

October 28, 1963

Dr. Richard Masland, Director
National Institute of Neurological
Diseases and Blindness
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda 14, Maryland

Dear Dick:

After all our previous commotion on arranging support for our demographic studies, I was a little startled, though pleasantly so, to hear from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development about their interest in supporting the further utilization of census data. I was not very clear whether you were in close touch with Dr. Rosa about this, and if not, would like very much to discuss some of the details with you. We have, in any case, submitted the enclosed application, whose origins will, I hope, be understood. Dr. Bodmer in our department is an extremely gifted bio-mathematician who has worked on population genetical problems, in some depth, although he is now concentrating mainly in genetic chemistry, and is equally interested in developing as far as possible the scientific uses of this type of information. Fortunately, too, Dr. Cann has returned to the Pediatrics Department and will be collaborating in these studies as well. I would be happy to hear from you and Dr. Berendes concerning any aspects of the census tabulations that ought to be particularly stressed for their relevance to mental retardation and the perinatal morbidity study.

I have been thinking about making a pass through the 1/1000 census sample to get some impression of the magnitude of educational anomalies which might be evidence of the prevalence of mental retardation in the non-institutionalized population. What I had in mind was to tabulate for significant discrepancies between the age of a child and his educational advancement, and to plot this as against the characteristics of other children in the family and the socio-economic status of the parents. Of course, a great deal has been remarked concerning the distribution of educational opportunity; I thought it might just be possible, however, that we could also get some evidence of the distribution of educational capacity, particularly among the more well-to-do groups. Do you know whether this sort of study has been conducted on such a scale, and on such an objective basis? Any other thoughts that you might have concerning ways of pinpointing this type of information from the census data which would bring them into relevance to the mental retardation problem would also be very gratefully received.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

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supplementary applications