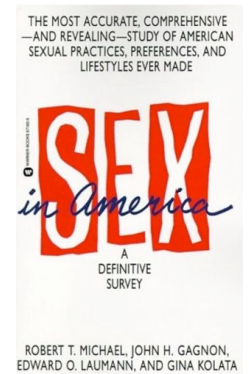


# THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF SEX

Feb. 25, 2008

## 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. 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



HOMER & MARGE'S ANNIVERSARY

## 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

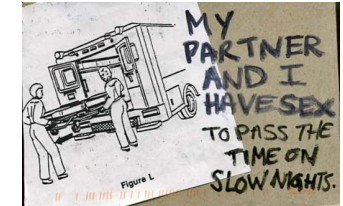


## WHO ARE OUR SEX PARTNERS?

Percentage of Partnerships in Which the Two Partners Are Similar in Social Characteristics				
Type of Similarity	Type of Partnership			
	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%

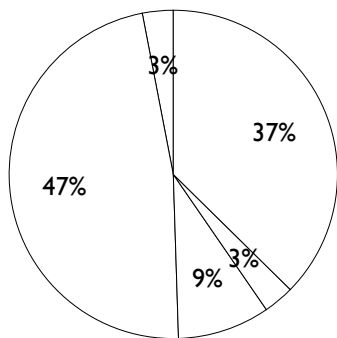
## WHY ARE OUR SEX PARTNERS LIKE US?

- 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

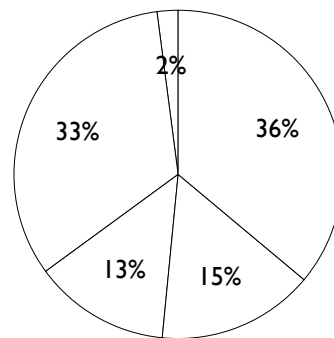


## WHO INTRODUCED PARTNERS?

Short-term non-cohabitating



Married couples



Mutual friends    Family    Coworker/classmate/neighbor    Self-introduction    Other

## 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

