

# In Search of a Useable Past

ALBERT E. GOLLIN

1985 HAS already borne witness to several noteworthy anniversaries. In recent months we have recalled the triumph of 1945—the victory over fascism in Europe—and the tragedy of 1975—the final collapse of America's Vietnam effort. And, of course, we are celebrating the fortieth anniversary of AAPOR's founding by the small band of visionaries who gathered together in July 1946 in the Opera House in Central City, Colorado. Given this time of remembrances, and my strong interest in the history of public opinion—both as concept and as a field of research—initiated 30 years ago through association with Paul F. Lazarsfeld, it seems appropriate to draw upon the historical record for themes to commemorate this anniversary.

## A Dip into the Past

The study of public opinion as a political force has both a long history and a relatively recent past. Emblematic of the former is the proverb cited by Alcuin, in a letter to Charlemagne at the end of the eighth century: "The people in accordance with divine law are to be led, not followed.

**Abstract** The "voice of the people," the root meaning of public opinion, is an old idea. Early political thinkers struggled to define the proper role of public opinion in government. The confluence of developments in commercial opinion polling and social psychological studies of attitudes in the 1930s gave the concept new meaning. An historical perspective is helpful in understanding how public opinion research has progressed; it also allows us to identify once vital but now neglected issues. A concern with professional standards in opinion research links modern researchers with the moral imperative contained in the earliest idea of public opinion.

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Nor are those to be listened to who are accustomed to say, 'The voice of the people is the voice of God.' For the clamor of the crowd is very close to madness" (quoted in Boas, 1969:9).

Neither time nor talent permit me to trace the evolution of the concept of public opinion from Alcuin's gruff *Realpolitik* formulation to our own time. But in the spirit of Charles Tilly's (1983) richly illustrated portrayal of public opinion as embodied in repertoires of collective action, let me add a vignette from the eighteenth century. Everyone knows of Edmund Burke's famous Speech to the Electors of Bristol, given in 1774, with its classic statement that "your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion" (quoted in Wilson, 1962:62). What is less well known is that his actions in line with this principle cost him electoral support, and he eventually withdrew from the race for reelection in 1780.

But an episode early in the career of Charles Fox, in the same period, offers an even more vivid example of how the popular will might be manifested. Fox claimed that the House of Commons was the only proper agency of public opinion, and stated: "I pay no regard whatever to the voice of the people: it is our duty to do what is proper, without considering what may be agreeable: their business is to chuse us; it is ours to act constitutionally, and to maintain the independency of Parliament" (quoted in Emden, 1956:53). Burke ultimately lost his seat in Parliament for saying the same thing; Fox did not have to wait that long to find out how people felt about his theory of public opinion. "As a result of this speech, Fox was attacked by a mob, as he drove down to the House, and was rolled in the mud" (Emden, 1956:53).

After a jump of a thousand years, from Alcuin to Burke and Fox, our next brief stop a mere hundred years or so later will seem like a hop-and-skip. Yet, in terms of the history of public opinion research, it is a giant step. It brings us to the era of James Bryce and of others (such as A. Lawrence Lowell, Woodrow Wilson, Graham Wallas, and Arthur Bentley) whose theoretical and institutional studies made fundamental contributions to the emerging field of political science and through it to the shaping of contemporary traditions of opinion research.

In 1870 two British barristers and scholars in their early thirties, James Bryce and Albert Venn Dicey, set off for America. This was only the first of three trips Bryce made, criss-crossing the continent then and again in 1881 and 1883, prior to the publication of *The American Commonwealth* in December 1888. Everywhere he went he gathered facts: "It was said of him that to him all facts were born free and equal. He remembered them all alike" (Murray, 1944:5). A man of penetrating intellect and great physical stamina, Bryce was also "an alert observer and a persistent, and apparently ingratiating questioner" (Coker, 1939:156). He

once estimated that “five-sixths of *The American Commonwealth* was the result of conversations with Americans in trains, carriages, coaches, on steamboats, in political clubs and conventions, in hotel lobbies, even on top of mountains and at outposts in the wilderness” (Ions, 1968:43).

Bryce’s talent for observation and interviewing and his genius in synthesizing facts to support authoritative generalizations are nowhere better displayed than in his classic treatment of public opinion (Bryce, 1890: II; IV). His achievements led Gallup and Lazarsfeld, among others, to claim for him the title of “patron saint of modern public opinion research” (Lazarsfeld, 1950), and they have earned Bryce a prominent place as a seminal theorist in practically every collection of writings on public opinion published in the past 40 years.

One strand of his detailed analysis can be used as a springboard for comment on a number of problems confronting us. Bryce begins his discussion of “government by public opinion” by asserting that “opinion has really been the chief and ultimate power in nearly all nations at nearly all times,” and then outlines “three stages in the evolution of opinion:” from a passive and acquiescent public, then (through conflict between the ruler and a segment of the ruled) armed struggle for dominance, and finally, submission by the ruler to the popular will, expressed by balloting. Then, prophetically, he envisages a stage beyond these three.

