

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Nebraska Anthropologist

Anthropology, Department of

1999

Teen Pregnancy: A Cross-Cultural Phenomenon but a Western Problem?

Tina Brown

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebanthro>



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#)

Brown, Tina, "Teen Pregnancy: A Cross-Cultural Phenomenon but a Western Problem?" (1999). *Nebraska Anthropologist*. 116.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebanthro/116>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Anthropology, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Nebraska Anthropologist by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Teen Pregnancy: A Cross-Cultural Phenomenon but a Western Problem?

Tina Brown

Teen pregnancy (broadened to “premarital pregnancy” for research purposes) was investigated cross-culturally. Using the electronic Human Relations Area Files and literature review, attitudes toward premarital pregnancy, the incidence of premarital pregnancies, and outcomes of premarital pregnancies were compared in “African” and “Eurasian” social systems (as defined by Goody, 1976). Despite considerable variance, there were no significant differences in approval or disapproval of premarital sex or pregnancy in African and Eurasian systems. There was no difference in incidence rates of premarital pregnancy in African and Eurasian systems; however, not taking marital status into consideration, developing countries have higher rates of adolescent childbearing than developed countries. Outcomes (forced marriage, illegitimate children, abortion, infanticide, or adoption) also did not vary significantly in African versus Eurasian systems. African systems were slightly more likely to employ forced marriages or incorporate illegitimate children into the kingroup as a result, and paternity certainty was the primary concern. Eurasian systems were slightly more likely to employ adoption, and resources (or lack of them) motivated outcome decisions. Attitudes, incidence, and outcomes of premarital pregnancy were also compared in historical and modern Eurasian/industrialized countries in relation to growing female independence. Incidence rates reflect decreasing disapproval of premarital pregnancy until recent years in which education and birth control have reversed the trend. Changes in preferred strategies -- an increasing number of illegitimate children and single-parent households -- have led to the increased focus on teen pregnancy as a societal issue.

Twenty-two percent of sexually active girls, ages 15-19, become pregnant in the United States (Henshaw for AGI, 1997). More than one in eight births was a child born to a teen mother (March of Dimes, 1997). Seventy percent of teen mothers complete high school, but they are less likely to go to college than women who delay childbearing (AGI, 1996). In 1993, 55% of the 3.8 million mothers receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children became mothers when they were teenagers. Children of teen parents are twice as likely to be abused or neglected (Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Dept., 1995). One in five infant deaths is a child born to a teen mother (March of Dimes, 1997). Children born to single mothers tend to have lower scores on verbal and math achievement

tests, increased behavioral problems, increased rates of chronic health and psychological problems, increased rates of teenage childbearing themselves, and increased rates for dropping out of school, incarceration and unemployment (LLCHD, 1995). Taxpayers pay an estimated \$6.9 billion dollars annually on teen mothers and their children, including welfare, Food Stamp, and medical benefits, loss of tax revenue, incarceration, and foster care (Robin Hood Foundation, 1996). This is the face of “teen pregnancy”, one of the paramount social problems in Western society today.

The goal of the present research is to look at teen pregnancy (broadened to “premarital pregnancy” for research

purposes) from a cross-cultural perspective, focusing on incidence, attitudes, and outcomes. In order to provide structured contrast, I utilized Goody's model of African and Eurasian social systems where possible.

Hypotheses:

- 1.The incidence of premarital pregnancies will not vary significantly in African and Eurasian systems.
- 2.Outcomes of premarital pregnancies will not vary significantly in African and Eurasian systems.
- 3.Changes in incidence, attitudes, and outcomes of premarital pregnancy from historical to modern Eurasian/industrialized societies will be associated with increasing female independence.

Research Design

Goody's Model:

In 1976, Jack Goody published, "Production and Reproduction", a comparative description of social structures. He distinguished "African" and "Eurasian" systems contrasted by mode of inheritance. In African social systems, characterized by extensive agriculture, egalitarianism, and labor-limited wealth, property is inherited homogeneously by clan/lineage members, maintaining a corporal unity. In Eurasian systems, characterized by intensive agriculture, stratification, and land-limited wealth, property is inherited divergently by immediate kin in order to maintain the social status of the nuclear family.

Goody hypothesized that mode of inheritance effected restriction on premarital sex, cross-cultural evidence from the Human Area Relation Files supported this. Goody defined "prohibition on premarital sex" as an "emphasis on virginity at marriage" as a means to limit the possibility of conflicting claims on estates in which a woman may have rights, and coded it as either present or

absent. He found a positive association between societies where women inherit property and those where premarital sex is prohibited ($\phi = 0.21$) (Goody, 1976, pp: 14). Where dowry was practiced, a process central to Eurasian social systems, premarital sex was most likely prohibited.

