**THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF SEX**

Oct. 8, 2008

- Conducting survey research
  - Sampling—importance of having a random sample
  - Indicator: measurable event, characteristic, or behavior commonly thought to reflect a particular concept (p. 79)
- What best explains sexual behavior?
  - Sexual instincts: inborn patterns of sexual behavior
  - Sexual scripts: socially constructed scripts that define what is a sexual situation and what ought to be done with whom and with what feelings or motives
  - Sexual scripting perspective argues that sexual behavior is shaped by norms and values, social networks, and social institutions—like any other social behavior

**THE ART OF THE SEX SURVEY**

- Kinsey: institutional populations, snowball sampling
- Magazine surveys: biased samples, low response rates
- National Health and Social Life Survey (1992)
  - Randomly sampled 4,369 people
  - 3,432 were interviewed (78.6% response rate)
- Finding supports importance of sexual scripts
WHO ARE OUR SEX PARTNERS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Partnerships in Which the Two Partners Are Similar in Social Characteristics</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Similarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-term non-cohabiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term non-cohabiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial/ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

WHY ARE OUR SEX PARTNERS LIKE US?

1. Useful to you
- Easier to share lives
- Equal social status = equal power in relationship
- Facilitates intimacy
2. Useful to your social network (stakeholders)
- Parents
- Friends
- Professionals, moral entrepreneurs, etc.
- Changing stakeholders, e.g., colleges
3. We meet people in our networks

WHO INTRODUCED PARTNERS?

Short-term non-cohabitating

- Mutual friends: 3%
- Family: 47%
- Coworker/classmate/neighbor: 37%
- Self-introduction: 9%
- Other: 3%

Married couples

- Mutual friends: 2%
- Family: 33%
- Coworker/classmate/neighbor: 36%
- Self-introduction: 13%
- Other: 15%

NUMBER OF SEXUAL PARTNERS

- Average number of sexual partners has increased
  - Over 50: a third have had five or more sexual partners
  - 30-50: half have had five or more sexual partners
  - Rates of unfaithfulness in marriage are low
    - 5% of married persons had > 1 partner in past year
  - More time spent sexually active but unmarried
    - Earlier first intercourse (18 to 17-1/2 over 30 years)
  - Later marriage
  - More frequent divorce
SEX PARTNERS IN PAST 12 MONTHS

**Men**
- 0: 5%
- 1: 10%
- 2-4: 18%
- 5+: 67%

**Women**
- 0: 10%
- 1: 2%
- 2-4: 14%
- 5+: 74%

SEX PARTNERS SINCE AGE 18

**Men**
- 0: 17%
- 1: 3%
- 2-4: 20%
- 5: 16%
- 10: 23%
- 11-20: 21%
- 21+: 36%

**Women**
- 0: 6%
- 1: 15%
- 2-4: 31%
- 5-10: 31%
- 11-20: 36%
- 21+: 31%

FREQUENCY OF SEX IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

**Men**
- Not at all: 8%
- A few times a year: 14%
- A few times per month: 26%
- 2 or 3 times per week: 37%
- 4 or more times a week: 18%

**Women**
- Not at all: 10%
- A few times a year: 7%
- A few times per month: 30%
- 2 or 3 times per week: 36%
- 4 or more times a week: 18%

FREQUENCY OF SEX BY TYPE OF UNION

**Noncohabitating**
- Men: 52%
- Women: 44%

**Cohabitating**
- Men: 92%
- Women: 91%

**Married**
- Men: 86%
- Women: 86%
FREQUENCY OF SEX BY AGE

- **18-24**
  - Men: 73%
  - Women: 85%

- **25-29**
  - Men: 64%
  - Women: 78%

- **30-39**
  - Men: 76%
  - Women: 75%

- **40-49**
  - Men: 69%
  - Women: 69%

- **50-59**
  - Men: 73%
  - Women: 66%

- **50-59**
  - Men: 66%
  - Women: 49%