

CHAPTER

3

SEX RESEARCH

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According to the Kinsey Report
Every average man you know,
Much prefers to play his favorite sport,
When the temperature is low,
But when the thermometer goes way up,

And the weather is sizzling hot,
Mr. Adam
For his madam
Is not.
'Cause it's too darn hot.*

In the last few decades, sex research has made increasing advances, and the names of Kinsey and Masters and Johnson are household words. How do sex researchers do it? How valid are their conclusions?

There are many different types of sex research, but basically the techniques vary in terms of the following: (1) whether they rely on people's self-reports of their sexual behaviour or whether the scientist observes the sexual behaviour directly; (2) whether large numbers of people are studied (surveys) or whether a small number or just a single individual is studied (in laboratory studies, qualitative research, or case studies); (3) whether the studies are conducted in the laboratory or in the field; and (4) whether sexual behaviour is studied simply as it occurs naturally or whether some attempt is made to manipulate it experimentally.

Examples of studies using all these techniques will be considered and evaluated later in the chapter. First some issues in sex research—objections frequently made to studies that have been done—will be discussed.

It is important to understand the techniques of sex research and their strengths as well as their limitations. This knowledge will help you evaluate the studies that are cited as evidence for various conclusions in later chapters and will also help you decide how willing you are to accept these conclusions. Perhaps more important, this knowledge will help you evaluate future sex research. Much sex research has been conducted already, but much more will be done in the future. The information in this chapter should help you understand and evaluate sex research that appears 10 or 20 years from now.

**Kiss Me Kate*, a musical comedy. (1953). Music and lyrics by Cole Porter; book by Sam and Bella Spewack. New York: Knopf.

Issues in Sex Research

Sampling

One of the first steps in conducting sex research is to identify the appropriate **population** of people to be studied. Does the population in question consist of all adult human beings, all adults in Canada, all adolescents in Canada, all people guilty of sex crimes, or all married couples who engage in swinging? Generally, of course, the scientist is unable to get data for all the people in the population, and so a **sample** is taken.

At this point, things begin to get sticky. If the sample is a **random sample** or representative sample of the population in question and if it is a reasonably large sample, then results obtained from it can safely be generalized to the population that was originally identified. That is, if a researcher has really randomly selected 1 out of every 50 adolescents in Canada, then the results obtained from that sample are probably true of all adolescents in Canada. One technique that is sometimes used to get such a sample is **probability sampling**.¹ But if

¹A detailed discussion of probability sampling is beyond the scope of this book. For a good description of this method as applied to sex research, see Cochran et al. (1953). A random sample is one example of a probability sample.

Population: A group of people a researcher wants to study and make inferences about.

Sample: A part of a population.

Random sampling: An excellent method of sampling in research, in which each member of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample.

Probability sampling: An excellent method of sampling in research, in which each member of the population has a known probability of being included in the sample.

the sample consists only of adolescents with certain characteristics—for example, only those whose parents would agree to let them participate in sex research—then the results obtained from that sample may not be true of all adolescents. Sampling has been a serious problem in sex research.

Typically, sampling proceeds in three phases: the population is identified, a method for obtaining a sample is adopted, and the people in the sample are contacted and asked to participate. The scientific techniques of the second phase—obtaining a sample—are by now fairly well developed and should not be a problem in future research, provided investigators use them. What is perhaps the thorniest problem, though, occurs in the last phase: getting the people identified for the sample to participate. If any of the people refuse to participate, then the great probability sample is ruined. This is called the **problem of refusal (or non-response)**. As a result, the researcher is essentially studying volunteers, that is, people who do agree to be in the research. The outcomes of the research may therefore contain **volunteer bias**. In casually conducted research such as the Hite report (Hite, 1976, 1981), the response rate was only 3 percent, making it impossible to reach any conclusions about the population based on the sample. The problem of refusal in sex research is difficult, since there is no ethical way of forcing people to participate when they do not want to.

The problem of volunteer bias would not be so great if those who refused to participate were identical in their sexual behaviour to those who participated. But it seems likely that those who refuse to participate differ in some ways from those who agree to, and that means the sample is biased. Evidence suggests that volunteers who participate in sex research hold more permissive attitudes about sexuality and are more sexually experienced than those who don't; for example, they masturbate more frequently and have had more sexual partners (Bogaert, 1996; Morokoff, 1986; Strassberg & Lowe, 1995; Wiederman et al., 1994). In addition, women are less likely to volunteer for some but not all types of sex research than men are (Senn & Desmarais, 2001; Wiederman et al., 1994), so that female samples are even more highly selected than male samples. In sum, volunteer bias is potentially a serious problem when we try to reach conclusions based on sex research.

Table 3.1 shows how different the results of sex surveys can be, depending on how carefully the

Problem of refusal or non-response: The problem that some people will refuse to participate in a sex survey, thus making it difficult to have a random sample.

Volunteer bias: A bias in the results of sex surveys that arises when some people refuse to participate, so that those who are in the sample are volunteers who may in some ways differ from those who refuse to participate.

Table 3.1 The Percentage of People Reporting Having Sex at Least Once a Week: Comparing a Convenience Sample with a Probability Sample

Age	Men		Women	
	Convenience Sample (Janus Report)	Probability Sample (General Social Survey)	Convenience Sample (Janus Report)	Probability Sample (General Social Survey)
18–26	72%	57%	68%	58%
27–38	83	69	78	61
39–50	83	56	68	49
51–64	81	43	65	25
Over 65	69	17	74	6

Source: A. M. Greeley (1994), The Janus Report, *Contemporary Sociology*, 23, 221–223. Reprinted by permission of the American Sociological Association and Andrew M. Greeley.

sampling is done (Greeley, 1994). The table shows results from two American surveys. The Janus report (Janus & Janus, 1993) used sampling methods so haphazard that the researchers ended up with what some call a “convenience sample.” It included volunteers who came to sex therapists’ offices and friends recruited by the original volunteers. In contrast, the General Social Survey conducted by the University of Chicago obtained a probability sample. Notice that a considerably higher level of sexual activity is reported by the convenience sample in the Janus report, compared with the probability sample. This difference is especially pronounced among the elderly. Convenience samples simply do not give us a very good picture of what is going on in the general population.

Reliability of Self-Reports of Sexual Behaviour

Most sex researchers have not directly observed the sexual behaviour of their research participants. Instead, most have relied on respondents’ self-reports of their sexual practices. The question is: How accurately do people report their own sexual behaviour? There are several ways in which

inaccuracies may occur, and these inaccuracies are problems for sex surveys. These problems are discussed next.

Purposeful Distortion

If you were an interviewer in a sex research project and a 90-year-old man said that he and his wife made love twice a day, would you believe him, or would you suspect that he might be exaggerating slightly? If a 35-year-old woman told you that she had never masturbated, would you believe her, or would you suspect that she had masturbated but was unwilling to admit it?

Respondents in sex research may, for one reason or another, engage in **purposeful distortion**, intentionally giving self-reports that are distortions of reality. These distortions may be in either of two directions. People may exaggerate their sexual activity (a tendency toward “enlargement”), or they may minimize their sexual activity or hide the

Purposeful distortion: Purposely giving false information in a survey.



Figure 3.1 The reliability of self-reports of sexual behaviour: If you were interviewing this man in a sex survey and he said that he had never masturbated, would you believe him, or would you think that he was concealing a taboo behaviour?

fact that they have done certain things (“concealment”). Unfortunately, we do not know whether most people tend toward enlargement or concealment. However, participants will often distort responses in the direction that they believe will be seen as more acceptable by the researcher, called **social desirability**. For example, an individual in a long-term relationship who believes that he or she engages in sexual activity with his or her partner much less often and masturbates much more often than other people do may exaggerate their sexual frequency but minimize his or her masturbation frequency. Participants are often not aware that social desirability is affecting their answers.

Distortion is a basic problem when using self-reports. To minimize distortion, participants must be impressed with the fact that because the study will be used for scientific purposes, their reports must be as accurate as possible. They must also be assured that their responses will be completely anonymous; this is necessary, for example, so that a politician would not be tempted to hide an extramarital affair or a history of sex with animals for fear that the information could be used to blackmail him or her.

But even if all respondents were very truthful and tried to give as accurate information as possible, two factors might still cause their self-reports to be inaccurate: memory and difficulties with estimates.

Memory

Some of the questions asked in sex surveys require respondents to recall what their sexual behaviour was like many years before. For example, some of the data we have on sexual behaviour in childhood come from the Kinsey study, in which adults were asked about their childhood sexual behaviour. This might involve asking a 50-year-old man to remember at what age he began masturbating and how frequently he masturbated when he was 16 years old. It may be difficult to remember such facts accurately. The alternative is to ask people about their current sexual behaviour, although getting data like these from children raises serious ethical and practical problems.

Difficulties with Estimates

One of the questions sex researchers have asked is: How long, on the average, do you spend in

precoital foreplay? If you were asked this question, how accurate a response do you think you could give? It is rather difficult to estimate time to begin with, and it is even more difficult to do so when engaged in an absorbing activity. The point is that in some sex surveys people are asked to give estimates of things that they probably cannot estimate very accurately. This may be another source of inaccuracy in self-report data.

Evidence on the Reliability of Self-Reports

Scientists have developed several methods for assessing how reliable or accurate people's reports are (Catania et al., 1995). One is the method of **test-retest reliability**, in which the respondent is asked a series of questions and then is asked the same set of questions after a period of time has passed, for example, a week or a month. The correlation² between answers at the two times (test and retest) measures the reliability of responses. If people answer identically both times, the correlation would be 1.0, meaning perfect reliability. If there were absolutely no relationship between what they said the first time and what they said the second time (a situation that never actually occurs), the correlation would be 0, meaning that the responses are not at all reliable.

In one study, heterosexual university students were asked to estimate their frequency of vaginal intercourse for a one-month period; the test-retest reliability was .89, which is excellent (Catania et al., 1990a). However, when they were asked their frequency of intercourse in a six-month period of time, the test-retest reliability fell to .65, and when they were asked about frequency during a one-year period, reliability was only .36. Respondents can give their best estimates about short, recent time intervals.

