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Kinsey's Kids

Sex-guru is still being celebrated.

By Janice Shaw Crouse

Indiana University, which has the dubious distinction of being home to the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender and Reproduction, is hosting a yearlong 50th-anniversary celebration of Alfred Kinsey's controversial 1953 book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*. The festivities ignore the serious exposés of Kinsey's work and maintain the fiction that his research methods and findings are legitimate. Kinsey, whom some call the father of the sexual revolution, published misinformation that was a major step toward making research spin more important than scientific truth and academic integrity. Kinsey got away with "research" that the scientific and academic communities acknowledged as bogus; as a result, other researchers and subsequent generations of researchers learned that flamboyant findings — whether true or not — can make you rich and famous, while legitimate research will be ignored and under funded.

We could overlook IU's festivals and exhibits — after all, the university has had it rough in recent years what with basketball and coed pornography scandals — but we cannot overlook the fact that Kinsey's misinformation has become part of the nation's cultural standards and beliefs. Tragically, women and children have borne the brunt of the fallout from Kinsey's ideology of sexual freedom and "anything goes" sexuality. Acceptance of these myths has left women both rocking the baby and paying the rent.

There is no question that Kinsey's "titillating" publications were influential; more than 270,000 copies of the nearly 850-page female sexuality book were sold in less than a month. IU officials claim that Kinsey's work is important because "it was the first of its kind and remains one of the largest collections of data on sexual behavior." True enough. But the data, regardless how large the collection, are seriously flawed and the findings are erroneous.

There are three major, and specific, problems with Kinsey's research. First and foremost, it is bogus science. Second, it was little more than a vehicle for Kinsey's own agenda. And third, his legacy has produced grave problems throughout American society.

BAD SCIENCE: The most-egregious aspect of Kinsey's methodology was his use of children as subjects. He used over 300 children, including babies, in his studies of female orgasm. Some critics legitimately accuse Kinsey of child molestation. The American Board of Pediatrics argues that his data are not the norm; that he used unnatural stimulation and, even then, did not prove his point. Using pedophiles, he charted the length and frequency of infants' and children's supposed "orgasms." When questioned about how he knew whether a baby had an orgasm, he said he measured by their crying. Five of these infants and children were subjects for months or years, and it is reported that much of the "testing" occurred when they were either strapped or held down. There is no evidence that the institute followed up to see whether they were adversely affected as a result of this sexual abuse/experimentation. We do know that today many of the adult "subjects" refuse to discuss Kinsey's research; some 50 years later, they don't even want to talk about the horrific experience.

In terms of subjects, Kinsey used volunteers — a practice that scholars decry because of the selection bias it introduces. Many psychologists say that exhibitionists and unconventional sexual experimenters are the most likely respondents, thus distorting the results of the studies. A quarter to nearly half of Kinsey's subjects were prisoners, hardly reflective of the general population. Plus, over 1,400 of his subjects were sex offenders. Kinsey's samples were skewed

in other ways as well: His subjects were overwhelmingly single when less than a third of the population was single during the 1950s, and they were also predominantly college educated.

Perhaps the most offensive aspect of Kinsey's supposedly "scientific" method was his definitions. He classified prostitutes and cohabiting females as "married" women, and then claimed that 26 percent of married women committed adultery. Of course, his deceptive definition of "married" was buried in the details of the lengthy book and didn't end up in popular versions of the research.

Critics of Kinsey's methodology and findings include fellow sex researchers who are aware that *their* work is suspect because of Kinsey's malpractice. One was noted psychologist Abraham Maslow, whom Kinsey asked to validate the research. After studying it carefully, Maslow exposed the problems. Kinsey severed all contact with him and ended both their professional and personal relationships, refusing to acknowledge the criticism.

SPECIAL AGENDAS: In his personal life, Albert Kinsey was promiscuously bisexual, sado-masochistic, and a decadent voyeur who enjoyed filming his wife having sex with his staff. He was hostile to religion and hated taboos of any kind. He often expressed the opinion that all sex is good. He advocated sexual activity as early, as varied, and as long as possible, claiming that a child's sexual activity would prepare him for better sexual adjustment later in life. He sought to validate numerous sexual practices (homosexuality, adultery, bisexuality, pedophilia, incest, and bestiality) that were not generally accepted at the time. Many of those sexual activities are more common today — in part a legacy of Kinsey's influence over American culture.

Kinsey was not an objective scientist but a passionate ideologue particularly interested in using his research to change laws. In 1958, he won a court case allowing him to import pornography for his sex studies. This decision struck down postal laws, of course, and opened the floodgates for international pornography.

Ironically, in an era when most women were married, Kinsey's book devoted to female sexuality had only a few pages at the end dealing with marital sex. His unorthodox definition of "married women" skewed the numbers; thus, a message of his book was that "everyone" was having illicit sex, and they were enjoying it far more than the couples in boring, monogamous relationships. (This in contrast to multiple studies documenting the fact that the sexual satisfaction and frequency of sex for married couples far exceeded those of uncommitted couples.)

KINSEY'S LEGACY: Gloria Steinem enthused in a recent interview that Kinsey's work, while "far from perfect," was a "big step forward" for women. I'd have to vehemently disagree. Everywhere you look in contemporary culture, there are problems associated with the popularization of Kinsey's view that "all sex is good," all the time. Yet Kinsey's research, sadly, has become something of the standard for sexual behavior. Many of his devotees propagate his ideas through Planned Parenthood, SIECUS (Sexual Information and Education Council of the United States), and other like-minded organizations. The price we pay is an epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases: The National Institutes of Health state that sexual behavior drives the spread of STDs, including the pandemic of HIV/AIDS. The Centers for Disease Control have issued a "call to arms" because there are 12 million new cases of STDs every year in the U.S. The Federal Bureau of Investigation reports that 1 in 3 girls today is sexually molested before she reaches age 18; with boys, it is 1 in 7.

Since Kinsey published his "studies" at the beginning of 1950, the general public has absorbed much of Kinsey's ideology as conventional wisdom. For instance, DataMonitor reports that in 1998, nearly 70 percent of paid-for online content was pornography. And after Kinsey advocated lifting cultural taboos, cultural indicators changed dramatically. Since 1968, the ravages of divorce have severed more families each and every year than did maternal deaths in childbirth throughout the entire period from 1915 to 1998. The last 40 years have seen the percentage of persons living together as unrelated individuals increase from six to 16 percent of the general populace. By 1999 only 66 percent of the population lived in a married-couple family. In 1998 there were more than ten times as many women cohabiting as in 1960. In the year 2000, one in every three babies was born out of wedlock. The number of children living in

single-parent families has more than doubled in the past three decades. And the list goes on. These facts are but the tip of the family-disintegration iceberg; obviously Kinsey does not merit all the blame, but his publications were influential and his disciples have been even more so.

Kinsey promised "free sex" and "sex without consequences." Yet women and children have paid an exorbitant price tag, and the consequences are evident in the scourge of STDs, abortion, cohabitation, and disconnectedness. We are fast approaching the point of no return with growing numbers of single-parent families. The restoration of marriage and family is no longer a luxury that would be nice; it is a necessity for the survival of American civil society. Thanks, Dr. Kinsey.

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