

Concerning Man's Basic Drive

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR IN THE HUMAN MALE. By Alfred S. Kinsey. 804 pp. New York: W. B. Saunders Co. \$4.50.

By HOWARD A. RUSK

JUST as this was a difficult study to make, so it also is a difficult book to write, and it also is a difficult book to review. Difficult, because of the magnitude of the subject—difficult, because it deals with man's basic drive to reproduce, a drive as strong as that for survival—difficult, because of our prejudices, taboos and preconceptions, preconceptions colored by personal experience which gives the individual the microscopic rather than the total concept. Now, after decades of hush-hush, comes a book that is sure to create an explosion and to be bitterly controversial.

The book is "Sexual Behavior in the Human Male," by 53-year-old Alfred S. Kinsey, Professor of Zoology at Indiana University. Although it is by far the most comprehensive study yet made of sex behavior, it has been preceded by hundreds of others. The author lists 500 titles in his bibliography. However, there are only nineteen articles on sex in that literature which have the "taxonomic" approach (measurement of the variation in a series of individuals that represent the species). The approach of this specific study is the taxonomic one of the trained scientist, and is based on over 12,000 personal interviews, each encompassing over 300 questions. It has required eight years to complete this first phase, "Sexual Behavior in the Human Male." The complete study, for which Dr. Kinsey plans to secure a hundred thousand interviews over a twenty-year period, will include sex behavior of the female, sex factors in marital adjustment, legal aspects, sex education and other problems.

Professor Kinsey began this study due to the frustrating experience of attempting to answer the sex queries of students when there were no adequate facts on which to base such answers. He is a brave man, for to publish this book took real courage; courage to fight taboos and prejudices, preconceptions based on ignorance and the confusion that comes from translating one's personal experience as universal practice.

That it took courage, not only to publish this report, but to

gather the data, is well evidenced by the fact that the author withstood violent opposition from medical groups and school boards, psychiatrists and sheriffs, scientific colleagues and politicians. In one city the president of the school board, a physician, dismissed a teacher because he had assisted in getting histories outside of the school, but in the same city. But for every individual or group that opposed the study, hundreds cooperated, ranging from Harvard and Columbia Universities to the Kansas State police and the Salvation Army's Home for Unwed Mothers. The auspices of the National Research Council, and the financial underwriting of the Rockefeller Foundation, bespeak the scientific solidarity of the project.

THE 12,000 subjects interviewed in the study by Professor Kinsey and his colleagues represented every level in our social strata—bootleggers and clergymen, professors and prostitutes, farmers and gamblers, no-ordinals and social registerites. The final result—800 pages of text, with hundreds of charts and graphs analytically evaluated and statistically sound—is cold, dispassionate fact, starkly revealing our ignorance and prejudices.

These facts are presented with scientific objectivity, and without moralizing—but they provide the knowledge with which we can rebuild our concepts with tolerance and understanding. Here are a few of the significant findings:

Human sex patterns are established by three factors: physiological, psychological and social, the social being by far the most predominant. Using as a yardstick the educational level of eighth grade, high school and college, wide variations in sex concepts and behavior were found. "Most of the prejudices that develop in sexual activities are products of this conflict between the attitudes of different social levels."

We understand little of the



range of human sex behavior. On the graph showing sexual frequency each individual differs only slightly from those next on the chart. This brings up the point of what is "normal" and "abnormal," and where such terms fit in a scientific study.

Dr. Kinsey points out that homosexual experience is much more common than previously thought. He indicates, however, that this is an extremely difficult problem to analyze "as very few individuals are all black or all white," and that one homosexual experience does not classify the individual as a homosexual. He decries the use of the noun, and finds that there is often a mixture of both homo and heterosexual experience.

To have or not to have premarital intercourse is a more important issue for a larger number of males than any other aspect of sex. Individuals in our American society rarely adopt totally new patterns of sex behavior after their middle teens. The peak of sex drive and ability comes in the late teens rather than in the late 20's or 30's as heretofore believed.

THE theory of "sex conservation" so commonly taught as reason for continence, is refuted. Boys who attain early puberty and begin sex activity earlier have the highest rate of sex activity and continue such activity to the older age level.

Comparing the sexual activities of older and younger generations evidences the stability of our sexual mores and does not justify the opinion harbored by some that there are constant changes in such mores.

