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### Social Change through Science: Homosexual Activism Influencing the Kinsey Report

William “Bill” Miller was a gay model and artist who acted as a Research Consultant for the Institute for Sex Research (also known as the Kinsey Institute) in the 1950s.<sup>1</sup> Miller corresponded personally with sex researcher Alfred Kinsey and his associates, made two trips to the Institute in Bloomington, and saw Kinsey during his visits to New York City. Miller contributed his personal sexual history to Kinsey’s research and put Kinsey in touch with many other contacts, both straight and gay, for the collection of their histories. He also suggested literature and art with homoerotic subject matter for acquisition by the Institute’s library.<sup>2</sup> Although many gay men acted as researchers for Kinsey, there are some clues that Kinsey’s relationship with Miller was especially intimate: Kinsey’s colleague reported that Kinsey had sex with Miller on at least one occasion,<sup>3</sup> and Kinsey instructed Miller to mark his letters to the institute “Confidential.”<sup>4</sup> The exact ramifications of the personal relationship between Kinsey and Miller are outside of the scope of this paper, the purpose of which is to explore Miller’s contributions to the Kinsey report as an example of the informational flow between Kinsey and his research subjects. Miller’s personal contributions to the Kinsey report suggest that Kinsey and his contacts had a mutually productive relationship, wherein Kinsey used his contacts to gain information about their sexual and personal lives and his contacts used the Kinsey Institute to increase societal understanding and tolerance of homosexuality.

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<sup>1</sup> Roehr to Miller, 11 May 1953, Correspondence between Bill Miller and Paul Cadmus, Alfred C. Kinsey, Monroe Wheeler and others, diaries by Bill Miller, and other related papers, YCAL.MSS.298, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>2</sup> Gathorne-Hardy, *Alfred C. Kinsey*, 295.

<sup>3</sup> Gathorne-Hardy, *Alfred C. Kinsey*, 358.

<sup>4</sup> Kinsey to Miller, 26 June 1956, Bill Miller Papers.

Crucially, it is worth noting that Miller's contributions to the Kinsey Institute were motivated and enhanced by his participation in a well-developed, socially conscious gay social network. Miller's individual perception of societal intolerance was influenced both by his own experiences and by the insights of his friends, and his participation in the Kinsey study was motivated in part by his feeling that he was assisting in a collective project. Prior to the release of Kinsey's first book, Miller and his friends had collaboratively sought out sympathetic representations of sexuality in literature and art as a means of developing an alternative to the more typical societal homophobia.<sup>5</sup> The release of Kinsey's first book was a watershed event for these men, who saw in Kinsey's study the potential to use science to change the way society both talked about sex and treated homosexuals. The homophobia that Miller experienced and the highly literate social network to which he belonged contributed to his desire to work with the Institute, and the manner of his contributions was shaped by the group ethos that drove his involvement.

Miller became involved with the Institute after Kinsey's first book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, was published in 1948.<sup>6</sup> That book and Kinsey's second book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953) triggered a national conversation about sex, "forcing open discussion and setting the stage for the sexual revolution of the 1960s."<sup>7</sup> The books were based on interviews with an unprecedented number of individuals and drew press attention for their assertion that homosexuality occurred much more frequently than had previously been assumed.<sup>8</sup> Miller's research for the Institute was intended to be published in Kinsey's planned but never published third book, addressing "the 'heterosexual-homosexual' balance."<sup>9</sup> In the course of

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<sup>5</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 6 February 1952, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>6</sup> Minton, *Departing From Deviance*, 162.

<sup>7</sup> Minton, *Departing From Deviance*, 162.

<sup>8</sup> Sagarin, "Sex Research and Sociology," 386.

<sup>9</sup> Minton, *Departing from Deviance*, 169.

researching for the book, Kinsey recruited “a widespread network of gay men” to contribute personal histories and information about gay life.<sup>10</sup>

Historian Henry Minton has suggested that these men’s involvement should be considered a form of activism within a greater lineage of homosexual contributions to medical discourse. Early clinical studies portrayed homosexuals as “abnormal, deranged” deviants (in a study by Richard von Krafft-Ebing) or sexual inverts deserving of sympathy (in Havelock Ellis’ work).<sup>11</sup> Minton’s research indicates that homosexual activists began to get involved in the medical discourse on homosexuality by participating in George Henry’s sex variants study in the 1920s and 1930s, and that they played a “major” role in the study of the Committee for the Study of Sex Variants (1935).<sup>12</sup> Minton has written that many of these activists engaged with researchers for the purpose of “educating and engaging researchers in effecting social change.”<sup>13</sup> Miller’s contributions to the Kinsey report fit well into Minton’s framework. Like many of the activists Minton describes, Miller’s decision to help Kinsey was motivated in large part by a desire to change social attitudes and practices.