The present study broadens Goody's variable, "prohibition on premarital sex", to "attitude toward premarital sex" in order to assess degrees of approval/disapproval while taking incidence and sanctions into consideration.

Operational Variables/Coding

African Social Systems

As Goody describes, African social systems are based on extensive or hoe agriculture in which females are highly engaged in production activities. Such societies have simple polity, practice homogenous inheritance, emphasize exogamy and polygyny, permit pre- and extra-marital sex, and employ bifurcate merging kinship terms. In essence, they are unstratified and labor limited in regards to obtaining wealth (Goody, 1976). Bridewealth was the key identifying variable for societies selected to represent African social systems in the present sample.

Eurasian Social Systems

As Goody describes, Eurasian social systems are based on intensive agriculture in which males are almost exclusively involved in production activities. Such societies have more complex polity, practice diverging devolution, emphasize endogamy and monogamy, prohibit pre- and extra-marital sex, and employ sibling kin terms. They are unstratified and land limited in regards to obtaining wealth (Goody, 1976). Dowry was the key identifying variable for societies selected to represent Eurasian social systems in the present sample.

Historical Eurasian Societies

Eurasian social systems prior to approximately 1850, at the brink of industrialization and prior to the birth control movement are considered “Historical”. Although evidence of contraceptive practices date back to Ancient Greece and Egypt, advocacy for birth control began in the 1700’s appealing to medical and economic reasons for curbing family size. By the mid-1800s, in response to medical advances and the so-called population explosion, advocacy had perpetuated into a political movement, peaking in the 1920s in the U.S. under Margaret Sanger (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1967).

Modern Eurasian Societies

Eurasian social systems are considered “modern” in the present study after 1850, when industrialization began to flourish and after the inception of birth control movement.

Premarital pregnancy. Pregnancies (regardless of live birth) that occur outside marriage or cohabitating unions. Adolescent pregnancies were focused on when possible.

Attitude toward premarital sex – rated for approval/disapproval, considering encouragement/ discouragement of the behavior, incidence of premarital sex, and sanctions against it. Attitude toward premarital sex is used as an indicator of sexual behavior (situations in which a premarital pregnancy could occur) of persons before marriage. Codes:

Approve = premarital sex is allowed and may even be encouraged; no sanctions against premarital sex are present; premarital sex occurs regularly.

Mildly Disapprove = premarital sex is disapproved of, but there is no strong punishment when it occurs; consequences may include public

shame; premarital sex occurs frequently.

Disapprove = premarital sex is disapproved of, but it still occurs; punishments may include retribution.

Strongly Disapprove = premarital sex is considered abhorrent; punishment may include beating or death; premarital sex occurs infrequently.

Attitude toward premarital pregnancy – rated for approval/disapproval, considering encouragement/discouragement of the behavior, incidence of premarital pregnancy, and sanctions against it. Attitude toward premarital pregnancy may differ from attitudes toward premarital sex, and was used as an indicator of both incidence and probable outcomes. Codes:

Approve = premarital pregnancy is allowed and may even be encouraged; no sanctions exist against it; premarital pregnancy occurs often.

Mildly Disapprove = premarital pregnancy is discouraged, but no strong punishments exist when it occurs; consequences may include public shame; premarital pregnancy occurs frequently.

Disapprove = premarital pregnancy is disapproved of; consequences may include retribution, reduced brideprice, or loss of inheritance; premarital pregnancy occurs less frequently.

Strongly disapprove = premarital pregnancy is considered abhorrent; consequences may include beatings or death; premarital pregnancy is rare.

Outcomes of premarital pregnancies – coded as present or absent, noting outcomes that are most common. Strategies of dealing with premarital pregnancies may include: forced marriage, abortion, infanticide/child homicide, adoption, or illegitimate children. Child abuse/mortality data was also

collected to indicate maltreatment that may lead to death in children born to premarital unions. An “other” category was also utilized, but in the end exclusively included strategies in which the premarital culprits were killed.

Force Marriage = kin force the partners to marry, or partners choose to marry because of the pregnancy, possibly even causing the pregnancy in order to force their own marriage.

Abortion = purposeful termination of a pregnancy before birth by strenuous activity, poison, or instruments.

Infanticide/Child Homicide = premarital pregnancies that result in a live birth in which the infant or child is subsequently killed; may include children killed due to lack of paternal investment or killed by a stepparent.

Adoption = premarital pregnancies that result in a live birth in which the infant/child is raised under the care of someone other than the biological parents.

Illegitimate Child = premarital pregnancies that result in a live birth in which the infant/child is raised by only one of the biological parents or is incorporated into the parent’s kingroup; stepparents may exist.

Child Abuse/Mortality = the presence of physical abuse or neglect or high mortality of illegitimate children.

