

## The Socio-demography of Extramarital Sex in the United States

Extramarital sexuality is not a new topic in the United States. Already in 1940s, it was estimated that by age 40, about half of all married men and more than one-fourth of all married women will have sexual intercourse with someone else than their spouse (Kinsey et al. 1948; 1953). Although such estimates have not been found, there is evidence that sexual relation outside marriage is a fact in the United States.

There are many consequences of extramarital sexuality, but the most serious ones are: (1) divorce, which can have significant effects that may lead to the death of the spouse, children, judge, and/or other parties; and (2) health hazards, including the risks of HIV/AIDS and other STDs. Despite these negative effects, a significant number of American spouses do have extramarital sexual relations.

Why some people cheat and others don't? Are there significant racial and gender differences in extramarital sex? If so, how much of these differences are due to socio-demographic characteristics? To answer these questions, this paper will review existing theoretical perspectives on extramarital sex in America and focuses on the following two that have more utility in the study of racial and gender differences:

(1) The "sex opportunity theory" assumes that the availability of alternative mates increases the likelihood of extramarital sex (Johnson, 1970; South & Lloyd, 1995). The emphasis is on the quantity and quality of spousal alternatives. Proponents of the opportunity theory argue that "cheaters" are pulled to opportunity (more desirable partners).

(2) The "marital unhappiness theory" is based on the premise that those who cheat do so because they are unhappy in their marriages (Reiss et al. 1980; Saunders & Edwards, 1984). In other words, "cheaters" are pushed out of their marital nests and are looking for sexual and emotional satisfaction elsewhere.

The purpose of this research is twofold. First, it will provide the levels of extramarital sex in the United States during the last decade by race and gender. Second, it will construct the socio-demographic profiles of men and women who are more likely to have extramarital sex.

The analysis is based on the data from the General Social Survey for the period of 1991-2010. Preliminary results show that black men and black women have consistently had higher probabilities extramarital sex as compared to their white counterparts. However, this racial difference becomes insignificant in most periods when the socio-demographic variables are controlled for in logistic regression models.

In contrast, there is a significant sex difference, with men being two to three times more likely to engage in extramarital sex than women. Overall, marital happiness appeared as the strongest correlate of extramarital sex in America. Those who were not very happy in their marriages were two to three times more likely to have had extramarital sex than their counterparts who were very happy with their marital conditions.

More analysis will be conducted in sex-specific models to determine racial differences in the likelihood of having extramarital sex.