A fourth stage would be reached if the will of the majority. . . . were to become ascertainable at all times . . . possibly even without the need of voting machinery at all. In such a state of things the sway of public opinion would have become more complete, because more continuous, than it is in those. . . . countries which. . . . look chiefly to parliaments as exponents of national sentiment. . . . To such a condition of things the phrase “rule of public opinion” might be most properly applied, for public opinion would not only reign but govern (Bryce, II: 247–51).

Bryce’s analysis of public opinion, like those of others before him and since, moved easily among descriptive statements, conceptual issues, and normative concerns. What helped to earn him the title of our patron saint, however, was his glimpse of how an alternative *means* of ascertaining public opinion might affect the governmental process. It took another 50 years before developments in the social sciences, especially in statistics and social psychology, were harnessed to our nation’s expanding marketing, economic, and public policy requirements, and survey methods and public opinion polling came to be recognized as the technological means of realizing, however partially and imperfectly, Bryce’s earlier vision (Martin, 1984; Converse, 1985).

If one seeks a more precise watershed for this recognition, I would nominate the two-month period between November 1936 and January 1937. The election of 1936 was, of course, distinguished by the successful

forecasting of Roosevelt's reelection by Gallup, Crossley, and Roper, a feat that helped boost the scientific status of this infant technology. And two months later, *Public Opinion Quarterly* was launched, with a lead article by Floyd Allport (1937) that defined this new scientific approach to the study of public opinion while firmly rejecting the "fictions and blind alleys" of the past.

### Uses and Criticisms of Public Opinion Research

Signposts and markers in the history of theory and research on public opinion such as these have a certain antiquarian charm. But they can also help us appreciate how far we have come. Surveys and polls have by now been integrated into economic decision making and government and politics at all levels, practically around the world. Recall in this connection that an exit poll conducted by Nancy Belden anointed President Duarte's party as the victor in the recent elections in El Salvador, weeks before the official count was concluded, and that this "fact" almost immediately caused political tremors and a realignment of factional allegiances.

The use of polls has also transformed news coverage and political and social commentary. This is neatly illustrated by the opening sentences in a recent op-ed piece by McGeorge Bundy (1985) on the Bitburg controversy: "Seventy-two percent of the West Germans want President Reagan to go through with his visit to the Bitburg cemetery; 55 percent of Americans think he should not. It has taken 40 years to do it, but our leaders finally have set majorities of their countries against each other." Public opinion research, as Davison (1972) suggested in his AAPOR presidential address, has indeed become "part of the communication system of our society and of the world community."

Our professional aspirations, successes, and failures have not escaped critical attention, of course. Fault has repeatedly been found with our guiding concepts and methods, our scientific pretensions, our conclusions, and especially with our baneful influence on the politics and institutions of representative democracy. My favorite critic is Lindsay Rogers (1949:239), whose Shandean, epigrammatic style is nicely displayed in the following:

The facts that the pollsters accumulate and endeavor to explain they create themselves. . . . So far as. . . [they] are concerned, the light they have been following is a will-o'-the-wisp. They have been taking in each others' washing, and have been using statistics in terms of the Frenchman's definition: a means of being precise about matters of which you will remain ignorant.

Given my emphasis on the uses of the historical record, it seems only fair to cite the concluding remark from George Gallup's review (1949:180) of

Rogers' book. "I think that we pollsters should take a charitable view towards Mr. Rogers. He represents perhaps the last of the armchair philosophers in this field. I, for one, do not begrudge this last—albeit futile—charge by an armchair warrior, even if the weapons he chooses are tomahawks and poisoned arrows."

The drumfire of criticisms since the earliest days of polling and survey research notwithstanding, the most useful critiques of our concepts, methods, and impacts over the years have come primarily from within our own ranks. Self-criticism is indispensable to progress in all fields of knowledge, and the newly published two-volume work, *Surveying Subjective Phenomena* (Turner and Martin, 1985), provides us with a comprehensive accounting of the current state of the "art-science" of survey research. We will all be consulting it with great profit (if not always with self-satisfaction) for years to come.

### The Return of the Repressed

There is another value to be realized by employing an historical perspective in the study of public opinion, one that was an important dimension of Paul Lazarsfeld's work. He urged modern empiricists to confront the challenges posed by what he termed the "classical tradition," stressing its value in clarifying our concepts, rescuing ideas from undeserved neglect, and helping us to avoid a preoccupation with "what is a manageable topic at the moment, rather than by what is an important issue" (1957:41). Following his injunction, I would like to comment on two important areas of opinion research, which once were vital but now are relatively neglected, in hopes of stimulating debate and renewed attention.

The first of these is the study of the role of personality processes in attitude-formation, stability, and change. This topic was important to earlier theorists who were absorbing the initial impact of Freud. It was evident in the early work of Harold Lasswell (1930), who identified "displacement" as a key mechanism in people's orientations to the political world. It also found a place in Walter Lippmann's classic work, *Public Opinion* (1922), primarily in his discussion of the "pseudo-environment," and in several other books as well (Wellborn, 1969). More recently (but still more than three decades ago), there was the ambitious series of studies of prejudice of which *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al., 1950) is perhaps the best known. Projective questions once were thought to hold out promise in tapping deeper sentiments, but they have dropped out of sight. And the works of Daniel Katz (1960), M. Brewster Smith (1956), Herbert Kelman (1961), and Robert Lane (1962)

are still cited frequently in the literature on opinions and attitudes, but these were all contributions to an interrupted tradition.

