

Social Scientific Citizens:

Surveys, Statistics, and the Public in Modern America

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The Occasional Papers of the School of Social Science are versions of talks given at the School's weekly Thursday Seminar. At these seminars, Members present work-in-progress and then take questions. There is often lively conversation and debate, some of which will be included with the papers. We have chosen papers we thought would be of interest to a broad audience. Our aim is to capture some part of the cross-disciplinary conversations that are the mark of the School's programs. While Members are drawn from specific disciplines of the social sciences—anthropology, economics, sociology and political science—as well as history, philosophy, literature and law, the School encourages new approaches that arise from exposure to different forms of interpretation. The papers in this series differ widely in their topics, methods, and disciplines. Yet they concur in a broadly humanistic attempt to understand how, and under what conditions, the concepts that order experience in different cultures and societies are produced, and how they change.

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Social Scientific Citizens: Surveys, Statistics, and the Public in Modern America

Note: This lecture was delivered the week before the 2004 U.S. elections, which took place on November 2.

Recently, the political action committee MoveOn took out an intriguing full-page ad in *The New York Times*. In it, the group charged the Gallup Poll with inflating George Bush's public opinion numbers in the days leading up to November's presidential contest. It is important to note that MoveOn—to the tune of \$68,000—was here protesting not a political action but a *representation* of one: more specifically, Gallup's projection of who would vote, and how they would vote in the upcoming election. Indeed, in 2004, it has sometimes seemed, Americans are fighting above all else about the terms of their representation. In an updating of David Riesman's notion of "the inside dopester," spin rooms and political blogs have taken the stance that, at least until November 2, depictions of the electorate are equally if not more significant than the thing itself.¹ Up for grabs in this struggle are characterizations of the U.S. public. And crucially, they are mediated by a social scientific technology, namely, opinion polls.

As an historian I cannot pretend to shed any light on future elections. But I do want to inquire into something that this advertisement helps highlight: the entangled careers of social statistics and modern American culture. This peculiar configuration, what I have sometimes described as the emergence of a "social scientific public," is not so old as we might think, nor was it recently invented. If I am right, it emerged fitfully—and with a fair bit of controversy—in the early and middle decades of the twentieth century.

This social scientific public is apparent not just in battles over the polls in 2004 but in the words of a research subject, half a century ago, reflecting upon her experience of being interviewed for Alfred Kinsey's mass survey on human sexuality. "When I first stepped into his office," she confessed in 1949, "I was...disturbed at the prospect of revealing the most intimate details of my life...But in very short order I was taking a completely objective view and finding the interview as clinical and impersonal as an examination by a doctor." This woman went on proudly to describe her role in Kinsey's data-collection: "I was an infinitesimal cog in one of the greatest fact-finding projects ever undertaken," she explained. "Day by day, month by month, [the interviews] add up to the first great mass of facts, and figures drawn from a cross-section of all social and educational groups, from which charts, curves and finally conclusions may be drawn."²

This woman's initial unease about divulging personal information—and, equally, her fascination with the composite results—bespoke the new and powerful role that social data were coming to play in daily life. Over the course of the twentieth century, more and more individuals would participate, either as research subjects or consumers of information, in a voluminous traffic of social scientific numbers, knowledge, and norms. Like Kinsey's interviewee, Americans would learn not only to offer up private information about themselves to surveyors, but also to see themselves reflected in aggregate data collected from anonymous others.

My current work has grown out of a desire to understand this relationship between American society and the tools used to measure, display, and express it: community studies, questionnaires, man-in-the-street interviews, consumer surveys, and of course, public opinion polls. Despite the prominence of all manner of polls, surveys, and statistics today, such intimacy between social scientific knowledge and American life is quite new. In the early days of the Great Depression, for example, even the head of federal unemployment relief reported that “he had no statistics on how many people were unemployed, how many on relief, or how much relief they got.” Furthermore, and here is where it gets interesting, he “hadn’t tried to obtain these figures.” Before 1940, according to one scholar, “it was a commonplace that the United States had better statistics on its pigs than on its unemployed people.”³

The multiple techniques for gathering information about “ourselves” became part of American public discourse only in the years around World War One. Of course, social information encased in numbers was not new. Historians of statistics have traced the techniques employed by states and bureaucracies to count, administer, and make “legible” populations for military service and taxation as far back as William the Conqueror’s Domesday Book of 1086.⁴ In the United States, the formal census initiated in the 1780s was coincident with the founding of the nation itself. And Western countries in the nineteenth century witnessed a wave of surveying by private citizens, an “avalanche of numbers,” in the cause of industrial and social reform.⁵

The purposes and effects of gathering data about the population changed dramatically in the last century, however, especially as academic researchers and commercial interests joined reformers and state agencies in seeking such information. These surveyors aggressively expanded their domain by turning from social problems or simple tabulations to detailed descriptions of individuals’ actions and preferences. And they successfully colonized new areas of American life: from routine habits, to social and political attitudes, to the most intimate areas of private experience. By bringing “normal” behaviors, beliefs, and personalities into their orbit and making their findings broadly accessible through the mass media, surveyors also found new audiences for their statistics, allowing social data to play a novel role in the public sphere as well as in individual lives.

Social surveyors were able to lay powerful claims to elucidating national trends and characterizing the American population. But their particular modes of collecting and aggregating information offered more than simple facts: they provided new ways of seeing, knowing, and imagining. These ways of knowing were always partial (they did not include each data point and often deliberately excluded some Americans from “the public”) and, in some sense, fictional (they made social life simpler and more homogeneous than it was in reality). Nevertheless, they were engaged in a powerful, if covert, kind of nation-building. I want to suggest that it has now become nearly impossible to know the modern public *apart from* opinion polls, surveys, and social statistics.

I have been interested in the form these technologies of social representation took, and what sort of cultural power they exerted in the stories they told about the public. Even though social scientific modes of representation were ubiquitous in the twentieth century—and were, I contend, crucial to the making of a self-consciously mass society—this theme is strangely absent from histories of American nationalism, mass culture, and public life. Scholars of the modern United States have barely registered the movement of social data into the public sphere as an historical question or problem.⁶ And so I have asked: How did social scientific technologies secure authority with the U.S. public? What were the ramifications for individuals of the intervening,

questioning presence of social surveyors, as they reached more deeply into people's lives for information? How did the influx of facts and figures purporting to describe "average Americans" shape understandings of the collective, and of social identities within it?

