

SOCI 224: Social Structure of Modern Ghana

Session 6 – THE MARRIAGE INSTITUTION IN TRANSITION

Lecturers: Dr. Fidelia Ohemeng & Mark K. M. Obeng, Dept. of Sociology,
University of Ghana

Contact Information: fohemeng@ug.edu.gh



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

College of Education

School of Continuing and Distance Education

2016/2017

Session Overview

In this session, students would be introduced to the changes that have occurred in marriage in Ghana. Some of the changes that have occurred are increase in the age at first marriage, new marriage markets, decline in polygynous relationships and increase in divorce rate. Also to be discussed are the implications of these changes on the social structure.



Session Outline

The key topics to be discussed in this session are:

- Changes in the age at first marriage
- Changes in the forms of marriage
- Reasons for high divorce rate in Ghana
- Decline in polygynous relationships



Reading List

- Abotchie, C. (2016) *Social Change in Ghana*. Accra: Hans Publications. Chapter 4



What is marriage?

- A union between a man and a woman such that the children born to the woman are recognised as legitimate offspring of both parents (Lucy Mair, 1951:110)

□ **What are the implications**

- Marriage is any union in which the couple has gone through all the **procedures recognised in the society** for the purposes of **sexual intercourse, raising of a family or companionship** (Nukunya, 2014)



Procedures in Traditional Marriage

- ✓ Marriage Payment
- ✓ The Handing Over Of The Bride To The Bridegroom
- ✓ The Marriage Ceremony
- ✓ Consummation*



CHANGES IN MATE SELECTION

In **pre-colonial** Ghana age of marriage followed certain biological developments

In **post-colonial** and contemporary Ghana age at first marriage have increased

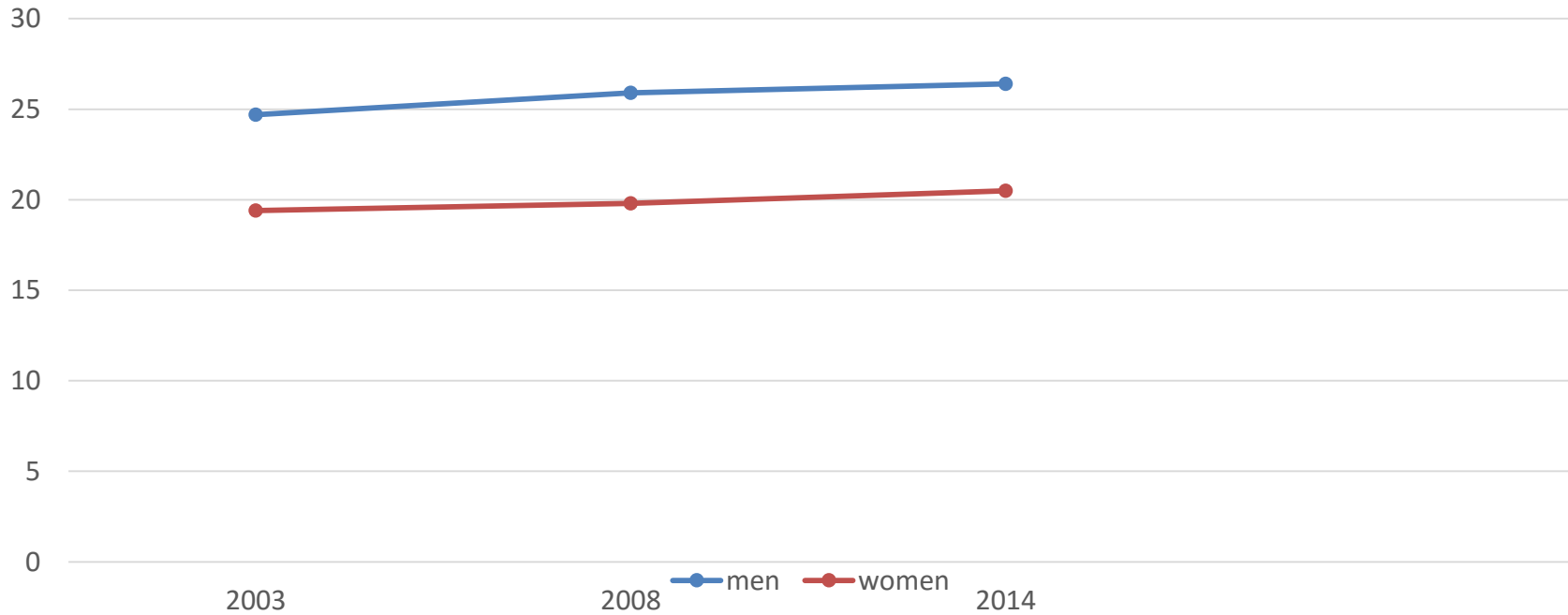
The Table below indicates the average age at first marriage for males (30-59 years) and females (25-49 years)

YEAR	WOMEN	MEN
2014	20.5	26.4
2008	19.8	25.9
2003	19.4	24.7



Age at First Marriage

Chart Title



Reasons for Increase in Age at First Marriage

- ✓ Formal education
- ✓ Apprenticeship
- ✓ Legal age at marriage is 18



Decline in Parental Role in Mate Selection

- Diminishing role of parents in the choice of marriage partners
 - However, parents must approve the choice of partners
- Emergence of new marriage markets
- Increase in inter-ethnic marriages



Polygyny

Available data shows a decline in polygynous relationships.

The table shows the proportion of women and men in polygynous relationships between 1998 and 2014

Year	Women %	Men%
1998	23	No available data
2003	23	No available data
2008	18	9
2014	16	7

Reasons for Decline in Polygyny

- Conversion to Christianity
- Urbanization and rising standard of living
- New sources of prestige, wealth, leadership
- Easy access to extra-marital sex

New Forms of Marriage

- Wedding VS Engagement*



Divorce

- Reasons for the increased rate of divorce in Ghana (there are no statistics though)
 - Greater independence of women due to rise in attainment of education
 - Weakening religious and cultural supervision
 - Changing attitudes towards divorce
 - Rise in inter-ethnic marriages*
 - Other views: that marriages are more stable in urban conditions

Question

- Do you believe that marriages were more stable in traditional Ghana than in contemporary Ghana? give reasons for your answer.