

DECEMBER 1947

Harper's MAGAZINE

The Military Move In

Hanson W. Baldwin

The Sex Habits of American Men.....

Albert Deutsch

Gertrude Stein: A Self-Portrait

Katherine Anne Porter

Greece Puts Us to the Test

George Polk

And also: The Strong Man of the Balkans by Albert A. Brandt; Blueprint for a Silver Age by Cyril Connolly; A European Traveler's Notebook by Joseph C. Harsch; There Goes Upper Michigan by John Bartlow Martin; The UN Builds Its Home by Edith Iglauer; Stories by Elizabeth Taylor and John Watson; The Easy Chair; After Hours; The New Books.

THE SEX HABITS OF AMERICAN MEN

Some of the Findings of the Kinsey Report

ALBERT DEUTSCH

MANY of our most deep-rooted concepts of sex and marriage are about to be blasted by a soberly documented report of a group of University of Indiana scientists, following a nine-year survey of the sex habits of the American people. You get no clue to the explosive nature of this report in the quiet, file-stacked laboratory of its compilers on the second floor of the old Zoology building on the university campus at Bloomington, Indiana. You begin to get its full impact when Professor Alfred C. Kinsey and his three young associates—Clyde Martin, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Paul E. Gebhard—lay before you their statistical charts and tables embodying the sex histories of 12,000 Americans in all walks of life, representing a scientific cross section of the population. Age-old ideas about sex embedded in our legal and moral codes are revealed as myths and delusions under the searchlight of this important investigation. The first report of the Kinsey group, which will be publicly released in January in book form, is entitled *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, but it is of vital interest to both sexes.

So startling are its revelations, so contrary to what civilized man has been taught for generations, that they would be unbelievable but for the impressive weight of scientific agencies backing the survey. The Kinsey group has had the sponsorship of the National Research Council, the most authoritative scientific body in the land. It has enjoyed the steady financial support of the Rockefeller Foundation's Medical Science Division and the unstinting encouragement of the University of Indiana. Its methods, goals, and findings have been checked and rechecked by outstanding investigators not connected with the project. Dr. Alan Gregg, medical chief of the Rockefeller Foundation, says of the survey:

The findings of Dr. Kinsey and his associates deserve attention for their extent, their thoroughness, and their dispassionate objectivity.

Certainly no aspect of human biology in our current civilization stands in more need of scientific knowledge and courageous humility than that of sex. The history of medicine proves that in so far as man seeks to know himself and face his whole nature, he has become free from bewildered fear, dependent shame, or arrant hypocrisy. As long as sex is dealt with in the current

Access to the findings of the Kinsey research project has been given to many periodicals, and accounts of it may appear elsewhere before this issue of Harper's reaches our readers. Yet we believe its exceptional interest merits this detailed summary. Albert Deutsch, the author, is health and welfare columnist for the newspaper PM.—The Editors

confusion of ignorance and sophistication, denial and indulgence, suppression and stimulation, punishment and exploitation, secrecy and display, it will be associated with a duplicity and indecency that leads neither to intellectual honesty nor human dignity.

Dr. Gregg, one of the wisest of medical statesmen, appeals to the American public to receive the findings of the Kinsey survey with "cool attention, courageous judgment, and scientific equanimity." While some of the results may shock many people at first, they are bound to be helpful and constructive in the long run, as the truth always is.

THE Kinsey report deals a shattering blow to commonly held notions as to when sex activity begins and reaches its peak in human beings. Sex attitudes and habits start in infancy, the Kinsey group find, thus confirming—for the first time on a mass basis—the thesis of Dr. Sigmund Freud, founder of psychoanalysis. Sex life, in fact, begins virtually at birth. Kinsey reports that a complete orgasm (except for ejaculation) has been observed in a five-month-old male infant, and in a girl baby of only four months.

"A fretful baby," he notes, "quiets down under the initial sexual stimulation, is distracted from other activities, begins rhythmic pelvic thrusts, becomes tense as climax approaches, is thrown into convulsive action, often with violent arm and leg movements, sometimes with weeping at moments of climax. After climax the child loses erection quickly and subsides into the calm and peace that typically follows adult orgasm."

