

COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS

Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture • Saint Louis University

Public Opinion Research

IN THIS
ISSUE

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Public Opinion Research

I. Defining "Opinion"

Robert W. Worcester. *British Public Opinion: History and Methodology of Political Opinion Polling*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991.

Jacob Shamir and Michal Shamir. "Pluralistic Ignorance Across Issues and Over Time: Information Cues and Biases." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 16, no. 2 (1997), pp. 227-260.

Irving Crespi. *The Public Opinion Process: How the People Speak*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997.

Several generations of academics over the past 60 years have contributed definitions of public opinion and debated its individual and collective formation processes. This issue of *Trends* is a summary of contemporary research by academics and industry professionals concerning the current issues in public opinion measurement. The definition of the term, its relevancy to political and cultural climates, the reasons why the public changes or remains fixed in its opinions, and the role of leading theories such as the spiral of silence, third person effect and audience/reception analysis are explored here.

Robert M. Worcester, the founder and chairman of the international polling firm MORI (Market and Opinion Research International), contributed a working definition balancing the pragmatic and theoretical viewpoints in his speech accepting the 1997 Dinerman award from the World Association for Public Opinion Research and American Association for Public Opinion Research. The industrial side of the public opinion business uses five tools of the trade, Worcester observed: behavior, knowledge, opinions, attitudes and values. Behavior is what we do, knowledge what we know; the other three require further explanation. Opinions are

...those low salience, little thought about reactions to pollsters' questions about issues of the day, easily manipulated by question wording or the news of the day, not very important to the respondent, not vital to their well being or that of their family, unlikely to have been the topic of discussion or debate between them and their relations, friends and work mates, easily blown about by the winds of the politicians and the

media. (Worcester 1997)

Attitudes constitute the "currents below the surface," derived from "a deeper level of consciousness," though held "with some conviction ... likely to have been held for some time and after thought, discussion, perhaps the result of behavior. ... and harder to confront or confound" (*ibid.*). At the same time, it is values that are inculcated, inherited, most durable because held most deeply, and likely to become more fixed with time and age, and least likely to be penetrated by media or manipulated by political debate.

The academic researchers Jacob Shamir and Michal Shamir offer a similar definition about the complex forces — social, psychological, environmental and political — that help cultivate opinion, and the public's misperception of others' opinions.

We consider public opinion as a multi-dimensional concept, which incorporates attitudes as well as perceptions of opinion distributions but also other elements such as expectations as to future developments, opinion expressions, and behaviors of various sorts. These dimensions of public opinion will be often in synchronization, but there also can be discrepancies among all or some of them (Shamir and Shamir 1997: 229-230).

The concept that opinions are formed by the public as a multidimensional interaction of social, psychological, political and mediated factors is central to the investigations in public opinion research literature. Public opinion exists on a number of levels of reality, as Irving Crespi pointed out, and each level has its own causal

processes. The multilevel perspective of opinion presupposes that the process is in constant flux, and reacts to emerging trends and developments: the process exists on the individual as well as aggregate level. As Crespi observed, public opinion is more than the summarization of opinions. Crespi incorporates the findings of a range of social phenomena including the relation

of opinion to underlying beliefs and values, socioeconomic status, political leadership, the impact of news events, interaction between opinion leaders and followers, agenda setting by the media, mass audience analysis, reception studies, and personal versus impersonal genres of communication (Crespi 1997: 5).

II. The Beginnings of Public Opinion Research

Wilhelm Bauer. *Die Öffentliche Meinung in der Weltgeschichte* (Public Opinion in World History). Potsdam, 1929.

Ferdinand Tönnies. *Kritik der öffentlichen Meinung* (Critique of Public Opinion). Berlin, 1922.

Charles Horton Cooley. *Social Organization: A Study of the Larger Mind*. New York, 1909

Walter Lippman. *Public Opinion*. New York: Macmillan, 1922.

Harold Lasswell. "The Theory of Political Propaganda." *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 21 (1927).

Margaret Mead. "Public Opinion Mechanisms among Primitive Peoples." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Vol. 1, No. 1 (1937).

George H. Gallup and S. F. Rae. *The Pulse of Democracy: The Public-Opinion Poll and How It Works*. New York: Greenwood, 1968 [orig.: 1940].

Hadley Cantril. *Gauging Public Opinion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944.

Albert H. Cantril. *The Opinion Connection: Polling, Politics, and the Press*. Washington DC: CQ Press, 1991.

Paul F. Lazarsfeld, B. Berelson, and H. Gaudet. *The People's Choice*. 2nd ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 1948 [1st ed.: 1944].

Ann Northrop. "The Rise of the Polls: Bloopers Amid Improving Aim." *National Journal*. Vol. 3, No. 33 (14 August 1971), pg. 1703.

Maurice C. Bryson. "The *Literary Digest* Poll: Making of a Statistical Myth." *American Statistician*. Vol. 30, No. 4 (Nov. 1976), pp. 184-185.

Graham R. Walden (ed.). *Polling and Survey Research Methods 1935-1979*. Westport, CT/London: Greenwood Press, 1996.

The business of public opinion, Worcester concluded, is a "marriage of the Art of Asking Questions and the Science of Sampling," vital in the formation of public policy by elected leaders. Some fear that polling is becoming too powerful or a threat to democracy. Ordinary citizens believe that although their opinions are supposed to influence elected officials, they do not know if opinions held by others count more. These doubts are historically based, for the opinion-engineering industry includes among its forbearers journalists

-turned-propagandists, such as Ivy Ledbetter Lee and Edward Bernays (Worcester 1991).

Some attention to the public's opinion can be traced far back in history (Bauer 1929), but its claim to scientific status rests on the work of nineteenth and early twentieth century sociologists, especially Germans and Americans, such as Ferdinand Tönnies (1922) and Charles Horton Cooley (1909). The modern academic field of public opinion, and the professional industry of public opinion measurement, were prefigured

theoretically by Walter Lippman (1922), but began in earnest at Columbia and Princeton universities in the thirties — with the work of Paul Lazarsfeld (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1944), Hadley Cantril (1944), Margaret Mead (1937), George Gallup (Gallup and Rae 1940), Floyd Allport (1937), Harold Lasswell (1927), and many others. These were social scientists who believed their work had an idealistic, democratic purpose: to serve the common good and to improve the life of the collective community.

Social science enjoyed great popularity during the New Deal years of the 1930s, with its practical orientation towards "social engineering." There were setbacks in the sampling of public opinion, such as the defective poll undertaken by the *Literary Digest* before the 1936 U. S. presidential election, which predicted a landslide victory for Alf Landon, the Republican candidate. The subsequent landslide victory for his opponent, Franklin D. Roosevelt, not only caused the death of the magazine but raised doubts about the reliability of polling in the public mind. It also brought methodology to the forefront of concerns among professional pollsters (Northrup 1971; Bryson 1976; Walden 1996: 27-50).

In the first article of the first issue of the academic journal, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Margaret Mead reported on her work in Bali in 1928, as a young PhD candidate from Columbia

University, concerning public opinion mechanisms among "primitive" peoples. Mead's conclusions implied there was a strong link among deeply embedded tribal values, attitudes toward individualism, authority, law and religion, and the way collective opinion was formed, held, and how it determined individual behavior. The prescient observation Mead made, in the context of the future development of research in the field, that the perspectives of "simpler" or economically less-developed countries might provide researchers the means to understand more complex civilizations, has implications for contemporary research. From Bajoeng Gede in Bali, Netherlands East Indies, Mead concluded in July of 1937:

...each of the different types of appeal to public opinion or ignoring of public opinion which we find in modern society presupposes a different relationship between the character formation of the citizen and the political system of which he is a unit... In our diverse and disintegrate society, the incommensurability of these types of appeal may possibly stimulate some individuals to critical thought which transcends any of them. But it is even more possible that a continued exposure to such incomparable assumptions may be an important influence in the fragmentation and disintegration of the average citizen (Mead 1937: 16).

