

ALFRED KINSEY

U.S. Sex Researcher

(1894-1956)



Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey was among the first researchers to conduct large-scale scientific inquiries into human sexuality utilizing group sampling techniques. His conclusions gave statistical evidence for what many clinicians had guessed might be the sexual conduct of the American people. Nonetheless, his books sent shockwaves through American society, which was largely unaccustomed to thinking about – let alone openly discussing – human sexuality in anything other than the most conventional terms, feeding into fears of hidden “otherness” already stoked by the rise of Communism. At his Institute for Sex Research, founded in 1947, Kinsey and his colleagues anonymously interviewed 18,000 Americans in order to catalogue and statistically analyze their sexual proclivities. From this data he developed the “Kinsey Scale” for measuring sexual orientation – where 0 is exclusively heterosexual and 6 is exclusively homosexual, with an additional X category for those with no sexual inclinations. His data, though widely debated, concluded that men and women with homosexual experience accounted for anywhere from 2% to 10% of the general population. His *Kinsey Reports* – starting with the publication of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948, followed in 1953 by *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* – became bestsellers, turning Kinsey into an instant celebrity while creating a firestorm of controversy that continues to this day. Though his research is sometimes criticized regarding sampling methods and the unreliability of personal memories of sexual behavior, subsequent analysis has left many of his conclusions intact. Kinsey married Clara Bracken McMillen in 1921 – the only woman he is known to have dated – and fathered four children. Posthumously published biographies, which revealed that he had been actively bisexual (though he did not embrace the term on scientific grounds), suggest that his interest in human sexuality may have stemmed from a need to understand his own desires. Whatever his motivations, a 1953 issue of *Time* magazine concluded that “Kinsey...has done for sex what Columbus did for geography.” Few men have had as profound an influence on the social and cultural attitudes of contemporary society as Dr. Alfred Kinsey.

Lesson Plan

Level 1: Contributions Approach

1. Activate prior experience: What was the importance of Kinsey’s study on sexuality during this time period? What do you think people thought of Kinsey’s report that 2 in 10 people were gay?
2. Read the biographical information.
3. Group Discussion: What were the aspects of the study that Kinsey did? What scales were used and how were his findings reported?
4. Extend knowledge: Based upon your understanding of Kinsey’s report, what are some results and in what ways did Kinsey’s report change the attitudes of our society?

Level 2: Additive Approach

1. Website Investigation: Which of the following GLBT inductees contributed to the study of sexuality and how does this connect to your study in your schools?
2. View the following websites to build your knowledge of Kinsey report at <http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/research/ak-data.html>
3. Develop how the Kinsey reports may be included in your curriculum or counseling study.

Level 3: Transformational Approach

1. Assess how the elements of Kinsey’s study changed society at large.
2. Investigate studies that you think have had an impact on science and medicine today.
3. Demonstrate the elements that you think would be included in studies that have impacted views on homosexuality.

4. Level 4: Social Action Approach

1. In reviewing those inductees who have impacted medicine and science, identify a GLBT topic that needs more research for change today.
2. Incorporate specific elements that you would like to have this in the study.
3. Communicate via Facebook, email, blog, or letter to secure funding for this research