Female independence – indicated by female status, presence/absence of females in the workforce, and dependence of females on their husbands; each of which are also associated with the ease of divorce.

Relationship of Variables

It is assumed that attitudes will have a causal effect on both incidence and outcomes, but most strongly on outcomes. If premarital sex is strongly disapproved, it would be expected that premarital sex

occurs infrequently; premarital pregnancies would most likely result in outcomes in which the illegitimate child is disposed of discretely, protecting the mother’s chances for subsequent marriage as much as possible. Attitudes toward premarital sex/pregnancy may predict incidence, but less accurately, as behavior does not always follow cultural norms or rational decision making. Outcomes are assumed to more closely reflect attitudes as the most desired or accessible strategies for dealing with illegitimate pregnancy, which is dependent on the degree or absence of sanctions against it.

Sample

Sample societies (see *Table 1*) were randomly chosen from Probability Samples in the electronic Human Relations Area Files based on their social organization as either “African social systems” or “Eurasian social systems” as proposed by Goody (1976) and operationalized above. Each society’s adhesion to Goody’s model was double-checked using a basic search tool on the electronic Human Relations Area File, focusing on bridewealth and dowry practices, the type of agriculture, and preferred form of marriage (African – bridewealth, extensive agriculture, and polygyny; Eurasian – dowry, intensive agriculture, and monogamy). Nine societies classified as “African social systems” and nine classified as “Eurasian social systems” were selected. Four of the sample societies (the Iban and Saramaka of the African societies, and the Amhara and Aymara of the Eurasian societies) are considered atypical because of their geographical location

Methods

Basic searches of each society using the electronic Human Relations Area Files were utilized to ascertain attitudes toward premarital sex and attitudes toward premarital pregnancy (including general approval/disapproval, incidence, and

sanctions), as well as outcomes of premarital pregnancies. Keywords included: premarital, pregnancy, adolescence, courtship, lovers, punishments, virginity, chastity, forced marriage, abortion, infanticide, adoption, illegitimate, child abuse, child mortality, etc.

Premarital pregnancy rates were also investigated in recent literature. However, current literature pertained to “developed” versus “developing” countries rather than “African” versus “Eurasian” social systems.

Due to the lack of distinctive historical/modern Eurasian data in the eHRAF, a literature review was utilized to investigate the relationship between premarital pregnancies and female independence.

Findings/Results

African versus Eurasian premarital pregnancy rates.

Attitudes toward premarital sex and pregnancy were measured as indicators of incidence and probable outcome. It is assumed, according to the present operationalization of the variables, that the incidence of premarital sex/pregnancy increases with increasing approval (or decreasing disapproval).

The eHRAF results contradicted Goody’s model in that Eurasian societies were more likely to approve of premarital sex than African societies (67% versus 44% of the present sample); and African societies were more likely to disapprove than Eurasian (33% versus 0%). Strong disapproval in which individuals caught engaging in premarital sex are killed, was equally likely to occur in Eurasian and African societies. Eurasian societies were also more likely to approve or mildly disapprove of premarital pregnancy than African societies (67% versus 22%); while African societies were more likely to disapprove (44% versus 11%).

Societies in which attitudes varied in degree of approval, did so on the basis of gender or social status of the premaritally engaged partners. Although this pattern was less evident in the present study, evidence for significant cross-cultural double-standards exist; for example, in one study 54% of societies permitted extramarital sex for men while only 11% permitted it for women (Pasternak, Ember, & Ember, 1997).

Overall, attitudes toward premarital sex tended to be more approving than attitudes toward premarital pregnancy. No other patterns were evident in the data, indicating support for hypothesis #1 – African and Eurasian societies do not significantly differ in the incidence of premarital pregnancy as indicated by attitudes.

A literature review revealed data more specific to incidence rates, but compared developed versus developing countries instead of African versus Eurasian social systems. A 1996 Alan Guttmacher Institute study of 49 countries found that, worldwide, approximately 15 million births occur among adolescent women each year, accounting for slightly more than 10% of all births. Recent demographic and health data show that an average of 50% of girls give birth during their teenage years in Sub-Saharan Africa (including Ghana, Kenya, and Zimbabwe). Twenty-two to 30% of teenage girls give birth in Asia (including Indonesia and the Philippines). Latin American countries averaged 37%. Developed countries ranged from 2-3% in Japan to 19% in the United States. Overall, developing countries have higher rates of teen pregnancy than developed countries.

While this seems to refute hypothesis #1 by showing patterns in variation, there is no parallel to African or Eurasian social systems to allow such comparison. Also the study did not take marital status into account. Some societies encourage early marriage (in some cases before puberty), and childbearing shortly thereafter; births to

these teens were not distinguished from out-of-wedlock births to teen mothers in the AGI study.