III. The Ideal Public

Daniel Yankelovich. "A New Direction for Survey Research." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 8, No 1 (1996), pp. 1-9.

Richard M. Perloff. *Political Communication: Politics, Press and Public in America*. Mahwah, NJ/London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998.

Jean M. Converse. *Survey Research in the United States: Roots and Emergence, 1890-1960*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

The term "Public" when used in connection with "Opinion" can refer to the idea of a social group for whom ideas provide cohesion and identity, or to the process one individual goes through in exposing his or her ideas to others. The founders of public opinion as a social science began a debate, in the early twentieth century, about the

respective roles of culture and rationalism. The hypotheses that emerged from that debate were tested and retested in wartime by propagandists such as Edward Bernays, who had worked for the U.S. Government's Committee on Public Information (CPI), in the First World War. The CPI, also known as the Creel Committee, was

established by President Wilson explicitly for domestic propaganda and was "America's first propaganda campaign, perhaps the most extensive effort by government to mobilize and shape public opinion — and one of the most controversial" (Perloff 1998: 31. See also Creel 1920). The social purposes and uses of opinion measurement remain controversial, and their relationship to developing countries and global democratization continues to enlarge the political role, scope and definition of the public opinion research being conducted today.

The idea of public consent and its relationship to the ideology of capitalist democracy and the role of polling as a communications industry which thrives because of the political climates of mediated debates in democracies are **both** central to the historical roots as well as the future of the field:

Pollsters saw themselves as innovators who would defend a democratic faith with new methods of conveying the popular will. They saw their role as providing a continuous measurement of public opinion which would supplement and strengthen the normal operations of representative government and protect it from the domination of lobbyists and special interests. (Converse, 1987, as cited in Dran and Hildreth 1995).

Homogeneity

Although the concept of populations as homogenous is historically inaccurate, as social psychologists have demonstrated, homogenous thinking persists. It served as the philosophical basis for research models such as the approximately 60 geodemographic cohorts that

Claritas Corporation developed in the seventies. Similarly, the homogeneity implied by the roughly one-dozen Psychographic descriptors (Values and Lifestyles Index, Stanford Research Institute) based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, first conceived fifty years ago during the heyday of Freudian psychology correlated wealth and an integrated, whole life. Psychographics, as developed by the Stanford Research Institute and adapted by marketing communication firms for a variety of purposes, perceived the American public as having values that could be categorized according to income levels and purchasing patterns. The SRI Values & Lifestyles^o typology developed broad generalizations about attitudes and norms of each economic class and developed from that methods to extract generalizations about opinions concerning political choices, religious values, educational aspirations and so forth.

Geodemographics, patterned along the same model using postal zip codes, made broad categorical assumptions about citizens' political opinions based on the neighborhoods in which they lived. Geodemographics and psychographics make assumptions about people that are most useful in fine-tuning a targeted marketing campaign yet need to be tested philosophically and experientially for validity with regard to public opinion.

In the past five years, technology has made political tele-targeting by interest groups faster, more direct, and pervasive; while at the federal, state and local levels, interpersonal communication, political advertising and party organization diminished the utility of demographics as a determinant in assessing public opinion.

IV. Evaluations of Polling

Wolfgang Donsbach. "Survey Research at the End of the Twentieth Century: Theses and Antitheses." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 17-28.

Ellen M. Dran and Anne Hildreth. "What the Public Thinks About How We Know What It Is Thinking." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 7, No. 2 (Summer 1995), pp. 128-144.

Paul J. Lavrakas, Jack K. Holley, and Peter V. Miller. "Public Reactions to Polling News During the 1988 Presidential Election Campaign." In, *Polling and Presidential Election Coverage*, edited by Paul J. Lavrakas and Jack K. Holley. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991.

Quality: A *sine qua non*

On the other side of the democratic fence, there is what Daniel Yankelovich and others cite as a profound misunderstanding of the "eye" of the poll and what it ought to represent for leaders and for the general public. In a speech accepting the 1996 Dinerman award, Yankelovich observed that the early founders of public opinion research during the thirties upheld the "democratic ideals of free expression and the common good," and they believed that egalitarian ideals would be "promoted, and totalitarian forces defeated," by the cultivation of the business that measured and disseminated public opinion as a commercial product (Yankelovich 1996).

Research by Dornsbach (1997) and by Dran and Hildreth (1995) concluded that at the end of the twentieth century, public attitudes about polls are complex, and analysis of the structure of public opinion is insufficient to understand issues such as the *Quality* of public opinion research, a continuing area of vital research and debate. The goal is not only to refine techniques and instruments in order to detect with greater clarity a true reading of the public temperament, but at issue is the reading itself, the quality of interpretation, the utility and consequence of the investigation and its relationship to social ideals.

Today, popular doubt exists that polling is a vital part of the operation of a democratic order. Among professionals in academe and in industry who believe polling has a healthy place in public policy debates as a way of informing the electorate and telling elected leaders about constituent beliefs, there is considerable debate about the source of the contemporary "malaise" about polling and the character as well as professional identity of pollsters. The widespread use of polls in elections, particularly the use of exit polls, has been said to discourage voter turnout and contribute to the general malaise about representative government (Lavrakas et al. 1991).

Undoubtedly, polls have suffered by association with negative political advertising, and by their proliferation in advocacy campaigns of all types, where pseudo-polls are used to get the message across, and validity, or the quality of research, is less important than persuasion.

As a number of writers concerned with this

subject have observed, the general public does not differentiate among polls; one poll resembles another, and the average reader would be hard pressed to differentiate between an academic poll, a media poll or a proprietary poll conducted for a client who needed to lobby a point about public policy before a legislative body.

Opinion "snapshots" of what people think about complex social and public policy issues, though merely intended as a litmus test, are published by news industries as if they constituted fixed opinions. When policymakers realize these polls are invalid, Daniel Yankelovich observed recently, they undermine the image and credibility of professionals in the polling industry.

In his analysis of the defeat of the Clinton health care plan, Yankelovich cited an example where seventeen national polls reported an average level of public support for universal health care insurance to be about 71%. However, the seventeen polls meant, as it turned out, the exact opposite of what they seemed to mean, based on the phraseology of the questions asked, which were weighted to the positive, and leading. The President was caught off-guard by the defeat of a Health Policy Plan he thought was supported by his constituents, at least according to more than a dozen polls. Bias in questioning, bad sampling techniques or technical amateurishness were responsible for the defeat of the health care plan, according to Yankelovich (1996).

In Yankelovich's view, the problem of media ownership of polls, the proximity of collection and dissemination, and the vested interest the media has in publishing poll results, explain the decrease in public confidence in polling as a profession: "The prevailing attitude is, 'a poll is a poll is a poll.' Poor quality drives out good quality" (*ibid.*, pg. 4). Consequently, professional pollsters have devised a volatility measure, or what the editor of *Time* referred to as "the mushiness index" (pg. 6), to determine whether public opinion on an important topic or issue is firmly or thoughtfully held, or whether it is volatile and likely to change from one form of question wording to another.

Authority and Credibility of Polls

Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann. *Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion, Our Social Skin* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann. "Quality Criteria in Survey Research." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 29-32.

J. H. McManus. *Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994.

Jeff Dominitz and Charles Manski. "Perceptions of Economic Insecurity." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Vol. 61, No. 2 (1997), pp. 261-287.

Wayne Wanta. *The Public and the National Agenda: How People Learn About Important Issues*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997.

