

## Letters to the Editor

Editor: *Indiana Magazine of History*

Sir, I wonder if I might comment on Professor Reed's recent review, which has only just reached me, of my biography of Alfred C. Kinsey—*Sex The Measure of all Things*. Professor Reed asserts that James Jones, the author of a previous biography, "[made] clear his respect for Kinsey whose 'great accomplishment was to take his pain and suffering and use it to transform himself into an instrument of social reform'." This is a quotation from Jones p. 772.

What Reed fails to note, or report since he can hardly have failed to notice it, is that Jones had spent many of the previous 771 pages in a concerted and misguided attack, partly on Kinsey's character, but principally on his motives and his methodology as regards his male homosexual statistics.

There are two sides to this—Kinsey's figures and his use of them. Jones asserted that Kinsey collected far too many male homosexual histories. This is perfectly true. What Jones did not point out was that Kinsey also collected far too many sex offender histories and far too many juvenile sex histories. He did this because he planned full scale books on the influence of child upbringing and sex education on future sexual development and behaviour, on sex offenders and on homosexuality. What Jones also failed to point out was that when Kinsey came to his first published work, the *Male* report, he did not use the juvenile or sex offender histories except in individual cases, and he drastically scaled down the male homosexual figures so that they conformed with the rest of his sample (see my *Kinsey* pp. 282-286).

The reason, as Reed might have indicated, why Jones did not make the necessary qualifications to his quoting of these figures is that he had another use for them. They "virtually guaranteed," wrote Jones, "what he was looking for" (Jones, p. 533)—that is, too many homosexuals. As a result his work was seriously "flawed" and "skewed." (Too many references, but see Jones pp. 349, 376, 387, 516, 522, 533, 541).

What the reader is meant to infer is that Kinsey did this so that he could make out there were far more male homosexuals than there were. And this is precisely what reviewers *did* infer. I quoted ten leading reviews from both sides of the Atlantic—and could have quoted many more. Here are two. Julian Barnes, *Sunday Times* (UK), 9 November 1997: ". . . resulted in his research being seriously skewed in favour of homosexuals." Terry Teachout, *The National Review* (US), 13 October 1997: ". . . sought out as many male interviewees as possible. . . [and] vastly overestimated the incidence of homosexual behavior in America." In Britain, *The Times* (2 January, 1998) actually ran a leader on the apparently deliberately skewed science of Kinsey. (My *Kinsey* pp. 366, 487, 488).

In fact, analysis of Kinsey's figures and his use of them shows them to have been scrupulously used and interpreted, and as accurate as they could have been given the statistical science of the day. Nothing was "skewed," nothing "flawed." (See my *Kinsey* pp. 282-286, 355-369).

I answer at some length, not just because the subject is complicated but because to accuse a scientist of cheating on his evidence is the most serious allegation it is possible to make. The damage to Kinsey's reputation has been incalculable. It is in the interests both of science and historical scholarship that this false accusation is refuted; it should not be defended, which is in effect what Professor Reed has done.

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Editor: *Indiana Magazine of History*

In my short review, I did not deal with the controversies surrounding Kinsey's statistical methods. I did observe that "Gathorne-Hardy's case for Kinsey is strong on some issues, including Kinsey's methodology and the place of his increasingly compulsive personal sexual conduct within his research. . . ." I do not think that Jones slandered Kinsey in the way that Gathorne-Hardy implies in his biography of Kinsey and in his response to my *IMH* review. My reading of Jones did not lead me to the conclusion that Kinsey was a scientific fraud. I stand by my observation that Gathorne-Hardy's "special empathy [for Kinsey] is a poor substitute for the critical perspective that Kinsey commands as one of the modern world's most important advocates of sexual reform."

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