Within all societies, adolescent childbearing is most common among the poor. Within the last 20-30 years, rates have declined worldwide; women who are aged 20-24 are less likely to have their first child before age 20 than women aged 40-44 (AGI, 1996). This will be further discussed regarding hypothesis #3.

African versus Eurasian Premarital Pregnancy Outcomes.

If an outcome was mentioned in the eHRAF, it was recorded as present; most common outcomes were noted where possible. (Data in *Appendix C: Code Book for Outcomes.*)

Societies based on an African social system were more likely to force marriage when a premarital pregnancy occurred than those based on a Eurasian social system (African societies were 5 times as likely to force marriage, and 80% of the time it was the preferred outcome) (See *Table 3*). The context in which marriage is forced indicates that sexual partners often became marriage partners and some societies commonly allow a pregnancy to force marriage to an otherwise unlikely partner. For example, among the Hausa of West Africa, “some tsarance partners [pubescent partners who commonly engage in premarital sex but are not allowed to marry] who wanted to marry did so by conceiving a child premaritally” (eHRAF). The context in Eurasian societies on the other hand, indicates that a girl was “lucky” (as quoted in the eHRAF regarding Highland Scots) if the boy married her.

Abortion outcomes were equal among African and Eurasian societies, both in general outcome and preference. However, in African societies abortions were referred to more in the context of extramarital pregnancies than premarital. Devereux (1955) also identified improper paternity as

a leading conscious motivation to abort in tribal societies. Abortion occurred in Eurasian societies most often when the woman lacked resources (being unmarried), often specifically due to a lack of paternal investment. Frayser (1985) identified lack of paternal investment and inappropriate inter-status relationships as leading motivations for abortion in stratified societies.

Infanticide was also an equally likely outcome in African and Eurasian societies. Child homicide was never explicitly referred to in the eHRAF. Infanticide was also most likely to occur in both types of societies when there was a lack of resources/paternal investment.

Adoption was slightly more likely to occur in Eurasian societies than African; the contexts also differed. African adoptions, although pre- or extra-marital context is not distinguished, almost always occur within the family. This is indicated by the Hausa, “Child adoption is common, almost always involving close kin.”, and most clearly by the Ganda, “Adoption is unnecessary since all children ultimately belong to the clan.” Kin adoptions were not as strongly emphasized in Eurasian societies, and in the case of the Taiwan Hokkien adoption occurs outside the family to “enlarge kinship units” (eHRAF).

African societies were more likely to have references to illegitimate children in the eHRAF than Eurasian. Illegitimate children did not decrease a woman’s chances to marry in African societies, but did in Eurasian societies.

Child abuse and mortality was found nearly equally in the eHRAF African and Eurasian societies. The data was always in a general context, not specifying premarital or illegitimate conditions.

African and Eurasian societies were equally as likely to have alternative outcomes to the primary strategies

measured. Killing the culprits was the only alternative strategy noted in the present data. Most often the girl was murdered; sometimes the boy and/or their families were killed as well.

Overall, hypothesis #2 was supported; African and Eurasian systems do not significantly differ in premarital pregnancy outcomes.

Historical versus Modern Eurasian incidence, attitudes, and outcomes of premarital pregnancy.

It was hypothesized that as women's independence grew from historical to modern Eurasian societies, attitudes toward premarital sex and pregnancy became more relaxed, leading to increases in premarital pregnancies and the number of illegitimate children in single parent households.

Attitudes. Literature review supported the hypothesis in regards to a change in attitudes toward premarital sex/pregnancy. Kristin Luker gave a tremendous overview of changing American attitudes in her book "Dubious Conceptions" (1996). Historical records show that premarital relations were not only strictly guarded against by Puritans, but bastardy (if marriage was not successfully forced) was harshly punished, possibly by expulsion from the colony. In the 18th century, although premarital sex/pregnancy were still openly disapproved of, punishments had lightened, focusing mostly on securing financial responsibility from the father. By the 1900s, women who became mothers premaritally, as well as their children, came to be seen as victims. A "child-saving" movement kicked off the Progressive Era during which networks of social workers were developed. "Out-of-wedlock" became the politically correct term to further decrease the stigma. Simultaneously in the 1900s, "adolescence" became a special category of individuals characterized as "vulnerable" and "innocent" – basically, "incapable". Thus, adolescents became the focus of out-of-

wedlock births, and "teen pregnancy" was born as a social issue. In summary, Luker describes the issue as the result of a social movement.

This change in attitude seems to be reflected in the increasing number of sexually active youth, however, data only spans the last 30 years in the U.S. During the 1970s, 29% of teenage girls had engaged in premarital sex; in 1980, 42%; 52% by 1988; slightly declining to 48.1% in 1995 (Park, Card, & Muller, 1998).

