to be perceived as a clearly defined, distinct function by all our informants, although there did appear to exist some pronounced views with reference to both formal and informal headship. Hereby headship was often given a conditional definition. So the conferment of functional headship was dependent upon a certain general view as well as on a number of conditions with respect to the fulfilment of certain economic, sustentative, protective and status-conferring functions. We shall adduce a few examples of headship in our sample in support of this statement at the end of the present section. In the present and the following chapter this general view and these conditions will be evaluated by correlating the headship typology with the social, economic and cultural characteristics of the different heads and household groups.

The formal view on headship of a household group is patrifocal. "Where there is a man in the house, that man is the head", is a dictum which found wide support, especially in the case of marriage, where the rights and duties of the male partner were clearly defined. Married men were stated with much greater consistency than common law male marriage partners<sup>75</sup> to be responsible for the material welfare of their wives and children, while their married status, in combination with their adequate fulfilment of the status-conferring, sustentative and protective tasks, gave the former a definite say in all matters pertaining to the household and the group. This way a married man



might secure himself a stable position in his group, which derived its status from him, and so in principle act as that group's spokesman. The matrimonial status provided the fundamental cultural basis for male headship, though the good or bad *kalidad* (quality) of the male's fulfilment of his tasks either buttressed or undermined his position as such, as the case might be. Where the matrimonial status was lacking, and there was, moreover, little prospect of any marriage in the future, a man's position was more exclusively conditional upon his individual qualities. The lack of a legal basis on the whole made for a stronger accentuation of matrifocality.

In a great many common law marriages with which we became acquainted in the course of our research, the male partner functioned solely as provider and lover, being for the rest a vague and peripheral figure as far as the household and the group were concerned. Where in the case of legal marriage the male partner mostly presented himself as head by more or less common consent of the members of the group, in the case of common law marriage the female partner often dominated, while her male partner took no part in the conversation or left. Explicit delegation of the right to talk to the interviewer by the husband to the wife was observed only in the case of legal marriage, while on a few occasions this right was arrogated by the wife over the husband's head where the latter had expressly declared himself against granting the interview. In a few instances the idea of joint headship of both partners was advocated, so that the two were interviewed together in these cases.

A number of complicating notions, which have their roots in Curaçaoan history, are still exercising an influence here. As a consequence hereof the adequate fulfilment of the function of breadwinner by the male partner does not necessarily lead to patrilocality of headship *per se*. In a number of cases in which the man's economic role fulfilment and conjugal fidelity were adequate enough to meet the satisfaction of a married woman, the woman clearly showed herself to be the dominant partner. This may be taken as a sign of the tenacity of matrifocality, which may persist as a consequence of the traditional method of bringing up boys and girls, as well as of circumstances of considerable social and economic insecurity in the society in general and the man-woman relationship in particular.

It is important to note in this connection that there are still numerous instances of the existence of a great deal of uncertainty with respect to partners as "constant reminders" for both men and women in the

lower strata. A few male informants expressed the opinion that women can never be sure of their partners, adding that: "One never can tell what the future may bring". They considered it advisable for women to consolidate their position in the group as much as possible. One of our key informants furnished us with a further elucidation of a number of instances of female headship despite the presence of a male partner in the group, in which the historical double standard was plainly reflected. He expressed the view that a virile man (*un homber cu ta saca su hombra*) with mistresses and children by these was an extremely unreliable figure as a partner, so that his female partner should make herself as independent as possible in order to avoid sooner or later getting into economic difficulties. If the man behaved "tamely", that is to say, as a faithful husband, he ran a great risk of his virility being called into question. Hence, in his view, female headship was equally to be expected in the case of less virile husbands. He thereupon proceeded to outline the case of a young woman, with whom we ourselves had a few interviews later on, as a representative example of female headship.

F. was the 29-years-old daughter of a woman who had married F.'s father in later life (at the age of 51), after 18 years of common law marriage with him. The father had died a good one and a half years previous to the interview. F. said she had been brought up 'under the system' which granted the father and brothers considerable freedom of movement, but kept her and her mother tied to the house all the time. Her father had been often away from home and on one or two occasions had spent the entire night out. Although these nocturnal absences usually provoked quarrels between her father and mother, this never culminated in a total break. Despite her father's mistresses and natural children (F. had no idea of the number) he had enjoyed a reputation as a devoted husband and a man who was always ready to help his neighbours. F. remembered her father as an amiable, generous man, and believed her mother had allowed him a certain right to affairs with other women not only on account of her own concubinary relationship with him, but definitely also because of the good care he took of her. She did say emphatically, however, that actually her mother was always the one who did all the work in and around the house and had the general leadership of the group.

F. herself had been married six years and had three children by her husband T., a plumber. The latter was also frequently absent from home in his leisure hours, so that F. considered it not unlikely that he had a mistress somewhere, even though she

could not say so definitely. It was simply a possibility. T. had installed her in a comfortably furnished home, gave her sufficient housekeeping money and, moreover, now and then took something extra home for the children. F. considered every man-woman relationship as fraught with uncertainties, and expressed the view that a woman should think first and foremost of herself and her children. On one occasion, when T. had spent almost all of his *quincena* (fortnightly wages) on drink or other things, F. had thrown him out of the house and locked the door on him. After that, T. had never come home drunk again and had been good to her 'as always'. But F. felt nevertheless that he should not be so domineering with her. What she still reproached him most was that he so poorly defended her against neighbourhood *redashi* (gossip). T. had latterly been showing vexation at the gossip about himself, according to which F. had *power riba dje* (mostly allegedly magic power) over him.

This had given rise to short but bitter quarrels, while T. was staying away from home more often and for longer intervals. F. disapproved of the 'old system' of gross inequality in freedom of movement between boys and girls, and felt that men ought to spend more time at home with their children. Anyhow, that's how it was in Curaçao (*Asina e bida ta bai na Corsow*). And since that was how matters stood, children, both boys and girls, ought to help their mothers as soon as they began earning money. Men could not be trusted.

In spite of all this, headship of the husband and father over the family group continued to be considered the ideal. A *netchi bida* between a man and woman involved their living together in conjugal fidelity with their joint offspring, with the man rightfully acting as head of the family.

As was intimated above, we are adducing a few more cases furnished by our sample below in order to introduce more subtle shading in the concept of headship. It will be clear from these examples, too, that a legalistic definition of headship as given in official censuses and documents is sociologically invalid. Though all married men may *ipso facto* be officially designated as head, and though this may correspond with the formal view, the cases set out below bring the existence of different conditions to light, in which differences in status, in behavioral orientation and in the fulfilment of specific tasks play a significant part.

1. The man acted as head.

He was 38 years old, married 14 years and a Shell employee. The home was of brick and was the man's property. He was quite willing to grant an interview, though only in the presence

of his family of six, "as I have no secrets." The wife occasionally added a remark of her own to her husband's answers, while two of the three daughters, seated on the arms of his chair, also butted in with an occasional comment. The idea of equality between man and women was spontaneously stressed throughout ("though a man is the actual boss at home"), as was that of harmony in children's upbringing and the parent-child relationship. Neither the husband nor the wife had any *ju djafo* (extra-marital children). The wife had been a virgin when they first met, though not when they married. They had wanted to marry each other from the first moment, the husband emphasizing the fact in this connection that they were alienating themselves from 'the system' as practised by the great majority of people in Curaçao.

2. The man acted as head.

He was 29 years old, married 4 years, and an operator with Shell. The home was of brick and built by the man himself. The woman retreated after welcoming the interviewer. She was asked to help with the answers to a few questions, whereupon she again disappeared, however. The two children were sent out of the room, too. The man was quite self-assertively head of this family. He had no *ju djafo* that he knew of, nor was he entertaining any extra-marital relations at the time of the interview, "but one never can tell what the future may bring."

3. The man acted as head.

He was 58 years old, married 34 years and Crown land superintendent in Government service. The home was of brick and self-made. The man never slept in it, however, having built a *palu di maishi* hut (of the type formerly used by slaves) behind the main house for this purpose. Here he stayed most of the time he spent off from work at home, having done so ever since conflict had arisen between him and his wife and two sons. His daughters made him out a *pulushi* (old nagger) who played the moralist while he himself had a few extra-marital relationships. By leading this *de facto* separated life he was avoiding a great deal of further conflict. The man gave his wife sufficient housekeeping money and was on the whole amicable to his children. They did not really bear him any ill-will, because he was a man with always a good word and a piece of good advice to spare. It was no more than appropriate in the eyes of all concerned that he should act as head.

4. The woman talked to the interviewer.

She was 30 years old, married 8 years to a watchman with the *Mijnmaatschappij* (Mining Company), and had six children. The husband had explicitly delegated the right to talk to the inter-

viewer to her, because she "could tell him just as much as he, and he was often away from home for work." The husband had a natural child, whom the woman knew, of a premarital union. She was convinced that her husband no longer had any contact with the child's mother. He was paying a regular allowance via an aunt of the woman's, at whose house he furthermore saw the child. The man interfered little in the housekeeping, "which is generally better really."

5. The woman acted as head.

She was 57, and legally married 5 years, after 24 years of common law marriage. The husband was an old-age pensioner and was making some extra money by selling fruit and vegetables, which he raised on a small plot of ground. Two daughters out of the eight children were paying something towards the household expenses. Although the husband began by introducing himself as the head in the wife's presence, he did not answer a single question and left all the talking to her. Nearly all decisions regarding the house, the housekeeping and the group were taken by her, as became apparent later on. The man seemed quite contented and expressed the view that in actual fact women are the pivots around which everything revolves. "I built a house so as to *hanja sacu pa cohe cangreeuw* (have a sack to catch a lobster in), but lobsters have pincers and they will nip you," the man stated to the interviewer amid loud laughter.

6. The woman acted as head.

She was 52 years of age and married 23 years to a lorry driver working for a bakery. The latter refused an interview, "because his life was nobody else's business." The wife invited the interviewer inside and asked him what he wanted, whereupon the husband sullenly left the room. It later transpired that the man had been out of work for some time. The wife was earning some money as a laundress, while two sons still living at home were contributing to the household expenses.

7. The man acted as head.

He was 29 and was living in concubinage with a woman of 34, three of whose five children he had fathered. He was employed in the building trade and had promised to marry the woman as soon as he had saved up enough money to build a better house. The timber house they were living in at the time was small and dilapidated. His mother had died not long before the interview, and "that's why I've been living with her for a while." The woman said their savings were growing and they would probably have their house in two years, "if there are no major expenses from more babies or sickness of the children, and so on."

8. The man acted as head.

He was 43 years of age and had been living in concubinage with a slightly older woman, four of whose seven children were his, for sixteen years. His motto was: "*miho bon biba cu mal casa*" (a good concubinage is better than a bad marriage). The woman had tried several times to get him to marry her, "for the children's sake," but the idea did not appeal to him, since "if you marry, you have to tell your wife everything and she will become the boss!"

9. The woman acted as head.

She was 31 and had been living in concubinage with the father of the two younger of her three children for a good two years. The man had been out of work for a while, but would soon start earning some money again. Although she had no promises of marriage, she had hopes. The spacious timber house was her property. She had inherited it from an aunt with whom she had moved in after the first signs of her first pregnancy had become evident, which had aroused the anger of her legally married father and mother. Although she had been allowed to come back home again later on, she had remained with her aunt. Her present common law husband was her second. The first had only lived with her for eight months, having left her just before the birth of his child, which had died three months later.

10. The woman acted as head.

She was 37 years old and had been living in concubinage with a car mechanic, by whom she already had two children, for one year. It was her third common law marriage. The house was of timber, with a brick extension which housed the master bedroom. They were renting this for 30 guilders a month, and it was registered in her name. She had six children in all. She underscored the lack of a strong tie between the partners to a common law union. This she ascribed partly to the lack of formality of common law marriages, and partly to the insecure economic position of women and often also of men, which in her view was also to blame for the prevalence of common law marriages. She considered herself the head because her partner was bound to leave her sooner or later, and she would remain alone with the children anyway. She was looking forward to receiving some extra income from two of her children in a few years' time, so that she would not be forced to take another common law husband after the present one if he left her. She had no ambitions for another common law marriage, because she considered the position of a *companjera* far from enviable. Many people were avoiding her socially, and her economic position was also precarious, while the partnership *per se* did not

merit a favourable opinion either. Depending on her position, she contended, a "*companjera mihó ta keda boca ketu pa no perde tur cos*" (a common law wife was obliged to be meek and submissive lest she lose everything). She would no longer want a partner if she were completely independent financially. Although her present *companjero* was a good man, he could leave tomorrow if he wanted to. She would do nothing to stop him. That wasn't necessary anyway, since she and her children were good workers.

## 2. *Headship Types and their Distribution in the Sample*

The sample included 389 heads of household groups, 210 of them male and 179 female. The great majority of the male heads (87.1 %) were legally married and coresiding with their conjugal partners (85.7 %, or 98.4 % of the legally married men).

As was to be expected, there was a greater number of divorced — *de facto* and *de jure* — female heads than male, since children as a rule stayed with their mothers and the maternal unit usually continued to enjoy the use of the home. Most men, on the other hand, joined the household group of their mother or a brother or sister, or of some woman with whom they had a relationship of one kind or another, upon being separated from or deserted by their wives. Only 1.6 % of the male heads were seen to be unofficially separated from their legal partners, whereas 5.0 % of the female heads were found to be in that position. The percentages of officially divorced male and female heads were 1.4 and 7.3 respectively.<sup>76</sup> Although the institutionalization of marriage appeared to be relatively advanced in Curaçao, the percentage of unmarried female heads is indicative of the occurrence of non-legalized sexual reproduction on a large scale still. A number of informants observed in this connection that the independence of young unmarried mothers was a concomitant precisely of the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage, among other factors. For this supposedly reduced the willingness of some parents to accept a certain drop in status in consequence of the maternity of their unmarried daughters. Because of this the tendency for such daughters to be admitted back to their parental home after the first violent reaction to their pregnancy was no longer as great as before. Although we definitely encountered some illustrations of this phenomenon, we were unable to check this explanation conclusively as to general validity. As it happened, there were a large number of cases of young unmarried mothers living in their parents' home also.

This latter may explain the comparatively small number of heads in the 21-30 and 31-40 age-groups in table 16. These unmarried mothers tend generally to either marry or settle down as heads of a household group in some other capacity at a slightly later age.

The figures admit of the conclusion that for male heads of households marriage was the most prevalent form of union. Legally married men coresiding with their partners constituted 73.7 % of the total number of married heads coresiding with partners in the sample, these latter in their turn constituting 62.9 % of the total sample. In all the other forms of civil status women were numerically dominant, while for the sake of clarity it should be added that the categories of "divorced", "widowed" and "separated" are invariably taken to include persons whose present situation was preceded by a legal union.

TABLE 16

**The Ages of the Heads of Household Groups and the Corresponding Distribution of the Different Forms of Civil Status of the Heads**

Age of Heads	Civil Status					n =
	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Un-married	Separated	
21—30	72.2	2.8	2.8	22.2	2.8	36
31—40	71.3	4.6	1.2	22.9	1.2	87
41—50	77.4	5.7	5.7	11.3	5.7	106
51—60	65.8	5.5	8.2	20.5	2.8	73
61—70	50.8	1.7	16.4	31.1	3.3	61
71—80	30.0	—	55.0	15.0	—	20
81—90	1	—	2	2	—	5
91—..	—	—	—	1	—	1

By adding the 4.1 % divorced persons (13 women and 3 men) and the 9.5 % widows (30) and widowers (7) to the total percentage of 65.8 of married persons, four out of five heads, i.e., 79.4 % are discovered to have been legally married at one time or other. The unmarried heads, expressed in percentages per sex, included four times as many women as men.

We designed our headship typology on the basis of the different types of man-woman relationship or, where applicable, the absence of any such relationship. From a sociological viewpoint the application of these criteria makes for a more subtly shaded picture of the Afro-American family than one is able to obtain if one uses only strictly



juridical criteria for determining civil status. As has been observed above, however, the differences in *kalidad* of the various forms of man-woman relationship have made for varying reliability of the data. People were on the whole spontaneously open about the matrimonial state, but were inclined to be somewhat reserved where less highly rated kinds of union were concerned. Legal and common law marriage could be established with a fair degree of, be it not absolutely equal, reliability. It proved considerably more difficult to introduce a further differentiation on the basis of the existence or non-existence of a visiting relationship, however. Although this latter may not have any repercussions for the headship *per se*, it can definitely exercise an effect on the household group composition or on the social relations arising either within the group internally or between members of the group and outsiders.

So we shall give some further attention to this when describing the composition of groups. For the present we shall confine ourselves to the information that, according to our data, there were thirteen heads entertaining a visiting relationship (*biba* or *amistad*). Three of these were solitary men and one a solitary woman, while the remaining nine appeared to belong to the type of the unmarried woman.

The headship typology was constructed on the basis of four different categories, thus producing eight main types when split up according to sex. These categories are:

- (a) that of the coresident legally married husband and wife;
- (b) that of the coresident common law husband and wife;
- (c) that of the single person, i.e., the person without a coresident partner but not living by him- or herself; and
- (d) that of the solitary person.

So the eight types resulting from these are:

- (a) the man with wife (m + w);
- (b) the woman with husband (w + h);
- (c) the man with common law wife (m + c);
- (d) the woman with common law husband (w + c);
- (e) the single man (m);
- (f) the single woman (w);
- (g) the solitary man (sm); and
- (h) the solitary woman (sw).<sup>77</sup>

Although it may seem curious for solitary persons to be classed as

heads of household groups, this is an outcome of the method used in drawing our sample. For the selection was based first and foremost on the criterion of Curaçao nativeness, any solitary person who was thus selected along being included for the sake of completeness. Solitariness may, moreover, have some connection with migratory movements, while it may on the other hand also be indicative of particular aspects of man-woman relationships and household groups. So, in a few cases rivalry for the mother's affection between a brother and sister had led the brother to leave the parental home to settle independently in a rented house, where he lived intermittently with a mistress. The number of solitary heads was so low, however, and the absence of any kind of grouping of these so obvious, that little purpose is served by giving this category by itself overmuch attention. Not that the number of common law marriages was in itself much higher; but these nevertheless require a more detailed treatment in view of the groups they brought into the sample with them and because of the nature of the man-woman relationships they imply.<sup>78</sup>

Table 17 sets out the different types and their numerical distribution in the sample.

TABLE 17  
Headship Types and their Distribution in the Sample

Headship Types	Number	Percentage
m+w	180	46.4
w+h	64	16.5
m+c	8	2.1
w+c	14	3.6
m	9	2.3
w	93	23.7
sm	13	3.4
sw	8	2.1
Total	389	100.0

This typology presents the following picture after splitting up of the percentage according to sex (see page 150).

So, in order of numerical importance, the following appear to be the most prevalent types: the man with wife, the single woman, and the woman with husband. Together they represented 86.6 % of the household groups and clearly illustrated the growing fundamentality of the choice between marrying and remaining single for Curaçaoan

TABLE 18  
The Categories of Headship According to Sex

Categories of Headship	Sex	
	Male	Female
Coresident legally married	85.7	35.7
Living in concubinage	3.8	7.8
Single	4.3	51.9
Solitary	6.2	4.6
n =	100.0 210	100.0 179

women. By way of underscoring the importance of legal marriage, we would further draw attention to the fact that almost half of the single women (48.9 %) had at one time been married. Of these ex-married women in the category of the single woman, six out of ten found themselves in their present position as a result of the death of their legally wedded spouse. This becomes evident from table 19.

TABLE 19  
Headship Types Split up According to the Different Forms of Civil Status of the Head

Headship Types	Civil Status					n =
	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Single (Separated)		
m+w	100.0	--	--	--	--	180
w+h	100.0	--	--	--	--	64
m+c	12.5	12.5	12.5	62.5	12.5	8
w+c	7.1	21.4	14.3	57.1	7.1	14
m	--	11.1	22.2	66.7	--	9
w	8.7	10.9	29.3	51.1	8.7	93
sm	15.4	7.7	30.8	46.2	15.4	13
sw	--	--	12.5	87.5	--	8

The percentage of common law marriages is low for the Afro-American area, that of our sample being more or less in line with the data of the 1960 Census, where the number of "coresidential relationships" constituted 7 % of the total number of partnerships. This percentage in our sample came to slightly over 9, which seems probable enough in view of the fact that our research was restricted to the lower strata in Curaçao. Whereas the Census went on the assumption

that persons living in concubinage would be mostly unmarried (1960 Census, p. 25), the above figures show that two of the eight male and six of the fourteen female heads living in concubinage were married currently or had been married in the past.

Marriage and concubinage were seen to mutually differ on the point of stability, among others. The relative instability of common law unions is reflected to some extent by the ratio between male and female heads in the category of common law headship as compared to that in the category of married heads in our sample. In the category of legally married persons, men were seen to act as heads in almost three times as many cases as women; in the category of common law marriages, on the other hand, groups were represented by women in almost twice as many cases as men. Although there is obviously a wide difference in the number of heads between these two categories, the above assertion appears nonetheless justified when one combines the figures with rather more qualitative data.

On the basis of the figure relating to the ages of heads, a few supplementary remarks should be made. The average age of 48 for female heads of household groups slightly exceeded that of 45 for men. If one draws a dividing-line between the 51-60 and 61-70 age groups in table 20, one will discover that 81.5 % of the male heads were below the age of 61 and 18.5 % over the age of 60. The corresponding figures for female heads of household groups were 73.1 and 27.1.

**TABLE 20**  
**Male and Female Heads of Household Groups Distributed**  
**over 10-yearly Age-Groups**

Age-Groups	Heads	
	Men	Women
21—30	9.0	9.5
31—40	24.8	19.5
41—50	28.6	25.6
51—60	19.1	18.5
61—70	13.3	18.5
71—80	4.7	5.7
81—90	0.5	2.3
91+	—	0.6
Total	100.0	100.0
n =	210	179

TABLE 21  
Headship Types Split up According to Age-Groups

Age	Headship Types							
	m+w	w+h	m+c	w+c	m	w	sm	sw
21—30	8.9	14.1	12.5	21.4	11.1	5.4	7.7	--
31—40	25.0	25.8	25.0	50.0	44.4	10.8	7.7	25.0
41—50	30.5	32.9	12.5	14.2	22.2	23.9	15.4	12.5
51—60	18.4	20.3	25.0	7.1	11.1	20.6	30.8	--
61—70	13.3	7.9	12.5	--	--	26.1	23.1	50.0
71—80	3.3	--	12.5	7.1	11.1	8.7	15.4	12.5
81—90	0.6	--	--	--	--	4.4	--	--
91+	--	--	--	--	--	1.1	--	--
n =	180	64	8	14	9	93	13	8

A comparison of headship types on the point of age structure, as given in table 21, shows that the "predominance" of female heads in the higher age-groups is accounted for mainly by the category of single women. Common law wives were hardly represented at all in these higher age-groups. The latter frequently change over to the category of single heads as a result of the relative instability of common law marriages. The four common law husband heads over the age of 50 were all partners to what might be termed "stable common law marriages", i.e., common law marriages lasting an average of twelve years, which are therefore significantly longer-lasting than the usual common law marriage of three years' average duration.<sup>79</sup>

As has been indicated above, the death of husbands also constituted an important factor in the rise in the number of single female heads.

The quantitatively much more extensive category of legally married heads displayed no significant shift in the sex ratio of the heads with ascending age. Even though numerous examples may be cited of growing marginality of the man in the household group (a phenomenon referred to in Curaçao as "*perde stens*" or the loss of voice or position by the man in proportion with lengthening duration of the union and increasing stimulation of matrifocal ties with the children by the woman), this was not plainly manifest in the form of a statistical shift in the category of legally married heads at any rate. Whereas in common law marriage a breach between the partners was seen to occur at quite an early stage, as soon as the male partner showed himself incapable of securing or keeping a job, in fact, the

position was different as regards man-woman relationships in legal marriage. Here there were no overwhelming numbers of official divorces and unofficial separations to be observed, while marriage was seen, moreover, to tend towards a more consistently patrifocal headship in conjunction with its higher status, greater stability and the more formal definition of roles. The process of institutionalization in marriage implies first and foremost the establishment of male headship over a neolocal family. The turnover in the membership of the household group then follows the natural course of increase through birth and decrease through the children's leaving home at marriage or possibly the death of children or of the partners. In such cases male headship is less subject to "interference" from matrifocal tendencies as springing from a less secure and less stable social and economic position. Wherever the processes of acculturation and institutionalization are inhibited by, for instance, a weak position of the husband-father in the society and the economy, a certain matrifocal tendency may become more clearly manifest in the group relations, implying an undermining of the male headship. Most likely female headship in the category of legally married persons should therefore be considered as having some connection with:

- (a) differences in group size;
- (b) deviations of the group structure from the nuclear family form;  
and
- (c) a weakening in the economic position of the household group.

These assumptions are based on the above-mentioned correlation between the nature of the social and economic position and the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship and the household group in marriage and the family. Here we observed different types of man-woman relationship to correspond with different types of household group composition. Where legal marriages were concluded despite a weak social and economic position (such as, for example, under pressure exercised by a social environment in which marriage and the family had become normative), the chances are high that a different division of tasks between members of the group and non-resident relatives and a different group composition from those found in the case of more "normal" marriages would be observable. In such cases the social and economic conditions of institutionalization of the relationship and the group in marriage and the family had been inadequately met.<sup>80</sup>

### 3. *Headship and Group Composition*

In the preceding passages the correlation between legal marriage, male headship and the nuclear family group was underscored, even though that between marriage and male headship appeared to be less unequivocal than the official publications would lead one to believe. In the present section we shall have to go into group composition in more detail. In this context we would remind the reader of the references in the literature on the Afro-American family to the great variety of forms of household group composition. and the problems involved in classifying these groups. Marriage and the rule of neolocality of settlement are so highly institutionalized in Curaçao, however, that they emerged as easily recognizable structural principles in group formation.

In the enumeration and description of the different forms of group composition the headship typology described above will once more serve as basis. We have classified as members of groups all persons regarded as such by the head. In so doing we applied three criteria, however, given the definition of the household group. According to these criteria members were expected to:

- (a) sleep in the residential unit;
- (b) eat the common household meals; and
- (c) be intentionally permanent members.

A partial membership involving "sleeping only" or "eating only" was found in 26 of the 389 household groups, there being relatively slightly more "lodgers" than "boarders" in male headed households, while the reverse was true for female headed ones. Almost without exception these cases represented some form of familial assistance to persons prevented by circumstances from adequately providing for themselves. So it was mainly brothers and sisters who were being supplied with meals and sleeping-places. In one single case the landlord was a "sleeping guest" in the household as a partial member, which meant a big saving in rent for the household concerned. Where possible these "lodgers" and "boarders" tended to make some form of payment. While most of the "boarders" were seen to be making some contribution towards the household funds, of the "lodgers" less than half were paying guests.

Where marriage and neolocality are relatively highly institutionalized, the head's own generation is numerically weakly and the first descending generation comparatively strongly represented. Where

marriage is lacking as a basis for group formation, there is greater scope for diversification of the structure, however, even though in this case, too, the institutional principle of the man-woman relationship and group formation will not be without its effect. So a broader generational "span",<sup>81</sup> for instance, will not necessarily imply the presence of a wide range of relatives beyond immediate kin. One is justified in positing, however, that generally the more diversified the group structure, the easier it will be for structural changes in the group to occur. Group structures are much more liable to change where change is less exclusively conditional upon the natural cycle of birth, maturation and departure or death. Here the composition will be less immediately determined by the stable union between a particular man and woman. An initial indication of the correlation between marriage and nuclear family formation is to be found in table 22, in which the civil status of heads is correlated with the generational span of their groups.

TABLE 22

**The Civil Status of Heads and the Generational Span of the Corresponding Household Groups**

Civil Status of Heads	Generational Span of Groups				n =
	1	2	3	4	
Married	7.4	71.1	20.7	0.8	256
(Separated)	(25.0)	(41.7)	(33.3)	—	(12)
Divorced	12.5	68.8	18.8	—	16
Widowed	13.5	40.5	40.5	5.4	37
Single	18.8	43.8	33.8	3.8	80

That the generational composition involves the immediate succession of generations here is apparent from the data of table 23. The groups concerned encompassed mainly the heads' own and the first descending generation.

Table 24 sets out the number and percentage of household groups with a nuclear family composition under the headship of a legally married man or woman or a man or woman living in concubinage. The figures given here confirm our observations about the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship and the household group in marriage and the family, as well as regarding the correlation between male headship and group composition.



TABLE 23

**The Generational Span of Groups Differentiated According to Genealogical Relationship to the Heads**

Genealogical Relationship	Generational Span Groups			
	1	2	3	4
Own generation	86.4	16.0	10.1	4.2
First Descending	—	81.7	60.4	62.3
Second Descending	—	—	19.4	16.5
Third Descending	—	—	0.7	2.8
First Ascending	—	0.5	3.5	8.2
Remaining	13.6	1.2	5.4	6.9

TABLE 24

**The Number and Percentage of Household Groups with an Elementary Family Composition for the Headship Types m+w, w+h, m+c and w+c**

Headship Type	Total Number of Groups	Number with Family Composition	Percentage
m+w	180	145	80.5
w+h	64	35	54.7
m+c	8	5	63.5
w+c	14	4	28.6

Obviously household groups in Curaçao come about on anything but a "sheer proximity" basis. On the contrary, the genealogical principle asserts itself much more strongly than the principle of locality in household group formation, while its definition may be fairly easily narrowed down to the principle of direct biological descent. A definite procreative line was discernible in the composition of both groups with a male and those with a female head. Corresponding with the more diversified civil status and economic position of female heads, these latter represented easily twice as many three-generation and seven times as many four-generation groups. The percentages of male and female heads of one-, two-, three- and four-generation groups respectively are set out in table 25.

Although the average membership of groups rose in proportion as the number of generations was greater (one-generation groups comprising an average of 1.5 persons, two-generation groups 6.2 persons, three-generation ones 8.5 and four-generation ones 11.7 persons), and groups with female heads counted on the average the most generations and the largest number of members, this is not to say that female

headship *ipso facto* goes hand in hand with more extensive domestic groups. This becomes plainly evident from the differentiation of headship in table 26, in which the headship types are mutually compared on the point of generational span and average group size.

TABLE 25

**The Generational Span of Household Groups Set out According to the Sex of the Heads**

Sex of the Head	Generational Span of Groups				n =
	1	2	3	4	
Male	12.9	69.5	17.1	0.5	210
Female	7.8	54.2	34.6	3.4	179

TABLE 26

**Headship Types Differentiated on the Basis of the Generational Span of their Groups and Group Size**

Headship Types	Generational Span of Groups				n =	No. of Members	% of Sample Popul.	Average Size
	1	2	3	4				
m+w	7.8	75.0	16.7	0.6	180	1227	49.4	6.8
w+h	3.1	65.6	29.7	1.6	64	522	21.0	8.2
m+c	--	75.0	25.0	--	8	51	2.1	6.4
w+c	14.3	64.3	14.3	7.1	14	89	3.5	6.4
m	--	55.6	44.4	--	9	51	2.1	5.7
w	2.2	48.9	44.6	4.3	93	525	21.1	5.7
sm	100.0	--	--	--	13	13	0.5	--
sw	100.0	--	--	--	8	8	0.3	--
Totals					389	2486	100.0	6.5

The single woman, with a relatively high number of three- and four-generation groups, represented what were on the average the smallest groups. She was followed as regards generational composition by the married woman, who, however, surpassed her as well as all the other types, including the man with wife, by far on the point of group size.<sup>82</sup> The above table admits of the conclusion that at the time of research, 70.4 % of the sample population were members of household groups established and maintained by a married couple. Easily one in five persons was a member of a group headed by a single woman, while one in eighteen persons belonged to a group headed by a common law marriage partner. The smallest average

size in the single woman's case turned out to be attributable first and foremost to the differences in civil status, the connected irregularity of sexual relations, and the relatively high average age of this type.

Not only was the single woman's biologically reproductive life reduced by partnerless periods, but, as further became apparent, the age at the birth of the first child of this type was also slightly higher on the whole. So 50 % of the married women as against only 33.8 %

TABLE 27

**Headship Types and the Corresponding Household Group Composition**

Members of the Group, according to Relationship to the Head of the Group	Headship Types						Total
	m+w	w+h	m+c	w+c	m	w	
Legal spouse	17.1	14.0	--	--	--	--	11.6
Common law spouse	--	--	18.2	18.7	--	--	1.1
Brother	0.1	--	--	--	9.1	0.7	0.3
Sister	0.1	0.4	--	--	9.1	2.3	0.8
Partner's brother	0.1	0.4	--	--	--	--	0.1
Partner's sister	0.3	--	--	--	--	--	0.1
Brother's wife	--	--	--	--	3.0	0.2	0.1
Sister's husband	--	--	--	--	3.0	--	0.1
Mother's resident si. dau.	--	--	--	--	--	0.2	0.1
<b>Head's generation</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>24.2</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>14.3</b>
Son	33.9	35.6	29.5	17.3	3.0	31.4	32.6
Daughter	38.3	37.3	22.7	26.7	18.2	28.6	35.1
Head's son	0.2	0.2	--	17.3	--	--	0.8
Head's daughter	0.1	2.0	--	10.7	--	--	0.9
Partner's son	0.8	0.2	9.1	--	--	--	0.6
Partner's daughter	1.1	--	6.8	--	--	--	0.7
Son's legal wife	0.2	0.4	--	--	--	0.5	0.3
Son's common law wife	--	--	--	--	--	0.2	0.1
Daughter's legal husband	0.2	0.2	--	--	--	0.2	0.2
Daughter's common law husb.	--	--	--	--	--	0.2	0.1
Partner's daughter's husb.	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	0.1
Resident brother's son	--	--	--	--	3.0	0.2	0.1
Non-resident brother's son	--	0.2	--	1.3	--	0.5	0.2
Non-resident sister's son	0.1	0.4	--	--	--	2.5	0.7
Resident brother's daughter	--	--	--	--	--	0.7	0.1
Non-resident brother's da.	--	--	--	--	--	0.9	0.2
Resident sister's daughter	--	--	--	--	3.0	0.7	0.2
Non-resident sister's da.	0.2	--	--	--	9.1	0.9	0.4
Partner's non-resident si. so.	0.2	--	--	--	--	--	0.1
Partner's non-resident br. da.	--	--	2.3	--	--	0.2	0.1
Partner's non-resident si. da.	0.4	--	2.3	--	--	0.2	0.2
<b>First descending generation</b>	<b>75.8</b>	<b>76.5</b>	<b>72.7</b>	<b>73.3</b>	<b>36.3</b>	<b>67.7</b>	<b>73.8</b>

TABLE 27 continuation

Members of the Group, according to Relationship to the Head of the Group	Headship Types						Total
	m+w	w+h	m+c	w+c	m	w	
Resident son's son	--	0.7	--	--	--	0.7	0.3
Non-resident son's son	0.4	0.2	--	2.7	--	0.9	0.5
Resident son's da.	--	--	--	--	--	0.5	0.1
Non-resident son's da.	0.3	--	--	--	--	1.2	0.4
Resident daughter's son	2.2	1.7	--	--	18.2	3.7	2.5
Non-resident daughter's son	0.5	0.4	--	--	--	1.2	0.6
Resident daughter's da.	1.4	1.3	--	--	3.0	4.8	2.1
Non-resident daughter's da.	0.4	--	--	--	--	0.7	0.3
Head's resident da. son	--	--	--	1.3	--	--	0.1
Head's non resident da.'s so.	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	0.1
Head's resident da.'s da.	--	--	--	1.3	--	--	0.1
Head's non-resident da.'s da.	--	--	2.3	--	--	--	0.1
Partner's non-resid. so.'s so.	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	0.1
Partner's resident da.'s da.	--	--	2.3	--	--	--	0.1
Partner's resident da.'s son	--	--	4.5	--	--	--	0.1
<b>Second Descending Generation</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>7.5</b>
Great-grandson	--	--	--	--	--	0.7	0.1
Great-granddaughter	--	--	--	--	--	0.9	0.1
<b>Third descending generation</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>0.3</b>
Father	--	0.4	--	--	--	0.7	0.2
Mother	--	0.9	--	1.3	12.1	2.5	1.0
Partner's father	--	0.2	--	--	--	--	0.1
Partner's mother	0.5	0.4	--	--	--	--	0.3
Mother's brother	--	0.2	--	--	--	--	0.1
Mother's sister	--	--	--	--	--	0.5	0.1
Partner's father's bro.	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	0.1
Mother's sister's husband	--	--	--	--	--	0.2	0.1
<b>First ascending generation</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>
Other male consanguines	--	0.7	--	--	--	0.7	0.3
Other female consanguines	0.1	0.4	--	--	--	4.2	1.0
Other male affines	0.2	--	--	--	--	0.7	0.2
Other female affines	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Male non-relatives	0.2	0.4	--	1.3	3.0	1.6	0.6
Female non-relatives	0.3	0.4	--	--	3.0	2.3	0.8
<b>Other categories</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>2.9</b>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	1047	458	43	75	42	432	2097

of the single ones had attained maternity before their 20th year. These percentages will be seen to be closer together, namely 77.4 and 71.6 respectively, if one takes the age of 25 as the maximum limit. The high incidence of widowhood in this type of headship also led to many of these women having seen a proportion of their children leave home to settle independently when they already had a period of married reproductiveness lying behind them. The figures for the various categories of headship tend on the whole to confirm the supposition that marriage is attended with greater biological reproductivity.

We did not observe any significant shift in the sex ratio of the heads with rising age-group for legally married couples. A more distinct difference was discernible per group size category, however.

In table 28 a shift in headship away from males to females in the legally married head category in proportion with increasing number of members is plainly visible, even though males remained quantitatively dominant as heads in the case of legal marriage. Our data are indicative of an evident correlation between group size and female headship in the married group, although legal marriage even so guaranteed a predominantly male representation of groups.

TABLE 28

**The Sex Ratio of the Heads in the Legally Married Category,  
According to Cumulative Group Size Categories of 5 Persons**

Group Size	Sex Ratio of Heads	n =
Up to 5	246	86
Up to 10	285	198
Up to 15	359	242
15+	355	244

As is evident from the detailed structural table no. 27 reproduced above, there were no major differences in the membership of joint children observable between the groups of married men and married women. Differences in size appeared to be attributable rather to a greater diversification of composition of the groups of married women, aside from a slightly larger number of children. Most of the "additional" members here were relatives of the woman. Kinship relationship was formally reckoned bilaterally, although actual kinship relations pointed in the direction of a plainly matrilineal emphasis.

Many legally married informants, however, were seen to be striving towards bilaterality in word and deed.

Owing to the relative insignificance of marriage as a basis for group formation in the remaining female headship types, and because of the difference in material circumstances of most of the latter from those of legally married couples, the composition of groups belonging to the headship types of the woman with common law husband and the single woman was found to be considerably more diversified than that of the type of the legally married woman. The structural table, drawn up on the basis of generational relationship of the members to the head of the group, makes further analysis of the variations in group composition between the different headship types possible. Partners and their joint offspring quite plainly constituted the chief classes of members, followed at some distance by the category of grandchildren, particularly children of resident daughters. The progenitors of these grandchildren were generally absent as members of the domestic group, a corollary partly of the incidence of uncontrolled sexual reproduction and partly of the rule of neolocality of settlement, whereby the coresidence of parents is subject to the satisfaction of certain material conditions which it is not always possible to fulfil. The integration of daughters- or sons-in-law, whether or not legal, in the household group was a rare phenomenon.

The type of the single male head seems to constitute a case apart in the table, not so much in terms of size as of composition of the group. At first glance, one might interpret the structural deviation of this type as a sign of its rarity. On closer scrutiny the group composition of this category appears in actual fact to be less divergent from that of the others, however. For the difference of this group was seen to spring from the fact that not so much the head as his mother should be assigned a key role as group-forming figure. This explains why the kinship categories of mothers, brothers and sisters showed such a strong representation here. The son here was acting as head in his capacity as substitute husband-father.

The sibling relationship, and more specifically that between sisters, also figured prominently in the groups of the single woman, which groups displayed the most diversified structure of all. The exception to this rule was formed by the nine single women with a *bibà* relationship, whose domestic groups much more closely resembled those of common law wives, with relatives other than those belonging to the category of own offspring being totally absent. There was one case

here of the presence of an adoptive child, which had moved in with the woman in question on its own initiative at the age of 5, prior to the establishment of the *bibà* relationship; while in one other case the woman's mother was included as a member of the group. The common law wife likewise had only few relatives other than her children coresiding with her. Kinship ties here were not as strong as in the married woman's case on account of the *diferente calidad* of the relationship in question. The nature of the accommodation of the types of the woman with common law husband and man with common law wife on the whole lent itself less to the admission of extra members, moreover, while affinal relationships here were less institutionalized. None of the groups of either common law husbands or wives were seen to include non-partner members of the head's own generation. The man with common law wife type included almost no consanguineal kin as members, while the woman with common law husband displayed greater diversity of group composition, on the other hand, any additional members beyond the primary categories of parents and children coming from her side. Relatives of the wife were encountered in the groups of male heads with common law wives as well. Relatives of the husband only were seen to be present exclusively in the groups of married heads, which serves to illustrate the more bilateral tendencies of families formed on the basis of legal marriage, in which the conjugal and paternal dyads were more closely integrated. Were it not that heads with common law partners are too weakly represented in our sample for reliable comparison with legally married heads, one might take the presence — sporadic though this may be — of children of the man only in groups formed on the basis of legal marriage as further confirmation of the greater strength of the man's position in the case of legal marriage and the nuclear family. Children of the man only were totally absent in the case of common law marriage. Conversely, the man had to put up with the presence of his partner's children much more frequently in this latter type of union than in the case of legal marriage, this being a corollary of the woman's having previous sexual relations with other men.

The first descending generation, as was said above, was numerically the most important. Within this category the sub-class of joint offspring featured by far the most prominently, moreover, 1420 of the 1530 children of heads and partners being the joint offspring of the man and woman, which comes to a percentage of 92.7. In addition, there were 62 stepchildren, of whom 58 had a *padrasa* or stepfather,

and 4 a *madrasa* or stepmother (see table 29), as well as 48 *sobrinunan* (nieces and nephews).

TABLE 29

The Distribution of Stepchildren over the Headship Types and the Kinds of Stepparent

Headship Type	Kind of Stepparent		Total
	Stepmother Number of Stepchildren	Stepfather Number of Stepchildren	
m+w	3	20	23
w+h	1	10	11
m+c	—	7	7
w+c	—	21	21
Total	4	58	62

To the number of children in the first descending generation should further be added another 11 children of *primunan* (*primu* = male or female cousin). They have been included under the heading "other categories" in table 27. All these 11 *primu* children, like 40 of the 48 *sobrinus*, are classed as *ju di crianza* (foster children). Of these latter 40 foster children, 31 were related to the head via a sister and 9 via a brother, while we are struck by the fact that *sobrinus* were predominantly relatives of the woman (see table 30).

TABLE 30

Sobrinus, specified According to Residency or Non-Residency of the Genealogical Link and to Relationship to the Man or Woman

Sobrinus (Nieces or Nephews)	Link – Sister or Brother	
	Relative of the Man	Relative of the Woman
Resident sister's child	1	3
Resident brother's child	1	3
Non-resident sister's child	8	23
Non-resident brother's child	—	9
Total	10	38

As is apparent from table 31, the single woman included the highest number of *sobrinus* as well as *ju di crianza* in her group.



TABLE 31

The Presence of *Sobrinus* According to Headship Type

Sabrinus	Headship Types					
	m+w	w+h	m+c	w+c	m	w
Man's resident sister's ch.	-	-	-	-	1	-
Woman's resident si.'s ch.	-	-	-	-	-	3
Man's resid. bro.'s child	-	-	-	-	1	-
Woman's resid. bro.'s child	-	-	-	-	-	3
Man's non-resid. si.'s ch.	3	-	-	-	4	1
Woman's non-resid. si.'s ch.	6	2	1	-	-	14
Man's non-resid. bro.'s ch.	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woman's non-resid. bro.'s ch.	-	1	1	1	-	6
Total	9	3	2	1	6	27

The single woman had the highest number of *sobrinus* of either category of genealogical link. The female genealogical line appeared to be invariably most strongly represented (also in the case of marriage). Both *sobrinus* and *ju di crianza* were encountered especially in the groups of women whose own children were no longer young or, in some cases, had even already left home.

The occasional resident partners of children were encountered only in the domestic groups of legally married heads and single women. Except in the isolated case of the presence of the common law wife of the son of a single woman, the reason why such partners were living in was invariably stated to be that the couple in question were waiting for a house or for the completion of the construction of one. Although in one particular case the same arguments were advanced to explain the presence of the common law husband of a daughter, the man in question was later discovered to have been living in with the group for over a year and to have already had three children by the daughter, while he had not even started building a house of his own or looking for a house to rent.

As regards the second descending generation, the detailed table 32 shows that more especially the single woman and the legally married man counted a number of grandchildren among the members of their group. There were some 41 grandchildren coresiding as *ju di crianza*, 38 of them the children of non-resident children (predominantly daughters, viz. 29) of the head's, and 3 of non-resident stepchildren. Of the grandchildren with coresident parents (111 in all), 3 of the 38 children of resident daughters of married male heads were seen

to have their fathers living in as well. Two of the 14 children of resident daughters of married women and 4 of the 14 children of resident daughters of single women had their fathers living with them. All the children of resident sons had both their parents living in as members of the group.

TABLE 32

**Resident Grandchildren Specified According to Type of Genealogical Link (Son or Daughter, Resident or Non-Resident), per Headship Type**

Grandchildren	Headship Types						Totals
	m+w	w+h	m+c	w+c	m	w	
Resident son's child	-	3	-	-	-	5	8
Resident daughter's child	38	14	-	-	9	37	98
Man's resid. so.'s child	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Man's resid. da.'s child	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woman's resid. so.'s ch.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woman's resid. da.'s ch.	-	-	3	2	-	-	5
Non-resid. son's child	7	1	-	2	-	9	19
Non-resid. da.'s child	9	2	-	-	-	8	19
Man's non-resid. so.'s ch.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Man's non-resid. da.'s ch.	1	-	1	-	-	-	2
Woman's non-resid. so.'s ch.	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Woman's non-resid. do.'s ch.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Grandchildren differentiated according to the presence of both parents, of only the father or only the mother, or the absence of both parents, are set out per headship type in table 33.