The claim by pollsters which is central to their professional self-definition, that polls are "true," and that they therefore deserve to be believed by the public, is grounded in their methodological rigor. However, the Public has been demonstrated to suspect polls and statistics when they are interpreted by the media. The concept of a representative "Public," however small the random sample, or however brief the time frame that Yankelovich calls the "snapshot" that typifies the pseudo-poll today, contributes to an ethos of credibility as important to social scientists as objectivity is important to journalists. For professional pollsters, service to the ideal of the public good is central to that ethos, and makes them both part of the marketplace and part of the democratic order. Once completed, the accuracy of a poll is an interpretive value — only as important to the context within which the public receives the poll.

According to Yankelovich, skepticism about the democratic ideals of pollsters today is caused by the media's ownership of the polls which are disseminated as news (1996). Similarly, *Wall Street Journal* reporter Cynthia Crossen (1994) placed the blame for public disbelief on reporters' general inability to comprehend, use and report on data using complex statistical results, whether the subject be about finance, science or pharmaceutical products. Yale University law professor Stephen Carter (1994) suggested that more profound shifts in widespread religious practices among elites and intellectuals also contribute to an opinion climate. When polls as commercial products cease to affirm the public belief in democratic ideals, as Yankelovich contends, the pollster's inability to inform leaders about the

public mind of the electorate, or to inform voters about the opinions of their peer constituents is diminished. The resulting "credibility gap" or "disconnect" between elected leaders and the people, as discussed by Yankelovich, is a serious threat both to democracy and to the industrial, mediated marketplace.

A number of factors converge to create what Yankelovich, Worcester, Crossen and others have called a "credibility gap" in the US with regard to polling, and the suspicion among the public about the concept of public opinion, as it is used by news media, magazines and in electoral politics. The existence of the gap between mass publics and elites has been corroborated by a "confidence index" constructed by Roper Polling. Those questioned put their greatest faith in the US military (46%), the medical profession (35%), organized religion (25%), President Clinton and congressional representatives as individuals (15-16%), while those least trusted were Congress as an institution and lawyers as a professional class (13%). The proliferation of pseudo-polls targeting elected officials by special interest groups has contributed to the decreased credibility of polls. Public opinion is ranked lower in terms of its influence on legislative decision-making than are interest groups or media, according to a poll of Congressional representatives (Columbia Institute, cited in Badaracco 1996). In a survey of Congress conducted by a former representative in 1994-1995, in conjunction with the Harvard School of Public Health, elected representatives cited the role of "hundreds" of interest groups as the most significant factor influencing decisions about public policy, according to respondents. The media were the second most influential, and polls the third most influential factor in decisions about public policy, although Republicans ranked polls as being more important than did Democrats.

Jeff Dominitz and Charles Manski (1997) studied perceptions of economic insecurity among Americans after the March, 1996, New York *Times* week-long series titled, the "Downsizing of America," and to economic anxiety resulting from widespread public fears about job insecurity and other economic risk factors. Articles similar to the *Times* data, based on its own proprietary polls, were also run in *Business Week*, *The Economist*

and other publications. As Dominitz and Manski explain, the Survey of Economic Expectations is a new effort to learn how Americans perceive their financial futures, conducted under the auspices of the University of Wisconsin Survey Center. The researchers concluded that "eliciting subjective probability statement of well-defined adverse outcomes," or asking respondents about event-specific fears, offers a credible way to monitor public opinion about risk (1997: 283).

Many researchers believe that popular understanding of social science research survey methodology is inadequate to judge the *authority* of a poll, as a basis for credibility. Dran and Hildreth probed the reasons for negative attitudes toward polls. Among respondents who thought

polls "were hardly ever or never right" and who blamed other respondents for the wide margin of error, 28% thought others were less thoughtful than they, 20% that pollsters talked to the wrong people, 13% that they failed to talk to enough people, and 8% that questions were badly worded or manipulative. While journalists tend to simplify polls, research by social scientists tends to confirm a multi-faceted response to polling and pollsters among the American public. From Lippman to Noelle-Neumann, media bias has been studied as an agenda-setting force that blurs the public's ability to distinguish between attitudes and perceptions, and the news organization's ability to reinforce the socioeconomic status quo.

V. The Real Public

Although agenda-setting and audience analysis are fields of inquiry separate from public opinion studies their substantial literature has a bearing on the latter, in both academe and industry. Their critical perspective and analysis of media help explain why the media lack credibility. Audience analysis focuses on the response, receptivity and reactivity habits of audiences exposed to messages and news reports transmitted by the media.

McManus (1994, p. 25, cited in Wanta 1997) asserted the connection between a malaise or public apathy and television news. When the public mind is not receptive to information because people perceive it to be irrelevant to their lives, they become victims of resistance, and that leads to apathy. Researchers (Kinder and Sears, 1985; MacKuen and Coombs, 1981, McLeod et al, 1974 — all as cited by Wanta) debate the link between interest in political issues by individuals and their vulnerability to agenda-setting. Though the evidence is mixed, it appears that those most interested are most susceptible to agenda-setting effects (Wanta 1997: 26).

Mass media research has encountered some difficulty in sorting through the factors that constitute credibility (Singletary 1976). Meyer (1989) developed a credibility index, with two scales measuring believability and community affiliation. Wanta uses Meyer's two scales in a framework to study the agenda-setting

susceptibility of an individual. It is based on the person's perception of the believability of media and is centered on the assumption that the media have a responsibility to offer accurate and unbiased information, and on the concern that "media need to maintain harmony and a leadership status" in their community (Wanta 1997: 29).

"Mass Audience"

James Webster and Patricia Phalen. *The Mass Audience: Rediscovering the Dominant Model*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997.

J. R. Beniger. *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Virginia Nightingale. *Studying Audiences: The Shock of the Real*. London: Routledge, 1997.

The concept of the mass audience emerged historically and concurrently with the formation of the public opinion research field. Advertisers were the first users of the methodology, in their attempts to extend their reach and their messages' effectiveness. Newspapers and magazine publishers were concerned with similar issues. The development of ratings research coincided with readership surveys (Webster and Phalen, 1997: 5). The U.S. Census Bureau advanced the theories of sampling (Beniger, 1986, as cited in Webster and

Phalen 1997: 5).

The political rather than the commercial sector, however, can be seen as responsible for engaging the interests of social theorists who attempted to explain the behavior of the mob and the response of the masses to the propaganda of wartime. Until the mid-1980s, conceptual and theoretical examinations of the nature of the audience as an issue remained undeveloped.

Until the concept of audience was taken up by cultural theorists — who thought the way people imagined the masses to be as interesting as the attempt to define their collective identity through numbers — audiences were not considered as serious an avenue of investigation as the state, nation or classes (Nightingale, 1996).

The mass audience, as Webster summarized, came to be regarded more seriously as a heterogeneous collection of individuals, each driven by a separate set of emotional and

psychological behaviors, able to act out those behaviors in a public arena of autonomous individuals. The concept of the "mass" as a collection of individuals who need to belong to some tribe or family community, is a force for homogeneity and perhaps hegemony.

Paul Lazarsfeld, from his position at the Columbia University Bureau of Applied Social Research, developed new tools for quantitative measurement for marketing during the forties. Decision-making by individuals, their relative passivity or receptivity to manipulation came to be regarded as a fertile field of social science inquiry primarily because the nature of the "masses" seemed random, even chaotic and unorganized in times of crisis or negative news. The potential for controlling the "mob" of consumers through mediated sources posed an ideological threat as well as a market opportunity of unprecedented dimensions.

VI. The Global Public

Everett M. Rogers. *Diffusion of Innovations*, 3rd edition. New York: The Free Press, 1987.

George Vassiliou. *The Freedom to Publish Public Opinion Polls: Report on a Worldwide Study*. Amsterdam: Foundation for Information, 1997.

