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NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

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26 January 1946
333 Cedar Street
New Haven 11, Ct.

Dr. L. H. Weed
Division of Medical Sciences
National Research Council
2101 Constitution Avenue
Washington 25, D. C.

My dear Doctor Weed:

In response to your recent request for my opinion of the Kinsey sex behavior project, I very gladly send you the following emphatic and somewhat dogmatic sounding appraisal of the undertaking and my grounds of opinion.

I should confess that when some six years ago I first read description of the project and of the proposed method of inquiry, I was considerably prejudiced against it because of my extensive experience as experimentalist, objectivist, and naturalist with the shortcomings of the interview procedure. For I discovered through many examples that whether observation be direct or by questionnaire the method has serious limitations, ordinarily yields results of low reliability, and is especially subject to impressional and other types of subjective error.

The opinions which I am about to express are based on several categories of information of which the following probably are most significant.

(1) General acquaintance with Kinsey's proposals and procedures as set forth in his request for assistance.

(2) Experience as subject of sex behavior interview and as observer of the interview of another person, in each case with Kinsey as interviewer.

(3) Thoroughgoing examination of the content and logical arrangement of the interview, of the method of recording results, of analysis and filing for statistical use, and of the mechanics as well as the intellectual aspects of the entire procedure.

(4) Excellent opportunity to become familiar with Kinsey's expositional and interpretative handling of his observational data and of the products of statistical analysis.

(5) Discussion of the above aspects of the situation and varieties of information with many competent specialists in biology and sociology.

Kinsey's plan of inquiry is broadly based and, although obviously ambitious, also wisely conceived. With unprecedented inclusiveness it covers the study of human patterns of sex behavior, their genesis and development in the individual, their modifying or conditioning causes; their types and variation in relation to race and religion, education and occupation, economic and social status, age and cultural exposure. Without reservation, I characterize this plan as the best of which I have knowledge in recorded human history.

As to methodology, Kinsey's interview procedure is the outcome of years of diligent, critical effort. In its present state it is relatively highly developed, admirable in question content, topical arrangement, system of recording, checks of accuracy, and adequacy or completeness. In saying this I have in mind the historical development of interview methodology. In all essential respects Kinsey's happens to be the best that I have met. Even in the hands of a person of ordinary interviewing talent, adequately trained, it should yield fair to excellent results, but in the hands of Alfred Kinsey, and in the light of my personal observation of its use by him, it is remarkably effective. This statement requires certain further elaboration.

Beyond doubt Alfred Kinsey is an extraordinarily gifted interviewer. He has rare tact, sympathetic insight, ability to win confidence, disinterestedness, objectivity, and directness. His success in overcoming individual and social mistrust, timidity, and prejudice relative to studies of sex behavior patterns, and in obtaining voluntary subjects for this inquiry, is truly amazing. Again I express myself enthusiastically and without qualification, for assuredly Kinsey is a genius in this extremely difficult field of inquiry. Indeed, he is so extraordinarily well qualified for this work by nature, technical training, and experience that it obviously has become a matter of social wisdom and economy of human resources to give him optimal support, intellectually, morally, and financially.

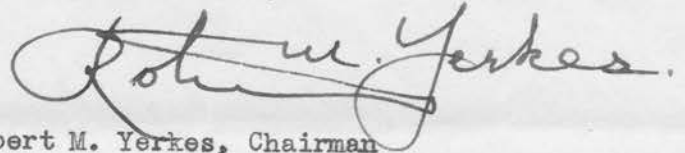
As to the outcome of this great undertaking, which stretches indefinitely into the future of human enlightenment, some facts already are clear. On the basis of ~~Kinsey's~~ personal experience in interviewing thousands of individuals of all ages and walks of life, and of his preliminary analysis and study of upward of 10,000 sex behavior histories, this man now has a knowledge of human sex behavior patterns and their relations to our mores, social institutions and culture, which is wholly incomparable with anything discoverable in the relevant literature or in my acquaintance with current work and workers the world over.

Dr. Weed

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Instead of apologies, Dr. Weed, for these emphatic statements of approval and appreciation, I rejoice in the circumstances which enable me to make them. Alfred Kinsey is in the midst of an epoch-making socio-biological inquiry.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Robert M. Yerkes". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

h

Robert M. Yerkes, Chairman
Committee for Research in Problems of Sex