TABLE 33

**The Presence or Absence of Both Parents, or of Only the Father or the Mother, of Grandchildren in the Household Group According to Headship Type**

Presence of Absence of Parents	Headship Types						Totals
	m+w	w+h	m+c	w+c	m	w	
Both parents present	3	5	-	-	-	9	17
Only the father present	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Only the mother present	35	12	3	2	9	33	94
Both parents absent	18	3	1	2	-	17	41

Turning back to the phenomenon of child adoption, one may observe that 122 *ju di crianza* in total were included in the household groups

of the sample, comprising 40 *sobrinus*, 11 *primu* children, 41 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren, and 23 non-related youngsters, 12 of whom were referred to as god-children (*ihà*). Of the 17 grandchildren both of whose parents were present as members of the household, 14 were of legitimate birth. The same was true for only 11 out of the 94 grandchildren whose mothers only were present, while of the 41 grandchildren with neither parent present as a member only 7 were lawfully born. Of the 7 *ju di crianza* grandchildren 5, and of the 23 non-related foster children 17 were born out of wedlock. In addition, 22 of the 40 *sobrinus* and 4 of the 11 *primu* children had to be classed as illegitimate. So 45 % of the foster children were of illegitimate birth in widely varying proportions per category. The ratio between own offspring, stepchildren and foster children in the sample was 115 : 5 : 9.

The number of foster children is set out per category and headship type in table 34. We are struck here by the relatively high prevalence of non-related *ju di crianza* as well as great-grandchildren in household groups headed by the single woman.

There were foster children present in 20.1 % of the domestic groups, while the phenomenon of adoption was more frequent in the case of female heads, more specifically in groups headed by the single woman, than in that of male heads (see table 35).

TABLE 34

The Number of *Ju di Crianza* per Category and Headship Type

<i>Ju di Crianza</i> Categories	Headship Types						Totals
	m+w	w+h	m+c	w+c	m	w	
Grandchildren	18	3	1	2	-	17	41
Great-grandchildren	-	-	-	-	-	7	7
<i>Sobrinus</i>	9	3	2	1	4	21	40
<i>Primu</i> children	-	2	-	-	-	9	11
Non-relatives	4	4	-	1	2	12	23
Totals	31	12	3	4	6	59	122

Table 35 tends to confirm the trend towards the concurrence of the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage and a decrease in adoption. The reasons for adoption, as well as the above figures for the illegitimacy of birth of foster children, also point to the instability of partnerships and economic weakness as important

factors encouraging adoption. The practice of "giving away" children was explicitly stated by several informants to be a logical outcome of the Curaçaoan living conditions. "*Esun cu ke hanja ju, no ta hanja. Esun cu no ke hanja, ju, ta hanja*" (People who want children don't

TABLE 35

The Percentage of Household Groups with Ju di Crianza per Headship Type

Headship Type	Percentage	n =
m + w	13.9	180
w + h	20.3	64
m + c	25.0	8
w + c	14.3	14
m	44.4	9
w	34.8	93
Total Average	20.1	368

get any, and those who don't want children do) was a common saying. The giving away of a child in order to be *crià* (i.e., reared, fostered and educated) was not always looked upon as a sign of indifference, irresponsibility or indolence on the part of the mother. It was partly a measure aimed at the protection of children whose mother's social and economic position made it impossible for her to bring up her child(ren) according to certain minimum standards herself, while on the other hand childless women stated themselves to be able to look forward to their old age with a little more confidence because of their *ju di crianza*. Women whose grown-up children had already left home were extending their period of effective motherhood by means of adoption. The phenomenon of adoption is to be looked upon in many cases as a response to the hardships of life, or to a *bida duru* (hard life).

Although there are no figures available, we know from Hoetink that adoption, or *crià*, was a frequent phenomenon in former times also. Our material, corroborated by the statements of a great many informants, allows of the conclusion that in the wake of the improved social and economic conditions and the growing institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage, *crià* is becoming less frequent. Van Meeteren, too, uses the past tense in a description of a children's game, which "reflected the conditions prevailing in our islands for so long", in his *Volkskunde van Curaçao* (Curaçaoan Folklore) (Van Meeteren, 1947, p. 63). The game, called "*mi ta riku*"

(I'm rich) is still sometimes played today. It goes as follows: A row of children, with the eldest at their head, representing a poor mother with her offspring, stands facing a girl representing a wealthy lady.

The latter begins by singing:

"Mi ta riku, mi ta riku,  
mariones marionette.  
Mi ta riku, mi ta riku,  
Maria."

"I'm rich, I'm rich,  
mariones, marionette.  
I'm rich, I'm rich,  
Maria."

To this the poor mother replies:

"Mi ta pober, mi ta pober,  
mariones, marionette.  
Mi ta pober, mi ta pober,  
Maria."

"I'm poor, I'm poor",  
and so on.

Then the game goes on with the following series of sung questions and answers:

"Bo ke nami un di bo ju  
mariones, marionette?"  
and so on.

"Would you like to give me one of  
your children?"  
and so on.

"Ta ku kwa bo ta kontentu  
M, M,"

"Which of my children do you like  
best?"

Etc.

Etc.

"Ta ku . . . mi ta kontentu"

"I have chosen . . ."

Etc.

Etc.

"Ma ta kiko lo bo duné"

"But what will you give her?"

Etc.

Etc.

"Ta un . . . bo mi duné"

"I will give her a . . ."

Etc.

Etc.

"Ta pa'esei lo bo hanjale"

"So you shall have her"

Etc.

Etc.

It is evident from this game that the "giving away" of children often amounted to a "business transaction" between a poor mother and some wealthier woman, who then made the child work for her. It is a likely assumption that in former times the practice of *crià* was partly an outcome of similar such transactions between poor free Negro women and wealthy whites or Mulattoes, even though it naturally also occurred within the Afro-American lower classes internally as a result of social and economic differentiation. The motives for adoption as stated by our informants are set out below.

The reasons given were, in the frequencies indicated:

The child stayed of its own accord	16
For companionship (+ 2 assistance)	14
The mother is (frequently) ill	10
The mother is unmarried and working	9
The mother has died	8
The child has been living in the house from birth	5
The mother has too many children	4
The mother is having a <i>companja</i> with someone other than the father	4
The mother is married to someone other than the father	3
The mother is unmarried and much too young	2
The mother did not want the child	2
The mother has left Curaçao	1

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Total 78

Female heads more often gave the desire for company (and assistance), the death of the mother (3 out of the 8 children concerned being non-relatives) and the fact that the child had resided in the household from birth as reasons for adoption than male heads. In the case of the latter of these motives, the children were all daughters' children.

Where adoption among the lower strata in the Afro-American area is not infrequently described as a negative factor in children's upbringing, on account of the frequent changes of foster homes it involves, under the conditions obtaining in Curaçao 113 of the 122 foster children were seen to have come to their foster parent(s) direct from their mothers. The remaining 9 *ju di crianza* had stayed with one other foster family for a short while before becoming members of the household groups in which they were encountered at the time of research. Unfortunately there are no figures available with regard to the average duration of the stay of foster children in their adoptive groups, so that it is impossible to compare this average duration with the average age of foster children. One may say with a degree of probability bordering on positive certainty, however, that many *ju di crianza* make their entry in the group at a very early age (sometimes immediately after birth), subsequently to remain members of the group in question until adulthood.<sup>83</sup>

## CHAPTER V

### THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POSITION OF HEADS AND HOUSEHOLD GROUPS

In chapter II a number of historical, socio-cultural, economic and political characteristics of Curaçao were discussed, with the aim of showing that this island occupies a place apart among those of the Afro-American areas in which the Afro-American family type has been encountered.

Curaçao was found in many respects to form part of Plantation America as defined by Ch. Wagley. On the other hand, this area was also seen to differ on a great many points; as a result of this difference no *négritude* or return-to-Africa movements have developed here, for instance. There was found to exist a strong sense of Curaçaoan identity, with the course of the cultural orientation following in the course of history the acculturative lines which we have briefly sketched above. In this process Curaçao attained a degree of modernization that is fairly unique for the Afro-American area. Increased prosperity, the spread of education and the widening range of the mass-communication media have helped to an important extent to place a variety of status symbols within the cultural and material reach of the lower strata. Marriage and the family represented two such symbols of status and respectability. The socio-economic emancipation has turned marriage into the standard type of man-woman relationship for the lower strata, with the socio-historical conception of the *sjon* and his behavior pattern being "modified" sufficiently to conform to what might be termed the "modern Western" ideal that governs relations between the sexes under the impact of:

- (a) the possible moral influence of the Roman Catholic church;
- (b) adaptation of the double standard to the socially more homogeneous relations within the lower strata;<sup>84</sup> and
- (c) intensified contact with the modern Western world.

As we have indicated above, a scientifically valid contemporary study of the distributive order in Curaçao is still lacking, such a study being also beyond the scope of our own explorative researches. It nevertheless proved possible to determine a few of the characteristics of the social, economic, political and cultural mobility of the Afro-American sections of the population. In the present chapter we shall attempt an illustration of the correlation between the above-said changes in the society and the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship and the household group in marriage and the nuclear family among the lower strata. We wish to note in this connection that the emancipatory developments in Curaçao, of which the improved housing, higher incomes and greater participation in education, and similar such phenomena, may be regarded as indicators, are likely to give rise to certain inconsistencies in the social status of individuals because of the historically determined social weight carried by somatic traits.<sup>85</sup> This may in turn bring about both psychological and social frustration and tension (Lenski, 1954, pp. 405 ff.), which will then manifest themselves not only in Curaçaoan society as a whole, but also in individual man-woman relationships and domestic group relations. Moreover, the social antecedents of both individual persons and families (which may be traced back to such ancient differentiations as between domestic, artisan and garden slaves, or between slaves and freemen, or between rural and urban freemen) are exercising a definite influence on acculturation as on group affiliations, together with the connected social control. The correlation between modernization and the behaviour of men and women as marriage partners and parents is partly conditioned by this. Affluence, the demographic changes and the changing social and political ideas have nonetheless brought many members of the Curaçaoan lower strata, unquestionably closer to a modern middle class pattern than most low-status coloured persons in other parts of the Afro-American area.

With regard to the further illustrations of the correlation between relative prosperity, educational level, and so on, on the one hand, and civil status, kind of headship and group composition on the other, we should stress once more that the statistical foundation on which statements concerning any differences between common law and legal marriages and between male and female headship in the case of common law unions may be based should be treated with some reserve. The wide differences in *n* numbers between the various headship



types are not calculated to give such comparisons anything like a solid foundation. We feel justified in using the material nonetheless, since there is an unmistakable consistency to be observed in the statistical distributions, while our more qualitative data tend further to confirm our conclusions.

If our assumptions are correct, common law marriages will generally speaking occur in conjunction with lower economic status than marriages, while female headship in both categories will go hand in hand with a lower income and an inferior role as breadwinner of the male partner. Here the role of breadwinner in the domestic economy is not dependent solely on the size of the male partner's income, the portion of this which the man is able or willing to hand over to the group being at least as important. Regrettably, it proved extremely difficult to obtain reliable data on the actual part of their income which men spent on their households. There are, however, at least some illustrations of different male spending patterns in different man-woman relationship types available, while the married man's intention to spend more on his domestic group and less on individual outings with peers, among whom he is supposed to build up and maintain a reputation for virile behaviour that is incompatible with any responsible form of family headship, is quite evident. We have already referred in passing to the trend towards decreased solo spending on drink, *muhê djafo* (mistresses) and *ju djafo* (extramarital children). Frequent pub visits according to some informants were an outcome more of frustrations in the man-woman relationship, or parental and other social relations, than of a need for informal conviviality. Curaçaoan bars were for the greater part exceedingly bare, dreary affairs, visited mainly by men whose home life was disrupted by a high degree of social disharmony, and whose homes furthermore offered little in the way of comfort or relaxation as a result of overcrowding. A "successful" married and family life offered men enough respectability to prevent them from having lasting affairs with mistresses and begetting extramarital children.

Presumably the single woman will emerge at the extreme lower end of the scale of domestic incomes because the wage-earning adult male partner is by definition absent from her group. Dependence on sons for the domestic income should be seen as a form of dependence that is typical for a low economic level of subsistence. The woman's role as wage-earner is as a rule of slight financial consequence for the household, even though some domestic groups may be dependent on wages

earnt by the woman for their livelihood to a high degree. Women's wages were on the whole substantially lower than men's in Curaçao, however, as is apparent from table 37. Where female headship has an economic basis, that is to say, where the husband-father is unable or unwilling to fulfil his role as breadwinner adequately, the domestic level of income will be lower than that of household groups with a male head. Any extra income derived from working children here is similarly likely to be lower than the husband-father's income in most cases. Sons as young men are, moreover, given a certain right to a carefree bachelor's existence in the Afro-American area, and hence are often not expected to spend all or most of their incomes on their group of orientation. This right may even constitute a considerable drain on the household economy if the young man in question is unemployed. Some mothers will try to bolster their sons' reputation with their friends, as well as strengthen their own tie with such sons, by giving them pocket money. So one unemployed son of a married woman whose husband was providing for her only irregularly was receiving fl. 10.— pocket money a week, while the woman's daughter had to make do with the same amount for a whole month. According to the arguments for this advanced by the woman in question herself, the girl needed no money, whereas the boy had to be able to go out. "*E mester keiru i bebe*" (he has to go out and drink), she said. The income out of which these expenses had to be met was earnt for the greater part by the woman and her daughter.

Only after their thirtieth year were Curaçaoan males expected to regard the support of a domestic group of their own as their principal duty. They were then considered as having outgrown their days of *keiru* and *sjaurá* (philandering and revelling), as having *mas tinu* and being *mas sosegá* (more serious and sedate), and as being old enough to start a family. Their principal obligation was then theoretically always towards the procreational group, so that their importance as breadwinners was even further reduced for their mothers. Most mothers resented their sons' undertaking what might be termed "primary" financial obligations before their thirtieth year. Sons' obligations towards their mothers were such that the latter could always claim first place among the women entitled to receive money from them before they reached that age. There were also instances of mothers obstructing their sons in the choice of a partner even after they had turned thirty, in order to prevent being deprived wholly or in part of their share in the latter's income. Many sons themselves considered

it their duty to go on contributing towards their mother's livelihood even after marriage, especially if she was dependent on sources other than a male partner's earnings. The latter always constituted the best potential source of income.

Curaçao's economic development has made for a considerable increase in job opportunities for both sexes. However, since in the lower strata men were somehow more directly involved in the modernizing economic process than women, they were the first to reap the economic benefits, while women's dependence has relatively increased. Whereas male occupations as components of an industrial and commercial economy had changed in kind, women's occupations had grown rather in number.<sup>86</sup> There was even so a widening of the range of opportunities for girls from the lower strata observable as a result of increased education and the expansion of administrative organizations, whereby a large number of clerical positions and so on had been opened up to them. Independent trades such as that of tailor, cobbler, hat-weaver and market vendor had lost in importance, in favour of paid employment. The average income — which was high for the Afro-American area — was drawn mainly by men, while the growing number of marriages, with the norm that the wife should not have to work outside the home, were preventing women from earning their own incomes more than ever before. The demand for jobs came mostly from the quarter (and on behalf) of unmarried daughters, unmarried mothers and single women.

It is interesting to note in this connection that women from the middle strata mostly tried to make some extra money by carrying on a little private trading in clothing, footwear, jewellery, and so on, or performing clerical duties. In the higher strata this in itself has long been a common phenomenon. But insofar as the women concerned were persons of lower-stratum origin who had managed to work their way up to the middle levels and copied the above pattern, one may justifiably speak of a change in the man-woman relationship. The ideal whereby a woman should not need to go to work outside the home among the lower strata was connected with masculine pride and male status aspirations on the one hand, and with male distrust of female partner's establishing and maintaining uncontrolled relations outside the house on the other. Males further resented any weakening of their economic position in the domestic group. In the case of common law marriage the man's responsibility with regard to the support of his family was mostly confined to the payment of his own children's

food, clothes, medical expenses, and so on, while the costs of feeding, clothing, and educating any other children present in the group, as well as those of her own livelihood in some cases, devolved upon the woman or her relatives. The liberty or, in many cases, the need to work outside the home which many common law wives accordingly felt hence was coupled with a relatively weak identification of the male with the partnership and the group. In marriage, on the other hand, the payment of all expenses incurred by the household was more apt to be regarded as an integral part of the overall duties of the husband.

Female uncertainty as to how much the male might be prepared to hand over, or the desire on her part to receive a bigger share of his income, was responsible for the performance of a great variety of magic acts supposed to have the power of tying and subjugating the man to the woman both materially and psychologically. Men not infrequently refused to give their female partners more money because they disagreed with the latter's spending pattern. "*Loke un bon homber ta trece na cas cu man, tin muhé ta tira afó cu cuchara*" (What an honest man brings home by the handful, a woman often throws away by spadeful), was the opinion of a great many men, who suspected their female partners of spending too much on magic practices and too many luxuries, as well as on themselves and any of their children by other men at the expense of their own children, and so on. Some men even went as far as buying the family's daily food themselves. We encountered a similar state of affairs in some marriages as well. What the majority of men failed to take into account, however, was that the household expenditure entailed by a respectable married life was quite considerable. A decent house with proper furniture (preferably including a settee and armchairs with gold-coloured covers) and all kinds of modern electrical appliances are prerequisites of the married state. One informant told us that his wife claimed virtually his entire pay packet "*p'e cerra un porta i abri un bentana, i m'a complace mi sinjora*" (to be able to close a door and open a window (i.e., to run a respectable household of her own), and I have complied with the lady's wishes). He later regretted his complaisance, however, as his wife was running up debts by buying furniture and other things on the instalment plan under the motto "*tanto bo tin, tanto bo bal*" (you're worth as much as you've got). He himself seemed to have no clue about budgeting either. When asked by us to make a list of items on which his income was spent,

he obliged us by supplying a long list which lacked all indication of the total sum spent. In other attempts at gaining an insight into household budgeting, too, the totals were invariably found to have been left out, or in some cases to come to an amount that seemed out of all proportion to the domestic income. Our above informant, as one of many, stated the price of a refrigerator he had bought on instalments, in reply to our question accordingly, to be "fl. 5.— a week", and prepared to be ignorant of the actual shop value as well as of the amount he would have paid after paying all the instalments. People simply coveted particular items and were prepared to get into debt to possess them, without realizing the implications of the resultant financial commitments. This lack of budgetary foresight was connected with a certain preoccupation with social status, rather than being the product of pure carelessness. One might argue, however, that lower-class Curaçaoans, as former have-nots, have never been in a position to learn the art of budgeting. The practice of buying household appliances and food on credit, of running up arrears of rent and raising loans to help finance purchases was sometimes seen to be of all proportion to the domestic income. Our above informant, as responsible for people incurring heavy debts, whereby many saw themselves constrained to raise illegal loans at usurious rates, which they had no hope of paying off, in order to be able to temporarily satisfy their creditors. The development of the Credit Union system, which was introduced into Curaçao by Father Römer, may help to redress the situation.

When asked about the differences in household expenditure between the present and the past, both male and female informants formulated the developments in domestic spending roughly as follows:

"In the old days we were poor, but we had enough to eat. Now the price of everything has gone up. We are earning higher wages, but the costs of living are higher too. We are eating different food, and people are obliged to dress well. Formerly you could *bisti bari* (dress in cornsack cloth), but now you can't appear as a *hende na panja di cachó* (man in dog's clothes, i.e., dirty rags). You're no longer supposed to let small children run around naked either. Decent people wear pyjamas instead of old clothes to bed. In the old days you washed with *lodo* (mud) or slices of *cadushi* (a variety of cactus), or *tera blancu* (white clay), now with factory-made abrasives and soap powders. In the old days you could make do with a *stokki* (lemon-plant twig), now you need toothpaste. In the old days you could marry without any fuss, now you have to have cars, parties, and so on. In the old days you could use a donkey cart for burying some-

one, now you need money *pa e caha, pa respons, pa santana i hopi otro cosnan, pakiko gubierno no ta judabo* (for a coffin, a reception, the cemetery and many other things besides, for the government gives you no assistance). The expenses of a First Communion party are also much higher — fl. 600 or fl. 700 is nothing. Children have to learn a lot these days and do less and less work around the house. In the old days you played with goat droppings and *boonchi* (pods), now they have to have real marbles and real toys. All this is costing *hopi placa* (heaps of money).”

### 1. Economic Activity of Heads

Of the male heads 76.2 % and of the female heads 28.5 % stated themselves to be wage-earners. The economic activity as differentiated according to headship types was as set out in table 36.

TABLE 36

Headship Types and Corresponding Economic Activity of the Heads

Headship Type	Economically Activa		n =
	Yes	No	
m+w	78.3	21.7	180
w+h	20.3	79.7	64
m+c	75.0	25.0	8
w+c	28.6	71.4	14
m	77.8	22.2	9
w	32.6	67.4	93
sm	46.2	53.8	13
sw	50.0	50.0	8

As regards the female heads, there was obvious differentiation in economic activity, 20.3 % of the legally married women, 28.6 % of the common law wives, 32.6 % of the single women and 50 % of the solitary women earning their own wages. There is no significant differentiation observable among the male headship types. What strikes one here, however, is the low economic activity of the category of males who were not members of household groups, i.e., the solitary male.

We shall see further down that there are distinct differences between the female and male headship types on the point of female as compared to male economic activity.

The discovery that, in spite of the high average income of the Curaçaoan population, there is abject poverty among the lower strata is by no means surprising. Especially groups which were in a large

measure dependent on income earned by the female head were living in dire circumstances. It is also important to note in this connection that the average earnings of legally married men appeared to be higher than those of common law husbands. It should further be added that the proportion of their income contributed to the common household fund by common law husbands was in many cases considerably smaller than that contributed by married men to theirs.

## *2. Income from Economic Activity and the Household Income*

As household groups may derive income from other sources besides the earnings of the head or of the female head's male partner, a distinction has been drawn in table 39 between income derived from the exercise of an occupation or from economic activity and the income of the household group. Here a distinct difference in domestic incomes according to headship type may be observed.

The greater dependence of female heads on other sources besides their own earnings for the domestic income was responsible for a relatively wide discrepancy between income derived from jobs, and so on, and domestic incomes. The on the whole greater variety of sources of domestic income of groups represented by women did nothing to prevent the latter's level of income being on the average lower than that of domestic groups represented by men. There is, moreover, an extremely great diversity of domestic incomes observable within the category of female heads internally. So the single woman's income was found to be substantially lower than that of the married woman, while the domestic income of the married woman in its turn remained below that of the married man. The figures with respect to common law marriages are regrettably less unequivocal on this point. Although the domestic income of common law marriage partners was seen to be lower than that of married heads, there is no plain differentiation according to the sex of the head visible owing to the limited numbers.<sup>87</sup>

On the whole, the widely held belief that there is a correspondence between low domestic incomes and large size of domestic groups in the lower strata was disproved by our typology. As is apparent from table 38, there was no plain inverse ratio between domestic income and size of the group. There is even a vague correlation between higher domestic incomes and larger domestic groups observable.

An important factor in the partial correlation between higher income and larger average size of groups in our typology was in-

directly provided by the correlation between affluence and the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage. For institutionalization in marriage entailed a reduction of the total period of celibacy and a corresponding extension of the actively reproductive life of women. The institutionalization of the man-woman relationship and the household group in marriage and the nuclear family further-

TABLE 37

**The Distribution of Net Monthly Wage Brackets over Male and Female Heads**

Monthly Earnings	Heads of Household Groups	
	Male	Female
0	11.0	67.6
50—100	9.0	24.6
100—200	10.0	5.6
200—300	25.7	1.1
300—400	15.7	0.6
400—500	12.9	—
500—600	4.3	—
600—700	1.4	—
700—...	7.1	—
Unknown	2.9	0.6
n =	210	179

TABLE 38

**The Distribution of Net Monthly Domestic Income Brackets over the Household Groups Split up According to Size of Group**

Monthly Domestic Income	Number of Members of Household Groups											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
0	4.8	2.5	—	5.9	—	2.2	—	3.3	—	—	—	—
50—100	52.4	27.5	23.1	17.6	22.5	6.7	9.7	3.3	11.5	—	4.0	—
100—200	28.6	35.0	33.3	23.5	22.5	20.0	6.5	26.7	15.4	25.0	20.0	14.7
200—300	4.8	15.0	28.2	14.7	22.5	28.9	32.3	36.7	30.8	33.3	32.0	35.3
300—400	—	10.0	2.6	17.6	20.0	13.3	16.1	16.7	23.1	20.8	20.0	14.7
400—500	—	2.5	5.1	14.7	2.5	13.3	16.1	6.7	11.5	4.2	20.0	5.9
500—600	—	—	2.6	2.9	—	4.4	6.5	—	—	4.2	4.0	2.9
600—700	4.8	0.1	2.6	2.9	5.0	4.4	3.2	—	3.8	—	—	5.9
700—...	4.8	—	2.6	—	2.5	2.2	3.2	3.3	—	4.2	—	14.7
Unknown	—	7.5	—	—	2.5	4.4	6.5	3.3	3.8	8.3	—	5.9
n =	21	40	39	34	40	45	31	30	26	24	25	34

Kendall's Tau — 27

 $\chi^2 = 176.24$ , with 126 degrees' latitude.



TABLE 39

**Headship Types and the Corresponding Earnings of Heads and the Domestic Income**

Headship Type	Un- em- ployed	Earnings (I); Dom. 0 Inc. (II)	Earnings										Un- known	n =
			50 100	100 200	200 300	300 400	400 500	500 600	600 700	700 ...	700 ...	700 ...		
m+w	21.7	I	11.1	7.8	8.3	27.8	16.1	13.9	3.9	1.7	6.7	2.8	180	
		II	1.7	6.7	14.4	33.3	20.0	11.1	1.7	4.4	4.4	2.2		
w+h	79.7	I	78.1	14.1	3.1	1.6	1.6	--	--	--	--	1.6	64	
		II	1.6	9.4	18.8	21.9	17.2	14.1	4.7	--	3.1	9.4		
m+c	25.0	I	--	--	37.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	25.0	--	--	--	8	
		II	--	--	62.5	25.0	--	12.5	--	--	--	--		
w+c	71.4	I	64.3	28.6	7.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	14	
		II	--	14.3	21.4	42.9	14.3	--	--	--	--	7.1		
m	22.2	I	22.2	--	--	11.1	33.3	11.1	--	--	11.1	11.1	9	
		II	--	22.2	--	11.1	11.1	11.1	22.2	--	11.1	--		
w	67.4	I	65.2	27.2	6.5	1.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	93	
		II	1.1	26.1	39.1	19.6	6.5	2.2	1.1	2.2	--	2.2		
sm	53.8	I	7.7	38.5	23.1	15.4	--	--	--	--	15.4	--	13	
		II	7.7	30.8	38.5	7.7	--	--	--	7.7	7.7	--		
sw	50.0	I	25.0	62.5	12.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	8	
		II	--	87.5	12.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--		

I = net earnings of the head

II = net income of the household group

more exercised an influence on group formation in headship types other than that of the legally married head.<sup>88</sup> Another factor responsible for the differentiation in the size of groups, and one that has so far been left uninvestigated, may be provided by the effects of greater or lesser medical care on infant mortality per headship type.

### 3. Number and Kinds of Sources of Income of Domestic Groups

Also illustrative of the correlation between affluence and marriage is the fact that domestically the least poor groups of our sample, namely those of the married male head, were drawing more than any of the other headship types on only a single source of income, namely the man's earnings. The differences in this respect between married men and married women corroborate our arguments with regard to married female headship.<sup>89</sup> Table 40 sets out the number of sources of domestic income for each of the different headship types in percentages.

Married women here are seen to draw on additional sources for the running of their households more than married men, while the trend towards an increase in the number of sources from 1 through 2 to 3 and 4 in the percentages from the married man through the married woman to the single woman is seen to follow a virtually rectilinear course.

Looking at the kinds of sources of income in tables 41 and 42, one is able to form some idea of their relative importance for male and female heads. Male heads were financing their households chiefly out of their own earnings, old age pensions, the earnings of resident children, superannuation, and so on, with the partner's earnings being only of slight importance. As opposed to this, female heads were supporting their groups out of their own earnings to only a limited extent; they were dependent on the earnings of a partner in three out of ten cases, and were receiving financial contributions from resident sons in twice as many cases as male heads, while income derived from old-age pensions (fl. 52.— a month for single pensioners and fl. 90.— for married couples), from allowances paid by non-resident fathers, from non-resident relatives and resident other persons, from relief and from the sale of lottery tickets (legal *biljechi* and illegal "numbers") played a more prominent role in their household than in that of male heads.

TABLE 40

**Headship Types and the Corresponding Number of Sources of Domestic Income**

Headship Types	Number of Sources of Domestic Income					n =
	1	2	3	4	Unknown	
m+w	56.7	27.8	13.3	1.7	0.6	180
w+h	45.3	34.4	18.8	—	1.6	64
m+c	37.5	50.0	12.5	—	—	8
w+c	50.0	42.9	7.1	—	—	14
m	22.2	55.6	22.2	—	—	9
w	30.4	48.9	15.2	5.4	—	93
sm	84.6	15.4	—	—	—	13
sw	75.0	25.0	—	—	—	8

In these tables such sources as the earnings of partners, non-resident relatives, resident sons, daughters and other persons, and of non-resident fathers are especially interesting. The figures relating to the earnings of partners are indicative of the prevalence of the norm that

where the man is head the woman is not supposed to have a job. This was seen to be true for legal marriage and to some extent also for common law marriage. It is considered to be to a man's credit for him to be able to support his group without extra money from his partner. In addition, as was mentioned above, male aversion to wives holding jobs stemmed partly from distrust towards the woman's entertaining relations outside the home. One female informant underscored the realistic foundation of this distrust by expressing the opinion that "one shares one's bed with whoever provides one's daily bread". Obviously men are anxious to avoid as much as possible the risk of *corta oreja* (having one's ears cut, i.e., being cuckolded), with the attendant risk of becoming the object of social scorn and ridicule. The figures for partners' earnings also show that lower male economic activity went hand in hand with increased female fulfilment of the role of head, especially where male partners failed to compensate the loss of income from earnings with income from old-age pensions or superannuation allowances. In the case of the legally married female head, income derived from her own earnings as well as from other sources, including more specifically earnings of sons, played a definite role. The differences in economic position between the principal headship types were further borne out by the differences in the frequency of relief payments and financial assistance from non-resident relatives. Such sources were totally absent in the case of common law marriage, which is not to say that they might not play a role in some individual common law marriages. We did observe, however, that the ties between common law husbands and wives on the one hand and their mutual relatives on the other were not as strong as was the case with legally married couples. In reply to our question about the reasons for the less effective functioning of familial aid in the case of common law marriage, our informants suggested the following explanations:

- (a) common law marriage and other, less reputable, forms of union led to relative social isolation for the people concerned; and
- (b) the rise in the living standard had rendered relatives less able and willing to give help to others.

As regards poor relief, one often observed a certain aversion to the idea of applying for this, which people underwent as an indignity. Aside from the fact that most people were reluctant to disclose their private affairs, perhaps out of fear for taxation, and to make their poverty public, the behaviour of some social workers often induced

people applying for relief to withdraw their application in the course of the interview with the Social Welfare Service official. These functionaries often made no attempt to conceal their prejudice against the Afro-American population groups.

The order of the sources of income of the single woman reflects the latter's higher average age, the greater pressure on her to earn her own income, and her dependence on children, as well as the more complex structure of her household group. Old-age pensions, personal earnings and earnings of sons, non-resident fathers (including 6 fathers of children of the head and 17 fathers of children of resident unmarried daughters) and other resident persons constituted important sources of income here.

With respect to contributions from non-resident fathers the role of the Child Welfare Department, on which we have already touched above, should not go without mention. An increasing number of women appeared to be taking recourse to this organization for the regulation of the payment of allowances, fixed by the Government at a minimum of fl. 5.— a week per child. Serious complications were apt to arise if the man in question denied his paternity, in which event he was required to prove, where his relationship with the mother had been established beyond a reasonable doubt, that other persons had also had sexual access to her during a set period of from 301 to 179 days before the birth of the child in question. He might then be exempted from the obligation to pay an allowance pursuant to the principle of *excepcium pluricum concubensium*. Article 27, 2b, of the Penal Code stipulates in connection with the compulsory payment of alimony that a man makes himself liable to six months' imprisonment (maximally) by remaining in default for a period of at least two months. Few women actually resort to such drastic measures, however, in view of the hopelessness of effecting any genuine improvement in the behaviour of the man concerned. After all, too great a pressure on the latter's income might induce him to let himself become unemployed, since he would derive little if any personal benefit from his work in such a case anyway. Moreover, a woman has absolutely nothing to gain by imprisonment of the man, since this would only make him lose whatever income he was earning altogether. And where this was not the case, his preparedness to make financial sacrifices for his children would only diminish rather than augment. But as the child Welfare Department was even so able to offer women at least some sort of guarantee with regard to income (the alimony and child

allowance "turnover" for 1965 came to roughly a million guilders), a number of them refused to come to a private arrangement, in spite of all solemn protestations of good faith on the part of the man concerned. The rule whereby the Child Welfare Department was powerless to do anything for a woman as long as the man was still present in the house is illustrative of the still prevailing official lack of women's rights, as well as of the official status accorded to male headship.

In only a few cases, namely 3.2 %, did the household appear to be totally dependent financially on one or more resident sons. It may be stated that as a general rule the importance of partner's wages, old-age benefits, and wages of sons, daughters or other resident persons, as well as of assistance from non-resident relatives or fathers and superannuation allowances rose in proportion as the number of sources of income of the household was higher (see table 41). The importance of the various types of source of income of the Curaçaoan household group per headship type may be inferred from table 42. Especially in a comparison of the three numerically most prominent headship types the differences as regards said sources become plainly apparent.

One means by which people sometimes tried to acquire some financial or material property was the so-called "*sam*", a collective saving scheme, which was anything but remunerative, however, on account of the costs involved, while the money invested in it was non-interest bearing. Under this scheme each member deposited a fixed sum of money, which was the same for all, with the "*sam-keeper*" regularly each week or month. The number of instalments paid exceeded the number of participants (mostly women) by one. The total amount of money so deposited weekly or monthly was paid out to the participants in rotation according to a pre-arranged order, with the "*sam-keeper*" receiving the pool the first time, while, if she herself was a participant as well, she was entitled to twice this. The term "*sam*" was also used with reference to the traditional system of mutual cooperation in connection with the building of a house or harvesting. The money acquired under such a *sam* scheme was mostly used to finance some major purchase or a party, for instance. The *sam* system as a genuine form of mutual aid in agriculture or horticulture or on the occasion of the construction of a house was rapidly disappearing.<sup>90</sup> Clearly institutionalized forms of mutual assistance were found only among groups of fishermen.

TABLE 41

**The Number of Sources of Domestic Income on which Household are Dependent and the Relative Importance of the Respective Types of Source**

Sources of Domestic Income	Number of Sources of Domestic Income				Total Distribution
	1	2	3	4	
Head's Earnings	58.2	49.3	50.0	75.0	54.0
Partner's earnings	13.2	19.1	25.9	--	16.7
Rent of house(s)	--	9.6	14.8	12.5	5.7
Rent of land	0.5	--	--	--	0.3
Child endowment	--	7.4	11.1	25.0	4.6
Non-resident relatives	0.5	8.1	14.8	12.5	5.4
Resident sons	3.2	19.1	50.0	62.5	16.5
Resident daughters	1.1	16.9	37.0	37.5	12.3
Other resident persons	0.5	14.0	20.4	50.0	9.0
Non-resident fathers	1.1	13.2	11.1	50.0	7.7
Poor relief	2.6	7.4	3.7	37.5	5.1
Old-age pension	14.3	20.6	40.7	37.5	20.8
Superannuation allowance	2.6	11.8	18.5	--	8.0
Sale of lottery tickets	2.1	1.5	--	--	1.5
Other sources	--	2.9	1.9	--	1.3
n =	189	136	54	8	100.0 = 387 *

\* The number of sources in two cases was unknown

TABLE 42

**The Headship Types and the Corresponding Relative Importance of the Different Sources of Income for the Household**

Sources of Domestic Income	Heads							
	m+w	w+h	m+c	w+c	m	w	sm	sw
Head earnings	78.3	26.6	75.0	28.6	77.8	28.3	46.2	37.5
Partner's earnings	5.0	64.1	12.5	85.7	--	--	--	12.5
Rent of house(s)	6.1	6.3	12.5	--	11.1	5.4	--	--
Rent of land	0.6	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Child endowment	7.8	1.6	12.5	--	--	2.2	--	--
Non-resid. relatives	3.3	4.7	--	--	--	13.0	--	--
Resident sons	13.3	21.9	--	7.1	--	27.2	--	--
Resident daughters	12.8	15.6	12.5	--	11.1	14.1	--	--
Other resid. persons	3.8	7.8	12.5	7.1	44.4	19.6	7.7	--
Non-resident fathers	3.3	1.6	--	7.1	11.1	21.7	--	12.5
Poor relief	3.9	4.7	--	--	--	8.7	15.4	--
Old-age pension	11.1	7.8	--	21.4	55.6	42.2	30.8	50.0
Superannuation allowance	8.3	7.8	37.5	--	--	6.5	15.4	--
Sale of lottery tickets	0.6	1.6	--	--	--	3.3	--	12.5
Other sources	1.1	--	--	--	--	2.2	--	--
n =	180	64	8	14	9	93	13	8

#### 4. *Economically Productive Property*

As became apparent from the list of occupations, there was little if any independent business activity. Most small shops were kept by "Arabs", that is, Syrians and Lebanese, while agriculture and horticulture were practised by but a few, those engaging in horticulture at all being mainly Chinese and Portuguese, moreover. The separation between place of residence and place of work was virtually complete, which gave frequent cause for mutual suspicion between man and women on the economic and sexual planes, while it further stood in the way of effective surveillance of young daughters. So we did not encounter any family businesses whereby internal relations in the group were determined to an important extent by the structure of the production unit, of the type sometimes found in the case of independently run farms, anywhere here.<sup>91</sup>

Over the past decades, with their vigorous economic development, the practice of growing vegetables and fruit on small, privately owned garden plots, usually diked in so as to retain the rainwater or provided with artesian wells with a windmill for pumping up the water, has come to be abandoned. In only a few isolated instances did we come across people growing anything for their personal consumption as well as, in some cases, for sale to neighbours or on the local market on a small scale. Many formerly cultivated plots were now lying fallow.

The husband-father derived his authority not so much from the economic leadership of his household group as from the adequacy of his economic contributions, both in money and in kind. The ownership of a *cunucu* (a term usually denoting a rural area, but used here to refer to a plot of land) and the economic exploitation of the same, as well as the possession of economically productive livestock were almost exclusively restricted to the non-urban districts, where an obvious minority of the population were living and an extremely small minority were working. As has been indicated above, Curaçao is highly urbanized, with only few people making a living in the primary sector. The economic exploitation of land and livestock for the sake of making some extra money was, moreover, a virtual monopoly of women, assisted by their children. The hydrological conditions, the negative attitudes to working the soil as a hangover from slavery, and the higher rewards offered for work in the secondary and tertiary sectors of the Curaçaoan economy were all responsible for the lack of interest in jobs in agriculture, horticulture and fishery on the part of the great

majority of people. Anyone engaging in agriculture at present would, moreover, face competition from a number of well-organized, highly mechanized plantations with super-efficient irrigation systems and mass production methods.

So 89.5 % of the male and 84.4 % of the female heads of our sample possessed no arable land, either contiguous to their houses or anywhere else. Furthermore, only 5.7 % of the male and 5 % of the female heads were turning any of their privately owned or leased land to economic account, and then exclusively for their personal consumption, a few exceptions aside. In only a few isolated cases were a proportion of these home-grown products sold on the local market. So there were only a few people (mainly old women, what is more) who still regularly undertook the day's walk from Westpunt, Kenepa, Barber, Krakeel or some other place into town in order to sell a few vegetables or some fruit. Although fish and vegetables were sold in larger quantities in the main market-hall behind the post office in Willemstad, it was mostly the Portuguese who were strongly represented in vegetable trading here.

Our remarks about the exploitation of the potential of the soil by the Curaçaoan lower strata apply equally to the economic exploitation of livestock. The products of these, too, were used almost exclusively for the owners private consumption. As the figures in table 43 indicate, such livestock was turned to practical economic account mainly by household groups with a female representation in our sample. This was in addition for the greater part a monopoly of married women with the higher figures in the table corresponding with female headship. In general, married female heads tended more to be working in jobs outside the home, to have husbands who were less frequently economically active, to be drawing on a greater variety of sources of income, and to be taking slightly greater advantage of land and livestock than the wives of married male heads. The type of the single woman, who on the whole lived in more indigent circumstances, owned markedly less land and livestock. Common law marriage partners were seen to own livestock of only the most common variety, namely chickens.

##### 5. *Kind of Housing and Material Possessions of Household Groups*

Affluence and urban employment have not failed to exercise their effects on the quality of housing. The old-style Curaçaoan Negro hut, or the *wardia*, *ca'i palu maishi*, *cas di jerba* or the *mangasina* of *barra*



(mud daubed onto a framework of wood and plastered with dung) with a roof of *palu di maishi* (cornstalks) has become a rare sight. Only 2.1 % of the homes in our sample were still made of *barra* and possessed the characteristic slanting walls or *muraja di saja* (skirt walls), while less than 1 % was provided with a roof of cornstalks. We came across *mangasinan* almost exclusively in the *cunucu*. If one

TABLE 43

**Headship Types and the Corresponding Economic Utilization of Land and Livestock**

Headship Type	Economic Utilization of Land and Livestock					
	Land	Hens	Goats	Sheep	Pigs	Turkeys
m+w	5.6	28.3	11.7	3.3	3.3	0.6
w+h	9.4	28.1	14.1	9.4	9.4	3.1
m+c	--	12.5	--	--	--	--
w+c	--	7.1	--	--	--	--
m	--	33.3	--	--	--	--
w	3.3	16.3	9.8	2.2	2.2	1.1
sm	15.4	23.1	15.4	--	--	--
sw	--	37.5	--	--	--	--

takes the proportion of the rural population of our sample into consideration<sup>92</sup> it will become clear that the old type of house had for the greater part been replaced by more contemporary styles in the rural areas as well, however. Except in the case of people moving to the outskirts of town to settle mostly in wooden shanties, many of them covered with metal from old oil drums and roofed with corrugated iron, the majority of new houses were built close to the main roads. Hence actual residential nuclei are few and far between as a consequence of ribbon development. In addition, our informants expressed the desire to live "*liber di hende*" (uninterfered with by other people) and "*cu distancia*" (at a distance).<sup>93</sup>

Besides wooden houses of a simple basic architecture and with every imaginable sort of extension and addition to suit a variety of situations and occasions, from christening and First Communion parties to additions to the family, we found brick houses with a porch and loungeroom lining the roads and streets. In one or two instances we discovered a *mangasina* at the rear of a new house. For, as according to a popular belief the deliberate demolition of a house is certain to bring on the death of the eldest member of the family, people were reluctant to pull these down on completion of the construction of

the new house. The curious situation whereby the *mangasina* was newer than the actual modern-style house also occurred, however. In these cases they had been built in the back yard by the man of the family for his private accommodation, mostly out of nostalgia for the good old days or the desire to escape to some extent from his marginal position in the household group.

Grown-up sons, unlike daughters, were free to come and go as they pleased and when they pleased. Therefore they were sometimes allocated a room with a private entrance in an annex, or a separate hut in the yard to sleep in. The adult husband-father occupying a marginal position in the household group also expressed his claims to masculine independence in a similar manner. As a general rule, the poorest kinds of dwelling in Curaçao are occupied by the most indigent, who include especially single women and common law wives. On the outskirts of town we further came across Negroid immigrants from the British islands as occupants of the most squalid types of dwelling. More than half the houses of the sample (i.e., 53.2 %) were constructed of brick or concrete, however, while 44.2 % were of timber. There were very few tin shanties in the sample, these being of more common occurrence in the few slum areas on the peripheries of town. Where and whenever possible the Curaçaoan strove to give his house as "decent" as possible an appearance by means of a few flower boxes or a flower garden (*mata*) and curtains and flounces before the windows. The roofs of 47 % of the houses were of zinc or galvanized iron, and of 41.9 % of asbestos cement, while 10.3 % of the houses were tiled. The post-war depression on the one hand, and the increased dependence on skilled tradesmen for the construction of modern homes on the other, were said to be a few of the factors responsible for the marked decline in private home-building. The higher standards of modern housing have made house-building considerably more expensive. The price of building-materials has gone up, while furthermore specialists are needed for the installation and fitting of all the various technical services and appurtenances. The days of building a simple hut or shanty with the help of a few friends and relatives against no remuneration other than food, drink, a festive meal and the obligation of reciprocation are virtually gone, as was observed above.<sup>94</sup>

Only a small percentage of the houses dated back to the "pre-oil era", and 58.1 % were more than twenty years old. Roughly a quarter was between ten and twenty years old, and about one sixth were more

recent than ten years. There was nothing to indicate that single women and common law husbands and wives were living on the whole in older homes than the relatively more well-to-do headship types. The differences between types seemed to lie much more in the kind of material, the condition and the size than the age of the house. Single women and common law wives were discovered to be more frequently living in timber houses than married male and married female heads and common law husbands, for instance. The percentages for all of these types were 51.1, 78.6, 39.4, 35.9 and 25.0 respectively.