Robert W. Worcester. "Why Do We Do What We Do? A Review of What It Is We Think We Do, Reflections on Why We Do It, and Whether or Not It Does Any Good." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 9, #1, 1997, pp. 2-17.

N. Rohme. "The State of the Art of Public Opinion Polling Worldwide: An International Study Based on Information Collected from National Market and Opinion Research Institutes in April 1992." *Marketing and Research Today*. Nov. 1992.

T. L. Glasser and C. T. Salmon. *Public Opinion and the Communication of Consent*. New York: Guilford Press, 1984.

P. Huet. "Introduction." In Glasser and Salmon 1984.

Paul Freedman and Ken Goldstein. "Building a Probable Electorate from Preelection Polls." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (1996), pp. 575-587.

Tore Slaatta (ed.). *Media and the Transition of Collective Identities: Papers from a Research Symposium in Oslo, January 12-14, 1995*. Oslo: University of Oslo Department of Media and Communication, 1995.

Opinion polls are conducted in all democratic countries of the world. In Western Europe, polling practices vary by country. The degree to which those practices vary is regarded by scholars as a threat to freedom of expression. It also represents a threat to the industry, according to Robert Worcester of MORI, a sponsor of the 1996

Budapest regional seminar on the impact of polling industries on emerging democracies. The unsuccessful attempt, in 1985, by a Council of European Parliamentary Assemblies to issue a uniform ruling for all of Europe was defeated by opponents who invoked the principle of freedom of speech in order to argue against government

regulation of polls.

The rise of polling in non-Western countries is linked to the fairly recent phenomenon of market research as a management tool. The Foundation for Information monitors the world community's rights to collect, process, make, use and publish information obtained through professional polls. According to the 1997 report, many countries do not permit the taking of opinion samples through polls nor their publication in the mass media.

While in some countries unprofessional polls create problems, in several others restrictions exist. Even among western states, many seek increasing restrictions on the publication of polls prior to elections. George Vassiliou, Chairman of the Foundation for Information, objected:

No one seeks to ban politicians from expressing their opinions right up to the day of an election. Nor does anyone seek to ban newspapers or the broadcast media from writing and publishing highly colored and often extremely one-sided articles about the political issues of the day. And yet it is apparently the case that many believe that ordinary voters should be denied access to relatively objective information about how other people like themselves think and feel about the issues of the day (Vassiliou 1997).

The suggestion that the US ban polling or the reporting of poll results prior to an election is "undemocratic," according to Worcester (1997), Rohme (1992), Huet (1984), and other leaders of the American public opinion industry.

The Foundation for Information reported, in 1997, that of 78 countries surveyed, 47 had no restrictions on the publication of findings from political polls. A minority of 30 countries embargoed publication of polls near elections, and nine applied the ban only to election day. Certain subjects are sometimes restricted. Taboos against questions concerning royalty pertain in Japan and Thailand, and questions on foreign or defense policies, political leaders and parties, and military conflicts are barred in Albania, China, Hong Kong, Croatia, Indonesia, Mexico, North Korea, Turkey, Venezuela, and some Middle Eastern countries.

The report noted that while it was rare to find a

country that posed restrictions on polls concerning social issues, a large number of countries could not be included either because the political structure prohibited the formation of opinion, or because the media infrastructure did not exist. Of the 147 respondents in 78 countries, 57% reported regular publication of poll results in newspapers, 49% in political magazines, and 38% on television (Worcester 1997: 5).

Where polls were published irregularly or seldom, 52% attributed the cause to the reluctance of the media to sponsor polls, 13% responded that there was political pressure against polls. In 30 of the 78 countries included in the survey, legal restrictions on the publication of public opinion survey results occurred prior to elections. Some countries have prolonged their embargo periods in recent years: Italy from 7 to 28 days, Poland from 7 to 12 days, Canada from no ban to 3 days, Chile from 1 to 7 days. Among those shortening or eliminating their embargoes: Croatia from 3 days to 24 hours, Colombia from 10 to 7 days, Argentina from 2 weeks to no restrictions.

Polling is forbidden within one day of the election in Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania and Slovenia. Russia has a ban of 3 days. Western European countries including France, Hungary, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland all ban polls one week prior to the election, while Poland forbids public opinion surveys for two weeks prior to an election. Italy ranks among the most conservative, requiring a ban on polls three weeks prior to an election; and Luxembourg and Turkey ban them for a full month prior to elections. Outside Europe, Latin American countries count among the most cautious, requiring either one week (Chile, Colombia, Mexico), or two (Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela). Indonesia requires a three-week moratorium, and South Africa has a full month (Vassiliou 1997).

Whether or not there is a demonstrable link between a "probable electorate" and preelection polls is a matter for continuing debate and research. Paul Freedman and Ken Goldstein have tested different methods of screening potential voters, building on earlier and recent research. Using the National Election Studies data between 1988 and 1992, they constructed a simple,

practical, two-stage model of voter turnout that was an improvement over traditional methods, allowing for shorter interviews that increased accuracy at decreased expense (Freedman and Goldstein 1996).

Polling and National Identity

The potential for cumulative impact of polling and media on the national identity of countries in economically less-developed regions of the world and in countries of the Eastern European bloc of formerly Soviet states, has been and continues to be a politically progressive force in global democratization leading to structural changes, increased education, and in some cases greater economic independence. Among cultures and countries where competitive markets are recent and democracy is relatively new, the freedom to express an opinion, whether or not it is to a pollster, is vastly different than in America.

The European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR), the Gallup

Organization, and the University of Oslo have independently and respectively brought together groups of scholars in conferences between 1995 and 1997 to discuss the impact of polling and media industries on the transition of national identities. At ESOMAR's regional seminar in Budapest in 1996, and the Gallup Organization's seminar at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, in 1997 (Alan McKutcheon n.d.), leading pollsters addressed the climate of opinion in Russia, Bosnia, Hungary and Latin America.

The Communication Department of the University of Oslo, with the participation of the Communication Department of the University of Zimbabwe addressed similar questions from an academic standpoint in their 1995 conference on "Media and the Transition of Collective Identities." At the close of the twentieth century, "identity" in the social sciences and in the humanities as a term and key concept in academic analysis occupies center stage, as Tore Slaatta (1995: 311-316) observed.

VII. Public Opinion and Democracy

Competing definitions of collective identities among tribe, clan, and nation, and between urban and rural areas are particularly noteworthy in Southern Africa. Helge Rønning has discussed the correlation there between the organization of civil society and the structure and diffusion of media technology. She traced the impact of these new technologies and emerging social structures on the formation of that element of public opinion termed identity politics (in Slaatta 1995: 29-54). This relationship is comparable to the "reflexivity" that Slaatta and others regard as central to the philosophical perspective that bridges pre-modernity, modernity, and post-modernity (Slaatta 1995: 1).

In Southern Africa, where there are competing definitions of collective identities among the tribe, clan, and nation, and between urban areas and rural, public perception about the democratic potential for television, radio or newspapers, is fundamentally changed according to an individual's proximity to media experience and new technology. An individual needs to experience

in order to know, then to react, and formulate an opinion based on response to the first knowledge, filtered through a number of "screens" having to do with how one sees others, as enemies or neighbors, strangers or friends and so forth. In such a climate, every opinion is an interaction of two forms, old and new: the one is an oral tradition, the other technological diffusion. Out of the experience of the two, a post-modern identity is formed. This process is illustrated by several of the papers from Southern Africa presented at the Oslo conference (Slaatta 1995).

Temba S.B. Masilela explored the extent to which identity frames in media discourse are used as resources in public discourse and opinion formation, using the 1994 election in South Africa as a case study. He argued that before that election, all political life in South Africa was communicated in terms of racial and ethnic conflict. In the post-election world, legitimization of collective identities and identity politics changed. Masilela argued that prior to the 1994 election, the media silenced conflicts about issues and race

"contributing to a kind of collective amnesia" about reconciliation of the political conflicts of the past. Currently, the language of "unity" prevails (in Slaatta 1995: 55-82).