One motivating factor for Miller’s involvement in the Institute was his experience encountering social condemnation of homosexuality in the media and in his everyday life. Miller expressed his familiarity with homophobic press in a letter to Kinsey following the release of Kinsey’s second book in 1953. Miller summarized an editorial by a man named Sokolsky in the New York Post responding to the book; according to Miller, Sokolsky wrote “something about beating up HMs [homosexual males]...‘for the good of their souls,’ I think it ran...and an

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<sup>10</sup> Minton, *Departing from Deviance*, 169.

<sup>11</sup> Sagarin, “Sex Research and Sociology,” 395, 379, 381.

<sup>12</sup> Minton, *Departing from Deviance*, 18, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Minton, *Departing from Deviance*, 15.

invocation to the Talmud, the American Way of Life, and what not."<sup>14</sup> Miller assured Kinsey that the commentary was nothing new, but merely: "a venomous manipulation of all the old abstract arousers, -- Faith, the home, Mother, Sacred Love, Patriotism, and so on."<sup>15</sup> Miller's casual reassurance that the editorial was only an example of "the old abstract arousers" revealed his intimate familiarity with the rhetorical tactics of homophobic writers. Miller downplayed the threats contained in the editorial, but at other points in his correspondence with Kinsey his frustration with continued homophobia and policing became clear. Only a few months before Kinsey's second book was published, Miller wrote about the police presence at Cherry Grove, a popular gay vacation resort: "Have you heard out there that all hell has been breaking loose at Cherry Grove? Mike and I joked about organizing a counter-reformation, rounding up the flatfeet, ravishing hell out of the plain-clothesman, and tossing them all in Great South Bay... Joking aside, it was a depressing weekend."<sup>16</sup> Miller's narrative indicates the manner in which homophobia was experienced collectively; individuals like Miller confronted homophobia through companionship and humor. Despite his jokes with Mike, the presence of plainclothes policeman put a damper on Miller's mood by signaling the inescapable presence of policing, even in the supposed haven of Cherry Grove.

Miller seemed even more disturbed by an anti-gay scare that occurred on the island of St. Croix in 1957, which caused him to reflect on the burden of suspicion homophobia placed on unmarried men. Miller was refurbishing his house in St. Croix when the neighboring island of St. Thomas began "a great H clean-up...which had echoes" on his own island.<sup>17</sup> Miller was not

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<sup>14</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 3 November 1953, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>15</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 3 November 1953, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>16</sup> undated (maybe sent enclosed with the letter from M to K on June 24, 1953)

<sup>17</sup> Miller to Gebhard, 24 May 1957, Bill Miller Papers.

directly implicated in the cleanup, but wrote to Kinsey's successor, Paul Gebhard, that the incident left him "angry and embittered." Miller explained the intense scrutiny on the island:

American society offers someone like me no escape, it seems; on St. Croix I led a carefully conformist, sexless life; still, during the weeks of hysteria, gossip, and suspicion, it became clear than an unmarried man on St. Croix is either an 'eligible bachelor' or a 'fairy.'<sup>18</sup>

Unlike Cherry Grove, where homosexual men felt somewhat free to display their sexual preferences, Miller was careful to note that he led a "carefully conformist, sexless" life on St. Croix. Even so, Miller felt under suspicion merely because of his marital status. He went on to explain that he had attached a set of press clippings of the event, incomplete because the social scrutiny had been so intense that he had been "embarrass[ed]" even to purchase the daily paper "during the hot period."<sup>19</sup> Miller's vivid account of homophobia expressed the pervasive nature of suspicion during a homosexual clean-up, as well as his feeling of vulnerability as a gay man.