Modern survey techniques could seem strange, offensive, invasive, and even illegal to people who were first subject to them in the middle decades of the twentieth century. In trying to reconstruct the accommodation of American culture to new social data, then, one place to begin is in the conflicts, debates, and suspicions triggered by surveyors' ways of knowing. Relying on interchanges between researchers and subjects, journalistic coverage of social scientific findings, researchers' private papers, and their correspondence with the general public, I trace the patterns of distrust and dependence that marked Americans' relationship with the social data that claimed to represent them. Along the way, I hope to glimpse just what sort of public was evolving in tandem with opinion polls and sex surveys.

Gallup and Kinsey's Aggregated America

Let me turn now to popular reactions to two of the best-known purveyors of quantified facts about "average Americans" in the twentieth century: George Gallup and Elmo Roper's public opinion polls, beginning in 1935, and Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior* studies of 1948 and 1953.

"What is the common man thinking?" asked George Gallup in 1940. He claimed to provide "a modern answer on the basis, not of guesswork, but of facts" by announcing the arrival of "a new instrument—the public opinion poll" that could "provide a continuous chart of the opinions of the man in the street."⁷ Gallup and his colleague Elmo Roper had arrived on the national stage in 1936, publicly challenging conventional wisdom and the famous *Literary Digest* straw poll to predict Franklin Roosevelt's victory in the presidential contest of that year.⁸ The self-proclaimed founders of "scientific polling" had higher aspirations for their craft, however, hoping their sampling procedures could unlock what mainstream America believed on a wide range of social issues. The new polls—on topics from war plans to taxation policies, working women to venereal disease, and underwritten by newspaper syndication—enjoyed spectacular growth. By 1940, just four years after his election day victory, an estimated eight million people were receiving George Gallup's triweekly reports of "What America Thinks."⁹ Polling techniques would become an increasingly familiar way of representing the attitudes of surveyors' stock character, "the man in the street."

Similarly, Alfred Kinsey, in his best-selling *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), proudly announced the application of social science to new territory: "normal" American sexual habits. Kinsey and his research team, employing an intensive interviewing technique, claimed to uncover how ordinary Americans "really" behaved. Apart from the vast size of his sample (100,000 subjects was the goal), what appeared groundbreaking about Kinsey's research, as just about every commentator noted, was his focus on everyday sexuality. "Kinsey has one great advantage over the psychotherapist and the psychoanalyst," wrote one reviewer: "his specimens are not neurotics, psychopaths, or psychotics in the meshes of emotional and social conflicts or legal entanglements, but average men, who are encountered daily on the street or the bus."¹⁰ Commentators were quick to praise Kinsey's findings as "the first work in all the mountain of writing on the subject which presents an authenticated picture of normal sexual behavior," and "the greatest mass survey of normal sex activity in our society."¹¹ Like Gallup

and Roper's polls, Kinsey's statistics on the prevalence of behaviors from masturbation to extra-marital sex to "homosexual contacts" would circulate widely in the postwar years.

There is much to say about the form—stark, quantitative, and stripped of nuance or social context—that Gallup and Kinsey's brand of knowledge took. Both men were naïve empiricists who counted opinions and behaviors without inquiring too deeply into the malleability of categories and responses. And both buttressed their findings with a calculated scientific stance. More important for our purposes were the representations of social reality they projected in their tables, charts, and graphs.

The pollsters devised ambitious tools for tracking the nation and locating the modal American. Part of a movement away from the community survey and toward modern sampling techniques in the 1930s, opinion researchers developed both quantitative methods and human networks that allowed a tiny cross-section of Americans of different regions, classes, and races to stand in for the whole. The real breakthrough here was the discovery of ways to estimate standard errors based on sample size in 1935.¹² Armed with this tool, organizations such as Gallup's American Institute for Public Opinion and Roper's *Fortune* Survey employed a cast of thousands fanned out across the country, ready to be tapped for timely poll results. The questions put to scattered, anonymous individuals were translated, in the words of George Gallup, into a "week-by-week picture of what Americans are thinking."¹³

It bears saying that the polity Gallup sampled in the early years presented a rather distorted picture of the adult "general public," systematically under-representing women, African-Americans, and individuals at the bottom of the economic ladder.¹⁴ But perhaps more influential were the pollsters' invocations of "the public" itself. Surveyors were, on a day-to-day basis, engaged in segmenting the U.S. population by class, race, age, and region. Yet they tended to describe their findings not as the diverse views of a heterogeneous public, but as the singular voice of the nation. Indeed, "America Speaks" was the catch-phrase of the Gallup Poll. Gallup could ask in 1939, for example: "Where is the American public headed in 1939? What will it be saying and thinking?"¹⁵ And in a feature article in 1941, Gallup invoked not majority and minority views but the "average American" or "average man" ten times.¹⁶ By 1947, *Newsweek* was able to announce that a "shadowy figure" was beginning to emerge from the polls of the period: the "American Majority Man."¹⁷ Pollsters in this way made of multiple, conflicting social groups a collective "we," or in Michael Warner's words, a "mass subject."¹⁸ Opinion surveys were in the business of creating and constantly remaking—not simply monitoring—a national public.

Kinsey's Reports, on the other hand, were derived from thousands of laborious one-on-one sexual history interviews, composed of anywhere from 350 to 521 questions. The result, in the lead author's words, was "an objectively determined body of fact about sex which strictly avoids social or moral interpretations of the fact."¹⁹ Although there were important oversights in his own claims for representativeness—most strikingly, the elimination of African-American subjects from the final tallies—Kinsey claimed to have sampled a cross-section of all populations, regions, and age groups in order to arrive at a scientific mirror of sexual behavior.²⁰

The Reports' statistics, some of which became as well known as the Reports themselves, were radically compressed from millions of individual responses to hundreds of questions asked in varying ways by different interviewers. Primarily interested in behavior, and in behavior that was easily measured and quantified, Kinsey designated "sexual outlet," broken into six different types, as his chief unit of analysis. Individual eccentricity submerged in favor of mean

frequencies, the findings displayed in the Reports represented individual experience in a social scientific mode best captured by the use of the orgasm as the primary unit of measurement. The scientist's lengthy columns of statistics illuminating the rates of sexual activity among various groups offered up a more variegated representation of the American population than did Gallup's polls. Nevertheless, Kinsey could not avoid characterizing his survey as one documenting how "average" people, or "Americans," behaved sexually. Coupled with his statistical mode of presentation, this had the effect of creating not a single normal curve, but many of them, based on a given individual's age, sex, education, and class.