At the same meeting Ullamaja Kivikuru expanded on Masilela's argument, saying that the media, rather than silencing conflict, offered new ways of reading cultural identity, and that racial and tribal identities matter less than the distinctions between Northern and Southern hemispheres (in Slaatta 1995: 83-112). Tawana Kupe disputed that view, arguing that the media's role in the political liberation in African states is "hard to see," and that tensions between rural villages and their traditions and the global media present a threat to culture in Africa (in Slaatta 1995: 113-128).

Lloyd Sachikonye argued that the role of economic elites is diluted because they are silent about economic problems concerning the underclasses. He said that media are far less important as a social institution shaping how the public thinks than are the universities and churches. Widespread state control of media and state ownership, he maintained, will keep modern technology in its place, in effect, because traditional peoples who base their identities on tribal culture will remain suspicious of a new technology owned and operated by the political elites in the country, regardless of their tribal or geographical affiliation (in Slaatta 1995: 129-150).

"Pluralist Ignorance"

Hubert J. O'Gorman. "The Discovery of Pluralistic Ignorance." *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 22 (1986), pp. 333-347.

Hubert J. O'Gorman and Stephen L. Garry. 1976. "Pluralistic Ignorance: A Replication and Extension." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Vol. 40 (1976), pp. 449-458.

Floyd H. Allport. *Social Psychology*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924.

Carol Glynn, Andrew Hayes, and Andrew Shanahan. "Spiral of Silence: A Meta-Analysis." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Vol. 61, No. 3 (1997) pp. 452-463.

Marylee C. Taylor. "The Black and White Model of Attitude Stability: A Latent Class Examination of Opinion and Nonopinion in the American Public." *The American Journal*

of Sociology. Vol. 89 (1983), pp. 373-401.

Growing out of the experiences in developed countries with economic power and technology, the concept of "globalization" may be the result of a form of *pluralist ignorance*, the term coined by Floyd Allport (O'Gorman 1986) in the 1920s to express the phenomenon of misreading the majority position, or the misperception that the minority is the majority, or a significant under- or over-estimation of the majority or minority position (Shamir and Shamir 1997; Glynn et al 1995; Taylor 1982; O'Gorman, 1986). Allport attributed patterns of false belief to psychological causes, a focus of intense interest among public opinion researchers since the 1970s in areas of gender, race, voting preferences, and issues such as the return of land in the Middle East. As the Shamirs asserted, from the social perspective, the error is systematic rather than random, collective rather than individual (Shamir and Shamir 1997).

Similarly, the Western world may remain ill-informed about those regions of the world which lack economic power and technology, and conclude falsely that certain ideas are being communicated and accepted more widely than they are. Phillip Schlesinger questioned, in his 1995 Oslo presentation, the ideals of democratic communication and how they are articulated through nationalism (in Slaatta 1995: 163-206).

Maria Heller reported at the Oslo meeting on the experience of Eastern and Central Europe where the two superpowers during the years of the Cold War not only dominated public political discourse in the media, but prevented people from thinking about themselves and their national identity. Since the collapse of the communist system, harsh identity politics have emerged, quickly polarizing all political discourse. Conflicts have grown increasingly heated between rural and urban traditions, and between the values and life experiences regarded as more important by rural inhabitants than by those in cities with access to media. "Political discourse has since been dominated by bitter and polarized discourse on race and ethnicity in attempts to define 'who are true Hungarians,' Heller argued, which signals prospects for an unstable future of revolt and upheaval" (in Slaatta 1995: 207-238).

VIII. "World Opinion"

Hamid Mowlana. *Global Information and World Communication: New Frontiers in International Relations*. New York: Longmans, 1986.

Frank Louis Rusciano and Roberto Fisk-Rusciano. "Toward a Notion of 'World Opinion' ." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 2, No. 4 (1990), pp. 305-322.

Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (in Slaatta 1995: 239-258).

Victor Turner and Edith Turner. *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

The phrase "World Opinion" is a politicizable metaphor. Communication theorists regard World Opinion as either a homogenous aggregate of discrete publics whose identity is contained by geographical borders, or, increasingly, as the "stage for world events" described by Hamid Mowlana (1986), upon which leaders and citizens of separate countries act, making it possible for others to observe, judge and react (Rusciano and Fisk-Rusciano, 1990).

Continuity in an opinion climate depends on the existence of shared narratives, as Dayan and Katz pointed out in their presentation at the Oslo meeting (in Slaatta 1995). Television and the internet provide the impetus for borderless storytelling, contribute to media events staged for global audiences, and thus contribute to a unified, perhaps even homogenous, social identity. In addition to events, television contributes to narratives about institutions, ensuring the continuity of social systems as successive generations struggle to identify with key actors: "Whether in sports or in politics, one hero has to give way to another" (Dayan and Katz in Slaatta 1995: 241).

Television claims a place in the post-modern culture as the "custodian of collective memory," (*ibid.*, pg. 243) holding society together by providing the vehicle for "convergence," bringing the center to the periphery, providing the symbolic construct cited by Victor and Edith Turner in their "pedagogy of the shrine" meant to ensure the unity of the group (Turner and Turner 1978). As Lundby observed in his response to Dayan and Katz, not every public ritual has the power to change the collective mind, or to alter a national identity.

Media Power and Opinion Change

Diana C. Mutz and Joe Soss. "Reading Public Opinion." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Vol. 61, No. 3 (1997), pp. 431-451.

Dayan and Katz offer the view that major televised events, with the power to "stage" opinion change, consist of the following: (1) they are live, pre-planned and publicized, (2) they possess that quality of interruption, the vacation from ordinariness that White (in Hoover and Lundby 1997: 37-62) calls "liminality," (3) they evoke an enthralled response from outside the media infrastructure, (4) they invoke a deeply embedded narrative tendency in every culture, a collective response to individual actions performed "on the level of the heroic" (Dayan and Katz in Slaatta 1995: 248).

Dayan and Katz categorize these super-events or heroic acts into three types: coronations, which reiterate loyalty to social institutions; competitions, which celebrate pluralism; and conquests, "perhaps the most consequential of media events," because they "consist in dramatizing political or diplomatic initiatives aimed at the radical transformation of public opinion on a major issue" (*ibid.*, pg. 249). Conquests invoke the authority of tradition, using agreed-upon rules, and they consist in the element of drama or defiance, that depends upon individual charisma (*ibid.*).

Distribution among the three types of staged events varies considerably. Dayan and Katz compare the situation in Poland with Korean television, which broadcasts the suffering in the North to the South, and the very telegenic example of the urban marathon in America as prototype:

A crowd of amateur runners is seen "progres-

sing" through the city streets, cordoned off from everyday traffic and everyday violence in a display of togetherness that has become a tradition of live broadcasting. Not a race, these are events in which the public, at home and in person, search for such non-heroes as their dentists, priests, mothers-in-law, baby-sitters. Only the identifiable professional runners remind us that it is something of a race after all. In this type of event...the collective dimension is celebrated directly, not through representation by a symbolic figure. Here participants and non-participants are interchangeable; the audience sees itself as hero. (Dayan and Katz, in Slaatta 1995: 252).

Dayan and Katz conclude that the tug-of-war going on in ceremonial television — pulling towards individuation where no two people will see the same screen at the same time, and simultaneously toward globalization, where the whole world can see the same franchised programs at the same time — may be, in their opinion, "the only shared experience that will hold nations together in the future" (*ibid.* 256).

Elite vs. Mass Publics

William M. Reisinger. "The Renaissance of a Rubric: Political Culture as Concept and Theory." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 7, No. 4 (1995), pp. 328-350.