During the 1950s, as part of the debate over mass culture, Ernest Van Den Haag (1957) claimed that “of happiness and of despair we have no measure.” Since then we have learned much about positive affect through studies of happiness and subjective well-being (Bradburn, 1969; Campbell, et al., 1976). But as Herbert Hyman (1973) has pointed out, kindness, pride, outrage, sympathy, and other significant “social sentiments” are almost wholly absent from the literature on socialization, where they should be a central concern.

Do personality variables have little to offer in the analysis of attitudes? Obviously not: it would be hard to understand the dynamics, intensity, or rigidity of attitudes without recourse to some notion of individual motives or personal needs. Why then this discontinuity? Partly, I suspect, it is because of the difficulties inherent in using the survey method to explore motivations and emotions. It may also be a byproduct of the schism within the academic discipline of psychology between personality and social psychology. But whatever the reasons, what has emerged to fill the gap are such watered-down versions of earlier personality approaches as “psychographics” in marketing, “uses and gratifications” in the field of communications, and “psychohistory” in the study of political leadership. When well-employed, such concepts can be enlightening, but they don’t cut deep.

Neither, for that matter, did conventional polling on such issues as Vietnam after 10 years, or Bitburg. One had to consult one’s social circle or the mass media to gain a sense of the often profound emotions that these two events evoked, feelings that were hardly captured in published poll findings. Events such as these should challenge us anew to develop means of tapping the substrate of affect, to restore a needed dimension to the primarily cognitive conceptions that inform much current survey research.

A second area that has undergone a partial eclipse in the past decade is the study of racial and ethnic attitudes. Inspection of the index to *Public Opinion Quarterly* shows a slow buildup of listings under “race relations” and “integration” prior to 1960, then a rapid increase until the mid-1970s, (especially during the period 1960–69), and a tailing-off since then. The listings under “race” are somewhat more evenly distributed, but they include studies of interviewer effects and others in which race is used primarily as a background variable. The same is true of entries under “ethnicity,” which are few in number in any case. This rough count does not take account of many other publishing outlets available to race relations researchers, nor does it register the tracking of racial attitudes by public polls across the decades, apart from the collections compiled by

Hazel Erskine in the "Polls" section of *POQ*—most of which appeared in the 1960s. But it is not inconsistent with my sense of a relative decline in the volume of such studies, in a field that has long been of great interest to me.

There is more than a trace of the paradoxical in this, given the high prominence of such work in the earliest years of attitude research. Concepts of social distance and stereotypes and concerns about prejudice and discrimination were driving forces in the development of opinion-attitude methodology. Much of this work involved small-scale questionnaire studies among college students or small groups. But explorations of attitudes toward desegregation in the military and of resistance to school desegregation in the South during the 1940s and 50s added impetus to and enlarged the scope of race relations research.

The events of the 1960s—in particular, civil rights protests that swelled into a broad social movement, and the long, hot summers of urban disorders—had a galvanizing effect on the study of racial attitudes. Various large-scale studies were commissioned, and national polling agencies added to the pool of data as they stepped up their earlier, sporadic efforts to track public opinion on this most pressing social issue.

Attention shifted during the 1970s to problems raised by the implementation of various civil rights laws and public programs. Much important, innovative social research was done in this regard, but it was, for the most part, not concerned with racial attitudes or race relations per se. As Robert Hill (1984) has noted, it was left largely to the major pollsters and such centers as NORC and Michigan's Survey Research Center to maintain the research momentum of the prior decade. He also points out that ethnic minorities other than blacks are rendered nearly invisible in most national polls by their small numbers. I might add that we really know very little about the attitudes of the white majority toward these groups.

One interesting innovation in this field is the launching of large-scale survey research on the attitudes and the social and economic conditions of blacks, organized by black researchers at the University of Michigan and elsewhere. We have heard preliminary reports on these studies at recent AAPOR conferences, and their scope and depth are indeed impressive. There are at least three persuasive reasons why I feel that these efforts need to be matched by counterpart studies of other ethnic minorities and of whites, especially in individual communities.

First, the value of any single study is significantly enhanced by the availability of comparative data on other groups, especially when majority-minority relations are a focal point of the research. Second, we still have a long way to go as a society before problems of prejudice, discrimination, and segregation can be relegated to a lower level of concern, despite recent claims about the declining significance of race.



And third, the “new immigration” since 1965, from Asian and Latin American countries particularly, is already contributing to rising tensions in heavily impacted communities. Conflicts over jobs, education, and housing, and increased pressure on available public services in an era of budgetary constraints are likely to create or add to feelings of fear and resentment, especially among groups already under pressure.