Occupation of a single yard (much less a single house) by more than one household group was rare, although this also varied per type. In accordance with the rule of neolocality, married couples mostly went to live independently in a separate home, and this was seldom built in the yard of parents, relatives or other persons. The single woman, with her greater dependence on relatives, was seen to be sharing a *curà*, whether or not in a residential unit annexed to the main building, considerably more frequently with 17.4 % than the married man with 7.8 % and the married woman with 9.4 %. The same was true for the common law wife. Hence female headship displayed on the whole less insulated neolocality. The other *curà* occupants were mostly brothers or sisters and uncles or aunts of the woman concerned. In several cases the fact that a woman had reasonably independent accommodation to "offer" was considered as enhancing her marriage chances. Conversely, some informants stressed the fact that the higher standards imposed on modern housing and households in some cases were tending to counteract marriage. More than half the male and over a third of the female heads owned the house they were living in. The land on which these houses were built was their property in only 15 % of the cases, the remainder being mostly long-term leasehold Crown land. The normal rent paid for such land was around 10 guilders a year.

The average rent of the 41.9 % rented homes, more than half of which were Government-owned, came to approximately 40 guilders a month. Although male and female heads were encountered in virtually every rent category, rents of 50 guilders or over were being paid more frequently by men, and rents of 21-30 guilders more frequently by women. Table 44 sets out the kind of ownership rights to houses per headship type.

It was a rule with the Public Housing Commission to recognize the man as the official tenant. The woman might act as such only upon

the former's death or after separation of the couple. Legal marriage was not an absolute condition of qualification for tenancy of Government houses, however, especially where people were compelled to leave their old home because of slum clearance or major redevelop-

TABLE 44

**Headship Types Differentiated According to Kind of Ownership Right to the Residence (Property of Head, Partner or Relative, or Rented)**

Headship Type	Kind of Ownership Rights to Residence								n =
	Head	Part- ner	Resid. Relat- ive of Head	Resid. Relat- ive of Partn.	Non- Resid. Relat- ive of Head	Non- Resid. Relat- ive of Partn.	Rent- ed	Govt., incl. houses brought on terms	
m + w	56.1	1.7	--	--	2.2	1.7	17.2	21.1	180
w + h	34.4	15.6	3.1	3.1	3.1	1.6	10.9	28.1	64
m + c	12.5	--	--	--	--	--	62.5	25.0	8
w + c	21.4	--	7.1	--	--	--	50.0	21.4	14
m	44.4	--	11.1	--	--	--	11.1	33.3	9
w	43.5	1.1 *	9.8	--	4.3	--	20.7	20.7	93
sm	46.2	--	--	--	--	--	46.2	7.7	8
sw	50.0	--	--	--	--	--	50.0	--	13

\* non-resident partner to a visiting relationship

ment or construction projects, such as in connection with the construction of the approaches to the new bridge between Otrabanda and Punda, as a consequence whereof the quarters of Quinta and Ararat had to be wholly or partially cleared. As in the case of the most stable kinds of common law marriage, the house would then be registered in the woman's name. Although in each individual case the financial capacity of a potential tenant was subjected to an investigation, failure to pay rent was usually dealt with with sufficient leniency. Especially for people who had been compelled to vacate their old home, two different rent rates were wielded, namely the economically remunerative and the special, socially reduced rate. Where at all financially possible, tenants liked to exercise their right to purchase of the house occupied by them by paying it off in instalments. Public housing had grown into an important Government concern during the post-war period and was playing a significant role in lower-class housing, especially for young families, as may become apparent from table 45. This table

sets out the age-groups of the heads and the two principal types of occupancy of Government houses, namely ownership and tenancy.

In former times it was in fact the custom for a man to build a house for himself and his family, so that he automatically became the owner of the house. This custom was closely connected with the rule of

TABLE 45

**Age-groups of the Heads of Household Groups Differentiated According to the Two Principal Types of Occupancy of the House**

Age-Groups	Type of Occupancy of the House		n =
	Own Property	Government House	
21—30	8.3	75.0	36
31—40	28.7	55.2	87
41—50	48.1	38.7	106
51—60	60.2	30.1	73
61—70	68.9	26.2	61
71—80	—	—	20
81—90	—	—	5
91+	—	—	1

neolocality of settlement, as well as linking up with the view that home ownership constituted an important symbolical confirmation of the male's rise in status and his new-found independence as head of his own household group subsequent to marriage. This practice of building one's own home was furthermore an outcome of the general lack of funds and the modest requirements with respect to housing on the part of the great majority of people in days gone by. The correlation between independent occupancy of a house and headship finds expression for both men and women in the saying, "Ta mi cas ta, ta mi cu ta manda aki" (It's my house, and I'm at the wheel). A man was invariably supposed to have a domicile of his own, or, as the saying went, "Mester tin sacu pa hanja cangreeuw" (He is supposed to have a sack or net to catch lobsters in).

The changes in Curaçaoan society, the greater complexity of the construction of houses, the different, more expensive building-materials and the costs involved in furnishing and fitting a house to suit modern needs had undermined many of the traditional customs and ideals in this respect, as is apparent also from the percentages of rented and Government houses respectively. Nevertheless, 56.1 % of the married men possessed their own home, closely linked with headship

as such ownership still appeared to be, while about two thirds of these men had built the house themselves. The importance of home ownership in this connection is further underscored by the striking differences between the married male and the married female head in the categories of "Property of Head" and "Property of Partner" in table 44. For the married female head here is seen to be much more frequently the owner of the residence than the wife of the married male head. The former's husband was the owner in only relatively few cases. Security with regard to a roof over one's head was considered of the utmost importance by women. Quite a number of them put forward the idea that besides giving a woman respectability, marriage also gave her the right to a home of her own.

Even after a woman became divorced, she remained in possession of the house, for, as the saying goes, "Ora bo ta casa, bo ta keda cu cas" (When you get married, the house remains yours). The position was juridically different where a woman had entered into a common law marriage, unless the house was her original property or that of some relative to begin with. Once a woman owned a house, she possessed material security as well as a basis of authority. The correlation between female home ownership and female headship was explained at least in part by the association of home ownership with authority. This correlation was discovered to apply especially to common law marriage, even though here there was a greater dependence on rented house in the private sector than was the case in any of the other headship types, on account of the relatively weak social and economic position of the group. It was nonetheless mostly the woman who was the official tenant, and as such the person possessing all rights to the house here.

Single women were much more often the owner of their residence, either through inheritance from partners or relatives or through personal purchase, than married women. However, the single woman's greater dependence on relatives, whether resident or non-resident, is also reflected by the relevant percentages here.

Home ownership was encountered only sporadically among the younger heads. Nevertheless, many of these were determined to build their own home at some future time. Although presumably few will ever put this resolution into practice, 95.4 % of all heads at any rate preferred ownership of their own house, 88.2 % of them on account of the certainty of having a roof over one's head in times of economic crisis which this afforded. Despite the fact that there were numerous

examples testifying to a general laxness in paying rent because of financial incapacity, it was precisely this circumstance that caused arrears to accumulate to such an extent as to make the payment of rent come to constitute a substantial burden. This was obviously an important reason why no-one favoured this type of occupancy of the residence. A few persons showed complete indifference in this matter.

As regards people's opinions of the house occupied by them, only a few were outright dissatisfied. Moreover, most of the complaints raised concerned rather the state of repair of (ranging from bad to moderate, with only a few good) than lack of space in the mostly overcrowded houses (from moderate to good, with only a few bad) — by Western standards anyway.

The internal arrangement of the older-style Curaçaoan house was comparatively uniform, this type of house generally comprising a main room — containing, where present, the luxury items of furniture, preferably covered with gold-coloured fabric protected by transparent plastic covers — which was used for receiving visitors (this room is sometimes referred to as the “zaal”, i.e., “hall”, in imitation of the special room set aside for receptions and parties in the homes of the rich), a kitchen (in a few rare cases with a *forno* or brick oven detached from the house), and one or more bedrooms. The oldest kind of arrangement comprised simply one main “hall” and one tiny bedroom. The bedroom in many of the older and smaller types of house usually contained a large trunk (*baùl*) with a lock, in which the family's good clothes and valuables were kept. Sometimes this *baùl* was painted and decorated, whereas in other cases it was simply an old suitcase. Modern developments were responsible for the partial disappearance of this piece of furniture and its replacement by a wardrobe, however.

Some of the more contemporary styles of home contained a small diningroom between the kitchen and sitting-room, while extensions of all kinds and shapes, mostly in the form of lean-tos, provided the necessary structural variety. The dream of the lower classes — a dream that had been realized by the members of the upper ones among them — was the possession of a spacious brick bungalow with a “porch”, tiled floors, and a tiled roof, of the type owned by members of the middle classes.

Aside from the size of houses, the choice of furniture and fittings had also been affected by the economic boom. This was reflected by, among other things, the presence of refrigerators and other household

appliances, and the quality of the sleeping-places. So the *cama spanjo* (Spanish bed, i.e., grass mat) had been replaced in most, though not all households by beds, which were, however, often slept in by more than one person. There were better possibilities than in the old days of putting boys and girls to sleep separately, and of screening off the parental bed from the prying eyes of other members of the household.

Table 46 gives an idea of the average bedroom and bed space per person among the lower strata. There were some differences between the different headship types in this respect. So the married female head was seen to have less space at her disposal than the married male head (especially owing to the larger average size of 8.2 head of the former's household group, among other factors). Single women, on the other hand, had a larger average number of rooms at their disposal, which was attributable chiefly to the smaller average size of 5.7 head of their household groups.

TABLE 46

**The Distribution of Household Groups According to the Available Beds and Bedrooms per N Persons**

Bedrooms and Beds per N Persons	Distribution of Household Groups According to Beds and Bedrooms per N Persons	
	Bedrooms	Beds
1 to 1	24.5	41.9
1 to 2	22.9	20.3
1 to 3	21.3	14.4
1 to 4	15.2	9.8
1 to 5	6.9	4.6
1 to 6	4.6	4.1
1 to 7	1.8	1.3
1 to 8	1.5	1.0
1 to 9+	1.3	2.6
<b>N =</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>389</b>

Table 47 sets out the differences between the headship types on the point of number of persons per bed and bedroom.

Both the legally and the non-legally married female heads appeared to have less bedroom space at their disposal than their male counterparts, while the same conclusion is warranted with regard to the number of beds per household. Here, too, a correlation between female headship and poorer material circumstances is evident. The single



female head enjoyed relatively more comfort on the above two scores, however. As regards those household appliances and articles of furniture for the possession of which a certain degree of affluence is conditional, such as refrigerators, television sets, cars, and so on, the single woman again seemed to come off a little worse, on the other hand.

TABLE 47

The Different Headship Types and the Corresponding Beds and Bedrooms per N Persons

Headship Types	Bed-rooms (I) or Beds (II)	Beds and Bedrooms per N Persons									n
		1:1	1:2	1:3	1:4	1:5	1:6	1:7	1:8	1:9+	
m+w	I	17.2	25.0	23.3	17.8	6.7	6.1	1.1	1.1	0.6	180
	II	39.4	22.8	15.0	11.1	4.4	3.3	1.7	--	2.2	
w+h	I	9.4	15.6	32.8	20.3	7.8	3.1	6.3	1.6	3.1	64
	II	31.3	18.8	14.1	14.1	4.7	6.3	3.1	3.1	4.7	
m+c	I	12.5	37.5	12.5	--	12.5	12.5	--	--	--	8
	II	50.0	25.0	12.5	--	--	12.5	--	--	--	
w+c	I	14.3	14.3	35.7	14.3	7.1	7.1	7.1	--	--	14
	II	28.6	14.3	21.4	14.3	14.3	7.1	--	--	--	
m	I	22.2	22.2	22.2	11.1	22.2	--	--	--	--	9
	II	33.3	22.2	22.2	11.1	11.1	--	--	--	--	
w	I	29.3	28.3	13.0	12.0	6.5	3.3	--	3.3	--	93
	II	42.4	21.7	15.2	6.5	4.3	4.3	--	2.2	3.3	
sm	I	100.0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	13
	II	100.0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	
sw	I	100.0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	8
	II	100.0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	

At the time of our research, the whole of Banda'riba (the eastern part of Curaçao) was being put under electricity, while considerable progress was being made with the work in linking up other parts of the island with the electric power net as well. The whole of Banda'bao (the western part of the island) has furthermore also been recently electrified. Our survey showed 85.6 % of the houses to be connected up to the power net. Wherever there was water laid on (there are water mains extending to every corner of the island), the proximity of taps to consumers varied. In view of the climatic conditions and

the requirements of even the most simple form of physical hygiene, water was on the whole considered more important than electricity by the local population. There was running water in 74.8 % of the houses of our sample — most of them in the urban area —, be it that it was not exactly running in every one of these, since in some houses the water supply had been cut off on account of failure to pay the — frequently quite high — water rates.<sup>95</sup> In the remaining cases the drinking-water supply ranged from water supplied from a tap in the yard adjacent to the house, through water delivered by truck and stored in tanks, to that provided by a public tap in the neighbourhood. The relevant figures are set out in the table below.

Indoor water facilities	75.8 %
Outdoor tap at roughly 10 metres' distance	9.5 %
Outdoor tap at 10-100 metres from the house	4.4 %
Water tap at over 100 metres from the house	2.6 %
Water obtained from neighbours	6.7 %
Water delivered by truck	1.0 %

For cooking-fuel charcoal was much less generally used than in former times; nowadays it was used mostly only on special occasions such as big parties. Kerosene cookers were more in vogue, though anyone at all able to afford it used portagas instead. Curaçao to this day still lacks a gas works supplying piped gas.

In contrast with such amenities as tap water and electricity — with which in principle every house was automatically supplied, so that their enjoyment was hardly a matter of individual choice, though actual consumption might vary according to individual financial capacity — there are distinct differences per headship type observable on the point of sanitation and the presence of electrical appliances or mechanical devices. Bathroom and toilet facilities varied from wooden outhouses fitted with a tub and bucket or sceptic tank, through simple indoor facilities to the modern, fully equipped bathroom. Of the heads of our sample, 87.1 % had their own bathroom facilities — 51.6 % indoors and 35.5 % outdoors in the yard —, while 12.9 % had to go without. We established roughly the same percentages with respect to toilet facilities. Where there was no toilet available, people had to find some other solution, and sometimes used the *mondi* (copses) on the outskirts of town for this purpose. Bathroom and toilet facilities were encountered much more frequently in the houses of male heads than in those of groups represented by a

female. The single woman was decidedly worse off on this score than the married female head, while the latter headship type in turn was less well provided than the married male head, as becomes apparent from the data contained in table 48. The differences with respect to common law marriage confirm our supposition as to the correlation between the *kalidad* of the conjugal relationship and the material circumstances. In common law marriage the male was better able to assert himself if he was able to provide comparatively good accommodation and the necessary comforts.

TABLE 48

**Headship Types and the Corresponding Bathroom and Toilet Facilities**

Headship Type	Bathroom Facilities			Toilet Facilities			n =
	Indoors	Outdoors	None	Indoors	Outdoors	None	
m+w	57.8	36.7	5.6	57.2	36.7	6.1	180
w+h	54.7	32.8	12.5	53.1	31.3	15.6	64
m+c	87.5	--	12.5	87.5	12.5	--	8
w+c	28.6	42.9	28.6	28.6	42.9	28.6	14
m	66.7	22.2	11.1	66.7	22.2	11.1	9
w	42.4	40.2	17.2	40.2	37.0	22.8	93
sm	30.8	30.8	38.5	23.1	46.2	30.8	13
sw	12.5	12.5	75.0	37.5	12.5	50.0	8

A number of other material possessions were encountered in the following order of frequency: radios (89.7 %), refrigerators (81.0 %), sewing machines (56.3 %), television sets (45.8 %), washing machines (45.2 %), cars (28.0 %) and bicycles (5.4 %). Differentiated according to headship type, the distribution of these is as set out in table 49. Of all the different headship types, the single woman possessed the fewest of these articles. Even the sewing machine, which constituted a potential source of income, irrespective of whether it was used for members inside the group or for outsiders, and the washing machine, which might sometimes also be turned to economic account, were less frequently found in her home.

Though the differences in material possessions between male and female heads with coresident partners as listed above are negligible, they are virtually consistent. Material wealth of this kind appeared to have become so common, moreover, that the younger heads of household groups (the 21-30 year group) possessed almost all of the articles under discussion, and more especially television sets, washing

TABLE 49

**Headship Types and the Corresponding Presence of a Number of Material Possessions**

Headship Type	Material Possessions							n =
	Radio	Refrigerator	Sewing Machine	T.V.	Washing Machine	Car	Bicycle	
m + w	93.9	90.0	63.3	52.8	55.0	37.8	6.1	180
w + h	93.8	85.9	67.2	51.6	53.1	34.4	4.7	64
m + c	87.3	87.3	62.5	75.0	62.5	50.0	25.0	8
w + c	85.7	85.7	35.7	57.1	35.7	--	7.1	14
m	100.0	88.9	33.3	55.6	55.6	44.4	--	9
w	80.4	66.3	50.0	30.4	30.4	7.6	4.3	93
sm	84.6	53.8	--	7.7	--	30.8	--	13
sw	75.0	25.0	25.0	25.0	--	--	--	8

machines, refrigerators and cars, with a frequency that exceeded the average by far. The sewing machine, an appliance that is of no mean importance for many household groups on account of the opportunity of economizing on clothing which it affords, constituted the only exception here, as there was a trend among younger people to buy ready-made clothes from the shop instead of making their own.

### 6. *The Level of Education*

Since education represents one of the chief means of achieving social and economic mobility and participation in the national culture, we

TABLE 50

**The Level of General Education of Male and Female Heads of Household Groups**

General Education	Heads		
	Men	Women	
Primary School	— Completed	56.7	52.0
	— Uncompleted	27.6	32.4
Junior Secondary School	— Completed	2.4	5.0
	— Uncompleted	0.5	2.8
Senior Secondary School	— Completed	2.9	0.6
	— Uncompleted	7.1	2.2
Unknown		2.9	5.0
n =		210	179

compared the different headship types also on the point of level of education. This showed the differences in the amount of formal elementary education between male and female heads to be only slight.<sup>96</sup> Table 50 gives an outline of the amount of general education enjoyed by male and female heads.

In view of the negligible differences in elementary education (both completed and uncompleted) between the sexes as well as between the different headship types, the effects of sex and material circumstances on education should likewise be assumed to be slight in the percentages relating to the age-groups of the heads. The figures in table 51 point to a distinct rise in the level of education over the past few decades.

TABLE 51

**The Age-Groups of the Heads and the Corresponding Level of General Education**

Age- Groups	General Education						Un- known	n =
	Primary		Junior Secondary		Senior Secondary			
	Compl.	Un- compl.	Compl.	Un- compl.	Compl.	Un- compl.		
21—30	61.1	13.9	(2)	(2)	(2)	(3)	—	36
31—40	58.6	20.9	(6)	(2)	(1)	(9)	—	87
41—50	66.9	21.7	(3)	(1)	(2)	(5)	(1)	106
51—60	53.4	35.6	(3)	—	(1)	(2)	(2)	73
61—70	36.1	49.2	—	—	(1)	—	(7)	61
71—80	25.0	55.0	—	(1)	—	—	(3)	20
81—90	(1)	(3)	—	—	—	—	(1)	5
91—..	—	—	—	—	—	—	(1)	1

Whereas there were no significant differences in primary education discernible between men and women, the men appeared to have enjoyed considerably more supplementary training than the women. This latter mostly took the form of occupational training, more specifically as provided by the firm by which the persons in question were employed. So 27.1 % of the male heads were receiving some form of supplementary training, while 24.8 % were doing preparatory courses or advanced training courses in connection with their work. The corresponding percentages for women were 6.7 and 5.6, the latter percentage relating primarily to sewing courses. Hence the percentages

of women receiving supplementary training per different type of female headship, as set out in table 52, are only very low and of no great significance in the sample. They do admit of the conclusion that common law wives with low domestic incomes and an inferior social status had enjoyed no supplementary education, however. Single women, whose number included a relatively high percentage of economically active persons, had received much less occupational training than legally married women, who were on the whole economically better off and of whom fewer held jobs outside the home. Only 4.4 % of the wives of married male heads — whose average economic position may be said to be the best — had enjoyed any supplementary training. The explanations given by our informants themselves for this relatively low proportion of supplementary training can be divided into two categories. On the one hand the opinion was expressed that women who had made a “good marriage” had no need to go and find jobs outside the home, and so had no need for supplementary training either, and on the other it was suggested that women who had enjoyed extra education were more likely to dispute the household headship, while women without such education were much more dependent on their husbands.

TABLE 52

**The Different Headship Types and Some of the Corresponding Forms of Supplementary Education**

Headship Type	Supplementary Education				n =
	General Education	Occupational Training	Secondary Education	None	
m+w	1.1	24.5	0.6	73.9	180
w+h	1.6	9.4	--	89.1	64
m+c	12.5	12.5	--	75.0	8
w+c	--	--	--	100.0	14
m	--	55.6	--	44.4	9
w	--	3.3	--	96.7	93
sm	--	23.1	--	76.9	13
sw	--	12.5	--	87.5	8

The upward trend in the participation in general primary education which we were able to observe by examining the data for the different age-groups becomes manifest also with regard to supplementary education from the figures in table 53, although there is a downward

trend, attributable to the post-War depression, observable among the younger heads.

TABLE 53

**The Age-Groups of the Heads and the Corresponding Business or Occupational Training**

Age-Groups	Supplementary Economically Oriented Education	
21—30	19.4	36
31—40	26.4	87
41—50	22.6	106
51—60	5.5	73
61—70	6.6	61
71—80	—	20
81—90	—	5
91+	—	1

Education was generally considered very important. Invariably a “homber sabi” (man of learning) enjoyed much prestige, while a good education was looked upon as the primary condition for social and economic mobility. So it is only understandable that parents should foster ambitions for a good education for their children, even though especially among the lowest classes we encountered side by side with vague aspirations in this direction a considerable lack of understanding for the educational situation, which was very often responsible for non-attendance. We not infrequently struck total ignorance as to the number of classes a particular child had completed among the lowest classes. Especially where the household relied on youngsters to perform such tasks as fetching water, tending livestock, and so on, conflicts of authority concerning the children’s being late for school or remaining absent altogether for full or half days were apt to arise between mothers and teachers. It was not uncommon either for children to be kept away from school on purpose by their mothers simply because the latter had no proper shoes or clothes for them to wear. The social importance attached to such externals was furthermore responsible for some children going to school wearing nice clothes but with an empty stomach, which was not exactly conducive to a good performance, poor as this already was as a result of language difficulties and the effects of the intellectually weak environment. The status value of attending school was formerly reflected in particular by the distinction made between schools at which parents were required to

pay fees, and schools offering free tuition. Children attending a *skool di placa* (money school) were often forbidden all dealings with children attending a free B school by their parents.

The rise in the level of prosperity was manifest also from the higher level of general education of children than that of parents. To quote a few relevant statistics: 55 % of the heads (214) had children who were no longer receiving any general education; in 15 cases it was impossible to obtain accurate data; in 52.8 % (113) of the cases the children's educational level was higher than that of the heads, while in 37.4 % (80) the children's education was the same. Our material revealed no significant difference on this point between children of male and those of female heads. The differences in the heads' level of general education between the two sexes and between the different headship types were also slight. The differences in educational level between the children of the married man, the married woman and the single woman correlated more or less with the slight differences in level of education between their respective parents.

As far as general education is concerned, our material revealed a tendency towards a decreasing difference between children on the one hand and parents per descending age-group on the other, on account of the higher average level of education of younger parents and of the difficulty for their children to make a "break-through" to secondary education. Primary education had become almost universally accessible to the lower strata. The following figures may serve to illustrate the tendency towards increasing similarity in level of general education between parents and children: the percentage of cases in which children had enjoyed more general education than the head fell from 63.8 to 27.2 from the 61-70 age-group down to the category of heads between 31 and 40 years of age, while the percentages of "same level of education" rose from 29.8 to 54.5. On the other hand, the percentage of the category with "less education than the head" increased from 0 to 9.1, which is attributable to the higher average level of education of younger heads, as a result of which children may lag behind their parents more than before. A secondary education was not yet generally considered as one of the realistic goals. Nonetheless, both the data concerning the heads of household groups and the figures relating to their children reveal a certain tendency towards cumulation of education. So it is apparent from table 54 that a completed primary school education was more often followed up with supplementary training by the heads than an uncompleted, for instance.



TABLE 54

**The Level of General Education of the Heads and the Corresponding Supplementary Education**

General Educational	Supplementary Education				n =
	General	Occupational Training	Secondary Education	None	
Primary – Completed	2.4	19.4	--	78.3	211
Primary – Uncompleted	--	7.8	--	92.2	116
Jun. Sec. - Completed	--	21.4	--	78.6	14
Jun. Sec. - Uncompleted	--	--	--	100.0	6
Sen. Sec. - Completed	--	42.9	14.3	42.9	7
Sen. Sec. - Uncompleted	--	36.8	--	63.2	19
Unknown	--	--	--	--	16

As far as the children were concerned, a higher percentage of supplementary education went hand in hand with “more general education than the head”, as becomes apparent from table 55.

TABLE 55

**The Ratio of the Level of General Education of Children to that of the Head, and the Amount of Supplementary Training of Children**

Ratio of General Education to that of the Head	Supplementary Education				n =
	General	Occup. Training	Second. Educ.	None	
More than head	(2)	48.7	(8)	38.9	113
Same as head	(3)	32.5	(1)	62.5	80
Less than head	-	-	-	(6)	6
Unknown	-	-	-	-	15

Whereas 27.1 % of the male and 6.7 % of the female heads were found to have enjoyed some form of supplementary training, our figures indicate that of the 214 household groups including children who were no longer attending primary school, the children of 39.1 % were receiving or had received supplementary training, while those of 45.9 % were receiving or had received none. The differences along sexual lines were not as great for the children as for the heads. So the 45.9 % “without supplementary training” represents the average

of 49.5 % of the daughters and 38.6 % of the sons, while the percentage of 39.1 of persons with supplementary training constituted the average of 40.4 % and 34.9 % respectively.

In table 56 a differentiation of headship types according to the supplementary education enjoyed by the children of the above-mentioned 214 household groups is given. The percentages with respect to supplementary education plainly reveal the unmistakable preponderance of economic considerations here. Occupational training provided by the employer is generally speaking cheap, while the still relatively low economic level of the lower strata makes it understandable that educational aspirations for children here should be focused on low investment and quick returns.

TABLE 56

**The Different Headship Types and the Corresponding Forms of Supplementary Education Enjoyed by the Children**

Headship Type	Supplementary Education of the Children					n =
	General	Business and Occupational Training	Secondary Education	None	Unknown	
m + w	4.3	38.3	8.5	40.4	8.5	94
w + h	2.3	39.5	4.7	48.8	4.7	43
m + c	--	(3)	--	(1)	--	4
w + c	(1)	(1)	--	(1)	(2)	5
m	--	(1)	--	(1)	(1)	3
w	--	43.4	--	56.7	(4)	61
sm	--	--	--	(1)	--	1
sw	--	--	--	(3)	--	3

Judging from the above data, the conclusion seems warranted that the educational situation in Curaçao has definitely improved over the past decades. A certain temporary stabilization has occurred on the primary education level, however, even though obviously some groups with the more respectable headship types — i.e., the groups of married heads — included members who had attained the secondary level of general education. As regards occupational training, there was a definite expansion observable. One of the things that strike the average sightseer most about Willemstad is the large number of new advanced technical school buildings.

### 7. *Parents' Aspirations for their Children*

We have tried to gain some insight into parents' aspirations for their children's future by asking heads of households a number of questions on this subject. The figures relate only to heads with sufficiently young children of an appropriate educational level to preclude the likelihood of a definite choice of occupation having already been made. So 19.5 % of the male and 16.2 % of the female heads had no sons falling within this category, while the corresponding percentages for daughters were 15.2 and 17.9 respectively. Parents (i.e., both men and women) tended more often to foster ambitions for their sons than for their daughters, with male heads evincing higher aspirations than female heads for both sons and daughters. The aspirations for sons were focused chiefly on technical occupations and teaching or clerical jobs. The occupations most favoured for girls were, in order of the frequency with which they were mentioned, teaching, nursing and clerical jobs. As we have already stated above, the low investment required by training for specific occupations constituted an important factor in these aspirations. Until quite recently it was possible to train for a teaching position of the lowest (4th) rank at no cost at all, or even at a slight remuneration, while the same is true still for a number of technical, business and nursing courses. These aspirations have in view optimum economic security combined with a status lying within the individual's reach, moreover. Female heads were more inclined than male heads to look forward to financial assistance from their sons and daughters, and were particularly anxious for their sons to start earning. Wherever female heads evinced definite aspirations at all, these were directed rather more to white-collar jobs in business and with the police force and customs and less to blue-collar jobs than in the case of male heads, however. Children in the former types of job offered parents greater security for their old age, so they believed, while furthermore the prestige enjoyed by these children would to some extent also reflect on them.

Tables 57 and 58 set out parents' aspirations for their children according to the sex of both the children and the heads. They are supplemented by tables 59 and 60, which present a differentiation of headship types according to these aspirations.

The aspirations relating to technical jobs for sons are seen to drop from 28.9 to 11.5 % with decreasing age of the heads. Over against this, the desire for sons to take up teaching became more prevalent. For daughters the aspirations for nursing jobs increased. For both

TABLE 57

**The Aspirations of Male and Female Heads for their Sons**

Aspirations	Heads	
	Male	Female
Technical occupations	30.8	16.7
Teaching	10.7	10.7
Clerical jobs	4.7	8.0
Police force or customs jobs	2.3	3.3
Other	5.9	5.3
None	45.6	56.0
n =	210	179

TABLE 58

**The Aspirations of Male and Female Heads for their Daughters**

Aspirations	Heads	
	Male	Female
Teaching	17.4	14.3
Nursing	12.9	10.2
Clerical	7.3	7.5
Dressmaking	3.9	2.0
Housewife	2.9	2.0
Other	5.0	2.7
None	50.6	61.2
n =	210	179

TABLE 59

**Headship Types and the Corresponding Aspirations for Sons**

Headship Types	Aspirations for Sons						n =
	Technical	Teaching	Clerical	Pol./Cust.	Other	None	
m+w	32.0	10.5	4.6	2.6	5.2	45.1	153
w+h	22.0	11.9	8.5	1.7	5.1	50.8	59
m+c	14.3	28.6	14.3	--	--	42.9	7
w+c	8.3	--	--	8.3	8.3	75.0	12
m	25.0	--	--	--	50.0	25.0	4
w	14.0	12.2	9.4	4.3	5.0	54.1	74
sm	20.0	--	--	--	--	80.0	5
sw	--	--	--	--	--	100.0	5

TABLE 60

**Headship Types and the Corresponding Aspirations for Daughters**

Head- ship Types	Aspirations for Daughters							n =
	Teaching	Nursing	Cleric.	Dressm.	House- wife	Other	None	
m+w	17.2	13.5	7.9	4.3	2.5	4.3	50.3	163
w+h	16.7	15.0	8.3	3.3	1.7	3.3	51.7	60
m+c	20.0	20.0	--	--	--	--	60.0	5
w+c	8.3	16.7	--	--	--	--	75.0	12
m	25.0	--	--	--	--	50.0	25.0	4
w	14.3	5.7	8.6	1.4	2.8	2.8	64.4	70
sm	16.7	--	--	16.7	--	--	66.6	6
sw	--	--	--	--	--	--	100.0	5

sexes there was a considerable increase observable in the category of "no aspirations", however, which may have some connection with the on the whole extremely low ages of the children of younger heads who were asked about their ambitions in this respect.

#### 8. *Expectations for the Future*

The recent economic developments in Curaçao had not given rise to any general attitude of defeatism as far as expectations for the future were concerned, at any rate not at the time of our research. No-one stated himself to believe that a complete reversal of the rapid growth rate coupled with growing unemployment would take place. As far as their children's future was concerned, parents — provided they had any aspirations at all — fostered ambitions that were largely capable of realization, and constantly stressed the need for education as a means of assuring oneself of a more secure future.

Although some had difficulty in clearly formulating their future prospects, and though not a few households were living in downright poverty, we did not often encounter real pessimism. So 31.0 % of the male and 29.6 % of the female heads were expecting an actual improvement in their economic situation in the near future, while 30.0 % and 23.5 % respectively stated themselves to believe that the future would bring no change. The "tem di katibu" (period of slavery) had been left well behind and people had attained a certain degree of prosperity, even though the post-war years had brought a deterioration rather than improvement of the living conditions. Lastly, 46.9 % of the male and 39.0 % of the female heads expressed no opinion on

this at all. The future expectations of the heads belonging to the different headship types are set out in table 61.

TABLE 61

**The Different Headship Types and the Corresponding Subjective Economic Prospects**

Headship Types	Economic Expectations for the Future				n =
	Im- provement within 5 years	Im- provement in more Distant Future	No Im- provement	No Opinion	
m+w	29.5	1.7	29.4	39.4	180
w+h	26.5	7.8	14.1	51.6	64
m+c	62.5	--	12.5	25.0	8
w+c	14.3	--	21.4	64.3	14
m	11.1	--	44.4	44.4	9
w	27.1	4.3	28.3	40.2	93
sm	15.4	7.7	38.5	38.5	13
sw	--	--	50.0	50.0	8

There was little differentiation according to age-group observable in the "no opinion" column, while those to whom more than any of the others the future actually belongs took a rather more optimistic view. The following reply of one 52-year-old informant to the question about what he had wanted to be when he was young echoes something of the personally experienced improvement and of some uncertainty about the future, as well as a sense of dependence on God and fate that is devoid of all pessimism.

"Nada, nada, nos tabata hende pober. Tempu di awo ta hopi mihó, ma mi ta màsha bieeuw. Loke bini, bini. Dios ta sabi so i Dios ta bon pa su junan. Hendenan no por cambia e porvenir." (Nothing, for we were poor people. Today things are much better. But I'm too old. Whatever will be will be. God alone knows and God is good to his children. Man can do nothing to change the future.)

This stands in sharp contrast to the self-confident attitude of a 31-year-old man who expressed the view that, now that Curaçao had become much more "independent", Curaçaoans should make a start with the island's social and economic construction as well, no matter how difficult this might be. He strongly advocated the adoption of a

mental attitude that was open to change and inclined towards active organization.

### 9. *Membership of Clubs and Organizations*

With respect to the participation of our sample population in a number of different associations, our material allows of the following conclusions. Of the male heads, 15.2 % were members of one or other trade union, while of the female heads 3.3 % exclusively single women, were seen to members of this kind of organization. There were strikingly more members of trade unions among the younger than among the older heads. Membership rose gradually from 4.1 to 9.4 % from the 51-60 age-group down to the 21-30-year-old male heads, the numbers being 73 and 36 respectively. A trend in the opposite direction was observable with regard to an association of a different kind, namely the traditional *seter* or neighbourhood society set up for the purpose of creating a fund to finance the funerals of the individual contributors, the membership of which societies had fallen from 42.5 % to 16.7 %. Whereas in former times every person had to make provisions for his own funeral — for which reason many people used to buy their own coffin fairly early on in life and keep this stored suspended from the ceiling awaiting the appropriate occasion — later on people voluntarily organized themselves into these *seters*. Although our data on this are insufficient, we are under the definite impression that more people were insuring themselves with commercial funeral directors than in former times, or were refraining from insuring themselves against this altogether.

Sports and other recreational associations counted their membership exclusively among the male heads, the younger heads being especially strongly represented among the 15.7 % who had joined organizations of this kind.

Questions about membership of political parties were not included in the questionnaire. The tense political atmosphere, in which many people down to the lowest social levels felt themselves to be quite personally involved and about which they were often highly sensitive, precluded this. Hence this kind of membership was mostly subsumed under the heading "other associations". As became apparent after further questioning, people were inclined also to include insurances — life insurances, for example — under this. The percentages here were 17.6 and 7.3 for male and female heads respectively.

Of the men 25.2 % and of the women 19.0 %, and of the two

categories combined more particularly the middle-age group, had joined the junior branch of the Credit Union. Women were more active members of this Union, however.

The membership of religious associations was very low indeed. Only 1.9 % of the men and 3.9 % of the women, in descending percentages per descending age-group, moreover, stated themselves to be members of religious associations of any kind at all. Similarly, church attendance fell from 54.0 % for the 61-70 age-group to 19.4 % for the 21-30 group (the n numbers here being 61 and 36 respectively). Men were discovered to go to church less often and less regularly than women, furthermore.



## CHAPTER VI

### PARENTS AND CHILDREN

#### 1. *General*

In the preceding chapters the supposition of the existence of a correlation between the social and economic position of the members of the lower strata and the *calidad* of the man-woman relationships among them was subjected to a closer scrutiny. There appeared generally speaking to be a certain connection between the social and economic developments on the one hand and changes in the nuptiality and legitimacy figures on the other. A closer examination of the different headship types on the points of composition of the domestic group and size of the income, and so on, showed the correlation between these quantities to be obvious.

There was no equitable distribution of wealth — which was comparatively great for the Afro-American area — in the lower strata, while, moreover, not everyone reacted to the changes in the social and economic situation in a like way. There was nonetheless a relatively low percentage of illegitimate births (31.5 % in our sample) observable for the population as a whole, which pointed to a general difference in the structure of man-woman relationships and household groups with countries like Jamaica, Surinam and Haiti. Whereas in these latter countries many women in the reproductive age-groups were unmarried, and there was a trend towards marriage at only a fairly late stage in life, the average age at marriage in Curaçao was markedly lower. One might say that the different forms of man-woman relationship and domestic group composition in Curaçao conformed less to the characteristic picture presented by the Afro-American family than those encountered in these other countries. The cultural, socio-economic and political participation of the lower-class Afro-American population in urbanized Curaçaoan society has tended to bring behavioural orientations here into conformity with patterns that are more in line with notions of greater social equality for the different

racess and sexes. The adaptation of the behaviour patterns connected with the polygynous and the dual standards of morality to the prevailing social homogamy, and the growing conformation to the values of a modernizing society were reflected in the relatively high number of legal marriages and nuclear family groups found here. The behaviour of individual men and women, however, testified that there were certain historical influences still at work. Depending on the degree of participation in the social system of Curaçao, as well as that of social mobility and of the modernity of the immediate social environment, behaviour was subject to the influence of heterogeneous moral views and sentiments.

Insofar as the traditional values of pre- and extra-marital he-man behaviour were still asserting themselves, we encountered instances of even married women tolerating their husbands' having mistresses and illegitimate offspring, provided this did not interfere with the adequacy of the husband's support of his domestic group as prescribed by status norms and standards, and provided the *comblis* (from Spanish *combleza*, married man's mistress) was not set up with any material attributes, such as a house, and so on, and was not publicly treated as the wife's social equal by the husband. In this kind of situation the influence of the double standard was reflected by the circumstance that, although a man and woman might have entered into a monogamous marriage, this was accompanied by tolerated forms of extra-marital sexual activity. One might interpret this tolerance of wives towards extramarital affairs carried on by their husbands also as conditioned by the African polygynic structure, since this tolerance was restricted to women of more or less the same somatic traits and belonging to the same social stratum. The married woman's opposition to her husband's raising his *comblis* to her own social and economic level, on the other hand, points to the importance of social differentiation as well as the differential estimation of the different man-woman relationships.

The question as to how big or small the social distance between the legal spouse and the *comblis* must be for us to be able to say whether the influences at work here are chiefly of a polygynous nature or are preponderantly those of the double standard is extremely difficult to answer. It seems reasonable to suppose that in the type of Curaçaoan relationship outlined above it was virtually exclusively the double standard that was exercising its effects. After all, it was monogamous marriage on which the emphasis fell here, while, moreover, the social

and economic distance between the legal wife and the *comblis* had to be underscored, or at least suggested. The relative social and economic proximity of the women in question was often responsible for considerable tensions arising between a husband and wife, to which the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage, with the connected values of respectability, seemed to be offering some sort of solution. Respectability of the kind suggested by the value of *decencia*<sup>97</sup> seemed to be preventing a growing number of men from having affairs with other women, or if they did have such affairs, to keep them as secret as possible, and furthermore to keep these childless, or again, to restrict themselves to casual affairs only. With the growing prosperity and the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship and the household group in marriage and the nuclear family, the structural factors governing man-woman relationships and household groups also changed, so that more men were becoming oriented to the conjugal home as a result of the fusion of their partnership with the group formed by the mother and her children. A definite trend in this direction became manifest from the great importance attached by men to domestic harmony for their children's upbringing. As a corollary of this, the emphasis on matrifocality weakened. If one is inclined to view this growing importance of the man's position in the family, as well as his interpretation of his role as guardian of his family's morals, as an imitation of *sjon* behaviour still, one should reflect that the specific peculiarities of the behaviour pattern in question, such as the usually unbridled patriarchal tendencies and the numerous intimate relations, both lasting and casual, with women belonging to a lower class, were far from easy to copy for lower-class men. Nor is it likely that the wife, with her historical love of independence, should be prepared to renounce her say in domestic affairs and the family life in consequence of the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage to the point where she will try to emulate the white woman's former submissiveness to her lord and master. "Mi tambe tin poder di papia" (I have a right to speak up, too) was the view expressed by the majority of women. Hence the conceptions of man-woman relationships that had harmony and equality as ideals appealed especially to many of our female respondents.

Although the economic depression came with time to be coupled with rise in the illegitimacy figures, the legal union, in contrast to the former situation, even so represented a value that

was actually or potentially realizable for a considerable proportion of the Curaçaoan population, so that the "supply" of women for casual liaisons entailing few if any obligations was smaller than it was for white gentlemen in olden times. We encountered a great many instances of what may be termed a casual affair and irresponsible behaviour nonetheless, many of these being reminiscent of the cases observed under proletarian conditions by Lewis (1966) and Blake (1961). Viewed from the perspective of the literature on the Afro-American family, Curaçao comes considerably closer to the contemporary Western pattern of political, economic, social and familial organization, however. Where this may have already become sufficiently clear from the quantitative data of the preceding chapters, we will try in the present one to find our way among the bewilderingly diverse qualitative information which we succeeded in collecting during our stay in Curaçao. The variety of forms in which man-woman-children relationships presented themselves to our observation in a situation of rapid, far-reaching social change made the delineation of the Curaçaoan family an all but easy task. Likewise the headship typology failed to provide a conclusive basis for the classification of all the phenomena in such a situation of rapid social change.

The uncertainty and insecurity still facing many men and women in consequence of the current conditions in Curaçao were responsible for the important part played by the stars as well as signs from spirits and fortunetellers in lottery, business and political affairs and matters of the heart. There was a tendency, however, for people to link their fate more and more to a rational outlook on life, as also to secondary socio-economic and political organizations. In this context they strove to attain greater social and emotional security by marrying before the law and having legitimate families.

It is these tendencies which will once again provide the basic themes of the present chapter. The social, economic, cultural and political emancipation of the lower strata will furnish the interpretational framework for the explanation of the different phenomena, moreover.

## 2. *The Ideal Number of Children and the Relevant Arguments*

A rational attitude was found to exist particularly with respect to the ideal number of children. As we have already pointed out above, the population of Curaçao was growing at an alarming rate. The average annual population growth between the years 1960 and 1966

amounted to roughly 3000; expressed in percentages this came to an average of ca. 2.7, which, however, showed a sharp drop to ca. 1.4 in 1967. A not insignificant factor here was provided by the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage, thus causing a reduction in the periods of celibacy, while, moreover, there was still a considerable lack of information, know-how and communication on the subject of available birth control methods and techniques. Health care appeared to have improved markedly over the years, what is more, which doubtless also had definite repercussions for the population growth. As we shall see below, the number of children desired was in many cases far from low, although not infrequently there was question of a rationalization of the actual number of children possessed. Be that as it may, people at least had formed a definite idea of the number of children they considered as ideal, and rejected all thought of optimum biological reproduction, despite traditional views on male behaviour and the supposed physiological desirability of frequent child-bearing. Hopes for the success of birth control campaigns were centered on the concurrence of male and female interests and responsibilities in marriage and the nuclear family, and the spread of rational modern views. Whereas on the one hand our data confirmed the contention that the number of births would rise in proportion as man-woman relationships became increasingly regularized (for instance, married heads tended to have the largest average household group, which was, moreover, mostly characterized by a nuclear family composition), on the other hand such regularization afforded greater scope for family planning as a consequence of the more obvious integration of male and female social and economic interests. Although in many cases the how of birth control was not clear, the why was obvious to most of our informants. Before going on to discuss the arguments concerning the ideal family size and contraception, we shall first furnish a few figures with respect to this ideal size. As table 62 shows, the number of children stated by women to be the ideal was slightly higher than that suggested as such by men, while the percentage of those without any opinion on this was also higher among the former.

One respondent in five — more often women than men — was unable to make a clear statement on the ideal number of children, either because they considered this to be beyond their control, or because they qualified their answers by mentioning so many variable conditions as to make the specification of an exact number impossible.

TABLE 62

**The Ideal Size of Families as Stated by Male and by Female Heads**

Desired Number of Children	Heads	
	Male	Female
Less than 4	17.2	13.5
4—8	48.6	45.2
9—11	5.1	5.0
12 or more	10.5	13.4
No opinion	18.6	22.9
n =	210	179

As an example of the former kind of reply we have a statement like:

“No tin nada di haci. Junan semper ta nace.” (There’s nothing you can do about it. Children always will be born.)

While the second category included answers with a diversified content, which never had any bearing on the respondent’s actual situation, moreover, of the kind:

“Ora rico bo ta, i casá, bo por tin hopi ju. Bo no tin zorgnan. Ma ora bo ta sin trabao, to otro. Semper ta depende die situasie.” (If your’re rich and married you can have a lot of children. You have no cares. But it’s different when you’re out of work. It always depends on the situation.)