As political scientists argue, the structure of civic institutions undoubtedly is a reflection of the political culture of a country, yet the extent to which a democratic order, or the structure of a democracy's institutions is dependent on elite versus mass publics is a matter for research and debate in public opinion literature. The argument between rational-choice proponents, who say that civil society is an expression of public interest, and political culturalists, who hold that public life is the result of conflict and advocacy by special interests, in the political science literature, though beyond the scope of this essay, is useful in helping to define public opinion and its nuances. Some scholars (Almond 1950) have argued that the word "attitudes" is too limiting for characteristics of a political culture.

Much of the literature asserts that society's political culture is a "set of attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system and its various parts, and attitudes" held by its members. In response, alternative phrases have been proposed, including "beliefs, values, orientations, expectations, symbols, perceptions, knowledge, affect, norms" (Reisinger, 1995).

Reisinger argues that the inability of political culturalists to link mass values and political outcomes has diminished their relevancy to contemporary debates about emerging democracies. Political scientists need to consider the accounts of how public opinion functions in the political order as explained by communication theorists. Similarly, anthropologists have extended their description and definition of the climate of opinion to include political, ethnic and religious identity. From a political scientist's perspective, opinions are a function of the electorate. From the cultural studies and anthropologists' perspectives, opinion is an expression of the electorate.

When explaining the nature of a public and the multiple facets that interlock to transform a private opinion into a public one, social denominators are more useful than individual psychology. For opinions can be held privately — even in the privacy of a home, yet a public cannot exist without a constituency of opinions that interlock to form a climate.

A study by Diana Mutz and Joe Soss (1997) traces the effects of a deliberate media agenda on public opinions and perceptions. Using a year-long, quasi-experimental design, Mutz and Soss found that when a newspaper tried to sway public opinion about policy using an agenda for change, its effectiveness was extremely limited. The agenda-setting practice by newspapers brings to the foreground the names and identities of issues in public opinion, and the influences on their perceptions of the dominant policy issue in their community. However, the ability to alter the climate of opinion may facilitate news organizations' ability to influence audiences indirectly rather than sway opinion toward one side or another. They can tell the public what to think about, and that, in turn, may cause them to make decisions about policy that are favorable to

the news organizations' agenda.

Polls and the "CNN Effect"

With the development of interactive technologies, communication among individual representatives and organized advocacy or special interest groups alters the time-frame from that traditionally accepted by newspaper journalists to twenty-four hour, continuous, real-time coverage. Progressive technology, and developments in the public sector in reaction to innovative communication and the "CNN Effect" (Gitlin, in Slatta 1995) abbreviate further the shelf-life of headline news, public attention, and the utility of the "snapshot" poll. All serve not only to diminish the credibility of pollsters, but to undermine the public's ideas about what "classic" democratic values are. Iyengar and Simon (1994, as cited by Gitlin) found that between August 1990 and March 1991, for example, media exposure had a strong effect on public opinion about the Gulf War: the greater the public's exposure to broadcasts, the more likely they were to favor a military solution (Gitlin, in Slatta 1995: 17).

The familiarity elites can have with other elites, part of the CNN Effect, leads to what Gitlin called at the Oslo meeting a "transparency" of images which can lead to "shaming" a new political resource to move public opinion from one point to another. When global awareness of the political actions of the State creates a public embarrassment among members of the nation which has acted in a questionable way on the world stage and that action has been broadcast on CNN, restraint over the subsequent actions of the State can be one result.

Through global political events such as the funerals of Princess Diana and of Mother Teresa, and the "virtual" grief they engendered, television forms new communities. TV and the internet create the "time out" or "liminial" space (see White in Hoover and Lundby, 1997: 37-62) that creates room for public rituals informing and shaping the public memory and its homogenous identity — as if funerals were more alike than not, and events like the Olympics constitute a mass-mediated religious ceremony evoking tradition, and history, connecting the Public with heroism and human challenge while narrating the

drama of competing nation states. From the perspective of ritual studies, as Lundby points out (in Hoover and Lundby 1997: 146-164) sporting events on the stage of world opinion are a strangely effective combination of narration based on tribal culture leading to post-modern definition of national identity. The link with history, at the same time, is undercut by the CNN Effect, the continuous saturation broadcasting linked intimately with the advertising and promotion industry that finances the spectacle and makes telecommunication possible.

Through public ceremonies of all kinds, the public mind can be changed. As Dayan and Katz discuss, "there is a pre-natal link between television and political ceremony. Nation after nation has inaugurated its television system by broadcasting events meant to celebrate continuity, community and centre... Community rests here on the existence of shared narratives" (in Slatta 1995: 240-241). Whether celebrating conquests, contests or coronations, televised events leave a deep impression on the collective memory of the public: Sadat's voyages to Jerusalem and Pope John Paul II's visits to Poland and all corners of the globe effectively connect a global public by bringing the centre to the periphery (Turner and Turner 1978; Benjamin 1968). The reproduction of a political event constructs its meaning live, and that changes the collective memory of the audience, in effect, creating nations as contemporaries, whatever their language, geography or socio-economic class.

Of the five characteristics of ceremonial broadcasts cited by Dayan and Katz, the ability to invoke deeply rooted narrative forms that are associated with heroics is the most significant variable shaping public opinion about the event, whether it be famine, war, a funeral or wedding, a coronation or papal mass in a communist country. Todd Gitlin's discussion of television's effects on the dissemination of images of war and mass suffering on public knowledge, public attitudes and leadership conduct, points to the consequences of a situation where "public opinion" will be "available to be mobilized into a force independent of foreign policy considerations." He suggested that television will usurp the control nation-states once had over "that potent resource, public opinion," with the danger of governments

losing the capacity of control not only over policy, but over the ability to wage war (Gitlin, in Slaatta 1995: 12).

At the same time Gitlin argued, "war among some is a theatre for others," and "fugitive communities" of concern and complicity would emerge. From a public opinion perspective, then, while television will be able to reach most and convince many, some people will continue to abide on the periphery of issues, either because they disagree, because they rebel, or because they lack the economic wherewithal to possess or have access to the technology. Why people remain "undecided" or silent, then, remains a question that may not be as central to the assessment of public opinion climates as it once was. Opinions among "fugitives communities" during the Vietnam War for example ("the most televised war in history")

turned into a majority view after the January-February 1968 Tet offensive, after which time the war was televisualized "as mystery, defeat, and empty ritual of death" (*ibid.*, pg. 13).

Television makes possible a geographically borderless sitcom consciousness that homogenizes all political beliefs in favor of the ideas embedded in the values of a consumer culture. Ritual events constitute a shared "instant history" contributing to the national identity or self-definition of those who live in the country where the events transpired. When a dominant aspect of those special events is infused with advertisements the commercial culture forms not just a subtext that interrupts the public ceremony or ritual, but a super-text which creates a context for the values embedded in the ritual (Hoover and Lundby, 1997).

IX. How the Public Changes its Collective Mind

Data Quality

Marc Couper. "Survey Introductions and Data Quality." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Vol. 61 (1997), No. 2, pp. 317-338.

Quality is as important to polling data as accuracy and validity are to methodology, and as techniques are in the construction of surveys. Interaction between the interviewer and respondent, is an area of measurement error that has been the subject of a body of research. Marc Couper (1997) has explored the impact of the interaction between the interviewer's introductory comments and the respondents' reactions during the introductory phase of the survey on data quality. Using data from the 1990 National Election Study, Couper tried to link introduction and respondent's perception of the study with data quality by asking, in a series of structured items, for the respondents to react to what was said by the interviewer. Couper found a close association between the statements made by respondents during the introduction to the interviewer and differences in both data quality and substantive responses.

Validity

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. "Quality Criteria in Survey Research." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 29-32.

