THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF SEX
Feb. 25, 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?

| Percentage of Partnerships in Which the Two Partners Are Similar in Social Characteristics |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Type of Similarity | Marriage | Cohabitation | Long-term non-cohabiting | Short-term non-cohabiting |
| Racial/ethnic       | 93%      | 88%          | 89%                      | 91%                      |
| Age                | 78%      | 75%          | 76%                      | 83%                      |
| Educational        | 82%      | 87%          | 83%                      | 87%                      |
| Religious          | 72%      | 53%          | 56%                      | 60%                      |

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?

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: 18%
- 1: 5%
- 2-4: 10%
- 5+: 67%

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