

Kinsey film review



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Film Review: Kinsey (2004) Love is the answer, isn't it? But, sex raises a lot of very interesting questions... Writer/Director Bill Condon does a thoroughly detailed, fascinating study of the life of famed sex researcher Alfred Kinsey in the drama, Kinsey. What would on surface seem unfilmable is done with great sensitivity and honesty. Raised in a repressed family dominated by a stern father, Kinsey is portrayed as an isolated teen who rebels against not only his father, but against sexual convention.

As a science instructor in college, he meets a student who becomes his wife. As other students look more and more to him for sexual advice, his original interest in insect studies changes to sex adviser and ultimately sex researcher. His team of assistants and even their wives become involved in the research. As Kinsey's study requires sample interviews across the country, a diverse, amazing discovery of sexual habits and statistics are revealed. The study ultimately becomes published in a groundbreaking bestseller amid a swell of hatred from the public.

As time progresses Dr. Kinsey begins realizing that sexuality within humans, including himself, is a lot more varied than was originally thought. The range of expression he creates later becomes known as the Kinsey scale, which ranks overall sexuality from completely heterosexual to completely homosexual and everything in-between. The first sexological book Kinsey publishes, which is on the sexual habits of the male, is a large-scale success and a best seller. Kinsey's research turns to women, which is met with more controversy.

With the release of the female volume, support for Kinsey declines. Kinsey feels that he has failed everyone who has ever been a victim of sexual

ignorance. A customs office is tipped off to an importation of some of Kinsey's research material, which only exacerbates the financial situation of Kinsey's research organization. Kinsey suffers a heart attack, and is found to have developed an addiction to barbiturates. Meeting with other philanthropists fails to garner the support needed. Still, Kinsey continues his taking of sex histories.

He interviews an older woman, who tells Kinsey that she had felt so much shame about her attraction to another woman that she became an alcoholic, but that his research has saved her life and made her happy again, by helping her come to terms with her own sexuality. The story returns to the initial interview with Kinsey, and he is asked about love and if he will ever attempt to conduct research on it. His response is that love is impossible to measure and impossible to quantify (and without measuring, he reminds us, there can be no science), but that it is important.

The final scene is of Kinsey and his wife, pulling over to the side of the road for a nature walk. She remarks about a tree that has been there for a thousand years. Kinsey replies that the tree seems to display a strong love in the way its roots grip the earth. Afterwards, the two walk off together, Kinsey remarking "there's a lot of work to do". In keeping with the subject matter, there is graphic dialogue and sexual depictions, but there is nothing exploitive or without narrative purpose here.

It is interesting to note that this film is coming on the heels of a moralistic backlash of media content and permissiveness. By showing how well-intended human studies into formerly taboo subjects helped to enlighten and reexamine human behavior, Kinsey proves to be the right film for the right

time. According to Vern Bullough, author of *Alfred Kinsey and the Kinsey Report: historical overview and lasting contributions*, Alfred Kinsey is regarded by many to be the foremost pioneer in the quantitative study of human sexuality.

From his roots studying marriage and sex to his quantitative studies on women's sexuality, Dr. Alfred Kinsey is a research pioneer in human sexuality. His interest in human sexuality began when in 1938 the Indiana Association of Women Students petitioned the university to offer a noncredit course on marriage. Kinsey coordinated the course and presented lectures on the biological dimensions of sex and marriage. In preparing for his lectures in what quickly became a very popular course, he discovered that little survey research was available on human sexuality.

Initially, Kinsey gathered data from students in his classes, then from other students and faculty, and later from people whom he could persuade to be interviewed. Kinsey published "Sexual Behavior In The Human Male" in 1948, which came to be known as the "Kinsey Report." The report immediately created controversy for its revelations of the sexuality of white American males. It sold more than 250, 000 copies and was translated into a dozen languages. (Bancroft 1998) Kinsey's findings on homosexuality also shocked the American public.

He reported that a third of American males and 13 percent of American females claimed to have had at least one same-sex orgasmic experience by age 45. Furthermore, approximately 10 percent of the males admitted to having been predominantly homosexual for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55, and four percent of white males described themselves as

exclusively homosexual (Kinsey 1948). Kinsey's research refuted the widely held notion that heterosexuality and homosexuality are exclusive forms of behavior.

References Bancroft, John. 1998 “ Alfred Kinsey’s work 50 years later. ” New Introduction to Sexual Behavior in the Human Male by Alfred Kinsey, et al. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. Bullough, Vern L. 1998. “ Alfred Kinsey and the Kinsey Report: historical overview and lasting contributions. ” The Journal of Sex Research. Kinsey, Alfred C, Wardell B. Pomeroy, Clyde E. Martin. 1948. Sexual Behavior in the Human Male. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company.