²The statistical concept of correlation is discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Test-retest reliability: A method for testing whether self-reports are reliable or accurate; participants are interviewed (or given a questionnaire) and then interviewed a second time sometime later to determine whether their answers are the same both times.

Social desirability: The tendency to distort answers to a survey in the direction perceived to be more acceptable.

Kinsey, too, used the test-retest method, re-interviewing 162 men with a minimum of 18 months between the first two interviews. The results indicated a high degree of agreement between the first and second interviews. Correlations greater than .95 between the first and second interviews were obtained for reports of incidence of masturbation, extramarital coitus, and homosexual activity.

Another method for assessing reliability involves obtaining independent reports from two different people who share sexual activity, such as husbands and wives. Kinsey was the first to use this method, interviewing 706 couples. Reports of objective facts—such as the number of years they had been married, how long they were engaged, and how much time elapsed between their marriage and the birth of the first child—showed perfect or near-perfect agreement. However, on items that are more difficult to estimate or remember such as the frequency of intercourse early in marriage, the correlation was only .50, which was the lowest correlation obtained. Even with these subjective reports, though, husbands and wives showed a fairly high degree of agreement.

Recent research has also used this same method for checking for agreement between spouses. One study found that on a simple item such as whether a couple had engaged in intercourse in the last month, there was 93 percent agreement. Agreement on the number of times they had had intercourse in the last month, something that requires more difficult estimation, was .80, which is lower but still good (Hyde et al., 1996). Similarly, researchers in Montreal asked partners to indicate the behaviours that had occurred during lovemaking. The partners agreed 87 percent of the time on average, which is a high level of agreement (Ochs & Binik, 1999).

Interviews versus Questionnaires

In the large-scale sex surveys, three methods of collecting data have been used: the face-to-face interview, the phone interview, and the written questionnaire. Each of these methods has some advantages when compared with the others (Catania et al., 1995).

The advantage of the interview, particularly the face-to-face interview, is that the interviewer can establish rapport with the respondent and, it is hoped, convince that person of the research's worth

and of the necessity for being honest. An interviewer can also vary the sequence of questions depending on the person's response. For example, if a person mentioned having had a homosexual experience, this response would be followed by a series of questions about the experience; however, those questions would be omitted if the person reported having had no homosexual experiences. It is hard to get this kind of flexibility in a printed questionnaire. Finally, interviews can be administered to persons who cannot read or write.

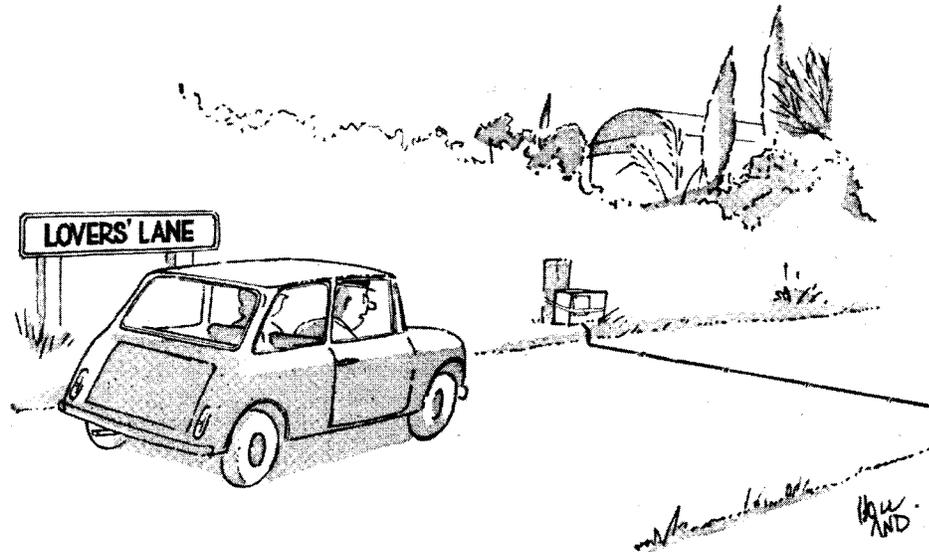
Questionnaires are much less costly, since they do not require hiring interviewers to spend the many hours necessary to interview respondents individually. It is also possible that respondents would be more honest in answering a questionnaire because they are more anonymous.

A recent innovation is the computer-assisted self-interview method (CASI), which can be combined with an audio component so that the respondent not only reads but hears the questions. This method offers the privacy of the written questionnaire while accommodating poor readers. The computer can be programmed to follow varying sequences of questions depending on respondents' answers, just as a human interviewer does.

What do the data say about which method works best for sex research? Several researchers have compared the results obtained through use of two different methods. For example, in one study, the rate of reporting rape was nearly double (11 percent) in a face-to-face interview compared with a telephone interview (6 percent) (Koss et al., 1994, p. 174). This finding seems to indicate that, when respondents are reporting very sensitive information, interviewers can establish rapport and trust better in person than over the telephone. In a study assessing risky sexual behaviour among gay men, both face-to-face interviews and written questionnaires were used (Siegel et al., 1994). Riskier behaviours were more likely to be reported on the questionnaire than in the interview. People evidently feel a bit freer to report particularly sensitive information on the more private written questionnaire than to an interviewer. Many experts in sex research recommend that a face-to-face interview to build rapport be combined with a written questionnaire administered during the interview to tap particularly sensitive information (Laumann et al., 1994; Siegel et al., 1994).

Figure 3.2 Sex researchers have tried to revise some ingenious methods for overcoming the problems of self-reports.

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“Another one of those damned sex surveys, I suppose.”

Self-Reports versus Direct Observations

As we noted earlier, one of the major ways of classifying techniques of sex research is according to whether the scientist relied on people's self-reports of their behaviour or observed the sexual behaviour directly.

The problems of self-reports have been discussed above. In a word, self-reports may be inaccurate. Direct observations—such as those done by Masters and Johnson in their work on the physiology of sexual response—have a major advantage over self-reports in that they are accurate. No purposeful distortion or inaccurate memory can intervene. On the other hand, direct observations have their own set of problems. They are expensive and time-consuming, with the result that generally a rather small sample is studied. Furthermore, obtaining a random or probability sample of the population is even more difficult than in survey research. While some people are reticent about completing a questionnaire concerning their sexual behaviour, even more would be unwilling to come to a laboratory where their sexual behaviour would be observed by a scientist or where they would be hooked up to recording instruments while they engaged in sex. Thus results obtained

from the unusual group of volunteers who would be willing to do this might not be generalizable to the rest of the population. One study showed that volunteers for a laboratory study of male sexual arousal were less guilty, less sexually fearful, and more sexually experienced than non-volunteers (Farkas et al., 1978; for similar results with females, see Wolchik et al., 1983).

Direct observations of sexual behaviour in the laboratory, such as those made by Masters and Johnson, involve one other problem: Is sexual behaviour in the laboratory the same as sexual behaviour in the privacy of one's own bedroom? For example, might sexual response in the laboratory be somewhat inhibited?

Extraneous Factors

Various extraneous factors may also influence the outcomes of sex research. In interviews about sexual behaviour, for example, there is some indication that both male and female respondents prefer a female interviewer (DeLamater & MacCorquodale, 1979). Thus such extraneous factors as the gender, race, or age of the interviewer may influence the outcome of sex research. Questionnaires do not get around these problems, since such simple

factors as the wording of a question may influence the results. In one study, respondents were given either standard or supportive wording of some items (Catania et al., 1995). For the question about extramarital sex, the standard wording was as follows:

At any time while you were married during the past 10 years, did you have sex with someone other than your (husband/wife)?

The supportive wording was as follows:

Many people feel that being sexually faithful to a spouse is important, and some do not. However, even those who think being faithful is important have found themselves in situations where they ended up having sex with someone other than their (husband/wife). At any time while you were married during the past 10 years, did you have sex with someone other than your (husband/wife)?

The supportive wording significantly increased reports of extramarital sex from 12 percent with the standard wording to 16 percent with the supportive wording, if the interviewer was of the same gender as the respondent; the wording made no difference when the interviewer and respondent were of different genders. Sex researchers must be careful to control these extraneous factors so that they influence the results as little as possible.



Web Reading:
Legal and
Ethical Issues

Ethical Issues

There is a possibility of ethical problems involved in doing research. Ethical problems are particularly difficult in sex research, because people are more likely to feel that their privacy has been invaded when you ask them about sex than when you ask them to name their favourite political candidate or memorize a list of words. All research conducted at Canadian universities must conform to a policy established by the federal government that sets standards for conducting ethical research involving human participants (Medical Research Council of Canada, 1998). The cardinal ethical principle is respect for human dignity: above all, researchers need to keep this in mind when they are establishing the goals and the procedures of their research. The principle of respect for human dignity leads to several other ethical principles, including respect for free and informed consent and protection from harm.

Free and Informed Consent

According to the principle of **free and informed consent**, participants have a right to be told, before they participate, what the purpose of the research is and what they will be asked to do. They may not be forced to participate or be forced to continue. An investigator may not coerce people to be in a study, and it is the scientist's responsibility to see to it that all participants understand exactly what they are agreeing to do. In the case of children who may be too young to give truly informed consent, it is usually given by the parents.

The principle of informed consent was adopted by scientific organizations in the 1970s. It was violated in some of the earlier sex studies, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Protection from Harm

Investigators should minimize the amount of physical and psychological stress to people in their research. Thus, for example, if an investigator must shock participants during a study, there should be a good reason for doing this. Questioning people about their sexual behaviour may be psychologically stressful to them and might conceivably harm them in some way, so sex researchers must be careful to minimize the stress involved in their procedure. The principle of respect for privacy and confidentiality of response, for example by making sure that responses are anonymous, is important to ensure that participants will not suffer afterwards for their participation in research.

Balancing Harms and Benefits

Considering the possible dangers involved in sex research, is it ever ethical to do such research? Officials in universities and government agencies sponsoring sex research must answer this question for every proposed sex research study. In doing so, they must do a **harms-benefit analysis**. That is,

Free and informed consent: An ethical principle in research, in which people have a right to be informed, before participating, of what they will be asked to do in the research.