Gallup's majorities and Kinsey's medians, appearing on the scene when they did, evoked specific fears in the public they studied. I will focus on two prominent strains: first, concern about the unrepresentative and even undemocratic nature of survey data; and second, apprehension about quantified averages themselves becoming normative. These reactions—laced through journalistic commentary, social criticism, and the letters of the general public—greeted both of the social scientific productions in question here. Deep worries over the surveys' representativeness and influence reveal how much was at stake in social scientific methods for a public just beginning to recognize their power.

"Nobody Asked Me": The Politics of Representation

The results of Gallup and Kinsey's mass surveys were meant to be representative and generalizable. Comparing the modern poll to the clearly partisan straw polls that newspapers had been conducting since 1824, Gallup and his colleagues placed themselves in the camp of efficiency, progress, and science.²¹ They substituted "direct factual reporting for intuition," systematically-culled data for erratic local knowledge.²² Similarly, Kinsey noted that previous sex research had never been able to get at "any precise or even an approximate knowledge of what average people do."²³ His thoroughgoing interviews and rigorous scientific standards, by contrast, would disclose just that.

The power of impersonal numbers claiming to represent the American public was always most evident to those who disagreed with them. Many who took up their pens to write to Gallup and Roper had an unwavering conviction about their own grasp of social and political opinion, and challenged the pollsters to tell them otherwise. Dismissing the surveys as unrepresentative, many writers in fact insisted that they were better able to speak for "the public," or a significant segment of it. One such example is a woman who complained in 1951 that Elmo Roper was "98 per cent wrong" regarding American support for universal military training. He might speak for "a certain group" (she suspected New Yorkers), but certainly not "the American people."²⁴ Similarly, a man who protested Roper's poll results showing strong support for the Democrats in 1950 asserted, "I do not know where your company procured these figures but I do not believe that they made a complete survey of the rank and file of the people." He conceded that it was "easy to get a favorable account by going among certain people," but notified the pollster that his own personal survey of the rank and file had produced a different outcome.²⁵ Myriad like-minded letters poured into Roper and Gallup's polling organizations, testifying to individuals' anger at and disbelief in statistics that contradicted their own readings of the political and social milieu.

A larger problem was that the pollsters' understanding of representativeness clashed head-on with popular notions of the same. Gallup endlessly repeated the pollsters' stock-in-trade,

that “a poll which includes only a few hundred persons properly selected can easily be more accurate...than another poll which embraces millions of voters.”²⁶ But scientific sampling, with its assumption that a small group could speak for the whole, confounded and offended many critics. Its logic—that the nation’s spectrum of beliefs could be divined from doorstep interviews with as few as 1,000 people—was counterintuitive to many Americans, who viewed the practice as fundamentally unable to account for all of the people.

Refusal to accept the scientific basis of opinion polls was commonplace in the 1940s and 1950s. One woman wrote to Gallup, for example, “I notice you always say ‘The Public’ in the headline, but further down in very small print you say the question was put to a carefully selected sample of 1,536 persons. Now, how in the world, by any stretch of the imagination can 1,536 people be termed ‘the public?’”²⁷ Another characteristic response came from those who had never been questioned by a polltaker, and who believed that this fact itself gave lie to the polls’ claims to representation. “As I have skeptically been following your recent Polls, I have been conducting one of my own,” one man informed Gallup.

The first question is: ‘Do you know of anyone that has ever been polled by Gallup’...??? Upon failure to find ANYONE yet to answer in the affirmative [sic], my next question is then asked: ‘Do you know of anyone that knows anyone that has ever been polled by Gallup’...??? Well, needless to say, I again fail to find ANY-ONE to say yes...So, WHERE do you find these people that you poll, I’d really like to know.²⁸

Demanded another man, who wrote to Elmo Roper after hearing one of his radio broadcasts: “Where do you get your information? I am 44 yrs old and have never been interviewed by a poll taker.” This man ran a cigar stand in Pittsburgh and claimed to talk with hundreds of people daily, none of whom had been interviewed either. He went on to challenge Roper’s figures because the pollster hadn’t queried anyone like him.²⁹ In his doubt that scientifically-selected “representatives” could express his perspective, this man was quite evidently not alone.

Pollsters, partly through this kind of correspondence, were well aware of their problems with the public. And they fretted about the widespread distrust of sampling. George Gallup wrote with some frustration as early as 1936, “Tell [the average man] that it is possible to select a few hundred or a few thousand persons...who represent the divergencies in point of view of the entire voting population...and he will laugh, if he does not swear.”³⁰ He later confirmed the ubiquity of this vein of criticism, remarking that the most common query he received from individuals who wrote to him at his polling outfit was: “Why haven’t I been interviewed?” This continued to be the case up until the late 1950s.³¹ The single greatest complaint of those who wrote to the pollsters was that a science that claimed to speak for them had never bothered to ask their opinion in the first place. A technology of representation was, in the eyes of its critics, an instrument of voicelessness.

Challenges from general readers also met the *Sexual Behavior* findings, not to mention Kinsey’s assertion that normal sexuality was the surveyor’s to define. Many of his critics charged that the Reports were simply not accurate: that Kinsey’s subjects could not possibly be drawn from the pool of “respectable” American men and women; that his sample was corrupted by reliance on the sexually deviant; and that his interviews could not detect the wild exaggerations of his volunteers.