Survey research can help to define the scope and severity of problems among the groups affected by them, and by heightening their saliency as public issues can contribute to the search for solutions. Older public opinion researchers will recognize this as a call for “action research,” a tradition that had an honorable history in this field and that can still serve the cause of tension-reduction and problem-solving in intergroup relations.

### **The Calling of Public Opinion Research**

The reference to *vox populi, vox Dei*, with which this historical excursion was launched, reminds us that the idea of public opinion carries a profound moral imperative. It bestows powerful legitimation on those chosen by the people, whose mission is often described as discharging a sacred trust. Little wonder, then, that even the most autocratic rulers in the modern era seek to appropriate symbols of legitimacy by holding sham elections.

Some of this moral imperative carries over into theory and research on public opinion, especially when public issues are at the center of inquiry. It was, for example, a central theme in Ferdinand Toennies’ sociological theory of public opinion, in which the supplanting of religion by public opinion was seen as a dynamic element in societal change (Gollin and Gollin, 1973). I do not mean to imply that this transforms pollsters into oracles of the popular will: few of us would claim a priestly function, though some critics persist in believing that we seek to play such a role. Rather, in the conduct of our work we take our moral and ethical responsibilities seriously, and have attested to them by subscribing to AAPOR’s Code of Professional Ethics and Practices. In doing so we recognize that adherence to a code is partially rooted in self-interest: we rely on public trust and cooperation, and the trust of our clients as well. But mostly our adherence is based on norms and values that infuse the social system of science and that form key components of our professional self-image. These practical concerns and ethical prescriptions are the sources of reactions that range from uneasiness to outrage when we are confronted with questionable surveys or polling practices, or breaches of privacy or confidentiality.

In recent years, especially in recognition of the powerful appeal or flattering effect of being asked for one’s views on public issues, polls have



proliferated in many quarters. There are congressional polls of constituents, “voodoo” call-in polls conducted by some of the media, advocacy polls designed to please the client, robotized polls by telemarketing agencies, “rock-n-roll” polls used to spice up news coverage on slow days, and sales pitches thinly disguised as opinion research. In the past few years we have seen an upsurge of what I suggest can be called “mendicant polls”: fundraising appeals attached to a set of questions that encourage people to classify themselves as true believers of one cause or another. These dubious or irritating devices cheapen the value of opinion research in our eyes, and we fear that they may confuse the public and devalue the status of our work in the eyes of significant others.

Two months ago, however, a new note was struck in a letter of solicitation from the *Dolan Report*, which is linked to the National Conservative Political Action Committee. It stated in part that “the *Dolan Report* differs from the other national polling firms and media polls. . . . Whether they admit it or not all pollsters are biased. The problem is that all the major pollsters like CBS, Gallup, Garth and Harris are biased in favor of liberals. The *Dolan Report* will provide a conservative pollsters view.”

All this and more will be delivered for annual fees that range between \$350 and \$1500. To the other types of pseudo-polls noted earlier we can now add the “partisan poll,” one that makes no bones about its intent and slant. The sales pitch is given an additional endorsement by James Watt, whose cover letter states: “Right now, American public opinion is held hostage by the large, liberal national pollsters who dominate the American political scene. They are no longer content to simply report on public opinion. They now seem intent on helping shape it.”

Is there anything we can do about all this, except to shake our heads at the follies perpetrated in the name of public opinion research? I think there is. First, we must strengthen our resolve to maintain the highest standards of conduct in our work, to understand the full implications of the codes to which we subscribe, and to adhere to them. AAPOR’s recently revised code, our shield and sword, deserves to be reviewed carefully by each of us in this connection. Second, we must step up our efforts to educate the press and public about the criteria to use in evaluating opinion research. We have already seen improvements in the level of understanding and quality of reporting of polls in the news media, but more needs to be done and on a continuing basis. Partisan polling efforts will ultimately fall of their own weight if those asked to support them or to give them credibility become sufficiently aware of the difference between quality and shoddy work.

Finally, though I realize that this will arouse controversy, add to AAPOR’s annual costs, and augment the burdens of its council members

and others, we need to be more willing to raise questions about the work of pollsters and survey researchers that we believe has violated our codes of conduct. I am not encouraging anyone to use AAPOR to conduct personal or professional vendettas. What should concern us are practices that, in our judgment, clearly go beyond the limits prescribed in our code. AAPOR has a set of procedures for investigating complaints that maintain confidentiality and are eminently fair and practicable. If we simply shrug our shoulders or criticize in private, we cannot be said to be a self-regulating profession, and we will become progressively less capable of responding effectively to attempts made by others to regulate us.

George Bernard Shaw once wrote, "All professions are conspiracies against the laity." This gibe doesn't apply to us too well; we fall short of being a profession inasmuch as we don't prescribe formal criteria for entry into the field, nor do we exercise control through a certification process. But our self-images and research practices contain important components of a professional character, and we can reinforce these by giving greater recognition to work that is "exemplary" in both the positive and negative senses. By doing so, I suggest, we would be serving both our collective interest and the public interest, as well as acknowledging the force of the moral imperative embedded in the idea of public opinion.