Harms-benefit analysis: An approach to analyzing the ethics of a research study, based on weighing the harms of the research (such as stress to subjects) against the benefits of the research (gaining knowledge about human sexuality).

stress to research participants should be minimized as much as possible, but some stresses will remain; they are the harms. The question then becomes: Will the benefits that result from the research be greater than the harm? That is, will the participants benefit in some way from participating, and will science and society in general benefit from the knowledge resulting from the study? Do these benefits outweigh the potential harms? If they do, the research is justifiable; otherwise, it is not.

As an example, Masters and Johnson considered these issues carefully and they feel that their research participants benefited from being in their research; they have collected data from former participants that confirm this belief. Thus a harms-benefit analysis would suggest that their research is ethical, even though their participants may be temporarily stressed by it. Even in a study as ethically questionable as Laud Humphreys' study of the tearoom trade (discussed later in this chapter), the potential harms to the participants must be weighed against the benefits that accrue to society from being informed about this aspect of sexual behaviour.

The Major Sex Surveys

In the major sex surveys, the data were collected from a large sample of people by means of questionnaires or interviews. The best known of these studies is the one done by Kinsey, so we will consider it first. The data were collected in the late 1930s and 1940s in the United States, and thus the results are now largely of historic interest. However, Kinsey documented his methods with extraordinary care, so his research is a good example to study for both the good and the bad points of surveys.

The Kinsey Report

The Sample

Kinsey (see Focus 3.1) and his colleagues interviewed a total of 5300 males, and their responses were reported in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948); 5940 females contributed to *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953). Though some blacks were interviewed, only interviews with whites were included in the publications. The interviews were conducted between 1938 and 1949 in the United States.

Initially, Kinsey was not much concerned with sampling issues. His goal was simply to collect sex histories from as wide a variety of people as possible. He began conducting interviews on his university campus and then moved on to large U.S. cities, such as Chicago.

Kinsey later became more concerned with sampling issues and developed a technique called *100 percent sampling*. In this method he contacted a group, obtained its cooperation, and then got every one of its members to give a history. Once the cooperation of a group had been secured, peer pressure assured that all members would participate. Unfortunately, although he was successful in getting a complete sample from such groups, the groups themselves were by no means chosen randomly. Thus among the groups from which 100 percent samples were obtained were 2 sororities, 9 fraternities, and 13 professional groups.

In the 1953 volume, Kinsey said that he and his colleagues had deliberately chosen not to use probability sampling methods because of the problems of non-response. This is a legitimate point. But as a result, we have almost no information on how adequate the sample was. As one scholar observed, the sampling was haphazard but not random (Kirby, 1977). For example, there were more respondents from Indiana than from any other state. Generally, the following kinds of people were overrepresented in the sample: university students, young people, well-educated people, Protestants, people living in cities, and people living in Indiana and the northeast. Underrepresented groups included manual labourers, less well-educated people, older people, Roman Catholics, Jews, members of racial minorities, and people living in rural areas.

The Interviews

Although scientists generally regard Kinsey's sampling methods with some dismay, his face-to-face interviewing techniques are highly regarded. Over 50 percent of the interviews were done by Kinsey himself, and the rest by his associates, whom he trained carefully. The interviewers made every attempt to establish rapport with the people they spoke to, and they treated all reports matter-of-factly. They were also skilful at phrasing questions in language that was easily understood. Questions were worded so as to encourage people to report anything they had done. For example, rather than asking "Have you



Web Search:
Alfred C. Kinsey

Focus 3.1

Alfred C. Kinsey

Alfred C. Kinsey was born in 1894 in New Jersey, the first child of uneducated parents. In high school he did not date, and a classmate recalled that he was “the shyest guy around girls you could think of.”

His father was determined that Kinsey become a mechanical engineer. From 1912 to 1914 he tried studying mechanical engineering at Stevens Institute, but he showed little talent for it. At one point he was close to failing physics, but a compromise was reached with the professor, who agreed to pass him if he would not attempt any advanced work in the field! In 1914 Kinsey made the break and enrolled at Bowdoin College to pursue his real love: biology. Because this went against his father’s wishes, Kinsey was put on his own financially.

In 1916 he began graduate work at Harvard. There he developed an interest in insects, specializing in gall wasps. While still a graduate student he wrote a definitive book on the edible plants of eastern North America.

In 1920 he went to Bloomington, Indiana, to take a job as assistant professor of zoology at Indiana University. That fall he met Clara McMillen, whom he married six months later. They soon had four children.

With his intense curiosity and driving ambition, Kinsey quickly gained academic success. He

published a high school biology text in 1926, and it received enthusiastic reviews. By 1936 he had published two major books on gall wasps; they established his reputation as a leading authority in the field and contributed not only to knowledge of gall wasps but also to genetic theory.

Kinsey came to the study of human sexual behaviour as a biologist. His shift to the study of sex began in 1938, when Indiana University began a “marriage” course; Kinsey chaired the faculty committee teaching it. Part of the course included individual conferences between students and faculty, and these were Kinsey’s first sex interviews. When confronted with teaching the course, he also became aware of the appalling lack of information on human sexual behaviour. Thus his research resulted in part from his realization of the need of people, especially young people, for sex information. In 1939 he made his first field trip to collect sex histories in Chicago. His lifetime goal was to collect 100,000 sex histories.

His work culminated with the publication of the Kinsey reports in 1948 (*Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*) and 1953 (*Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*). While the scientific community generally received them as a landmark contribution, they also provoked hate mail.

ever masturbated?” the interviewers asked “At what age did you begin masturbating?” They also developed a number of methods for cross-checking a person’s report so that false information would be detected. Wardell Pomeroy recounted an example:

Kinsey illustrated this point with the case of an older Negro male who at first was wary and evasive in his answers. From the fact that he listed a number of minor jobs when asked about his occupation and seemed reluctant to go into any of them [Kinsey] deduced that he might have been active in

the underworld, so he began to follow up by asking the man whether he had ever been married. He denied it, at which Kinsey resorted to the vernacular and inquired if he had ever “lived common law.” The man admitted he had, and that it had first happened when he was 14.

“How old was the woman?” [Kinsey] asked.

“Thirty-five,” he admitted, smiling.

Kinsey showed no surprise. “She was a hustler, wasn’t she?” he said flatly.

In 1947 he founded the Institute for Sex Research (known popularly as the Kinsey Institute) at Indiana University. It was financed by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation and, later, by book royalties. But in the 1950s United States Senator Joseph McCarthy, the communist baiter, was in power. He made a particularly vicious attack on the Institute and its research, claiming that its effect was to weaken American morality and thus make the nation more susceptible to a communist takeover. Under his pressure, support from the Rockefeller Foundation was terminated.

Kinsey's health began to fail, partly as a result of the heavy workload he set for himself, partly because he was so involved with the research that he took attacks personally, and partly because he saw financial support for the research collapsing. He died in 1956 at the age of 62 of heart failure, while honouring a lecture engagement when his doctor had ordered him to convalesce.

By 1957 McCarthy had been discredited, and the grant funds returned. The Institute was then headed by Paul Gebhard, an anthropologist who had been a member of the staff for many years. The Institute continues to do research today; it also houses a large library on sex and an archival collection including countless works of sexual art.

In a recent, highly publicized, tell-all biography of Kinsey, James Jones (1997) argued that, although Kinsey's public self was a heterosexual married man, Kinsey was homosexual (more accurately,

bisexual) and practised masochism. According to Jones, this discredits Kinsey's research. Jones's logic is poor, though, because one can evaluate the quality of the research methods independent of one's views about Kinsey's personal sex life.

Sources: P. Gebhard (1976), *The Institute*, In M. S. Weinberg (Ed.) *Sex research: Studies from the Kinsey Institute*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 10–22; C. V. Christensen (1971), *Kinsey: A biography*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; J. H. Jones (1997), *Alfred C. Kinsey: A public-private life*, New York: Norton.



Figure 3.3 Alfred C. Kinsey (second from right, holding the folder), with colleagues Martin, Gebhard, and Pomeroy.

At this the subject's eyes opened wide. Then he smiled in a friendly way for the first time, and said, "Well, sir, since you appear to know something about these things, I'll tell you straight."

After that, [Kinsey] got an extraordinary record of this man's history as a pimp. . . . (Pomeroy, 1972, pp. 115–116)

Strict precautions were taken to ensure that responses were anonymous and that they would remain anonymous. The data were stored on IBM

cards, but using a code that had been memorized by only a few people directly involved in the project and that was never written down. The research team had even made contingency plans for destroying the data in the event that the police tried to demand access to the records for the purposes of prosecuting people.

Put simply, the interviewing techniques were probably very successful in minimizing purposeful distortion. However, other problems of self-report remained: the problems of memory and of inability to estimate some of the numbers requested.

How Accurate Were the Kinsey Statistics?

When all is said and done, how accurate were the statistics presented by Kinsey? The American Statistical Association appointed a blue-ribbon panel to evaluate the Kinsey reports (Cochran et al., 1953; for other evaluations, see Terman, 1948; Wallin, 1949). While the panel members generally felt that the interview techniques had been excellent, they were dismayed by Kinsey's failure to use probability sampling, and they concluded, somewhat pessimistically:

In the absence of a probability-sample benchmark, the present results must be regarded as subject to systematic errors of unknown magnitude due to selective sampling (via volunteering and the like). (Cochran et al., 1953, p. 711)

However, they also felt that this was a nearly insoluble problem for sex research; even if a probability sample were used, refusals would still create serious problems.

The statisticians who evaluated Kinsey's methods felt that one aspect of his findings might have been particularly subject to error: the generally high levels of sexual activity, and particularly the high incidence of homosexual behaviour. These conclusions might have been seriously influenced by discrepancies between reported and actual behaviour and by sampling problems, particularly Kinsey's tendency to seek out persons with unusual sexual practices.

Kinsey's associates felt that the most questionable statistic was the incidence of male homosexuality. Wardell Pomeroy commented, "The magic 37 percent of males who had one or more homosexual experiences was, no doubt, overestimated" (1972, p. 466).