These arguments hinged on the same question of representativeness that had plagued the

pollsters. As with many of Gallup and Roper's critics, Kinsey's could draw upon personal authority to challenge the Reports' findings. "In all my life; and I have been around some, I never, to my knowledge met a homosexual," declared one such reader, dubious about statistics announcing a 37% rate of "homosexual contact" among American men.³² In fact, pollsters' well-publicized failure to predict Harry Truman's election in 1948 prepared many Americans to approach Kinsey's findings skeptically. "The recent spectacular failure of polls to reflect truth has taught thoughtful people to take even long established and accredited poll-methods with a grain of salt," editorialized the popular magazine *Life Today*. "How much salt, then, must be taken with a poll which judges and condemns 60,000,000 white males on the basis of only 5,300 interviews?"³³

Not everyone believed that Kinsey's statistics—no matter how scientific—ought to overturn established mores, or claim to represent average Americans. "You have taken a few crackpots and held them up as the norm and yourself as God," complained one correspondent.³⁴ "Adultery and kindred offenses involving sex are neither tolerated nor secretly practiced by most people in New England," protested a Boston *Daily Record* editorial, responding to Kinsey's statistic that 95% of American men could be hauled before the courts for their violations of sex laws.³⁵ Another reader objected tersely, "I do not fit in any of you're [sic] catagories [sic] and pray to God I never will."³⁶

In fashioning a "normal" out of a diverse set of interviewees (including homosexuals and prisoners), and in claiming representativeness for his studies, Kinsey plainly hit a nerve. The Reports ignited a furious debate about what social science could say about America writ large. Calling the subjects of the female study "5,940 sex delinquents," for example, one woman argued that they could not possibly represent the mainstream, "the hundreds of thousands of women and mothers...who have never engaged in any pre-marital sex relationships." Pointing to the Report's finding that fifty percent of the women interviewed were not virgins when they wed, she insisted that "the implication by association that this ratio is true among women as a whole indicates a complete lack of moral and social responsibility on the part of Dr. Kinsey." She believed he had utterly failed at "in any way portraying the womanhood of America as a whole" since "no adequate sampling of the women of America can be found among frequenters of 'bars, dance-halls and swimming pools' of the type that lend themselves to 'Socio-Sexual approaches.'"³⁷ As her challenge to the Reports makes clear, establishing a representative sexual sample in 1953 was never simply a question of science.

Indeed, some critics, much like those who decried pollsters' random sampling, disputed the basic assumption underlying Kinsey's research project: that ordinary individuals would reveal private information to a stranger. "People who volunteer information about their sex life are not necessarily typical people," pronounced a reviewer of the female report. He continued, "one would like to know what kind of women these were who were willing to discuss the intimate details of their sex lives with a stranger and how truthful their answers were."³⁸ Another argued, "the sort of woman who would tell all to Dr. Kinsey is certainly not qualified to be taken as typical of anything, even though Dr. Kinsey is said to have found 10,000."³⁹ By this logic, since only "abnormal" individuals were willing to be interviewed, the Reports could never get at the facts of average Americans' sex lives, and a sexual survey could never be truly representative.

Such rejections of social scientific technologies were rarely total, however, as a final example suggests. This particular critic objected not to sex surveys *per se*, but only to Kinsey's figures on marital infidelity, which he proposed were seriously flawed since they did not take into account

the long separations of husbands and wives during the war. Therefore the statistics were “not a true representation of the average sex-socio conditions of the country.” The writer declared himself “disgusted” that “anyone who is supposedly gathering and using statistics on a scientific basis” would make such an error and then present it to “the gullible public.” He begged Kinsey to “*please* publish a statement to the effect that your figures in this phase of the sex study are not true of what a picture of the normal segment would be.”⁴⁰

Alarmed by his characterizations of American behavior, many disbelieved Kinsey’s conclusions. In the process, however, critics betrayed their allegiance both to “the normal” and to its objective determination through statistics. Why else this vested interest in the representativeness of Kinsey’s subjects, “the womanhood of America as a whole,” or the “normal segment”? Such responses to Kinsey’s findings—like reactions to Gallup and Roper’s polls—suggest the increasing hold of social scientific ways of thinking, if not always the specific conclusions that flowed from it. They also suggest that some individuals’ identification with a quantitatively-conceived national community was strong indeed.

“Statistical Morality”: The Problem of Influence

Public opinion polls seemed to outmode local perceptions in favor of aggregate national facts. They also seemed—to summarize another sort of contemporary critique—to create a public prone to the “bandwagon effect” and the pressures of group conformity, a society that believed the majority was right and wanted fervently to belong to it. This was a criticism of quantified social facts that had less to do with their make-up than with their effects. And it was the primary reason that calls to outlaw electoral polling appeared almost immediately alongside the new technology. In 1936 and throughout the next two decades, many Americans—from members of Congress to the fabled “man in the street”—were suspicious of pollsters’ methods as well as their potential sway over elections, administrations, and individual voters.⁴¹ One angry follower of the polls made the point in a letter to Gallup, care of the “American Institute for Measuring or Formulating of Public Opinion.”⁴² The charge, here and elsewhere, was that measuring was *equivalent* to formulating.

But if the bandwagon effect was one concern among others for Gallup and Roper’s critics, it was the single most threatening aspect of Kinsey’s statistics on sexual behavior. Frequent comparisons between the new sex research and the atomic bomb—the Reports themselves were regularly referred to as the “K-bomb”—illuminate both the novelty and impact of Kinsey’s survey.⁴³ Many wondered, as did one reviewer, what might be the “effect from the pouring of these masses of laboriously collected data into the stream of public thought.”⁴⁴ Prior to the Report’s release, wrote another, Americans had a “collective ignorance of the ways of our fellows.” But once this ignorance was dispelled, he agreed, Kinsey’s sexual knowledge could not be ignored.⁴⁵ Many commentators shared the sense that a collection of data, or more precisely, public awareness of these data, could have dramatic consequences. As one minister put it, “it is not possible for Christians to return to a pre-Kinsey sexual era. Having facts about sex behavior, and consequent new insight into existing sex attitudes, there is no possible retreat into an ostrich-like position.”⁴⁶ He recognized that such knowledge did not exist in the national consciousness in the same way before and after 1948. This is why, for all their hyperbole, those who spoke of an abrupt break between a pre-Kinsey and post-Kinsey era were correct.