A male and a female respondent with whom we had regular discussions gave the following answers on the subject:

“A man should never have a large family (household group). Although times are better than during the ‘tem di katibu’ (period of slavery), life is very expensive nowadays. You’re supposed to give them a good education. That’s impossible if you have a lot of children. It’s also hard to get on with your children.” (Married man, 39 years of age, 2 children.)

“Life is rather uncertain. Although your husband may have a job tomorrow, he may be without one the day after. So not too many children.” (Woman, 42 years old, legally divorced and at present a common law wife, 10 children by 3 different fathers.)

In reply to our question about a possible difference in viewpoint between men and women, the male informant added to his above statement that there’s nothing to be done to stop women having children, and that it’s their own fault if they have a lot. The argument that paternity does not necessarily impose responsibilities upon a man *per se* is an often heard one. The question of who was to blame if a

woman actually became pregnant, however, was particularly pertinent where man-woman relationships were relatively unregulated, as it determined to a large extent the respective bargaining positions of the parties involved wherever acceptance of the consequences of a sexual relationship was a point at issue.

The female informant explained that a woman is simply more dependent on her children than a man. The latter could look after himself, whereas a childless woman was doomed to have a very hard life. Although to her, too, a large family definitely implied an enormous burden, this was offset by the example of a single neighbour of hers, who, because she had no children and was obliged to make a living by peddling *tentalaria* and *dent'i cachó* (kinds of sweet), and so on, might well be regarded as misery and poverty personified. Where there was a divergence of opinions between man and women, the reasons for this should be sought in considerations of this nature, according of these informants.

The uncertainties with which their economic position as well as their partnership was frequently fraught were more especially responsible for the higher percentage of persons expressing no opinion among the female respondents. It should be noted that as against the "no opinion" figure, there were only a few isolated individuals (less than 2 %) among the persons interviewed who stated themselves to be decidedly opposed to birth control, however. Apart from them all our respondents considered some form of control at least desirable.

In table 63 we have set out the headship types and the corresponding ideal family size.

TABLE 63  
Headship Types and the Corresponding Ideal Family Size

Headship Type	Categories of Ideal Family Size					n =
	Less than 4	4—8 *	9—11	12 or more	n.o.	
m + w	14.5	51.1	5.0	12.2	17.2	180
w + h	4.7	53.1	6.3	17.2	18.8	64
m + c	37.5	37.5	12.5	--	12.5	8
w + c	49.9	21.4	--	--	28.6	14
m	55.5	22.2	--	--	22.2	9
w	14.2	42.4	5.4	14.1	23.9	93
sm	15.4	38.5	7.7	--	38.5	13
sw	12.5	62.5	--	--	25.0	8

\* An ideal number of 4 or 6 children appeared in fact to be the most frequently stated.

In proportion as the *kalidad* of the social and economic position of the female head was considered lower, the lack of opinion became greater. As opposed to this, the preference for small families (of less than 4 children) is seen to be reflective of an altogether different situation, in which an important part is played by differences in economic and social security, among other factors. For common law wives the preference for small families, as our interviews showed, was much more a function of the insecurity of their life than of any definite conception of future prospects.

Although legally married women preferred for the most part a family of between 4 and 8 children, in conformity with the great majority of our respondents, their group deviated markedly from the others as far as the other percentages were concerned. For they were least of all interested in a drastic restriction of the size of families to less than 4, and were most in favour of large families. This was to some extent, influenced by a rationalization of the actual size of their families, however. It should be noted in this connection that the legally married man, whose household group was on the average slightly smaller, had evidently less need for this kind of rationalization. This was an outcome of his awareness of the demands made on him by the status of a responsible husband and father. As far as women were concerned, their maternal relation to the children differed historically from the paternal relation of men. Although even women in lower-quality situations showed a distinct preference for small families, this does not alter the fact that all hopes for the future were pinned on their children also by women who did not feel their economic circumstances or prospects to be hopeless (i.e., whose children were not utterly neglected by their father(s), for instance).

The legally married man was invariably expected to educate and provide for his children. The institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage, with the concomitant decline in matrifocality, was responsible for the household groups of many parents and children functioning relatively independently the one of the other, even though there were definitely cases of fathers and mothers receiving assistance from their children here, too. In most cases this assistance was emphatically being given to the mother only, however.

Unfortunately we possess no corresponding data on the wives of legally married male heads for comparison with those on the married female head. Our hypothesis about female headship in the case of legal marriage, which we considered as coming about mostly as a



manifestation of strong matrifocality as a result of the real or imagined inadequacy of the social and economic security provided by the husband, makes it likely that the married female head had a stronger sense of dependence on her children for her future than the wife of the married male head, however. The comparatively greater security of the conditions of life of these wives of male heads than of those of common law wives ("E mester respondé" = the man is "answerable", i.e., it is impossible for him to shirk his duty against his wife's wishes) was conducive to their having larger families than the latter category, moreover, who were often extremely uncertain of receiving assistance from their partners at all. The combination of marriage and maternity offered the Curaçaoan woman optimum conditions of life under the local circumstances.

We have set out below a number of statements on the desired number of children made by the representatives of several headship types.

"You must understand. Of course a man should look after his children. But if anything goes wrong, it's also the woman's fault. A man is not responsible alone for the birth of children, and as soon as a woman begins making demands, the man will leave her. That's her own fault, isn't it? A woman should be *humilde* or 'dumb', also, though less so, if she's married. As a married woman she will enjoy greater prestige; she will have women friends and take a lot of fancy ideas into her head. She should always remain *humilde* towards her husband, though. Many women aren't. The risk is far too great. That's why it's better not to have a large family." (Married man of 39, watchman, 12 children, m + w.)

"Children cost *hopi placa* (lots of money). They are supposed to get a good education and study quite a bit. I have too many really, but we manage. Sometimes it's a bit difficult." (Married woman of 38, 8 children, not including one still-born child, wife of m + w.)

"You should not have a lot of children. Four or five is enough. Then you can give them a good education and let them go to school. We have four. I don't really want any more, but number 5 is on its way. It's not too bad if you have money. We are poor people, although my husband looks after us well." (Woman of 30, 4 children, wife of m + w.)

"I love my children. I have ten. I'm quite happy. Sometimes it's hard, but my son has a job and helps me out. Next year my daughter will go to work as well." (Married woman of 46, 10 children, one still-born and one dead in infancy, wife of m + w.)

"My husband's out of work. He drinks and beats us and sometimes does not come home at all. It's no life for a married woman. If you have no children you're all on your own. My children will look after me later." (Married woman of 32, 7 children, of whom one is not by her husband, w + h.)

"Who will look after me when I can no longer work? If a woman has no children, what'll become of her? My husband gives a little, but he keeps most to himself." (Married woman of 41, 5 children, w + h.)

"I have 6 children. How many do you see here? Three! The other three are staying with their father's relatives. He refused to pay up, so I took them there. This one is due in a few months. If he still refuses to give anything, it will go, too. I don't want any children." (Woman of 29, with *bibà* relationship whereby her partner sometimes visits her for a few days and then leaves her again, w.)

"I have 4 children. That's more than enough. I don't want a husband, for then I'll have more children again. Now I can go out to work, while my next-door neighbour looks after the children." (Single woman of 31, w.)

"If you're not married you have to make your own living. In that case you can't have a lot of children. You have to look after yourself, for you can't trust men. There's a saying in Curaçao that 'El a buscé pa un i hanjè cu tur' (She wanted him for one child and had him with all the rest). You're better off without a man, unless you're able to marry." (Woman of 30, unmarried and single after two years of common law marriage, in which two of her four children were born. She has been deserted by her partner, who refuses to pay any allowance for the younger child because he claims it isn't his, w.)

"I don't want a lot of children. They're a nuisance. I always have to look after them by myself." (Woman of 26, common law wife, 4 children, w + c.)

Where there are other factors besides the actual size affecting the ideal size of the family, such as those immediately connected with the nature of the man-woman relationship in question and with the social and economic security, one might expect some influence on the desired number of children also from the religious sphere. The population of Curaçao, or at any rate the lower and (for the greater part) middle strata of this population, was Roman Catholic, while many people were in touch with the Latin countries on the continental coast via relatives and the mass media. We cannot attach any great significance

to these influences — which normally have an all but inhibitive effect on fertility —, however. As we have already pointed out with respect to religiosity,<sup>98</sup> and as will become apparent once more from what follows below, religious motives played only a minor role in people's wishes in general, while the reactions of our informants to the idea of either themselves or any of their relatives, neighbours or friends having a "big" family were almost invariably expressed in terms either of comic admiration at the virility of the man concerned, or of the ignorance and the unenviablensness of the social and economic position of the couple. In table 64 the arguments with reference to the desired number of children are set out in categories. The religious argument, like the economic one, carried little weight in the desire for a "lot" of children. The number of women who considered a large family as constituting a positive economic advantage was relatively low. The great majority considered the burdens entailed by laying out a "child garden", from which one might later, if in need, at least pick a fruit or two, too great.

TABLE 64

**The Types of Argument Advanced by Male and Female Heads in Support of their Preference with Regard to the Size of their Family**

Heads	Type of Argument							n.o.	n =
	Large *				Small *				
	relig.	econ.	varied	total	econ.	varied	total		
male	1.9	1.0	2.9	5.8	78.1	10.9	89.0	5.2	21
female	1.1	3.9	0.6	5.6	69.3	15.6	84.9	9.5	17

\* large = comprising 8 or more  
small = 4 or less

Hence the desire for family planning is perhaps more clearly reflected by this table than by the figures relating to the concrete ideal number of children. Only 5.6 % of the respondents stated themselves to be in favour of a large and 86.1 % of a small family.

In contradiction with the expected greater religiosity of women, the number of men advancing the religious argument was slightly higher, which was a corollary of their role as guardians of their families' morals. The church appeared to be of negligible importance, however, even though it did possibly exercise some influence on the size of

families through its culture. The wishes with regard to the size of families clearly belonged to another than the religious order, namely the economic one. The economic motive even outweighed the religious one in the relatively rare cases in which a large family was desired, while the latter motive was, moreover, totally absent among those in favour of a small family. Although the commandment to "Go and multiply thyself" was certainly not unknown here, it was allocated only a very insignificant place among the various considerations. Wherever the religious motive constituted a factor at all, it was advanced much more in terms of human powerlessness and dependence than of a desire to carry out God's commands, what is more. The following quotations with reference to the religious argument offer a good illustration of this:

"Nada cu haci. Dios so ta sabi loke bo ta hanja i Dios ta duna cuminda na bichi, anto Dios lo duna na mi junan tambe."  
(There's nothing to be done about it. Only God knows what you'll get, and God provides the worm with food, so he'll also provide for my children.) (Married woman of 39, 8 children, the husband is a driver working for a bakery.)

"No ta cos di religion. Cosnan di religion ta pa meneer pastoor. Mi mes tin cu cria mi junan. Meneer pastoor no ta judami nada."  
(It's got nothing to do with religion. Religious things are the priest's concern. I have to bring up my children myself. The priest gives me no help.) (Married woman of 31, 6 children, the husband was without a regular job, but had been working on the waterfront for a few weeks running.)

"Some people may say that children are 'Gracia di Dios' (Grace of God). *Ma mucha bes gracia ta bira desgracia, sigur no?* (But too much grace will become a disgrace, won't it?)" (Married, though legally separated man of 43, low-rank customs official, 3 children.)

The economic motive played a more pronounced role for women than for men wherever the choice concerned a large family. This category of women comprised mainly mothers fostering diffuse hopes of assistance from their children in old age.

As regards the percentages relating to the preference for small families, the ratio between the sexes was the precise reverse. Men considered it their paternal duty to give their children a good education, and were inclined to consider the pressure of a large family on their income too great. In their opinion a large family was liable to upset the peace and harmony in the group of which they liked to see them-

selves as head, moreover. Similar arguments were advanced by women, who furthermore stated themselves to look forward to future material and status advantages from their children. We encountered much less speculation about the future among men. The following quotations may serve to elucidate the various viewpoints to some extent:

“Mi no ke hopi ju. Hopi ju ta hopi gastu. I ora bo junan a bira grandi, no tin danki.” (I don’t want a lot of children. A lot of children cost a lot of money. And when your children are grown-up you get no thanks.) (Married man of 28, 3 children, fitter, turner and mechanic.)

“Homber, mi no ke responsabilidad. Mi ta traha, i mi no tin placa pa gasta. Nunca por confiá muhènan. Ora casà, e muhè bai demandabo hopi i bo ta keda sin nada nada.” (Man, I don’t want any responsibility. I’m a working man, and I don’t have any money to spend. You can’t trust women. When they’re married, they ask you for all kinds of things, and you’re left without anything.) (Single man of 24, wharf labourer, 2 children by a non-coresident partner.)

“Here in Curaçao life is expensive. Children have to study a lot these days. That costs a lot of money. If you don’t have any and you just keep having children, then what? You can’t do anything and end up having quarrels, since everything’s always wrong then. I would like three, perhaps four children. Then I’ll be able to live in peace and harmony with my family.” (Married man of 30, 1 child, attendant/cleaner.)

“You know what? A man does this and that, and a woman doesn’t want that. Then she will want a few children, a good son or something, who will go and earn money for her. She won’t need a husband then. If she doesn’t get on with him, she’ll set the children against him. They will then call him a *pulushi* (old crank), and then a man won’t want many children. That’s a good thing. I know a woman with 7 children, one after the other, here in Wishi. Her husband has been out of work for three years. He makes no money at all. Can you understand why she doesn’t send that man on his way? She certainly ought to. She just keeps having children. She’s a fool. She says he’s quite a good husband. He just sits around at home all the time and says ‘Do this’ or ‘Do that’. That’s what you get. He has another wife in Montanja. *Hende semper ta haci mal cos. Si, asina e bida ta bai.* (People are always doing nasty things. Yes, that’s life.)” (Widow of 67, mother of 3 children and grandmother of 14, ‘acting’ mother of 11 children, 2 of her son’s and 9 of the 12 children of her 43-year-old, rather dissolute daughter.)

Aside from hopes for support in old age, the wish to have help in

the house also played a role as an economic motive for women, even though the preference here concerned not so much a specific number of children in general as daughters in particular. Although girls and boys were both expected to help in and around the house (e.g., with such work as sweeping, washing clothes, cooking, feeding animals, fetching water and running errands), the inequality between the sexes became increasingly evident as the children grew older. Then girls were allocated increasingly more domestic and child-minding tasks, whereas boys acquired increasingly greater freedom and, especially if the husband-father was absent or occupied a marginal position, were assigned the responsibility of the moral supervision of their sisters. This latter role was rarely fulfilled in actual reality, however. Sons' financial contributions to the household expenditure definitely served to bolster their authority, on the other hand. Needless to say, the urbanization of the island has not been without its effects on this situation. So the actual financial needs of young men were seen to have increased substantially, which was in many cases giving rise to difficulties between mothers and sons. The male-oriented nature of Curaçaoan culture, male liberty in the spending of their incomes, and the need for material display were all strengthening the ambivalence of sons with respect to their responsibility towards their mothers. Sisters furthermore tended to resist the paternal role often imposed upon their brothers by their mothers, while hankering after the same sort of freedom, as well as after a more luxurious style of life with pretty clothes and make-up.

Many parents stressed the importance of education and were of the opinion that children ought to be partly excused from doing household chores on this account. There were also, however, a number of explicit statements to the effect that children ought to help in the house. If the children thought differently about this, this might often give rise to friction.

“When I was young I always had to fetch water, feed the goats, and this and that. Now people don't do this as much. Children have to study a lot. It's much better this way.” (Married man of 46, labourer, 6 children.)

“The children have to help a little, but times have changed. They have to go to school and go out. They grow up quickly.” (Married woman of 34, 2 children.)

“In the old days, the houses were much dirtier, what with so many people squeezed into tiny rooms. People nowadays have

adopted a different style of life altogether. They have *machien pa laba panja* (washing machines) and have a lot more money to spend. At the moment times are rather bad, and many people still are very poor and lowly, but they're still different. Children are different, too. In the old days you could count on your daughters' help. Now they go out into the streets as soon as they're 13. They want to act the pretty girl and you can't tell them to be home by 11 o'clock any more. They come home late and you can't tell them anything." (Widow of 53, with 4 of her 7 children still living at home.)

"I want a son first and then a daughter. Later on my son will be able to go to work, and my daughter can help in the house, with the children and the sweeping, cleaning, and so on. I want 4 children, 3 sons and a daughter. Children cost *hopi placa* (heaps of money). They have to go to school and have clothes. A nice house is a must, too. That's why S. doesn't want to marry yet. He has to earn some money first, and then he'll marry me. He says he isn't able to afford to set me up as a married woman, with a house and pretty clothes, yet. And a wedding also costs *hopi placa*." (Woman of 19, expecting her first child and living with her mother, who had a stable relationship with 23-year-old S. S. had a regular job in a garage.)

Aside from the expectation that sons might start contributing towards the household income sooner, the he-man value was also responsible for the often heard preference for children of the male sex.

"People in Curaçao sometimes pray for three sons first, and a daughter only after that. I don't know why. They prefer sons in Curaçao. Someone without a son is always a little inferior. People sometimes say that there's something the matter with a man who has only daughters. They all want boys. At least they bring in money, although nowadays there are also girls going out to work who give their parents money. But you never know with girls. All of a sudden they'll be expecting a baby. Sometimes when they're no more than 15! On the other hand, girls are always supposed to help in the house, while boys must always go gadding about. Sometimes people receive more help from daughters than sons after all. Girls tend to stay at home more. Boys are always out somewhere. Nowadays girls study a lot more, too. This way they'll be able to find a good job, and if they marry decently, the mother will sometimes receive a lot more help from daughters than from sons. But still, they want sons. It's quite crazy, but do you know when women want a daughter? If they think the child has been conceived after the wedding. Then they're tired and are inclined to believe that the child is bound to be *flojo* (puny). A delicate daughter isn't as bad as a puny boy." (Single woman of 24, 4th grade teacher.)

Some women preferred daughters because the relation between mothers and daughters is usually better than between mothers and sons. So a number of informants expressed the desire for their first child to be a daughter "pa marra mi cades" (to help me when I'm old and decrepit). Conversely, we frequently heard the desire for sons formulated as follows: "Tur bo malunan ta disparcé ora bo hanja un ju homber" (all your troubles are over when you have a son), and, "Si bo ta hanja un ju homber promé, e ta habri porta di celu" (If you have a boy first, the doors of heaven are opened to you). The preference for sons on the part of men is clearly formulated in the following statement by a 27-year-old single man:

"Mi ke ju homber. Mucha homber por dunabo verdriet, ma ju muhe ta pone bo bira nada den wowo di hende." (I want sons. Though a lot of sons may cause you distress, a lot of daughters reduce you to a nothing in the eyes of people.)

Another important factor that has a bearing on the ideal number of children was constituted by the aspirations fostered by parents for their children's future. These aspirations were indissolubly linked with the parents' own social and economic position. Low social status and a low and uncertain income might exercise an inhibitive influence on the tendency for parents to project their own status ambitions. A certain social and economic mobility as undergone by the average member of the lower strata over the past decades helped to raise the aspiration level, however. This in turn stimulated the need for family planning. The far-reaching effects of matrifocality became evident from the desire for quick financial returns from children as against low initial outlay. Conversely, individuals who had climbed up the social ladder were only expecting to have to contribute towards the costs involved in the acquisition of status for their children (e.g., education, weddings, accommodation, etc.) without being able to look forward to any great financial benefit for themselves in return.

The varied motives included, besides certain vague arguments, also considerations of affection, virility and maternity, and so on. Needless to say, it would be implausible to assign a value corresponding to the frequency with which they were stated to the strong economic motives and to each of the other arguments. There was no question of absolute alternatives. Advancement of the economic argument did not preclude affective considerations, while conversely these latter were not always entirely free from notions on expenditure and profit. Children were



commonly regarded as a source and object of emotional warmth. They were viewed as *inocencia* incarnate, losing this innocence gradually as they grew up. Affection was most obviously focused on very young children. A few exceptions aside, we encountered no woman who did not endlessly caress and fondle her new-born infant, regardless of the circumstances under which it had been born. As the family expanded, however, the growing child was gradually ousted from the focus of warmth to that of authority and its assertion. Then the noise would sometimes become too great for the limited space available, and all the children would vie with each other for their mother's affections, and become troublesome or *ferfelu* and impudent. If the *kabuya di respet* (cord or strap for imposing respect by force, if necessary) was not effectively wielded for every misdemeanour, it was usually hanging somewhere on the wall as a visible threat. It was interesting to note how, despite the frequent demonstrations of affection for children, the "good child" was apt to be defined in terms of obedience rather than affectionateness. *Inocencia* was not considered as being inherent in one's own children alone. Visiting children were normally allowed to move freely about their host's house so as to leave behind good luck in every room. Although a man's mistress might not occupy a very warm place in the heart of his legal spouse, any grievances the latter might have against her were not usually taken out directly on the illegitimate children. There were even instances of the two rivals for the man's affections letting their children play together, or of a man's legal partner looking after his mistress's children in the event of the latter's illness or death. Her relation to the man in question was, however, of great importance here. In addition to general affection for children and the husband's adequate support of his legitimate family — in such a way that his extramarital relations had no directly disruptive effect on the legal household —, in some cases certain hopes of derived prestige fostered by the legal wife if there were grounds for expecting her husband's illegitimate child to occupy an attractive social position, constituted an important factor in this.

Affection, aside from the need for company of help in the house and the readiness to take on the responsibility for children whose mother had to go out to work or was ill or had died, furthermore constituted a motive for adoption. We have already seen above that this phenomenon was of some, though diminishing importance in Curaçao.

Virility and maternity also constituted important elements in the desire for children, though here, too, it should be borne in mind that

they did not *per se* engender the desire for a large family, since male *sirbi* (competence) and female fertility were equally proved by a small family. If a couple's first child was not quickly followed by a second and third, the man was likely to be taunted by his friends with such remarks as "bo ta slo, bo ta" (you're slow) and "bo ta friu" (you're cold). He exposed himself to similar jibes by fathering more daughters than sons. The male culture hero was often still the *macho* or he-man with a large family of children as proof of his potency, though in principle paternity of a single child was enough to establish a man's status as an adult male.<sup>99</sup> Female infertility was just as contemptible as male sterility. The childless woman was liable to be called a *mula* (mule, punished by God with sterility) or *machoro* (masculine woman). If she had borne even only one child, however, she was a mother, enjoying all the respectability attaching to the maternal status in Curaçao. Plurality of maternity was unanimously preferred here, while a woman might also derive considerable pride from a large family of children. One married female informant, for instance, told me proudly that she was a "mama di dies ju" (mother of ten children) and had made all the necessary sacrifices to bring up a family that size, which indisputably entitled her to the respect of her children as well as other people. As became apparent, there was a general preference mainly for smaller families, however.

The definitions of the male and female roles respectively as allegedly classifiable under the term "double standard" also have certain reverberations in this respect. Whereas quantitative maternity is once for all biologically restricted, paternity is less unequivocally limited by biological factors. According to the definition of the double standard, a mother is more highly esteemed if her children are born of a relation with one man. Relations with more than one man will not in any way help to increase her maximal biological reproductivity in any case. As far as the male is concerned, however, he stands to gain in reputation among his friends if he is able to extend his procreative activities over the greatest possible number of women. Although the double standard was still affecting man-woman relationships in Curaçao, it is our impression that it is clearly losing ground. The fact that stories such as that about the man who had seven children presented for baptism in a single year were all set in the past is probably symbolical of this. When the man was called to account for his irresponsible behaviour by the bailiff of one of the several districts, there was nothing anyone could reply to his counter-argument

that the sexual promiscuity of a particular gentleman belonging to an influential white family was responsible for scores of births. Although this story still invariably provoked great hilarity, it was nevertheless clear that undeniable changes had taken place in the island's culture. So extramarital relations were entertained much less openly than before, while lower-class men, moreover, were seen to be using increasingly more contraceptives, as a preventive against venereal disease on the one hand and against pregnancies for which they might be held responsible on the other. Men were universally expected to provide for their progeny, both legitimate and illegitimate. The *bandido* or irresponsible procreator or man "cu ta kita bondad o felicidad di hende" (who robs people of their virtue or peace of mind) was categorically condemned.

There are some who have posited that in the Afro-American area a man must have proof of a woman's fertility before he is able to make up his mind to marry her. But premarital maternity, which might be taken as such proof, found no positive appreciation among men anywhere in the area (Clarke, 1957, p. 95). Although many Curaçaoan women were, in fact, pregnant at marriage, our informants tended to regard this much more as a consequence of the early development of sexual relations in a given relationship than of a fertility test.

There seemed to be a development taking place in Curaçao whereby biological reproduction was increasingly restricted to the legal partnership also for men, while the number of children desired was fixed well below the female partners' maximum biological potential. This is not to say that the he-man value had disappeared altogether, but it had definitely become adjusted to the changed circumstances. People still tended to be skeptical at the idea of men sticking to one woman, but men were no longer called "*jini*" (delicate, effeminate) if they had no more than two or three children, and then only as the issue of a legal marriage. A man's masculinity was no longer called into question in this latter event, although he was considered to be too unasserting with his wife or suspected of aping the *macamba* (Dutchman). Extramarital affairs often boosted a man's prestige among his friends, and a "muherero" (skirt-chaser) or "cabron" (he-goat) was normally held in high esteem by his friends. The "gayo" (potent cock) was an acclaimed hero, although if a man had many women vying for his favours, this was mostly considered at least as much proof of his virility as a great horde of illegitimate children in these circles. Openness in all these matters was taboo for all who had risen socially.

Respectability, after all, demanded adaptation to the norms of the family man ideal and the exclusiveness of the family.

Along with the changes in the man-woman relationship, the role of children as integrative or disintegrative elements with respect to the conjugal relationship also changed. In this connection our informants expressed the opinion that a limited, legal family living under relatively stable economic circumstances was definitely conducive to the stability of a given union. In cases in which an inferior social status combined with a lower and irregular income played a role, the stability of the marriage in question was by no means always promoted by the presence of children. Here there were often strong matrifocal tendencies, so that children might be regarded as being instrumental in the weakening of the conjugal relationship in these cases. After all, marriage as a harmonious conjugal dyad supplemented by a limited number of children as an integral part of the union was the undeniable ideal.

In a few instances childlessness after marriage seemed to give rise to enormous tensions within the partnership. The husband here considered himself deprived of the proof of his virility, while the wife felt she was a failure as a woman and a wife. The status of both the partners was undermined by the absence of children, while furthermore both saw themselves frustrated in their desire for children as an object and source of affection. Whereas this situation tended to make the wife feel mainly sad and guilty, the husband reacted rather with aggressiveness. This led in one or two isolated cases to the dissolution of the union. In one case known to us, the husband believed that the cause lay in a curse on the house, and so got ready to move to another house. In other cases the blame was put entirely on the wife. Men at any rate seemed disinclined to consider the possibility of the cause lying in a biological defect in themselves. In these relationships children might definitely have fulfilled a largely integrative function in the marriage.

Whereas the above section was focused on the fairly general desire for children, in the following we shall discuss conscious birth control measures.

### 3. *Contraception*

The Roman Catholic church appeared not to have constituted a factor inducing the Curaçaoan to condemn contraception with any degree of severity. We have already made a remark to this effect above. Most of the clerics to whom we talked stated themselves not to be opposed

to the adoption of measures to prevent pregnancy as long as "girls continued to fall victim to the sexual promiscuity of the boys and so long as there was still dire poverty in many families". This is not to say that they were in favour of contraception in principle, however. In this connection they especially stressed the necessity for ethical instruction and sex education for boys and girls from an early age — two forms of education which were either not being provided in the household group at all, or were backfiring.

The Roman Catholic church has for centuries been a moralistic institution in Curaçao, the affects of which were to some extent still perceptible in the notions of sinfulness surrounding such matters as contraception entertained by some people. However, the Bishop of Willemstad did not seem in 1965 to show an absolute negative attitude towards the family planning campaign launched at that time, while, moreover, a few progressive teacher-clerics were actually taking steps to introduce sex education in schools.

The data on the ideal number of children which we presented above allow of the conclusion that people are favourably disposed towards the use of effective devices to prevent pregnancy. Whereas on the one hand there were a number of forces at work which stimulated a high birth rate (such as the need to give proof of virility, the notion that children assure one of a secure future, the attitude of the Roman Catholic church, and so on), on the other hand social and economic modernization was accustoming people to modern comforts and stimulating the mobility orientation of many parents, as well as increasing the accessibility of modern contraceptive methods. Modern society is demanding the existence of financially well-supplied household groups capable of investing in the education of their members. At the time of our visit to Curaçao, a large family certainly was not regarded as the poor man's riches — if it was ever so regarded in former times. On the contrary, people were only too well aware of the potential obstacle of a large family in parents' efforts to achieve a modern standard of living for both themselves and their family.

The accessibility of modern birth control techniques was still extremely problematic, however. As a result partly of ignorance and partly of diffidence, modern contraception constituted a rare topic of conversation. Several informants stated themselves to believe that the subject was seldom discussed between women friends, husbands and wives, and parents and children.

"A mother can't discuss these things, nor how to go about them, with her children. Husbands and wives never talk about such things between themselves. I don't talk about it with my girl friend either." (Married woman of 38, 7 children.)

"We in Curaçao know nothing of such things. If you know of anything against it, do pass it on to us." (Common law wife of the father of her 3 children, 26 years of age.)

"Nada por haci pa limità e number di junan. Mi no por papia die cos ei. Hombrenan no ke limità e number di junan." (There's nothing you can do to cut down the number of children. I can't talk to him about it. Men don't want to keep the size of their families down.) (Woman of 23, 2 children, non-coresidential common law wife of the father of both.)

Among men likewise, contraception was a far from frequent subject of conversation, even though there was an upward trend in the use of specific contraceptives (mainly condoms), especially in the case of casual affairs. One chemist assessed the imports of these for the year 1963 at around 800, and for 1965 at several thousand, although this does not, of course, warrant the conclusion that sales were boosted to any extent by increased consumption among the lower classes.

However, a number of our male informants confessed to a more frequent use of contraceptives in recent years, both as a preventive against venereal disease and in order to avoid the risk of being held responsible for particular pregnancies. They were of the opinion, moreover, that in this modern day and age it was no longer fitting for a man to have children "with many women". As a typical sign of their diffidence in such matters, they usually purchased their contraceptives from certain men of their acquaintance — who made a modest profit on the sale of these — rather than going to a *botica* (pharmacy) to buy them. According to a statement by a specialist — which, although it was made with particular reference to patients belonging to the coloured middle classes, characterized the Curaçaoan situation in general — general practitioners were regularly referring women patients to him with an emphatic request for prescriptions for the contraceptive pill. His authority as a specialist was considered essential as a justification for the use of this contraceptive for medical reasons. A prescription from a general practitioner was regarded as possessing insufficient moral authority.

Attempts to combat the prevailing ignorance about modern contraceptives and embarrassment with regard to the question of contraception in general are being made in the form of a large-scale

campaign launched in 1966. The initial impulse for this was given by the Curaçao Rotary Club, with the actual initiative in founding the *Stichting Verantwoord Ouderschap* (Responsible Parenthood Foundation) on 30th September, 1966, being taken by the trade unions, i.e., the Petroleum Industry Workers' Federation. This fact illustrates among other things the importance of modern structural changes in the traditional social system of Curaçao.

A consultation bureau was opened in Abraham de Veer Street in Willemstad after an introductory series of radio and television programmes, public discussions and advertisements in the form of posters showing the smaller family's better prospects in life in graphic representation. The International Planned Parenthood News Bulletin devoted some of its attention to the Curaçaoan campaign in several of its issues. In consequence of this the *Stichting* has received requests for copies of the scripts for such radio and television programmes sponsored by it as "Un Isla jen di habitantes" (An island full of people), "Kuminsamentu di un bida novo" (Beginning of a new life), "Mamaai, to ken ta mi tata?" (Mother, or Grandma, who is my father?), and "Planeamentu di famija y encyclica" (Family planning and the *Humane Vitae* Encyclical) from various parts of the world, including Indonesia, Haiti and Costa Rica.

As a more concrete illustration of the success of the campaign, the figures for the number of consultations at the Bureau in 1967 and 1968 show a sharp rise from 885 to 1715 (*Antilliaanse Nieuwsbrief* (Antillean Bulletin, 20th August, 1969). Unfortunately these data are not sufficiently differentiated to indicate the effects of the campaign on the lower strata, which formed in effect its principal target as representing the most proliferous and fertile section of the population. We were able to ascertain, however, that the arguments used in the campaign possessed considerable power of persuasion for many of our respondents, and had already induced the spontaneous adoption of birth control practices. Whereas the above figures may not provide overwhelming evidence of any high frequency of active family planning (as we shall see below, accurate information on and the active use of modern contraceptives are both still negligible among the lower classes), the population figures published by the *Departement van Sociale en Economische Zaken* (Department of Social and Economic Affairs) in its brochure of June, 1967, testify that a vigorous, spontaneous family planning trend, furnishing a basis for the *Stichting's* future campaigns, has in fact set in.<sup>100</sup>

The propaganda constantly stressed a number of factors the effects of which had made themselves personally felt to the local population, viz.:

- (a) The pressure of unemployment;
- (b) the resultant difficulties for older men in providing for their families, and for younger men to start a family in a responsible way;
- (c) the problems of the domestic group living in cramped housing conditions and on a low income;
- (d) the effort involved in adequately providing for a family ("cuida manera mester") and giving them a proper education ("cria debidamente");
- (e) the rising percentages of illegitimate births, which formed an obstacle in the realization of personal ambitions; and
- (f) the danger to women's health of bearing (too) large families.

One further point that should be noted here is that every religious grouping had been persuaded to lend the campaign its support. Representatives of the Roman Catholic church, the United Sephardic Israelite Community Mikve Israel-Emanuel, and the Ecumenical Council of Churches had seats on the *Stichting's* board, side by side with representatives of the Netherlands Antilles Medical Association and the Federation of Petroleum Industry Workers' Unions. The *Stichting's* statutes, however, plainly reflect certain reserves on the part of the religious bodies represented therein. So these have the right to suspend their representatives, which is not to say that the latter's views should necessarily always coincide completely with the official stance, but only that the two should correspond as closely as possible. The churches have furthermore explicitly reserved themselves the right to publicly proclaim any contrary views they might hold independently.

The pamphlet entitled *De ontwikkeling van het inwonertal in het recente verleden en in de naaste toekomst* (Population Developments in the Recent Past and Near Future), published by the Bureau of Statistics of the Department of Social and Economic Affairs, to which we have already referred before, contains a number of data which underline the fact that the effects of the family planning campaign as reflected by the facts and figures published herein should be viewed rather more as a logical development in and an intensification of and boost to a spontaneous process than as a startling new trend. The figures quoted in the brochure are convincing enough, so that one



may well ask whether the campaign was not perhaps slightly superfluous. The reasons for answering this question in the negative are twofold. In the first place, the population growth in proportion to the island's economic potential was still such that any attempt at accelerating spontaneous processes in this direction by stimulating a more profound awareness, disseminating reliable, matter-of-fact information, and making contraceptives readily available should be considered welcome. And secondly, large sections of the population (especially those whose social and economic position was least favourable) appeared to be partially or wholly ignorant of the possibilities of controlling childbirth. This latter fact emerged plainly from numerous conversations, while we have tried to obtain a somewhat better-defined picture of this by interviewing a number of women belonging to the reproductive age-groups. For this purpose we arranged for a number of sessions at baby health centres run by the *Mama di Bon Conseho* (Good Counsel Mother) Foundation, which is rapidly expanding its activities. At the time of our research the Foundation had ten buildings scattered all over the island at its disposal. We conducted interviews in four of these. On account of the large volume of mothers passing through for consultations, the length of the interviews had necessarily to be restricted, so that there was no opportunity of going into certain points at greater depth. We interviewed a hundred women in total. The information derived from the resultant 98 interviews which lent themselves for further working out was sufficiently interesting to be reproduced here insofar as it is relevant to our present subject.

The advantages of this procedure were that we were thus in a position to ask a larger number of women than would otherwise have been possible questions which could not be included in the questionnaire, as well as having an opportunity of immediate selection of women in their fertile period. In the retrospect, that section of the population that is normally designated in American terms as the "lower-lower-class" appears to have been disproportionately represented here, as these centres were attracting mainly mothers from one particular stratum. Judged by the criteria of housing and partner's or father's occupation and income, all these women without exception had to be assigned a place at the lowermost end of the social scale. Hence the principle of social and economic diversity as reflected in the general survey, the sample for which was drawn in an extensive geographical area and subject to different principles of selection, here was violated. Nonetheless, there are certain indices in the data obtained that

corroborate our contention concerning the correlation between social and economic differentiation on the one hand, and attitudes in man-woman relationships or with respect to the ideal number of children on the other. The sharp drop in the birth figure of the Antillean population (which according to the most recent Statistical Yearbooks was sharper than was anticipated in 1967) likewise suggests a more intensive use of contraceptives among the Afro-American population groups. Most likely this phenomenon will be encountered especially among persons occupying rather better social and economic positions in these groups. Further research is even so called for, the more so since the availability of respondents here was partially conditioned by recent maternity.

The stratum-determined selection of women visiting these centres was also reflected by the different ratio between legally married women and common law wives from that established for the general survey. Of the 98 women interviewed, 45 were legally married, 26 were common law wives, and 27 had no coresiding partner at all. The latter category included only a few (5) whose relationship with the progenitor had been broken off as an immediate consequence of the pregnancy. The average number of children per mother here was 4.5, while, moreover, the average number of children per (simplified) type of civil status also differed from that emerging from the data of the survey (see table 65).

TABLE 65

**The Average Number of Live-born Children per Mother, According to the Mother's Civil Status**

Civil Status	Average Number of Live-born Children
Legally married	4.8
Common law wife	5.7
Partnerless	2.5

The picture presented by the age-groups differentiated according to civil status is as follows (see table 66).

Obviously these figures do not admit of any conclusions about the course of sexual careers in terms of: "As partnerless women advance beyond 20 years of age, they will enter into either legal or common law marriage; when they are older still, the chances are high that they will all be married."

Whereas normally the distribution of the various types of civil

status over the different age-groups may quite well be regarded as an index of the course of this career, in the present case the pattern was distorted by the criterion of recent motherhood. Partnerless women thus will figure less prominently here due to the fact of their lower reproductivity alone.

The women interviewed appeared to be acquainted with no modern contraceptives other than foam tablets, condoms and the pill. The former two were being used — wherever they were used at all — on the personal initiative of those concerned. In only a few cases (2) was the pill being taken for health reasons, and on doctor's orders.

TABLE 66

**The Civil Status of the Mothers According to Age-Group**

Age-group	Civil Status			n =
	Legally Married	Common Law Wife	Partnerless	
16—20	3	2	13	18
21—30	20	15	9	44
31—40	16	9	4	29
41—50	6	—	1	1

TABLE 67

**The Mother's Familiarity with Contraceptives According to Age-Group**

Age-Group	Familiarity with Contraceptives	
	+	—
16—20	4	14
21—30	23	21
31—40	14	15
41—50	2	5
Total	43	55

Table 68 sets out the civil status of the mothers and their corresponding familiarity with and use of contraceptives. The effect of the age factor on the familiarity with modern contraceptives is indicated by the figures in table 67.

The above figures permit us to draw two general conclusions. In the first place, the familiarity with modern contraceptives was far from widespread, only 43 of the 98 women stating themselves to have

ever heard of these, while, moreover, one may justifiably assume their knowledge in most cases to be anything but precise. In the second place, the use of contraceptives was hardly in vogue. No more than 13 of the 98 stated themselves to be using modern contraceptives in their sexual relationships.

TABLE 68

**The Familiarity with and Use of Contraceptives According to the Mother's Civil Status**

Civil Status	Familiarity with Contraceptives		Use of Contraceptives			n =
	+	—	Man	Woman	None	
Married	26	19	3	2	40	45
Common law wife	10	16	1	5	20	26
Partnerless	7	20	—	2	25	27

The married women were most, and the partnerless women least frequently informed on this subject. As regards this latter point, one should take into account the fact that 13 of these mothers were below 20 years of age, and that most had received no sex education or information on contraceptives as part of their general education. These matters were all of them "cos di hende grandi" (matters for grown-ups), and even then not for all.

Another factor responsible for the differences in familiarity with contraceptives was the difference in degree of social contact. This was significantly lower for single mothers and unmarried mothers still living at home than for married women with their own home. Common law wives occupied a position somewhere in between, lacking as they did one of the important social consequences of legal marriage. In the great majority of cases, the chief corollary of this latter type of civil status was held to be respectability, with as evidence of this a circle of friends and acquaintances. The married women had the most obvious opportunity of participation in a broader social context, surrounded as she was by a circle of relatives and friends. As a result, any news of modern developments was more likely to reach her. A factor stimulating the use of contraceptives by some common law wives, on the other hand, was the need to safeguard themselves against the uncertainties as regards stability and economic position of the partnership in question.

There was no correspondence between the use of and familiarity

with contraceptives, as becomes evident from a comparison of the ratios between users and non-users according to type of civil status. One in four (or more) common law wives, one in nine legally married women, and one in thirteen (or more) women without a coresiding partner stated themselves to be using contraceptives. Within the different civil status categories there were seen to be differences according to the sex of the user, moreover. Although the numbers involved are extremely small, in view of the consistency of these figures with what may be inferred from information from other sources the distributions are not entirely arbitrary. Thus, since we know that partnerless women's knowledge about contraceptives was minimal, it is only reasonable to expect that the use of these among them should not be very intensive either. The two women in this category who did use contraceptives were 25 and 29 years of age; they used foam tablets. Communication concerning contraceptive measures with the male partner was without exception denied also in interviews with other single women. In the case of common law marriage, communication between the partners was similarly minimal, any women who were using contraceptives here doing so in secret.

In marriage, communication on the subject of contraception was also slight between the partners, although such communication was a little less difficult here (a fact similarly corroborated by information from other interviews). As the figures indicate, the husband played a more active role in contraception here, furthermore, which does not mean to say that there were not some women secretly using contraceptives here as well. The use of traditional preventives, such as the extract of the "tabak di piscado" (fisherman's tobacco, a tiny plant growing on the north coast, which is also obtainable at the market) or an infusion of the rind of a species of pomegranate with a number of other ingredients added to it, which are swallowed with the aim of causing abortion, and the drinking of cold water, lying down on one's belly, or squatting in a cold bath for the purpose of preventing pregnancy, likewise took place without the man's knowledge in many cases. Our material does not permit us to make any quantifications on this point. However, it is our definite impression that communication about domestic, educational and sexual problems was much more frequent — be it still ever so slight — between legally married partners than in any of the other kinds of man-woman relationship. Despite the higher biological reproductivity in marriage, its institutionalization constitutes an important factor in the chances of success of

family planning campaigns. The integration of the conjugal dyad here tends to enhance the likelihood of communication concerning birth control between the partners. As a consequence of the correlation between the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage on the one hand, and social and economic mobility on the other, the advantages of family planning as suggested by the posters clearly had more appeal for legally married couples. The lack of confidence and trust that is frequently observed in relations between the sexes in Curaçao, and to which we have already drawn attention earlier on, in many cases still constituted a strong barrier, however. It was likewise lack of trust which prompted a great many of our male informants to voice their opposition to their partners' using contraceptives. They were inclined to view this as a threat to their exclusive possession of the woman in question, since it made it easier for a woman to cuckold her husband or to "corta oreja" (nick someone's ears, i.e., commit adultery). It sometimes came to pass that a woman who suggested using contraceptives was suspected of having ulterior motives by her partner.

The current views on marriage implied a definition of the roles of the respective partners whereby the man was saddled with the permanent responsibility for his offspring, however. If he accepted this and was not opposed to contraception, then he could resort to the available devices, rather than techniques such as the calendar method or coitus interruptus, which were categorically rejected by most on account of their reduction of the individual's enjoyment of the sex and their supposedly adverse effects on his or her health (e.g., high blood pressure). A positive attitude to conscious and effective birth control on the part of men is an absolute condition for the success of any family planning campaign.

The attitudes to birth control differed from those to abortion. Men more frequently stated themselves to be opposed to abortion than women, who had of old been familiar with and practising traditional methods. On this subject we further questioned 28 women (14 of them legally married, 9 common law wives, and 5 partnerless women) and 19 men (12 legally married, 5 common law husbands and 2 non-coresidential partners). One married man aside, all of the male respondents unanimously declared themselves against all forms of abortion, which they considered as sinful. A number of them spontaneously stressed the responsibility of men as guardians of their families' morals, which ruled out a man's tolerating abortion.

The one man who was not opposed to abortion said he believed it was simply a question of money and connections. He believed that most doctors refused to produce abortions; only a few were prepared to do so at exorbitant fees, and then only for rich patients. The wealthiest usually went to Santo Domingo, Venezuela or Colombia to get an abortion. As for the female respondents, the widespread knowledge and frequently admitted use of traditional methods (about the effectiveness of which the opinions were very divided) among them were in themselves indicative of a positive attitude to abortion. Only one of the partnerless women (3 others had no opinion and one was in favour), none of the 9 common law wives, and three of the legally married women pronounced themselves against abortion. Those who were for appealed to the right of the individual to protect his economic interests and give his children the best possible chances in life. None of those against ever applied the qualification of "sinful", but rather feared the risks of *sangramentu* (haemorrhages) as a result of uterine infections, *lomba* (back(-aches)), and even insanity from "an excess of blood". This latter notion was connected with the idea that women should bear children regularly to avoid the risk of high blood pressure. The popular belief in the Afro-American area that every woman is destined to have a fixed number of children, as presaged by the number of "knots" in the umbilical cord, seemed incredible to the bulk of our informants, however. All but eight women had heard of the idea, and all were of the opinion that especially English women (i.e., coloured women from the British West Indies) believed in this.

#### 4. *Education and Sex*

Whereas the two preceding sections dealt with the ideal size of families and contraception, in the present one we shall pause to examine the prevailing views and practices in relation to children's education.