The above are only a few of the revealing findings of the study.

Because we are all human, every individual is bound to interpret this study in terms of personal experience. For some it will be clarifying. Others it will confuse. Some will be alarmed, others will be shocked; a few will interpret the general findings as grounds for personal license. After the initial impact, when time permits sober reflection and analysis—the end results should be healthy. They should bring about a better understanding of



Mr. Kinsey: "After Decades of Hush-Hush, His Book Is Sure to Cause an Explosion."

some of our emotional problems, and the bases for some of our psychiatric concepts.

We can reorganize some of our attitudes and methods of sex education on the basis of need as dictated by experience rather than preconception, and we must surely re-examine the legal criteria by which we renounce and condemn individual sex behavior. Professor Kinsey states this well when he concludes:

To each individual, the significance of any particular type of sexual activity depends very largely upon his previous experience. Ultimately, certain activities may seem to him to be the only things that have value, that are right, that are socially acceptable; and all departures from his own particular pattern may seem to him to be enormous abnormalities. But the scientific data which are accumulating make it appear that if circumstances be propitious, most individuals might have become conditioned in any direction, even into activities which they now consider quite unacceptable. . . . There is an abundance of evidence that most human sexual activities would become comprehensible to most individuals, if they could know the background of each other's individual behavior.

Dr. Alan Gregg, in his concluding paragraph of the Preface to this study, has brilliantly summarized the many facets involved in this study as follows:

Certainly no aspect of human biology in our current civilization stands in more need of scientific knowledge and courageous humility than that of sex. The history of medicine proves that in so far as man seeks to know himself and face his whole nature, he has be-

come free from bewildered fear, despondent shame, or arrant hypocrisy. As long as sex is dealt with in the current confusion of ignorance and sophistical denial and indulgence, suppression and stimulation, punishment and exploitation, secrecy and display, it will be associated with a duplicity and indecency that lead neither to intellectual honesty nor human dignity.

These studies are sincere, objective and determined explorations of a field manifestly important to education, medicine, government and the integrity of human conduct generally. They have demanded from Dr. Kinsey and his colleagues very unusual tenacity of purpose, tolerance, analytical competence, social skills and real courage.

THE findings of Dr. Kinsey's report provide us with the material for sober thought, and a new basis for the personal understanding of our individual sex problems. It presents facts that indicate the necessity to review some of our legal and moral concepts. It gives new therapeutic tools to the psychiatrist and the practicing physician. It offers a yardstick that will give invaluable aid in the study of our complex social problems. It offers data that should promote tolerance and understanding and make us better "world citizens."

After recovery from the original impact due to the explosion of many of our preconceptions, this study should be most valuable if, in the words of Dr. Gregg, "the reader will match the authors with an equal and appropriate measure of cool attention, courageous judgment and scientific equanimity."

Psychiatry for the Average Reader

THE MIND IN ACTION. Being a layman's guide to psychiatry. By Eric Berne. 320 pp. New York: Simon & Schuster. \$3.

HANDBOOK OF PSYCHIATRY. By Winfred Overholser and Winifred V. Richmond. 251 pp. Philadelphia, Pa.: J. B. Lippincott Company. \$4.

By FREDRIC WERTHAM

PSYCHIATRISTS and non-medical writers alike have instituted in the general public a desire to become acquainted with psychopathology. One might ask: What is to be gained by these popularizations? If it is a question of helping sick people, it would be far simpler to popularize the essential symptoms

that need attention, the tried and proved methods that are called for and the dependable public services (if any) available. In the fields of cancer and tuberculosis that is being done. In psychiatry, other motives than health for everybody seem to be operating. Psycho-writers, fast multiplying and well rewarded, seem to be trying to infuse the public with an image of man which deserves far more scrutiny than it gets.

Dr. Eric Berne's book is "based largely on his own experience with orthodox Freudian methods" and reliance on them and actual submissiveness to them is his

keynote. Dr. Berne, formerly at Yale, now a practicing psychiatrist in California, frightens the reader away from common-sense dependence on himself or simple help and advice from others. Instead, he implants the idea that all may be error that is not "orthodox" psychoanalysis. "Many people," he says, "are in love, or angry, or afraid, for ten, twenty, or thirty years without being aware of it until they come to a psychoanalyst." Statesmen should, of course, be "psychoanalyzed" before undertaking their duties.

Although the author mentions

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