Probability Sampling vs. Sampled Certainty
John W. Tukey and Alfred C. Kinsey’s Negotiation of Valid Numbers

Against the background of the McCarthy era, the public response to A.C. Kinsey et al.’s Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (1948) was massive and controversial. Kinsey’s funding institutions were particularly concerned about methodological criticisms and requested a statistical evaluation of the “Kinsey Report.” During the years 1950–1952, J.W. Tukey and two other statisticians served on this review committee. Their intention was to exclude all non-technical matters from their assessment. Drawing mostly on Tukey’s papers and the review group’s internal correspondence during the collaboration, however, this project shows that the statisticians did not live up to their claim. Continuous negotiations of partiality and diplomacy became an important part of the review group’s work: sexuality and politics could not be tamed simply with Tukey’s suggested probability sample. This incident sheds light on how scientists navigated their quest for objective validity in an early stage of the Cold War imbroglio.


Mittwoch, 21. Mai 2014
18 Uhr
Raum H 6124