Preadolescents, the Kinsey survey shows, have a capacity for frequency of sexual orgasm far greater than most adults. One preadolescent child was observed to experience twenty-six orgasms within twenty-four hours when sexually aroused. In the preadolescent age, the child responds sexually, in a physical sense, to a great variety of stimulating situations of indefinite character—taking a shower, receiving punishment, feeling shame or anger, seeing an accident, friction with clothing, riding horseback, getting an examination mark in school, fast car riding, fear of a house intruder or "being scared" otherwise, receiving grade cards at school, seeing a

movie, listening to music or an adventure story, entering an empty house, sex play with other children, etc.

There is a far greater amount of sex activity in that period of life known as adolescence, when the child rather suddenly acquires physical stature and adult conformation along with growth of pubic hair, change of voice, and ability to ejaculate. Adolescence is usually associated with the teen-age period, but Kinsey notes that some boys arrive at this stage at eight or nine years of age, while there are occasional cases of college seniors who have not yet passed adolescence.

Contrary to the traditional idea that the male's "prime of life," sexually, is reached in the thirties or forties, the Kinsey survey reveals that the height of sexual capacity and activity in human males is usually reached in the late teens. (Kinsey uses sexual activity in a comprehensive sense, including—beside intercourse—masturbation, nocturnal emissions, homosexual experiences, etc.)

Five per cent of all twelve-year-old American boys have already had sexual intercourse. At thirteen, one out of every seven has had such experience. Over 73 per cent of American males have premarital intercourse by the time they are twenty; only a small percentage remain virgins till marriage.

A REMARKABLE conclusion of the Kinsey group, on the basis of their survey, is that the sex pattern of the average American male is firmly established by the time he has reached sixteen years of age and that with rare exceptions no circumstance, however catastrophic, materially alters that pattern in his later life. Those who are most sexually active in their adolescent years, for example, are likely to remain most sexually active through marriage and middle age.

So firmly established are these sex habits, and so closely are they related to the social and educational group for which the growing boy is destined, that Professor Kinsey feels he is able to predict with a high degree of certainty whether or not a sixteen-year-old boy is destined to go to college just by reviewing his sex history!

This set of facts has tremendous signifi-

cance for the future of marriage, parenthood, and education. The revelation that a human male actually arrives at the height of his sexual needs in his late teens demands the immediate attention of experts already grappling with the problem of delayed marriage imposed by our modern way of life.

"The situation," Professor Kinsey writes, "is complicated by the fact that the average adolescent girl gets along well enough with one-fifth as much sexual activity as the adolescent boy, and the frequency of sexual outlet of the female in her twenties and early thirties is still below that of the average adolescent male.

"As mothers, as school teachers, and as voting citizens, women are primarily responsible for the care of these boys. To a large extent, they are the ones who control moral codes, schedules for sex education, campaigns for law enforcement, and programs for what is called juvenile delinquency. It is obviously impossible for a majority of these women to understand the problem that the boy faces in being constantly aroused and regularly involved with his normal biologic reactions.

"Many of these women, including some high-school biology teachers, believe that the ninth or tenth grade boy is still too young to receive any sex instruction when, in actuality, he has a higher rate of sexual outlet and has already had a wider variety of sexual experience than most of his female teachers ever will have. . . . It is obvious that the development of any curriculum that faces the facts will be a much more complex undertaking than has been realized by those who think of the adolescent boy as a beginner, relatively inactive, and quite capable of ignoring his sexual developments."

The average unmarried male experiences three or four orgasms per week. This startling figure demonstrates conclusively society's failure to impose complete abstinence on youth before marriage.

"For the mass of unmarried boys," Kinsey adds, "intercourse still provides the chief sexual activity. This means that the majority of the males in the most potential and active periods of their lives have to accept clandestine or illegal outlets, or else become involved in psycho-

logical conflicts in attempting to adjust to reduced sexual outlets."

HERE is another fact, disclosed by the Kinsey survey, which will require a great deal of pondering on the part of experts in sex education:

The sex attitudes, habits, and patterns of the average child are formed less by the home, the school, and the church than his own peers—his playmates and associates of like age. Further, *attitudes* toward sexual behavior generally are discernible in a child long before it starts receiving specific information about sex.