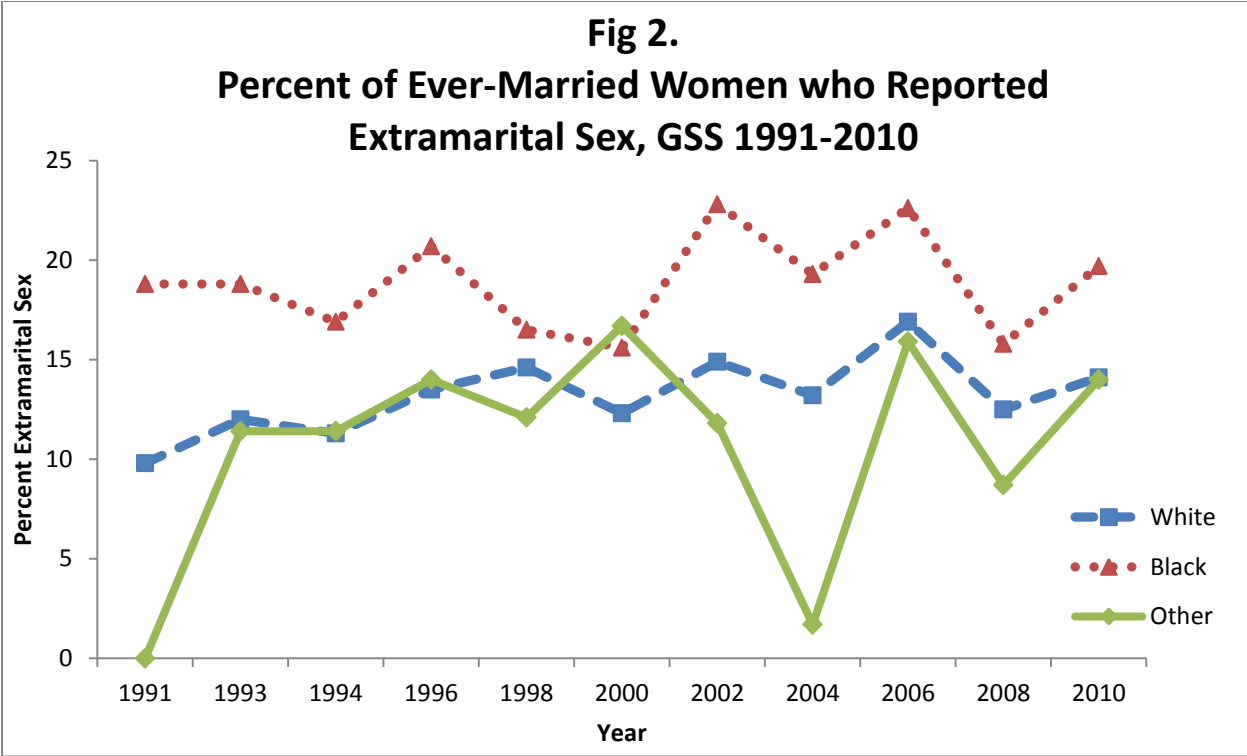
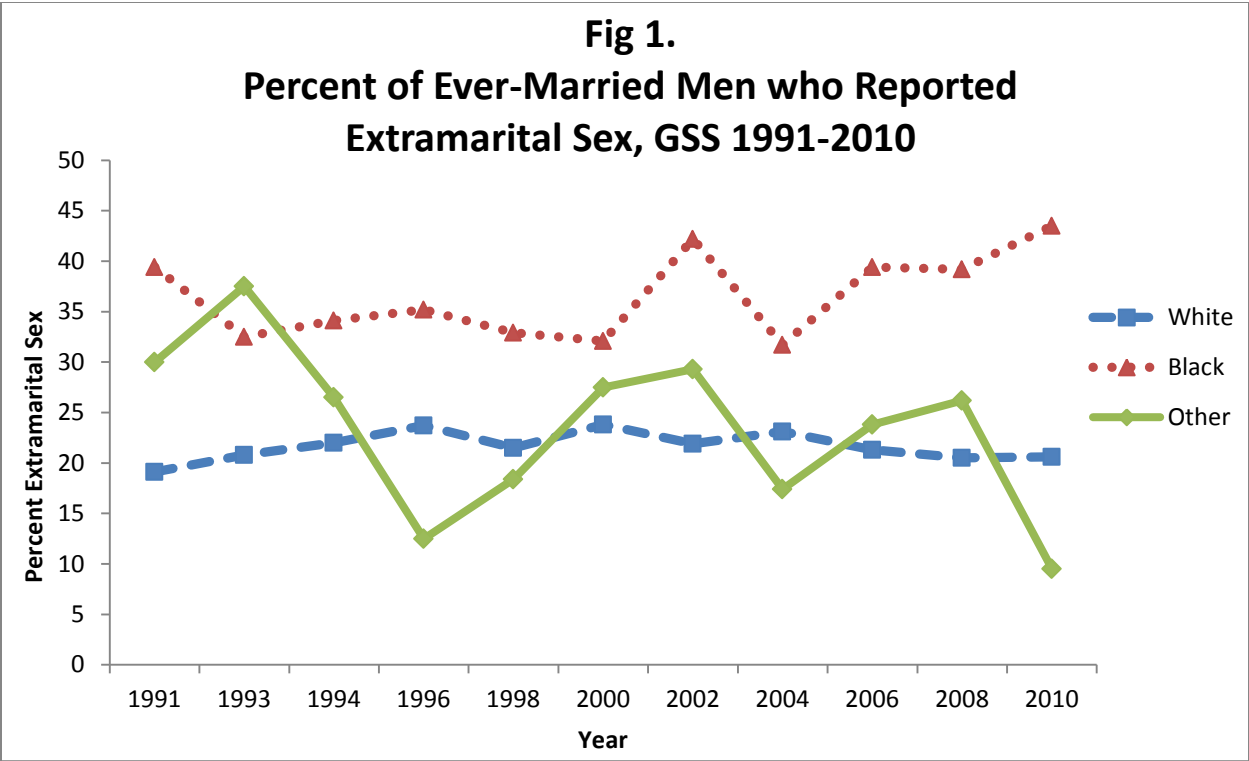


Table 4. Odds Ratios of Logistic Regression of Ever-Married American Men and Women Reporting Extramarital Sex, GSS 1991-2010