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**AAPOR 1985 Conference Program**

DIDACTIC SESSION:  
 SURVEY ANALYSIS WITH MICROCOMPUTERS  
 ORGANIZER: David Morganstein, WESTAT

FIRST PLENARY SESSION:  
 SOCIAL FORECASTING: A CLOUDED CRYSTAL BALL?  
 In Memory of Joseph T. Klapper

CHAIR AND DISCUSSANT James R. Beniger, Princeton University  
*Sam Stouffer as Gypsy: Cohort Analysis and Forecasting in the GSS*  
 James A. Davis, Harvard University  
*Forecasting Technological Change: New Products and New Processes*  
 Joseph P. Martino, University of Dayton  
*Using Demographic Forecasts to Predict Environmental Issues*  
 M. Rupert Cutler, Environmental Fund

**PUBLIC OPINION AND PUBLIC POLICY**

CHAIR: Bernard Roshco, U.S. Department of State  
*The Mass Media Do Affect Policy Preferences*  
 Robert Y. Shapiro, Columbia University and NORC  
 Benjamin I. Page, University of Texas, Austin, and NORC  
 Glenn R. Dempsey, University of Chicago (Ph.D. student) and NORC  
*Opinion Polls and Public Policy: The Case of the 1977 Panama Canal Treaties*  
 Ted J. Smith III and J. Michael Hogan, University of Virginia  
*The Attitudes of American Elites on Foreign Policy Issues*  
 Barbara A. Bardes, Loyola University  
 Robert Oldendick, University of Cincinnati  
 DISCUSSANT: Alvin Richman, U.S. Department of State

**HOW ACCURATE ARE ELECTION POLLS?**

CHAIR: Herbert H. Hyman, Wesleyan University  
*Why the Polls Differed in the '84 Election*  
 Kenneth P. Adler, United States Information Agency  
*An Assessment of the Predictive Accuracy of Preelection Polls*  
 Irving Crespi, Irving Crespi and Associates  
 DISCUSSANT: Diane Colasanto, The Gallup Organization

**MEASURING ATTITUDES**

CHAIR: Howard Schuman, University of Michigan  
*Measuring the Effects of Attitude Crystallization on Response Effects*  
 Seymour Sudman and Knude Swensen, University of Illinois  
*The Middle Position in Survey Questions About Issues of Public Policy*  
 George F. Bishop, University of Cincinnati  
*Improving the Attitude-Behavior Fit through Post-Stratification of Opinion Responses*  
 Robert G. Mason, Larry A. Boersma, G. David Faulkenberry, Oregon State University  
*Victimization, Fear of Crime, and Neighborhood Quality of Life: Question-Order Effects*  
 McKee J. McClendon, David J. O'Brien, Kathie Heizer, University of Akron  
 DISCUSSANT: D. Garth Taylor, University of Chicago

**THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME: PUBLIC OPINION AND NUCLEAR WAR**

CHAIR: Sidney Hollander, Jr., Hollander, Cohen Associates  
*The Cambridge Nuclear Free Zone Campaign: Attitudes Leading to Action*  
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 James Ennis, Tufts University

*ABM and Star Wars: Attitudes Toward Active Defense Against Nuclear Weapons*

Bernard M. Kramer, University of Massachusetts, Boston

Thomas Graham, MIT

*Public Perceptions of the Arms Race*

John Doble, Public Agenda Foundation

*A Public-Opinion Based Strategy for Peace*

Ralph K. White, George Washington University

## THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN THE '84 ELECTION

CHAIR: Gladys Lang, University of Washington

*Debate Viewing and Debate Discussion as Predictors of Cognition in the '84 Campaign*

J David Kennamer, Virginia Commonwealth University

*The Effects of the First 1984 Presidential Debate on Issue and Image Assessments*

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*Gary Hari's Momentum: News Coverage of the Iowa Caucuses and the New Hampshire Primary*

David W. Moore, University of New Hampshire

DISCUSSANT: Kurt Lang, University of Washington

INCREASING RESPONSE RATES:  
METHODOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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Wendel Thompson, U.S. Department of Energy

*An Experiment in the Timing of Payment. Physician Response to a Mailed Survey*

Sandra H. Berry, The Rand Corporation

*An Evaluation of Mode of Initial Contact for In-Person Interviews*

Nancy A. Mathiowetz, Doris R. Northrup, Sandra Sperry, Deborah Bercini, WESTAT and National Center for Health Statistics

DISCUSSANT: Don A. Dillman, Washington State University

## ROUND TABLE SESSIONS

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Paul Scipione, Response Analysis

Stuart Herman, Technical Analysis and Communication

*An Emerging Paradigm for Communications Effects Research*

W. Russell Neuman, MIT

*Reporting Social Science Research in the Media*

Michael W. Traugott and Stanley Presser, University of Michigan

Philip Meyer, University of North Carolina

*Successes and Failures in Conjoint Analysis*

Joan Black, Joan Black &amp; Associates

Subrata Sen, Yale University

*The New Electronic Media: Social, Economic, and Cultural Trends*

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*Are New Demographic Measurements Needed for a Postindustrial Society?*