In addition to behavioral policing, Miller was also impacted by restrictive censorship laws. The topic of censorship surfaced in his letters to the Institute because Miller regularly shipped erotic materials to Kinsey for addition to the Institute's extensive collections. Given the repressive atmosphere, Miller's assumed that Kinsey understood his continual anxiety that the shipments would be discovered and confiscated.<sup>20</sup> When discussing a film taken by friends in Rome, Miller wrote, "naturally, no one must know there is a print out there" and suggested that he deposit the sealed films intended for the Institute with "some reliable person in New York...to be picked up and transported by another reliable person" rather than mailing them.<sup>21</sup> Kinsey attempted to reassure Miller that the transport would be safe, responding that the Institute "never

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<sup>18</sup> Miller to Gebhard, 24 May 1957, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>19</sup> Gebhard responded supportively, apologizing that Miller had been subject to 'the witch hunt' and offering to place the newspaper clippings in a file at the Institute marked 'H' for 'hysteria' or 'harassment.'"

<sup>20</sup> Gathorne-Hardy, *Alfred C. Kinsey*, 295.

<sup>21</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 22 April 1952, Bill Miller Papers.

had any difficulty getting any such material through” the express mail and assuring Miller that the Institute would “carefully guard” the film and any negatives he sent.<sup>22</sup> Kinsey himself was aware of the dangers of censorship, since he was at that point embroiled in an ongoing battle with U.S. Customs over a confiscated shipment of materials from Europe.<sup>23</sup> Miller and Kinsey’s letters on this subject reflect their consciousness of the issue of censorship and caution in proportion to their perceived vulnerability to the censorship laws. Kinsey may have been less worried about being caught than Miller because he was married, making him less vulnerable to the scrutiny to which bachelors were subjected.<sup>24</sup> The incidents of overt homophobia and censorship described in Miller’s letters illustrate the repressive, homophobic atmosphere that Miller and other gay men confronted in the 1950s.

Miller’s anxiety about being exposed as a homosexual occasionally increased as a result of the cautious attitudes of his homosexual friends. In a 1957 letter to Gebhard, Miller expressed his determination to follow the advice of Glenway Wescott, his friend and fellow Kinsey-researcher, and destroy all of “odds and ends of erotica” that he had been “been careless and self-indulgent” about collecting over the course of five years.<sup>25</sup> It is unclear whether Wescott’s suggestion was in response to a particular incident, but he advised Miller to “get everything out of [the] apartment.”<sup>26</sup> In the event of a raid, Miller was most worried about the photos he had taken with a self-timer of himself engaged in “action,” and planned to destroy those incriminating negatives first. Miller offered to send the materials to the Institute instead of destroying them, but he expressed nervousness about using the mail system Kinsey had

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<sup>22</sup> Kinsey to Miller, 28 April 1952, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>23</sup> Minton, *Departing from Deviance*, 172-173.

<sup>24</sup> Miller’s worry was always that the government would discover the materials, not that Kinsey would use them in an inappropriate way. He had “complete confidence” in the Institute. Miller to Kinsey, 4 July 1954, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>25</sup> Miller to Gebhard, 24 May 1957, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>26</sup> Miller to Gebhard, 24 May 1957, Bill Miller Papers.

recommended only two years earlier. In his letter to Gebhard he wrote, “Do I dare to send several parcels out there American Express...? For the moment I can lock everything up in a suitcase—but then I don’t know where to safely store the suitcase.”<sup>27</sup> In the event of a raid, the items that Miller collected to catalogue and record his gay life would make him vulnerable to prosecution; Miller could think of no alternative but to ship the materials to Bloomington or destroy them. This letter is notable both as an illustration of the impact of gay policing and because it showed how vigilance and anxiety within the gay community influenced Miller’s behavior. Members of Miller’s homosexual network turned to each other for advice on escaping anti-gay policing, emphasizing the shared experience of homophobia.

