



Does Moodiness Put You in the Mood?

A new Institute project explores the links between mood and sexuality

Take two elusive phenomena—our moods and our sexual interests, put them under the same microscope, and what do you have?

A steamy French novel or a bold new area of research at The Kinsey Institute under the auspices of its director John Bancroft.

The Institute has embarked on a project that seeks to discern the impact of certain emotional states on sexual interest and responsiveness, using interviews and a short questionnaire, posing questions about how depression and anxiety affect a subject's sexual desire and response. The results so far have been surprising.

Bancroft explains: "Conventional wisdom maintains that when an individual feels anxious or depressed, his or her sexual desire goes down. There are, however, a few pointers in the literature to suggest that for some, the opposite happens. In our survey we found that for a significant minority of about 15-25%, sexual interest and responsiveness goes up when they are in a negative mood. This phenomenon has not previously received attention."

The researchers are also interested in whether an individual's propensity for sexual excitation and inhibition, the theme of much of the Institute's current research, helps to account for this paradoxical response. To some extent they can predict that the relationship between negative moods and sexual interest is more likely in men who are prone to high excitation and low inhibition.

David Strong, a research associate at the Institute, conducted the interviews that contained some of the initial questions on mood and sexuality. He describes the interview process and some of the challenges of the new topic. "We are interested in the relationship between mood, arousal, and control, both self-control and control

in the context of interpersonal dynamics," he explains.

"The goal of the project," he further reflects, "is to see if there are different types of relationships between negative moods and increased sexual interest. Certain types could be relevant, for example, to the prevention of sexually transmitted disease. Individuals who take sexual risks often do so because of a negative mood, not a lack of knowledge. To reach these people, we must address issues of mental health."

Erick Janssen, a research scientist at the Institute also working on the project, outlines some of the project's intricacies. "What we're really looking at is the relationship between different emotions, how different emotions interact with one another in different people. How, for example, can two seemingly incompatible emotions go together? And how does physical arousal relate to both cognitive and emotional processes?"

He further points out, "The topic fits neatly into the history of research at the Institute. Kinsey himself continually sought to account for individual variation within a population. This can be rare in experimental research which often focuses on norms at the expense of variation."

To look at this issue more closely, researchers at the Institute are working on more sophisticated methods of measuring the relationship between moods and sexual behavior. So far, Bancroft explains, the data reveal that the tendency for negative moods to increase sexual interest is age- and gender-related. Young men are most likely to report this effect.

All three researchers convey that the new project has broad practical and theoretical implications. "I wish I had started earlier on the topic," says Bancroft. "I could foresee working on it for the next fifteen years, if I was around that long."



KinseyToday

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The mission of The Kinsey Institute is to promote interdisciplinary research and scholarship in the fields of human sexuality, gender, and reproduction. The Institute was founded in 1947 by renowned sex researcher Alfred Kinsey. Today, the Institute has two components, an Indiana University research institute and a not-for-profit corporation, which owns and manages the Institute's research data and archives, collections, and databases.

Director's Column

By Dr. John Bancroft




The first in our new series of Summer Institutes for graduate education, on “Understanding High Risk Sexual Behavior,” scheduled for this July, attracted a great deal of interest from graduate students around the world, leaving us with the difficult task of selecting the 25 best candidates from a very strong field. With rich cross-cultural representation, and excellent faculty, this promises to be a great start to what should be a long running Kinsey Institute activity.

In May we held a workshop on sexual development, bringing together most of the key researchers in normal childhood sexual development and several in child sexual abuse. The book that will result will set a landmark in establishing a more balanced approach to the politically explosive topic of childhood sexuality. If for no other reason, and there are many others, this workshop was needed to advance our understanding of normal sexual development in childhood, so that we can better understand the impact of the negative experience of sexual abuse. The Kinsey Institute took the initiative on this issue at a critical time, and met enthusiasm and support from the various researchers contacted, and

from the W. T. Grant Foundation which funded the workshop.

Through 2000 I was one of a group of academics, educators, advocates, and politicians who, under the admirable leadership of Eli Coleman from the University of Minnesota worked in a highly committed fashion to help Surgeon General Dr David Satcher prepare a Call To Action on sexual health and responsible sexual behavior. The expectation of all of us, who came from a broad spectrum of opinion, was that this would initiate a much needed debate at the local and national level, as well as in the media, about what we mean by sexual health and responsible sexual behavior.

