

## **Kinsey the Film, Kinsey the Man: Just Another Target of Juicy Media Conflict ©**

by Marty Klein, Ph.D  
from [www.SexEd.org](http://www.SexEd.org)

The Bible contains no injunctions against cannibalism. That's not because Hebrews and early Christians thought it was morally acceptable - it's because no one was doing it.

On the other hand, the Bible contains serious warnings against adultery, incest, and same-gender sex. That's because there were people doing these things.

A half-century ago, Alfred Kinsey asked 18,000 Americans what they did sexually. He didn't get any cannibalism, but he did get plenty of adultery, incest, and same-gender sex, along with oral sex, prostitution, and masturbation. Like any good scientist, he categorized the behavior according to fundamental demographic variables: by age, gender, race, religion, and so on. Simple.

Simple except for two things: Millions of frightened people relaxed, and millions of frightened people got more frightened. The first group flocked to his classes and made his books bestsellers, while the second group tried to destroy his livelihood and freedom, and banish his work.

The two groups' descendants are still battling. His professional offspring struggle against government, Church, and even academia to educate and heal Americans. Much of the public cherishes scientific knowledge about their own bodies, and the freedom to use sexuality as a form of self-expression.

The descendants of the second group are still trying to destroy Kinsey fifty years after his death, with bizarre stories of sadomasochistic, incestuous orgies of child abuse and bestiality. They warn that Kinsey's work is responsible for America's pornography, sex crimes, and abortions (as if there were none before 1948). They even claim that Kinsey's disciples have infiltrated the Catholic Church, and should be sued for giving bad advice about how to handle pedophile priests. Yes, really.

It's in a country that spends \$10 billion per year on porn but which is not allowed to see an entertainer's nipple on TV that the biographical film Kinsey arrived last week. Good news: it's a wonderful film, intelligently written, beautifully photographed, gracefully acted. The era from 1900-1950 is lovingly recreated. There's a little bit of sex (quite gentle except for the Kinseys' wedding night, which was awkward and painful for both) and some nice humor (also quite gentle). The film isn't preachy about the storm of fear, hate, and ignorance that desperately attempted to return America to the closet whose door Kinsey opened with his naive faith in science and human beings.

So for entertainment, go see the film. Or see it to support the producer and distributors, who are being threatened with boycotts from thousands of evangelical websites and pulpits around the country. Or see it because it will put your own struggles for sexual identity and self-validation into a comforting context. That, of course, is Kinsey's ultimate legacy.

But enough about Kinsey the man, or Kinsey the film. Let's talk about the people who hate both man and film, how the media covers this hatred, and why we should care. Because that's what today's electronic media are primarily about: sex and hate. Besides, we're all post-modernists: we've learned that no thing is as real as its broadcast image.

Frightened, angry people are using Kinsey to make points -- to their constituents, to the media, to their own repressed eroticism. There's a whole industry keeping the national

fear machine going; not even control of the Presidency, Congress, and Supreme Court soothes these folks.

They tell us that Satan literally walks among us, that he will literally be seducing us until Judgment Day. With that siege mentality, it's sensible to constantly scan the horizon for evil. And if sexual impulses are inherently evil, well, we will never run out of evil stuff to fear. Like the Aztecs who were waiting for God when Cortez arrived, Alfred Kinsey is the latest devil for which the Christian Right has been waiting.

The media's in bed with these Satan-worshippers, thrilled to broadcast the latest chapter in America's medieval science-versus-fear marathon. And so Fox, CNN, and the rest have set up a bunch of verbal wrestling matches.

They aren't educational, because there's no attempt to get at the facts. They aren't news because they involve the same old organizations (Focus on the Family, Traditional Values Coalition, American Family Association, Bob Jones University) spewing the same old hate. They aren't fair or balanced, because non-scientists are critiquing science. Actually, critiquing isn't the right word, as that implies reasoned examination. It's non-scientists screeching about not liking the results of science.

Kinsey described sexual reality in America, results that are consistent with later surveys by everyone from the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center to Modern Maturity Magazine. Some people hate and fear that reality. And so they're attempting to kill the messenger. The media is complicit in this manslaughter: they're pretending there are two sides to this, and they're giving each "side" time. (They're actually giving the anti-Kinsey people way more time because their bile is more mediagenic than most scientists' straightforward explanations.)

The two "sides" being presented are 1) scientists and educators and 2) moralists and "concerned citizens." What exactly are the latter's credentials to critique science? To draw conclusions about the effects of science? To predict how things would be different with different science? How many moralists know the difference between a cluster sample, snowball sample, and a random sample -- the key methodological question about the Kinsey data they so confidently disparage?

The anti-Kinsey "side" says:

Kinsey used pedophiles to abuse kids to get data.

This is FALSE.

Kinsey himself had sex with kids.

This is FALSE.

Kinsey said that all sex is OK.

This is FALSE.

By neutrally collecting information, Kinsey endorsed everything he heard.

This is FALSE.

By neutrally describing various sexual behaviors, he endorsed them.

This is FALSE.

Because his sample wasn't random, Kinsey's data is skewed toward perversion.

This is FALSE.

These facts are not matters of opinion - they are matters of public record. There aren't two sides to these questions; there's only one side - the truth. But in giving viewers the meta-message that there are two sides to this "controversy," the media not only obscures the truth, it undermines the idea that there IS truth about this. Thus, nothing is required from the audience - no thought, no evaluation, no growth. In fact, people can watch the conflict without actually listening to what's said, because they know which protagonist they believe based on which "side" they're on.

With all the talk shows purporting to "explore" the Kinsey "controversy," there hasn't been one that has challenged the assumptions of those who damn him:

Information is dangerous

People weren't already doing "those things" before Kinsey reported them

Sexual ignorance has no personal or social costs

Sexual problems didn't exist before Kinsey did his work

Science should not challenge society's status quo

Kinsey accurately noted that Americans enjoyed oral sex, masturbation, and premarital sex. Today, virtually everyone accepts this as factual, and organizations from the American Medical Association to the Unitarian Church accept these behaviors as healthy when done honestly and respectfully. But many people are uncomfortable with, and disown, their own behavior. Our President, for example, who had plenty of premarital sex, insists we spend hundreds of millions of dollars teaching kids not to.

Kinsey and his interviewers asked about both attitudes and behavior, but he felt that behavior spoke more eloquently. "Often," he said, "the expressed attitudes are in striking contradiction to the actual behavior, and then they are significant because they indicate the existence of psychic conflict."

Kinsey: still telling the truth after all these years.

#### About The Author

Dr. Marty Klein has been a Licensed Marriage & Family Counselor and Sex Therapist for 24 years. He has aimed his entire career toward a single set of goals: telling the truth about sexuality, helping people feel sexually adequate & powerful, and supporting the healthy sexual expression and exploration of women and men. See more of Marty's work at [www.SexualIntelligence.org](http://www.SexualIntelligence.org).