



Kiss and Tell: Surveying Sex in the Twentieth Century

By Julia A. Erickson, Sally A. Steffen

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, United States, 2001. Paperback.

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*****.Learning the details of others sex lives is possibly the most enticing of guilty pleasures. We measure our own practices against the normalcy sex surveys seek to capture. Special interest groups often use or attack survey findings (such as the claim that 10 of Americans are gay) for their own ends. This text chronicles the history of sex surveys in the USA over a century of changing social and sexual mores. It reveals that the survey questions asked, more than the answers elicited, expose and shape the popular image of appropriate sexuality. As much, therefore, can be learned about the history and practice of sexuality by looking at surveyors changing concerns as can be learned by reading the results of their surveys. The authors show how surveys have reflected societal anxieties about adolescent development, teen sex and promiscuity, and AIDS, and have been employed in efforts to preserve marriage and to control women's sexuality.

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