



Sex, Lies, and Kinsey

Exposing the father of child abuse.

My survey (sample size: three) shows that the younger generation has not heard of the Kinsey report. For college students everywhere, then, I offer an update—Kinsey has been in the news. Alfred Kinsey (1894-1956) was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, and became a zoologist, contrary to his father's wishes. For a number of years he studied nothing but gall wasps. He joined the zoology department of Indiana University in 1920 and, tired of wasps, started to research the sexual behavior of a different animal—humans. It never crossed his mind that humans were other than animals. When he added a photographer to his Institute for Sex Research in Bloomington, and the university wanted to know why, Kinsey said he wanted to film animal sex. He did not tell them humans would be included, and no doubt didn't think the omission dishonest. Kinsey's sex research was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, which paid \$40,000 a year (real money in those days) until 1954. Kinsey was a workaholic, went to the office seven days a week, and died of heart failure aged 62. He had three children.

Early on, Kinsey's institute began collecting pornography. His assistant Wardell Pomeroy called it "the largest collection of erotica in the world, larger than the British Museum's and presumed to be more extensive than the legendary Vatican collection." Kinsey often referred to the Vatican collection in his public lectures. In *Degenerate Moderns: Modernity as Rationalized Sexual Misbehavior* (1993), E.

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Michael Jones brilliantly dissected this smear, showing the Vatican rumor to be without any foundation. A researcher told Jones that the Institute's collection, unlike others, was not "for prurient interest." Jones commented: "If the Vatican were to collect pornography, their interest would be clearly prurient. When sex researchers do the same thing they accuse others of, they do so only from the highest scientific motive. The double standard bespeaks anti-Catholic bigotry more than anything else."

Kinsey's first volume, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, was published in 1948. The Female volume followed in 1953. By Kinsey's report, sexual behavior was more varied than believed. Eighty-five percent of males had intercourse before marriage. Ten percent were "more or less exclusively homosexual," 13 percent "predominantly" so; 37 percent had had at least one homosexual experience to orgasm. These claims were grossly exaggerated. Only 2.4 percent of those surveyed in exit polls in the 1992 presidential election, with a sample three times larger than Kinsey's, claimed to be homosexual or bisexual. "Volunteer error" and a sample including 25 percent or more prison inmates (many of them sex-offenders) badly skewed Kinsey's figures. The male volume was based on 5,300 subjects. "Several hundred" male prostitutes and 1,400 sex offenders were interviewed, but Kinsey's constant evasions about the precise composition of his sample—one of the most suspicious aspects of his research—have made it difficult for statisticians to nail down the error precisely.

The volunteer problem was pointed out by the prominent psychologist Abraham Maslow even before Kinsey's report was

published. In 1942, he warned in print that volunteers always include many "high dominance people and therefore will show a falsely high percentage of non-virginity, masturbation, promiscuity, homosexuality, etc., in the population." Maslow then demonstrated that it had arisen with the Brooklyn College students whom Kinsey himself had interviewed for his survey. The "error was proven, and the whole basis for Kinsey's statistics was proven to be shaky," Maslow wrote in a letter to a colleague a few weeks before his death in 1970. But Kinsey "refused to publish it and refused even to mention it in his books, or to mention anything else that I had written. All my work was excluded from his bibliography."

How did Kinsey et al. know their subjects were telling the truth? Dr. Pomeroy explains it for us: The Kinsey system of "asking questions rapidly" made exaggeration "almost impossible." (People wouldn't remember what lie they had told half an hour later. Sure they wouldn't.) Kinsey assumed that subjects covered up more than they exaggerated and "inclined to an ethic of abundance," Paul Robinson wrote in *The Modernization of Sex*. Kinsey assumed that everyone had engaged in every type of activity. "Consequently," he wrote, "we always begin by asking *when* they first engaged in such activity"—not *if*.

Kinsey undermined the norm by imputing omnifarious activity to normal people. "Continuous variation," he wrote, "is the rule among men as well as among insects.... Our conceptions of right and wrong, normal and abnormal, are seriously challenged by [these] studies." He subverted moral standards by demonstrating "scientifically" that they weren't observed in practice. He legitimized deviance by exaggerating its frequency. A writer in the *Amer-*

ican *Journal of Psychiatry* commented on his “persistent hammering at Judeo-Christian legal and moral codes.” Pomeroy wrote in 1972 that Kinsey “knew a great deal about the Judeo-Christian tradition, and he was indignant about what it had done to our culture. He often cited the inaccuracies and paranoia in which he asserted it abounded.” He was “quite blunt” about “its effect on the sexual lives of people in our own time.” God did not exist, he was confident, and “when you’re dead you’re dead.”

When the Kinsey report came out, religious people didn’t know how to respond. They accused Kinsey (to his delight) of *advocating* what he was merely describing. “This is a report on what people do, which raises no question of what they should do,” he told *Time*. I’m not the moralist (he posed), you are. I’m observing, counting, measuring. Keep your morals off my statistics. No one at the time knew how misleading the statistics were. And worse than misleading; fraudulent—perhaps criminal. No one studied his Chapter 5 for about thirty years.