The issues of censorship especially impacted Miller and other members of his social network because artistic collecting was a major focus of their collaborative energy. Miller, Wescott, Wescott’s longtime partner Monroe Wheeler, and other members of their circle were highly attuned to positive representations of homosexuals in literature and art that presented an alternative to the virulently homophobic depictions of gay men in most of society. From 1951 to 1955, Miller gave Kinsey (or recommended that Kinsey acquire) three novels, one manuscript, two “long sado-masochist [sic] doggerel verses,” hundreds of film negatives, two plays, a record of German opera sung by Marlene Dietrich, a copy of a talk given by Anais Nin, a woodcut, an etching by Picasso, a sculpture from Bali, and several erotic drawings that revealed his taste for sympathetic representations of homosexuality.<sup>28</sup> For example, Miller recommended the novel

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<sup>27</sup> Miller to Gebhard, 24 May 1957, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>28</sup> Novels were referenced in a letters from Miller to Kinsey on 6 February 1952 and 29 December 1951; Manuscript was referenced in a letter from Miller to Kinsey, 24 March, 1952; Verses were referenced in a letter from Miller to Kinsey, 22 April 1952; Negatives were referenced in a letter from Miller to Kinsey, 22 April 1952; Plays were referenced in a letter from Miller to Kinsey, 3 November 1953; Record was referenced in a letter from Roehr to Miller, 28 April 1952; Anais Nin Talk was referenced in a letter from Miller to Kinsey, 3 May 1952; Woodcut was referenced in a letter from Miller to Kinsey, 12 January 1952; Picasso etching was referenced in a letter from Miller to Kinsey, 29 December 1951; Balinese sculpture was referenced in a letter from Miller to Kinsey, 1 January 1953; Erotic drawings were referenced in a letter from Miller to Kinsey, 6 December 1954. Bill Miller Papers.

*Aleko*, writing: "Does the library have a copy of a reasonably rare novel, Aleko, by Kenneth Matthews? . . . It is an early treatment of H. [Homosexuality], and one of the most sensitive and sensible. Should you not have one, I will send my copy by express right away."<sup>29</sup> Miller recommended many works for their delicate treatment of homosexuality. Some of the books that Miller referenced were rare, and he frequently offered to mail Kinsey copies if he was unable to locate them.<sup>30</sup> The rarity of the works that Miller recommended indicates that his acute interest in the subject of sexuality led him in a careful search for obscure homoerotic material. Miller's friends also gave the topic of sexuality in literature careful consideration. In 1951 Wescott sent Kinsey a catalogue of "the top-ranking contemporary authors, with some indication of sexual subject-matter in their work," marking homosexual authors with a red spot.<sup>31</sup> Wescott and Miller's suggestions to the Institute reflected their familiarity with sensitive literary and artistic treatments of homosexuality.

The process of obtaining these rare literary texts and artistic works was a collective one that contributed to the cohesiveness of the homosexual community. The rarity of many of the books and artistic works dealing with sexuality (and homosexuality) meant that they were difficult to obtain and copies were often handed from friend to friend. On several occasions, Miller sent manuscripts and other items to Kinsey that had already changed hands several times within the homosexual community. One manuscript authored by Jean Genet which Miller sent to Kinsey was accompanied by Genet's personal letter to Miller's friend Cesare Pavani, meaning that Pavani had sent both the manuscript and Genet's letter to Miller.<sup>32</sup> A short descriptive entry about a woodcut tells a similar story of shared cultural objects: "Woodcut 'Self Portrait' placed as

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<sup>29</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 29 December 1951, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>30</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 6 February 1952, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>31</sup> Kinsey to Wescott, 6 December 1949, Glenway Wescott Papers; Wescott to Kinsey, 22 May 1951, Glenway Wescott Papers.

<sup>32</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 24 March 1952, Bill Miller Papers.

a joke in the mailbox of John \_\_\_\_\_, H. Male, approx. 30y. Signature is a fictitious one--artist is unknown. Given to Douglas Luther, then to Bill Miller, February 1952."<sup>33</sup> The woodcut described was created by one man, given to John, then to Douglas, and finally to Miller, who passed it to Kinsey. Miller also sent Kinsey two verses, "Navy Caning" and "Young Waterlow, A Luscious Page," which had been given to him by a Dutch friend who brought them to the U.S. after he "obtained them with some difficulty in England."<sup>34</sup> The lengths Miller's friend went to in order to obtain the verses shows the premium that homosexual men placed on homoerotic literature. The process of sharing objects pertaining to sexuality created a common cultural vocabulary that intensified the bonds that existed between friends and expanded social networks in new directions. By soliciting recommendations from men like Miller and Wheeler, Kinsey became the beneficiary of pre-existing networks that directed materials dealing with homosexuality into the hands of socially-involved gay men.