Some critics thus argued not with Kinsey’s facts, but rather with their publication. Letters

and editorials charged the scientist with an almost criminal irresponsibility in having made statistics detailing high rates of masturbation and extramarital activity easily obtainable, sure to fall into the hands of the young and impressionable. Statistics like Kinsey's, it was argued—in venues academic and tabloid alike—were powerfully suggestive, and harmful to the public welfare.⁴⁷ Their popular consumption would, among other things, increase divorce rates, destroy children's morals, and even pave the way for a Communist takeover.⁴⁸ “Turning these sex reports loose upon the public is on a par with the Rosenberg crime in the atomic field,” wrote one angry reader.⁴⁹ A group of letter-writers put it even more pithily: “Kinsey calls it realism, a SEWER is also realism but for obvious reasons we keep it COVERED.”⁵⁰

This vein of criticism only intensified with the release of the female Report. Articles with titles like “The Kinsey Report and Your Wife” betrayed anxiety about the effects of the new data on women's behavior, and especially their rates of premarital and extramarital sex.⁵¹ Critics spilled much ink on this problem of justification by numbers, or as one called it, “statistical morality.”⁵² To one reporter, the clinical tables at the end of the male volume were “especially dangerous” since they made for easy comparisons and self-measurement.⁵³ And at a forum on the Reports at Louisiana State University, an expert felt it necessary to proffer what might have seemed an absurd piece of advice: that “no person should feel compelled to consult tables in the Kinsey report before deciding on his type of activity.”⁵⁴ To such observers, social scientific data had a life of their own that extended far beyond the mere aggregation of facts. Access to information about other Americans could cause people to act in different ways and to reevaluate their beliefs. A battery of psychologists and sociologists set out to test just this proposition on college students at Princeton and UCLA (among other institutions), their question being: did mere familiarity with the Report alter students' sexual attitudes and behaviors?⁵⁵

Kinsey's detractors, it is safe to say, did not require such social scientific confirmation. What is revealing in their concern about “statistical morality” was their near certainty that older community standards would swiftly give way in the face of scientifically-collected data. Kinsey's champions were equally convinced of this fact. One opined, “the Report has the psychological effect of lifting a large weight of guilt from the shoulders of the individual, divides the guilt, so to speak, among millions.”⁵⁶ “To be sure,” agreed a writer for *The New Yorker*, “people might still regret their actions, even after coming into possession of the Kinsey facts, but there is a substantial difference between remorse over having acted as a member of one per cent of the population and remorse over having acted as a member of ninety per cent.”⁵⁷ Implicit in such analyses was the assumption that statistics about strangers' behaviors and national medians could become personally meaningful. In fact, Kinsey noted that among the most frequent queries interviewees had for the researchers involved “comparisons of the individual's activities with averages for the group to which he belongs” and the question, “Am I normal?”⁵⁸

Social Scientific Citizens

It is not, I think, coincidental that the issues that most distressed Kinsey and Gallup's challengers—that is, representation and influence—were political in nature. Americans who wrote to Gallup and Roper to complain about their exclusion from the polls, or who deplored Kinsey's influence on sexual mores, understood the cultural weight of quantified social data. They also appreciated how much power those who spoke for “the public” through these data were coming

to have. Anger about not being counted or about statistical morality must be read in this light. In fact, Americans' vigorous criticisms of particular social scientific findings and techniques may be seen as one measure of their investment in the new surveys—or at least their recognition, as *Time* magazine put it in 1948 in an article on the polls, that they were “here to stay.”⁵⁹

That Gallup and Kinsey's numbers triggered widespread debate attests to the novel effects of an aggregated America. Embedded even in critical responses to new kinds of social data was a gathering recognition of the power of surveying techniques to define social trends, individual identities, and the public itself. At the same time, readers' bids for inclusion in the very surveys they distrusted and even condemned suggests that their disagreement with particular findings could coexist with an accommodation to social surveying practices. Perhaps the best evidence that the public was being transformed by social science in the mid-century decades can be found in the sometimes reluctant, sometimes eager, embrace of its tools by ordinary individuals.

If the majority of Gallup and Roper's correspondents were irked that they hadn't been questioned, for instance, some were moved to tell the pollsters how they would have spoken on the issues of the day had they been asked. They wrote in unsolicited, as did one man in 1947, to say: “I did not happen to be one of those selected to answer questions on your recent [poll], but I would like to express my views.”⁶⁰ An equal number offered advice, their own distinctive opinion about which way the public mood was going to swing. Far from slamming the door on inquisitive pollsters, such individuals believed that they should count in the eyes of the statisticians, or at least that they personally could sway the numbers. One man's rather intimate link to the national polls illustrates this well. In a letter to Roper just after the mistaken forecast of the 1948 presidential election, he reported: “perhaps I had one small part in causing that error.” He explained that he had told a field interviewer that he would vote for Dewey, but in the end had voted for Truman. The man apologized, stating, “I didn't deliberately try to deceive. I changed my mind in the last week of the campaign,” and noted that a number of his friends had done the same.⁶¹

Even more striking are the ways that some Americans took up the rhetoric of the Kinsey Reports and willingly transformed themselves into social scientific subjects. One woman's letter to the author of the *Sexual Behavior* volumes read: “Dr. Kinsey, Sir: I should like to volunteer to be interviewed for your records...For classification purposes I will mention that I am an actress, married eight years, no children. Please notify me at the address below at any time I can be of service in your research.”⁶² Her offer—and her attendant self-classification—was not at all unusual. Kinsey's team had to turn away droves of individuals who hoped to be interviewed for the Reports in the 1940s and 1950s. One Vermont newspaper let its readers know in 1952 that it was “not too late to sit down with the original Kinsey researchers and take one of the same kind of interviews that went into the book.” The reporter noted, however, that there was a good deal of competition for slots.⁶³

The readiness to take part in Kinsey's research was not restricted to those who underwent interviews. Plenty of information from volunteers arrived unbidden at Kinsey's Indiana University offices. Hoping to make his mark on the Reports, one man sent his “frequency record” to Kinsey anonymously, with his annual number of dreams and climaxes recorded for the years 1942 to 1953.⁶⁴ Another kept records of his and his wife's sexual activity for years, sending regular installments to Bloomington.⁶⁵ In a further instance, a man who had read the male volume wrote to Kinsey in 1948: “I am making an offer to help out in the work. If it will be of any value to you, I am willing to give you a detailed history of my sex life; the inside story revealing my thoughts,

aims, motives and mental picture, in regard to various phases of sex.” An enthusiastic subject of research, he merely required from Kinsey specific headings and topics to structure his sexual history. This man could give the scientist “typical instances and cases,” as well as “particular cases (army experience).” He added, “I am a touch typist and qualified to explain anything and everything for you.” Demonstrating a familiarity with the techniques of the social scientist for fitting particular behaviors into standardized categories, he wrote to Kinsey, “you can punch out the facts and details on your card system or whatever you have.”⁶⁶ Such correspondents proved thoroughly comfortable with a scientific mode of recording experience.