Robert Bezilla, The Gallup Organization

## BACK IN THE OLDEN DAYS

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Sheldon R. Gawiser, Sheldon Gawiser &amp; Associates

EMERGING SOCIAL ISSUES

CHAIR: J. Ronald Milavsky, NBC

*Natural, Unnatural, and Invisible Hazards—What Do the Media Report?*

Phyllis Endreny and Eleanor Singer, Columbia University

*The Distortion of Health Risks in the Media*

Jonathan Cole, Columbia University

*Suicide Attitudes in America*

Darwin Sawyer and Jeffery Sobal, University of Maryland

*Measuring Attitudes about Social Justice*

Thomas L. Piazza, University of California, Berkeley

DISCUSSANT: Donald R. DeLuca, Yale University

PUBLIC OPINION FORMATION AND CHANGE

CHAIR AND DISCUSSANT: W.P. Davison, Columbia University

*Cycles of Reform: Trends since World War II*

Tom W. Smith, NORC

*Public Opinion about Public Opinion*

Carroll J. Glynn, Cornell University

Jack M. McLeod, University of Wisconsin

*Communicating Opinions about Social Problems*

Alex S. Edelman, University of Washington

Youichi Ito, Keio University, Japan

*Toward a General Theory of Self-Interest Effects*

Donald Philip Green, University of California, Berkeley (AAPOR Student Paper Award)

SECOND PLENARY SESSION:  
IS THERE A CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE IN  
PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH?

In Memory of George H. Gallup

CHAIR: Paul B. Sheatsley, NORC

*Why American Public Opinion Research Is Doing the Best It Has Ever Done*

Everett C. Ladd, University of Connecticut

*Rating the Polls: The Views of Media Elites and the General Public*

Andrew Kohut, The Gallup Organization

*A Pollster Evaluates Polls with Poll Data: (Or, Measuring a Gaseous Body with a Rubber Band)*

Burns W. Roper, The Roper Organization

DISCUSSANTS:

Mervin D. Field, Field Research

Warren Mitofsky, CBS News

MEASURING MENTAL HEALTH

Organized by the Shirely Star Memorial Committee

CHAIR: Jack Elinson, Columbia University

*Toward a Valid and Easy Mental Health Survey—The Impossible Dream?*

Lee N. Robins, Washington University

DISCUSSANTS:

Patrick Shrout, Columbia University School of Public Health, Division of Biostatistics

Elena Yu, University of Illinois, Chicago Circle

## POLLS AND EXIT POLLS IN THE '84 ELECTION

CHAIR: Herbert I. Abelson, Response Analysis

*The Ferraro Candidacy and the Polls*

Kathleen A. Frankovic, CBS News

*Early TV Calls in 1984: How Western Voters Deplored but Ignored Them*

William C. Adams, George Washington University

*Respondent Selection and Preelection Estimates of Candidate Preference*

Michael W. Traugott, University of Michigan

DISCUSSANT: Michael R. Kagay, Louis Harris

THE USE OF NONSURVEY METHODS IN  
PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

CHAIR: Doris R. Northrup, WESTAT

*Measuring Public Opinion Through Unobtrusive Methods: The Community Case Study Approach*

Walter K. Lindenmann, Opinion Research Corporation

*Whatever Happened to Deviant Case Analysis, and Should It Be Revived?*

Ann Pasanella, Columbia University

*The Legacy of Uncle Tom's Cabin: A Case Study in Book History*

Susan B. Neuman, Eastern Connecticut State University

*Uncle Tom's Cabin: A Public Opinion Phenomenon*

Robert L. Cohen, Yankelovich, Skelly, and White

DISCUSSANT: Fred H. Goldner, Queens College, CUNY

## PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

CHAIR: Mark A. Schulman, Schulman, Ronca, and Bucuvalas, Inc.

*Laughing at the Polls: How the Comics and Cartoons View Public Opinion Surveys*

Tom W. Smith, NORC

*Survey Research: Trends in Attitudes and Participation*

Stephen Schleifer, Walker Research, Inc.

*Surveys on Surveys: Limitations and Potentialities*

John Goyder, University of Waterloo

*The Values and Attitudes of Market and Survey Researchers*

Thomas Danbury, Survey Sampling, Inc.

DISCUSSANT: Janice M. Ballou, Louis Harris

## THE FEDERAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

CHAIR: Laure M. Sharp, Bureau of Social Science Research

*Federal Statistics: Preserving the Past, Planning the Future*

Katherine K. Wallman, COPAFS

*Federal Statistics: Emerging Values and Lifestyles Deserving Recognition*

Norman M. Bradburn, University of Chicago

*Federal Statistics: An Agenda for Response to Societal Trends*

Sidney L. Jones, Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, U.S. Department of Commerce

## ATTITUDES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF YOUTH

CHAIR: Alida Brill, Russell Sage Foundation

*Some Recent Trends in the Aspirations, Concerns, and Behavior of American Young People*

Jerald G. Bachman, Lloyd D. Johnston, Patrick M. O'Malley, University of Michigan