"The so-called sex instruction which is given by parents and schools," Dr. Kinsey says, "usually consists of a certain amount of information concerning the anatomy and mechanics of reproduction. As far as our present information goes, this has a minimum of effect upon the development of patterns of sex behavior and, indeed, it may have no effect at all. Patterns of behavior are the products of attitudes, and attitudes may begin shaping long before the child has acquired very much, if any, factual information."

A lesson can be drawn from this fact: that efforts to mold the child's sex pattern must begin long before the school age is reached, and must be concerned more with shaping sex attitudes than with imparting factual knowledge.

II

DR. KINSEY first launched upon his epochal survey of American sex habits as a result of questions put to him by his students that he felt unable to answer authoritatively. Hoboken-born and Harvard-educated, he had joined the Indiana University faculty twenty-eight years ago at the age of twenty-five, rising to professor of zoology. He had spent nearly two decades in an intense study of the life of insects, notably of the gall wasp. He had written a best-selling textbook on biology. But Kinsey was increasingly irritated by the fact that he was unable to give scientifically valid answers to the simple questions of students about human sex problems. He searched the available literature on human sex and discovered that

it was confusing, contradictory, and patchy. He found the whole subject entangled in a mass of taboos and repressions. He wondered why human sex habits could not be studied with the same scientific objectivity, and recorded with the same detached precision, as were the sex habits of the lower animals.

Dr. Kinsey set out to study and to classify human sex patterns with the same scientific precision he had applied to the study of the gall wasp. He would not get his knowledge second-hand from books. He would get his information about the most intimate aspects of individual life directly from the people. Fortunately, he had an out-going, tolerant, easy-to-talk-with personality that permitted him to gain quick contact with people and speedy confidence of all kinds and conditions of men and women. He interviewed bankers and bums, teachers and truck drivers, cowboys and cabbies, the upper crust and the underworld, infants (by special techniques) and nonagenarians, from border to border and coast to coast. He delved deeper into human sex life, on a mass basis, than any scientist had ever done before. His success was based mainly on four factors: he guaranteed complete confidence; he passed no moral judgments; people were willing, even eager, to aid in this scientific effort to help us understand ourselves better; his interviewing technique was devised with consummate skill. Astonishingly, people were willing to tell this stranger things about themselves that they would never dream of revealing to their most intimate friends and kinfolk.

In time, Kinsey brought three young associates into his great sex survey of America. Martin joined him seven years ago, soon after graduating from Indiana, to take over the management of the statistical problems of the project. Pomeroy, a thirty-three-year-old clinical psychologist, followed two years later. Gebhard, thirty-year-old anthropologist, came into the work last year. Each associate gets a year of intensive training in Kinsey's interviewing and classifying methods before he starts collecting personal sex histories on his own. To date, the Kinsey group has interviewed over 12,000 American men, women, and children.

As part of my research for this article, I subjected myself to an interview by Professor Kinsey, answering 325 questions on my sex history in one hour and fifteen minutes. I am as inhibited as the next fellow about sexual matters, but to my great surprise I experienced no embarrassment in giving intimate details of my personal life to this amazingly skillful interviewer. The answers to the 325 questions were recorded by Professor Kinsey in code on one side of a single sheet of paper. It would require about 25 typewritten pages if the details were set down in text!

Experts who have closely scrutinized the interviewing techniques of Kinsey and his associates indorse their scientific validity and state further that the people so far interviewed represent a fair cross section of the American population. The Kinsey group, who have made a life work of this project, expect to interview 88,000 more Americans during the next twenty years; the present report will be followed by eight others as other aspects of American sexual behavior are analyzed.

III

THE Kinsey survey reveals that there is no single "American sex pattern," but scores of different patterns, based mainly on social differences in the population. Professor Kinsey found wider differences in the sex habits of social groups living within the same community than anthropologists have reported between peoples separated by vast geographical distances.