It should be stated at the outset that Curaçaoan men and women regarded children as an important source and focus of affection, as also as proof of fertility, maturity and virility, and as a life insurance. A number of other factors played a role in the parent-child relation and education as well, however. So we may list the nature of the accommodation, the degree of institutionalization of the man-woman relationship and the family life, and the connected security of women with regard to their own and their children's livelihood.

One should bear in mind in addition to the above that there are

two aspects to the socialization of children, namely an objective and a subjective, or a material and an ideational one. The objective aspect concerns the manner in which maturity is exemplified by the parents' behaviour in and outside the home. The subjective aspect is implicit in the psychological internalization of values and norms as reflected in behaviour patterns.

The nature of the accommodation as well as vexations caused by poor quality housing and lack of space were only too apt to act as inductors or catalysts in the tensions between children among themselves, between children and parents, and between parents mutually. Below we have described the case of G. as an illustration of the tensions that may be engendered between the two partners partly by the nature of the accommodation.

G. was a married man of 43, who had a job as a driver, and was a father of 5 children. He lived in a timber house consisting of two bedrooms, besides a *zaal* (sitting-room) plus cooking-area. As the children grew older, acute problems of sexual privacy arose, as a result whereof a small makeshift bedroom was erected out in the yard by and for G., who no longer shared his wife's bed at night. His nocturnal advances were quite often rebuffed by his wife out of fear lest the children be awakened. Hereupon G. took advantage of the spatial separation between him and his wife by spending the greater part of most nights with another woman. Prior to this period he seemed like 'un hende cu a beba awa siete' (a man who has drunk water number seven, i.e., water with which a woman intent on binding her husband to her has washed her body in seven different places and which is then mixed into her partner's food and drink), according to his friends. He was often at home and did a lot to help his wife, who had a reputation among her neighbours as a 'muhé wapu' or woman who is on her guard against men and capable of preventing her husband from having affairs with other women by force if necessary. He countered the reproaches which his wife made him on account of his relations with a *muhé djafó* (mistress) with 'loke bo no ta dunami, mi ta hanja cerca dje otro' (the other woman gives me what you refuse me). The harmonious relationship which he was said to have had with his children up till then was also upset by these complications, while one of the sons stated that his mother's behaviour towards the children had become less agreeable too. That was why he was so often away from home, he said.

Where in the above example we are able to observe a deterioration in the relations between parents and children, it will become clear from the case described below — which is no more exceptional than



the preceding one —, furthermore, that the freedom of movement boys were allowed outside the house was not an outcome exclusively of a double standard in the education of boys and girls, whereby the former were permitted almost unrestrained freedom while the latter were subjected to a virtually absolute restriction of movement outside the house. For the living conditions might be conducive to the development of sibling rivalries for the mother's affections, which might render the sons' presence in the family problematic.

E. was a boy of 14, who in his mother's opinion, and as he himself admitted, spent very little time at home. "He comes only to eat and sleep, and I don't even know when. He keeps company with bad friends, but gets angry whenever I say anything about it. He was beginning to stay away from school and did not study very hard. I tried to get him a place in Skerpene (Scherpenheuvel, a boarding school for boys run by the Brothers of Tilburg), but he didn't want to go. I even went to the police. But there was nothing to be done about him," his mother stated. E. told us that he wanted to study, but that there was nowhere at home where he could read and do his homework quietly. He was always being made to do all kinds of odd jobs, moreover, while there was nothing but shouting and screaming around him all the time. "That's why I leave." This way he was getting some peace, as well as having a good time with his friends. He refused to go to Scherpenheuvel, but was going to be a car mechanic in a small workshop owned by a friend. He was prepared to pay a little money at home and sleep and eat there, but more than that they should not ask of him. It was impossible for him to live there. E.'s sister V. was 15 and the eldest child. She, too, was giving her mother cause for complaint. She was disobedient, regularly went out without permission and came home late, was friendly with a girl who was no good (as she came from a not very respectable household group lacking a father), and sulked whenever she was told to do anything. V. replied to all this that if she did as her mother wished she would be staying at home to help her with the house work and the children all day. She had no room of her own in the house, and had to sleep together with a sister of 10 and a brother of 6. She had little affection for her brothers and sisters, 7 in all, except for the youngest of 1½. "When you're as little as that everyone loves you," she said. "When you grow older you get beatings and people get annoyed with you. Maai has no time to be nice any longer. Other children have come, and you have to be quiet, and then they think you're a bit of a nuisance." She was extremely fond of her girl friend, and also had a boy-

friend, about whom her mother was not supposed to know, since that would cause a really serious quarrel.

The affections were focused primarily on the newborn. In an overcrowded house, older children were apt soon to become nuisances. This implied a sudden gap in their upbringing, which the individual child experienced as a rupture.

Urbanization and modernization were leading to many youngsters, girls as well as boys, increasingly evading parental control. As one informant put it: "Awendia nan ta sinti nan mes mas muhé i mas homber cu nan ta. Antes cos tabata diferente. Hopi cos ta cambia i no ta bira mihó." (Nowadays they imagine they're men and women long before they are. In the old days things were different. There is much change and little improvement.) Only very few (5.7 % of the male and 5.0 % of the female heads of our sample) considered that relations between boys and girls had "improved", while 71.4 % and 64.8 % respectively felt that the moral standard in these relations had become lower than before, despite the rise in the number of marriages as a result of modern developments. The percentages correspond to some extent with those for the answers to questions concerning the relation between parents and children. The frequencies of the different answers are set out in table 69. Here we are struck by some slight differences between the distributions of these frequencies as regards the relation between boys and girls — an important preoccupation of parents —, the relation between mothers and children — which has of old been of prime importance —, and the relation between fathers and children — which, although it has also always been important, was even so a kind of relationship which many found more difficult to define.

TABLE 69  
The Supposed Quality of a Number of Relationships as Compared with  
"the Old Days" According to the Sex of the Head

Kind of Relationship	Evaluation							
	Positive		Negative		Unchanged		No Opinion	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
boy-girl	5.7	5.0	71.4	64.8	6.2	7.8	16.7	22.3
mother-child	4.3	2.2	64.8	52.5	14.3	17.3	16.7	27.9
father-child	5.2	1.1	54.3	38.5	18.6	20.1	21.9	40.2

Examining these data according to headship type, a number of slight

differences also become apparent. We have restricted ourselves in the reproduction of this differentiation to the main headship types, viz. the married man, the married woman, and the single woman, in order to make for some simplification of table 70.

TABLE 70

**Supposed Quality of a Number of Relationships as Compared with "the Old Days" According to Selected Headship Type**

Kind of Relationship	Evaluation								
	Positive			Negative			Unchanged		
	m+w	w+h	w	m+w	w+h	w	m+w	w+h	w
boy-girl	6.1	10.9	1.1	71.1	65.6	66.3	6.7	9.4	4.3
mother-child	5.0	6.3	—	63.3	54.7	52.2	16.7	21.9	15.2
father-child	5.6	1.6	1.1	52.2	34.4	43.5	21.1	31.3	14.1

Kind of Relationship	No Opinion		
	m+w	w+h	w
boy-girl	16.1	14.1	28.3
mother-child	15.0	17.2	32.6
father-child	21.1	32.8	41.3

As the most important virtues children could possess were mentioned, in order of importance, obedience, honesty and respect for their elders. The views on disciplinary methods ranged from regular corporal punishment at one extreme to no chastisement at all at the other, according to percentages which were doubtless influenced by the differences in confrontation with the daily problems of child-rearing between the different parents (see table 71). Mothers saw themselves confronted with concrete tensions in the domestic group, and tended to be especially worried about their daughters' matrimonial prospects since these latter had more opportunities for uncontrolled relations in the contemporary, urbanized world. The father was often able to afford a more philosophical attitude as the person who was culturally assigned the role of guardian of his group's morals, a role which many men were only just beginning to fulfil by establishing themselves a permanent position in the family group both socially and spatially. The words of an old song, in which one man asks another: "Do you still beat your children? Then you're still a slave," are not without

significance here. The seriousness of the moralistic paternal role became most clearly manifest from the viewpoint that “un bon tata no ta hunga cu su junan” (a good father does not play with his children), which has by now become old-fashioned, for the rest. It is reminiscent of the traditionally dominant role of the father in the old white families.

TABLE 71

**A Number of Principles with Regard to Disciplinary Measures According to the Sex of the Head**

Sex of Head	Disciplinary Principles				n =
	Regular Corporal Punishment	Occasional Beatings	No Beatings At All	No Opinion	
Male	12.9	58.1	22.4	6.6	210
Female	24.0	58.7	12.3	5.0	179

Whereas the percentages in the column “occasional beatings” were more or less the same, many more of the younger heads were in favour of “no beatings at all” (e.g., 28.6 % of the 21-30 age-group, as against 12.5 % of the 41-50 group, and 19.7 % of the 51-60 group). Differentiated according to typology, there were similarly few significant fluctuations observable in the middle column. Nevertheless, 15.1 % of the married men, 30.2 % of the married women, and 22.2 % of the single women were of the opinion that regular beatings were useful in instilling obedience and so on. “No beatings at all” varied from 21.2 % through 9.5 % to 14.4 % for the above types respectively.

Women tended to place more emphasis on implicit obedience and strict control than men. They sometimes exploited the current conception of dominant paternity in enforcing discipline on their children by representing the father as a kind of bogymen and threatening them with his appearance and intervention. If necessary, however, they would threaten to use the *kabuya di respet* — the rope or strap present in one form or another in most houses, whether or not for actual use themselves. Nonetheless, outright harshness in the man’s treatment of the children often ultimately provoked the mother’s resistance. We even so struck a generally quite severe attitude among most mothers with growing children. Much harsh and violent behaviour

was offset by a regular show of affection, however. Obedience was seen to be extremely important nevertheless. The saying that "Un mucha muhé bon criá ta un mucha criá con dominio" (a well-brought-up girl is a girl with a strict upbringing) was unanimously endorsed by our female informants. Even where mothers were convinced of the presence of sufficient inner control in their daughters, they still imagined so many dangers besetting young girls in the immediate neighbourhood outside the house, that they were quite reluctant to give up their control and *dominio*. This not infrequently gave rise to tension between mothers and daughters, although as far as we know, such tensions seldom led to actual conflicts. We know of one tragic case of a girl "cu no tabata kier conoci a su mama" (who ignored her mother) because the latter was too dark and presumed she had the right to tell her much lighter-skinned daughter what to do. The differential estimation of skin colour played a role in other kinship relationships as well. We even come across discrimination in the treatment of children on somatic lines on the part of parents, which acted as a first constant reminder of racial differences in children's education and occasioned tension and conflict between even the closest of kin.

Needless to say, it was not only race relations that were given expression in family relations, but ideas concerning relations between the sexes and sex and family life were likewise transmitted through the same mechanisms. Where on the one hand we encountered girls expressing anti-marriage opinions in terms of "casamentu ta un sklavidud; hombernan no ta pa confia" (marriage is a form of slavery; men are not to be trusted), on the basis of indirect experience of man-woman relationships in their own domestic group, in the extended family circle or in the neighbourhood, on the other hand boys frequently stated the opinion that many girls ("though by no means all") were "duru pa cai" (hard to get, literally: hard to trip), because they were only out after marriage and came from respectable families, that is, families in which no common law marriages or unmarried mothers were to be found. The emphasis placed on harmony in internal family relations had a distinct connection also with parents' wishes to bring up their children well, to be able to talk with them and to encourage them to help one another as well as their parents. Both men and women clearly stressed the ideal, harmonious conjugal relationship "pa pone un bon ehempel" (to set a good example). There were a few unmarried mothers who, wishing to save their

daughters from a *mal vida* (bad life), refrained from entering into a common law marriage or any other kind of non-legal relationship with a man, or refused to receive their lovers at home out of respect for their children. One particular couple, the parents of 8 children, 6 of whom were the husband's, had married "pa drecha vida" (to better their lives). Talking on the subject of bringing up children, they said: "Nos tabata den fierno; nos sa con e ta. Nos no kier pa nos junan tambe cai den dje" (We were in hell. We know what it's like. We don't want our children to end up there). The desire to be a "bon ehempel", or the idea that parents should exemplify the right kind of man-woman relationship and the family life ideal to their children through their own behaviour, implies the prevalence of the view that an immediate social environment of a stable character is most important in shaping children's personalities, which in turn may boost the parents' respectability. The institutionalization of the man-woman relationship and the household group in marriage and the nuclear family was responsible for the tendency for boys to be more domesticated than they were in former days, in the opinion of our informants, and for girls to gain increasingly greater independence, since they were coming to take part in increasingly more activities outside the house and building up a greater reserve of inner control in their behaviour vis-à-vis the opposite sex. Hence there was less necessity for parents to rely on an exceedingly dubious system of chaperonage and masculine protection. In a situation where the patterns of the double standard continue to exercise an influence and in which life is becoming increasingly individualistic in consequence of what was termed above a proletarian situation, effective adaptation to the norms of marriage in Afro-American society is highly dependent on the protection of girls by male relatives belonging to the same domestic group of orientation and on a chaperonage system. Several studies have drawn attention to the function of this type of protection and supervision. In this connection Blake pointed especially to the weakness of the protection offered by male members of the group, who were often absent from home and had not been really brought up to this responsibility. The "strict confinement" to which girls were subjected, and which tended to arouse a strong need for affection, so that as a result girls were equipped with little inner control against male seducers subsequent to the "breakdown of restraint" on growing up, constituted another factor in the failure to conform to ideal patterns (Blake, 1961, p. 80). Hence girls lost their virginity and were exposed

to the risk of pregnancy at an early age, whereby a situation was created in which marriage in accordance with the ideal norms became harder to realize.

In our view chaperonage should be regarded primarily as a prestige-conferring institution, since it was observed especially on social occasions such as parties and so on among the lower strata. Here the practice, copied as it is from the upper classes, lent those observing it a certain prestige, as well as serving to regulate social relations between the generations. We are inclined not to regard the wish to keep the sexes segregated as the prime cause behind the phenomenon of chaperonage, since aside from chaperonage on important social occasions there was little effective supervision in actual daily practice.

The warning "Warda bo curpa!" ("Watch out! Be careful!", literally, "Guard your body", which was used also in a more general sense) was all that most girls received in the way of a sex education upon their first menstruation. Or they would be told: "Warda bo curpa. Ta peliger. Bo ta mira loke a pasa cu a mucha ei. Tene cuidao cu lo e no pasa cu bo." (Watch out. You saw what happened to that girl. See it doesn't happen to you.) For the rest they derived most of their information on sex from their school friends. This course of affairs was of course calculated precisely to make girls curious and adventurous, rather than arming them against whatever temptations might come their way. In combination with another factor, to which we will come presently, it made them only too willing a prey for the sexual game. Although sexual relations between youths and girls, or even pregnancy, did not necessarily always result in permanent and legalized unions, more and more people were beginning to realize the need for some form of sex education for boys as a precaution for both their sons and themselves as parents against the potential claims of some girl to a share of the sons' income. Although this was chiefly the father's responsibility, the mother might take it upon herself to attend to this if there was no father present in an educational role. In the old days boys were told "Bo ta hecha" (You're mature), and "You ought to go gallivanting about and mix with girls". In the education of boys an emphasis was still placed, though less so than formerly, on the sexual *machismo*. Mothers were anything but happy with the social and financial consequences of their sons' sexual exploits, however. No mother fared well socially by having a *bandido* for a son. A resultant pregnancy constituted a positive economic threat, moreover, if the girls's relatives succeeded by exerting social pressure

or legally suing the boy in forcing him to marry her or pay her a regular allowance.

Hence boys enjoyed relative freedom, though no mother was grateful for the likely consequences of such independence, such as the untimely arrival of grandchildren, claims on her son's income, and sometimes injury to her own good name, which was just as apt to be damaged by the behaviour of sons as that of daughters. Boys themselves professedly honoured the principle that "every girl is mine, but don't let anyone touch my sister", and normally gave expression to any close friendship with another boy with such terms as "Jack", "broe", and, most striking of all, in our view, "swa" (= brother-in-law).

Before his thirtieth a boy owed responsibility chiefly to his mother. Until that time he was a "joncuman" (a young gentleman of between approximately 20 and 30 years of age), whose "amor no sa dura largu" (love is incapable of lasting very long), but whose responsibility towards his mother and any younger brothers and sisters had at all events to be defended against possible claims to his paternity or matrimonial obligations put forth by some girl or her relatives.

Some girls might try to exploit a young man's naivety by seducing him and trapping him into marriage by imputing to him a pregnancy or defloration for which actually another man was responsible, and subsequently bringing moral and social pressure to bear on him. A girl's desertion by her original deflowerer or, worse still, the progenitor of her child, considerably spoils her matrimonial chances. "Si un mucha muhe tin un pasado, su chens ta poco pa hanja un hende casa cuné" (If a girl has a past, her chances of finding someone to marry her are slim). She might then be saved by resorting to the above trick. Therefore boys had to be prepared against this. So the first question a mother usually asked a son accused of defloration or paternity was whether the girl was in fact a virgin when he first had sexual intercourse with her. The seduction of a virgin more than before entailed the duty to marry her.

Boys usually received detailed, sexually stimulating information from their friends, who liked to style themselves as "tough boys" and to build up a reputation as a *gai* (cock), or *gai bibu* (potent, crafty rascal), and who displayed a strong preoccupation with such body cults as body-building, boxing, and so on. In agreement with other researchers' observations in the Afro-American area, boys were in the habit of talking about girls as consumable items, such as "un bonbon", "un chocolati", or "un pollo pa come hentero a la batel" (a sweet,



a chocolate, a chicken fit to eat body and bones), and so on, when among themselves. In their actual contacts with girls they drew on an extensive arsenal of romantic expressions, such as "sol di mi bida", "mi curazon", "mi dushi", "mi vida" (my life's sun, my heart, my sweet, my life), and similar such terms.

Doubtless the use of this kind of terms constituted part of a whole gamut of techniques of seduction, by which girls might often without too much difficulty be persuaded into committing sexual acts. One should not lose sight of the fact, however, that such romantic moments might also hold promises of marriage, or at any rate some kind of stable union. The character of this romantic approach was not wholly exploitative. It might unquestionably imply also a sufficient degree of affection to bind the couple together emotionally and to make the contraction of a union of some kind less dependent on family agitation, arrangements or prejudices, or on peer-group pressures, and so on.

The popular idea held by some that the admittedly sexually uncommitted young man is out unscrupulously to exploit the naiveté of girls is in no way corroborated by our data. Girls quite often were willing "victims" much rather than innocent objects beguiled by some young man's fair promises on the contrary, they were quite apt themselves to take the initiative out of a desire to be grown-up and a craving for affection.

It has of old been a brother's duty to protect his sister(s). This was also so in higher-class families. However, where the white boy's seductive tactics were focused mainly on Afro-American girls and women, it is unfair to expect the coloured boy's protection of the coloured girl against the advances of young men from the same social strata to come up to "white" standards. Not only were boys too much absent from home and too involved with their own friends to have the time and opportunity to worry about their sisters, but the difficulty of their role in this respect was most of all an outcome of the social homogeneity of the situation, which found expression in the saying "e kimadó di cas di hende ta spanta cu su cas" (the fire-bug who sets other people's houses on fire is aghast at the sight of his own house going up in flames). So one young informant was of the opinion that it was difficult for a boy to protect his sisters where he believed with his friends that girls existed solely for the pleasure of boys, "as though these girls had no brothers"! In contrast with boys from the higher strata, coloured boys had no girls outside their own group to direct their amorous advances to.

The wish to defend the virginity of girls on the one hand, and the inefficacy of the protection offered by the father and brothers — who usually did no more than inform the mother if the girl wanted to go out, but took action only after it was too late anyway — on the other, were responsible for the restrictions imposed on the liberty of girls. In principle a girl was supposed to stay at home and to go out only under chaperonage. No chaperonage was as effective as that provided by the mother herself, sisters being considerably less reliable in this respect. Maternal chaperonage asserted itself as an institution particularly at dances so that the behaviour of boys and girls here possessed a strikingly forced character. The equation for all practical purposes of “combersa” (conversation) with sexual intercourse was responsible for the following behavioural pattern at dances. The mothers, or sometimes their representatives (usually a sister, i.e., the aunt of the girl), were seated in a room giving on the dance floor, with a view also of the girls grouped around it. The boys were hanging around somewhere outside until the music began, whereupon they unceremoniously invited a girl of their choice to dance with them, often only with a short hissing noise. They would dance with eyes cast to the floor and faces devoid of all expression, without exchanging a word, until the music stopped, when the partners would abruptly turn away from one another and each go back to their own places. This kind of behaviour, which was governed by strict norms, in no way compared with the freedom from restraint which urban life increasingly offered girls, and which ended in pregnancy for some. If this latter came to pass, the girl’s father would invariably feel disillusioned and abandon himself to self-pity, while her brothers were filled with indignation at the thought that people would point at them as “e ruman homber dje mucha ei” (the brother of that girl). The person most upset by the girl’s misstep, however, was unquestionably her mother, maternal anxiety about the virginity of daughters having increased under the impact of the developments of the past few decades. Unmarried motherhood of one of the daughters as a result of “comportamentu indecente” (improper behaviour) was regarded more and more as a stain on the family’s name. There was a saying that “Un famija decente tin ju casá so” (translated by our informants as: a decent family has only children born in wedlock). A family without any unmarried mothers was accorded the highest esteem, whereas the social position of a family with unmarried mothers was quite weak, as was sometimes reflected by, among other things, the definition of the bargaining position of a

pregnant girl and her relatives vis-à-vis a particular boy and his. "Un famija decente" afflicted with the pregnancy of one of its unmarried daughters underwent this as a social disgrace. "Un jaga mala ta cura; un mala fama ta mata" (a bad wound is curable, but a bad name is lethal). The wish to give girls as strict as possible an education, less by telling them the facts of life than by curbing their freedom of movement, was aimed at preventing unpleasant social and economic consequences both for the girls and their families. A few sayings in this connection were: "Strea cu ta sali tempran, to drenta tempran" (Stars that rise early set early), "E mucha muhé cu no ta tenda di su mama, atá den boca di culebra" (A girl who doesn't listen to, or obey her mother is soon bitten by the treacherous snake).

As we have already pointed out above, the custom of chaperonage was in vogue mainly out of prestige considerations and as a means of regulating intergenerational contacts on social occasions. In practical day to day life there was no effective chaperonage, despite the importance people professed themselves to attach to virginity and legal marriage. This to some extent explains the prevalence of pre-marital sexual relations and pregnancies. There were countless easy opportunities for a girl to evade parental control and chaperonage: on her way to school, while out running errands, going on outings and swimming, at home during the absence of the other residents, and even at nights when, as soon as the younger sisters sharing her bedroom with her were fast asleep, she could climb out of the window unnoticed. That girls not infrequently were far from averse to this, and by no means always innocently succumbed to the seductive charms of a *gai bibu* was confirmed by some young men in terms of "Ai homber, goloso nan ta!" (Oh man, are they greedy!). Many girls considered it only natural for a young girl to want to have a boyfriend and, as soon as she had one, to break off existing friendships with other girls from fear of competition. Having-a-boy-friend constituted an important step towards adulthood, of which implicit obedience in the domestic group deprived them. At the same time, a girl normally received a gratifying amount of affection and adoration from such a representative of the opposite sex, which was usually represented to them — though not without some degree of contradiction — as worthy of admiration and respect in the course of their education. We discovered in Curaçaoan culture an unmistakably erotic focus and general admiration for the virile male, contact with whom gave women not only considerable sexual but also emotional gratification.

The image of the male as the father of progeny was on the whole impressed less unambiguously on growing boys. Children playing at grown-ups did not normally resort to the game of fathers and mothers, but, significantly, played rather that of "mama cu ju" (mother and children).

The traditional image of the male, the strictness of the education of girls, in which the emphasis fell on obedience, the custom of (admittedly none too effective) chaperonage, which was aimed at preventing girls from having affective and sexual contacts with the opposite sex, and the yearning to be grown-up or to escape from the status of a mere child were all of them factors arousing the "greediness" of some girls. The saying that "pisca ta muri pa su boca" (fish die through their mouths) echoes a general awareness of the existence of this greed. The notion of "dying", however, appeared in actual practice to be more often the construction put on this by the older generation, since the girls themselves mostly derived a sense of gain — which was anything but negligible at the time itself — from it, even if they became pregnant and were deserted by the young man in question. Apart from affording them the affection which they craved — in which case the *warda bo culpa* formula was experienced primarily as a form of emotional deprivation — unmarried motherhood also involved a social gain of sorts, as through it they attained the status of a woman and mother.

In accordance with the general Curaçaoan custom, girls did not usually put the blame for a pregnancy on the progenitor. The "culpa", regarded by a few young women as "destino" (fate), lay *ipso facto* with the girl or woman, in conformity with the relative freedom allowed young men. Consequently they were not usually filled with indignation — though obviously not exactly with joy either — at the young man's refusal to marry them, not even if a promise of marriage had been made them in the heat of the conquest. Girls furthermore often showed themselves in favour of continuing their relationship with the man "pakiko un homber so ta mihó cu masha homber" (because one man is better than a whole bunch of them) and "bo tin cu pone bo curazon pa un" (you should give your heart to only one). In this connection a few girls expressed regret at their relationship with the young man having been broken off either by the latter himself or under pressure from their own relatives. All the girls interviewed by us gave a more or less identical description of the course of events following the announcement of their pregnancy in

the domestic circle, whereby they were able to realize their short-term social gain, namely the acquisition of prestige and freedom by passing from the status of a "muchacha" (child) to that of a "hende grandi" (grown-up). This course of events will be discussed further below.

With many girls marriage did not appear to be the primary pre-occupation to start with. It is this circumstance that prompted some of the socially and economically more substantial of our informants to elucidate their own ideals pertaining to child-rearing and disciplining, coresidency, marriage, and so on. They tended to regard their own example, a formal education and their ability to communicate with their children as the most appropriate means of liberating themselves from the "old system". Their daughters were to enjoy greater freedom in this modern day and age. These latter were mostly better informed on all kinds of matters than their parents, and were educated and capable of looking after themselves. Parents should always be on their guard nevertheless, and should give no opportunity for misconduct. Daughters tended to develop reasonably sufficient inner control, however. If they became pregnant before they were married nonetheless, then a marriage should be contracted forthwith. Formal education, homework and a good paternal example, whereby extramarital relations were either condemned or, where they existed, kept secret, were not without their due effects on the conduct, aspirations and sense of responsibility of sons, with regard to whom likewise bad company ought to be avoided. If a son got a girl pregnant, it was his duty to marry her — "e ta debele" (he owes it to her), was the generally expressed view. One informant belonging to this category was truthful enough to admit that the entire history of the affair, as well as the "kalidad" of both the girl and her relatives were sure to be investigated first in such an event. However, some boys defied their relatives' disapproval of the relationship on account of the girl's "pasado" (past) and would marry her in spite of this. According to some, they might do so in order to erase this past, as the girl was certain to appreciate this gesture wholeheartedly, seeing that, after all, she derived a certain advantage from this, while the boy was young enough to be able to "sow a few wild oats still".

We also know of a number of cases in different categories within the lower strata in which the boy's preparedness to marry the girl met with a snub from the girl's parents on grounds of a discriminatory nature, such as "he's too black", "he's a Surinamer", "he comes from

a bad family", and so on. The reaction to the pregnancy of unmarried daughters among the socially and economically lower categories tended to be more public than in upper-lower-class circles. Initially this circumstance aroused the disappointment and anger of the parents and brothers, which might sometimes even lead to the infliction of corporal punishment, which in turn would bring about a certain reversal in the mother's attitude. Mothers were often opposed to the use of violence by male members of the group, "pakiko ta mi cu a sinti e doló pa hanjale" (because I'm the one who suffered the pangs of bearing her), while a feeling of female solidarity vis-à-vis males might also play a role here. Mothers would say: "Ta mi ju. Mi no ta tirale afó" (She's my child. I'm not turning her out). In other cases again, daughters would leave the house — though mostly only temporarily — after being told "bai, sali afo cuné" (go and leave with him). In that case some relative or friend might offer the girl accommodation and act as go-between in attempts to effect a reconciliation, whereafter the daughter might make her re-entry in the household in her new status. This procedure prompted Madeline Kerr to term the entire sequence of events a social ritual (Kerr, 1952, p. 144). Blake rightly pointed to certain aspects which give these proceedings a somewhat broader significance than that of a mere change-of-status ritual, however (Blake, 1961, p. 78). In Curaçao parents were often genuinely enraged at the threat to their status. The relative anonymity of the urban environment usually offered them little chance of successfully dragging the young man up the "trappi veintiun" (21 steps, or the court house steps). The young man might simply say "Who are you? I don't know you. What are you talking to me for?", or "Ningun hende por prueba cu ta mi" (No-one can prove it was me). One woman with two daughters who were unmarried mothers resentfully stated: "Gai por nenga puitu, ma galinja si no por nengé" (the cock can disown the chicken, but that's impossible for the hen). This saying underscored the mother-child tie, as given expression also in the saying "tata tin hopi, ma mama ta un so bo tin" (there are lots of fathers, but you have only one mother). Another mother said: "Si meneer t'asi e ta, un homber cu te cai kaka ta keda homber, un muhé no" (Yes, sir, that's how it is; a man can fall in the shit and remain a man, but a woman can't). Besides bitter resentment against all men and ultimate understanding for her daughter, the mother's anger had been aroused by the humiliation suffered because of her public failure as a mother, by the daughter's disobedience, and by the disgrace of

having to go to another woman, the boy's mother, who was bound to defend her personal interests (including, among other things, her financial and other material claims on her son), in order to try and arrange a marriage. "E mester hila masha fini" (She will have to go about it very discreetly). Normally the boy's mother was disinclined not only to unconditionally surrender her economic rights, but also to sacrifice her social status. "Bo no por a mira mas aleeuw?" (Couldn't you have looked further?), one mother asked her son because she considered the girl too dark and her family too dis-respectable. If the boy's mother refused to exercise pressure on her son to marry, or if the latter simply preferred "e bida soltero cu ta dushi" (a carefree bachelor life), the girl's chances of marriage might be completely destroyed.

If no marriage was concluded, then, as was said above, the girl would in many cases return to her parental home in her new status of relatively independent mother-to-be, or, if she had not been expelled at all, there would follow a period of mutual adjustment to the new situation on the part of the members of the entire household group. One of the consequences of the girl's new status was the relaxation of familial control and the discontinuation of chaperonage. The new mother not infrequently won additional freedom if she was able to go out to work and have someone else look after the child. The infant's grandmother would then mostly be entrusted wholly or partially with the care of the child. This liberty, and sometimes also the girl's attachment to the progenitor of her first-born, in many cases led to new pregnancies, which eventually induced the young woman and her parents to effect a total separation of domestic groups. People were inclined to dismiss the first child with "ta un desgracia" (it was an accident); the second provoked the comment "si e sosédé" (if it happens, it happens), under due recognition of the young woman's freedom; at the birth of the third illegitimate child, however, people would say "el mes a buscé" (she was asking for it, it's her own fault). From that time onward a permanent partner would become a greater must for the young woman, if she did not already have one. As the birth of her first child had already sharply reduced her matrimonial chances, often the only possibility offering was that of a common law marriage, with its greater instability and economic insecurity, the limited responsibility of the common law husband, and the necessity of looking around for another lover-cum-provider if the latter left. She might then quite likely end up being caught in the vicious circle

of "el a buscé pa un, el a hanjé cu tur" (she wanted him for one child, she got him with all the rest).

The tolerant attitude towards unmarried motherhood, as evident from the above passage, was diminishing with the growing institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage. A few informants stated that "in the old days" a young unmarried woman of 25 normally enjoyed a large measure of freedom in her dealings with men, because she had at all costs to have children to assure herself of support in her old age; the lot of a "dams bicemo" (childless old spinster) was anything but enviable, and was even considered downright unnatural. The social situation had changed markedly since, however. Better education was preventing large numbers of girls remaining single, in the opinion of our informants. If it appeared doubtful that a particular girl could be trusted in her dealings with men — it being always good policy to assume the worst — then she had to be properly supervised. Unmarried motherhood had become a much graver matter, which circumstance might warrant a strict surveillance, sometimes until well past a girl's 30th birthday.

"In pre-oil times" it was quite usual for a man to simply notify the girl's mother of his intention to have a regular relationship with her, so we were told by different informants. The mother would retort by asking if the suitor had enough to eat and a good pair of pants to go out in, to give her daughter permission to follow him on the spot if the answer was in the affirmative. As a consequence of social mobility, current aspirations with regard to respectability, and the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage, these proceedings had become to some extent formalized into the procedure of "pidi un stul" (asking for a chair, i.e., permission to enter the house) and "pidi na cas" (proposing at home, i.e., making a formal proposal of marriage through the parents' intermediary). This was connected with the growing desirability of exercising control over the relations between boys and girls and protecting the virginity of girls, since this had become a condition of marriage. The correlation of virginity with marriage was increasingly determining the choice between marrying and not marrying, as a result of which there was no question of any cyclical development of the type encountered by R. T. Smith in rural British Guyana.<sup>101</sup> The rather formal character of the "pidi un stul" and "pidi na cas" procedures and of the "displaying of the sheet" (whereby the bride's mother displayed the blood-stained bedsheet to the groom's mother after the wedding-night as a proof of the girl's



virginity at marriage) no longer found acceptance with modern boys and girls, accustomed as many of them were to independence of behaviour. This independence, opposed as it was to formalized family arrangements, in no way involved that individual whim and caprice were playing an important part in sexual relations. On the contrary, the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage implied rather increased social (as well as inner) control over individual behaviour. The linking together of virginity and marriage — two quantities which played a less important structural role in the life of the Afro-American population of Curaçao in former times — was inducing not only parents bent on protecting their own as well as their children's status, but also young people themselves to consider defloration as entailing the moral obligation to marry. The general reputation of boys' peer groups for stimulating irresponsible sexual behaviour in young men notwithstanding, we came across some groups which had actually advised certain of their members against deflowering their girl friends before marriage, since this would create the risk "of someone else having her as well". Though this does not testify to any great confidence in girl friends ("your wife will never become kin, only your children will", was the opinion expressed by one young man of 20), it does give evidence of some preoccupation with virginity and marriage, which were eventually taken seriously even in these boys' peer groups. This is not in any way to say that sexual intercourse was generally put off until after the wedding; it does imply that there were certain forces at work which established a link between a girl's first sexual experience and marriage with the deflowerer, however. Hence there was question of a fundamental choice between marrying now or never. There is an intimate connection between this and the low average age at marriage and high nuptiality in comparison with other parts of the Afro-American region.

##### 5. *Procedures with Regard to Marriage*

Aside from the ideally strict education and the chaperonage of girls, there existed, as was indicated above, certain formal procedures with regard to the relations between the sexes which were aimed at providing control and supervision over these relations, in order to prevent "desgracia" (accidents) from happening and girls' matrimonial chances being destroyed. A girl's suitor was formally required to ask permission for courting her "E tin cu puntra pa namora X" (He has to ask permission to court X). It was out of the question

for him to just go and "talk" to the girl without any further ado, but he had to gain admission to the domestic cocoon surrounding his beloved first: "e ta pidi un stul" (he is asking for a chair to sit on). If he was granted this, a period of approximately two years' courtship would set in, in which the couple's liberty and privacy were extended gradually, though in accordance with a set "timeable". The boy's formal rights to the girl increased accordingly, implying a phased transferral of parental authority to the husband-to-be. According to the strict view, a wife owed her husband implicit obedience; she was supposed to stay at home with the children and to act "humilde" (with humility). Towards the end of this two-year courtship, the young man had the right to tell the girl to "cera bo boca, keda ketu!" (Keep your mouth shut, don't talk) without her relatives' intermediary, or even threaten to strike her if she did not behave well. However, such violence was not as a rule appreciated, neither before nor after the marriage had taken place. If a woman was disposed to put up with beatings from her husband, people assumed that "el a perde heful" (she has lost feeling, meaning that she was no longer taking much notice of her husband or was indifferent to his treatment of her), or that she tolerated such beatings on account of the good care the husband otherwise took of her, or that she was capable of defending herself as a *muhé wapu* (strong woman) anyway.

After the granting of permission to court, there was still no absolute certainty that the official courtship would end up in marriage. The chances that this would in fact, happen increased with time, however. People would say that in the initial phases the boy should refuse every cup of chocolate offered him, for instance, "pakiko ora e mama trece chocolati no tin scapatorio" (because once the mother starts serving chocolate there is no escaping). This was because of a general fear that magic charms for binding the boy to the girl for good could have been added to this beverage. To avoid frightening a suitor away, one should refrain from offering him chocolate, therefore. Where the courtship had been carried on for some time and the couple's liberties had gradually increased, the social pressure on the young man to convert this particular relationship into a marriage increased correspondingly. By this time the relationship had become closely interwoven into a whole network of familial and other social relations. If a young man still did not feel obliged to give the future a more definite shape after one year's official courtship, but wished to break off the relationship instead, he exposed himself to the indignation

of his own relatives also, since these then considered themselves to have become socially compromised. Society took a grave view of such behaviour. "El a sinti stul na lomba un anja largu i el a bula pipa i bai sin casa" (He has felt the chair behind his back for a whole year and yet he has thrown up the sponge and left without marrying) constituted a serious social reproach.

The end of the two-year courtship was marked by the customary "pidi na cas" (making a proposal of marriage, literally: to propose at home). In its most formal form this procedure involved the young man's writing a letter to the girl's parents, whereupon a meeting for the purpose of making arrangements for the wedding took place between the mutual families.

The "pidi un stul" procedure seemed to be rapidly disappearing in Curaçao. Although the custom of "pidi na cas", as the culmination of the entire process, the purpose of which was to ask official permission for marriage and enable the respective families to make arrangements for the necessary festivities, seemed to have stood the test of time slightly better, it was losing in formality in "e bida moderna" (modern life). Hence in our view the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage tended to some extent to stimulate the observance of this kind of procedure, while on the other hand the modernization of life in Curaçao was undermining their formal character. Where such formalities as "pidi un stul" and "pidi na cas" were observed, though more particularly where the former was for the greater part omitted on account of the freer and easier style of life of the modern generation, the boy was certainly expected to make an unambiguous statement of his intentions. Before giving a boy permission to court or marry one of their daughters, the girl's parents would investigate his own antecedents as well as his family background. Conversely, the boy's relatives would make enquiries about the girl and her family. "Bo tin cu mira con e mama, pakiko pampuna no sa pari kalbas" (You should look at the mother. After all, pumpkins don't put forth calabashes) was a popular saying in this connection.

The investigation of the boy's background was focused on both his economic resources (work, income, savings, etc.) and his good or bad reputation. If he was discovered to possess "ju djafo" (illegitimate children), for instance, or in general to have behaved unreliably in the course of his sexual career, he was almost certainly rejected. In such cases parents might oppose the conclusion of a marriage even if the girl was pregnant. "Bai drecha caminda b'a danja, ma no casa

mi ju" (Make up for the wrong you have done, but don't marry my daughter), they might then say in response to the boy's proposal of marriage. If, it transpired on the other hand, that the boy was meeting his financial responsibilities towards any illegitimate offspring he might have fathered, this could sometimes count in his favour, so that *ju djafo per se* definitely did not necessarily stand in the way of marriage. If there was little fault to be found with either of the prospective partners and their mutual families — though uneasiness about specific social stigmas attaching to the family name and parental anxiousness to have daughters safely married off might make for considerable compromising here — the families would declare themselves "contentu" (content), and the way was cleared for the marriage and wedding arrangements to be set in notion.

The first contact between the respective families was preferably established by the fathers, in the presence of the mothers but the absence of the boy and girl. It was often initiated by the girl's parents after the young man's announcement of his intention to marry their daughter, in order to inform the boy's parents accordingly. This opened the way for a speedy disposal of the various arrangements for a marriage in a contingency, such as the girl's pregnancy, without fear of opposition from the young man's relatives. The first official visit was paid by the boy's to the girl's parents, which was followed by a visit in the opposite direction. This way the courtship of the two young people was "confirmed". Not long after this the mothers would take steps to attend to the rest, partly because it was primarily the mothers on whom the success of the upbringing of the couple reflected. So the girl's mother experienced her greatest triumph when she could show the boy's mother the blood-stained sheet of the bed in which the newly-weds had spent their wedding night the next morning as evidence that she had delivered her daughter in good, that is to say, virginal condition. However, the fact that only few girls entered marriage as virgins was causing the sheet ceremony to fall into virtual disuse. If the parents insisted on observing it nonetheless, the couple usually took precautions to dye their sheet by some simple means in order to avoid complications. The girl's virginity definitely determined her status vis-à-vis her husband(-to-be) and his relatives to a not inconsiderable extent both before and after the wedding.

"Loka ta masha bunita ta un casamentu con 6 cos:

1. bishita di famija;
2. e mucha muhé i e mucha homber to conoci otro 1 o 2 anja;

3. e famijanan ta contentu;
4. e mucha homber tin un cas;
5. nan ta casa inocente; i
6. un fiesta di casamentu."

(What is ideal is a marriage with six things:

1. the exchange of visits between the mutual families;
2. the girl and boy have known each other for one or two years;
3. the respective families are contented;
4. the boy owns a house;
5. they are pure at marriage (i.e., they are either virgins or at least not expecting a child, and the marriage is not 'forced'); and
6. a wedding.)

The civil marriage ceremony usually took place in the morning or afternoon. It was mostly a very simple affair, without many people attending. The church ceremony was preferably conducted late in the afternoon, so that as many people as possible could attend. As a result the church ceremony was regarded as the essential one. Where in the old days the couple would drive to church in a *garoshi* (a light cart drawn by a mule or two oxen) or, more stylish still, a horse-drawn *sjers* or *gig*, later on these were superseded by the car as the most popular conveyance. In the *cunucu* it was customary to drive all the way from town by car, if possible. The bridegroom likewise would go by car to Willemstad, there to dress up in a dark suit with tailcoat, and then return to the *cunucu* to fetch his white-gowned bride. It was supposed to be lucky for a bridal couple to have a great train of bridesmaids and pages, all dressed in brand new clothes, the girls all alike in dresses resembling bridal gowns and the boys in tuxedos, if possible. The couple, preceded by flower-girls and followed by a large retinue, would set out for church from the bride's home, where they returned again for the reception, the sumptuous wedding breakfast and the party after the ceremony. Here the pair would seat themselves on the *talmu*, a kind of throne decorated predominantly in blue, and speeches were held, preferably in Spanish, at the conclusion of each of which the guests were supposed to toast them with nips of champagne ("toca! no bebe!" = just take a nip! don't drink it!). The wedding presents were usually piled somewhere on a bed unopened. Then the party and meal would commence. This was a lavish affair, neither cost nor effort being spared to draw the attention of the entire community to the festivities — amplifiers even being used for this purpose — and to provide all the guests with prodigious

quantities of food and drink. After this was over, each guest received a piece of cake wrapped in a serviette to take home with him. The bridesmaids and pages as well as the witnesses were sometimes presented with an extra piece of "bolo pretu" (black cake, an expensive delicacy) in special heart-shaped boxes with the name of the newly-weds inscribed on the lids in gold lettering. The invitations were likewise printed in gold and written in Spanish, and were sent round to as large as possible a number of people.<sup>102</sup> In the old days it even seems to have been customary or fashionable to attach a *dipchi* (silver coin) to the invitation. The hosts invariably hoped for many guests, weddings attended by 400-500 people being not uncommon, while sometimes a special party might even be given later for all who were unable to come on the actual weddingday. Excepting outright enemies, no-one was supposed to be turned away and every guest was supposed to be allowed to eat of every dish to his heart's content. Even friends of friends of friends were welcome, while uninvited guests also had to be admitted. All this provides abundant evidence of the desire for status display and lavish ostentation, which may be traceable to the custom of giving sumptuous engagement and wedding parties, at which even the poor were allowed to come and feed on the leftovers — these latter being referred to as "pikidó di punta" (crumb pickers) — among wealthy old Curaçaoan families.

It stands to reason that many people must have run into heavy debt by holding wedding celebrations which came up to the current social expectations in the lower strata. The contributions from the wedding *padrino* and *madrina* (male and female sponsor) normally covered only part of the total expenses. It is furthermore easy to see how the economic recession of the 1960's must have made it even more difficult than before for people to celebrate weddings in a way that buttressed their claims to status by concluding a marriage. It is understandable, finally, why some people should have concluded secret "hospital marriages", and why not only elderly couples wishing to better their lives after years of common law marriage, but also young couples desirous of legalizing their status as parents — either actual or prospective — in a cheap way should have resorted to this. An inevitable consequence in the latter case, however, was the socially embarrassing situation whereby the husband was obliged to "pay" his friends for the acquisition of his new status without the socially prescribed sumptuous display. He was often approached with the question "Ai, casà bo ta?" (Ah, so you're married?), whereat he

would try to place the event a long way in the past by replying "Ai homber, masha dia caba" (For ages, man). The traditional extravagance of weddings among Curaçao's upper circles in olden times was exercising an influence on the style of weddings among the lower classes today as a result of the social and economic advancement of Afro-American groups in the course of the present century. The fact that a wedding might plunge a couple into irresponsibly heavy debt, which sometimes did not fail to have its effect on the newly established matrimonial relations, accorded well with the relative lack of budgetary foresight which we encountered in connection with housekeeping expenses, buying furniture, and so on. Such financial irresponsibility in many cases was an outcome of the conception of respectability, which was supposedly achieved through legal marriage and, more in particular, the wedding as social confirmation hereof. Christening and confirmation parties constituted another source of indebtedness on account of the socially prescribed grandeur of these occasions.

Although some couples went on a short honeymoon trip to one of the surrounding islands, this was far from general. In many cases the bridegroom would simply take a few days off from work. The custom whereby the newly-weds were supposed not to leave the house for a few days after the marriage was dying out although it was still observed sporadically. Here the mother or aunt of the bride would provide the pair with food. We are unable to satisfactorily answer the question as to the prevalence of this custom in former times.

