

ALFRED KINSEY

b. June 23, 1894

d. August 25, 1956

Known as the father of sexology, Alfred Kinsey conducted groundbreaking and controversial research on human sexuality that profoundly influenced social and cultural values.

“The heterosexuality or homosexuality of many individuals is not an all-or-none proposition.”

Alfred Kinsey is known as the father of sexology. His groundbreaking and controversial research on human sexuality profoundly influenced social and cultural values.

Kinsey grew up in Hoboken, New Jersey, the oldest of three children in a devoutly religious home. His father was a strict disciplinarian and insisted the family attend church every Sunday.

In 1916, Kinsey graduated magna cum laude from Bowdoin College with degrees in biology and psychology. In 1919, he earned his doctorate in biology from Harvard University.

In 1920, Indiana University hired Kinsey as an assistant professor of zoology. The following year, Kinsey married Clara McMillen. The couple had four children.

Kinsey's first 20 years of research focused on the study of gall wasps. His research methodology, which made an important contribution to entomology, carried over into his later research on human sexual behavior.

In 1940, as part of a marriage course he was teaching, Kinsey began conducting research on sexual behavior. Thereafter, Kinsey worked exclusively on his research. He and his staff conducted over 18,000 interviews. Kinsey published “Sexual Behavior in the Human Male” (1948), followed by “Sexual Behavior in the Human Female” (1953).

The two books, known as the “Kinsey Reports,” became best sellers and sparked a firestorm of controversy. Kinsey became an overnight celebrity, with articles about him in Time, Life, Look and McCall's. Kinsey's work planted the seed for the sexual revolution of the 1960's.

Kinsey's findings on homosexuality were among the most widely discussed. His studies found that 37% of American men had at least one homosexual experience. Kinsey devised a scale measuring sexual orientation, now known as the Kinsey Scale. The scale ranges from 0 to 6, with 6 designating someone exclusively homosexual, and 0 signifying someone exclusively heterosexual.

In 1947, Kinsey founded the Institute for Research in Sex, Gender and Reproduction at Indiana University—now the Kinsey Institute—one of the leading academic centers on human sexuality.

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