Both because homophobia rendered Miller and his friends vulnerable to censorship and policing and because their tradition of seeking support through literature and art prepared them to seek social change through literature, Miller and other members of his social set were poised to see Kinsey as a potential ally. Miller's personal commitment to the Institute was inspired by the release of Kinsey's first two books. Kinsey's books charted a nationwide "violation of traditional socio-sexual mores," recording higher rates of masturbation, extramarital intercourse, and homosexuality than had been assumed.<sup>35</sup> According to Kinsey, 37% of American men had experienced orgasm through homosexual contact<sup>36</sup> and homosexuality could possibly even be

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<sup>33</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 12 January 1952, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>34</sup> Miller to Kinsey, April 22 1952, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>35</sup> Morantz, "The Scientist as Sex Crusader," 570.

<sup>36</sup> Morantz, "The Scientist as Sex Crusader," 570.

considered a “fundamental part...of mammalian patterns.”<sup>37</sup> These findings called into question the typical penalization of homosexual behavior. As Minton states, “If scientific objectivity produced data that subverted the conventional morality guiding sexual behavior, then scientific discourse on sexuality could serve as a source for bringing about positive social change.”<sup>38</sup> To many homosexuals, the statistics in the book were a “thrilling bombshell.”<sup>39</sup> Miller expressed his belief that Kinsey’s studies represented a breakthrough in a social discourse previously dominated by stale rhetoric, writing that the books presented “a new technical language...a new set of symbols and facts, words fresh and without a complex of muddying connotations stuck to them, with which people can discuss and re-evaluate problems too long communicated only with the language of superstition and vestige.”<sup>40</sup> Miller expressed his hope that a discussion and re-evaluation of societal stereotypes would occur as a result of the statistical, unbiased evidence of the Kinsey studies.

In his correspondence, Miller detailed three specific instances in which Kinsey’s research allowed him to open conversations about homosexuality with long-time friends and family members. Using the *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* book “as an opening wedge,” Miller and his long-time friend Cynthia “were able to talk about [themselves], and about things which had been innuendos for the fifteen years of [their] friendship.”<sup>41</sup> The book broke open their mutual silence about sexuality. A year later, Miller used Kinsey’s statistical language to broach the topic of his friend Leonor’s lesbianism. He gently suggested that she might be a “a rather statistically unusual female in some ways,” an idea which pleased her so much that she

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<sup>37</sup> Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 611.

<sup>38</sup> Minton, *Departing from Deviance*, 168.

<sup>39</sup> Gathorne-Hardy, *Alfred C. Kinsey*, 325-326.

<sup>40</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 3 November 1953, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>41</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 3 November 1953, Bill Miller Papers.

“immediately showed [Miller] a whole portfolio of erotic things she’[d] done.”<sup>42</sup> In these two instances, Miller used the language of the Kinsey books to bring honest conversations about sexuality into his close friendships. Miller also brought up the Kinsey statistics to his grandmother and great-aunt as a means of challenging their homophobia. Miller’s relatives happened to have grown up in the same neighborhood as Kinsey, and Miller’s mention of Kinsey prompted his grandmother to proclaim how morally scandalized she was by the Kinsey studies:

‘To think that a boy from a nice South Orange family would do that,’ said my Grandmother... ‘Why, they used to say right from the pulpits not to read those books.’ ‘Now, Grandma,’ I said, ‘they did, but they don’t,’ and I made a brief speech about 60% of American marriages etc etc etc. ‘Well I’m sure you’re right,’ said my grandmother, ‘for they were fine religious people.’<sup>43</sup>

Miller used statistical language, possibly quoted directly from Kinsey, to suggest to his grandmother that her homophobia was outdated. The Kinsey statistics emboldened Miller to defend homosexuality and provided him the means to do so without exposing himself as a homosexual. These three incidents demonstrated the ways in which the Kinsey books altered the way in which members of the homosexual community broached discussions of sexuality and illustrate the ways in which Kinsey’s research benefited men like Miller. Miller’s personal experience with the Kinsey studies contributed to his hope that scientific discourse could make societal change possible.