That Call to Action was to have been delivered in January. Unfortunately, with the change of government it got lost, though the buried cat was exposed in the *New York Times* of April 21st. Coleman remains hopeful that Dr Satcher will still pull something off. I admire his optimism. What I regret in particular about this ill-fated initiative is that together we had proposed criteria of sexual responsibility that I believe the large majority of Americans would embrace. And following the election with its close call, this seemed particularly timely – an opportunity to mobilize the middle ground. I hope Coleman's optimism is rewarded. Otherwise a great opportunity is lost. 

A Fifties Odyssey: Print Media Response to *The Kinsey Report*

The more sensational titles leap out at you: “Will the Kinsey Report Change Your Life?”; “Kinsey Attacked by Communists”; “We're Headed For Polygamy”; “I Lied to Kinsey.”

But the thousands of documents that make up the print media response to *The Kinsey Report* together conjure up an historical drama, the way the name itself took hold and reverberated through all facets of culture, both popular and elitist, serious and sensational. In the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities writers responded, as in law, religion, politics, and the arts. “Kinsey” became a household word and Kinsey himself a cultural icon.

The Kinsey Institute Library is currently producing a vital new resource – two cata-

logues that list the Library's comprehensive collection of print media responses to the two books comprising *The Kinsey Report*, the 1948 volume, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and the 1953 *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*.

This extensive collection of 72 binders contains thousands of newspaper and magazine clippings, journal articles, book reviews, editorials, letters from readers, photos, announcements, speeches, and cartoons, most of which dates to the 1950s. The library staff has created an index of the material, which is accessible to patrons in print and via a computer database that is searchable by source, year, and author.

Liana Zhou, head of the library, observes that “through this collection we witness

Spotlighting the Collections:

Coordinator Shawn Wilson describes some of the recent uses of the collections

Shawn Wilson has helped a wide variety of academic researchers, authors, film producers, and even health service professionals in the Institute Reading Room. Wilson, a 2000 graduate of Indiana University with a major in sociology and Spanish, is often surprised at the range of people and their research projects. He has assisted more than 150 people over the last 3 months. Among them are:

Regina Kunzel, a professor at Williams College on leave at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study: she is using Kinsey-collected prisoners' letters and interviews in her book about situational homosexuality. **Mack Friedman**, a social worker from Pittsburgh who works with HIV/AIDS patients: he is writing a book on male prostitution in America with help from Kinsey's correspondence with male prostitutes. **Joanne**

Meyerowitz, a professor at Indiana University: she pursues her research on the history of transsexuality by examining the archive of Dr. Harry Benjamin, who developed the standards for treating transsexual patients.

In other media, **The History Channel** recently made use of material in the collections for their Emmy-nominated "History of Sex." **HBO Sports** featured a series of Kinsey Institute photographs in "Playing the Field: Sports and Sex in America." And playwright **Brian Freeman**



PHOTO BY TYAGAN MILLER

Shawn Wilson (right), coordinator for User Services at The Kinsey Institute Library with Liana Zhou, head of the library

from San Francisco used images from the Thomas Painter collection as a backdrop to his play, *A Slight Variance*, performed in March at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco.

"It is exciting to see how these varied projects develop," Wilson says. "This is an incredible place to

work. It will be great to say I've been a part of it."



Permission was granted by researchers cited in this story.

"These sources are a window onto American society in the early 1950s..."

Kinsey's role in both educating and aggravating the public, the enormous influence Kinsey has had on society." She cites, for example, Kinsey's impact in the legal sphere. The collection contains a defense of Kinsey written by the lawyer Morris L.

Ernst as part of a public forum in the May 1950 *Scientific Monthly* on *The Kinsey Report*.

Ernst would later defend Kinsey in the case, *USA v. 31 Photographs*, in which Kinsey was accused of defying



the laws against importing pornography. Ernst's arguments for the scientific value of the photographs ultimately led to a landmark ruling in Kinsey's favor.