Incidence. The hypothesis was not entirely supported in regards to incidence of premarital pregnancies; evidence suggests fluctuation with a general increase through the 1900s and varying declines from 1970 through the present. Throughout Eurasian history data indicates that premarital pregnancies occurred at a steady rate. However, between 1977 and 1990, teen birth rates in most industrialized countries decreased – in some cases by more than 50%. In the U.S., the birth rate for teenagers declined from 68.3% in 1970 to 50.2% in 1986, then increased to 62.1% in 1991, decreasing to 54.7% in 1996. The United States has the highest adolescent pregnancy rate of all modern industrialized countries. Women in the U.S. are three times as likely to become pregnant before age 20 than women in France, and nine times as likely as women in Japan (AGI, 1996).

These recent declines are almost certainly due in part to increasing education. Research shows that the higher a woman's education, the more likely she is to postpone marriage and childbearing. This occurs not only in the Eurasian/industrialized countries but is a worldwide trend (AGI, 1996) (See Figure 2). In the U.S., 58% of women who do not complete their high school education give birth before the age of 20, while only 13% of women with a high school education do. Women's access to education has also increased dramatically worldwide. Women aged 15-19 are 2-3 times as likely as women

aged 40-44 to have at least seven years of education (AGI, 1996).

Outcomes. Abortion and illegitimate children seem to be the most prevalent outcomes of premarital pregnancies in Eurasian societies, along with adoption and forced marriages to a lesser extent. Abortion is mentioned in almost all related literature regarding illegitimate pregnancies in Eurasian and/or industrialized countries, most commonly in the context of premarital relations where there is a lack of resources/paternal investment. However, abortion rates among industrialized nations vary: a teenager in the U.S. is twice as likely to have an abortion as a teen in the United Kingdom, the industrialized country with the next highest abortion rate (AGI, 1996). Illegitimate births/children were also commonly referred to in the literature and eHRAF. However, in recent years it has become increasingly common: more and more births to teens take place out of wedlock. In the 1970s most teenagers ages 15-17 giving birth were married, while most teenagers in this age group giving birth in recent years were unmarried. The proportion of all teenage births to unmarried mothers has risen from 30% in 1970 to 76% in 1996 (Park, Card, & Muller, 1998). Adoption is referred to, both in the context of close kin and outside the family. In recent years at least, adoption is less common than other outcomes. In the U.S., only 10% of teen pregnancies that result in a live birth are adopted (compared to 90% of live births in which the child is kept by the mother, and 1/3 of all teen pregnancies that are aborted) (Henshaw for AGI, 1997). Forced marriages are also referred to, but a girl is usually considered "lucky" if the boy marries her.

Female independence. Divorce was used as an indicator of a woman's ability to be independent. Pearson and Hendrix (1979) found a positive correlation between divorce rates and female status cross-culturally, where female status was assessed by women's ability to inherit property, hold

religious/political office, attitudes toward adultery, and the existence of polyandry. Both Glick (1973) and Hawkes (1972) have suggested a correlation between economic opportunities for women and the ease of divorce. Trent and South (1989) later found a significant positive relationship between the amount women participated in the labor force, as recorded by the International Labor Office, and divorce, as well as with economic development in general.

The number of female-headed households has dramatically increased in industrialized countries (Pasternak, Ember, and Ember, 1997, Urban Institute, 1979). Neither teenage motherhood nor out-of-wedlock parenting in general can solely account for this; increased divorce rates, declining remarriage rates, as well as death of spouses and adoption play important roles. The findings of an Urban Institute study (1979) explain the relationship of female heads of household to teenage childbearing specifically: "Teenage childbirth does not appear to be associated with subsequently becoming head of a family, either in cross tabulation or in multivariate analyses. However, the occurrence of a premarital birth does predict later being a female head of family. A teenage marriage also predicts to the woman's later becoming head of the family, presumably because of the associations between early marriage and marital breakup. Since pregnancy precipitates many early marriages and since teenage births occur disproportionately outside of marriage, early childbearing may be viewed as having an indirect effect." (Urban Institute, 1979: 27).

Another theory, based on the "welfare state", suggests that state-provided benefits have made it easier for women to head households. For example, Sweden provides abundant benefits to unmarried/divorced women and also has the highest rate of out-of-wedlock births in the Scandinavian countries. In the United States, however, increases/decreases in welfare do not predict increases/decreases in the percentage of

mother-headed households (Pasternak, Ember & Ember, 1997).