In sum, it is impossible to say how accurate the Kinsey statistics are; they may be very accurate, or they may contain serious errors. Probably the single most doubtful figure is the high incidence of homosexuality. Although Canadians have often used the Kinsey data to draw conclusions about the situation in Canada, Canadians differ from Americans in ways that are likely to affect sexual behaviour such as family patterns, laws, attitudes, and health (Barrett et al., 1997). Thus, it is impossible to be certain of the extent to which these data reflect the sexual behaviour of Canadians. Unfortunately, there have been no large-scale Canadian sexuality surveys, with the exception of a few ques-

tions contained in the National Population Health Survey and other general surveys. This makes it difficult to develop a clear picture of the sexual behaviour of adult Canadians. In contrast, the United States, England, and France have all conducted this kind of large-scale survey. Many of the statistics in the French and British surveys match quite closely those from the United States. Thus, it is likely that a Canadian survey would also have similar, but not identical, findings. There are, however, many active sex researchers in Canada (see Focus 3.2). These researchers have conducted surveys of selected groups, such as university students, teenagers, First Nations peoples, sex trade workers, or gay and bisexual men, some of which are described in this chapter.

Sexual Behaviour in the United States

U.S. researchers identified a need to conduct a large-scale, national survey of sexuality using probability sampling methods to determine what Americans' patterns of sexual behaviour are today. Such a study appeared in 1994. The research team was headed by Edward Laumann, a distinguished sociologist at the University of Chicago, and was conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, one of the best-respected survey organizations in the United States. The survey was called the National Health and Social Life Survey; to keep things simple, we will call this study the NHSLS (Laumann et al., 1994; Michael et al., 1994).

The sampling method involved a probability sampling of households in the United States. This excluded less than 3 percent of Americans, but did exclude people living in institutions (e.g., prisons, university dormitories) and the homeless. People were eligible if they were adults between the ages of 18 and 59.

The researchers obtained an impressive 79 percent cooperation rate. Apparently, the great majority of people are willing to respond to a carefully conducted sex survey. The response rate is particularly impressive in view of the fact that today, even surveys of more neutral topics such as political opinions generally have a response rate of only about 75 percent.

The data were obtained in face-to-face interviews supplemented by brief written questionnaires, which were handed to the respondents for particularly sensitive topics (such as masturbation)

Focus 3.2

Sex Research in Canada

There are many active sex researchers in Canada. Most of them are in academic departments within specific disciplines such as psychology, sociology, family studies, or medicine. The only department of sexology located in Canada operates in French at the Université de Québec à Montréal. Although it is impossible to name all Canadian sex researchers, here are some of the most active researchers (from east to west.)

Psychologist Sandra Byers and her graduate students at the University of New Brunswick are particularly well known for their research on sexual interactions in close relationships including sexual satisfaction, sexual dysfunction, and sexual coercion.

In Quebec, psychologist Francine Lavoie of Laval University studies high school students' sexual coercive experiences. Joseph Levy and Joanne Otis at the Department of Sexology at the Université de Québec à Montréal have been active in assessing the sexual behaviour of Quebecers. In the same department, Robert Gemme has done extensive research on prostitution. At McGill University, Barbara Sherwin is well known for her work on sex hormones and sexual functioning in menopausal women, and psychologist Yitzchak Binik studies sexual pain disorders in women. Sociologist Frances Shaver of Concordia University is a leading researcher on prostitution.

A number of Ontario universities have active sex research programs. Researchers at the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen's University in Kingston have published extensively on adolescent sexual behaviour. Psychologists William Marshall and Vernon Quinsey have international reputations for their work on the assessment and treatment of sex offenders. Psychiatrist Paul Federoff at the University of Ottawa studies the treatment of sex offenders. At the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Clarke Division, in Toronto,

psychologists Ken Zucker and Ray Blanchard are well known for their work on gender identity disorders in children and adults, and Harold Barbaree for his work with sexual offenders. Ted Myers and his colleagues at the University of Toronto have conducted a number of major surveys with respect to sexual health, particularly HIV.

Guelph University sociologist Edward Herold's current research focuses on youth and sexuality, most recently on sexual norms and risk behaviour in holiday environments. William Fisher of the Department of Psychology at the University of Western Ontario has an international reputation for his work on the prevention of teen pregnancy, STIs, and HIV infection. At the University of Windsor, sociologist Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale is well known for her qualitative and multimethod research on sexual risk behaviour in various populations including sex trade workers; psychologist Charlene Senn conducts research on sexual assault.

In British Columbia, psychiatrist Rosemary Basson of the University of British Columbia conducts research on sexual dysfunction. UBC psychologist Boris Gorzalka conducts psychophysiological sex research. Sociologist Holly Devor at the University of Victoria has made important contributions in her work on conceptualization of gender dysphoria.

Canadian sex researchers publish their findings in both national and international journals. There are two Canadian journals committed to the dissemination of sex research: the quarterly *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* and the biannual *Revue Sexologique/Sexological Review*.

Sources: M. Barrett et al. (1997), Canada, In R. Francoeur (Ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, pp. 221–331, New York: Continuum.

and sealed in a “privacy envelope” when they had been completed. The researchers chose the face-to-face interview because they felt that it would yield a higher response rate than a written questionnaire alone, and it allowed the researchers to ask more complex, detailed sequences of questions than would have been possible with just a written questionnaire or a phone interview.

Laumann’s team was careful to obtain the respondents’ informed consent. About a week before an interviewer went to a household, a letter was sent explaining that the purpose of the survey was to help “doctors, teachers, and counselors better understand and prevent the spread of diseases like AIDS and better understand the nature and extent of harmful and of healthy sexual behavior in our country” (Laumann et al., 1994, p. 55). The purpose was therefore clearly and honestly described to participants before their consent was requested. In order to protect confidentiality, all identifying information about the respondent was destroyed after the interview. Each respondent was paid \$35 for the interview, which lasted, on the average, 90 minutes.

The NHSLs is the best sex survey of the general population of the United States that we have today, and its findings will be referred to in many chapters in this book. The researchers made outstanding efforts to use the best sampling methods and interview methods. Nonetheless, no doubt some respondents engaged in concealment and perhaps also in enlargement, because self-reports were used. The skill of interviewers and their ability to build rapport is crucial in overcoming such problems. The researchers reported training the interviewers extensively, but nonetheless the extent of concealment, or *under-reporting*, remains unknown.

One criticism of the NHSLs is that some of the interviews took place with a third person present, obviously not an ideal situation for honest reporting about sexuality. The researchers analyzed the data to see whether the presence of another person was associated with different patterns of reporting that might suggest concealment. They found some differences that might indicate concealment; for example, a lower percentage of respondents who were interviewed with another person present reported two or more sex partners in the past year. However, in many cases a woman was being interviewed with her preschool child present. It may be that mothers with preschool children are simply

less likely to have had multiple partners in the past year. When the authors reanalyzed the data controlling for simple social variables, only a few random reporting differences remained between the two groups. It seems unlikely that this methodological problem caused major difficulties with the results.

Ironically, the most controversial statistic in the study was the same as in Kinsey’s research—the incidence of homosexuality. In Kinsey’s case, people thought the numbers were too high. In the case of the NHSLs, some people thought that they were too low. We will return to this issue in Chapter 15.

Sexual Behaviour in France and Britain

Again stimulated by a need for far better information about sexual behaviour in order to deal with the AIDS crisis, a team of French researchers, called the ACSF Investigators, conducted a major French sex survey (ACSF Investigators, 1992). The data were collected in 1991 and 1992. These researchers chose the method of telephone interviews, preceded by a letter notifying potential respondents that they had been identified for the representative sample. The response rate was 76.5 percent. The result was a sample of 20,055 adults ranging in age from 18 to 69.

The results, indicate, for example, that 13 percent of French men, compared with 6 percent of French women, had multiple sex partners (two or more) in the past 12 months and therefore were at higher risk of HIV infection.

A British survey was conducted by Anne Johnson and her colleagues (1992) using both interviews and questionnaires for sensitive items. It yielded data for 18,876 men and women aged 16 to 59, living in England, Wales, and Scotland. The data indicated that, for the entire sample, 14 percent of the men and 7 percent of the women had multiple sex partners in the past 12 months, figures quite similar to the French survey. However, when one looks just at 16- to 24-year-olds, 27 percent of the men and 16 percent of the women had two or more partners in the past 12 months—a considerably greater proportion.

The Canada Youth and AIDS Study

In 1987, the Social Program Evaluation Group of Queen’s University conducted a study to assess adolescent sexuality in order to determine how young Canadians were responding to the AIDS

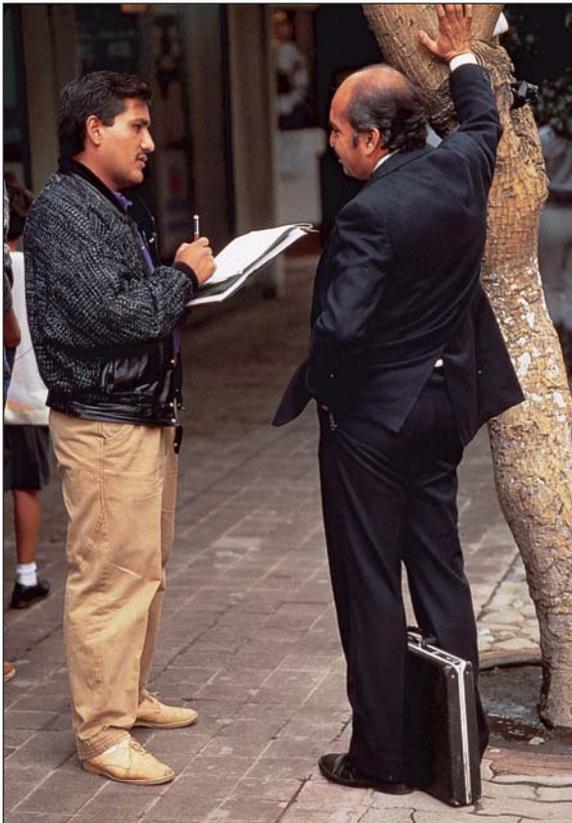


Figure 3.4 Research conducted among racial and ethnic minority groups must be culturally sensitive. Ideally, for example, interviewers should be of the same cultural background as research participants.

epidemic. The project, called the Canada Youth and AIDS Study, was coordinated by Alan King. The study was commissioned by the Federal Centre for AIDS in conjunction with the National Health Research Development Program of Health Canada and focused on the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour of Canadian young people with regard to AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. Thus, it is not a comprehensive survey of adolescent sexual behaviour and attitudes.