No formal procedure was encountered in connection with common law marriage. Men and women who had entered this form of marriage had usually met at the house of relatives, at work or in the street. The couple would go and live together after an initial period in which the man favoured the woman (and her children) with small gifts and economic assistance and in which sexual contact took place, at any rate after some time. It was held to be a matter of general courtesy for the man to go and inform the mother and neighbours of the couple's intention to live together. Not even this trifling formality was required by the *biba* relationship.

#### 6. *Legal and Common Law Marriage and the Visiting Relationship — Some Supplementary Remarks*

We have given above some illustrations of the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship and the household group in marriage and the nuclear family on the basis of the results of our survey and of

data provided by official statistical reports, among other things. At the same time we endeavoured to demonstrate the correlation between the economic and social status of the heads of household groups of our sample and the nature of the man-woman relationships among them, as a reflection of the relation between the process of Curaçao's economic development in general and the social and economic mobility of the Afro-American sections of its population in particular on the one hand, and the changes in the marriage and illegitimacy figures on the other. The institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage here ruled out a close correlation between differences in economic circumstances and differences in civil status. Those entering into legal marriage in former times did so under totally different social circumstances than those concluding marriages in later years. After all, the latter were acting more in conformity with the current norms of their immediate environment and under the influence of a different sort of social control in making their decision accordingly. The enormous rise in the costs involved in concluding a legal marriage was offset by the stronger influence on behaviour of the respectability values of marriage and the family. Modernization was also bringing a number of money-saving devices in its wake in this connection, moreover. So it became possible to settle neolocally in a rented house instead of having to build a home, for instance. In addition, a certain individualization of the relations between young men and women served to minimize the "grandness" of the necessary festivities to some extent, since as a result fewer familial status aspirations were involved, while the greater prevalence of marriage was responsible for a decreased emphasis on its socially distinctive function. We feel justified in pointing to this as a definite trend, even though the examples of marriages concluded publicly though with a modest measure of display were so far not numerous. The primary requirements of a wedding, as described for the greater part above, were still deterring a not inconsiderable number of people from taking this step.

The institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage together with the increased importance attached to virginity have not been without their due effect on the average age at marriage. Marriage as a confirmation of a conjugal relationship which had "proved" itself over a period of years (such as the Jamaican "trial concubinage") appeared to be decidedly un-Curaçaoan. Ideally marriages were concluded at an early stage in people's sexual careers. If a girl's loss of



virginity was not followed up with a marriage with the deflowerer, this definitely reduced her matrimonial chances, while these chances were rendered especially low if her sexual contacts with a young man led to pregnancy without marriage. Most significant in Curaçao's developmental process was the moral obligation under which a boy was placed to marry a girl after deflowering her or (in more extreme cases) getting her pregnant. This obligation was considered as more or less a matter of course by many young men.

Taking a look at the figures for the average age at marriage in Curaçao, it becomes evident that in comparison with other parts of the Afro-American area the situation here is characterized by a relatively low age at marriage. For Jamaica, Roberts noted an average age at marriage of 43.1 years for men and 28.6 years for women, side by side with a relatively high percentage of illegitimate births (Roberts, 1957, p. 293). Blake, in her Jamaican sample of 1961, arrived at a figure of 29.5 and 25.6 respectively for this average age. As regards Barbados, Goode established an average age at marriage of 31.7 for men, which corresponds with Greenfield's findings (Greenfield, 1966, p. 118). As against this, we arrived at a figure of 27.8 and 23.9 years for men and woman respectively, coupled with a comparatively low illegitimacy figure, for Curaçao.<sup>108</sup> Our informants believed the best age at which to get married to be 30 for men and 23 for women. So one may conclude that many men married at a considerably younger age than that which was considered ideal by the great majority. Among the reasons advanced for fixing this age at 30 for men there was the notion that this gave them all the time they needed to sow their wild oats. "E mester keiru i bebe. E bida soltera ta dushi i e no kier responsabilidad, ma ora e tin 30 anja e homber to bira mas sosegà; e tin mas tinu." (A man needs to go gadding about and to go on the booze. A bachelor's life is sweet and he wants no responsibility. But when he's 30 he becomes steadier; he pays more attention.) Moreover, men were considered as having fulfilled the most immediate of their material obligations towards their mothers by the time they were thirty, so that then some margin was created for financial responsibilities elsewhere. Nonetheless, there was general consensus about the obligation of sons to support their mother until her death.

For girls, 23 hence was considered an appropriate age at which to get married and set up an independent household. Before that time they were supposed to help their mothers at home, while after that,

too, some form of help was often expected of them. As we have observed above, daughters usually maintained closer ties with their mother than sons.

In our discussion of nuptiality,<sup>104</sup> we explained that there had been a trend towards marriage age at a younger age in Curaçao. The same tendency is observable for our sample from the data set out in table 72, and more especially from a comparison of the 31-40, 41-50, 51-60 and 61-70 age-groups.

TABLE 72

**Age at Time of First Marriage set out in Categories, According to the Age-Groups of those of the Heads of Household Groups who had Concluded Marriages**

Age-Groups of Heads who had Concluded a marriage	Age at Time of First Marriage					n =
	Below 20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	
21-30	32.1	67.9	-	-	-	28
31-40	16.4	76.1	7.5	-	-	67
41-50	8.5	57.4	31.9	2.2	-	94
51-60	10.3	46.6	32.8	8.6	1.7	58
61-70	4.8	54.8	21.4	16.7	2.3	42
71-80	5.9	47.1	29.4	5.9	11.8	17
81-90	-	66.7	33.3	-	-	3
91+	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>						<b>309 *</b>

\* = 79.4 per cent of the total sample

Both the ideal and the actual age at marriage were for the greater part well above the age at which young people had their first sexual experience with a member of the opposite sex. Nonetheless, a number of young male informants stated themselves to believe that girls "ta duru pa cai" (are hard to seduce, lit. "hard to trip"). "Antes no tabatin senjorita di mas cu 18 anja di edad. Awendia poco ta keda senjorita, ma mas cu antes" (In the old days there were no virgins above the age of 18; though there are few who remain virgins at present, more do so than in former times), so others stated, this latter viewpoint having some connection with the tendency for girls to establish a closer link between their sexual initiation and marriage. A drop in the age at marriage for men went hand in hand with this.

The institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage involved the necessity of marriage with the deflowerer. Of the marriages in our sample, 45.6 % had been concluded after the girl

had become pregnant, the stage of advancement of the pregnancy varying from 4 to 9 months. It is only logical to assume that the percentage of those who lost their virginity before marriage was well above this 45.6, however.

The results of our interviews at the baby health centres showed that 4 of the 48 mothers who were, or had at one time been married had had at least one child by their husbands before the marriage. In two cases the marriage had been a legal confirmation of an existing concubinage, while in the other two cases it formed the culmination of a visiting relationship.

A total of 27, or 56.3 %, of the married mothers had been pregnant at marriage. Of the 30 mothers who had at one time or another entered into a common law marriage, 12 (or 40 %) had had at least one child by their common law partner, and 21 (70 %) were pregnant at the time they entered into the partnership.

A girl's "choice" between marrying or not marrying subsequent to defloration or, in more extreme cases, pregnancy, is reflected also by the figures relating to previous unions. An increase in the number of marriages implied a decrease in premarital sexual relationships with men other than the (prospective) partner. Although such relationships generally had fewer adverse consequences as regards matrimonial chances for men than for women, men's sexual careers might even so also be affected whenever these relationships entailed such heavy financial responsibilities or such an enormous loss of respectability as to render them unacceptable as marriage candidates to girls and their relatives.

The ratio between the number of legal marriages, common law marriages and visiting relationships in our sample gives us little idea as to the relative frequency with which these forms of man-woman relationship were entered into, however. Obviously, unions of a less exclusive and definitive character than marriage will occur with greater frequency. One might represent this to oneself in terms of a continuum, with casual affairs involving casual changes of partners occupying a place at one end, and marriage with its greater stability and fewer legal and *de facto* separations and its clear-cut definitions of tasks and obligations one at the other end, and the *bibá* and *companjá* a place somewhere in between. Table 73 sheds some light on the relative frequency of occurrence of each of these, although data on the casual affair and the *bibá* relationship are not included in the figures presented here. According to the information we gather-

ed the married heads of household groups had had relatively few previous coresidential relationships. Among the single women, of whom 48.9 % had been married at one time and 51.1 % had never been married at all, there was a comparatively higher number of previous coresidential relationships observable. The category of heads with common law marriages, which is unfortunately too small to be relevant for comparative purposes, included an even lower percentage of people "without previous relationships".

TABLE 73

**The Different Headship Types and the Number of Previous Coresidential Relationships**

Headship Types	Previous Relationship					n =
	0	1	2	3	4	
m + w	90.0	7.8	1.7	--	0.6	180
w + h	92.2	7.8	--	--	--	64
m + c	37.5	37.5	25.0	--	--	8
w + c	35.5	57.1	7.1	--	--	14
m	88.9	11.1	--	--	--	9
w	77.2	17.4	2.2	2.2	1.1	93
sm	69.2	15.4	7.7	--	7.7	13
sw	12.5	62.5	12.5	12.5	--	8

The 69 heads with previous coresidential relationships (17.7 %) listed 97 such relationships in total, 22 of them legal and 75 common law. Of these 69 heads, 59 had had no more than one such previous coresidential relationship. The average duration of the 75 common law marriages was 2½ years. Whereas the figures of the survey probably present a somewhat exaggeratedly positive picture, the data derived from the interviews at the baby health centres point to a situation that may rectify this picture, although it should be borne in mind that, as we have already observed above, the category of women who came to these centres for consultation was to some extent determined by a certain social selection. Four of the women had had their first child at the age of 15 or less; 59 women were between 16 and 20 years of age, 23 between 21 and 25, 9 between 26 and 30, 3 between 31 and 35, and 3 over 35 when this event occurred.<sup>105</sup> All of the 15 women who had had their first child after their 26th year were married at the time of the interview. Of the married mothers 51.1 %, as against 76.9 % of the common law wives and 74.1 % of

the women without a coresidential partner, had had their first child before they were 20 years old. These data are presented in absolute numbers in table 74.

TABLE 74

**The Civil Status of the Mothers Visiting the Consultation Centres and their Age at the Birth of their First Child in Categories**

Civil Status	Age at Birth of First Child					n =
	10-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	
Married	1	22	13	7	2	45
Common Law Wife	1	19	6	-	-	26
Without Co-residential partner	2	18	4	2	1	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>98</b>

The civil status of these 98 women at the time of birth of their first child deviated noticeably from the picture presented by the above figures. Whereas 42 of the women were married at the time they first entered motherhood (as compared to 45 at the time of the interview), only 8 (as against 26) were living in concubinage at the time, while 48 (over against 27) had no coresidential partner.

Of the 26 women living in concubinage at the time of the interview, 5 had the same kind of relationship at the time of birth of their first child, while three were married and 18 had no coresidential partner. Of the 27 mothers lacking a coresidential partner at the time of the interview, 26 had been in the same position at the time their first child was born, while the only exception to this had been living in concubinage at the time. Of the 45 women who were married at the time of the interview, 39 had borne their first child in wedlock. Two of the remaining 6 had been living in concubinage at the time of the birth, both concubinages having been converted into legal marriages since. The other 4 had had no coresidential partner, 3 having later married the progenitor and one a man other than the child's father. The interval between the birth of the first child and the marriage of the three mothers concerned to the progenitors of these children varied from 3 days to up to 2 years. The only woman who had married someone other than the progenitor had married the father of her second child soon after its birth 4 years later. These data reflect the connection between pregnancy and marriage with the father of the first child. The position as regards common law wives and mothers

lacking a coresident partner was different altogether from the situation among the married women. Of the 26 women without a coresidential partner at the time of birth of their first child, 15 were still entertaining relations with the progenitor — 8 of these being uncertain or pessimistic about their matrimonial prospects, while the remaining 7 were convinced that their sexual partner would marry them as soon as he had enough money for a house and furniture, and so on — and 11 were no longer in touch with the father. It is interesting to note in this connection that 20 of the 27 women without a partner at the time of the interview were under the age of 25, 13 of them being below 20 years of age.

We encountered very few women older than 40 entertaining visiting relationships in the course of our investigations. This was reflected in our sample by the distribution of the 13 visiting relationships we counted here between the two sexes and over the different age groups.<sup>106</sup> Of these relationships, 3 were listed as being entertained by solitary males and 1 by a solitary female over 40 years of age; the remaining 9 relationships were being entertained by single young women. The solitary males were all receiving their mistresses at their own home, since the latter refused to receive male visitors in their house “out of respect” for the children. Two of these mistresses were single and one married. The number of times the partners to a visiting relationship met fluctuated between five times and once a week. For the limited number of people with this kind of relationship in our sample we arrived at an average of two visits a week.

Of the 18 women who were living in concubinage at the time of the interview at the consultation centre but had no coresidential partner at the time of birth of their first child, 14 were no longer in touch with the father. Of these 14, nine had had more than one coresidential relationship since first becoming a mother, while for the remaining five the current concubinage was the first. The remaining four common law wives who were without a coresidential partner at the time they first entered motherhood had later entered into a common law marriage with the father after all, three of them at or just after the birth of the second, and one at the birth of the third child. They expressed themselves about marriage in uncertain or negative terms, saying, for instance, “casamentu no a drentami” (lit. “marriage has passed by my door”), or “casamentu no ta pa tur hende” (marriage isn’t for everyone), or “casamentu no ta pa nos; nos ta hende pober” (marriage isn’t for us; we are poor people).

## 7. *Some Social Relations in and around the Household Group*

### 7.1. *Man-Woman Relations*

The multiplicity of mutually interacting forms of relationship between men and women, men, women and "in-laws", parents and children, brothers and sisters, stepbrothers and stepsisters, and so on, defies delimitation in some neat model of social relations. That is why we have preferred to give a descriptive outline of a number of important relations rather than a more or less rigid schematic representation of the same. Of course it proved unfeasible even in such a descriptive outline to do full justice to the numerous qualitative similarities and differences. It is our sincere hope nonetheless that we have succeeded in giving the reader at least some insight into these relations through the information presented below in combination with that given in the foregoing passages.

There is a wide variety of not infrequently mutually conflicting influences both from the past and from contemporary circumstances operating on all kinds of social relationships. Broadly generalizing, however, one may say that the economic, social and cultural developments in Curaçaoan society are having a stabilizing effect on conjugal and familial relations. So we were able to point out a certain correlation between the socio-economic development on the one hand and nuptiality and legitimacy of birth on the other for the society as a whole. However, the different developments (economic, social and cultural) by no means combined to form an integrated whole. They might in individual cases occur to some extent independently of one another. So a higher income certainly did not go hand in hand with a change in social environment or cultural orientation in every case. Conversely, changes in the social environment such as those resulting from the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage, for instance, were influencing individual behaviour even in the absence of social mobility or a more solid economic basis. We would point in this connection to the efforts of some to achieve simplicity at weddings and christening or first Communion parties, as also to the secret "hospital marriage". As there was a higher frequency of legal marriages in the immediate social environment, the views on and status of the common law marriage and visiting relationship were changing. The social control tended to stimulate even those in a weak social position to get legally married. In our discussion of a number of concepts and our description of the develop-

ment of Curaçaoan society we suggested that common law marriage and the visiting relationship should be regarded as typical lower-class phenomena. Viewed from the perspective of the socio-cultural background and in the light of the acculturation process of the Afro-American population, this contention must apply partly also to marriage, as the mutual relations between partners, the partners and their children, and so on, in both their legal and common law marriages and visiting relationships differed markedly from those among white groups both in the past and during the present century. A study of the family life of these latter groups would most probably only corroborate this statement.

In the preceding passages the conjugal and familial relations in both legal and common law marriage and the visiting relationship were brought up for discussion with a certain regularity and in different contexts. In this connection we also gave some attention to the related aspects of the different types of household group structure and the phenomenon of matrifocality. In the case of marriage there was a distinct tendency towards nuclear family formation observable, this tendency being demonstrable also in connection with household group formation on the basis of different principles, moreover. We furthermore pointed out a certain increase in bilaterality in kinship relations. This increase was interpreted as a sign of conjugal integration and the greater stability of the husband-father's position in the household group. This development was also having certain repercussions for the degree of matrifocality of household groups. In the literature on the Afro-American family the strength of the mother-child tie has been apt to be strongly emphasized. The specific traits of this family type as depicted here allow one to infer, moreover, that in the Afro-American area household groups tended to form around the central mother figure.<sup>107</sup> Although our data pertaining to Curaçaoan society in no way refute the existence of such Afro-American phenomena, they do point to a tendency towards a decline in male marginality as a concomitant of social and economic mobility. The desire for good, harmonious family relations was frequently expressed in both word and deed. The rule according to which "un bon tata no ta hunga cu su ju" (a good father never plays with his children) struck many of our informants as outdated, as they felt that this gave too exaggerated and formalistic a representation of the distance between fathers and children. In the two preceding chapters the cultural, domestic, social and economic position of men was more clearly defined. Here the



status of the male as a married man and breadwinner and the way in which he fulfilled his matrimonial and paternal obligations were considered as the chief criteria on which his formal leadership hinged. A strengthening of the in themselves universal matrifocal tendencies under the impact of certain specifically Curaçaoan historical circumstances, such as the existence of the double standard of sexual morality, and of contemporary economic and social environmental factors, such as the economic insecurity and the constant reminder of the inherent uncertainties of partnerships, was nonetheless observable in a number of household groups.

The children's reaching adulthood had unmistakable consequences for the internal relations within the household group. This is not in itself unusual. After all, it is only normal for the relations between parents and children to take on a different complexion as the latter grow up. However, against the background of matrifocal tendencies and the potential importance of children's earnings for the domestic group in Curaçao, a definite typological change occurred here. For, as became evident from observations and interviews, there was often a weakening of the conjugal and paternal dyad as the children grew older. Even the birth of children *per se* brought about a drastic change in the conjugal relations of many. Male domesticity was at its height before the birth of the first child. At this time the young couple would mostly go to parties and attend other social occasions together. But after the first child was born, the new mother was supposed to stay at home and her social life was practically over. Her husband enjoyed a large measure of freedom outside the house, on the other hand, while his behaviour was less subject to control by his wife. The circumstance that as a wife and mother she was tied to the house, combined with her exhausting domestic duties, gave potential mistresses "mas chens" (more chance) of entering into relations with her husband. As soon as the wife came to view such relations as a threat to her status and economic position, she would start getting suspicious of her husband. In the opinion of many the development outlined above provided a basis for tension in the conjugal and paternal dyad, and hence a fertile ground for the flourishing of matri-focality. Sometimes, however, the husband's extramarital conduct might give rise to violent conflicts between the partners very early on in the marriage, as, for instance, in the case of E.

E. was a 25-year-old married woman with one child, living in with her parents. She was waiting for a divorce. Her husband

had taken a mistress three months after their wedding. E. was five months pregnant at the time of marriage, and as her husband saw his sexual needs satisfied to a lessening degree, he found himself a *muhé djafó*. Although E. was not exactly overjoyed at this, she did accept the situation. Hence this was having no noticeable consequences for her household and her personal position until she heard that her husband was showing himself in public with his mistress and was even helping the latter to renovate an old house. E. thereupon left him and moved in with her parents, firmly resolved to obtain a divorce, despite her husband's attempts at reconciliation.

Another case, in which according to the environment the relationship was marked primarily by "carinjo" (affection or cordiality) and understanding, ended differently. An important factor here, however, was the growing number of children, which hence restricted the wife's alternatives.

M. had a mistress. His wife's friends urged her to leave him, but G. said she could not just move in with someone else with so many children, and wondered why she should walk out on her husband at all. "E. ta cria su cas, e ta bon" (He looks after his family well; he's a good man), was her opinion, to which she added "bo no ta troca basora bieeuw pa basora nobo, pasobra basora bieeuw ta conocé tur huki caba" (you don't change an old broom for a new one, for the old broom knows every corner).<sup>108</sup> Moreover, her husband had married her even though she was no longer a virgin when they first met. He had given her more security and happiness than she had dared hope for.

It became clear from the figures relating to headship that marriage (no doubt because of a certain connection between it and improved social and economic circumstances) offered some guarantee of male headship.<sup>109</sup> Generally speaking, however, our informants regarded the financial contributions by children, be they in many cases ever so small, as an obvious factor reinforcing the mother's position in marriages of some standing.

"E tata tin menos stens pa motibu cu es mama cu ta hanja placa for dje junan, i e mama ta sinti menos amor pe e tata" (the father has less of a say because it is the mother who receives money from the children, and the mother feels less love for the father.)

It normally made a big difference if the father continued in his role as breadwinner and the children had no grounds for accusing him of never doing anything for them.

Nonetheless, the matrifocal obligations of children constituted a traditional value that might create difficulties even for grown-up children. The dual responsibility of young men, namely towards their mothers on the one hand and to their wives and children on the other, was often at the root of conflicts between partners mutually, between parents and children, and between husbands, wives and parents-in-law. Wherever marriage was present as an institution, the marriage had been concluded according to a formal procedure, and the mutual families had become involved in the matter, so that "e bida ta na balanza" (life was in bilateral equilibrium) and the respective mothers were considered as "mama di dos" (the mother of both), there were on the whole fewer such conflicts. The institutionalization of marriage here fitted in with the objective of achieving the greatest possible harmony in the household group's relations. It was fitting that the relations with the mutual in-laws should likewise be harmonious in this context. We not infrequently came across situations that were reminiscent of what was called "the old system", however.

As was said above, in marriage the husband was ideally the head, although in many cases matrifocality was exercising a strong influence. In common law marriage the wife was usually the self-appointed head. She was quite commonly registered as the owner or tenant of the residence. The husband was under an obligation to support only his own children, and even then to a limited extent. The wife or her relatives were economically responsible for any other children present. The relative lack of integration of the man-woman relationship in this type of union was plainly manifest from this arrangement. It was fairly easy for the man to leave the household group. In a few cases, however, such a common law marriage had become a lasting affair, since the husband had stayed on because he "had nowhere else to go". If the residence was the husband's property or had been rented by him, the common law wife's position was usually dependent in the extreme, and it was "miho keda ketu para no perde tur cos" (better for her to keep her mouth shut so as not to lose everything). A return to her household group of orientation was often out of the question, since she had been obliged to leave this group on account of her growing family in the first place.

Stable common law marriages were frequently characterized by male headship. The conversion of such a common law marriage into a legal one was often a result of pressure being brought to bear on the parents by the children "pa drecha bida" (to better their life).

Such pressure was normally exerted primarily on the father, who had to put up with antagonism from both his wife and children if he resisted or was hesitant. Sometimes his choice was plainly one between solitude and marriage, whereby he usually anticipated a further strengthening of the woman's authority in the latter event, since "e muhé ta bira baas den cas. Bo ta keda chambon" (the wife will be the boss in the house, and you're the loser). "Den casamentu e muhé ta di mas harangangolo" (women are greediest of all in marriage), while, moreover, they abandon their attitude of "humilde" women, according to our male informants. Failure to convert a common law marriage was usually an outcome of a combination of economic, social and cultural factors. However, most men were able to carry through a policy of "miho bibá cu mal casá" (a concubinage is better than a bad marriage), or "asi mi ta tene nan mas serca di mi" (I will keep them closer to me this way, i.e., by not marrying but "looking after them well") only if their partners remained economically dependent on them, or if the couple's social position was so inferior as to make both feel that "casamentu no ta pa tur hende" or "casamentu no ta pa nos" (marriage isn't for everyone, or marriage isn't for us). The conversion of a common law marriage into a legal one represented first and foremost a confirmation of internal group relations, which on the point of authority had developed to the man's disadvantage. Resistance on his part was regarded as a last-ditch attempt to give his "stens" (voice or status) some weight. With the conversion of a common law into a legal marriage the woman's and children's claims to the respect they had so long coveted were finally fulfilled by "drecha bida", while the man commonly emerged a protesting "pulushi" (grouch) who had eventually given in from considerations of "paternal duty towards his children", but who might sometimes also withdraw further from the life of the group in consequence of this change. No actual breach between husband and wife occurred in any of the cases of conversion known to us. We found a most representative example of conversion of a common law into a legal marriage in the case of H.

H. was reluctant to exchange a life of non-legalized cohabitation ('amor constà', i.e., constant love) for the married state. In marriage his wife was bound to become domineering and to interfere with his spending habits, which were no one's business but this. The balance of his income and expenditure was his 'privà'. In his view neither his wife nor the children had any

right to insist that he 'drecha bida'. He felt he had always looked after them well. His refusal aggravated the antagonism between himself and his children to such an extent, however, that he finally gave in so as to avoid a really serious quarrel and the resultant gossip. The matrifocality of the group had considerably strengthened since, even though the wife herself had never insisted on a marriage. His presentiments about the future had proven correct, and his wife had become 'boss', whereas he had wanted to preserve the situation prevailing before the marriage. Conflict upon conflict about money and matrimonial display ensued, whereupon H. retired to the yard. His grievances concerned mainly his wife, while he said that he could on the other hand understand his children's attitude. After all, it was only normal for children to choose their mother's side, and perhaps he hadn't always behaved correctly (he had a mistress and, as far as he knew, two illegitimate children of other liaisons). He also realized quite clearly that the parents had to be married if the children wished to get on in the world. Given the situation in which his household group had come to be after so many years (19) of concubinage, he found it difficult to take such a risky step, however. What had seemed most sensible to him had been to get married 'na ultimu momentu' (that is, before the death of either himself or his wife). Then his children's prospects for the future would not be prejudiced by the social stigma of having parents buried in unconsecrated ground popularly referred to as 'chiké', i.e., literally, 'pigsty', or as the 'culebra verde', lit. 'the green snake').

Where the decision to marry was taken shortly after the conclusion of a common law marriage (one might say that the right moment for this was while the children were still small, before they had been made aware of the *calidad* of the common law relationship between their parents either at school or when applying for jobs), the man was establishing himself the same kind of position as that occupied by most married men. Some conversions of relatively long-standing common law marriages into legal marriages, in contrast to what was regarded above as the more usual course of affairs, were the outcome of initiatives taken by the men, who were desirous of legalizing their paternal status and the partnership also for the sake of their own prestige. In these cases the relations between the man, woman and children had always displayed a satisfactory degree of harmony, while children of previous relationships of the wife's were absent.

Clearly marriage meant not only a great economic but also a social achievement for a woman. The principal point at issue was her status, although the married state was held to be honourable for men, too.

Women formulated the advantages of marriage as follows, in order of importance:

- (a) "e homber mester respondé" (the man is responsible for her support and that of the children);
- (b) "mi ta keda cu cas" (happen what may, I'll keep the house);
- (c) "un muhé casa tene mas amiga; mas respet" (a married woman has more women friends and enjoys more respect); and
- (d) "hende ta mas carinioso; hende ta cumindabo" (people are friendlier; they even greet you).

Men were of the opinion that a married man was better able to fulfil his duty as a father. A married man was a "shon" (gentleman). People on the whole spoke slightingly of couples "who never marry", whose families were called such names as "djaca-famija" (rat family), for instance.

As we have underlined above, a man's wish to marry might fit in with views of a polygynic nature, with ideas connected with the double standard of sexual morality, or with the ideal of monogamy. We also argued, however, that the repercussions of polygynic principles in contemporary Curaçaoan conditions could only be minimal, while furthermore it was impossible for the double standard to be realized except with enormous attendant tensions and conflicts, and sometimes the total disruption of the partnership. The social mobility of many members of the lower Afro-American strata has greatly stimulated people's repudiation of "the old system". The growing social and economic differentiation within the lower classes has encouraged this repudiation just as much as creating a certain possibility of realizing the principles of the double standard.<sup>110</sup> Female infidelity was invariably much more strongly condemned than unfaithfulness on the part of men, however. Such expressions as "pasa contrabanda" (lit. "smuggling") and "corta" or "corta oreja" all referred to adultery committed by women, and as far as we know, there are no comparable terms for male infidelity, despite its condemnation by many.

No woman was allowed more than one sexual partner. Wherever people expressed the opinion that a common law wife possessed greater freedom on the point of the recruitment of new lovers, they were merely underscoring the relatively low "calidad" of common law marriage. Common law wives were allowed greater freedom of movement outside the house, were less strictly subject to their partners'

authority, in contrast, ideally, to married women, and were apt to run the risk only of their common law husband's taking their association with other men as an excuse to leave them. If a common law wife did not want this to happen, because she was satisfied with her partner's behaviour towards herself and her children, she would be more careful to adhere to the rules of the coresidential partnership. Some people believed that a woman might be forced by economic circumstances to find other lovers. But in that case there was question of a succession of partners rather than of a number of random, simultaneous sexual relations without any obligations. People distinguished between the *puta* (prostitute) and the *muhé di bida* (woman with experience) by this criterion. No man, whether he was married or living in concubinage, wished to expose himself to the risk of becoming the object of ridicule by tolerating sexual competition from other men. It was partly for this reason that men were often opposed to their wives' accepting allowances for children by previous sexual partners, or were reluctant to stake their masculine prestige on women who had had previous affairs. Few common law husbands, if any, ever went out in public with their partners, though the situation was slightly different in the case of common law marriages in which the wife had not had previous sexual contacts with other men. Where a woman had had such previous relations, people expressed the view that "amor bieeuw no sa frusa" (old love never rusts), that the "giambo semper ta bolbe na wea" (the *giambo*, a long vegetable, always returns to the pot), and "e baca no ta bai pos un biaha so. Semper ta bai ora e tin sed i esei ta mas cu un biaha pa dia" (a cow does not go to the well just once, but every time it feels thirsty, which is more than once a day).

The fact that a woman's fidelity might be dependent on a man's economic worth was formulated as follows by one informant, who had been deceived by his wife after losing his job with Shell's as a result of automation: "ora bo ta di mal papel, e muhé ta cortabo" (if you're financially badly off your wife will deceive you). What he most resented, however, was the fact that his wife had proposed the father of her fifth child (of his own paternity of which he had only later come to have grave doubts) as *padrino* (godfather) when it was born, so that the latter would always have free access to the house in this capacity. "Mi no ta cria capa" (I'm not going to bring up any children like a castrated billy-goat), he exclaimed, "kiko ta pensa! El otro a dana i un pendeeuw ta drecha?" (What do they think? The

other has done wrong, and some sucker will put it right?) He had no good word to say about the wife's relatives. He had done the right thing by marrying her when she got pregnant, and now they turned out to be accomplices in playing this dirty trick on him. One way in which he gave vent to his fury was by advising the suitor of one of his wife's younger sisters not to be misled by the family's fair appearances, saying, "Nan ta tapa tur puitu bao di tobo!" (They hide all their chickens under the tub, thus suggesting that the daughters are still virgins).

The wife's unmarried lover, whom we later interviewed several times, stated that he was not to blame. The blame ought to be put at least partly on the woman or girl, for normally nothing happened except with her consent. After all, a man will always act in accordance with a masculine pattern, so he believed. "E muhé, casá o no casá, ta dunabo camina pa cana, i ora bo no ta limpié, e muhé ta papia cu tal i tal, bisa: mi no sa, e no a puntrami nada. E ta zwak of a ta mariku, mi no sa." (The woman, whether or not she is married, always points the way you're allowed to go, and if you don't go to bed with her, then she'll talk to this and that person, saying, "I don't know what's wrong. He hasn't asked me anything. Either he's impotent or a homosexual. I don't know.") This kind of gossip had to be avoided. In reply to our questions about the woman's proposal to have him act as *padrino* to his own child he said that this was a disgusting intrigue on the woman's part. As for him, he refused to be a party to such deceit, though in the end he admitted that he was thinking of entering into a common law marriage with the woman.

It is obvious from the above that not all women acquiesced in their partners' claims to sexual exclusiveness. One man's indignation on being told by his doctor that he had gonorrhoea typifies the value that is set on sexual exclusiveness, to which men felt themselves entitled in marriage, and on which they made the continuation of the relationship conditional in non-legalized unions. This particular man was perfectly aware of the risks of venereal disease involved in sexual contacts, and normally used preventives against this. However, he had thought it quite safe to have intercourse with a married woman without taking this precaution, and now had to find out to his dismay that he had caught the disease off a married woman after all. He explained his exclamation "off a married woman!" to us by declaring that one might at least expect some sexual fidelity of a married woman. Our retort that the fact that she had consented to have intercourse



with him was in itself proof of the contrary, while, moreover, in view of the relative casualness with which husbands committed adultery she could have easily caught the disease off her husband, so that there was not necessarily cause for suspecting her of having had intercourse with other men besides himself and the husband, struck him as quite incredible.

The opinions on masculine infidelity showed considerable divergence. Some people expressed the view that a faithful husband was something altogether too "tame", and such a man should be regarded as "un homber den saya" (a man in a skirt). Others tended to believe that the wife was sure to have used magic on the husband in such cases. Others again stated that if a man was faithful to his wife — the examples they quoted being restricted entirely to married couples — this was due either to "decencia" or to "insuficiente ganamentu pa mantené muhé i ju djafó" (insufficient income to be able to keep mistresses and support illegitimate offspring). The censure passed on unfaithful husbands was indubitably less unanimous and much less severe than the criticism of disloyal wives. It is interesting to note how a number of our informants qualified their views on extramarital affairs entertained by both men and women. The definition of the social and economic status of the rival played a significant role in their reactions to adultery. The idea that the lover of one's partner "is even blacker than I am" or "is blacker than my shoe" made it absolutely impossible to support the very thought of that partner's unfaithfulness. Over against this there were the cases in which a higher status affected people's reaction in the opposite direction. One male informant, though breaking off the relationship with his common law wife on discovering that she had committed adultery with a light-skinned man, showed at least some understanding for her, saying, "Ta mal, ma e muhé ei ke ju blancu" (She's behaved badly, but the woman simply wants white children — implying that this held a promise of a somewhat better economic and social future for her). Another informant explained the rather phlegmatic reaction of a married friend of his to his wife's adultery with a light-skinned Government employee by saying, "E ta baloté; e ta menos cuné" (He, the official, is superior; he, my friend, is lowlier), adding that one might easily exploit this kind of situation as a way to improve one's own social and economic position by threatening one's rival with public exposure.

Most men were averse to affairs with lighter-skinned women, as the

latter usually were "too learned", so they claimed. Moreover, a dark man was not a very attractive partner for such a woman. Any man wanting a lighter-skinned woman could go to the "Campo Alegre", where he was sure to "receive good treatment" without any obligation.

It is undeniably true that men found sexual rivalry much less easy to put up with than women under whatever circumstances. We know of no cases of more or less institutionalized relations existing between a woman's husband and lover. Relations between wives and "comblis", on the other hand, might sometimes be of a lasting and anything but hostile nature. Nonetheless, in the great majority of cases these relations, too, were fairly strained and apt to culminate in serious conflicts between the wife and the "comblis" or between the wife and husband. Even so, a husband's unfaithfulness by no means always ended up in the couple's divorce. As was said above, this often depended on both the husband's and the *comblis'* behaviour. The legal wife's social status and material position should not have to suffer by it in any event. A special behavioural code had evolved, reflecting the precariousness of the relation between legal wives and *comblis* as well as the inferiority of the latter's status. Hereby the *comblis* was supposed, out of respect for the legal wife, not to publicize her sexual relationship with the latter's husband. If she met the couple anywhere by chance, she was not to betray by even the slightest sign that she knew the husband. Any action on her part that might in any way further undermine the man's marriage or family life was strongly censured. A married woman possessed vested rights and was entitled to respect. A most interesting illustration of this is afforded by the case of F., who decided to regulate the relations between his numerous, mutually competing mistresses by marrying one of them and thus putting an end to all the rivalry without being obliged to break off any of his relations. F. himself described his case, which he possessed sufficient literary flair to present in the third person, as follows:

"E tabatin un terció cu semper tabatin wowe di carinjo i un palabra tierna, fuera un sonrisa pa un dama cu e ta gusta. P'esei pa e no hanja trobbel cu e bellezanan cu cuenta di jalus etc., el a decidi di casa. Pero esei no a socedé sino promé cu el a hanja e amarga experiencia di amor, ora cu mama di un ju di dje a dal un butishi den cara, net ora e tabata paseando cu un otra dama. El a experimentà cu un muhé jalus por ta hopi peligrosa" (He was a fellow with always a friendly look, a kind word and a smile for any little lady that took his fancy. So as to avoid problems arising from jealousy and so on with any of the

beauties, he decided to get married. But this would never have happened had he not had the bitter romantic experience of being struck in the face by the mother of one of his children at the very time he was taking a stroll with another lady (from which blow he had sustained a fairly large wound). So he learnt from experience that a jealous woman can be a grave danger (and married a girl friend who had hitherto always been kind to him.)

Not infrequently a woman might be publicly confronted with the fact of her husband's infidelity either thanks to the intervention of other women, who deemed it their duty to save their friend from disgrace, or as a result of some jealous or other kind of malicious act on the part of the *comblis* herself, often inevitably giving rise to fights and quarrels. Try as she might to vindicate herself with some such remark as, "Bo no sa nada nada. Mi no ta tene man cu bo" (You don't know anything at all. I don't go holding you by the hand, i.e., you can't have been present and you can't prove anything), once a mistress was publicly branded as a "comblis" by the man's wife she was liable to be made the butt of all manner of abuse. Some people asserted that "Placa ta pa conta, comblis ta pa zundra" (Money is for the counting, the *comblis* is for reviling), though admitting at the same time that some women were inclined to wonder why their husband had taken a mistress in the first place, and, moreover, in what way they were failing him in comparison. The expression "No zundra! Mi no ta bo comblis!" (Don't you abuse me! I'm not your *comblis*!) is definitely indicative of the inferiority of the *comblis*' status vis-à-vis the legal wife, however. Wives did not on the whole take out whatever wrath their husbands' unfaithfulness might have provoked on the latter's illegitimate children, though this is in no way to say that they actually encouraged contacts between these and their own children.

### 7.2. *Relations between Men, Women and Mothers-in-law*

We have already pointed out in the foregoing the increased emphasis on bilateral kinship relations as a correlate of the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage. Hence the relations between men, women and parents-in-law hinged closely on the "calidad" of the man-woman relationship concerned. An important factor in these relations was the degree of certainty which a grandmother might have that her son was, in fact, the father of her (supposed) grand-

child. In the absence of an effective social regulation of sexual relations, biological kinship was easier to establish with a fair degree of certainty between a particular woman and her daughter's children than between her and her son's children. Given the casual attitude towards sex and the close tie between mothers and sons, in consequence whereof the blame for a particular pregnancy in a non-legalized relationship was apt to be put first and foremost on the girl, while the mother was intent on protecting her own material interests by binding her son as closely as possible to herself, it is not surprising that grandmothers should be inclined to build up a different kind of relationship towards their daughters-in-law and their children than to their sons-in-law and the latter's children by their daughters. Paternal grandmothers were invariably skeptical about their sons' biological paternity of a particular child. This had given rise to certain behaviour patterns by means of which grandmothers might establish the presence of a blood tie. So one of the popular ways of ascertaining whether or not a child was "di nos rasa" (one of our race, stock or family) was by subjecting its appearance to a close scrutiny. It was allegedly possible to establish blood relationship on the basis of the "dede chiki" (little toe), for instance. This importance attached to a child's outward appearance was hence partly responsible for the belief or hope that the child might look like its father if the woman looked at the man at the likely moment of conception. This way a woman might avoid doubt being thrown upon the child's paternity. We were informed that conversely in one case the woman had purposely avoided looking at her common law marriage partner at that precise moment in order that she might later refuse him and his family all claims on the child. This was because she had unfavourable economic experiences with the man and his relatives, so that she wished in fact to get rid of him. She did not succeed in doing so until after a series of violent quarrels. Meanwhile she had managed to make herself economically independent of the man by going to work herself. Women in precarious partnerships of this sort often attached considerable importance to exclusiveness of their relationship to their children and tended to reject the man's admission of paternity before the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Over against this there was the rather exceptional case of the woman who had, seemingly with the greatest of ease, foisted off three of her five children on the relatives of the three respective fathers owing to the latter's failure to meet their economic obligations, while she had the

same intentions with the next child to be born to her. Her neighbours were avoiding her, while her mother, brothers and sisters had refused her all help after the first three children, who had been born in rapid succession. Some mothers attached considerable importance to the "sheet procedure" mentioned earlier as a way of safeguarding themselves, their families and particularly their daughters against any slur being cast on their honour and good name, and preventing all attempts at denial of paternity. There often remained some uncertainty about sons' paternity in the eyes of their mothers even so, which provided a not infrequently tapped source of conflict in the wife-mother-in-law relationship. This was most evident in the case of non-legalized sexual relationships, where the boy's mother often kept his girl friend and her children at a distance, fiercely challenging all claims to financial assistance from her son put forward by the young mother or her relatives. If the man fully acknowledged his paternity and materially supported his children, however, the chances were high that his mother might grow fond of her "nietunan" (grandchildren) after all, because:

- (a) she possessed a greater guarantee of the truth as to her son's paternity;
- (b) she derived a grandmotherly right to free contact with her grandchildren from her recognition and care of them; and
- (c) she desired to exercise some form of control over the mother on the point of the children's upbringing in connection with the competition for the son's material support which the daughter-in-law offered her.

It goes without saying that the son's civil status played a not insignificant role in the matter of the relations between his mother and her daughter-in-law and grandchildren. Generally speaking, however, the unilateral tendency observable in other, formerly relatively more prevalent forms of man-woman relationship continued to exercise an influence in the case of legal marriage as well, children being on the whole in more frequent touch with their maternal grandmother. Grandchildren adopted as foster-children in other household groups were more often the children of daughters than sons, just as *sobrinus* (nieces and nephews) were more frequently children of sisters, and more in particular wife's sisters, than brothers. Sons' or brothers' children maintained familial relations more especially along other, female kinship lines.

Our informants were unanimously of the opinion that the bilateral

tendency was strengthened in marriage, however. Although there are no relevant figures to corroborate our findings, it has become evident from the analysis of a number of different cases that the children of common law marriage partners mostly addressed the man's sisters — providing they had any contact with these at all — by the latter's name or as "madam", while calling their maternal aunts "tante". There was no deviation from this in practice in a limited number of cases of legal marriage, although we found more frequent evidence of a bilateral kinship reckoning in the forms of address for these relatives in legal marriage, especially if the families on both sides were *contentu* (satisfied) and "e bida ta na balanza" (life is in equilibrium).

Nevertheless here, too, the mother of the man might sometimes be just waiting for an opportunity to say to her son: "Ma bisabo, X. ta mala mucha" (I told you X. was a bad lot), or to her daughter-in-law: "Bo n'tabata senjorita" (You were no longer a virgin, i.e., you've never had any rights). It was quite common for a daughter-in-law to be accused by her mother-in-law of using magic tricks to bind the son inseparably to herself and so induce him to commit a monstrous social crime. As one informant exclaimed in the course of a conversation on her son's marriage: "Caramba, e muhé ei ta brua: E. ta desconoci su mama!" (Caramba, that woman's using magic! He's ignoring his own mother!).

A good illustration of the character which the relations between a man's mother and his wife and children might sometimes assume is furnished by two cases in which the death of a married man occurred. In the one a violent conflict ensued between the two women about who was entitled to the compensation payable by the insurance company. When the money was paid to the widow and her three children, the mother-in-law challenged her right to it by saying that she "had never done anything for the man", whereas she (the mother-in-law) had suffered the pangs of bearing him and had made many sacrifices to bring him up. His wife, on the other hand, had only reaped the benefits of all this. In the other case the widow with her two children was told to leave her mother-in-law's yard, where she and her husband and family had been living in a small cottage. She was not recognized as kin by the mother-in-law. The relationship between a common law wife and her partner's mother and, via her, his brothers and sisters was usually much more precarious than that between a legal wife and her in-laws. In many cases no kind of relationship developed

between them at all owing to the short duration of most common law marriages. In the latter situation, the mother of the man was not as a rule overmuch upset at the presence of a relationship between her son and a woman, since the financial claims of a concubine were relatively negligible anyway.

The relationship between a common law husband and his partner's mother appeared to be on the whole considerably more cordial, on the other hand, due to the fact that the daughter's previous sexual career often precluded the conclusion of a legal marriage anyway, as also owing to the man's preparedness to undertake the material responsibility for the daughter and her children. In many cases certain hopes for a future marriage were even so expressed.

The institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage entailed a certain weakening of the mother-son and mother-daughter tie, even though the tie between mother and child remained of prime importance for all our informants. This institutionalization had resulted in a strengthening of the "lazo" (tie) between the husband-father and his family, on the other hand, whereby it had become both emotionally and economically easier for the mother to set her children free. A decrease in attachment to the maternal figure was going hand in hand with a tendency towards greater bilaterality of kinship relations. We were able to observe this especially in the case of one of our key informants, who felt that his marriage had brought him greater independence in many respects. He was paying his mother increasingly fewer visits and was entertaining regular, though not very frequent relations with his wife's relatives. His mother had finally given up the small room especially set aside for him in the event of his deciding to come back home. She stated emphatically that he was happily married and independent now, so that he need not come knocking at her door any more. She did continue to welcome some financial assistance to meet her housekeeping expenses, however. Our key informant stated, like other men in comparable positions, that he was no longer seeing many of his former friends, and was not going out as much any more either, and that he was a less frequent visitor to drinking-joints and was maintaining social relations mostly at work. He underscored the importance of kinship relationships in the life of Curaçaoan people with the saying "Sanker ta serafina" (blood makes for close ties), noting at the same time that spatial proximity and blood relationship, such as between mothers and children and children between themselves, were both of particular importance in active

social relations. He stated the view that generally speaking there existed no frequent kinship relations beyond the limited family. Such relations with more distant kin tended to be restricted mainly to such occasions as parties and funerals. He furthermore expressed the view that spatial proximity exercised a direct influence on these relations. "Too close proximity is likely to provoke quarrels", so he believed, ascribing the good relationship between himself, his wife and their mutual in-laws to the spatial distance between them. In the old days people liked to settle only a stone's throw from their mother's house, so that as a result the mother always had a chance of interfering with the couple and meddling in their domestic affairs, according to him. This was a potential source of violent conflicts.