Miller left no doubt that one of his main goals in participating in the study was to create social change. Miller trusted that the work of the Institute was altering individual dialogue about sexuality for the better and that scientists would be successful in altering the nationwide discussion of sex on the level of the media. He referred to Kinsey as the “champion” of the

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<sup>42</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 6 December 1954, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>43</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 6 April 1956, Bill Miller Papers.

effort to alter mass-consciousness.<sup>44</sup> Miller was joined in this feeling by many of his friends. Monroe Wheeler wrote that he participated in the study with the goal of “help[ing] humanity take another long stride toward the understanding and tolerance which will one day bring peace to this planet.”<sup>45</sup> Kinsey himself encouraged Miller and other participants in the study to feel that they were improving society. In a letter sent to Monsieur Julien Green by way of Glenway Wescott, Kinsey articulated the reasons Green should contribute his diary to the institute: “We believe that the world would be a better place if people learn to take human nature as it is and to sympathetically understand how it is as we find it.”<sup>46</sup> Although Miller was not necessarily won over in the same way as Green, Kinsey’s letter illustrates the activist image that the Kinsey Institute projected to homosexual researchers. The representation was not inaccurate; historian Regina Morantz has written that the Kinsey studies informed the public about the “prevalence of certain ‘questionable’ practices [and] tended to alter attitudes in the direction of tolerance.”<sup>47</sup> The Institute was successful in attracting men like Miller, Green, and Wheeler to its work in part through its promise to reshape American society into a more tolerant form.

Miller conceived of his individual contributions to the Kinsey Institute as part of a larger group effort within the gay community. The social networks that had already been engaged in a form of activism through the creation of an alternative canon of literature dealing with homosexuality were galvanized by the release of the first Kinsey book. Groups of gay men around the world gathered to discuss the findings.<sup>48</sup> In his letters to Kinsey, Miller frequently alluded to the “great number of people eager to contribute”<sup>49</sup> and said that he was “astonished

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<sup>44</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 3 November 1953, Bill Miller papers.

<sup>45</sup> Wheeler to Kinsey, 29 July 1953, Glenway Wescott Papers.

<sup>46</sup> Kinsey to Green, Glenway Wescott Papers.

<sup>47</sup> Morantz, “The Scientist as Sex Crusader,” 583.

<sup>48</sup> Gathorne-Hardy, *Alfred C. Kinsey*, 326.

<sup>49</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 29 December 1951, Bill Miller Papers.

and proud....to join the company of thousands who have had the privilege of contributing.”<sup>50</sup>

The feeling that he was a part of a group effort was key to Miller, because he felt that the shaping of cultural norms could only happen collectively. In one particularly poignant letter to Kinsey, Miller referred to the “social structure of culture” as “a great net, with all of us sitting around the periphery, mending holes and tying knots.”<sup>51</sup> Miller suggested that the Institute began the necessary process of societal alteration, sending off “rays of hope” that gave him “courage to try to chip away constructively in [his] own small way.”<sup>52</sup> Miller was inspired to contribute to the Institute in part because he envisioned his individual contributions as part of a collective effort.

Miller’s feeling that he was part of a communal activist process may have been due to the nature of Kinsey’s research, which relied in large part on Kinsey’s personal integration into pre-existing social networks. Miller knew Kinsey through mutual friends before working with him and was not alone in seeing Kinsey as a personal, as well as professional friend.<sup>53</sup> Monroe Wheeler met Kinsey in 1948 and introduced Kinsey to Glenway Wescott in June 1949.<sup>54</sup> It is possible that either Wheeler or Wescott was the mutual friend who first introduced Miller to Kinsey. Kinsey visited the group of friends in New York City regularly and attended dinner parties at Wescott’s house.<sup>55</sup> He signaled his awareness of the cohesiveness of the group by referring in his letters to “Glenway, Monroe, and the rest of them.”<sup>56</sup> For their part, the men of Miller’s set tracked Kinsey’s personal health and professional success with equal enthusiasm. In a letter just prior to the publishing of the Institute’s second book, Miller wrote that news of Kinsey’s recent health scare had traveled even to his friend Carey Walker in Venice: Carey

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<sup>50</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 22 April 1952, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>51</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 3 November 1953, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>52</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 3 July 1956, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>53</sup> Kinsey to Miller, 30 November 1951, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>54</sup> Gathorne-Hardy, *Alfred C. Kinsey*, 324.