*Changes in the Structure of High School Achievement: 1972-1980*

Tom Hoffer and Jim Wolf, NORC

*Factors Associated with Changes in Youths' Attitudes Toward Economic Issues*

Stephen J. Ingels and Mary Utne O'Brien, NORC

DISCUSSANT: Dorothy Jones Jessop, Albert Einstein College



ROUND TABLE SESSIONS

ORGANIZER: G. Ray Funkhouser, Rutgers University

*Regulation of Survey Research*

Harry W. O'Neill, Opinion Research Corporation

Diane Bowers, CASRO

*Interviewer Cheating*

Maria Sanchez, ISR

*Survey Respondents: New and Old Issues*

Elizabeth A. Martin and Naomi D. Rothwell, Bureau of Social Science Research

Diane O'Rourke and Johnny Blair, University of Illinois

Judith Fiedler, Group Health Cooperative

*The Role of PAC's in the Political Process*

Edward Handler, Babson College

Paul R. Hollrak, Consultant

John Erving, N.J. Common Cause

*Some Fresh Ideas About Values Research*

G. Ray Funkhouser, Rutgers University

Michael Hooper, Temple University

*Recent Developments in Research Using Optical Scanner Techniques*

Judith Bayer, New York University

John Keon, New York University

*TV Ratings: The Numbers, Their Meaning and Uses*

Peter V. Miller, Northwestern University

DIDACTIC SESSION:  
HOW TO HANDLE MISSING DATA

ORGANIZER: Graham Kalton, University of Michigan

TELEVISION AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

CHAIR: Horst H. Stipp, NBC

*Media Events and Public Images: Television and the 1984 Olympics*

Susan H. Evans, Melvin A. Goldberg, Peter Clarke, Annenberg School of

Communications, University of Southern California

*Perceptions of Bias in Television News*

Martin Collins, Social and Community Planning Research and City University Business

School, London

*Television's Impact on High School Achievement*

Gary D. Gaddy, University of Wisconsin

*The Media Credibility Problem: Putting the Research into Perspective*

Cecilie Gaziano, Kristin McGrath, MORI Research, Inc.

DISCUSSANT: Doris Graber, University of Illinois

REFLECTIONS ON THE '84 ELECTION

CHAIR: Harold Mendelsohn, University of Denver

*The Blitz: The Use of Political Advertising During the Final Days of the 1984 Election*

Montague Kern, National Endowment for the Humanities

*Changes in Party Identification and Party Images in the Reagan Years*

Martin P. Wattenberg, University of California, Irvine

*The Minnesota Poll: Mondale's Appeal*

Hazel H. Reinhardt, Minneapolis Star and Tribune

DISCUSSANT: Kenneth John, Washington Post

### SAMPLING, SIGNIFICANCE, AND ECOLOGICAL CORRELATION

CHAIR: Charles D. Cowan, Bureau of the Census

*Multiplicity Samples of Organizational Hierarchies*

Joe L. Spaeth, University of Illinois

*What Is the Significance of "Statistical Significance"?*

Eli S. Marks

*Where Have All the Men Gone: The Increasing Problem of Male Underrepresentation in Surveys*

James Dyer, David B. Hill, Arnold Vedlitz, Texas A & M University

*Testing Surrogate Measures for Household Income in Market Research*

James A. Sharkey, Loya F. Metzger, Equitable Life Assurance Society

DISCUSSANT: Owen T. Thornberry, National Center for Health Statistics

### THE FLOW OF NEWS AND INFORMATION IN SOCIETY

CHAIR: Charles R. Wright, University of Pennsylvania

*Community Attachment, Newspaper Use and Knowledge of Local Issues*

Clarice N. Olien, Phillip J. Tichenor, George A. Donohue, University of Minnesota

*Testing Traditional Beliefs About Competition and Diversity*

Maxwell McCombs, Syracuse University

*Interpersonal Communication and the Comprehension of News*

John P. Robinson, Mark R. Levy, University of Maryland

*The Appetite Hypothesis: A Note on Agenda Setting*

Richard Maisel, New York University

DISCUSSANT: Allen H. Barton, Columbia University

### METHODOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN RESEARCH ON AIDS

CHAIR: Raymond Fink, New York Medical College

*Methodological Issues in AIDS-Related Research*

Karolynn Siegel and Laurie J. Bauman, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center

*Designing an Effective AIDS Prevention Campaign*

Larry L. Bye and Rebecca C. Quarles, Research and Decisions Corporation

*How Do You Screen for Sexual Preference?*

Rebecca C. Quarles and Larry L. Bye, Research and Decisions Corporation

DISCUSSANT: Corinne Kirchner, American Foundation for the Blind

### 1985 Annual AAPOR Business Meeting

The annual business meeting was held from 4:00 to 5:30 P.M. on May 18, 1985 at the Americana Great Gorge Hotel, McAfee, New Jersey. Retiring President Albert Gollin presided. About 90 members attended.