This willingness to assume the position of a social scientific subject extended to those who measured themselves with the help of Kinsey’s statistical tables. One African-American woman expressed her relief at hearing the Report’s findings this way:

I learned quickly that as a social science researcher with a college degree, I had a sex life not unlike upper class women of any color. According to Dr. Kinsey, I and these women got more mental satisfaction and less physical gratification from sexual intercourse than persons with lower class standards...I was happy to learn that I am neither abnormal nor unusual since Dr. Kinsey’s research for his next book about U.S. women found that a third are so-called ‘cold’ women.⁶⁷

Framing her own experience against others like her—professional, upper class, and well-educated—this woman could find herself, newly, in the collective data the scientist had amassed.

Similarly, a man who contacted Kinsey after having read the female report found confirmation of his identity there. “Of particular interest,” he wrote, “was your indication that a new study of transvestism is being undertaken. I would like to stand up and be counted, if I’m not too late.”⁶⁸ This man’s hope for representation in the *Sexual Behavior* research, his wish to “stand up and be counted,” evinced something of the participatory desire of those who wrote to the pollsters. Like them, he wanted access to the tools that seemed to be remaking the social landscape. His words remind us that statistics did not only have estranging or normalizing effects. Survey data, highlighting both inclusion and exclusion, allowed some individuals to place themselves into new social groups or to forge a minority consciousness. As the use of the Reports’ statistics by the gay liberation movement would later show, the seemingly private and isolated act of divulging personal information could have significant public effects.⁶⁹

And yet this is not quite the end of the story. The man who wanted to be recorded as a transvestite also enclosed with his letter to Kinsey a thumbnail sketch of his sexual autobiography, adding, “you will find my case history somewhat typical.”⁷⁰ His wish to participate in the *Sexual Behavior* survey, it seems clear, carried with it the implicit agreement to take on its terminology and categories—so much so that he rendered his own, presumably highly individual story as a “case history,” classifiable by a social scientist as “typical.”

Conclusion

Social data have a reputation for being dry and dull, an inconsequential way, or even the only way, that we know things about the polity or economy. But as I have tried to suggest, the sort of aggregate figures that were marshaled to portray American beliefs and behaviors at mid-century were

anything but inert pieces of information. Statistical findings moved into social and political life in forceful ways, serving as dramatic actors on the national stage. If historians generally have ignored this phenomenon, ordinary Americans were able to point to the increasingly prominent role of social science in the culture around them: the new objects that came under expert scrutiny, the new and newly invasive kinds of questions being asked, the new techniques for representing averages and aggregates, and the novel repercussions of publicly available survey data. As we have seen, social surveys underwrote entities as abstract as “the average American” and as intimate as an individual’s self-concept. Constructs as potent as “normal sexuality,” and “public opinion” were brought into being, at least in part, by surveyors with their toolkits of techniques.

I would further contend that Americans’ very understandings of themselves as part of a mass public flowed from such social scientific claims circulated through the national media. A society saturated by empirical information about its members—knowable through aggregated answers to surveys—was a curious one, and one first imaginable in the twentieth century. Social surveys created public knowledge out of private information revealed to a stranger. They permitted Americans to know what their metaphorical, but not their actual, neighbors were thinking and doing. More oddly still, they allowed some individuals a flicker of recognition or communion with numbers displayed in graphs. The kind of public created by the dissemination of such knowledge was at once highly intrusive and completely anonymous, self-scrutinizing and other-directed, familiar and impersonal. Subjective feelings (such as opinion polls on “issues”) and private behaviors (such as sexual habits) were the building blocks of a new kind of national culture.

Despite challenges from all quarters, it seems undeniable that something like a social scientific public became a reality as the twentieth century progressed. Statistical majorities, weekly poll results, and other “impersonal influences” were becoming integral to Americans’ social and political imaginations.⁷¹ Increasingly, individuals voluntarily submitted to surveys, gave new weight to aggregate data, and measured themselves according to social scientific categories. That by the century’s close they no longer noted—or found strange—this transformation is a testament to the power of social scientific modes of knowing in the modern United States.

Ultimately, the unique ways of seeing and thinking made available by social scientific techniques permit us to re-imagine what mid-century “mass society” meant to historical actors. It demands, I think, that we write social surveying into our stories of the twentieth century: that we understand novel modes of representing the public and new practices such as scientific sampling, as crucial to creating the appearance, and perhaps even the experience, of the mass. We need a history of “majority opinion” and the “average American”—not as a reflection of the body politic, but as a window into a peculiar form of modern consciousness, anchored in the practices pioneered by social surveyors.

ENDNOTES

- 1 David Riesman, in collaboration with Reuel Denney and Nathan Glazer, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 199-209.
- 2 Lotta Dempsey, "Dr. Kinsey Talks About Women," *Chatelaine* (August 1949), 10, 60.
- 3 William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986; rev. ed.), 71, 73.
- 4 Theodore M. Porter, *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Alain Desrosieres, *The Politics of Large Numbers: A History of Statistical Reasoning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).
- 5 Ian Hacking has dated the "avalanche of numbers" in printed form to the decades between 1820 and 1840, although he notes that the "volcano" did not erupt in the United States until the 1880s; "Biopower and the Avalanche of Printed Numbers," *Humanities in Society* 5 (1982), 279-295.
- 6 This is true even as they regularly employ social scientific data as historical evidence and source material. See, for example, David P. Thelen, "The Public Against the Historians: The Gallup Poll, 1935-1971," *Reviews in American History* 4, no. 4. (1976), 614-618. Benedict Anderson, of course, noted the role of national censuses in creating the "imagined community" of the nation in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. 2nd ed. (New York: Verso, 1991). Others who have examined social science in the public sphere have focused mainly on expertise, and how elites, whether the state, policy-makers, or corporations have mobilized data for particular ends. See, for example, Loren Baritz, *The Servants of Power: A History of the Use of Social Science in American Industry* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1960); Gene M. Lyons, *The Uneasy Partnership: Social Science and the Federal Government in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1969); and more recently, Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and 'Nation-Building' in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
- 7 George Gallup and Saul Forbes Rae, *The Pulse of Democracy: The Public-Opinion Poll and How it Works* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), v.
- 8 On the rivalry between the *Literary Digest* and the "scientific pollsters," see David W. Moore, *The Superpollsters: How They Measure and Manipulate Public Opinion in America* (New York: Four

Walls Eight Windows, 1992), 31-55; and Michael Wheeler, *Lies, Damn Lies, and Statistics: The Manipulation of Public Opinion in America* (New York: Liveright, 1976), 67-70. On the straw poll tradition, see Claude E. Robinson, *Straw Votes: A Study of Political Prediction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932); and Susan Herbst, *Numbered Voices: How Opinion Polling Has Shaped American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 69-87.

