

# Carline dambreville

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



Carline Dambreville Behavior Analysis Paper Introductory Sociology April 3, 2012 New York Time Article Summary: This article reports on an enormous cultural change in American society. For the first time in U. S. history, more than half (53%) of the children being born to mothers under the age of 30 are doing so outside of marriage. The analysis in the article is that this is due to two major cultural shifts: 1) women are becoming more and more economically successful and independent compared to men; and 2) there has been a great decline in the stigma attached to single motherhood. The article also describes interesting demographic differences in this trend. Among mothers of all ages, 59 percent of births still occur within marriage, so the trend toward single motherhood is happening mostly in younger women. There are also huge racial and ethnic differences in this trend. While only 29% of all white births are to single mothers, the figure is 53% for Latinos and 73% for blacks. There is also a sharp difference in these statistics according to the educational level of the mothers. While 92% of college-educated women are married when they give birth, the figure is 62% for those with some post-secondary schooling, and only 43% for women with a high school education or less. Economically, as one women interviewed for the article put it, " Women used to rely on men, but we don't need to any more". Over the past 30 years, the income of men with some college but no degrees has fallen by 8%, while the income of their female counterparts has risen by 8%. The social changes supporting this trend are also important. With divorce being so easy, there is much less respect for marriage, and certainly there is much less social stigma and shame about being a single mother. A long time ago, many marriages took place when a couple who

were dating found that the woman was pregnant (they married to save her "honor"). While liberals put most of the blame on declining male incomes, conservatives tend to blame the sexual revolution and the fact that it was too easy to survive on welfare. In fact, they argued, marriage often had the penalty of raising income to the point where a couple was not eligible for welfare. Definition of culture according to James M. Henslin Sociologists distinguish between material and non-material culture. The former involves the material things a society makes and uses (such as weapons, houses, jewelry, etc.) while the latter is about values, beliefs, and attitudes. Certainly, habits and attitudes about marriage fall into the second category, though as explained, these attitudes can be influenced by the material (i. e., financial) situation in a culture. When one is raised inside a given culture, it is easy to assume that the particular attitudes and beliefs of that culture are the only possible way to think and live. When such a person encounters a completely different culture, there is often "culture shock." A sociological imagination requires the ability to put yourself into the mindset of people with very different cultural beliefs. To be extremely into your own culture is "ethnocentrism." To have no strong values for one culture rather than another, the opposite extreme, is "cultural relativism." A good balance is to value your own culture, but to appreciate and tolerate the culture of others, and to appreciate "cultural diversity." One striking example of cultural diversity (and ethnocentrism) is the wide range in the standards of personal attractiveness and beauty around the world. An even more important difference in cultures is the variations in language. A common language brings people and their attitudes together, while very different languages

often result in entirely different ways of thinking about the world. One theory, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, goes so far as to argue that language does more to shape the consciousness of a culture than any other factor in the life of its people. For example, the Hopi people have no words to distinguish between past, present, and future, implying that they have a profoundly different perception of time than we do. Cultures develop values, norms, and sanctions (which are punishments, or incentives, to maintain the norms and values that are approved in that culture, and to discourage their violation). Countercultures often arise in defiance of certain norms and values, thumbing their noses at the disapproval of the mainstream culture. A large and complicated culture, like that in America, may develop many subcultures, each with its own emphasis and way of distinguishing itself from the mainstream culture, or from other subcultures. Subcultures are much more common than countercultures. When countercultures become sufficiently strong, they may challenge the prevailing culture, resulting in "culture wars," such as took place in the U. S. in the 1960s and 1970s. Culture wars may also come about from contradictions between important values in a culture, to decide which value will turn out to be more important and win that struggle. Values in a culture may change over time, with newer, emerging values becoming increasingly important. Traditional American values included romantic love, education, and religiosity, while values like leisure and self-fulfillment are relatively new. Cultures are also characterized by a distinction between "ideal" and "real" culture, the former being things people give a lot of lip-service to, but don't really live by so much. An interesting example, much in the news recently, is Roman Catholic attitudes

about birth control, with the church doctrine forbidding it, and almost all Catholics in the U. S. using it at some point in their lives. Different societies around the world, and the world as a whole, are undergoing rapid cultural change. One cause of this is the many new technologies that allow faster transportation and communication. Often, the result is " cultural leveling, " where cultures become more similar to one another. Relevant Concept and Connection to Article Marriage is an ancient and universal norm in almost every culture. Related to this norm is the norm that says that children born outside of marriage are " illegitimate. " The sanction that discouraged the violation of this norm was social disapproval, especially of the sexual behavior that led to having the child out of wedlock. There were both positive and negative sanctions against violating this norm- Positive sanctions " expressing approval for following a norm, " and negative sanctions " reflecting disapproval for breaking a norm". In the case of marriage, positive sanctions involved much social approval, as well as real financial benefit. Negative sanctions included the stigmas of casual sex, single motherhood, and divorce. In recent decades however, the financial disincentives to single motherhood have become smaller, and so have the social stigmas, especially among younger and less educated people. The result is more children being born by unmarried women. References DeParle, J. & Tavernise, S. (2012, Feb. 17). For women under 30, Most births occur outside marriage. New York Times. <http://www.nytimes.com>, 1-5. Henslin, J. M. (2009). *Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* (9th Edition). Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University.