The researchers collected data in all ten provinces and in both territories. They surveyed more than 38,000 youth in grades 7, 9, and 11 and first-year college or university. The study was conducted in both French and English. The researchers designed their sampling procedure so that not only would the data be representative of Canada as a whole, but they would also have enough participants from each province so that they could present the

findings separately for each province. A particular strength of the study is that the researchers included youth who had dropped out of school and who spend most of their time on the streets of large cities. However, there were some problems related to potential volunteer bias. For example, 23 percent of parents refused permission for their child to participate. The students who did participate may differ in some important ways from those who did not.

The researchers found that many youth had begun engaging in sexual intercourse by age 14. For example, 26 percent of grade 9 students (more males than females), 48 percent of grade 11 students, and 75 percent of first-year university students had had sexual intercourse at least once. At the time, this finding surprised many Canadians. Further, few respondents were consistent condom users. Although King and his colleagues (1988) did their research in both French and English and thus could compare anglophone and francophone youth, they did not assess ethnicity. Thus, we do not know how the attitudes and behaviours of Canadian youth from various cultural backgrounds differ.

Magazine Surveys

Many large-scale sex surveys have been conducted through magazines. Often the survey is printed in one issue of the magazine, and readers are asked to respond. The result can be a huge sample—perhaps 20,000 people—which sounds impressive. But are these magazine surveys really all they claim to be?

Sampling is just plain out of control with magazine surveys. The survey is distributed just to readers of the magazine, and different magazines have different clienteles. No one magazine reaches a random sample of Canadians. If the survey appeared in *Chatelaine*, it would go to certain kinds of women; if it were in *Canadian Living*, it would go to others. It would be risky to assume that women who read *Chatelaine* have the same sexual patterns as those who read *Canadian Living*. To make matters worse, the response rate is unknown. We can't know how many people saw the survey and did not fill it out, compared with the number who did. The response rate may be something like 3 percent. One does not, therefore, even have a random sample of readers of that magazine.

As an example, let's consider a survey that was reported in the August 1998 issue of *Cosmopolitan* (Moritz, 1998). In an earlier issue they had printed their "Lust Survey." A boxed insert claims "1000 *Cosmo* readers confess," but the text of the article reports that "thousands of you sent in answers." Which was it? And how can we (or the editors at *Cosmopolitan*) know the response rate? Among the respondents, how many were married? Single? Canadian? What about their ethnic backgrounds? How old were they? Of course these details are not the sort of thing that *Cosmo* probably thinks will entertain its readers. Nonetheless, they could have printed the information in a small box at the end of the article. More importantly, these details mean everything in terms of whether one can take their claims seriously.

For example, in response to a question about what qualities of a man turn you on, the most frequent response, from 41 percent of the women, was "looks" (other common responses were "general attitude," endorsed by 37 percent, and "personality," endorsed by 32 percent). From this, can we conclude that 41 percent of North American women are most turned on by a man's appearance? That conclusion would require a leap of logic that is too big for safety. *Cosmo* isn't even close to a random sample in this study. Perhaps the sample was all white. The results, then, might be totally different for Americans and Canadians who are black, Asian, or Aboriginal. Perhaps all the respondents were in their 20s; then the results might have been totally different for women in their 50s.

For all these reasons, it would not be legitimate to infer that these statistics characterize North American women in general. We could continue with more examples of magazine surveys, but the general conclusion should be clear by now. Although they may appear impressive because of the large number of respondents, magazine sex surveys actually are poor in quality because the sample is generally seriously biased.

Studies of Special Populations

In addition to the large-scale surveys of Americans and of Canadian youth discussed earlier, many studies of special populations have been done. Three examples are given here: the Maticka-Tyndale

study of exotic dancers, a survey of First Nations peoples in Ontario, and a survey of Canadian men who have sex with men.

Exotic Dancers

Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale and her colleagues conducted a study of exotic dancers working at strip clubs in Southern Ontario (Lewis & Maticka-Tyndale, 1998; Maticka-Tyndale et al., 1999). Their goal was to determine whether the dancers' activities, both inside and outside the club, put them at risk for STIs, including HIV infection. They interviewed 30 female exotic dancers who had been dancing from 1 to 22 years. The researchers used a qualitative methodology rather than the quantitative methodology used in the other research described in this chapter. In **qualitative research**, the researchers try to make sense of experiences in terms of the meanings that people give to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Thus, qualitative researchers emphasize the participant's point of view and represent this point of view by providing quotations from participants rather than by giving statistics.

The researchers used a procedure called *non-probability purposive sampling* to maximize the diversity in the small sample. They wanted to make sure that the conclusions drawn from the research would reflect all the situations in which dancers find themselves. Participants were identified by key informants, research assistants who had worked as dancers themselves during field trips to the clubs, and by dancers who participated in the study, a technique called *snowballing*. Thus, as with all qualitative research, this was not a random or representative sample and thus we cannot draw conclusions about frequencies and prevalences. Nonetheless it provides an in-depth understanding of the world of exotic dancers.

Participants responded to an informal set of open-ended questions that allowed them to freely express themselves. The interviews were analyzed to identify themes that emerged from the sex workers' responses. There were two different types of dancers. Women begin dancing primarily for the

Qualitative research: Research, usually involving interviews, in which the researchers try to make sense of the meanings that people give to their experiences.

money, with the view that it will be temporary. Goal-oriented dancers continue to treat dancing as a temporary job and usually do not use alcohol or drugs or engage in sexual activity as part of the job. College and university students are one specific group of goal-oriented dancers. Dancing is attractive to them because it pays well and can fit into their class schedule. Some women shift from viewing dancing as a temporary job to viewing it as a career. These career dancers are usually part of the strip club culture, are often heavy drinkers, and may be involved in drug use. They may have sex with customers as part of the dancing or on dates with the men they meet while dancing at the clubs.

The researchers faced a number of difficulties that are common in this type of research. First, it was difficult to recruit participants. Dancers do not have much interest in participating in research and are suspicious of researchers. Second, as there is a stigma associated with exotic dancing, the researchers had to take extra steps to ensure that the participants could not be identified.

Ontario First Nations AIDS and Healthy Lifestyle Survey

The Ontario First Nations AIDS and Healthy Lifestyle Survey was conducted by Ted Myers and his colleagues (1993) at the Division of Community Health at the University of Toronto in collaboration with the First Nations Steering Committee. The goal of the study was to assess knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to HIV infection among First Nations peoples in Ontario. All decisions were made by consensus between the academic researchers and the Steering Committee in order to take the unique concerns of communities into account. The researchers used random selection to obtain a representative sample. They selected equal numbers of men and women as well as equal numbers within each of four age groups (Myers et al., 1993).

The data were collected using face-to-face interviews as well as an answer booklet for highly personal questions. All interviewers were hired from participating communities, spoke the appropriate First Nations language, and participated in two days of training. For questions about sexual behaviour, respondents were given a choice of using technical terms or slang terms. Most communities took steps to promote the study. The researchers found that many participants had engaged in high-risk

sexual behaviours. For example, 40 percent of the men and 18 percent of the women reported two or more sexual partners in the past year. Sixty percent of respondents did not consistently use a condom when engaging in vaginal or anal intercourse.

The methodology used in this study demonstrates a number of issues that need to be kept in mind in doing research with different cultural groups (Ford & Norris, 1991). First, respondents should be interviewed by an interviewer of the same gender and ethnic background as themselves. This practice is important for building rapport and establishing trust during the interview, both of which are critical in obtaining honest answers. Language is another important issue in constructing interviews. Many people, including those from the majority Canadian culture, do not know scientific terms for sexual concepts. Interviewers therefore have to be ready with a supply of slang terms so that they can switch to these if a respondent does not understand a question. This problem becomes more complex when one interviews people whose first language is not English. In keeping with these recommendations, Myers and his colleagues used interviewers from the communities involved in the study, allowed interviewers to translate the question into the appropriate First Nations language as they conducted the interview, if required, and trained them in both technical and slang terms.

This research also demonstrates another important principle—representatives of the target communities participated in the design and management of the study. This has two advantages. First, it allows the communities to have input into the research design and methodology to ensure that the research takes the unique concerns of each community into account. Second, minority group members are more likely to agree to participate in research if they know that representatives of their communities were involved in designing the study.

In conclusion, doing sex research with people from diverse ethnocultural communities in Canada requires more than just administering the same old surveys to samples of people from these groups. It requires revisions to methodology that are culturally sensitive to issues such as the ethnicity of the interviewer, the language used in the interview, and the special sensitivity of some groups regarding some topics.

Gay and Bisexual Men

Ted Myers and a team of researchers from three Canadian universities conducted a major survey of gay and bisexual men in Canada. The study was done in collaboration with the Canadian AIDS Society and was funded by Health Canada. The goal of the study was to understand gay men's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours in order to make recommendations about how best to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS among gay and bisexual men. The researchers were concerned that if they called it a study of gay and bisexual men, men who have sex with men but who identify themselves as heterosexual would not participate in the study. Therefore, they advertised the study as the *Men's Survey '91* and avoided the terms "gay" and "bisexual" (Myers et al., 1993).

The data came from questionnaires administered to 4803 gay and bisexual men in 35 cities and metropolitan areas across Canada. One strength of the study is that participants lived in both large and small communities across Canada and not just in large cities like Toronto and Vancouver. The researchers collected data in gay bars, bath houses, and at community dances. They were aware that not all gay men go to these types of settings, but argued that men who socialize in gay-identified venues are an important population for AIDS prevention.

