

EDITORIALS

"Let the people know the facts
and the country will be saved."

• ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Abuse or science?

A 30-minute video documentary has just been released that could cause severe embarrassment — or worse — to the Kinsey Institute, which is trying to resurrect its reputation as a serious research unit.

The institute, based at Indiana University in Bloomington, is emerging after seven years of intramural turmoil with restored state funding of \$500,000 a year and a new director, British psychologist John H.J. Bancroft.

The last thing the institute needs is another concerted attack on the methodology and conclusions of Alfred Kinsey's studies of human sexuality. But the video is just that. It is a poignant and deeply disturbing production of the Family Research Council, a conservative organization whose studies are frequently cited by politicians advocating a return to traditional family values.

The video attacks the methodology and conclusions of Kinsey's studies of human sexuality.

Given its subject and the increasing political involvement of conservative religious groups, the video could become a major talking point of the presidential campaign.

Entitled *The Children of Table 34*, the video concentrates on a chapter in Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* dealing with child sexuality.

In four different tables, the book details data on the response of children to sexual stimulation while under observation by adults, some of whom used a stopwatch to time orgasms.

Table 34 gives examples of multiple orgasms in pre-adolescent males from 5 months old to 14 years.

Kinsey acknowledged that the data were gathered in part by pedophiles who put diaries or other records at his disposal.

The video asks a number of probing questions, among them: Who were the children? How were they procured? How did the institute validate the accuracy of the data submitted to it? Was there any follow-up on the possible harm suffered by the children? Where are the children of Table 34 today?

Similar questions were asked in a book by Dr. Judith A. Reisman, et al. *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud*, published in 1990. Reisman is one of several research scientists featured in the video. She was the first to highlight the data on children and her challenges to Kinsey's body of published work date back to 1981.

The video, however, focuses on the infants and children who were the subjects of Kinsey's Table 34 and the profoundly troubling implication that some of them were abused in the name of science.

Paul Gebhard, a former director of the institute, in 1981 noted that since experimentation with infants and children is illegal, the Kinsey study depended on data from parents, nursery school owners or teachers, homosexual males who had numerous sexual contacts with children, and on written reports, photographs and films.

In a letter to the producer and director of the Family Research Council video, the current institute director, Bancroft, said he was appalled by accusations that Kinsey had experimented on children himself or employed researchers to do so. The video makes no such charges.

Kinsey's pioneering research, Bancroft noted, depended on a guarantee of confidentiality regarding sources and an objective approach that avoided moral judgment or censure on the behavior he encountered.

The family council is concerned not only with Kinsey's work in itself but the fact that it is the foundation of much of modern sex education and was widely used to validate sexual permissiveness.

But that is a tale for another time. For now, the public relations people at the Kinsey Institute have enough to worry about with the video.