- 9 Gallup and Rae, *The Pulse of Democracy*, 118.
- 10 Harry Benjamin, "The Kinsey Report: Book Review and Roundup of Opinion," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* (July 1948), 400.
- 11 James H. Lade, Review of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in *Health News* (April 1948), 16; Dempsey, "Dr. Kinsey Talks About Women."
- 12 Key figures in the development of modern sample surveying in the United States were Rensis Likert, Samuel Stouffer, Paul Lazarsfeld, and Robert Merton. See Frederick F. Stephan, "History of the Uses of Modern Sampling Procedures," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 43, no. 241 (1948), 12-39; William Kruskal and Frederick Mosteller, "Representative Sampling, IV: The History of the Concept in Statistics, 1895-1939," *International Statistical Review* 48 (1980), 169-195; and "The Development and Contemporary Use of Subjective Surveys" in *Surveying Subjective Phenomena*, ed. Charles F. Turner and Elizabeth Martin (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984), 25-59.
- 13 George Gallup, "Polling Public Opinion," *Current History and Forum* 52, no. 6 (February 1940), 23.
- 14 In 1936 and 1937, for example, women constituted only 34% of Gallup's sample, and African-Americans 1.9%, despite being ten percent of population. Daniel J. Robinson, *The Measure of Democracy: Polling, Market Research, and Public Life, 1930-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 51, 54.
- 15 George Gallup, "The Shape of Things to Come—1939," *Cosmopolitan* 106, no. 2 (1939), 27.
- 16 George Gallup, "We, The People, Are Like This,—A Report on How and What We Think," *New York Times Magazine*, 9 June 1941, 3, 24.
- 17 "The American Majority Man: He is a Reluctant Internationalist...Who Hopes for the Best in World Affairs but Expects the Worst," *Newsweek*, 4 August 1947, 32-33.
- 18 Michael Warner, "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject," in *The Phantom Public Sphere*, ed. Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 234-256.
- 19 Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1948), 5.
- 20 Although several hundred African-American subjects gave sexual histories, their data were not used in computing the statistics in either of the Reports. Kinsey's justification for this omission was that he had simply not collected enough sexual histories, especially from middle-

class blacks, to make any valid generalizations about the population as a whole. Several historians have made the intriguing suggestion that Kinsey consciously excluded African-Americans from his published sample for fear that contemporary myths about “Negro promiscuity” would undercut his statistics’ legitimacy. See David Allyn, “Private Acts/Public Policy: Alfred Kinsey, the American Law Institute and the Privatization of American Sexual Morality,” *Journal of American Studies* 30, no. 3 (1996), 410, fn. 18; and Miriam Reumann, *American Sexual Character: Sex, Gender, and National Identity in the Kinsey Reports* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 235, fn. 89.

21 In 1928, there were six major nationwide polls (the *Literary Digest*, Hearst newspapers, *Farm Journal*, *Pathfinder*, *Nation*, and *College Humor* polls), none of which however relied on scientific sampling. See Mildred Parten, *Surveys, Polls, and Samples: Practical Procedures* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 24-25.

22 Gallup made the break between the “Straw Vote Era” and the “Modern Polling Era” stark and decisive. See Jean Converse, *Survey Research in the United States: Roots and Emergence 1890-1960* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 116; Gallup and Rae, *The Pulse of Democracy*, 127.

23 Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 34.

24 Eleanor Holmes (Ansonia, CT) to Roper, 6 June 1951, Elmo Roper Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut Libraries, Storrs, Connecticut [hereafter, Roper Papers].

25 Grant Yelland (Detroit, MI) to Roper, 16 October 1950, Roper Papers.

26 George Gallup, “Polls and Prophets,” *Current History and Forum* 52, no. 3 (1940), 12.

27 Elinor Nevins (Nashville, TN) to Gallup, undated, George Gallup Papers, Gallup Organization, Princeton, New Jersey, by special permission of George Gallup, Jr. and the Gallup Organization [hereafter, Gallup Papers].

28 Robert Robusto (Baltimore, MD) to Gallup, 29 July 1954, Gallup Papers.

29 D. J. Stoner (Pittsburgh, PA) to Roper, 12 September 1952, Roper Papers.

30 George Gallup, “Putting Public Opinion to Work,” *Scribner’s* 100 (November 1936), 39.

31 Gallup, “Polling Public Opinion,” 24. Gallup noted the tailing off of this particular complaint in his last two decades of polling, and attributed this to growing public familiarity with scientific sampling. George Gallup, Interview with Don Winslow, 29 November, 1979 (Part II), 31, Gallup Papers.

32 Anonymous to Clara Kinsey, 28 April 1949, Crank Files, Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, Inc. Archive, Indiana University, Bloomington [hereafter, KIA].

33 Lee Cameron, “Is the Kinsey Report a Hoax?,” *Life Today* (August 1950), 3. Many others made

the comparison. "Now that other polls have proved wrong," wrote the archbishop of Chicago, "maybe someone else will prove the Kinsey report to be incorrect"; "Kinsey Sex Book Blasted by Cardinal," *Indianapolis News*, 29 December 1948. The *Boston Globe* quipped, "Dr. Gallup, subject to correction by election returns, has only envy for Dr. Kinsey"; "Editorial Points," 18 February 1949.