The geographical proximity or distance was of significance in another respect also in the development of kinship relations, as in the distinction between "famija yegà" (close kin) and "famija di aleeuw" (distant kin) the spatial factor was sometimes meant besides the genealogical one.

### *7.3. Relations between Parents and Children and between Children Mutually*

People in Curaçao seemed on the whole very fond of children. Children were considered as "inocente" and were the object of much tender affection, especially for the first years of their life. In proportion as the number of children in a given family increased, however, mostly the older children were gradually ousted from the immediate focus of tolerance and affection into the sphere of obedience. This shift was a likely source of tension and frustration. People on the whole emphasized the value of warm, harmonious relations between parents and children and among the children themselves, however, especially in legal marriage. Some were of the opinion that this value implied at the same time a high degree of equality between sons and daughters, although they stressed the need for some difference in the treatment of boys and girls even so. Boys were after all less vulnerable than girls as far as adolescent behaviour was concerned. As a result boys might be granted much more freedom of movement outside the house than girls. Notwithstanding this greater measure of freedom, in the eyes of many people growing sons had considerable responsibility towards their mothers and younger brothers and sisters. It was this combination of freedom and responsibility that was the underlying cause of the frequently noted ambivalence in the attitude of youths



towards the members of their household group of orientation. It was believed that conversely the less complicated nature of the relationship between mothers and daughters in many cases was responsible for greater harmony prevailing in this particular relationship. This was in point of fact borne out by our observations. The proverb inscribed in gold lettering on a plate which we saw hanging on the wall in several houses, and which ran:

“Ora bo ta pober, of ora bo ta ricu, bo mama no tin prijs pa pagé” (Whether you’re poor or rich, you can never (re)pay your mother (for all she’s done for you),

referred generally speaking to the obligations of sons as well as daughters. However, sons were while daughters were not obliged to continue some form of financial aid after settling independently in a household group of their own.

The mother-child tie was crystallized in such games as “mama cu ju” (mothers and children, the equivalent of our “fathers and mothers”), in songs such as “Mama na mi cuminda pa mi bai mi skool, pa manja mi bira grandi, ta bon pa mama mes” (Mother, give me something to eat so I can go to school, for when I grow up later it will be for your own good), and in sayings like “tata tin hopi, ma mama ta un so tin” (there are many fathers but there is only one mother) and “ju sin mama ta cuminda di wara wara” (a child without a mother is food for the *wara-wara* (a bird of prey)) in children’s education. The parental house was never referred to as “my father’s house” or “my parents’ house”, but generally as “cas di mama” (mother’s house). Fathers either did not figure at all in songs, sayings, and so forth, or merely played a negative or indifferent role, although here, too, we were struck by the contrast with the altogether different definition of the male role in contemporary marriage. Here, as the bearer of authority, the man was supposed to feature in a relationship to the woman that was sometimes represented as one marked by equality, as well as in one of social harmony with his children. Although admittedly a number of informants were not altogether in favour of an expression such as “cas di mama”, either they said that this just happened to be the way it was put.

The mother-child tie generally related to both sons and daughters, but the mother-son tie was as a rule emphatically given most prominence. It was precisely the more precarious character of this tie and its more vital economic importance for some mothers that was

responsible for this. The slightly different nature of the relationship between mothers and daughters, which was often more intimate than that between mothers and sons, manifested itself in, among other things, the relations between grandmothers and their different grandchildren, and in the differences in the interests defended by the mothers of young men and young women respectively. With regard to the tie between mothers and sons, the moral obligation to lend the mother material support was more particularly stressed, whereas the tie between mothers and daughters was more emotional and marked rather more by a feeling of solidarity as between fellow-sufferers in the *bida duru* (hard life) of mothers and wives as opposed to the "free life without real responsibility" of men. Moreover, the status of the mother was rather more directly a function of the respectability of daughters than of sons. The more material kind of support given by sons in the opinion of many young men met with little gratitude from their mothers, who were even apt to insist that their daughters were sometimes of more use to them than their sons. As it happened, the more amicable tie with grown-up daughters was sometimes supplemented with contributions to the mother's housekeeping money by these daughters.

So as to be better able to support two household groups at the same time, some young men might settle with their partner and any of their children in or near the house of their mother in order to cut the basic costs of living. This did not happen often, however, and if it did it was likely to have unfavourable consequences for the relations between the mother- and daughter-in-law, the husband and wife, and the parents and children. Most people were of the opinion that it was better for a young man to defer the moment of establishing a household group of his own until one of his younger brothers was able at least partly to take over his function as provider in his mother's household group. Until such time, and more generally until his 30th year, his prime responsibility lay with his household group of orientation. Until then "e mama i su junan ta pertenece na e ju homber mayó" (the mother and her children belong to the eldest son). This "belong" here refers to the role of husband-father-substitute which the son, who was apt to be given the nickname "papi" (daddy) in this sort of situation, was expected to fulfil. This illustrates the fact that ideally authority was assigned to the man, despite the emphasis on matrifocality in the education of children. Nonetheless, a mother had explicit rights "pasobra e ta sacrificà su bida pa cria e junan, i e

tabata sufri hopi dolò" (because she sacrifices her own life for her children's education and has suffered much pain). It was from her rights that the (eldest) son derived his considerable responsibility in the final analysis. The "exchange" of support for authority which was demanded of the eldest son was considered too burdensome by younger people, however. "Awendia e mes mester forma su bida. E no ta verplicht pa haci asina. Ta muchu duru." (He has to shape his own life at this time. He's not obliged to do it (i.e., give up the establishment of a household group of his own). It's too hard on him.) The potential importance of the eldest son to his mother was once more clearly underlined, finally, by one old woman calling her small sweets trade "mi ju mayò" (my eldest child).

Needless to say, the presence of a husband-father as chief breadwinner in the household group constituted an important factor determining the status of the eldest son here. His influence on the younger children's education and on the intra-group relations in general were dependent on this.

The differences in the tie between mother and son and between mother and daughter might sometimes lead a young man to wish to remain in his mother's household group after his sisters left it. This latter circumstance relieved him of a sibling rivalry for his mother's favours and supposedly enabled him better to fulfil his filial duties. We give below the story of G. as an example of this.

G. was married with one child. He had gone through a difficult period before his marriage, as he himself said. He had lived with his parents, his father occupying a small room built onto the house with its own separate entrance from the yard, and being spatially and socially peripheral. He brought in money from his earnings as a male nurse, and on the basis of his exemplary conduct as a son was counting on preferential treatment from his mother. He was disappointed in this, however, failing to secure the longed-for position as his mother's favourite even after his two sisters left their parental home. On the contrary, he continued to feel a victim of prejudice in his sister's favour, and stated indignantly that he believed he was discriminated against partly on account of the difference in skin colour with his sisters. G. did, in fact, possess pronouncedly more negroid somatic traits. Out of rancour he left his mother, though continuing to make financial contributions to her household. He rented a small vacant cottage on the edge of town, where he kept a number of mistresses in a succession of short relationships, without any plans for marrying any of them. This situation

did not satisfy him either, however, as the woman failed him in a number of domestic duties, such as keeping the house clean, mending his clothes and preparing his meals, as well as on the point of sexual exclusiveness. At that time, at the age of 28, he began toying with the idea of having a more stable kind of relationship, and married a woman who had once refused to move in with him and prior to that had been living in concubinage with a man whose child by her had been still-born. She was a good wife whose previous career he ought not to condemn. He himself had not lived a blameless life, and now they had both mended their ways. He was hoping for a harmonious development in his legal partnership and fatherhood. One of his sisters had broken off her common law marriage, by which she had two children, and had moved back in with her mother. G. had refused to increase the allowance he was paying his mother on her request accordingly, but had acted as a good son and brother in defending his sister's rights. After his efforts at mediation, her common law husband, who was to some extent a friend of G.'s, showed himself prepared to pay an allowance of fl. 5.— a week per child. Up to the day of our departure from the island, four months after this incident, the first instalment still had to be paid, however. But G. considered this no cause for intervening again. He was of the opinion that his sister and mother should take care of the matter themselves. By interposing in the first place he had done more than a brother could rightly be expected to do for his sister. His endeavours had earned him no gratitude.

The tie between mother and daughter was typified by many female informants expressing the view that the "cas di mama" was the best place to have particularly one's first child. The institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage and the improved health care, including, among other things, the professionalization of assistance at childbirth (the traditional midwife or *vrumu* being superseded more and more by trained, modern midwives, mostly of Surinam origin) were regarded as factors responsible for the decline of this tradition, however. This was coupled at the same time with the disappearance of a great many popular practices in connection with childbirth. A third of the unmarried women (half of them belonging to the category of women living in) stated that their first child had been born at the house of the grandmother. Of the married men and married women, less than a fifth stated this to be the case. Although married women also thought that a mother was the best person to turn to for help in these matters, they generally preferred having their

children at a clinic. In the course of our research we came across two cases of women resorting to the tradition of lying in at the mother's house as a convenient way of forcing through a *de facto* separation, these women simply remaining with their mother after the birth.

Less than a sixth of the common law wives stated their first child to have been born in their mother's house. Unfortunately we have not been able to find a satisfactory explanation for this relatively low percentage in the data of our survey. Doubtless many of these women were still living in with their mothers at the time they first became pregnant. Although we do know for a fact that many common law marriages, like many legal ones, came about immediately before the birth of a child, our questions were framed in such a way as to preclude an unambiguous answer being obtained to the question of where the first child had been born. It can be inferred from external information gleaned outside the survey that a number of these women had had their first child at the house of an aunt or sister. Others, whose number cannot be accurately assessed, had their first child at their own home. A few women pointed out that on account of the low esteem in which their union was held, their relationship with their household group of orientation was no longer good enough for them to be welcomed back there with open arms and with the loving care that is usually bestowed on mothers-to-be.

With reference to pregnancies of unmarried daughters we observed that the confirmation of such a pregnancy usually provoked a rather vehement reaction from the girl's parents. In many cases the girl would be expelled from the household group, to return to it again later in her new status as a mother. Contrary to the findings of R. T. Smith and several other authors, we have come across no instances of role confusion between mother-daughters living in their parents' house, their children, and the grandmother of these children, one isolated case aside. Where according to R. T. Smith's observations the problem of role confusion was solved by treating the mother-daughter and her children both like children of the mother-grandmother, with the daughter's children calling their natural mother by name and addressing the grandmother as "mama", we encountered no comparable cases of role confusion in Curaçao. Older children usually showed themselves to be aware of their genealogical ties, while to younger children the grandmother did not appear as someone superseding their own mother. Wherever the young mother herself was absent, but her children had been adopted into the grandmother's

domestic group, the latter's children and grandchildren were quite likely to be treated fairly alike. Especially where the grandmother herself still had young children, it was difficult to draw a distinction. Nieces and nephews would play together with their aunts and uncles as brothers and sisters and be subject to the same disciplinary measures. Growing children were usually informed of the genealogical details as time went on, however. A good illustration of this is provided by the case of G.

G. was a young unmarried mother of 20 with a child of 6. She had been living away from home for a few years, and had been a member of the household group — which, comprising as it did 17 persons, was rather on the large side — for five months at the time of research. Her child had gone on living with its grandmother during her absence, and although the child knew G. was his mother, he called her by her Christian name, just like the other children. Whenever G. came for a visit, and more especially now that she was actually living in the same house again, she was directly responsible for his care most of the time. Furthermore, the grandmother would tell G. whenever her child deserved punishment for some offence or other, whereupon G. would reprimand him accordingly. Later on the child began calling her 'mama'.

Where the mother was absent from the house in which her child being brought up by the grandmother the phenomenon of the child calling its true mother by her Christian name was more frequently encountered; this often provoked considerable hilarity. A compromise between this was the use of the term "aunt" as a form of address, especially where there were also children of the woman's brothers or sisters present in the grandmother's group. In other cases a distinction was maintained between the grandmother bringing up the child and the mother living away from the group, which might manifest itself in the child's addressing the grandmother as "mamai" and the biological mother as "mama", for instance. The general tendency was for the unmarried mother to remain living in only temporarily. Because of this and of the procedure whereby a girl's status was changed into the considerably more independent status of an adult woman as a consequence of maternity, there was little or no confusion of roles in the grandmother's domestic group. The solution to the problem was provided by the adjustment of the grandmother and her group to the daughter's new status rather than by the treatment of both the mother and her child as children of the (grand)mother's. Especially

where the grandmother adopted the children of a married daughter there was no uncertainty as to its genealogical relationships for the child at all. Maternity established an obvious tie between mother and child. In the latter case the maternal status was strongly boosted by marriage, moreover.

The adoption of *ju di crianza* (foster-children) in the household group was definitely no practical business affair, as became apparent from the reasons stated for adoption.<sup>111</sup> Such *ju di crianza* were many of them grandchildren born in the foster-mother's house; or they were the children of sisters, brothers or acquaintances. Quite a number of these children themselves had expressed the wish to move in with the *mama di crianza*. The latter was always the person on whose consent the adoption depended in the final analysis, however, even though her decision in the matter was often no more than a confirmation of the child's own intention, the wishes of young children as a rule carrying some weight here. As *inocente* (innocents) they were carriers of luck and were usually free to move about unrestrictedly in any house they were visiting. It was this freedom, in combination with other factors, such as the circumstance that the child had been ousted from the focus of its own mother's primary affective attention as a result of the birth of a brother or sister, which might prompt a child to "adopt" a foster-home. In accordance as the child became more closely integrated into the domestic group, however, it again became a child among children and was obliged to conform to the rules of the house. It would take over the genealogical terms current in the group, calling its foster-mother "mamai" or, if it had entered the group at a relatively advanced age, say 6 or 7, "tante".

There was not infrequently an element of tragedy in many cases of adoption as a result of crises of authority that might arise from the growing child's growing awareness of the special genealogical ties. Sometimes the genealogical mother might claim the maternal right to her children's earnings, and the child might exploit the situation by playing off his two mothers against one another. Such cases would become all the more dramatic where this form of blackmail was applied to childless women, as these were many of them women who had sought to secure themselves a child — unanimously considered an indispensable asset for every woman here — through adoption as a last resort. As we have already mentioned earlier, *sobrinus* (nephews and nieces) figured prominently among the *ju di crianza*.<sup>112</sup> There was even a saying about the adoption of *sobrinus* by childless

women current in Curaçao that characterizes the position as regards the latter very aptly, viz. "Esun cu Dios no ta duna ju, diabel ta duna sobrinu" (The person who is denied children by God is granted *sobrinus* by the devil). This saying plainly reflects a certain ambivalence, referring as it does to the kinship tie between the mother and foster-mother, to the principle of familial cooperation and to the foster-mother's weak basis of authority vis-à-vis her *sobrinu's* mother. One female informant formulated this as follows:

"You have to help your relatives when in need, and who's the best person for the child of a woman in need to turn to except her sister or mother? 'Si bo n'tin mama, lo bo mama wela' (If you have no mother, your grandmother will mother you), but if there is no grandmother or she is no longer able to help, then the sister will have to do so. This often gives rise to quarrels because of attempts by the real mother to 'steal the child' when it's grown up; for as the child's mother she retains all rights to it. When the child has grown up, she will often try to reap the fruits of its education."

Another woman informant regarded the saying quoted above as an illustration of divine retribution on some women. Childlessness according to her was tantamount to a curse upon the woman concerned to pass her life as a *mula* (mule) — a term of abuse that was commonly used with reference to childless women — the adoption of other people's children being incapable of making this curse undone. A child might exploit the rivalry between its real mother and foster-mother by exercising moral blackmail upon the two women (while this was not restricted to women between whom there existed some kind of kinship relation, what is more) so as to get his or her own way. The following example may serve to elucidate this point.

B. was a boy of 15 who had been living in the house of his aunt, a sister of his mother's, ever since he was 6. He had held a job as assistant mechanic in a car repair shop for a few months, handing over all his earnings to his foster-mother. He was earning fl. 100.— a month, out of which his foster-mother allowed him fl. 7.50 a week pocket-money and saved fl. 15.— to fl. 20.— a month for him, while putting the remainder towards her housekeeping money. A violent quarrel arose between her and her sister when B.'s mother came to claim the money for herself. She refused her the money, however. Not long after that B. asked her to raise his allowance by fl. 5.— a week, threatening to go and move in with his own mother if she



refused him the extra money. His foster-mother agreed to half the amount, and B. settled for this. He meanwhile promised his real mother to come back to live with her, informing her that he would like a new pair of hip-slacks (a "co'i lanta tipo" or something smart to dress up in). He was given the slacks and when his mother asked him when he was coming home, he said he wanted to think it over. Thereupon the real mother and foster-mother entered into a fierce competition for his favours, their fits of indulgence alternating with quarrels about his faithlessness. The atmosphere at home was thoroughly spoilt. Only B. was benefiting from the situation. The day of our departure, four months after the first quarrel between his mother and foster-mother, he was still living in the latter's house.

Obviously there was on the whole no question of any form of legalization of the relationship between the foster-mother and the natural mother and the child in cases of child adoption. Nothing was done to give the tie between the foster-mother and foster-child legal force, while, moreover, the fact that the child knew its biological mother tended to promote interpersonal friction. That this was not invariably so was confirmed by a number of instances which we also came across of foster-children unconditionally taking their foster-mother's side in conflicts of authority between her and the natural mother. These children explained this by saying that they owed everything to their *mama di crianza* and nothing, apart from their birth, to their natural mother.

Like all social relations, the relationships between husbands, wives and their stepchildren display considerable variety. We discovered the household groups in our sample to include very few blood-relations of the man in general or children begotten by him elsewhere in particular. Quite logically, the rule whereby children remained mostly with their mothers restricted the number of children of the man alone. In two of the three cases in our sample, in which the household groups of married male heads did include children of the man alone, these children had no mother. One of them was a legitimate child of a previous marriage, and the other the child by a woman with whom the man had never coresided but who had been on friendly terms with his present wife. In the third case the child had been adopted into the group on account of its neglect by the biological mother, who accused the man of paying too little towards the child's maintenance. The child had been born concurrently with the present marriage, but the wife had agreed to adopt the little boy into the group out

of pity for him, although she had strongly objected to her husband's relationship with the natural mother. The child's adoption put a definite stop to this relationship, however, among other reasons because the mother had decided to leave the island. The man was a good "provider", and although he was not especially domesticated, he did feature in the roles of head, breadwinner and educator in the household group. Our informants generally emphasized that equality of treatment of stepchildren by the woman was very much dependent on the relationship obtaining in the partnership.

A secondary reason which stepmothers advanced for adopting their husbands' children implied certain hopes that something of the child's achievements might reflect on them in the event of his having a successful career. After all, "Bo nunca por sabi, quisa e ju ei ta bira un pluma den su sombrê" (You never know, maybe one day that child will be a feather in his father's cap).

As became apparent after further enquiries, almost-grown-up stepchildren were usually aware of the fact that their *mama* or *mai* was a *madrasa* (stepmother), most of them — a few exceptions aside — giving her due credit for never discriminating between them and her own children.

The number of stepchildren of husbands exceeded by far those of wives, there being an especially large number of children of the woman alone observable in the case of common law marriage. These children constituted on the whole an important contributing factor in the instability of the partnership concerned. Elder children mostly had difficulty in accepting the presence of a strange man in the house. Hence a woman's elder children were not necessarily provided with a social father upon her entering into a new partnership. They usually called their mother's common law husband either "sir" or "uncle", or by his name. Some women were observed to entertain fears lest their partners take a sexual interest in their growing daughters. Especially elderly single women stated themselves to have their doubts about entering into new coresidential relationships for this reason alone. Nor did the presence of young children contribute in any way towards the integration of the conjugal dyad. Hence the relationship between the *padraso* (stepfather) and his stepchildren was not generally speaking very close. As we have already observed above, the common law husband's material responsibilities towards his stepchildren were very limited. If a woman had children by one or more men, this mostly ruined all prospects of matrimony for her. If she did succeed in making

a marriage with someone other than the progenitor after all, as was the case in one or two instances, the norm of acceptance of full paternal responsibility applied. This norm was seldom realized, however.

We may take the case of C. as an example of such complete acceptance by a man of a premarital child of his wife's of which he was not the father.

C. was 31 years old and a customs officer. He had been married to 26-year-old D., the mother of one premarital and one legitimate child, for two years. The former of these children was two years old at the time of their marriage. D. had been living in with her mother until her marriage. C. said that he had always wanted to marry D., but had for a long time considered himself too young. He had not wanted to be saddled with responsibility too soon. All this had resulted in "someone else getting in before me". D. is a good, *humilde* wife, however, and he remained in love with her, so that when her lover deserted her he undertook to look after her. Something very much to the credit of D. and her relatives was the fact that they had rejected the offer of a common law marriage in a small cottage which C.'s relatives were prepared to vacate. C. hereupon proposed marriage, rented a house and recognized the illegitimate child as his own, having his name bestowed upon it when the marriage took place. C. considered the fact that the child was still young and should look upon him as its father quite important. D. admitted in C.'s presence that she had been very lucky. Most girls in a like situation lost all chances of marriage. She felt that women like her ought in general to be *humilde*. After all, she was no longer a virgin at marriage, so that she would always have fewer rights vis-à-vis C.

In only a few isolated cases did people state themselves to have legitimated children not their own. This was strictly speaking prohibited by the law, which was why such cases were so rare. Hence differences in name between natural children and stepchildren often remained because of this. Stepfathers were mostly called "papa" or "paai" if they were legally married to the children's mother.

Our informants advanced two reasons why there should be at least some discrimination between their own children and stepchildren by married fathers. The first of these involved the idea that the presence of children by another man tended to reduce the husband's relationship to his wife to some extent to a concubinal one. A man's *padrasa*ship hence served as a constant reminder of the incompleteness of his

union, although the circumstances under which his wife had had these children before their marriage — either in or out of wedlock — were regarded as an important, possibly extenuating factor. The second reason involved a related idea, namely that of the threat to his *stems* resulting from his having less say over his stepchildren. A rebuke to a stepchild was easily liable to be interpreted as a sign of discrimination against children that were not his own, thus strongly encouraging matrifocal tendencies and stimulating antagonism in the relations between the (step)father and (step)children. One can say that the likelihood of conflicts of authority between parents and stepchildren was relatively great generally speaking, but that *padrasas* had to put up with such conflicts much sooner than *madrasas* in consequence of a potentially weak position in the household group.

Children's awareness of the nature of their relationship towards their stepfather was partly dependent on the age at which this relationship had come about. Although ideally a legally married *padrasa* was supposed not to discriminate between his own children and his *intènà* or *intènè* ("boarders", derived from *internaat*, "boarding-school"), in actual day to day practice he might go as far as actually stressing the stepchild's status. He was only too apt to say, whenever a stepchild asked his permission for anything "mi ta tene mi atras, bo mama tin cu bisa" (I'm staying out of it, it's up to your mother). "Ju di hende no ta bo ju" (someone else's children definitely aren't yours), some *padrasas* said, "and when they grow up later they will say, 'Bo no ta mi tata, i nan ta lanta contrabo' (you're not my father, and they'll stand up to you)".

Non-resident fathers usually had no authority over their children. This statement is nevertheless open to some qualification. As we saw above, the relationship of children towards their mother was the most dominant, though it varied slightly according to the *calidad* of the man-woman relationship in question. So the circumstances under which the man had left the group, whether amicably or otherwise, and the question of whether he was contributing towards its maintenance, or whether the relationship between the father and mother had been a legal marriage, a common law marriage, or a casual affair or visiting relationship, did make some difference to the relations between a child and his non-resident father. Both the results of the interviews and our general observations confirmed that contacts between fathers and children where the relationship with the latter's mother had been a matrimonial one, although quite rare, were even

so more frequent than those in the case of a broken common law marriage. Common law marriage was characterized more than legal marriage by considerable marginality of the man, which was reflected in, among other things, differences in the man's obligations with regard to the maintenance of his children. Children of a *companja* were invariably considered as having a closer tie with their mother than those of a marriage, the partners to which latter usually strove to achieve a harmonious integration of the paternal, conjugal and maternal dyads, to which they gave expression in the formulation of their mutual rights and obligations. If it was a matrimonial relationship which had broken up, the man possessed greater claims on the joint children, and the woman on his maintenance of these, than where the dissolution of a common law marriage was concerned. Except in the case of legal separations, few specific arrangements with regard to contacts between the father and children were ever made. Some men would incidentally speak to their children and give them some sweets or money when running into them in the street. Others might make arrangements to meet their children at school or at the house of a grandmother, aunt or godmother; these meetings were more or less regulated, though more often than not the result of chance or calculation. The mother was mostly the one to take the initiative in this whenever the children were in need of anything, such as clothes and so on. She would send the children off to see their father in the hope of receiving something (extra) towards the youngsters' maintenance from his this way. Some women consciously kept their children acquainted with their father solely with this object in view; so it might happen that a woman kept a photo of a man with whom she personally had the most bitter quarrel permanently on view somewhere in the house. There were also women who behaved in precisely the opposite way, however. Some wanted to see every tie between themselves and their children on the one hand and the man on the other completely severed, and would try to deny the man's paternity over the children, probably entirely in contradiction with the true state of affairs.

Another factor exercising some influence on the father-child relations was the circumstance whether or not the mother entered into a new partnership and her new partner forbade her to accept money for his stepchildren's maintenance. The quality of the new partnership was also of importance here. So there was one woman, for instance, who decided to break off her relations with a new partner, despite the fact that the relationship between them was professedly a good

one, because the latter insisted that she refuse all future maintenance payments, without, however, giving her sufficient guarantee that he himself would provide adequately for her. An important factor in this particular case was the circumstance that the Guardianship Court, which was becoming increasingly active, had given her a virtual guarantee of the payment of a regular allowance.

A different situation again was that of a young unmarried mother living in her parental house and carrying on a non-coresidential relationship with the father of her child. Here, too, various possibilities presented themselves to her, ranging from the discontinuation of the relationship in the course of the pregnancy or after the birth, since the young man wanted no *responsabilidad*, to the prolonged continuation of a visiting relationship. The breaking off of relations between the girl and boy normally resulted in the young father's having little if any contact with his child. Continuation of the relationship in the form of a visiting relationship as a rule had something to do with a certain pride on the girl's part. As an unmarried mother she took a definite pride in having only one lover, and it was a matter of extreme importance to her to be able to say that the union was stable and, at least as far as she was concerned, exclusive. It was, moreover, common for the maternal grandmother, like the young mother herself, to foster at least some hope that a marriage might eventuate after all. The inevitable consequence of all this in the majority of cases was the birth of still more children, which eventually led to the young mother's departure from her parental home. A breach between the young man and woman often proved unavoidable in the end nonetheless, even though conversely in some cases the relationship might culminate in a legal or common law marriage and the children's legitimation. In other cases, depending on the girl's mother's opinion of the young man on the point of behaviour and future prospects, the relationship was broken off right at the first pregnancy. In this kind of situation the mother would advise the girl to have nothing more to do with the boy and to go and find herself a job after the birth of her child, and leave it to her to bring it up. As was already said above, the father was virtually debarred from all contact with his child if the girl did, in fact, follow her mother's advice completely. In many cases, however, the girl would continue the relationship clandestinely, or would enter into new relationships resulting in new pregnancies. The young mother's departure and the adoption of one or more of her children by her mother or one of her

sisters might then offer some sort of a way out of the difficulties in which she had landed herself. Contact between these *ju di crianza* and their father was by no means always precluded. He might sometimes make them small presents or pay something towards their maintenance with some degree of regularity. The active part played by him in their actual upbringing, however, was utterly insignificant, if not (more often) totally non-existent. In many cases the relations between children and their non-resident fathers were seen to cease almost entirely in the long run, moreover.

As was pointed out in connection with the composition of household groups, foster-children not infrequently were godchildren (*ihá*) of the foster-mothers.<sup>113</sup> Among the Curaçaoan lower strata the institution of *compadrazgo* could be of vital importance, as was apparent from the adoption of *ihá*, which was a *madrina's* first duty in the event of the death of the mother of her godchild. Generally speaking, however, *compadrazgo* entailed few lasting intensive social relations.

A person's most important godparents were those who had stood sponsor for him at baptism, though at confirmation (*confirmacion*) and marriage, too, one tried to recruit such ritual relations. One's sponsors at baptism were called "padrino" and "madrina"; they were addressed by one's parents as "compader" or "compère" and "com-mader" or "commère", like all other persons invited to act as godparents at other occasions. Their relationship to the child was more or less like that of an uncle or aunt, while they were, in fact, addressed by it as "om" and "pepe".

Godparents were selected primarily on the basis of the criteria of status, open-handedness and somatic traits. There was supposed to exist a special genealogical relationship between the *padrino* and *madrina* as well as between the godparents and parents. The supposed existence of such a relationship was reflected in, among other things, the popular belief that quarrelling and objurgation between ritual relations would result in "petrification". Moreover, marriage between *compadrazgo* relations was prohibited by ecclesiastical law. In Latin America the relationship between a child's parents and godparents was usually marked by a wide difference in social and economic status, which was considered of great social and economic importance. Furthermore, as Mintz and Wolf posited in one article, "the compadre-commandre relationship outweighs the godparent-godchild relationship" (Mintz and Wolf, 1950, p. 355). In Curaçao it was impossible for this kind of *compadrazgo* system to come to full florescence, however,

partly owing to the religious heterogeneity of the island. Here any wealthy persons qualifying as godparents were for the greater part Protestant or Jewish. As a result, the institution of *compadrazgo* has remained confined within the Afor-American population classes, usually not extending beyond the immediate circle of intimate friends and relations. The most recent developments in Curaçao have given rise to some differentiation of social and economic status among the lower strata themselves that is not without relevance for *compadrazgo*, however.

Approximately 42 % of our male and female heads preferred to have relatives act as godparents to their children, while roughly the same percentage had no particular preference. In actual practice, non-relatives appeared to have been chosen as godparents in approximately 65 % of the cases, while maternal kin had been invited to stand sponsor one and a half times as often as paternal relations. There was a slight shift in favour of paternal relatives observable over the years, although our material does not admit of any definite conclusions in this respect.

Except at the moment of establishment of the *compadre* and *commadre* relationship, it was not so much the relations between the parents and the *commadre* and *compadre* as those between the godparents and godchildren that counted in Curaçaoan *compadrazgo* relations. The godfather's most prominent function represented the financing of the necessary festivities, while that of the godmother consisted in the baking of all the numerous cakes of different symbolical shapes that are traditionally displayed in barely consumable quantities in the *kamber di bolo* or special cake room. The *madrina* or female sponsor at baptism was the most important, however, which unquestionably had something to do with the importance of the maternal role and the frequent absence of the paternal figure, especially in the past. It is not improbable that the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship and the household group in marriage and the nuclear family has brought about some change in this. So a number of informants told us that formerly the godfather's function was more comprehensive, as he used ordinarily to be assigned a disciplinary and educational (i.e., father-substitutive) role. The church furthermore used the admission or non-admission of a godfather as a sanction on the illegitimacy of birth of godchildren at baptism, which sanction was abolished in 1964. The *madrina* figure was not subject to any such church sanction in the event of the illegitimacy of birth



of her *ihá*. In actual practice her role as adviser and, where necessary, mother substitute has also lost in importance, however, the sole remaining contacts taking the form chiefly of birthday visits paid by the godchildren to their *madrina* as also to a lesser extent, to their *padrino*.

At birth, both a godfather and godmother were recruited for the new-born infant. At confirmation, boys had a *padrino* and girls a *madrina*. While at marriage the couple shared one *padrino* and one *madrina* between them. Aside from the *madrina* at baptism, none of the others fulfilled any function worth speaking of except at the occasion for which they had been especially requested, on the extravagance of which their prestige was to a large extent also dependent. Their new status in many cases implied the emphasizing of a social relationship that was already existent before the relevant occasion.

Growing children seemed on the whole to have quite a good knowledge of the genealogical relationships existing between the various members of their domestic groups. They (at any rate those who had reached adolescence) were observed to possess such knowledge also as regards half-brothers and -sisters. It seems reasonable to suppose that this knowledge is to a not inconsiderable extent a function of the importance attached to the nuclear family composition of the domestic group. Children's attention was usually drawn by their mother or a non-resident father, or by friends, neighbours or acquaintances to any genealogical relationships that did not strictly speaking fit in with the nuclear family structure. The children themselves could not fail to notice any existing differences in name when enrolling at school, applying for jobs or registering for official purposes, moreover. The above-mentioned awareness had few if any concrete implications in the daily practice of sibling relationships as observed by us. Most children of either the woman alone or the man alone were members of separate household groups, namely those of their respective mothers. Uterine kinship, the strong emotional orientation towards the female parent and coresidence in the *cas di mama* were found to be the main factors responsible for the slight distinction, for all practical purpose, between brothers, sisters, *ruman parti' mama* (half-brothers and -sisters by different fathers) and, where present, *ruman parti' tata* (half-brothers and -sisters by different mothers). The relationship between the *padrasa* and *madrassa* on the one hand and stepchildren on the other has already been discussed above. We shall restrict our-

selves at present to the observation that we were unable to notice any obvious effects of possible differences between parenthood and step-parenthood on sibling relations within household groups.

Sisters were on the whole closest together. The mutual assistance they might lend each other as grown-ups in the care and upbringing of their respective children may be viewed as an extension of the relatively close ties they maintained with their household group of orientation. Here they were often required to do certain household chores together and usually shared the same bedroom, while it was also their duty to keep a watchful eye on one another's doings with respect to the opposite sex, so that they grew up in close contact with each other. Needless to say, the relationship between them was not marked exclusively by mutual solidarity. While they might at some times be closely allied in conspiracies against their mother, father, or brothers and other sisters, at others they might madly compete for their mother's affection with one another, not scrupling to tell tales about one another's major and minor offences. An instance of sisterly conspiracy is afforded by sisterly "chaperonage", often interpreted by the girls themselves as a form of mutual cooperation with respect to contacts with boys. So the sister acting as chaperon might give the other freedom to go out as she liked with some boy in exchange for particular objects which she desired (such as cosmetics, for instance).

The relationship between brothers was considerably less marked by solidarity than that between sisters. Where initially they often played together in the *curà* of their parental home, later on they tended much more each to go their own separate way in the considerably greater freedom they were granted outside the house. We would observe that as a general rule relations between brothers were less close than those between sisters, while relations between brothers and sisters were characterized by the keenest opposition. The differences in freedom of movement between boys and girls constituted an important source of tension, although the boys' frequent absences from home were in practice sometimes seen to prevent the eruption of such tensions. Where elder brothers usually exercised relatively little authority over their sisters, they were, however, liable to be asked their advice by their mother about such things as outings the daughters proposed to make. The degree to which an elder brother acted as substitute husband and father was of definite importance here. He might at times take over the husbandly role of moral guardian. Generally speaking he was far from dominant, however, but was

subject to his mother's authority just as much as his sisters, which circumstance in its turn often gave rise to antagonism between the mother and son. The son's motto "mi ta homber; mi mes ta manda mi mes" (I'm a man, I'm the one to decide what I ought to do) would then be in direct contradiction with the mother's principle that "Ta mi cas ta; aki ta mi cu ta manda" (It's my house, I'm the one to give orders here).

If a girl wished to go out somewhere she had to get her father's, mother's and elder brother's permission. If the brother was against and he was at least five or six years her senior, she would not go. The brother's authority in this respect was based to an important extent on his own considerable freedom of movement, on his familiarity in virtue hereof with the circles and places his sister was proposing to visit and on his fraternal duty to act as his sisters' protector. Brothers of the same age or even younger brothers might also exercise a considerable influence on their sisters' movements by acting as advisers to their mother.

The right to inflict corporal punishment, once such punishment had been decided on, was accorded especially to the mother, although fathers, too, might sometimes be allowed to exercise this right. The instances of maternal interposition in cases of harsh treatment of the children by the father are legion, however. Brothers were certainly never encouraged to use physical force on their sisters.

The difference in the tie with the mother between sons and daughters was definitely calculated to give rise to tension between brothers and sisters. In the eyes of many young men, sisters received "mas affeccion". Although many youths had as motto "let no one lay hands on my sister, but let everyone else's sisters be mine", in actual practice most brothers took little notice of their sisters. This became evident for one thing in connection with a malicious gossip campaign set afoot by the friends of one young man against the latter's sister. Instead of defending his sister, the young man admitted that the accusations laid against her — according to which the girl had had sexual intercourse with a number of boys and had been guilty of promiscuous behaviour — might well be true. After all, she was going out with boys in his absence. In another case a young man refused to intervene when his sister was receiving a beating from her common law husband on one occasion.

The tie between brothers and sisters was more or less indirect, usually running via the mother. As a result cross-cousins had little

contact with one another. Parallel-cousins, on the other hand, and more particularly sisters' children, were socially much more closely related. This became apparent also in connection with the differentiation between the different kinds of foster-child in the discussion of the different types of group structure.<sup>114</sup>

Many of the Curaçaoan's relatives were known to him without his actually maintaining social relations with them. Thus many of our informants knew, without any claim to completeness, their *ruman parti' tata* (half-brothers and -sisters by the same father) and other blood- and half-blood-relations. However, the strong emphasis on matrilinearity in the actual practice of kinship relations might lead to people's failing to recognize their paternal relations on social occasions at which relatives normally get together, such as weddings, for instance. So one of our informants was once forcibly refused admission to a particular family gathering and given this only upon confirmation of his alleged membership of the family via his father. People generally stressed the importance of as wide as possible a knowledge of one's kinship relations so as to avoid marriage between close relatives. There were no objections to marriage between first cousins, even though not one person in our sample was this closely related to his or her partner. Marriages between half-brothers and -sisters were strongly condemned, on the other hand.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the foregoing we set ourselves the task of elaborating the points of departure discussed in the introduction. The premises underlying our research were that:

- (a) the area of research, the island of Curaçao, occupied a place apart among the various parts of the Afro-American area; and
- (b) if Curaçao could be regarded as a special variant of the Afro-American type of society, then the Curaçaoan lower-class family had to be considered as a special variant of the Afro-American family type.

We have not followed up the comparisons implied by points (a) and (b) at any length. We had necessarily to restrict ourselves to a comparison between Curaçao and Wagley's Plantation America, taking a closer look only at a specific number of aspects. We concluded that Curaçao had followed a different course of development from most other parts of the Afro-American area both in the past and in the 20th century. So Curaçao never became a plantation colony with large slave forces, but rather acquired the character of a commercial centre. In the present century the island is characterized by a relatively advanced stage of modernization as a consequence of the establishment of the oil industry, the development of a contemporary trade union movement and political party system, the expansion of education and the intensification of international cultural and commercial relations. No comparable process of intensive modernization on the basis of industrialization has taken place, or only very sporadically so, in any other part of the Afro-American area, partly owing to the small size of Curaçao's population, as a result of which it was relatively quick to become almost totally involved in the modernization process.

The peculiarities of Curaçaoan society exercised a direct influence

on the nature of inter-ethnic relations, on the process of adaptation and acculturation of the different ethnic groups, and on the social structure, in which legal marriage and the nuclear family composition of the household group occupied an important place.

We placed our findings on the Curaçaoan lower class family not only in the local context but also against the background of the discussion of a number of theories concerning the Afro-American family evolved by different authors. The consideration underlying this procedure was that it was implausible to regard the findings of other scholars as nothing more or less than pure facts on the presentation of which the theoretical stance of the respective authors supposedly had no influence. Apart from being considered against the background of the relevant social conditions, the information on the Afro-American family in the different areas therefore had to be viewed also in the light of the various authors' theoretical standpoints with respect to patterns of social interaction and the development of culture. Finally, the chapter discussing the various theories of the different authors also served to elucidate further the perspective from which we ourselves approached the phenomena of marriage, concubinage, the visiting relationship, illegitimacy of birth, the instability of particular man-woman relationships, matrifocality, and so on.

We started our theoretical discussion by suggesting a compromise between the viewpoints of Frazier and Herskovits. The former of these was inclined to consider the acculturation of the African Negroes to "American" culture as virtually accomplished at a very early stage, as a result of which the stress in the explanation of certain phenomena of the Afro-American family came to fall on the contemporary living conditions of the lower strata. Herskovits, on the other hand, tended towards the view that African principles were exercising a strong structural influence on Afro-American man-woman relationships and household group structures. Both viewpoints, but more especially that of Frazier, seemed to us to be the products of a rather static conception of the cultures involved, no matter how historically oriented their exponents may have been. Frazier's stance led to the view that one ought to speak of an "American" society in which everyone alike had part, but of which not everyone alike was given the means of realizing the generally current values. The realization of these values became a fact only as soon as the means, such as regular work and an adequate income, became available. It was then possible for the Negro to behave like an "American".

Herskovits' standpoint pointed in the direction of dominancy of the African culture. If the means — which one should take to include the opportunity of establishing corporate family relations, for instance — were available, then it was possible for African ideas on social organization as preserved in the Negroes' collective memory to be given shape in the tribal, village and family context.

The viewpoints of both Frazier and Herskovits are slightly exaggerated, though here again that of the former is more so than that of the latter. A compromise between their standpoints was that according to which the importance of "African" and "American" cultural elements in man-woman relationships and household group formation varied in accordance with the phase of the Negro population's adjustment and acculturation to the Afro-American situation and culture. It was implausible to regard "the" American and "the" African cultures as permanently distinct ideal entities. There is always interpenetration between cultures, resulting in either substitution or reinterpretation of patterns of interaction. Credit is due to Herskovits for drawing attention to the aspect of reinterpretation in his studies on the community life of the originally African population in the New World.

Following Goodenough and Goetze, we viewed culture not as an absolute entity with its own logical internal coherence, but as a system of different orientations of individual persons in their social environment, with the various interactions conducing to a certain degree of convergency of *Privatkulturen* and so giving rise to *Arbeitskulturen* exercising a structural effect on further interaction. Hence acculturation should never be regarded as a process of interpenetration between different logical, ideal systems resulting in a new logically coherent system in consequence of adjustment and reinterpretation. On the contrary, acculturation is to a large extent a function of the nature of the social contacts, the mutual compatibility of the different cultural elements, and the economic and political positions vis-à-vis one another of the mutually confronting individuals and groups belonging to the respective cultures. The socially disruptive effects of the impact do not exclusively take the form of an essential "undoing" of all the old conditions and relations in order to make for the emergence of new ones with a new, logically integrated system. Individualization and pluralization of culture, depending on the momentum and "depth" of the acculturation process as well as the scale and the degree of differentiation of the new social context, such as, for instance, the urban industrial society, are just as likely to result. This representation

of the facts we followed up with three conclusions of a theoretical nature, viz.:

1. Regular interaction tends to conduce to a certain cultural consensus, with some individual differences together with differences in the intellectual and emotional endorsement of the prevailing norms remaining perceptible, however. There are individual variations and divergencies observable within every group.
2. The norms regulating intergroup relations are very much an outcome of, among other things, the degree of social and economic domination of one group by another and the differential endorsement of this by the parties involved. In this connection we discussed critically the complementary nature of what has been termed by Freyre and Hoetink the "seignorial" and the "slave behaviour pattern".
3. The ideas, aims and norms of the dominant individuals and groups, like those of the ones dominated, are subject to change. The culture of reference groups and of the individuals belonging to these groups is liable to change as a result of changes taking place in the total social system. These latter changes may take place under the influence of both internal and external factors. Persons inclined towards imitation may orientate themselves in this connection by:
  - (a) the obsolete patterns of the superior reference groups;
  - (b) the modified patterns of these groups; or
  - (c) other groups in the society, such as, for instance, emerging new middle strata.

Needless to say, these different orientational possibilities exercise a distinct influence on the patterns of interaction within the groups of imitating individuals. A large measure of diversity may result, while widely divergent orientations may even exercise a destabilizing effect on social interaction, such as that between men and women. A further complication here is the fact that people obviously orientate themselves not exclusively by the behaviour of persons outside their own group or social stratum. As a corollary of "internal" variation, the possibility of orientating oneself by individuals who are culturally different, though on the point of social and economic status within the total society more or less one's equals, also offers itself. Changes in the social and economic position of persons inclined towards imitation tend in general to modify also the prevailing social controls



over behaviour, as is the case likewise with respect to the persons imitated. In this contact we stressed the difference between reputation and respectability.

After discussing R. T. Smith's theory, who continued along the lines of Frazier's structural-functionalistic conception of society, and reviewing H. Hoetink's and M. G. Smith's criticism of the said theory, we presented our own general theoretical point of departure in the form of three different theses, viz.:

1. It is implausible to contend with reference to any given society that the system of values and norms of a specific social group or stratum should be viewed as a mere sub-system of a larger system forming a functionally differentiated whole.
2. Apart from "adoption" of cultural elements from other groups, new norms and ideas may develop under the influence of the conditions of life within the group itself, too. Such norms are then certainly no mere compensatory adaptations, or in other words, adjustments designed to compensate the lack of means of realizing the dominant values of the total social system, for they exist also "in their own right".
3. There are different historical influences affecting the development of culture in each different group or stratum. This process should therefore be viewed against the background of the original ethnic diversity and inter-ethnic relations.

The theoretical standpoint expounded above gave rise to a series of complex problems with respect to the Curaçaoan lower class family. Our research confronted us with a multiplicity of ways of behaviour as well as possible explanations whereby ostensibly similar conduct might on closer scrutiny also prove markedly dissimilar as far as underlying norms and motives and the relation to other conduct were concerned. Out of this multitude of forms of behaviour and explanations we made a choice based ultimately on our personal conception of the adaptation and acculturation process among the dark-coloured lower strata. This choice out of our different findings demonstrated the correlation between certain tendencies in the social, economic and cultural development of the Curaçaoan Afro-American population groups on the one hand and specific trends in their man-woman relationships and parental and other broader genealogical relations on the other. The typology of household group headship, of which the different forms of man-woman relationship constituted an im-

portant component, served as a structural principle in the presentation of our material.