President Gollin thanked committee chairs for their diligent work during the year. He noted in particular the work of Deborah Hensler as head of the Standards Committee in developing a revised Code of Professional Ethics and Practices. Dr. Hensler told the attendees that the revised Code would be mailed to all AAPOR members for a vote to determine whether the revisions would be adopted. Some discussion ensued regarding whether the revisions should be approved individually or as a set, but the final determination was that they would be voted on as a set in the fall of 1985.

Other Council members and committee chairs then presented their reports at the business meeting:

*Secretary-Treasurer*—Robert Groves reported that AAPOR is healthy financially, with current net worth of over \$100,000, revenues for 1985 of over \$90,000, and a similar level of projected expenses for 1985. A copy of Dr. Groves' financial summary was distributed, showing that costs had risen most rapidly in the areas of the AAPOR secretariat, publication, and conference costs. Despite rising costs and a budgeted deficit, it seemed that AAPOR would break even on the year. Dr. Groves mentioned that AAPOR's assets would continue to be invested in short-term T-notes as last year's investments came due for consideration. He concluded by thanking Diana Druker for her able assistance.

*Nominations*—Past President Laure Sharp reported on the results of the election. The newly elected officers are:

- Vice-President and President-Elect: J. Ronald Milavsky
- Associate Secretary-Treasurer: Barbara Lee
- Standards Associate: Stanley Presser
- Conference Associate: Philip Meyer
- Membership and Chapter Relations Associate: Susan Weisbrod
- Publications and Information Committee: Barry Sussman
- Councilor-at-Large: Eleanor Singer

Ms. Sharp reported that Council discussion on this year's nomination process centered on the need for more active participation by the membership and the nominations committee, and for earlier Council involvement in nominations activities. Possible by-law changes to this effect were considered but are believed to be impractical and unnecessary. Council recommended enlarging the size of the nominations committee in future years.

*Membership and Chapter Relations*—Diane Schroyer reported that

membership was up slightly in 1985 for a total membership of 1098, up from the previous year's figure of 1072 (no standards were given on these figures). Ms. Schrayner noted that the increase was mostly due to an increase in commercial memberships and that the only area that showed a drop in membership was the academic.

Ms. Schrayner also reported that there had been a rebirth of the Pacific chapter in the San Francisco area and that later this year there will be further activity in the Los Angeles area trying to initiate a chapter there. Finally, there was an attempt to start a chapter in the Boston area but it was not too successful.

*Publications and Information*—Barbara Lee reported that three issues of the AAPOR Newsletter were distributed over the past year, with the assistance of Doug Hughes, a journalism student at the University of North Carolina. Under the editorship of Donald DeLuca (Associate Chair), the Blue Book (formerly known as "Agencies and Organizations Represented in AAPOR Membership") was compiled. One hundred and fifteen organizations were included, four more than last year, despite an increase in the cost of being listed. A committee was organized to publicize the Conference. A glowing description of the field of public opinion polling that appeared in "Business Week's Guide to Careers" produced an unexpected flood of inquiries, and a committee is being formed to develop an organizational brochure on the subject.

*Conference*—Eleanor Singer reported that the Conference Committee met once, in September 1984, to plan this year's conference program. Thereafter, members were consulted as the need arose.

Somewhat more than 400 people registered for the conference. Of the 73 papers submitted, 60 were accepted—53 for presentation in paper sessions and 7 in round tables. Altogether, 58 papers were presented in the paper sessions, including the student paper winner and others recruited to round out the sessions. Of the 58 papers, 38 were by academics and 20 by nonacademics; of 33 chairs and discussants, 16 were academics and 17 nonacademics. About half the round table presenters were academics, the rest nonacademics. Nineteen student papers were submitted; Donald Philip Green of the University of California, Berkeley, received first prize, and the authors of two other papers received honorable mention.

Dr. Singer expressed her gratitude to the following: Diana Druker, for everything; Ray Funkhouser, for organizing the round table sessions; Bob Lee and Phyllis Endreny, for organizing the special exhibits; Jim Beniger for organizing a committee to solicit student papers and for refereeing them all; Chuck Cowan, for arranging transportation, audio-visual equipment, rooms, etc.; Joan Black, for making sure things in general were running smoothly; Kristin Antelman, for typing and retyping

the program; Emily Singer, for designing the cover; Don DeLuca, for publicity; and, of course, all the members of the conference committee, who provided help and support throughout the entire year.

*POQ Editor*—Eleanor Singer reported that plans were underway for AAPOR to acquire ownership of the *Public Opinion Quarterly* from Columbia University, and that AAPOR was investigating transferring publication of *POQ* from Elsevier Science Publishing Company to the University of Chicago Press. Elsevier has already been notified that its contract to publish *POQ* would not be renewed.

*Site Selection*—Charles Cowan reported that next year's conference site is the Don CeSar in St. Petersburg, Florida. The Don CeSar has 275 rooms, and rates will be \$110 per night for a single room, FAP, and \$80 for a double, FAP.

AAPOR returns to the Northeast in 1987 and recommendations are solicited for a site. Lake Lawn Lodge and possible sites in Canada are being considered for 1988.

Respectfully Submitted,  
CHARLES D. COWAN  
*Associate Secretary-Treasurer*