In order to find prospective participants, the researchers used a promotional campaign in English and French consisting of posters and advertising in Canadian gay newspapers. They took a number of steps to make sure that the sample was representative. The number of participants from each region was proportional to the male population in that region. Data were collected in as many different venues in each region as possible. In each venue, the researchers made sure that participants could complete the questionnaire in private. The response rate was excellent: 86 percent of the men who were approached to participate completed a questionnaire. Men in the study ranged from 16 to 75 years of age. The sample came from all income levels, but the educational level tended to be high. There were four versions of the questionnaire. Some participants completed a longer version that required 20 minutes to complete. Other participants completed shorter versions of the questionnaire.

The results of the study indicated that gay and bisexual men have made significant changes in

their sexual practices since the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. However, more than one-quarter of the men were still engaging in unprotected anal sex (a high-risk sexual activity) at least at times. Men who were more knowledgeable about the way HIV is transmitted were less likely to engage in high-risk sexual activities. The researchers also found regional differences and differences between English-speaking and French-speaking men. For example, men in smaller communities were more likely to engage in unprotected anal sex.

In evaluating this study, one can see that it was done more carefully and according to better scientific standards than many other surveys. The sampling was done carefully, and all regions of the country were represented. The researchers enlisted community support and cooperation and thus had a low refusal rate from potential participants. Although the results are generalizable to the population of gay and bisexual men who socialize in gay-identified establishments, the sample cannot be considered random or representative of all gay men in Canada. It omits covert gays and those gay men who do not socialize in gay-identified venues. Gay men with a low education level are not well represented. This research raises the point that studies of special populations defined by their sexual behaviour—such as homosexuals or bisexuals or fetishists—are essentially impossible to do in any kind of representative fashion. It is impossible to identify all the people in the population in the first place, and therefore it is impossible to sample them properly. In contrast, samples of the general population such as the NHLS or the national British or French studies are more feasible to obtain, though not easy.

Media Content Analysis

To this point we have focused on methods used to analyze people's responses. Yet we have also recognized the profound impact of the mass media on Canadians' sexuality. To be able to understand this impact, we need to be able to analyze the media, and the standard technique is called **content analysis** (Reinharz, 1992; Weber, 1990).

Content analysis: A set of procedures used to make valid inferences about text.



Figure 3.5 Precise methods have been developed for analyzing the content of the media.

Content analysis refers to a set of procedures used to make valid inferences about text. The “text” might be romance novels, advice columns in *Chatelaine* magazine, lyrics from rap music, or prime-time television programs. As it turns out, many of the same methodological issues discussed earlier also come into play with content analysis.

Sampling is an issue. Suppose that you want to do a content analysis of advice columns in *Playboy* magazine. First, you need to define the population. Do you just want to sample from *Playboy*, or do you want to sample from all sex-oriented magazines? If you want to focus only on *Playboy*, then you will surely want to collect your sample of columns from more than one issue. You will have to define the span of years of magazine issues in order to define the population. Finally, you will have to decide whether you will analyze all advice columns from those years, sample from only certain years, or sample some columns in some issues.

The next step is to create a coding scheme. First, you must define the recording unit—is it the word, the sentence, the entire text, or perhaps themes that run across several sentences? Then, perhaps most importantly, you must define the coding categories. Defining the coding scheme involves defining the basic content categories, the presence or absence of which will be recorded, for example, in the advice columns. The coding categories will depend on the question you want to ask. For example, suppose your question about prime-time television shows is, What is the frequency of non-marital compared with marital sex? In creating a coding scheme, you would have to define carefully what

observable behaviours on television count as “sex.” Suppose you include kissing, fondling of the breasts or genitals, sexual intercourse actually shown, and implied sexual intercourse. You could then code each of these behaviours as they occurred on a sample of prime-time shows and, for each act, indicate whether it was between married persons or unmarried persons.

The reliability of the data must be demonstrated in a content analysis just as they must in research with human participants. Without a demonstration of reliability, a critic might accuse you of bias; for example, seeing far more acts of sex on the programs than actually occurred. Usually a measure called **intercoder reliability** is used. The researcher trains another person in the exact use of the coding scheme. Then the researcher and the trained coder each independently code a sample of the texts in the study—for example, 20 of the advice columns or 20 of the prime-time shows. The researcher then computes a correlation or percentage of agreement between the two coders’ results, and that gives the measure of intercoder reliability. If the two coders agree exactly, the correlation will be 1.0.

Content analysis is a powerful scientific technique that allows us to know how the media portray sexuality.

Laboratory Studies Using Direct Observations of Sexual Behaviour

The numerous problems associated with using self-reports of sexual behaviour in scientific research have been discussed. The major alternative to using self-reports is to make direct observations of sexual behaviour in the laboratory. These direct observations overcome the major problems of self-reports: purposeful distortion, inaccurate memory, and inability of people to estimate correctly or describe certain aspects of their behaviour. The pioneering example of this approach is Masters and Johnson’s work on the physiology of sexual response.

Intercoder reliability: In content analysis, the correlation or percentage of agreement between two coders independently rating the same texts.

Masters and Johnson: The Physiology of Sexual Response

William Masters began his research on the physiology of sexual response in 1954. No one had ever studied human sexual behaviour in the laboratory before, so he had to develop all the necessary research techniques from scratch. He began by interviewing 188 female prostitutes, as well as 27 male prostitutes working for a homosexual clientele. They gave him important preliminary data in which they “described many methods for elevating and controlling sexual tensions and demonstrated innumerable variations in stimulative techniques,” some of which were useful in the later program of therapy for sexual disorders.

Meanwhile, Masters began setting up his laboratory and equipping it with the necessary instruments: an electrocardiograph to measure changes in heart rate over the sexual cycle, an electromyograph to measure muscular contractions in the body during sexual response, and a pH meter to measure the acidity of the vagina during the various stages of sexual response.

Sampling

Masters made a major breakthrough when he decided that it was possible to recruit normal participants from the general population and have them engage in sexual behaviour in the laboratory, where their behaviour and physiological responses could be carefully observed and measured. This approach had never been used before, as even the daring Kinsey had settled for people's verbal reports of their behaviour.

Most of the research participants were obtained from the local community simply by word of mouth. Masters let it be known in the medical school and university community that he needed volunteers for laboratory studies of human sexual response. Some people volunteered because of their belief in the importance of the research. Some, of course, came out of curiosity or because they were exhibitionists; they were weeded out in the initial interviews. Participants were paid for their hours in the laboratory, as is typical in medical research, and so many medical students and graduate students participated because it was a way to earn money.

Initially, all prospective participants were given detailed interviews by the Masters and Johnson team. People who had histories of emotional prob-

lems or who seemed uncomfortable with the topic of sex either failed to come back after this interview or were eliminated even if they were willing to proceed. Participants were also assured that the anonymity and confidentiality of their participation would be protected carefully. In all, 694 people participated in the laboratory studies reported in *Human Sexual Response*. The men ranged in age from 21 to 89, while the women ranged from 18 to 78. A total of 276 married couples participated, as well as 106 women and 36 men who were unmarried when they entered the research program. The unmarried persons were helpful mainly in the studies that did not require sexual intercourse, for example, studies of the ejaculatory mechanism in males and of the effects of sexual arousal on the positioning of the diaphragm in the vagina.

Certainly the group of people Masters and Johnson studied were not a random sample of the population of the United States. In fact, one might imagine that people who would agree to participate in such research would be rather unusual. The data indicate that they were more educated than the general population, and the sample was mostly white, with only a few black people participating. Paying the participants probably helped since it attracted some people who simply needed the money. The sample omitted two notable types of people: those who are not sexually experienced or do not respond to sexual stimulation and those who are unwilling to have their sexual behaviour studied in the laboratory. Therefore, the results Masters and Johnson obtained might not generalize to such people.

Just exactly how critical is this sampling problem to the validity of the research? Masters and Johnson were not particularly concerned about it because they assumed that the processes they were studying are normative; that is, they work in essentially the same way in all people. This assumption is commonly made in medical research. For example, a researcher who is studying the digestive process does not worry that the sample is composed of all medical students, since the assumption is that digestion works the same way in all human beings. If this assumption is also true for the physiology of sexual response, then all people respond similarly, and it does not matter that the sample is not random. Whether this assumption is correct remains to be seen (see Chapter 9 for further critiques). The

sampling problem, however, does mean that Masters and Johnson cannot make statistical conclusions on the basis of their research; for example, they cannot say that X percent of all women have multiple orgasms. Any percentages they calculate would be specific to their sample and could not be generalized to the rest of the population.

In defence of their sampling techniques, even if they had identified an initial probability sample, they would still almost surely have had a very high refusal rate, probably higher than in survey research, and the probability sample would have been ruined. At present, this seems to be an unsolvable problem in this type of research.

Data Collection Techniques

After they were accepted for the project, participants then proceeded to the laboratory phase of the study. First, they had a “practice session,” in which they engaged in sexual activity in the laboratory in complete privacy, with no data being recorded and with no researchers present. The purpose of this was to allow the participants to become comfortable with engaging in sexual behaviour in a laboratory setting.

The physical responses of the participants were then recorded during sexual intercourse, masturbation, and “artificial coition.” Masters and Johnson made an important technical advance with the development of the artificial coition technique. In it, a female participant stimulates herself with an artificial penis constructed of clear plastic; it is powered by an electric motor, and the woman can adjust the depth and frequency of the thrust. There is a light and a recording apparatus inside the artificial penis, so the changes occurring inside the vagina can be photographed.

Measures such as these avoid the problems of distortion that are possible with self-reports. They also answer much different questions. That is, it would be impossible from such measures to tell whether the person had had any homosexual experiences or how frequently he or she masturbated. Instead, they ascertain how the body responds to sexual stimulation, with a kind of accuracy and detail that would be impossible to obtain through self-reports.

One final potential problem also deserves mention. It has to do with the problems of laboratory studies: Do people respond the same sexually in the laboratory as they do in the privacy of their own homes?

Ethical Considerations

Masters and Johnson were attentive to ethical principles. They were careful to use informed consent. Potential participants were given detailed explanations of the kinds of things they would be required to do in the research, and they were given ample opportunity at all stages to withdraw from the research if they so desired. Furthermore, Masters and Johnson eliminated people who appeared too anxious or distressed during the preliminary interviews.