Discussion

The heavier disapproval of premarital pregnancy than premarital sex cross-culturally could be due to the visual evidence that a pregnancy provides, or more likely, the strain that a child out-of-wedlock creates for the mother, possibly the father, their families, and the community. Premarital pregnancy makes it evident that the privileges of a subsequent marital relationship have been infringed upon. The illegitimate child must either be cared for (by the couple and/or their families, or by an adopting family), or disposed of (through abortion, infanticide, or adoption). Obviously, premarital pregnancy requires dealing with more extensive results than premarital sex that does not result in pregnancy.

Attitudes toward premarital pregnancy seem more dependent on attitudes toward premarital sex than whether the society employs an "African" or "Eurasian" social structure. The findings regarding attitudes in the present research seems to contradict Goody's model which proposes that premarital sex will be prohibited in Eurasian societies but permitted in African. The operationalization of the current variables may be to blame. Goody measured "prohibition of premarital sex" as the presence or absence of an emphasis on virginity at marriage, rather than degree of approval/disapproval, considering general attitudes, incidences, and sanctions regarding premarital sex/pregnancy as in the present study. Sampling errors may also account for the discrepancy; while Goody utilized the entire Human Area Relation Files, the present study includes only 18 sample societies randomly selected by inheritance system. Goody's African/Eurasian model did predict premarital pregnancy outcomes as it relates to a woman's chances of marrying and

inheriting property; this is discussed in further detail later.

Teen pregnancy is more common in developing countries (most similar to "African" social systems) than developed countries (most similar to "Eurasian"). However, out-of-wedlock adolescent births are not distinguished from births to adolescents that are married in the available data. Where marriage occurs at an early age (sometimes before puberty) and childbearing shortly thereafter, premarital pregnancy is nearly erased as a social problem (Pasternak, Ember, and Ember, 1997).

The fact that there are only a limited number of possible outcomes to a premarital pregnancy may lend to the finding of no significant variation in African and Eurasian societies. Slight differences included a preference of forced marriages and illegitimate children in African systems and adoption in Eurasian systems. Both were equally likely to utilize abortion, infanticide, child abuse and mortality, and killing those that engage in such relations as strategies of dealing with premarital pregnancy.

However, the context in which each strategy was used differed. In African societies, the context emphasized paternity certainty. The illegitimacy of children and abortions usually resulted from extra-marital affairs. Out-of-wedlock children born to premarital unions did not decrease a woman's chance of marriage; as previously noted, forced marriage or incorporation of the illegitimate child into the kingroup were the most common strategies utilized. Adoptions were informal and within the clan/lineage.

In Eurasian societies, on the other hand, the context in which a strategy was chosen emphasized resources or lack of them. Illegitimacy most often referred to children born of premarital unions and decreased a woman's chance of marrying. A woman was considered "lucky" if a marriage could be forced. Adoption

sometimes occurred outside the family, thus re-elevating the woman's chances of marrying. Abortion and infanticide served the same purpose.

This evidence strongly supports Goody's African/Eurasian social structure model, demonstrating that inheritance is of central concern, although affected by indirect processes. In African systems, where property belongs to the corporate group instead of the individual, a woman doesn't stand the chance of losing inheritance if an out-of-wedlock pregnancy occurs. Although she may be publicly shamed, it is usually temporary and does not decrease her chances to marry. In fact, illegitimate children may be valued because they prove a woman's reproductive value, a commodity especially important in a system in which wealth is labor limited. This accounts for the propensity of forced marriages and incorporation of the illegitimate child into the kinship as the most common strategies to deal with premarital pregnancy.

Again in strong support of Goody's model, property is privately owned by individual families in Eurasian societies. Stratification requires that a sufficient amount of inheritance be passed to the next generation in order for the family's status to be maintained. Here, since an illegitimate child decreases a woman's chance to marry, it also decreases her chance to inherit property. Thus, if a woman cannot secure resources (force a marriage) to care for the child, she must dispose of it or forfeit her ability to inherit, ultimately deflating her/her family's status. This accounts for greater

instances of adoption outside the family. Although abortions and infanticide were equally likely in African and Eurasian systems, Eurasian systems emphasized a premarital context lacking paternal investment while African systems emphasized extramarital.

From historical to modern times in Eurasian and/or industrialized countries, attitudes toward teen mothers and their children have changed from "vixens and bastards" to "victims and innocents". This fueled the development of social aid networks and state-provided benefits, which further effected the incidence and outcomes of premarital pregnancies. The incidence of premarital pregnancies increased through the 1900s (parallel to women's ability to be independent), until the 1970s when rates fluctuated and began to decline. This recent decline coincides with increasing accessibility of education to women and advances in/access to birth control. This growing ability of women to be independent (indicated by a growing number of female-headed households), which was provided by increased economic opportunities and state welfare systems, ultimately led to a growing number of premarital pregnancies resulting in illegitimate children and single-parent households. The emphasis on "teen pregnancy" as a social problem in the Western world seems to be due to the increased visibility of premarital pregnancies -- and their negative effects -- resulting from a growing number of adolescents choosing to keep their babies, not due to an out of control, isolated epidemic.