Validity as well as Quality, are at the center of the credibility debates. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, author of the *Spiral of Silence* (1984), founder and director of the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, Germany, and a professor at Mainz University, observed as early as the late 1940s, that industrial leaders were writing about the need to balance empirical research and theory through an interactive relationship, rather than a superior and subordinate relationship. She recently wrote (1997) that "Quality" is the leading edge of the criteria for improving survey research and for differentiating between poor and good surveys in the popular mind. The issue of quality does not refer only to technical criteria — sample size, sampling methods, interviewer training and supervision, computer equipment, technology and the connection between computers and interviewers — but also to the intellectual quality of the survey.

What Noelle-Neumann calls the "spectacular evidence of validity" provided since 1936 by such

leaders as Gallup, Crossley and Roper in the arenas of election research have "undermined the development of authority" in contemporary research: the attitude prevails that the "subject of validity no longer needs to be addressed." Because of the expense of survey research, few universities, in Europe or the United States, can afford to develop the area. Noelle-Neumann cited (1997) her recent survey which indicates only 2% of university instructors of survey research actually had experience in the field.

Additionally, she observes, the habit and style of academic inquiry inhibits development of the intellectual quality of survey criteria. Traditionally, academic inquiry proceeds from a theory once a hypothesis is developed, presupposing the need for proof through research. Quality in survey research should be equated "with the ability to discover," leaders in the field such as Noelle-Neumann, Worcester, Al Gollin and others assert. However, such research is not financially profitable, as Noelle-Neumann observed, and that makes it too costly for academic research and too expensive even for industry: "The more monotonous the methods used, the greater the financial gain," as she said in the World Association for Public Opinion Research seminar in Quality, in 1996.

At the same seminar in Cannobbia, Italy, Vincent Price and Peter Neijens observed that a number of important contradictions and ambiguities inform the basic conceptions of quality in public opinion research. Their assessment of the criteria upon which measurements of quality can be founded turned to the principles of the field first enunciated by its founders in the 1930s and to the classical theorists of the survey research field. Price and Neijens argued that the concept of quality in public opinion cannot be separated from the concept of the quality of democratic decision making in the political culture as a whole, and that extends to multiple publics and engages all participants in a collective mind (Price and Neijens 1997: 336).

"Recently and with increasing frequency, 'deliberative' polls, 'educational' polls, polls of 'informed' public opinion and variants of focused group discussions have been advanced as supplements — and in some cases alternatives — to mass opinion surveys," according to the same

authors (1997: 337). All of these new types of polls, according to Price and Neijens, address the superficiality of public opinions and those opinions that may be non-attitudes or pseudo-opinions because the individuals are ill-informed. Some scholars such as Salmon and Glasser (1995) have suggested that such polls create public opinion, suppress public engagement, or diminish public debate, all of which contributes to a diminished discourse in the public sphere.

Price and Neijens outlined five phases of collective, democratic decision making: 1) the elicitation of values, 2) the development of options, 3) the estimation of consequences, 4) the evaluation of alternatives, and 5) the decision. In principle, the quality of the process of democratic decision-making depends on the quality of each phase: "one is unlikely" to make a sound choice without having attended to each phase, according to Price and Neijens (1997: 345). Collective opinion can be more rational and stable than individual opinion, as researchers have demonstrated (Page and Shapiro 1992). When evaluating individual opinion, stability and consistency, as well as conviction, have been the focus of researchers (Schuman and Press 1981; Neuman 1986). The same criteria that apply to the quality of individual opinion are equally valid as quality criteria for collective opinion. In the latter case, however, it seems that consensus is the best criterion for assessment of the most accurate possible representation of collective will, or of the "common good" (Price and Neijens 1997: 347).

Pseudo-polling practices, begun in the political and electoral processes of the sixties, were more partisan than democratic, and thus they became the bedrock for the pervasive tactic of "grassroots" advocacy campaigns developed over the next twenty years. In the industry today, the use of the term "grassroots" campaigns evokes a time and terminology, as well as a way of thinking about public opinion, that seems not only antiquated but indicative of poor quality, precisely because it sets out to exclude and to advocate a position. Interactive technology and the increasingly sophisticated ways in which individuals can be targeted have made nearly obsolete the well-orchestrated public opinion campaigns employing print media — they look uncomfortably

close to a *Reader's Digest* sweepstakes or a direct mail scheme, which the public has grown savvy enough to distrust. At the same time, this opens up new opportunities for the pseudo-poll as an advocacy tool. Similarly, the demographic profile of the mass public has changed enough to render decades-old typologies as typecasts: with new immigrant groups bringing new languages and expanding debates about affirmative action and diversity in the workplace, in schools and in neighborhoods, assumptions about cultural homogeneity are no longer equated with social reality, but with Madison Avenue's advertising mindset.

To improve the quality of data and reverse the trend toward decreased credibility in polls and numbers expressing predominant public opinion, Yankelovich suggested that all polls marking a shift in public attitude on social or policy issues be benchmarked according to the lifecycle of an issue, for the process of changing the public mind or shifts in attitudes can be predicted, anticipated and even, some suggest, manipulated. The stages or lifecycle of issues that professionals and scholars understand is built into public opinion shift is linked to a product or business cycle. Approximating rational thought processes, a number of scholars have tried to describe how the public makes up its mind about issues. Roughly speaking, awareness is followed by proximity, then by search, then by confrontation, then by choices, cognitive resolution and judgment (Yankelovich, 1995). However, many issues have a demonstrated shelf life of twenty or more years: they fade, only to reoccur. Health Care, child care, welfare, environment, and related interest groups seem to wear out their welcome in the public mind's eye, much as the seasonal public appetite for sitcoms seems to wax and wane. The credibility issue might be regarded as a measure of the professionalization of an industry which measures public opinion, rather than a significant benchmark which measures a shift in "the public" itself (Donsbach 1997).

The "Accounting Model"

Paul F. Lazarsfeld. "The Art of Asking Why." *National Marketing Review*. Vol. 1 (1935), pp. 147-151.

Allen H. Barton. "Asking Why about Social Problems:

Ideology and Causal Models in the Public Mind." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 7, No. 4 (1995), pp. 299-329.

Allen Barton found, when asking people why specific social phenomena like unemployment, poverty, inflation or urban riots existed, that open-ended responses were rarely probed, that closed-ended questions offered a limited range of explanations, and a tendency existed to crudely create dichotomies rather than delve for a cause. In his award-winning 1995 article, "Asking Why About Social Problems: Ideology and Causal Models in the Public Mind," Barton relied on Paul Lazarsfeld "The Art of Asking Why" (1935), a classic article in the literature of public opinion in which Lazarsfeld proposed an accounting model that divided individual action into inner dispositions (desires or values), perceptions of the external situation, and channels of influence on dispositions and perceptions, including interpersonal and mass communication. When public opinion researchers ask people for their explanations of social problems, according to Barton, they might focus on general behavior or social conditions of particular groups. Focusing on collective events that influence social conditions effectively frees an individual from associating the problems with his or her own action or inaction on the problem. Thus researchers can provide a cleaner statistical response, though Barton cautions that the "theoretical and methodological bases for research on public explanations of social phenomena are still primitive" (Barton 1995: 301).

Rigor or Chaos in the Study of Opinion Change

Tom W. Smith. "Is There Real Opinion Change?" *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 6, No. 2 (1994[a]), pp. 187-203.

Allen H. Barton. "If There Is Real Opinion Change, How Much Real Opinion Exists? Comment on 'Is There Real Opinion Change?'" *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 6, No. 2 (1994), pp. 204-206.

Tom W. Smith. "Reply to Barton's Comment." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 6, No. 2 (1994 [b]), pp. 206-207.