It is also possible that participating in the research itself might have been harmful in some way to people. Masters and Johnson were particularly concerned with the long-term effects of participating in the research. Accordingly, they made follow-up contacts with the participants at five-year intervals. In no case did a participant report developing a sexual disorder (for example, erectile dysfunction). In fact, many of the couples reported specific ways in which participating in the research enriched their marriages. Thus the available data seem to indicate that such research does not harm the participants and may in some ways benefit them, not to mention the benefit to society that results from gaining information in such an important area.

In sum, direct observations of sexual behaviour of the type done by Masters and Johnson have some distinct advantages but also some disadvantages, compared with survey-type research. The research avoids the problems of self-reports and is capable of answering much more detailed physiological questions than self-reports could. But the research is costly and time-consuming, making large samples impractical; furthermore, a high refusal rate is probably inevitable, so probability samples are impossible to obtain.

Participant-Observer Studies

A research method used by anthropologists and sociologists is the **participant-observer technique**. In this type of research, the scientist tries to become a part of the community to be studied, and she or

Participant-observer technique: A research method in which the scientist becomes part of the community to be studied and makes observations from inside the community.

he makes observations from inside the community. In the study of sexual behaviour, the researcher may be able to get direct observations of sexual behaviour combined with interview data.

Examples of this type of research are studies of sexual behaviour in other cultures, such as those done in Mangaia, Mehinaku, and Inis Beag, which were discussed in Chapter 1. Two other examples are Laud Humphreys' study of the tearoom trade and Moser's study of S-M (sodomasochistic parties).

Humphreys: The Tearoom Trade

Sociologist Laud Humphreys (1970) conducted a participant-observer study of impersonal sex between men in public places. The study is discussed in detail in Focus 15.2 in Chapter 15. Briefly, Humphreys acted as a lookout while men engaged in sex acts in public rest rooms ("tearooms"); his job was to sound a warning if police or other intruders approached. This permitted Humphreys to make direct observations of the sexual behaviour. He also got the licence-plate numbers of the men involved, traced them, and later interviewed them in their homes under the pretext of conducting a routine survey.

Humphreys obtained a wealth of information from the study, but in so doing he violated several ethical principles of behavioural research. He had no informed consent from his subjects; they were never even aware of the fact that they were participants in research, much less of the nature of the research. Thus this study was quite controversial.

S-M Parties

Sex researcher Charles Moser observed S-M (sodomasochistic) interactions in semi-public settings in the United States, attending more than 200 S-M parties (Moser, 1998). Parties are highly scripted. The person who gives the party may advertise it widely, for example on the Internet, or may issue personal invitations only to a very selected list. Parties may have a particular theme, such as female dominant-male submissive only or women only. The party may be held at a person's home or in a rented space.

Each party has a particular set of rules—although the rules vary from one party to another—and guests may be required to sign a written agreement to follow the rules. Issues covered in these rules include who may talk to whom (can a submissive be spoken to?), who may play with whom, who may

have sex with whom, prohibited S-M or sexual behaviours, what constitutes safer sex, not blocking equipment by sitting on it, and so on. Drunkenness is never acceptable; some parties allow wine or beer, but others ban all alcohol.

Some individuals plan to have a first "date" at a party. Parties clearly have a function of ensuring safety for participants, since others are always present if an interaction goes to far. Potential partners negotiate what kind of interaction they desire—for example, pain versus humiliation.

Perhaps most interesting is the fact that coitus and genitally focused activity designed to produce orgasm are very rare at these parties. The participants describe the S-M experience as highly sexual, but orgasm typically is not the goal.

Moser does not report that he obtained informed consent from the people he observed. However, their behaviour was public, leading to relaxation of human subjects regulations. In his report, he was careful not to divulge any identifying information about individuals.

Experimental Sex Research

All the studies discussed so far had one thing in common: they all were studies of people's sexual behaviour as it occurs naturally, conducted by means of either self-reports or direct observations. Such studies are **correlational** in nature; that is, at best the data they obtain can tell us that certain factors are related. They cannot tell us what *causes* various aspects of sexual behaviour.

As an example, suppose we conduct a survey and find that women who masturbated to orgasm before marriage are more likely to have a high consistency of orgasm in marriage than women who did not. From this it would be tempting to conclude that practice in masturbating to orgasm causes women to have more orgasms in heterosexual sex. Unfortunately, this is not a legitimate conclusion to draw from the data, since many other factors might also explain the results. For example, it could be that some women have a higher sex

Correlational study: A study in which the researcher does not manipulate variables but rather studies naturally occurring relationships (correlations) among variables.



Figure 3.6 An innovation in surveys of children is the use of “talking computers” to ask questions, with the child entering her answers using the mouse or the keyboard.

drive than others; this high sex drive causes them to masturbate and also to have orgasms in heterosexual sex. Therefore, the most we can conclude is that masturbation experience is related to (or correlated with) orgasm consistency in marital sex.

An alternative method that does allow researchers to determine the causes of various aspects of behaviour is the **experiment**. According to the technical definition of “experiment,” one factor must be manipulated while all other factors are held constant. Thus any differences among the groups of people who received different treatments on that one factor can be said to be caused by that factor. For obvious reasons, most experimental research is conducted in the laboratory.

As an example of an experiment, let us consider a study that investigated whether being interviewed face-to-face causes children to under-report their sexual experiences (Romer et al., 1997). The participants were approximately 400 low-income children between the ages of 9 and 15.

Some were assigned to a face-to-face interview with an experienced adult interviewer of their own gender. Others were assigned to be interviewed by a “talking computer,” which had the same questions programmed into it. The questions appeared on the screen and, simultaneously, came through headphones, for those who were not good readers. Presumably in the talking computer condition, the child feels more of a sense of privacy and anonymity and therefore responds more truthfully.

Among 13-year-old boys interviewed by the talking computer, 76 percent said they had “had sex,” compared with only 50 percent of the boys in the face-to-face interview. Forty-eight percent of 13-year-old girls interviewed by computer said they had had sex, compared with 25 percent of those interviewed by a human. The children clearly reported more sexual activity to the computer than to a human interviewer.

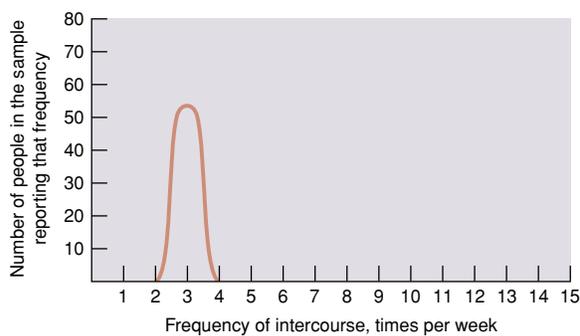
In the language of experimental design, the *independent variable* (manipulated variable) was the type of interview (computer or human interviewer). The *dependent variable* (the measured variable) was whether they had had sex (there were a number of other dependent variables as well, but a discussion of them would take us too far afield).

The results indicated that those interviewed by humans reported significantly less sexual activity than those interviewed by computer. Because the research design was experimental, we can make causal inferences. We can say confidently that the type of interview influenced the amount of reporting. That is, we can say that the type of interview had an effect on children’s answers. We might also say that a face-to-face interview causes children to under-report their activity. That statement is a bit shakier than the previous one, because it assumes that the answers given to the talking computer were “true.” It is possible that children over-reported or exaggerated in responding to the computer and that their answers to the human

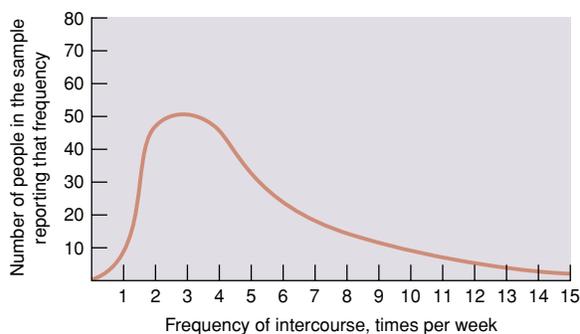
Experiment: A type of research study in which one variable (the independent variable) is manipulated by the experimenter while all other factors are held constant; the researcher can then study the effects of the independent variable on some measured variable (the dependent variable); the researcher is permitted to make causal inferences about the effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

interviewer were accurate, although this interpretation seems rather far-fetched.

Experimental sex research permits us to make much more powerful statements about the causes of various kinds of sexual phenomena. As for disadvantages, much of the experimental sex research, including the study described here, still relies on self-reports. Experimental sex research is time-consuming and costly, and it can generally be done only on small samples of participants. Sometimes in their efforts to control all variables except the independent variable, researchers control too much. Finally, experiments cannot address some of the most interesting, but most complex, questions in the field of sexual behaviour, such as what factors cause people to develop heterosexual or homosexual orientations.



(a)



(b)

Figure 3.7 Two hypothetical graphs of the frequency of intercourse for common-law couples in a sample. In both, the average frequency is about three times per week, but in (a) there is little variability (almost everyone has a frequency between two and four times per week), whereas in (b) there is great variability (the frequency ranges from zero to fifteen or twenty times per week). The graph for most sexual behaviour looks like (b); there is great variability.

Some Statistical Concepts

Before you can understand reports of sex research, you must understand some basic statistical concepts.

Average

Suppose we get data from a sample of common-law couples on how many times per week they have sexual intercourse. How can we summarize the data? One way to do this is to compute some average value; this will tell us how often, on the average, these people have intercourse. In sex research, the number that is usually calculated is either the mean or the median; both of these give us an indication of approximately where the average value for that group of people is. The **mean** is simply the average of the scores of all the people. The **median** is the score that splits the sample in half, with half the respondents scoring below that number and half scoring above it.

Variability

In addition to having an indication of the average for the sample of respondents, it is also interesting to know how much variability there was from one respondent to the next in the numbers reported. That is, it is one thing to say that the average common-law couple in a sample had intercourse 3 times per week, with a range in the sample from 2 to 4 times per week, and it is quite another thing to say that the average was 3 times per week, with a range from 0 to 15 times per week. In both cases the mean is the same, but in the first there is little variability, and in the second there is a great deal of variability. These two alternatives are shown graphically in Figure 3.7. There is great variability in virtually all kinds of sexual behaviour.