The sex habits of the grade-school son of a semiskilled laborer in an East Side New York tenement and the college-destined son of the business executive living in the swank apartment house around the corner may contrast more widely than those of an African jungle boy and Eskimo youth. The discovery of these tremendous variations in American sex habits is of incalculable importance, since our moral and legal codes are based largely on the assumption that "normal" Americans share a more or less common pattern of sex behavior.

Human sex patterns, Kinsey observes, are based on three major factors—the bio-

logical, the psychological, and the social. Of these, the social factor is by far the most important. The individual's sex habits are formed mainly by his cultural environment—the social group which he moves in or into. The Kinsey group discloses a remarkable aspect of the close relationship between sexual patterns and socio-educational levels. For example, one family they studied included five sons. The father was a semiskilled worker. Four of the sons never went beyond high school; their sex habits conformed to the lower-level group. The fifth son, whose sex habits were akin to those of the college-level group, later went through college. Professor Kinsey doesn't know at this point exactly what is the basis for this extraordinary link between sex habits and educational status; he knows only that the close relationship does exist. The boy's sex pattern accords not so much with the socio-educational group into which he is born, but with the one he eventually moves into in later life.

PROFESSOR Kinsey divides American males into three educational classes—those who never go beyond grade school, those who don't go beyond high school, and those who go to college. He uses another classification which divides the population into nine socio-economic groups ranging from the underworld (those depending mainly on illicit activities for a livelihood), through unskilled, semiskilled, and skilled laborers, lower and upper white collar workers, professionals, business executives, and leisure class.

There are sharp differences between the sex attitudes and habits of these educational, socio-economic groups, but remarkable conformity among most individuals belonging to the same group. For example, kissing is a common part of love-making among people in the upper social levels, but is widely abhorred as filthy and unhygienic among people in the lower levels. Petting is practiced more frequently and at greater length in the upper than the lower levels. There is a far greater acceptance of nudity within the family circle at upper social levels than in lower-level groups. Those in the upper levels tend to be far stricter about premarital and extra-

marital sexual intercourse, but far more tolerant of masturbation than those in the lower levels. The average American boy of grade-school level, between the ages of sixteen and twenty, masturbates only half as often as the college-level boy of the same age, but has seven times more sexual intercourse than the latter.

"The mother who is afraid to send her boy away to college for fear he will be morally corrupted there is evidently unaware of the histories of the boys who stay at home," Professor Kinsey says.

THE Kinsey survey explodes traditional concepts of what is normal and abnormal, natural and unnatural in sex behavior. The Indiana professor observes that practices considered normal and natural in some societies, including our own, are ridiculed as grotesque in other societies. (Emphasizing these peculiarities in sex patterns, Kinsey notes that a Latin-American audience may view complacently an artistic film about nudity, but may hiss down as "obscene" a Hollywood movie with kissing scenes.) Other practices considered essential to the art of love-making by many upper-level people are regarded as disgusting perversions by lower-level people.

"Present-day legal determinations of sexual acts which are acceptable or 'natural' and those which are 'contrary to nature,'" he remarks drily, "are not based on data obtained from biologists nor from nature herself. In no other field of science have scientists been satisfied to accept the biologic notions of ancient jurists and theologians, or the analyses of mystics of two or three thousand years ago."

About 98 per cent of all males who never go beyond grade school indulge in sexual intercourse before marriage, as compared with 84 per cent of high-school and 67 per cent of college-level males. While the fact that two out of every three college-bred males have premarital intercourse may surprise many people, Kinsey points out that such acts are far less frequent among them than among any other groups.

"A good many college males never have premarital intercourse with more than

the one girl they subsequently marry," Professor Kinsey says. "Very few have premarital intercourse with more than half a dozen girls or so. On the average, they don't have their first experience until five or six years after the lower-level males start."

Almost half of all males in the grade-school and high-school levels experience sexual intercourse before reaching their sixteenth year, but this is true of only 10 per cent of the boys who ultimately go to college.

IV

IMPLICIT in the revolutionary Kinsey report is a plea for greater public and private tolerance of the vast differences in the sex habits of Americans. Such terms as abnormal, unnatural, oversexed, and undersexed, as used in our legal and moral codes, have little validity in the light of Professor Kinsey's revelations. There is a tremendous variety in the frequency and type of sexual behavior in normal Americans.