	1991	1993	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010
<b>Sex</b>											
Male	3.008 ***	2.166 **	2.196 ***	2.172 ***	1.531 *	2.525 ***	2.194 *	2.814 ***	1.479	2.161 **	1.996 **
Female (ref)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<b>Race</b>											
White (ref)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Black	2.054	1.657	0.906	1.100	0.747	1.022	1.951	0.501	1.863	1.539	2.733 *
Other	0.894	1.915	1.050	0.611	0.363	1.765	1.213	0.430	1.015	2.127	0.679
<b>Age Group</b>											
19 to 40 years (ref)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
41 to 54 years	1.486	2.428 **	1.674 *	1.321	1.620 *	1.419	1.082	2.541 **	1.242	2.763 ***	0.931
55 to 64 years	1.211	3.371 ***	1.418	2.016 **	0.902	2.494 ***	1.657	1.286	1.471	2.709 **	2.583 **
65 years or more	0.914	1.360	1.179E9	0.577	1.097	0.673	1.958	1.717	1.802 *	2.597 **	1.655
<b>Religious Preference</b>											
Protestant	1.100	1.529	1.122	1.239	1.025	1.399	1.061	0.794	1.330	1.235	0.695
Catholic (ref)	1.159	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Other	0.630	2.294 *	1.186	1.201	0.947	1.533	1.854	1.367	2.026 *	1.190	1.215
<b>Highest Degree</b>											
LT High school (ref)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
High School	1.488	1.226	1.374	1.237	0.957	0.820	1.053	2.249	1.559	2.229	0.643
Junior College	0.963	0.795	1.985	1.230	0.602	0.850	1.561	0.653	1.710	1.040	0.940
Bachelor	0.332	1.341	0.920	0.903	0.671	0.598	0.581	1.098	0.866	1.293	0.811
Graduate	0.472	1.445	0.913	0.782	0.877	0.757	0.515	0.835	1.469	1.386	0.646
<b>Census Occupation Code (1980)</b>											
Executive, Admin, & Manag	0.944	1.044	1.485	0.818	0.748	1.018	1.904	1.161	1.470	1.109	1.837 *
Prof Special (ref)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Admin Support	0.719	0.693	0.992	0.665	0.818	0.729	0.981	0.662	1.244	0.811	0.713
Service	0.787	1.130	1.455	1.180	0.615	0.725	0.956	0.838	0.854	1.045	0.865
Farm, Repair Mach Op, Transp, Help & L	0.386 **	0.789	0.883	0.844	0.669	0.569	0.588	0.742	0.784	0.769	0.729
<b>Opinion of Family Income</b>											
Below Average	1.264	1.100	1.188	1.424	1.461	1.188	0.489	1.364	1.537	1.384	0.696
Average (ref)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Above Average	1.300	1.838 *	1.723 **	1.811 **	1.042	1.046	1.210	1.024	0.961	2.377 **	1.040
<b>Region of Interview</b>											
Northeast (ref)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Midwest	0.771	1.435	1.315	1.857 *	0.946	1.259	1.565	1.057	1.114	1.047	1.160
South	0.832	2.280 *	1.527	1.531	1.586	0.987	2.489	0.925	1.202	1.572	1.615
West	1.079	2.583 *	1.204	1.623	1.431	1.498	1.791	0.972	1.181	1.466	1.119
<b>Size of Place of Residence</b>											
0 to 5,000 (ref)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
6,000 to 24,000	1.396	1.217	0.761	0.989	1.163	0.891	0.858	1.587	0.884	0.408 **	0.708
25,000 to 110,000	1.318	1.183	1.190	1.070	1.254	1.010	0.440	1.459	0.899	0.518 *	0.893
111,000 or more	1.205	1.192	1.315	1.108	1.692	0.874	1.430	0.968	0.858	0.573	1.031
<b>Political Party Affiliation</b>											
Democrat	0.973	0.862	0.731	1.347	1.209	1.060	0.909	0.615	1.023	1.021	1.133
Other (ref)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Republican	0.674	0.850	0.568 **	1.244	0.956	0.782	0.743	1.781	1.250	0.783	0.799
<b>Happiness of Marriage</b>											
Very Happy (ref)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Not very Happy	1.857 *	2.574 ***	1.819 ***	2.012 ***	2.231 ***	1.811 **	2.689 **	3.279 ***	1.893 ***	1.538	2.226 ***
<b>N</b>	647	759	1337	1191	1057	1012	465	475	1047	784	749

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001