Average versus Normal

It is interesting and informative to report the average frequency of a particular sexual behaviour, but this also introduces the danger that people will confuse “average” with “normal.” That is, there is a tendency, when reading a statistic like “The average person has intercourse twice per week,” to think of one’s own sexual behaviour,

Mean: The average of respondents’ scores.

compare it with that average, and then conclude that one is abnormal if one differs much from the average. If you read that statistic and your frequency of intercourse is only once a week, you may begin to worry that you are undersexed or that you are not getting as much as you should. If you are having intercourse seven times per week, you might begin worrying that you are oversexed or that you are wearing out your sex organs. Such conclusions are a mistake, first because they can make you miserable and second because there is so much variability in sexual behaviour that any behaviour (or frequency or length of time) within a wide range is perfectly normal. Don't confuse average with normal.

Incidence versus Frequency

In sex statistics, the terms “incidence” and “frequency” are often used. **Incidence** refers to the percentage of people who have engaged in a certain behaviour. **Frequency** refers to how often people do something. Thus we might say that the incidence of masturbation among males is 92 percent (meaning that 92 percent of all males masturbate at least once in their lives), whereas the average frequency of masturbation among males between the ages of 16 and 20 is about once per week.

A closely related concept is that of cumulative incidence. If we consider a sexual behaviour according to the age at which each person in the sample first engaged in it, the *cumulative incidence* refers to the percentage of people who have engaged in that behaviour before a certain age. Thus the cumulative incidence of masturbation in males might be 10 percent by age 11, 25 percent by age 12, 80 percent by age 15, and 95 percent by age 20. Graphs of cumulative incidence always begin in the lower left-hand corner and move toward the upper right-hand corner. An example of a cumulative-incidence curve is shown in Figure 3.8.

Correlation

In this chapter the concept of correlation has already been mentioned several times—for example, test-retest reliability is measured by the correlation between people's answer to a question with their answer to the same question a week or two later—and the concept of correlation will reappear in later chapters of the book.

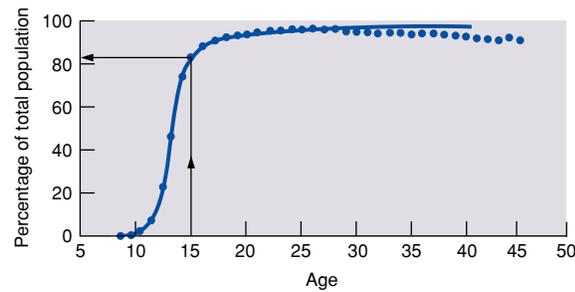


Figure 3.8 A cumulative-incidence curve for masturbation in males. From the graph, you can read off the percentage of males who report having masturbated by a given age. For example, about 82 percent have masturbated to orgasm by age 15.

The term “correlation” is used by laypeople in contexts such as the following: “There seems to be a correlation here between how warm the days are and how fast the corn is growing.” But what do statisticians mean by the term “correlation”? A **correlation** is a number that measures the relationship between two variables. A correlation can be positive or negative. A positive correlation occurs when there is a positive relationship between the two variables, that is, people who have high scores on one variable tend to have high scores on the other variable; low scores go with low scores. A negative correlation occurs when there is an opposite relationship between the two variables; that is, people with high scores on one variable tend to have low scores on the other variable. We might want to know, for example, whether there is a correlation between the number of years a couple has been together and the frequency with which they have sexual intercourse. In this case we might expect that there would be a negative correlation, and that is just what researchers have found. That is, the *greater* the number of years together, the *lower* the frequency of intercourse. As another example, we might want to know whether there is a correlation between people's sexual attitudes and their sexual behaviour, specifically whether people who hold more permissive attitudes about premarital sex have more premarital partners. In this case we expect a positive correlation in the sense that the

Incidence: The percentage of people giving a particular response.

Frequency: How often a person does something.

Correlation: A number that measures the relationship between two variables.

people who score high on the measure of permissive attitudes are expected to have more partners and that people who score low on the measure of permissiveness are expected to have fewer partners.

Correlations range between +1.0 and -1.0. A correlation of +1.0 indicates a perfect positive relationship between two variables, meaning that the person in the sample who scores highest on one variable also has the highest score on the other variable, the person with the second highest score on the first variable also has the second highest score on the other variable, and so on. A correlation of 0 indicates no relationship between the two variables. Knowing a person's score on one variable tells us nothing about whether the person will have a high or low score on the other variable. Positive correlations between 0 and +1.0—for example, +.62—say that the relationship is positive but not a perfect relationship. A correlation of -1.0 means that there is a perfect negative correlation between the two variables. That is, the

person in the sample with the highest score on variable *X* has the lowest score on variable *Y*, the person with the second highest score on variable *X* has the second lowest score on variable *Y*, and so on.

Returning to the example of test-retest reliability discussed earlier in the chapter, suppose we administer a questionnaire to a sample of adults. One of the questions asks, "How many times did you masturbate to orgasm during the month of September?" We ask this question of the sample on October 1 and again on October 8. If each person in the sample gives us exactly the same answer on October 1 and on October 8, the correlation between the two variables (the number given on October 1 and the number given on October 8) would be +1.0 and the test-retest reliability would be a perfect +1.0. In fact, test-retest reliabilities for questions about sex typically range between +.60 and +.90, indicating that people's answers on the two occasions are not identical but are very similar.

SUMMARY

Knowledge of the major methods that have been used in sex research and of the problems and merits associated with each is necessary for understanding and evaluating sex research. Sex research can use quantitative or qualitative methods.

Ideally, quantitative sex research should employ probability sampling techniques.

Large-scale surveys of sexual behaviour generally rely on people's self-reports, which may be inaccurate because of purposeful distortion, problems of memory, or inability to estimate some of the information requested. Direct observations of sexual behaviour avoid these problems, but they lead to an even more restricted sample. They also answer questions that are somewhat different from those answered by surveys.

In all behavioural research, the ethical principles of informed consent and protection from harm must be observed, although historically some sex researchers did not do this.

No major national sex surveys have been conducted in Canada. However, there are two large-scale U.S. surveys of sexual behaviour: Kinsey's interview study and the recent NHLS, which was based on probability sampling. The Canada Youth and AIDS Study assessed adolescent sexuality

across Canada. It is difficult to draw any general conclusions from large magazine surveys because the samples are so restricted.

Canadian studies of special populations include a qualitative study of exotic dancers by Maticka-Tyndale, a survey of First Nations Peoples headed by Myers, and a survey of men who have sex with men, also headed by Myers.

In media content analysis, researchers use systematic coding categories to analyze representations in the media, such as television, romance novels, or magazine ads.

In participant-observer studies, the scientist becomes a part of the community to be studied, and he or she uses a combination of direct observations and interviewing. Examples are studies of sexual behaviour in other cultures, Humphreys' study of the tearoom trade, and Moser's study of S-M parties.

In experimental sex research, the goal is to discover what factors cause various aspects of sexual behaviour. The researcher manipulates an independent variable and measures a dependent variable.

The following statistical terms were introduced: "average," "mean," "variability," "incidence," "frequency," and "correlation."

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Sex researchers can study only those people who agree to participate. This introduces the problem of _____.
2. Purposeful distortion and memory problems may create problems with the reliability of self-reports in sex research. True or false?
3. One alternative to self-reports that helps overcome some of their problems is the method of _____, which was used by Masters and Johnson.
4. Kinsey's sampling techniques were excellent; his interviewing techniques were also excellent. True or false?
5. The NHSLS used a convenience sample. True or false?
6. About half of Canadian grade 11 students have had intercourse at least once. True or false?
7. If we wanted to find whether articles in men's magazines or women's magazines are more likely to be about sex, we would use the research technique called _____.
8. _____ is the term for the type of study in which the researcher becomes a part of the community being studied and thus observes it from the inside, as in the studies of swingers.
9. The ACSF Investigators' representative sample of French adults' sexuality would properly be termed an experiment. True or false?
10. If someone says "Approximately 67 percent of people engage in premarital intercourse," this is a statement about frequency. True or false?

(The answers to all review questions are at the end of the book, after the Glossary.)

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT, DISCUSSION, AND DEBATE

1. Find a recent sex survey in a magazine. Evaluate the quality of the study, using concepts you have learned in this chapter.
2. Of the research techniques in this chapter—surveys, laboratory studies using direct observations, media content analysis, participant-observer studies, experiments—which do you think is best for learning about human sexuality? Why?
3. You want to conduct a survey, using face-to-face interviews, to determine whether there are differences between Asian Canadian and white Canadian teenagers (ages 15 to 19) in their sexual behaviour and attitudes. In what ways would you tailor the research methods in order to make them culturally sensitive?
4. Imagine that you have been hired by your college or university to produce a report on the patterns of sexual behaviour of the students there, with the goal of helping the administration to do better planning in areas such as health services and counselling services. You are given a generous budget for data collection. How would you go about collecting the data you would need in order to produce a truly excellent report?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Harry, Joseph. (1986). Sampling gay men. *Journal of Sex Research*, 22, 21–34. This article provides an interesting discussion of some of the methodological problems that occur when sampling special populations of people, such as gay men.

Matsumoto, David. (1994). *Cultural influences on research methods and statistics*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. This concise book, written for undergraduates, explains principles of cross-cultural research and how one should modify research methods depending on the culture being studied.

Michael, Robert T., Gagnon, John H., Laumann, Edward O., & Kolata, Gina. (1994). *Sex in America: A definitive survey*. Boston: Little, Brown. This book reports the results of the NHSL, and is written for the general public.

Wiederman, Michael W. (2001). *Understanding sexuality research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. This slim volume, written for undergraduates, takes up where the present chapter leaves off and offers an excellent analysis of methodological issues in sex research, with interesting examples.

WEB RESOURCES



www.indiana.edu/~kinsey

The Kinsey Institute Home Page.

www.sieccan.org

The Sex Information and Education Council of Canada.

www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca

Canadian Institutes of Health Research.