Appendix

Figure 1. Changes in Birth Rate Among Industrialized Countries.

[Originally published in "Just the Facts", Park, Card, & Muller, 1998: 54.]

Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1996: 6]

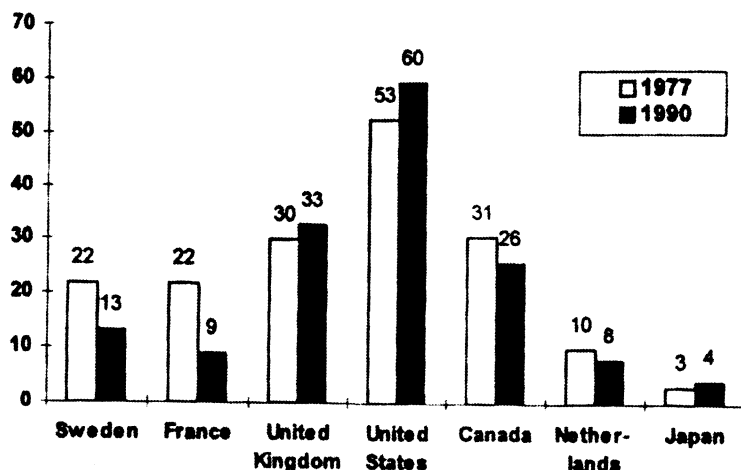


Table 1. Sample Societies

AFRICAN	OWC#	EURASIAN	OWC#
Ganda (Uganda, E Africa)	FK07	Amhara* (NE Africa)	MP05
Bemba (Zambia, SC Africa)	FQ05	Aymara* (W South America)	SF05
Lozi (Zambia, SC Africa)	FQ09	Taiwan Hokkien (E Asia)	AD05
Kanuri (Nigeria, W Africa)	MS14	Khasi (India, S Asia)	AR07
Hausa (Sahara/Sudan, W Africa)	MS12	Sinhalese (Sri Lanka, S Asia)	AX04
Wolof (Senegal, W Africa)	MS30	E Toraja (Indonesia, SE Asia)	OG11
Azande (Congo, W Africa)	FO07	Serbs (E Europe)	EF06
Iban* (Malaysia, Asia)	OC06	Highland Scots (W Europe)	ES10
Saramaka* (Suriname, So Amer)	SR15	Kurds (Middle East)	MA11

* = atypical geographic region

Table 2. Cross-cultural Attitudes toward Premarital Sex/Pregnancy (eHRAF sample)

Society (OWC#)	Attitude Toward Premarital Sex	Attitude Toward Premarital Pregnancy
AFRICAN		
Ganda (FK07)	Mildly Disapprove	Mildly Disapprove
Bemba (FQ05)	Approve	Approve
Lozi (FQ09)	Disapprove	Disapprove – Strongly Disapprove ¹
Kanuri (MS14)	Disapprove	Disapprove
Hausa (MS12)	Mildly Disapprove	Disapprove
Wolof (MS30)	Disapprove	Disapprove
Azande (FO07)	Approve	Unknown ²
Iban (OC06)	Approve	Disapprove

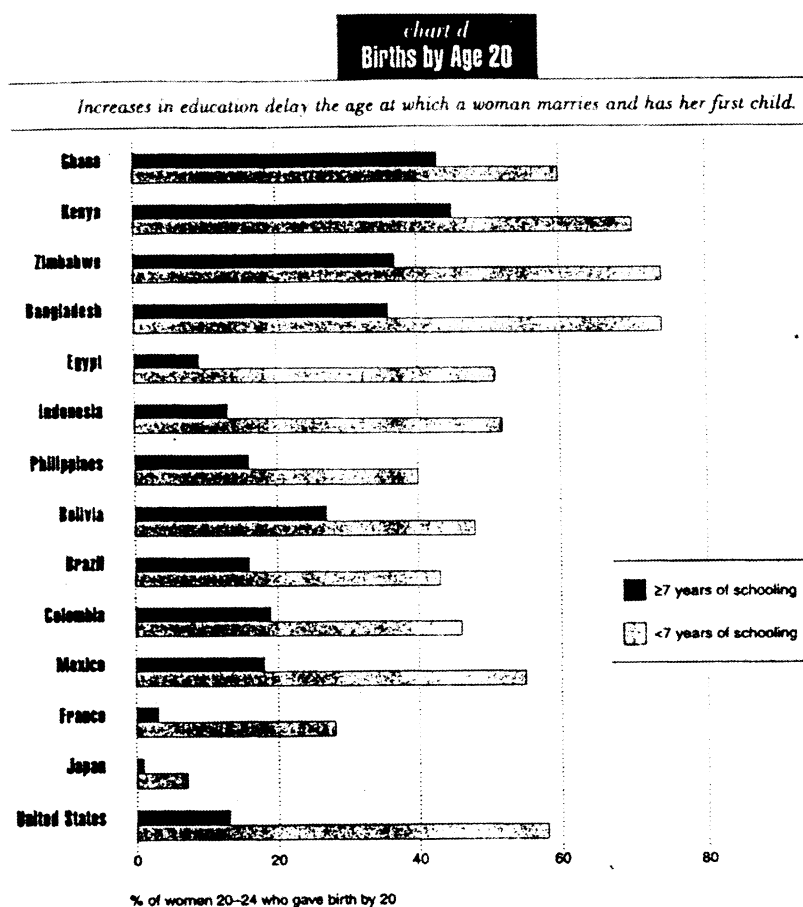
¹ If a girl became pregnant by a warrior, the culprits and their families may be killed. Premarital pregnancies by other men only require retribution to the girl's father and the chief.