Kinsey cites the contrast between one physically sound male included in his study who experienced but one ejaculation in thirty years, and another (a scholar and skilled lawyer) who averaged over thirty ejaculations a week over a thirty-year period. Kinsey adds that when his next report—on the sex habits of the human female—is published, it will show that an even greater variety is manifested among women.

"These differences in frequency of sexual activity are of great social importance," Kinsey remarks. "The publicly pretended code of morals, our social organization, our marriage customs, our sex laws, and some of our educational and religious concepts are based upon an assumption that individuals are much alike sexually, and that it is an equally simple matter for all of them to confine their behavior to the single pattern that the *mores* dictate. Even in such an obviously sexual situation as marriage, scant consideration is given the possibility that two persons who have mated may be far apart in their sexual inclinations, backgrounds, and capacities."

The fact that another person's rate of

sexual activity may be remarkably different from one's own is hard for even professionally-trained people to understand. It is a major reason why so many penological, psychiatric, and marriage counseling efforts fail in attempts at personal adjustment. The laws regarding sexual behavior, here and elsewhere, are written, interpreted, and enforced mainly by people in the upper educational and social levels, who generally conform to a particular pattern. Most sexual *mores* are imposed on modern society by those belonging to the 15 per cent of the population which is college-trained. But the Kinsey study shows that a vast gulf lies between this 15 per cent and the 85 per cent who never go to college. The upper-level group tend to view sex from a moral standpoint—on the basis of what is right or wrong. The lower-level group, on the other hand, regard sexual behavior from the viewpoint of the natural and unnatural. To most members of this group, sexual intercourse seems natural and therefore right, whether or not it has legal sanction. They view as disgusting perversions many of the love-making habits that are considered "civilized" by upper-level people.

For example, a policeman belonging to the lower-level group may let off with an admonition an adolescent couple caught in the act of intercourse, but may indignantly take to court a boy caught masturbating in a back alley. The upper-level judge, however, would tend to punish severely the participants in premarital intercourse while regarding the masturbator with tolerant understanding.

"In general," says Kinsey, "the upper level feels that 'lower-level morality' lacks the ideals and righteousness of the upper-level philosophy. The lower level, on the other hand, feels that educated and upper-level society has an artificial and insincere pattern of sex behavior which is all the more obnoxious because the upper level tries to force its pattern upon all other levels. Legends about the immorality of the lower level are matched by legends about the perversions of the upper level. One is inclined to accept the particular legends that apply to the group to which one does not belong."

ONE of the striking differences between upper- and lower-level sex patterns concerns extramarital relations. The report reveals that anywhere between 30 and 45 per cent of married American males have sexual intercourse with women other than their wives. Over 50 per cent of married males who never go beyond grade-school education engage in such extramarital relations.

An important implication arises out of this fact. A woman may be justified in rushing to a divorce court upon discovering an act of infidelity in her husband, but the cold statistics show that such acts, far from being extraordinary, are committed by a very large proportion of married men.

Many sex acts condemned as immoral and illegal in our law books are so commonly practiced as to make criminals of the vast majority of the American population. Consider these startling figures:

One out of every three American males has had some adolescent homosexual experience.

Nearly 70 per cent, by 35 years of age, have had relations with prostitutes.

Eighty-six per cent engage in premarital intercourse.

Between 30 and 45 per cent engage in extramarital intercourse.

One out of every six American farm boys has had intercourse with animals.

All of these and still other types of sexual behavior widely practiced in America are illicit activities, each performance of which is punishable as a crime under law, as Kinsey notes. He adds:

"The persons involved in these activities, taken as a whole, constitute more than 95 per cent of the total male population. Only a very small proportion of the males sent to penal institutions for committing sex offenses are involved in behavior which is materially different from the behavior of most males in the general population."

When people in a community, following a particularly shocking sex crime, demand an immediate "cleanup" of all sex offenders by the police, they might consider the amazing fact that fully 95 per cent of all American males are involved

in one or more illegal sexual activities!