- 34 "Case #45697234 1/2" to Kinsey, 2 September 1953, Crank Files, KIA.
- 35 "Dr. Kinsey's Shocking Sex Statistics," *Boston Daily Record*, 1 September 1948.
- 36 Anonymous (Champaign-Urbana, IL) to Kinsey, undated, Crank Files, KIA.
- 37 C.P.M. (Long Beach, CA) to Kinsey, 29 August 1953, Letters from Short Term Correspondents, KIA. In accordance with the guidelines of the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, I have used the initials rather than the full names of Kinsey's correspondents.
- 38 "Sexual Behavior in 7,789 Women," *Books on Trial* (November 1953), 63. Note the title of the article, which cleverly pares Kinsey's claims down to size.
- 39 John Temple Graves, "...This Afternoon," *Rome, (GA) News-Tribune*, 7 October 1951.
- 40 Anonymous (Amarillo, TX) to Kinsey, 26 August 1953, Crank Files, KIA.
- 41 The U.S. Congress and state legislatures made numerous attempts to reign in the new technology. Gallup noted that "bills to prohibit polls or to regulate them out of existence" had been proposed since their inception. Gallup, "Statement on the Karabian Bills Submitted to the California Legislature," October 1973, Gallup Papers. See also George Gallup, "On the Regulation of Polling," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12 (1948-1949), 733-735.
- 42 James A. Webb (Athens, GA) to Gallup, 23 June 1951, Gallup Papers.
- 43 One reviewer wrote, "Kinsey's book is like an atom bomb to shake educators and parents out of their complacency"; Benjamin, "The Kinsey Report", 406. Likewise, a 1947 CBS radio broadcast announced: "In January a book will appear which seems likely to have the same effect on some of our cherished beliefs as the atomic bomb had on the city of Hiroshima." Quincy Howe, "Frontiers of Science," CBS radio broadcast, 25 November 1947, KIA.
- 44 Review of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* in the *Bowdoin Alumnus*, undated, KIA.
- 45 E. Parker Johnson, "Books," *Bowdoin Alumnus* (February 1948).
- 46 Seward Hiltner, *Sex Ethics and The Kinsey Reports* (New York: Association Press, 1953), 209.
- 47 Psychologist and public opinion analyst Leo Crespi discussed this phenomenon in "The Moral Implications of Prevalence in the Kinsey Report," *International Journal of Opinion and Attitude Research* 3, no. 3 (1949), 385-391.

- 48 For one example of the latter, see Mrs. F.E.M. (Evanston, IL) to Kinsey, 6 September 1953, Letters from Short Term Correspondents, KIA. She wrote to Kinsey after hearing a minister discuss Communism: "This minister said that the very first place Communism would attempt to strike in any country was at its moral foundation. I wonder if you have not unwittingly lent yourself to this destructive design by your sensationally-publicized report on sex behavior (or misbehavior) in the human female."
- 49 "A Friend to Mankind" (Daytona Beach, FL) to Kinsey, 21 August 1953, Crank Files, KIA.
- 50 "A Group of Enraged Women" to Kinsey, undated, Crank Files, KIA.
- 51 R. B. Armstrong, "The Kinsey Report and Your Wife," *Action* (October 1953).
- 52 Many claimed that Kinsey furthered the idea that "ethics has only a statistical base." See, for example, Seward Hiltner, *Sex Ethics and The Kinsey Report* (New York: Association Press, 1953), 237. Even recent critics of Kinsey have decried what seemed to be his "statistical base for a new morality." Judith A. Reisman and Edward W. Eichel, *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud: The Indoctrination of a People* (Lafayette, LA: Lochnivar-Huntington House, 1990), 8.
- 53 Roy E. Dickerson, "Cincinnati Critic Takes Look at Controversial Kinsey Book," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, undated, KIA.
- 54 Anne Weedman, "Kinsey Forum Draws Debates and Laughs," *LSU-Baton Rouge Daily Reveille*, 3 December 1948.
- 55 For the U.C.L.A. study, see F. Harold Giedt, "Changes in Sexual Behavior and Attitudes Following Class Study of the Kinsey Report," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 33 (1951), 131-141. For the Princeton version, see "The Attitudes of College Students as Related to The Kinsey Report: A Socio-Psychological Inquiry from the Department of Psychology, Princeton University," KIA.
- 56 Hugh J. Parry, "Kinsey Revisited," *International Journal of Opinion and Attitude Research* 2, no. 2 (1948), 198.
- 57 Bruce Bliven, "Books: The Kinsey Report," *The New Yorker*, 3 January 1948, 62.
- 58 Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 37.
- 59 "The Black & White Beans," *Time*, 3 May 1948.
- 60 Contented Ford Employee (Dearborn, MI) to Roper, 19 September 1947, Roper Papers.
- 61 Roper quoted this letter in his CBS broadcast, "Where the People Stand," 2 January 1949, 1:15-1:30 pm EST, Roper Papers.
- 62 C.M. (woman, New York City, NY) to Kinsey, 20 March 1948, Letters from Short Term Correspondents, KIA.

- 63 “Kinsey’s Work Far From Done,” Burlington (VT) *Free Press*, 13 May 1952.
- 64 Anonymous (Brooklyn, NY) to Kinsey, 29 December 1953, Crank Files, KIA.
- 65 See correspondence from R.P.M. (man, Enosburg Falls, VT) to Kinsey on 28 October 1953 and 16 May 1954, and letters from Kinsey to R.P.M. on 4 June 1954, 30 November 1954, and 9 January 1956, Letters from Short Term Correspondents, KIA.
- 66 L.M.M. (man, Tacoma, WA) to Kinsey, 5 September 1948, Letters from Short Term Correspondents, KIA.
- 67 Mary X, “What I Told Kinsey About My Sex Life,” *Ebony* (December 1948), 45.
- 68 R.D.G. (Seattle, WA) to Kinsey, 3 June 1955, Crank Files, KIA.
- 69 In a similar vein, Jeffrey Weeks has argued that “anonymous people whose sexual feelings were denied or defined out of existence were able to use sexological descriptions to achieve a sense of self, even of affirmation.” *Sexuality and its Discontents: Meanings, Myths and Modern Sexualities* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 94. Ian Hacking is perhaps the most adept theorist of the mutually constitutive character of categories and social identities. See in particular “The Looping Effects of Human Kinds” in *Causal Cognition: A Multidisciplinary Debate*, ed. Dan Sperber, David Premack, and Ann James Premack (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- 70 R.D.G. (Seattle, WA) to Kinsey, 3 June 1955, Crank Files, KIA.
- 71 I borrow the phrase “impersonal influence” from Diana C. Mutz, *Impersonal Influence: How Perceptions of Mass Collectives Affect Political Attitudes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).