² Numerous searches provided no data.

Saramaka (SR15)	Approve	Unknown ³
EURASIAN		
Amhara (MP05)	Boys – Approve; Girls – Strongly Disapprove	Disapprove
Aymara (SF05)	Approve	Mildly Disapprove
Taiwan Hokkien (AD05)	Approve	Approve
Khasi (AR07)	Approve	Approve
Sinhalese (AX04)	Approve	Approve
Eastern Toraja (OG11)	Approve	Mildly Disapprove – Strongly Disapprove ⁴
Serbs (EF06)	Approve	Mildly Disapprove
Highland Scots (ES10)	Mildly Disapprove	Mildly Disapprove
Kurds (MA11)	Strongly Disapprove	Unknown ⁵

Figure 2. Delayed Childbearing Due to Education

[Originally published in “Risks & Realities of Early Childbearing Worldwide”, Alan Guttmacher Institute]



³ Numerous searches provided no data.

⁴ Freeborn girls who became pregnant by slaves were at risk of being killed for their misbehavior. There is no evidence that other premarital pregnancies were punished.

⁵ Numerous searches provided no data. Since death is the common punishment of premarital sex, it is probable that premarital pregnancies very rarely occurred.

References Cited

- Broude, Gwen
1976 Cross-Cultural Patterning of Some Sexual Attitudes and Practices. *Behavior Science Research*. 11:227-262.
- Devereux, George
1955 *A Study of Abortion in Primitive Societies*. New York: International Universities Press, Inc.
- Encyclopedia Britannica
1967 Birth Control. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 3: 704-711.
- Electronic Human Relations Area Files
1999 1949<http://www.hti.umich.edu/e/ehraf/> Human Relations Area Files, Inc. Copyright. Est. 1949.
- Frayser, Suzanne G.
1985 *Varieties of Sexual Experience*. HRAF Press. New Haven, CN.
- Glick, Paul
1973 Perspectives on the Recent Upturn in Divorce and Remarriage. *Demography* 10, August: 301-314. As cited in Pearson & Hendrix 1979.
- Goody, Jack
1975 *Production and Reproduction*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hawkes, Roland
1972 Class, Race, and Marriage Stability: A Re-examination. Paper presented at annual meeting of the Midwest Sociological Society, Kansas City, MO, April. As cited in Pearson & Hendrix 1979.
- Henshaw for Alan Guttmacher Institute
1996 *Facts in Brief: Teen Sex and Pregnancy*. Alan Guttmacher Institute. New York.
- Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department
1995 *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*. LLCHD. Lincoln, NE.
- Luker, Kristin
1996 *Dubious Conceptions*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge.
- March of Dimes
1997 *Statbook: Statistics for Monitoring Maternal and Infant Health*. March of Dimes Birth Defect Foundation.
- Park, Card, & Muller
1998 *Just the Facts*. Los Altos, CA: Sociometrics Corporation.
- Pasternak, Ember, & Ember
1997 *Sex, Gender, and Kinship: A Cross-cultural Perspective*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Pearson & Hendrix
1979 Divorce and the Status of Women. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* May 1979: 375-385.
- Robin Hood Foundation
1996 *Kids Having Kids*. New York: Robin Hood Foundation.
- Trent & South
1988 Structural Determinants of the Divorce Rate: A Cross-societal Analysis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 51 (May 1989): 391-404.
- Urban Institute, edited by Moore, Hofferth, Caldwell, & Waite
1979 *Teenage Motherhood: Social and Economic Consequences*. Washington, D.C. Urban Institute.