<sup>55</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 10 October 1955. Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>56</sup> Kinsey to Miller, 18 June 1953, Bill Miller Papers.

“heard from an Italian lawyer that Dr. Kinsey was ‘very ill’...and wrote [Miller] in alarm.”<sup>57</sup> In the same letter, Miller wrote “We are all awaiting the book with eagerness.” Miller, Wescott, Wheeler, Walker, and other friends in his social circle spoke regularly about Kinsey and took collective ownership of their participation in the project. Miller’s commitment to Kinsey’s research took place in the company of his friends, making the contributions a social as well as an activist exercise.

In addition to offering Kinsey his own personal angle on homosexuality, Miller attempted to introduce Kinsey to the diversity of experiences within the gay community by introducing him to many of his friends and acquaintances. Miller invited Kinsey into his apartment to meet his friends and take their sexual histories and served as a point of contact between Kinsey and other members of his extended social network.<sup>58</sup> Miller went to some effort to select contacts who he thought Kinsey would find interesting, including a Vicomtesse, a director of a boy’s school, an American-born Chinese couple, a doctor in “the village” (possibly Greenwich village), several well-connected artists in Europe, and a young painter who was interested in sadism.<sup>59</sup> Kinsey was appreciative of Miller’s help and asked him to help keep potential contacts interested when he did not have time to interview them immediately.<sup>60</sup> The story of the Engs is relatively typical: Miller recommended that Kinsey interview them for the first time in 1953 and Kinsey succeeded in meeting and interviewing them at the end of 1954.<sup>61</sup> Kinsey then kept up contact with the Engs, meeting them for dinner and inviting them to join Miller in a visit to Bloomington

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<sup>57</sup> Miller to Kinsey, 24 June 24, 1953, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>58</sup> Kinsey to Miller, 26 February 1952, Bill Miller Papers; Kinsey to Miller, 18 June 1953, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>59</sup> Vicomtesse and school director referenced in a letter from Miller to Kinsey, 22 April 1952; Engs referenced in a letter from Miller to Kinsey, 1 January 1953; Doctor referenced in a letter from Kinsey to Miller, 18 May 1955; European artists referenced in a letter from Miller to Kinsey, 10 October 1955; young painter mentioned in a letter from Miller to Kinsey, 27 September 1955, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>60</sup> Kinsey to Miller, 8 October 1955, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>61</sup> Kinsey to Miller, 4 December 1954, Bill Miller Papers.

together.<sup>62</sup> The example of the Engs shows how Kinsey's recruitment of new research subjects through preexisting social networks emphasized the social enterprise of his project. In general, the practice of referring new contacts to Kinsey reflected a common goal of Miller and other participants in the study: to expose Kinsey and his researchers to what Minton refers to as "the lived experiences and realities" of homosexual life.<sup>63</sup> To that end, Miller and his friends' efforts to include Kinsey in their circle provided the means of showing Kinsey the diversity of homosexual life, encompassing cultural tastes and critiques as well as varied sexual practices. Ultimately, the efforts of Miller and his friends were intended to induce better treatment of homosexuals as a consequence of a deepened understanding of homosexuality.

The correspondence between Bill Miller and Alfred Kinsey illuminates the aims and methods of homosexual participants in the Kinsey study as well as how Kinsey's research impacted the gay community. Miller and his friends were accustomed to seeking support through literature, art, and the companionship of friends from the repressive atmosphere in which they lived. When Kinsey's study was published the men recognized that it had the potential to create meaningful social change, and mobilized their social networks in support of the study. Miller and his friends drew Kinsey into their community and entrusted him with personal stories in the hope that his work would change the world they lived in. Miller's account adds to the greater story of homosexual activism in medical discourse by suggesting the importance of social networks in inspiring and informing early gay activism. Further research could explore the extent to which Miller's experience was emblematic of other relationships that Kinsey had with his contacts. Even without the knowledge of Kinsey's engagement with other social networks,

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<sup>62</sup> Kinsey to Miller, 5 January 1955, Bill Miller Papers; Kinsey to Miller, 28 February 1955, Bill Miller Papers.

<sup>63</sup> Minton, *Departing from Deviance*, 4.

Miller's experience offers a compelling example of the motives and contributions of individual gay men and their social networks to Kinsey's research.

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