It dealt with “early sexual growth and activity,” and included tables about children no more than four years old whose “multiple orgasms” had been “timed with second hand or stop watch.” “Actual observations” of “climax” were made on 206 males age between five months and 14 years, according to the Kinsey report. The number of boys observed under experimental sexual stimulation was at least 317. How did Kinsey & Co. obtain this data? Who were the “technically trained” observers? Who held the stop watches? Did parents give their consent to these criminal activities?

In the “moralistic” 1940’s, amazingly, *no one* asked these questions. Nor did they in the 1950’s or 1960’s. The first person to do so was a graduate student at Case Western Reserve named Judith Reisman, who was writing her Ph.D. thesis on pornography. At a conference in 1972, she asked why child abuse was soaring. A Canadian psychologist quietly suggested she might want to look up Kinsey. Reisman did—and couldn’t believe what she saw. She did nothing for a while; checked to see what others had written. Nothing. Yet the American Statistical Association had gone through Kinsey word for word. There had

been “intellectual paralysis” at the time, she says now. “No one had the mind-space to recognize what they were looking at.”

In 1981, she presented a paper on Kinsey’s child data at the Fifth World Congress of Sexology in Jerusalem and called for an investigation of the Kinsey Institute’s work. She contacted the Hastings Institute (ethics), which told her she was being hysterical. “This could have been compiled by Josef Mengele, and it was done at the same time, and I’m being told to go away,” she says. (Most Kinsey research for the Male volume was done in 1943-1945.) As we can see now, science had vast prestige at the time and Kinsey exploited it. Any perversion could be concealed beneath the scientist’s smock and the posture of detached observation. In exploiting that prestige, Kinsey helped to undermine it. His “work” on baby-sex and child-sex has never been replicated; Freud came up with the theory and Kinsey reified it.

Reisman’s book, *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud* (with Edward W. Eichel), appeared in 1990 and questions about the source of the child-sex data became more urgent. The *Lancet* noted that “the important allegations from the scientific viewpoint are imperfections in the sample and unethical, possibly criminal, observations on children.” The Family Research Council in Washington has taken up the cause and produced an excellent half-hour video called “The Children of Table 34.” CBS Evening News did a story, an article appeared in the *Washington Post*. The BBC has produced a one-hour documentary, not yet shown. Pressed by Rep. Steve Stockman (R-Tex.), Congress has taken an interest. The Oversight subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R-Mich.), has jurisdiction. Let’s open up the Institute, not close it down.

Kinsey’s leading co-workers, Pomeroy, Clyde Martin, and Paul Gebhard are still alive, and it would be interesting to hear what they might tell Congress. Their stories have been in conflict. From the report itself we learn: “Nine of our adult male subjects have observed such orgasm. Some of these adults are technically trained persons who have kept diaries or other records which have been put at our disposal.” Kinsey’s *New York Times* obit

said: “The interviewers even examined the sex life of babies as young as two years, asking the questions of their mothers.” (The mothers used stop watches?) Pomeroy has described a “self-effacing” man, aged 63, whom he and Kinsey interviewed for 17 hours. This criminal, who “held a responsible government job,” claimed to have had sex with 800 children. Pomeroy and Kinsey drove for hours to get his “extraordinary history, and felt that it had been worth every mile.” His information “was the basis for a fair part of chapter five.”

Gebhard, the second director of the Institute, told Reisman in 1981: “Some of these [sources] were parents, mostly college educated, who observed their children and kept notes for us. A few were nursery school owners or teachers. Others were homosexual males interested in older, but still prepubertal children.” The Institute had been provided with film (“cinema”), he wrote. In December 1995, the new director, John Bancroft, said that the information detailing “multiple orgasm in pre-adolescent males” came from a single sex criminal. “Kinsey may have felt that indicating a single source may have brought undue attention to bear on that individual,” he wrote.

What do we know about Kinsey personally? In 1980, Samuel Steward wrote an interesting memoir for the *Advocate*, the homosexual magazine. He met Kinsey in Chicago in 1980, later became his “unofficial collaborator.” Steward was a record keeper and noted that Kinsey had spent 700 hours interviewing him; this despite Kinsey’s frequent complaint that time was short, more subjects should be interviewed, a sex history could be taken in two hours. Steward continued:

Many persons I knew would ask: Is he queer? I told [Kinsey] this. “And what do you answer?” he asked. “Well,” I said slowly, “I always say, ‘Yes he is—but not in the same way we are. He is a *voyeur* and an *auditeur*. He likes to look and listen.” Kinsey laughed, but a moment later I caught him observing me thoughtfully. I may have hit closer to the truth than I realized.

A *voyeur*... Perfect. Remember, that’s not a moral judgment, Alfred. Just a clinical observation. ❧