

# UNMASKING ALFRED KINSEY

**D**R. ALFRED KINSEY, author of the famous Kinsey Report, was quite the interviewer. His biographer, James H. Jones, writing in the Aug. 25 *New Yorker*, describes how Kinsey, inquiring into the most private and secret sexual histories of his subjects, would ask questions in staccato style so as to deny the interviewee the chance to think of a lie.



**MONA CHAREN**

Questions presupposed the behavior inquired about. It was, "At what age did you begin masturbating?" — not "Do you masturbate?" When asked how he could tell when a subject was covering up, boasting or lying, Kinsey retorted, "As well ask a horse trader how he knows when

to close a bargain."

For thousands of hours, year after year, Kinsey interviewed thousands of people about their sex histories. It was all supposed to be very scientific. Certainly, the language suggested rigorous scientific method. But there were no written records of the interviews, certainly no audio or videotapes. There was no formal questionnaire, just a personal code Kinsey designed to recall what subjects had told him.

*Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* — sounds downright anthropological, doesn't it? — created a sensation when it was published with the imprimatur of the Rockefeller Foundation. America embraced Kinsey ardently and uncritically. He asserted that deviant sexual behavior was absolutely endemic among teen-age American males, and America believed him — thus undermining the very concept of deviance. (Despite the title, the report did not attempt to

study "human" males, only American males growing up in a few East Coast states.) Kinsey made the claim that 10 percent of males were practicing homosexuals, a figure that was widely accepted for two generations. But in 1994, the University of Chicago's National Health and Social Life Survey found that only 2.8 percent of American men could be called bisexual or homosexual.

Though Kinsey was at pains to present himself as a tweedy, middle-American professor and family man, Jones reveals, he was in fact a missionary whose goal it was to release

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America from the grip of "Victorian" inhibitions about sex. Why? Because Kinsey — wife and four children notwithstanding — was a serious sexual deviant himself.

The truth is about as tawdry and pathetic as Kinsey critics could possibly have imagined in their wildest dreams. Kinsey was not only interested in homosexual encounters — and he had many — but also in sadism and masochism. Jones, who had served as a scientific adviser to Kinsey's Institute for Sex Research, reveals that Kinsey, far from the anti-septic researcher serving science, was actually more of a panting voyeur, pursuing wilder and stranger

sexual exploits as his life unfolded.

He trolled through homosexual bars and nightclubs, supposedly seeking subjects for scientific research, but also seeking more private thrills. The subjects of his research were drawn disproportionately from among homosexuals. He had a particular interest in masochists.

At the Institute for Sex Research, Kinsey attempted to create a private sexual utopia, where everyone could have sex with everyone else. Kinsey's wife, Clara, who reportedly worshipped him, acquiesced, apparently even agreeing to be photographed masturbating and having sex with a staff member. There was, according to the wife of another employee, "sickening pressure" to agree to having sex on film.

As for the great man himself, he liked to be filmed — from the neck down — performing masochistic acts on his penis, like inserting pipe cleaners or swizzle sticks.

Toward the end of his life, Kinsey came to believe that there was nothing inherently wrong with sexual encounters between adults and children. It was society's attitude toward such contact that caused trouble.

In the 50 years since the Kinsey Report was published, Americans have behaved more or less as Kinsey would have wished, erasing centuries' old stigmas, jumping into sexual activity at a young age and placing sexual pleasure near the top of the hierarchy of life's goals.

Americans worship experts of every stripe — even to the point of abandoning common sense. Kinsey donned a lab coat and told us that all sexual behavior was "natural" and therefore beyond the reach of traditional morality. It was an absurd claim on its face — theft and murder are natural, too — and now we know that even the data he used were fraudulent. Jones has shown that Alfred Kinsey began the project we now call "defining deviancy down."

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For more information write or call:

RSVP America, PO Box 1400, [redacted], [redacted], [redacted]