

Dr. Alfred Kinsey: The Opening of the American Bedroom  
Dr. Alan Haffa

Biography (1894-1956): <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4161159>

- Education: Bowdoin and Harvard in Biology
- Indiana University, 1920; Studied the Gall Fly
- 1930s: Taught a Marriage Class
- 1938: Began studies on Human sexuality
- *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 1948
- *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, 1953
- Founded Kinsey Institute of Sex Research at Indiana University, 1947

Sex and Morality?

- “The present study, then, represents an attempt to accumulate an objectively determined body of fact about sex, which strictly avoids social or moral interpretations of the fact. Each person who reads this report will want to make interpretations in accordance with his understanding of moral values and social significances; but that is not part of the scientific method and indeed, scientists have no special capacities for making such evaluations.”

- *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 5

Methodology

- First hand survey of males from different ages and class across country; mostly from Eastern U.S., however
- A “group” will include at least 300 cases to be considered meaningful
- Total sample of 12,000 persons; 40 times more than in any previous study
- He conceived of this as a partial study; 100,000 cases would be needed to complete it
- He was criticized, rightly, for his samples being fully representative; many male prisoners
- No preconceptions about what is “normal” or “abnormal” behavior

Statement of Scientific Objectivity

- “No preconception of what is rare or what is common, what is moral or socially significant, or what is normal and what is abnormal has entered into the choice of the histories or into the selection of the items recorded on them. Such limitations of the material would have interfered with the determination of the fact. Nothing has done more to block the free investigation of sexual behavior than the almost universal acceptance, even among scientists, of certain aspects of that behavior as normal, and of other aspects of that behavior as abnormal...This is first of all a report on what people do, which raises no questions of what they should do...” (7)

Origin of the Study

- Students had come to him with questions about human sexuality
- Limited studies that drew general conclusions
- Contrast with large samples used in gall wasp studies
- “In many of the published studies on sex there were obvious confusions of moral values,

philosophic theory, and the scientific fact.”

#### Opposition and Challenge

- Opposition by a “medical group” who objected that they were practicing medicine
- Police interference in several cities
- Investigation by a Sheriff
- Attempts to get the University administration to stop the research
- Professional opposition by Psychologists, Sociologists, Psychoanalysts, Physicians
- Scientists who doubted that sex studies of humans could be “put on the same objective bases as other scientific studies.” (12)
- Committee on Un-American Activity accused the Institute of being Communist and the Rockefeller Foundation withdrew its funding

#### Research Focus

- Focus upon six outlets for sexuality: masturbation; petting; nocturnal dreams; heterosexual coitus; homosexuality; bestiality
- Related to socioeconomic factors: age; education; marital status; occupation; religion

Research Findings: <http://www.indiana.edu/~kinsey/resources/ak-data.html#analsex>

- Masturbation is common: 90% of men and 62% of women
- Females were capable of sexual response like men
- One half of women had engaged in premarital coitus
- One quarter of women had engaged in extramarital sex
- One third of men and 13% of women had had at least one homosexual experience by age 45
- 10% of males had been primarily homosexual and 4% of white males exclusively

#### Age of First Sexual Activity

- **Coitus**
- **Age at first intercourse:**
- Males:
  - 20.9% by age 16
  - 10.7% at age 17
  - 11.5% at age 18
  - 10.8% at age 19
- Females:
  - 6% by age 16
  - 4.9% at age 17
  - 9.1% at age 18
  - 11.2% at age 19
- (Table 218, p. 267, *Kinsey Data*, College Sample). For further male/female comparisons on premarital sex, see p. 330-32, *Female*.
- How would these figures influence theories of “abstinence education”?

#### Implications of his Findings

- View of Female Sexuality was exploded: formerly, women were thought to have sex only for reproduction or to please a man; not for their own pleasure
- The relatively large numbers of people having pre-marital and extramarital sex exploded the myth of the perfectly normal Nuclear family
- Much more homosexual sex than anyone suspected
- The most important finding may have been that sexual activity is not static; but, it may change and evolve throughout an individual's life
- Masturbation had been considered abnormal, shameful, and bad for one's health; yet, the findings showed how very common it was

#### Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale

- 0- Exclusively heterosexual with no homosexual
- 1- Predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual
- 2- Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual
- 3- Equally heterosexual and homosexual
- 4- Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual
- 5- Predominantly homosexual, only incidentally heterosexual
- 6- Exclusively homosexual

#### Kinsey Observation on Classification of Homo- and Hetero-sexuality

- "Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories... The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects (p 639)."
- This theory would be disturbing both to moral conservatives and liberals

#### Problems with the Study

- Race and class balance in sample
- Male Study had too many prisoners
- Kinsey knew this
- If the exact figures were not correct, the general picture was: Sex was much more varied and complex than people had thought
- Yet several aspects of his method are still practiced today: confidentiality; non-judgemental interview technique; interest in cultural context of sexuality

#### Summary

- Kinsey initiated the scientific examination of human sexuality
- He wanted to free people from the pressure of social conformity, fear, and ignorance about sex
- Partially responsible for sexual revolution
- Masturbation, while not talked about it, is not taboo
- Homosexuality, while Americans do not support Homosexual marriage, a majority do support the right of homosexuals to live openly
- Women's sexual desires are better understood and are not suppressed