The Social Organization of Sex

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The social organization of sex

- Conducting survey research
  - Sampling: importance of having a random sample
  - Indicator: measurable event, characteristic, or behavior commonly thought to reflect a particular concept (p. 84)
- 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

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?

<p>| Percentage of Partnerships in Which the Two Partners Are Similar in Social Characteristics |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Similarity</th>
<th>Type of Partnership</th>
<th>Racial/ethnic</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Educational</th>
<th>Religious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>Cohabitation</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term non-cohabitating</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term non-cohabitating</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who introduced partners?

- Mutual friends (37%)
- Family (35%)
- Coworker/classmate/neighbor (13%)
- Self-introduction (15%)
- Other (7%)
- Married couples (32%)

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

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 (3%)
  - 1 (29%)
  - 2-4 (21%)
  - 5-10 (23%)
  - 21+ (17%)
- Women
  - 0 (3%)
  - 1 (31%)
  - 2-4 (36%)
  - 5-10 (20%)
  - 21+ (3%)

Sex partners since age 18

- Men
  - 0 (3%)
  - 1 (29%)
  - 2-4 (33%)
  - 5-10 (20%)
  - 21+ (17%)
- Women
  - 0 (3%)
  - 1 (31%)
  - 2-4 (36%)
  - 5-10 (20%)
  - 21+ (3%)

Frequency of sex in past 12 months

- Men
  - 4 or more times a week (8%)
  - A few times per month (37%)
  - Not at all (14%)
  - A few times per year (16%)
  - 2 or 3 times a year (16%)
- Women
  - 4 or more times a week (7%)
  - A few times per month (36%)
  - Not at all (10%)
  - A few times per year (18%)
  - 2 or 3 times a year (18%)

Frequency of sex by type of union

- Men
  - Married (86%)
  - Cohabiting (91%)
  - Noncohabiting (92%)
- Women
  - Married (86%)
  - Cohabiting (91%)
  - Noncohabiting (53%)

Frequency of sex by age

- Men
  - 18-24: 52%
  - 25-29: 54%
  - 30-39: 55%
  - 40-49: 53%
  - 50-59: 50%
- Women
  - 18-24: 44%
  - 25-29: 48%
  - 30-39: 49%
  - 40-49: 45%
  - 50-59: 47%