Not surprisingly, given his collecting habit, Kinsey began the collection out of an interest in the public perception of his work. Others have expanded it. Sandi McNulty, an English and film studies major started to compile the new catalogue during her internship at the Institute. Jennifer Sodrel, a library employee, is helping her complete it. "We're extremely pleased to have people as capable as they are working

on the project," Zhou notes.

"At some point," she continues, "we hope to have the whole collection on CD ROM. This would make it even more accessible and easy to handle. It would also preserve the material, some of which is starting to deteriorate."

"These sources are a window onto American society in the early 1950s, into its treatment of women and the sexual attitudes of middle- and upper-middle class culture. Its value as an historical tool that will further our understanding of sexuality and gender during this period is immeasurable."

For more information, contact the library at libkinsey@indiana.edu.

Going Public

The Kinsey Institute begins to reach new audiences

Much has changed since *The Kinsey Report* first catapulted the Institute into the spotlight 52 years ago. Following the shock and sometimes the scandal that Kinsey's research generated, the Institute receded from the glare of publicity for many years.

Now, with its two recent exhibitions, "The Art of Desire" in 1997 and "The Kiss" in 1998, as well as the 2000 publication of *Peek: Photographs from The Kinsey Institute*, the Institute is returning to view, but with a noticeably different public.

Jennifer Bass, head of communications and public relations at the Institute, describes the shift that has taken place: "Most people recognize that our society is better off studying sex than fearing it or relegating the public discussion to the media."

Such an attitude was especially evident in the public's response to the Institute's decision to offer tours

of its galleries. A short article on the Institute's collections in the Bloomington *Herald-Times* prompted a more substantial story on the front page of its Sunday edition. "Within days the tours were booked 5 months in advance," Bass reports.

The story in the *Herald-Times* was followed by stories in *USA Today*, and other U.S. papers. At the same time, *Peek* was covered in major newspapers and magazines around the world, from New York to London, Berlin, Taiwan, and Brazil.

"The stories," Bass speculates, "jolted people's memory of the Institute and generated a new interest in its present-day activities." Further, she suggests, "More people now recognize The Kinsey Institute as a place where relevant research is taking place and the history of sex archived. Though we are primarily a research institution, we have much to offer, especially to our local University community." ◀

For more about tours and public events, visit our website, or contact Jennifer at kinsey@indiana.edu



PHOTO BY ANN ROTH

Jennifer Bass, head of communications and public relations, leads a tour of the collections. On display is the movie poster from the stag film *The Office Party*, circa 1960.

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Address Service Requested

Indiana University
Morrison Hall 313
1165 E. Third Street
Bloomington, IN 47405-3700
(812) 855-7686
www.kinseyinstitute.org

The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction



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Recent Events

An Evening of Jazz

On April 19, Friends of the Kinsey were treated to the cool jazz sounds of the KI Trio. At the keyboard KI director John Bancroft was joined by KI board member and dean of the law school Fred Aman on drums, singer and web consultant Cathy Spiaggia, and Gary Potter on bass. Old and new friends gathered in the Hoagy Carmichael Room in Morrison Hall. Tours of The Kinsey Institute gallery followed the concert.



PHOTO BY JENNIFER BASS

Singer Cathy Spiaggia with John Bancroft at the keyboard, Gary Potter on bass, and Dean Fred Aman on drums.

Workshop on Sexual Development, May 16-20

Researchers involved in the interdisciplinary study of childhood development came together to discuss key issues related to the study of childhood and adolescent sexual development. (See the Director's Column, page 2.)

Call for Research Volunteers

To participate in an online survey, go to our website at www.kinseyinstitute.org. Click on "What's New?"

up coming Events

Sex and Humor: Selections from the Kinsey Institute

February 9-March 9, 2002
School of Fine Arts Gallery

Kinsey Summer Graduate Training Institute

"Understanding High-Risk Sexual Behavior"

July 22-29, 2001 www.indiana.edu/~kinsey/summer.html

2003: The 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Kinsey 'Female' Volume, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*

Our tribute to female sexuality will include:

- An interdisciplinary conference on female sexuality
- An invitational art exhibition
- A new book on female sexuality, edited by John Bancroft
- Events around campus sponsored by different departments and centers
- Entertainment reflecting the theme of female sexuality

If you have ideas for a project and would like to get involved in the 2003 festivities, please let us know! Contact Nancy Lethem at nlethem@indiana.edu.