There are, of course, sex attitudes and practices that are dangerous to person and to public weal. But implicit in the Kinsey report is the need for careful reevaluation of our present legal codes on sex.

V

TWO very reassuring observations emerge from the Kinsey report: (1) the younger generation is not going to the dogs, morally, and (2) the late world war has not resulted in looser sexual behavior among those who fought in uniform.

Professor Kinsey, on the basis of his statistics, cracks down hard on the ubiquitous Jeremiahs who go about bewailing the evil ways of the next generation. Modern youth, he reports, is no wilder in its sexual behavior than was grandfather in the Victorian nineties. Nor are our young men more immoral than their fathers were. Kinsey reminds us that our present-day fathers were themselves the "flaming youth" of that jazz age in the "roaring twenties" that followed the first world war. It is true that the evidence indicates that boys of the lower social level are reaching adolescence a year or so sooner than boys of the same level a generation or two ago. This he inclined to attribute to the fact that better sanitation, medical care, and nutritional standards have improved the general health of lower-income groups during the past thirty years and, along with it, the capacity for sexual activity. There is also more dependence upon masturbation and petting among lower-level boys than there used to be, probably as a result of infiltration of upper-level ideas.

But with respect to premarital intercourse with prostitutes or other women (which, it has been claimed, has been increasing), Kinsey declares:

"The [incidence data] for the older and the younger generation are, by the admission of the older generation when it contributes its own histories, so nearly identical that no significant differences can be found. These questions are of such social significance that it is high time scientific data replaced the loose statements and

easy conclusions drawn by persons who find some sort of advantage in bewailing the ways of the world."

The violent social and political changes witnessed during the past generation have had no significant effect on the nation's sex patterns, Kinsey states on the basis of his findings. We have gone through two world wars of unprecedented scale, periods of economic prosperity and depression, jazz and jitterbug ages, political upheavals, changes in educational and religious attitudes, revolutionary developments in our means of transportation and communication. Yet, in war and peace, sex patterns have remained essentially as they were down the centuries.

AS FOR wartime effects on the sexual behavior of men, Dr. Kinsey flatly contradicts the widespread opinion that America has experienced a "moral breakdown."

"There is no evidence," he says, "that patterns of sexual behavior are materially altered even among men in the armed forces during a period of war."

Dr. Kinsey again stresses the demonstrated fact that such sex patterns are usually fixed by the age of sixteen, and do not change from then on, with rare exceptions.

It is true that many men had their first experience in sexual intercourse after they got into the armed forces, but most of these men would have begun it at about that age had they stayed at home. Those who had experience with prostitutes while in uniform were generally the kind who would have the same experience in civilian life; those who avoided prostitutes did so for the same reason they would have at home. The public is much more conscious of the behavior of a man in uniform than it is of a man in civilian clothes. The civilian who walks down the street with a

girl does not attract nearly as much attention as the uniformed male who walks down the same street with the same girl.

"The high officer who complained that too many mothers thought that the Army had invented sex had considerable justification for his complaint," says Kinsey.

Very few adults ever depart from the sex patterns established in their teens, Kinsey emphasizes again and again. Many individuals do acquire certain details of sex activity in later life, and some think they have acquired entirely new sex attitudes. Upper-level persons like to think they have become more liberal, sexually emancipated, free of their former inhibitions, rational instead of traditional in their behavior, ready to experiment with anything. Nonetheless, it is rare that such "emancipated" persons actually engage in sex behavior which is foreign to the pattern laid down in their youth.

There is the upper-level male who boasts of his many wild experiences with girls in the tropics, of his conquests of women in many ports, after returning from army service. But when such men contributed their objective records to Kinsey's scientific study, it usually turned out that they never brought themselves to having actual intercourse with any of the girls.

THE Kinsey report is certain to arouse a great deal of heated controversy in the months and years to come. Its findings are at odds with many prejudices, taboos, and false concepts that have been venerated as the truth for centuries. Yet, for our own sake and for that of our children, it would behoove us to heed the plea of Dr. Gregg and his fellow-scientists of unquestioned wisdom and integrity. Humankind can never be hurt by truths that help us understand ourselves and our fellow men.