The social organization of sex

- Conducting survey research
  - Sampling — importance of having a random sample
  - Selecting indicators
    - Indicator: measurable event, characteristic, or behavior commonly thought to reflect a particular concept (p. 68)
- What best explains sexual behavior?
  - Sexual instincts
  - Sexual scripts
    - Sexual behavior is shaped by norms and values, social networks, and social institutions — like any other social behavior

Sex surveys (sampling)

- 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>Type of Similarity</th>
<th>Type of Partnership</th>
<th>Long-term non-cohabitating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial/ethnic</td>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>Cohabitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</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?

- Non-cohabitating last < 1 month
  - Mutual friends (47%)
  - Family (32%)
  - Coworker/classmate/neighbor (9%)
  - Self-introduction (9%)
  - Other (3%)
- Married couples
  - Mutual friends (35%)
  - Family (15%)
  - Coworker/classmate/neighbor (13%)
  - Self-introduction (13%)
  - Other (13%)
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 17.5 over 30 years)
- Later marriage
- More frequent divorce

Sex partners in past 12 months

- Men
  - 0 (10%)
  - 2-4 (18%)
  - 5+ (85%)
- Women
  - 0 (14%)
  - 2-4 (10%)
  - 5+ (2%)

Sex partners since age 18

- Men
  - 0 (3%)
  - 1 (20%)
  - 2-4 (21%)
  - 5-10 (23%)
  - 21+ (17%)
  - 10-20 (16%)
- Women
  - 0 (3%)
  - 2-4 (15%)
  - 5-10 (20%)
  - 21+ (3%)
  - 10-20 (6%)
  - 1 (31%)

Frequency of sex in past 12 months

- Men
  - Not at all (14%)
  - A few times per month (37%)
  - A few times per year (16%)
  - A few times a week (26%)
  - 4 or more times a week (8%)
- Women
  - Not at all (10%)
  - A few times per month (36%)
  - A few times per year (18%)
  - 2 or 3 times a week (19%)
  - 4 or more times a week (9%)