In our description of the process of adaptation and acculturation we distinguished between four general phases, viz.:

1. that of the adaptation of the African Negroes to the conditions of slavery;
2. that of the adjustment of the product of the conditions of slavery to the situation of juridical freedom;
3. that of adaptation to urban proletarian circumstances in a society that had just entered the first stage of development of a capitalistic system; and
4. that of adjustment to urban modernization as a consequence of steadily growing industrialization and commercialization of the economy coupled with rapidly rising employment, improved social benefits, drastic social and economic mobility among the lower strata, a vigorous expansion of education, and increasingly active participation in political and socio-economic organizations.

The Negroes' "alienation" from their African socio-cultural heritage increases with every successive phase. The behaviour of the dark Afro-Americans is subject to the influence of a complex of factors and circumstances varying per area and, within the different areas, per individual group. As some of these we would mention:

1. the degree of cultural confusion and the inability to organize in accordance with African principles under the circumstances of slavery and subsequent freedom;
2. the relations with the socially and economically dominant groups, which, relatively isolated from their mother country as they were, evolved their own variants of metropolitan patterns, while also adopting foreign cultural elements of African or other origin, such as from geographically neighbouring cultures;
3. the social developments up to and including the emancipation of the Negro slaves, which was by no means everywhere realized exclusively through the use of force by the Negroes themselves, but was effected also as a result of changes in the views on race and man and society on the part of certain members of the dominant groups;
4. the social developments after Emancipation, which made it possible for the new status of the emancipated persons to find expression

in other besides the purely juridical respects. Here one should consider especially such factors as:

- (a) the extent of the increase in and distribution of wealth;
- (b) the changes in the occupational structure, which offered people an opportunity of giving up jobs which, against the background of slavery, were held in general contempt, aside from being unremunerative, in favour of work in a more modern economic context;
- (c) the opportunities for participation in new forms of socio-economic, political and cultural organization, or, more generally speaking, the possibilities of participation in the modernizing society at large, which has gained in emotional importance as a result of the process of decolonization, thus further strengthening the Negroes' self-respect; and
- (d) the opportunities provided by the social, economic and cultural mobility for establishing man-woman and parent-child relations that are generally considered respectable. These relations, that is, matrimonial and limited family relations, may be regarded as indicators of improved status.

The majority of the Afro-American areas had to be reckoned as being in the second and third phases of adaptation and acculturation. The agrarian communities which R. T. Smith studied and with respect to which he constructed his theory of the cyclical development of the Afro-American family may be placed in the second phase. With regard to the third phase we discussed the studies of M. G. Smith and Lewis and the latter's critics. Their findings show how seriously Afro-American family life is affected by the process of personal and social disintegration, by the irresponsibility of behaviour of men and women towards each other and to their children, and by the instability of partnerships in this phase. The transition from phase 3 to phase 4, which Curaçao in our opinion had entered long ago, was bringing in its wake drastic changes in the nature of the family. So if, as R. T. Smith also clearly posited, matrifocal forces in Afro-American families in low social and weak economic positions tended to be stimulated by the man's inability to fulfil his culturally prescribed role as a husband and father, while further men were impelled by the matrifocal shift in authority in their household groups to enter into extramarital liaisons, then it is only logical to assume that an improvement in the

social and economic position of members of the Afro-American section of the population will have a modifying effect on the matrifocal tendencies in their domestic groups, so that, as a result of the integration of the conjugal, maternal and paternal dyads, men may derive more pleasure from their partnership and their domestic life and be less inclined to find themselves mistresses out of spite and rancour. In this connection we advanced a number of considerations designed to make the development of a greater emphasis on monogamy in the lower-stratum family more understandable. Apart from repeating the view that the monogamous union on a basis of reciprocity was the only proper one for both men and women which a great many of our informants expressed, we grouped our arguments around a key consideration pertaining to the process of acculturation. This consideration involved that in attempts by men to put the double standard into practice, the social homogamy, (the condition of belonging to the same social stratum) made itself constantly felt as a source of conflict between husbands and wives in regard to the choice of mistresses. This homogamy in our view was also the underlying cause of the tendency for mothers to safeguard themselves against any "inroads" on both their social and economic status as a married woman arising from the rivalry of a *comblis* (married man's mistress) by forming a strong tie with their children. As married women they were mostly disinclined to tolerate a rival of more or less the same social standing as themselves, and tried to make themselves as independent as possible of their husbands, who because of their extramarital responsibilities had at the same time become a less certain source of income, by stimulating the mother-child tie. These women would then look to their children as an insurance for their old age. The mutual suspicion, tension and antagonism pervading the partnership as a result of this situation cannot have been very pleasant for either the man or the woman.

Although it was not quite possible to categorically deny the influence of African polygynic principles, as far as Curaçao was concerned we definitely considered such influence most unlikely. Nowhere did we come across any relation between wives and their husbands' mistresses modelled on the pattern of polygynic relations normally existing between a man's first, second, third, and so forth, wives. The Afro-American and, if possible, even more particularly the Curaçaoan living conditions formed an obstacle to the realization of polygynic principles from an early stage, so that their practical application must have met

with resistance even at a time when they might possibly have still been subscribed to in theory. So the presence of an African social environment in which men had opportunity of acquiring status, and neither men, women nor children could be traded and moved from place to place at the pleasure of a master was prerequisite for the realization of these polygynic principles, for instance. Although a social environment of this kind was not perhaps to the same extent preconditional for the realization of the double standard at least the same if not a greater degree of social and economic differentiation among the Afro-American population was requisite for this. Thus it may have become obvious to some at quite an early stage that the monogamous union was the most appropriate kind of relationship for the Negro under Afro-American conditions. The double standard, which bears only a superficial resemblance to the polygynic one, has the importance of monogamous marriage for its point of departure. There was too little social differentiation among the Negroes, however, to admit of the integration of the institution of the visiting relationship, of the type entertained by white masters, into the pattern of man-woman relationships in the lower Afro-American classes. When the industrial boom brought an increase in social and economic differentiation, marriage came to be more and more institutionalized. Men and women gained in respectability and, under the influence of the egalitarian-mindedness — at any rate ideologically relatively more so than before — of the society at large, became oriented to ideas of monogamy of a kind that had already forced themselves upon certain other groups in earlier times and which were now honoured by the new middle strata, and more particularly the mass communication media. We observed a rise in nuptiality and a fall in illegitimacy of birth going hand in hand with the increased wealth and social and cultural mobility of the Negroes. Our sample population corroborated the correlation between these quantities.

The institutionalization of marriage with the concomitant rise in importance and respectability of the husband-father made for a decrease in importance of the maternal role, as R. T. Smith suggested. Neolocality of settlement of the family, combined with the integration of the conjugal, maternal and paternal dyads, made for a decrease in the prevalence of adoption — which often served to extend a woman's period of effective motherhood — and was creating more favourable conditions for family planning.

Where R. T. Smith saw a link between the cyclical development of

the family in relatively stable rural communities and a high degree of social ascription in the society at large, and where proletarianization in the third phase of adjustment and acculturation was attended with much uncertainty, tension and conflict in man-woman relationships — a circumstance which, incidentally, no doubt also served to stimulate the desire for peace and harmony in familial relations as formulated by many of our informants —, as far as Curaçao is concerned the stress lay more unequivocally on status acquisition in consequence of the social, economic and cultural changes. In this connection marriage and harmony in the relations between the father and children in a nuclear family context were viewed as important symbols of social status. This led to the phenomenon of marriage taking place on the whole at an early age, that is to say, at the beginning of the partnership, in Curaçao, in contrast with what was the case in R. T. Smith's cycle. According to the latter's findings, an eventual marriage constituted a confirmation of a matrifocal shift in power. Again as far as Curaçao was concerned, however, marriage implied the realization of a specific value involving respectability for all concerned, as well as a confirmation of the husband-father role.

With reference to the transition from the third to the fourth phase we discussed the twin concepts of reputation and respectability, following Wilson's example. The term "reputation" was taken to refer to the name and standing which men and women acquired and defended in their respective peer groups, that is, groups of persons of the same sex, roughly the same age and more or less the same social and economic status. So the contexts to the control of which behaviour here was subjected were divided along sexual lines, while behaviour was not aimed at any social rise in the society at large. Respectability, on the other hand, was attained through conformation to norms and values inspired by the behaviour of socially superior groups via orientation to these groups. Respectability was considered as being connected with improved social and economic status and with increased participation in social, economic, political and cultural events. In conformity with this, the social control here concerned not so much the behaviour of men and women vis-à-vis one another or jointly as the conjugal, maternal and paternal dyads in as closely integrated a form as possible.

The expression "inspired by the behaviour of socially superior groups" which we used above with reference to the values and norms of the lower strata stresses the interpretative aspect of our approach.

In the discussion of Lewis' "culture of poverty" we objected to the representation of culture as a statistical profile, pointing at the same time to the difference in importance to different groups of seemingly similar matters. Our general theoretical point of departure as formulated in the above three points accordingly implies a rejection of the idea of homogeneity of the dominant values for each of the different groups or social strata within the total social context. In our view this idea tended to induce sociologists to argue too much in terms of economic determinism, as it led to the placing of a virtually exclusive emphasis on the availability of the means as the sole condition for the realization of these values. Hence our aim in drawing attention to the importance of studying adaptation and acculturation processes in the Afro-American area, in discussing the development of culture as analysed by Goodenough and Goetze, and in pointing out the importance of social control in inducing people to enter into legal marriage even where the economic basis for this was really considered inadequate, was to give social and spiritual factors more prominence. The importance of these factors may be demonstrated from a historical angle as well by pointing out the rise in nuptiality in the period between Emancipation and the establishment of the oil industry. It was the subsequent improvement in the social and economic situation that was nevertheless responsible for the greater importance attached to ostentation at occasions such as births, first communion, church visits, marriage, and so on. We further elaborated this viewpoint in the discussion of the varying significance of such phenomena as the visiting relationship, concubinage, marriage, divorce, illegitimacy of birth and matrifocality for members of the lower and the higher strata in different periods. Despite the high degree of institutionalization of man-woman relationships in marriage among the lower Afro-American strata of Curaçaoan society, one should nonetheless expect to find certain differences between the relations between men and women, parents and children, and so on, here and the corresponding relations in socially superior groups. Among other things, the specific developments with regard to matrifocality in the Afro-American lower class family and the functions which this family fulfilled for its respective members in earlier times must have exercised a definite influence on the nature of the matrimonial and familial relations encountered here. Hence one of our principal reasons for deciding to designate our study a sociological exploration is provided by the fact that we have never, no more than any other researcher into the

Afro-American family, conducted research into the family life of the upper strata or its influence in the total context. It is this that has prevented us from putting our findings with reference to the lower class family into the proper perspective. Research into the family life of the upper strata must hence be regarded as a valuable supplement particularly to a study in which acculturation processes must be accentuated in the explanation of the different phenomena. In our view this type of research could be extremely helpful in elucidating the nature of the Afro-American family and its place in the total social structure.

We have designated the society of Curaçao as a special variant of the Afro-American social type. At this point it remains only for us to place the findings of our research against the background of the typology of the Afro-American family as furnished in the form of a series of mutually connected points in the introduction. We shall hence proceed to contrast this typology of the Afro-American family with the general conclusions which our material has permitted us to draw, in exactly the same way that we tried to determine the place of Curaçao within the total area of Plantation America in these concluding remarks.

According to the first point of this typology, the coresidence of men and women as sexual partners often took place in the form of concubinages. Our material indicated that in Curaçao, however, marriage had clearly developed into the most prevalent form of man-woman relationship among the lower Afro-American strata. One might remark that even so concubinages were more frequent than the instantaneous exposure provided by our survey would lead one to believe, owing to the ease of changing partners inherent in this form of relationship. Notwithstanding, concubinages were far less numerous than marriages, while at the same time they did not enjoy the degree of legitimacy accorded to the Jamaican "trial concubinage" or the corresponding phase of the cyclical development of the lower class family in British Guyana.

We argued in the second point of the typology that relations between men and women were mostly weak and of short duration. Now, we observed with respect to the Curaçaoan lower class family that whereas concubinages did display weak man-woman relations, in point of fact, and were moreover of a limited average duration, the much more prevalent marriages were quite stable. Few *de facto* or *de jure* divorces



were encountered here, while marriage pointed rather in the direction of integration of the conjugal dyad than in that of a confirmation of the marginal position of the male, moreover. Headship of the domestic group was to a certain extent guaranteed to the male by the matrimonial status. More particularly in the case of prolonged concubinal relationships — where often pressure to have the union legalized was brought to bear by the children — the man did, however, show fear of loss of authority in the household group after marriage. On the other hand again, the strength of his position in the group might sometimes have proved itself by virtue of the long duration of the relationship.

In the third point we contended that visiting relationships were frequently found in the Afro-American area. Here again, this kind of relationship was admittedly more prevalent in Curaçao than the data of our sample seem to suggest. This is due firstly to the fact that people were inclined to withhold information on relationships of this type, which it is easy enough to keep secret, in interviews. Secondly, a change of partners was even easier in this form of man-woman relationship than in the case of concubinage; and thirdly, one person might easily entertain more than one visiting relationship at a time. Nonetheless, the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage warrants the conclusion that the visiting relationship was less frequently encountered in Curaçao than in other parts of the Afro-American area. Here, if the part in question was still in the second phase of adaptation and acculturation, a certain legitimacy attached to this non-coresidential kind of union, while the third phase understandably displayed a boom in visiting relationships (though probably even more so in casual affairs) on account of the frequent changes of partners and the high degree of social irresponsibility in consequence of the disintegration of the personality and the disruption of the social life in slum areas.

The fourth point, which drew attention to the variation in degree of institutionalization of the different forms of man-woman relationship, linked up with the discussion of the differences in the nature and importance of each of these forms among different groups and in different phases of adaptation and acculturation, as briefly touched on again in the foregoing points. We are not entering here into a detailed discussion on how the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage in Curaçao was exercising an influence on the nature and legitimacy of other forms of man-woman relationship, or how at

the same time this institutionalization, which was coupled with changing behavioural orientations as a result of the recent social, economic and cultural changes for the Afro-American section of the Curaçaoan population, was creating an "essential" difference between contemporary Afro-American marriage and Negro marriages in former times.

The fifth point concerned the high illegitimacy figures in comparison with European countries. The Curaçaoan figure was, in fact, strikingly high as compared to European figures. In comparison with the other parts of the Afro-American area, however, the illegitimacy figure of Curaçao was strikingly low. Although there were definitely still a considerable number of illegitimate births, a small proportion of which were legitimated later, the difference between the figures for Curaçao and those for the other parts of the Afro-American underscored the institutionalization of legalized reproduction here. Those responsible for most of the illegitimate births were the socially and economically weak. In these circles, too, however, we found definite signs of the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage. So there was an obvious need for conformation to the immediate social environment, where marriage had become the general rule, on the part of some people, even if their incomes were too low to permit them to live in a material state befitting marriage. In connection with this point we observed once more that illegitimacy of birth meant something different in different areas and for different groups within these areas, so that the figures were not representative of simple, undifferentiated facts. So the illegitimacy figure for Jamaica, for instance, was to be regarded as a compound total embracing births resulting from man-woman relationships entered into in accordance with set legitimation rules within particular groups, and births resulting from fleeting, illegitimate affairs. Likewise the views with respect to illegitimacy of birth held by some socially and economically weak persons differed from those of persons in socially and economically more favourable positions in Curaçao. However, there were no groups possessing an autonomous socio-cultural, economic and political organization within which births classifiable as illegitimate before the national laws were considered as sociologically legitimate here.

The sixth point referred to the frequent absence of the husband-father from the domestic group. Now, in our sample the husband-father was coresident in over 65.0 % of the cases, while 12 % of the domestic groups had lost the husband-father through death. Moreover, the

numerous marriages found here displayed a marked predominance of male headship.

The seventh point focused the attention on the key position of the mother or grandmother in the household group. As regards this we would point once more to the consolidation of the position of the male as father and husband as a consequence of legal marriage in Curaçao. We did, however, note a certain correlation between the economic and social situation obtaining in the household groups of married couples and male or female headship.

We drew attention to a tendency towards a decline in the adoption of grandchildren. Unmarried motherhood, which was not so rare here after all, often did entail the coresidence of daughters and grandchildren, on the other hand. Here again, however, the institutionalization of the man-woman relationship in marriage implied a decline in the prevalence of this phenomenon.

In the final point we observed how few Afro-American household groups comprised exclusively a limited family. In Curaçao, in contrast, the nuclear family structure was extremely prevalent, while, moreover, the limited family principle also had a structural effect on domestic groups built on a foundation other than the coresidence of a man and woman within the framework of a legal marriage.

Considering all the above deviations, we feel sufficiently justified in postulating that the Curaçaoan lower-class family should be considered as a sub-type of the Afro-American family. It little resembled the Negro family as found in such isolated communities as those of the Bush Negroes in Surinam. Nor did it bear any strong resemblance to the lower class family of British Guyana, the adaptation and acculturation stage of which we placed in the second phase. While similarly it was impossible to equate the Curaçaoan lower-class family with the third-phase type encountered by Blake in Jamaica and Lewis in Puerto Rico. Where Blake observed that:

“... although feminine demands and ‘miserable behavior’ after marriage ... have been cited by others as indexes of the unsuitability of legal wedlock to the lower class ‘culture’, these reactions may rather be interpreted as indicating that marriage, to be more successful, should have occurred sooner, before deep injuries to pride and self-respect were inflicted.”  
(Blake, 1961, p. 146.)

one is justified in positing with respect to Curaçao that social, economic, political and cultural mobility have, in point of fact, given a large

proportion of the lower Afro-American strata greater pride and self-respect. We hasten to add, however, that this in no way implies that universal peace and contentment are reigning on the island as a result. All kinds of major social tensions, which served precisely to reveal this greater self-respect of the Afro-American population, reared their heads again during the economic slump of the fifties and sixties, while, moreover, both the legitimate and illegitimate birth figures were still giving cause for concern. Curaçao's position was even so far more favourable as regards the rate of biological reproduction and the "calidad" of man-woman relationships than that of many other parts of the Afro-American area as a result of the specific developmental process it had undergone both in the distant and the more recent past.

## NOTES

- 1 For an explanation of the term "Afro-American" see p. 3 below.
- 2 Miscegenation has created a broad spectrum of skin-colours. There were major differences between coloured persons on the point of economic and social status also. In the present book the term "stratum" is used in a very broad sense, to refer to population groups that are mutually distinguishable on the basis of such criteria as skin-colour, economic status and social and political prestige. We in no way wish to suggest the idea of any harmoniously integrated arrangement of the different population groups into a unitary Afro-American society by this term.
- 3 The concept of "integration" should not be restricted to apply exclusively to the development of patterns of mutually satisfying and harmonious interaction. We are inclined to interpret "integration" rather as a process of development of a specific whole. Hence social integration denotes the development of a social system, whereby the question as to whether the standardization of interaction patterns is based on mutual compatibility of the normative patterns concerned, on pragmatic considerations, on coercion, or on a combination of these factors is strictly speaking irrelevant. Anyone inclined to reserve the concept of "integration" exclusively for the development of mutually satisfying, harmonious interaction patterns would do well to use the concept of "order" for the more general situation we have in mind here. For a discussion of the concepts of order, integration and reciprocity see, among others, D. Ellis, "The Hobbesian Problem of Order", *American Social Review*, 1971, 36, p. 4.
- 4 There are a number of widely varying definitions of the concept of culture (cf. A. L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn, *Culture; a critical review of concepts and definitions*, Vintage Books, 1963). We for our part have taken the wider concept of culture as embracing all of man's non-biologically hereditary behaviour as our point of departure. We should stress at the outset our total rejection of the idea of an essentially harmonious interrelation of the so-called sub-systems of cultures, of the kind emphasized by structural-functionalism.  
For a discussion of the structural functionalistic theory as compared with the theories that place the main stress on social conflict, we would refer the reader to B. Jessop, *Social order, reform and revolution; a power, exchange and institutionalisation perspective*, London, 1972.
- 5 We have taken the term "African consciousness" to refer to the Afro-Americans' consciousness of their African provenance. "Négritude", on the other hand, is used to designate the conviction that the Negro has his own specific culture, prompting a distinctly African conception of man. "Africanism" may refer to two distinct phenomena, viz. an emphatic orientation to a particular African culture, or (obviously related to the former) the desire to return to the African continent of provenance. In addition, there is the cultural anthropological use of the term to indicate the cultural survivals of the African country of origin in the new world.

In this connection Herskovits' study *The Myth of the Negro Past* is of special interest (cf. note 12 below).

- 6 Where the terms "modernization" and "modern" occur in the passages below, we are referring to:
- (a) a process of technological development, occasioning a marked increase in occupations in the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy (industry, commerce and public utilities);
  - (b) a shift in emphasis away from the ascriptive criteria of ethnic and family background to criteria relating to individual achievement in the distribution of occupations and jobs;
  - (c) increased participation in political and economic decision-making by constantly larger groups;
  - (d) a growing scale, differentiation and complexity of organizations in the political and economic spheres (business enterprises, trade unions and political parties);
  - (e) a vigorous urbanization process; and
  - (f) the opening of new cultural perspectives, implying a change in the nature and broadening of the horizon of behavioural orientations.
- (Cf. Eisenstadt, 1966, pp. 2-10.)

The above definition stands in need of some modification, however. Eisenstadt's notion of modernization reflects a basic conception of unilinearity of the development of all traditional societies towards a modern, Western-type state. L. Martins, among others, opposes to his "developmentalistic" view a "transformationalistic" model of change, in which the chief emphasis is placed on the lasting influence of internal elements in reaction to external influences (Martins, 1970, p. 451 ff.). In this context the foregoing remarks on intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts in the plural society are especially relevant.

Speckmann has pointed to certain unmistakable tendencies towards increasing particularism. The process of adaptation and acculturation of the Curaçaoan Afro-American population is discussed more particularly in section 2.3 of Ch. II.

- 7 We have used the term "ideal culture" to designate those behaviour patterns that are explicitly represented as proper and worthy of imitation.
- 8 The visiting relationship is called "friending relationship" in English-speaking areas, "amaziado" in Brazil, and "bibá" in Curaçao.
- 9 A more detailed discussion of the concepts of "reputation" and "respectability" will follow on p. 43 ff. below. The extremely complicated acculturation process will be brought up for further discussion on pp. 29 and 34 ff. below.
- 10 See p. 65 below.
- 11 The picture of the Jamaican Afro-American family as delineated by Davidson is probably highly exaggerated. It is not unlikely that his sample should have to be regarded as insufficiently representative of the Jamaican Afro-American population groups.
- 12 Herskovits says, for example: "... we are faced with a situation where acculturation has brought on disintegration due to slavery, to the present economic background of life, and to those psychological reactions which are the concomitants of life without security. Reinterpretation of earlier, pre-American patterns has occurred, but readjustment to normal conditions of life has been inhibited. We thus must recognize that the elasticity of the marriage concept among negroes derives in a measure, largely unrecognized, from the need to adjust

- a polygamous family form to patterns based on a convention of monogamy, in a situation where this has been made more difficult by economic and psychological complications resulting from the nature of the historical situation.”
- M. J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, New York 1941, p. 170.
- 13 We shall come back to the problem of the “adoption” of the double standard of morality of the higher strata by the Afro-American population groups on p. 55 ff. Meanwhile, we cannot exclude the possibility of a reinforcement of the polygynic standard in cases where free persons succeeded in regrouping in communities of their own in various places, subsequently to begin putting African cultural elements into practice.
  - 14 Cf. note 11 and p. 12.
  - 15 Wilson *et al.*, 1953, *The Family and Neighbourhood in a British Community*, Doctoral Thesis, Cambridge University Library.
  - 16 We shall go into this question at somewhat greater depth on p. 55 below.
  - 17 This problem will be dealt with further in the description of the visiting relationship and concubinage among both the lower and higher strata on p. 50 ff. and below.
  - 18 A definition of the various acculturation phases was given on p. 7 above. A further elaboration of the point of urbanization will follow after the discussion of O. Lewis’ theory on p. 39 below.
  - 19 The concept of matrifocality will be discussed in greater detail on p. 62 ff. below.
  - 20 Cf. in this connection the discussion of Frazier’s views on p. 17 above.
  - 21 Lewis refers to similar traits, for the rest, and even remarks that one of the characteristics of the culture of poverty is the poverty of culture (Lewis, 1968, p. 8).
  - 22 See p. 23 above.
  - 23 A brief review of R. N. Adams’ ideas on the interrelation between the conjugal, maternal and paternal dyads will follow on p. 60 below.
  - 24 A number of the characteristics listed below were to be found in other colonies as well. It is a likely assumption that the strong social control in the small-island society of Curaçao exercised a definite influence on the development of the man-woman relationship among the higher strata here (point b.). In wider social contexts, and more especially where white colonists settled on their properties, the control exercised over the married woman may have been different. Cf. A. de Kom, who informs us, in agreement with Stedman’s observations, that European women sought to compensate their husband’s neglect by having affairs with newly arrived white men (De Kom, 1972, p. 37; Stedman, 1799).
  - 25 We have used the term “social homogamy” to denote the social equality existing between men and women entering into relationships with one another. The concept is opposed to that of social hypergamy (the entering into a union with a partner of higher social rank) and social hypogamy (ditto with a partner of lower social station).
  - 26 The social status aspect is extremely important, as is apparent also from Gough’s definition of marriage, viz.:  
 “Marriage is the relationship between a woman and one or more persons, which provides that a child born to the woman under circumstances not prohibited by the rules of the relationship, is accorded full birth-status rights common to normal members of his society or social stratification.”  
 (Gough, 1962, p. 90.)
  - 27 When speaking of Negroes or Negroid or coloured persons, we are referring

- to people of the lower Afro-American strata and thus leaving out of consideration the more well-to-do, unless the contrary is explicitly stated.
- 28 See the discussion of R. T. Smith's theory of the cyclical development of the Afro-American family on p. 22 ff. above. This development was placed by us in the second phase of adjustment, as defined on p. 7 of the Introduction above.
- 29 In this context we would refer the reader to the quotation from Herskovits' *The Myth of the Negro Past* in note 12 above, while supplementing the theory of the reinterpretation of African cultural elements put forward in it with the two following extracts from the same work:  
 "The 'competent, self-sufficient women' who wish to have no husbands are of special interest. The social and economic position of women in West Africa is such that on occasion a woman may refuse to relinquish the customary control of her children in favor of her husband, and this gives rise to special types of matings that are recognized in Dahomey and among the Yoruba, and may represent a pattern having a far wider distribution." (*Ibid.*, p. 172.)  
 and  
 "Despite the place of women in the West African family, the unit holds a prominent place for the husband and father who, as head of the polygamous group, is the final authority over its members . . ." (*Ibid.* p. 175.)  
 The institutionalization of the man-woman relationship and the household group in marriage and the nuclear family in Curaçao points clearly to a drastic weakening of the influence of whatever reinterpreted Africanisms may have existed here to begin with.
- 30 Cf. p. 46 above.
- 31 Cf. p. 45 above.
- 32 Cf. pp. 12 and 39 above.
- 33 Cf. p. 33 ff. above.
- 34 Cf. p. 139 above, where the nature of the different forms of household group headship is discussed.
- 35 For this view see P. H. J. Uittenbogaard, "Welke taal ligt aan het papiaments ten grondslag", article in the Central Library of the Tropical Institute, Amsterdam 1965.
- 36 In former times horticulture sprang up especially to the east of the town, where the soil was more fertile than in the western part, for the purpose of provisioning the town and the ships calling there.
- 37 Of definite importance also in this connection is the fear lest outsiders, if given an opportunity of intimacy with the individual or the household, use black magic against either. More especially in earlier times the need for a small plot of ground for growing some vegetables and fruit for one's own sustenance also favoured the construction of residences of the detached type. Van Lier mentions the same kind of motive in his study on Surinam (Van Lier, 1971, p. 158).
- 38 The autochthonous Indian inhabitants of Curaçao were few in number and disappeared from the island together with the Spaniards.
- 39 Two pages earlier on Hoetink himself warns against the danger of all-too-facile ascription of cultural dominancy to the real European nobility (*ibid.*, p. 19).
- 40 The importance of "compadrazgo" in the relations between different social categories has been underlined in various publications. For a further working out of this point see S. M. Mintz and E. R. Wolf, "An analysis of ritual co-parenthood (compadrazgo)", *Southwestern Journal of An-*



*thropology*, 1950, p. 6; and O. Lewis, *Tepoztlan; Village in Mexico*, New York 1960.

- 41 We do not mean by this that people invariably try out their own magic first, in order to take recourse to the magic of other groups subsequently, in the event of the former proving inadequate. A reversal of this order is equally plausible. So people may revert to their own practices upon the adopted ones proving ineffectual. The same phenomenon is sometimes to be observed in connection with religion. So one may frequently come upon a hidden altar, or some other similar object connected with the original religion, among peoples converted to Christianity. People may often invoke their own gods in times of crisis. Evidence of a connection between religion and magic is provided by the fact that in Curaçao God and the saints were sometimes invoked in the course of certain magic practices. The problems encountered in the definition of specific theoretical concepts are an outcome of the traditional division between religion and magic, a division that raises definite difficulties as soon as one tries to apply it to concrete situations.
- 42 In this connection we would refer the reader back to the definition of integration in note 3 above, in order to prevent the term "complementariness" being taken in too positively suggestive a sense.
- 43 Obviously the well-to-do Mulatto was in the best position to copy that part of the "seigniorial behaviour pattern" that admits of definition in terms of the double standard of morality. We have set out our reasons for believing that this must have entailed no inconsiderable problems for those of lower social rank in section 2.1 of the preceding chapter.
- 44 The definitions of the terms "Privat-" and "Arbeitskultur", which were coined by Goetze, are given on p. 39 above.
- 45 Cf. p. 55 ff.
- 46 Cf. p. 285 below.
- 47 With reference to the higher-rank Protestant groups, Hoetink cites Brusse, where the latter posits that:  
 "In certain social circles the custom of having a *kambrada* (comrade?) is found. The latter herself, although invariably of lower rank, is the bosom-friend of a lady who she in turn has chosen as her *kambrada*. One may easily guess what the consequences of such intimate relations between women and girls of different educational, social and moral backgrounds were for the greater part. Parents had to make a point of preventing such abnormal friendships . . ." (Hoetink, 1958, p. 54 ff.; Brusse, 1882.)  
 Our older informants left no doubt of the lesbian character of these relations. A number of single women between the ages of 35 and 40 years belonging to the Afro-American population group explicitly denied that there was anything abnormal about bisexual relations in their own environment. Married women, on the other hand, condemned such relations as being undesirable, ridiculous or dirty.
- 48 Surinamers occupied a prominent place among the remainder of the immigrants. They exercised a particularly strong influence on the development of the Curaçaoan people's sense of national solidarity as a consequence of the relatively high social status they came to occupy. They were for the greater part doctors, midwives, teachers, or members of other professions, though there was also some immigration of unskilled labourers from Surinam.
- 49 Data provided by the personnel office of Shell. European Dutch were not accounted as foreigners in these calculations.

- 50 A factor that may have an important bearing on the relatively low economic activity in the higher age-groups, and which we have not taken into consideration, is the comparatively low retirement age (namely 55) of civil servants and Shell employees.
- 51 Pun on "zonneshijn" (= sunshine); as will have become apparent from the foregoing, *shon* means "gentleman".
- 52 There is, however, a report by the commission of enquiry into the causes and backgrounds of the incident which took place in Curaçao on 30th May, 1969. This report, which represents a full, stage-by-stage description of the entire course of the incidents, is not of course comparable to a report written on the basis of systematic scientific research (1969 Report).
- 53 The sex ratio expresses the number of women per 1000 men.
- 54 The nuptiality figure expresses the number of marriages per 1000 head of population.
- 55 The population pyramid of our sample population is presented on p. 133 below. The pyramid substantiates the present statement.
- 56 Cf. p. 55 above.
- 57 Cf. p. 78 above.
- 58 For the definition of "Africanism" see note 5 above.
- 59 We would remind the reader in this context that the term "dual cultural orientation" does not do full justice to the complexity of the acculturative process or to the resultant variety of widely different cultural orientations in Curaçaoan society in general and the lower population strata in particular.
- 60 In this connection the reader is referred back to the discussion of M. G. Smith's finding on p. 30 ff., and to our exposition of the process of mobility and acculturation on p. 36 above. The virtually completely urban character of Curaçaoan society is of special significance in this context.
- 61 Cf. p. 71 above.
- 62 The questionnaire submitted to the heads of household groups has been added in translation from the Papiamentu as an appendix to the present book.
- 63 This scheme is reproduced on p. 90 above.
- 64 The nature of the headship of the various household group types will be further elucidated in the next chapter; cf. p. 139 ff. below.
- 65 We have fixed the minimum period of settlement on the island for non-natives of Curaçao of Dutch nationality to qualify for inclusion in our sample at 30 years. The persons in question included non-Curaçaoan Antilleans and Surinamers as well as European Dutch.
- 66 Of course a closer investigation of this phenomenon may show it to be of greater importance in Curaçao than seemed to us at first sight. It would be particularly interesting to find out whether the revival of religious manifestations of this kind was stimulated by the social and economic depression on the island.
- 67 The aspect of education and ambitions will be discussed in more detail in Ch. V. Here the kind of education enjoyed and ambitions fostered will be differentiated according to household group headship type. See pp. 199 ff. and 206 ff. below.
- 68 In the Census the qualification "illiterate" was applied to anyone with less than three years' primary education.
- 69 See p. 92 above.
- 70 By "household income" we refer to the aggregate of the household group's income as contributed by its members and/or outsiders.

- 71 The question of the household income will be further elaborated in Ch. V. Here the incomes as differentiated according to household group headship type will be considered. Cf. p. 178 ff. below.
- 72 See p. 12 above. The composition of household groups under the different headship types will be further analysed in Ch. IV.
- 73 Cf. p. 61 above.
- 74 The pyramid relating to the total Antillean population is reproduced on p. 113 above.
- 75 In the present book the term "common law marriage" is consistently used, in conformity with the general practice, to refer to concubinage.
- 76 The civil status of the heads of household groups is set out, split up according to sex, in table 14, p. 134 above.
- 77 From here on the designations "married heads" and "married persons" will denote strictly only married couples, unless the contrary is obvious from the text.
- 78 For convenience sake abbreviations will be used to indicate the different headship types in the tables. Here *m* stands for "man", *w* for "woman" or, in *m+w*, for "wife", *h* for "husband", *c* for "common law husband or wife", and *sm* and *sw* for "solitary man" and "solitary woman" respectively. In the text the full words will invariably be used.
- 79 See p. 271 below.
- 80 See especially p. 111 ff. above for the correlation between the social and economic developments in Curaçao on the one hand, and nuptiality and legitimacy of birth on the other. The reader is likewise referred to the discussion of Adam's theory on p. 61 above.  
Points (a) and (b) will be further elucidated in the following passages of the present chapter. Point (c) will be brought up for discussion again in Ch. V, which deals with the social and economic position of heads and households groups.
- 81 By "generational span" of a household group we mean the number of generations (in the genealogical sense of the word) which it encompasses.
- 82 This, together with table 28, stands in confirmation of point (a) on p. 153 above. Point (b) on that same page is substantiated by the passage following table 28. This passage has a direct bearing on table 27.
- 83 The nature of the relations between stepmothers, stepchildren and natural mothers will come up for more detailed discussion in Ch. VI. Cf. p. 300 below.
- 84 For a discussion of the difficulties in connection with the possible realization of the double standard of morality among the Afro-American population groups the reader is referred to p. 55 ff. above.
- 85 The individual's status is the aggregate of his various standings as determined by such particular criteria as profession, income, education, skin colour, and so forth (cf. Davis, 1949, p. 92).
- 86 A limited comparison of the occupations of male and female heads with those of the fathers and mothers of these heads is given on p. 93 above.
- 87 It will become evident from the specification of the different kinds of sources that the sample included no male heads living in concubinage who were earning no wages at all. This is in conformity with our theory on the economic basis of male headship in general.
- 88 On p. 157 of the preceding chapter the headship-typological differentiation of group sizes became plainly manifest. The more complex forms of household group opposition, which were represented by types of heads other than the married man and the married woman, were not attended with larger membership. In contrast to what was observed by Kerr and David-

son to be the case in Jamaica (cf. p. 12 above), the majority of Curaçaoan household groups were not formed *ad hoc*. On the contrary, the principle of nuclear family formation was exercising a strong effect on the composition of the household groups of the other types of heads as well.

- 89 Cf. note 87 above.
- 90 We have already indicated on p. 69 of Ch. II above how modernization was making for a reduction in economic activity in the primary sector of the economy, as also in private home-building.
- 91 As was observed on p. 13 above, the absence of corporate family ties in the Afro-American area has been pointed out by various authors. Curaçao is certainly no exception to this rule.
- 92 Cf. p. 127 above.
- 93 The arguments pertaining to this desire were discussed on p. 71 and note 37 above.
- 94 In the official documents there was mention of an actual housing shortage only in connection with the Island Administration's slum clearance scheme. None of our informants seemed to feel that there was a genuine shortage of housing in Curaçao, though there were a few who stressed the fact that the financial burden of owning or renting a house might sometimes prevent people from concluding a marriage.
- 95 Curaçao is dependent on sea-water for its drinking-water supply, which makes water relatively expensive here.
- 96 A brief outline of the structure of the Antillean education system was given on p. 95 above.
- 97 The concepts of "respectability" and "reputation" were discussed on p. 43 ff. of Ch. I above.
- 98 The question of religion was dealt with on p. 81 of Ch. II and p. 127 of Ch. III above.
- 99 Not all of our informants were familiar with the term "macho", even though they were all able to place the word as to meaning straightaway. Many paraphrased the concept as "Un homber to liber. E mester keiru i bebe i saca su hombra" (A man is free. He was to act the man-about-town and go carousing and prove his virility).
- 100 Cf. p. 109 above.
- 101 The cyclical development was described on p. 22 above.
- 102 These practices betray an unmistakable "Latin" influence.
- 103 The corresponding Census figures for members of the Antillean population who were or had at one time been married for the period 1955-1959 are 28.1 and 24.3 respectively (1960 Census, p. 27).
- 104 For a discussion of nuptiality in Curaçao cf. p. 111 above.
- 105 The age structure of this group of women, together with the distribution of the age-groups according to civil status, are set out on p. 238 above.
- 106 See pp. 147 and 47 above.
- 107 See p. 8 above.
- 108 The use of the term "basora" (broom) to symbolize the male here represents a play on words in connection with the popular word "limpiá" (to clean, sweep) for sexual intercourse.
- 109 See p. 160 above.
- 110 For the discussion of this question the reader is referred to pp. 18 and 53
- 111 See p. 169 above. [above.
- 112 See p. 166 above.
- 113 See p. 166 above.
- 114 See p. 164 above.

## **THE QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE SURVEY**

(The list was drawn up in Papiamentu. The answers were partially precoded on the basis of number, period, place and possible alternatives.)

1. Could you tell me how many people are living in your house?
2. What are your name and personal name? What are the names and personal names of the other members of your household group?
3. What is the head's sex? To which sex do the other members of your household group belong?
4. When were you born? When were the other members of your household group born?
5. Where were you born? Where were the other members of your household group born?
6. What is your religion? What is the religion of the other members of your household group?
7. What is the relationship (kinship or otherwise) of the other members of your household group towards yourself?
8. Are you married, single, divorced or widowed? What is the civil status of the other members of your household group?
9. If married: How long have you been married? How long have any of the other members of your household group been married?
10. If married currently or at one time in the past: At what age did you get married? At what age did any of the other members of your household group get married?
11. If married: Is your husband or wife living with you? Are the husbands or wives of any of the other members of your household group living with you?
12. If single, married without coresidence of the legal partner, divorced or widowed: Do you have a partner ("companjero" or "companjera") living with you? Do any of the other members of your household group have a partner living in your house?
13. If single, married without coresidence of the legal partner, divorced, widowed or without a coresiding "companjero" or "companjera": are you keeping up any permanent kind of relationship with a non-coresiding partner? Are any of the other members of your household group maintaining a relationship of this kind?
14. If there is a "companjero" or "companjera" present: How long has your "companjero" or "companjera" been living with you? How long have the "companjero" or "companjera" of any of the other members of your household group been living with you?
15. If permanent relations are maintained with a non-coresiding partner: How long have you been maintaining this relationship? How long have any of the other members of your household group be maintaining a relationship of this kind?

16. If divorced: At what age did you get divorced? How long did your marriage last? At what age did any of the other members of your household group get divorced? How long did their marriage last?
17. If widowed: How old were you when your husband or wife died? At what age were any of the other members of your household group widowed?
18. Was your mother married when you were born? Were the mothers of the other members of your household group married when they were born?
19. If the mother was not married: Mothers who are unmarried at the time of birth of their children may officially recognize the latter as their children on registering the same or afterwards. Did your mother ever sign a special official paper of recognition on having your birth registered or at any time afterwards? Did the mothers of any of the other members ever sign such a document?
20. If the mother was not married: Did your father ever sign a document of recognition? Did the fathers of any of the other members of your household group ever sign such a document?
21. If the mother was not married: Did your mother marry your father later on? Did the mothers of any of the other members of your household group marry the latter's father later on?
22. Do you have any foster-children?
23. If there are any foster-children: How many foster-children do you have? What is the relationship (kinship or otherwise) of these foster-children to yourself?
24. If there are any foster-children: Into how many other household groups have they been adopted?
25. If there are any foster-children: For what reason is (or are) the foster-child(ren) living in your household group?
26. Is any of your children living as a foster-child in another household group? If so, why?
27. As members of your household group should be regarded anyone sleeping and eating in your house for some length of time. Are there, in addition, any people sleeping but not eating or eating but not sleeping in your house?
28. If there are any "lodgers only" or "boarders only", what is the relationship (kinship or otherwise) of these people to yourself?
29. Are you the principal tenant of the house or complex of houses in your yard?
30. If there are any other heads of household groups living in the same house or yard, what is the relationship (kinship or otherwise) of these people to yourself?
31. Of what kind of material is your house constructed?
32. Of what kind of material is the roof?
33. How old is the house?
34. How many rooms does your household group have at its disposal?
35. What is the arrangement of the house like?
36. Do you have to share your bedroom with anyone else besides your partner, children or otherwise?
37. How many beds does your household group have at its disposal?
38. Are there any bathrooms facilities in your house? If so, where?
39. Is there a toilet in your house? If so, where?
40. What appliances (e.g., refrigerator, washing machine, t.v., radio, car, etc.) is your household group equipped with?
41. Does the house have running water inside? If not, in what other way is the necessary water supplied?

42. Is the house connected up to the electric power net? If not, in what way is the necessary power supplied?
43. Who does the house belong to. Who does the land belong to?
44. If the house is rented: What is the rent?
45. In whose name is the house registered?
46. Are you the first occupant of the house? If not: Who lived there before you?
47. If the house is not rented or bought: Did you build the house yourself?
48. What do you think of your accommodation? Why?
49. Do you consider ownership of the home preferable to renting a house? Why?
50. What kind of work do you do?
51. Are you working at present?
52. If you have a job: Are you satisfied with your work? Why?
53. Have you enjoyed regular employment for the past two years?
54. For how many employers have you worked the past two years?
55. How many sources of income does your household group have, and what are they?
56. How much money do you yourself earn?
57. How much of this do you spend on housekeeping expenses and how much do you keep for your personal use?
58. Do any of the other members of your household group contribute to the group's income? Who? How much?
59. How much money a month do you feel a household group like yours needs to be able to live decently?
60. On what particular items do you have to economize?
61. Do you anticipate any change in your financial position and that of your household group in the future? If so, what kind of a change and how?
62. Do you (or any of the other members of your household group) possess a plot of ground? If so: Does it yield any food crops?
63. Do you (or any of the other members of your household group) keep any animals? If so: What kind? (Excluding domestic pets such as dogs or cats.)
64. What kind of education have you enjoyed?
65. What kind of education have any children no longer attending school enjoyed?
66. Are you attending any kind of course at present or have you ever done so in the past? Are any of the other members of your household group attending any courses or have any done so in the past? If so, what kind of courses?
67. What was your father's occupation? And your mother's?
68. What occupation do (or did) you want your children to take up?
69. For what kinds of offences do you think children ought to receive severe chastisement? (State these in order of importance.)
70. How do you feel about corporal punishment in disciplining children?
71. Do you think the relationship between boys and girls has changed since you were young? If so: In what respect and how?
72. Do you think the relationship between mothers and children has changed since you were young? If so: In what respect and how?
73. Do you think the relationship between fathers and children has changed since you were young? If so: In what respect and how?
74. Do you ever play with your children?
75. Do you ever go for walks with your children?

76. Are you a member of any club or society? If so: How many times a year do you go to meetings?
77. Are your children members of any club or society?
78. What is your favourite pastime?
79. Do you regularly read a newspaper? If so: What topics are you most interested in?
80. How many times a year do you go to church?
81. Which, if any, of your godfathers is related to you? In what way?
82. Which, if any, of your godmothers is related to you? In what way?
83. Do you have any preference one way or the other for relatives or non-relatives as godparents for our children?
84. If married currently or at one time in the past: Was your husband or wife ever your "companionero" or "companionera" before your marriage? If so, for how long?
85. If you ever had a "companiona" with your husband or wife: What was the main reason for converting the "companiona" into a marriage?
86. Have you ever been married to anyone (before)?
87. Have you ever been someone's "companionero" or "companionera" (before)?
88. If you have ever had one or more (previous) relationships, would you state: How often? What kind? In what order did they occur? How long did it (they) last? And how was (were) it (or they) terminated?
89. Do you have any children by a partner other than the present or last one?
90. Does your partner have any children by another partner?
91. (For female respondents only) How many pregnancies have you had? How old were you at the time of birth of your first child?
92. Where were your children born?
93. How many children would you like? Or how many children do you think a healthy woman should have?
94. What is your reason for fixing the number of children as above?
95. What do you think is the best age to get married for men and women?

Additional remarks and observations.



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