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## OPINION/COMMENTARY

## Sexuality and social problems

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**O**n a typical Saturday a 9-year-old must have his hair cut. Meanwhile his 12-year-old sister has a gymnastics class about an hour later.

Both children say they need new shoes. The parents disagree. They retort that their feet hurt. They all go off toward the mall.

Everybody is busy now, even on the weekend. All of our time is spent doing things.

Later, the children drift away. They plant themselves in front of a TV and begin to channel surf. They stop on one with a steamy pornographic sex scene in progress. The family's cable subscription doesn't include premium channels but HBO comes through good enough.

### Riveted on TV

Their eyes are riveted on the TV as their emotions become a jumbled mess. They see things they have never seen before, feel ways they have never felt before. No adults are around to allay their fantasies or restrict their thoughts; their hormones flow unrestricted.

This is a scenario of life in the '90s. Some say the influences of today's culture, more permissive than ever before, are at the crux of our seemingly pervasive social problems. Others contend that children are going to do what they want.

A related dispute rages around the work being conducted at the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research at Indiana University in Bloomington. The institute conducts study initiated more than a half century ago by its controversial namesake, Alfred C. Kinsey. Kinsey was both lauded and ostracized for publishing information about the sexual stimulation of children, some of them infants.

"Orgasm has been observed in boys of every age from 5 months to adolescence . . ." Kinsey wrote in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, published 50 years ago. "Orgasm is in our records for a female babe of 4 months."

He is one of the great Americans of all time, believes John Bancroft, the institute's current director. Besides, he contends, Kinsey has become the scapegoat for everything from suicides among the young to an increase in rapes. He insists that Kinsey never observed children engaging in sex, but Bancroft relents that Alfred Kinsey spoke with children about drawings of human bodies that he may have provided.

### That's nonsense

Institute supporters, say methods used by the former professor may be outdated but his work remains extremely important. Robert D. Garton, president pro tem of the state Senate, wrote this to a Greenwood woman who complained about the institute's source of funding:

"I suppose a legislator could propose language for the budget to prohibit the Institute for Sex Research from receiving any state appropriations. Frankly, given the international reputation of the Institute, I know there would be significant resistance to this proposal, particularly since the Institute has existed for over 40 years."

But State Rep. Woody Burton of Greenwood believes that is nonsense. Burton will introduce a resolution next week in the House declaring that no more public funds be given to the Kinsey Institute.

"My concern is, are they doing something scientific or are they teaching sexuality, and in my mind should the government be supporting that kind of education?" said Burton. "I don't see the scientific advantage of coming up with the conclusion that it's alright to just go out and have sex with whomever, whenever and however you want to do it."

The Institute has applied for a federal grant to the National Endowment for the Humanities. The monies would go toward preserving access to research photographs.

Kinsey's director believes that if people were surveyed, the majority would say they aren't bothered by a sexuality research institute.

That may be true, but not everyone has been asked.

Patterson is an editorial writer for *The Star*.