The historical and traditional concept of the "public mind" which served as the foundation of

the industry has come to be regarded as the public mood. Indeed, attempts to decipher the temper of the American electorate are so common, they have spawned a culture of complaint, as some newspaper pundits have dubbed it, and that has given rise to an epidemic of talk shows where the individual can vent feelings — rational or otherwise. Increasingly, the polling industry relies on the concept of climates of opinion, and social scientists measure the impact of cultural beliefs, habits, and ritual on the formation of a public culture. Rather than striving single-mindedly for greater and greater accuracy, the polling industry is moving toward a greater tolerance for ambiguity.

The important questions concerning reliability of public opinion research, and the relationship between individual and aggregate public opinion can be regarded in two ways: either opinion change can be measured, in which case the only real concern is accurate and rigorous methodology, or else it is so chaotic, random and multi-dimensional that any attempt to capture opinion changes and shifts, no matter how rigorous the method and technique, will be distorted. Tom Smith, the Director of the General Social Survey at the National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago demonstrated that aggregate public opinion shifts were generally slow and steady, rational, and explicable (Smith 1994a).

Drawing on his wide range of research experience, Smith explores the several corridors of beliefs among his peers engaged in similar studies that question the reliability of opinion measures and the meaningfulness and utility of studying opinion change. His analysis is based on 137 attitudinal trends on NORC's General Social Survey (GSS) extending over 15 years. Smith counters those who question the reliability of measuring public opinion change by arguing that shifts do not occur in a rapid or erratic manner, but typically along a regular pace in a consistent direction. A GSS-related study of 455 liberal/conservative trends covering the period from 1936 to 1985 with an average of 14.8 years per time series found that 10 percent were constant, 24 percent linear trends, 55 percent linear components, and 11 percent non-constant, non-linear, with the uptick or downtick averaging

1.3 percentage point yearly (Smith 1994a: 188).

Smith proposes two models to explain slow, steady and gradual shifts over ten to twenty years' time spans. The first is "cohort-education turnover," and the second measures shifts in the structure of institutions or of political orders. He finds the first model to be "the single most useful explanation for opinion change," the "opposite of the chaos model," registering both an increase in the general population of education levels, and a macro-demographic shift in the composition of the population. For example, Smith cites examples of shifts in opinions about race, gender, civil rights, drugs, and morality to show that they can be accounted for not only as changes in educational levels and demographic composition, but also as changes in the structure of the dominant social institutions themselves.

Based on the work of a number of leading researchers in the field, Smith concluded that the change in public opinion brought about by restructuring of social institutions occurs even more slowly than those changes brought about by demographic and education-level shifts. As he also observed, structural changes occur once, but educational and demographic changes reoccur.

Other cyclical changes in public opinion, including those in the business and political worlds are, in Smith's opinion, useful, but neither well-grounded in theory or in fact. Finally, of these cyclical types of changes, Smith believes that events, particularly the types of mass events, including economic crises, natural disasters, assassinations, revolts and wars, can create for a time a universal public. Smith's analysis categorized the top 36 changes in a data base that spanned 2,600 one or two-year change intervals on the 1972-1991 GSS, including 10 percentage change on one-year change intervals and 15 percentage changes on two-year change intervals. Of the top 36 changes, 14 could be explained as having been precipitated by events, ten from measurement variation, four from what Smith calls secular trends, four from cyclical trends in business and political life, two from a combination of measurement and events, and two from uncertain causes (Smith 1994a: 190-191). Of the event-driven changes, most were dramatic, including eleven in the area of foreign policy,

three domestic political events, one in economics, and one religious scandal.

Similar shifts of 493 trends compiled as part of the GSS record of liberal/conservative changes since the 1930s registered 52, or 10.5% exhibiting the type of peaks and valleys or fluctuations that could be used to demonstrate the chaos model of opinion change (Smith 1994a: 197). The single exception to Smith's contention that opinion shifts are steady, gradual and measurable is the volatile time series studies on presidential popularity, consumer confidence, and what the general public considered to be the greatest social problem of the day. Begun by Gallup in 1935, a five-item Index of Consumer Sentiments was issued quarterly by the Survey Research Center from 1952 to 1978, and monthly thereafter (Curtin 1982, as cited by Smith 1994a: 198). The practice has been widely imitated by other media organizations, including CBS/New York Times, Harris, NBC/Wall Street Journal, the Roper Organization, the Conference Board and others. In each case, extremely large, short-term changes of opinion register, occasionally swinging as much as 12 to 16 percentage points from one week to another, registering even larger changes over longer periods. Similarly, the social problem most people think is the greatest issue of the day, according to Smith, can change 20 percentage points within one month and 35 to 45 percentage points over six months (Smith 1994a: 199).

Non-opinions/Non-attitudes

Smith's position on the question of opinion change, as Barton observed in response to his arguments (Barton 1994), opposes the propositions of Converse (1970) and others since 1970, who, Smith claims, argue that opinions are "non-attitudes." Rather, they are moods, and the measurement of these quickly becomes an artifact, culturally significant in the long term, perhaps statistically significant in the short term. Based on extensive research models tested at the University of Michigan, Converse concluded that genuine or "real" opinion holders were a minority of all respondents, and that overall, "public opinion" represented a "diluted mixture" of real and random opinions.

Contrary to the impression that research

accomplished by Converse and others concluded that opinions consisted "of mostly unreliable chaff," and opinion change was "little more than random noise," (cited in Barton 1994: 204), Barton made the argument that there was a group, depending on the public policy or social issue which served as the focus of the investigation, roughly between 20 and 60 percent, whose stable opinions or "real, genuine" opinions could register change. According to Barton (pg. 204), Marylee C. Taylor (1983) argued that only those who showed genuine opinion change should be counted as "real" opinion-holders, and she constructed surveys, in the periods 1956-1960 and 1972-1976, that showed only 2 to 8 percent of respondents changing opinions.

Shortly after Taylor's work was published, it was criticized by Brody (1986) on the grounds that Taylor's structure classified people who answered "No opinion" as "non-attitude" holders, obliterating the possibility of fence-sitters or undecideds, or opinion-holders whose opinions were "soft". Brody's model replaced Taylor's, suggesting an estimated 40 to 60 percent as "attitude-holders," categorically and statistically significantly different from non-opinion-holders. Attitude changes are expected to occur slowly but steadily, and rapid attitude change is generally explicable on the basis of unusual events. This does not, in Barton's view, overturn the classic work of Converse and others who argued the majority of the public are "non-attitude" holders answering at random. However, as Barton points out, the confusion results when arguments made from assessing aggregate stability lead to conclusions about the stability of individual respondents.

The *aggregate* response of randomly responding non-opinion holders will be stable within normal statistical limits determined by sample size; the real opinion-holders will be divided between those who are individually stable over time, and those who are real opinion changers...It is also possible that people become real opinion holders when public events impinge [on] their lives and become salient to them...the amount of rationally explainable change only sets minimum estimates of the proportion holding real opinions. (Barton

1994: 205)

A number of studies (Black, 1982; Neuman, 1986) have tried to establish a relationship between knowledge of issues, or political sophistication, and opinion stability, without success. Real political and economic power, shared among elites who are in the public eye, however, do seem to suggest that they experience some

constraints not shared by the ordinary public: a congressional candidate, for example, might be reluctant to express an opinion on a specific issue for fear of losing votes or giving opponents the advantage. None of the researchers concluded that a media blitz or advocacy campaign penetrated the "real" opinion level of the public to the extent that any measurable or significant shifts could be deemed important.

X. Principal Models Of Public Opinion Change

R. M. Perloff. "Third-Person Effect Research, 1983-1992: A Review and Synthesis." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 5 (1993), pp. 167-184.

V. Price and D. F. Roberts. "Public Opinion Processes." In, Berger and Chaffee 1987: 781-816.

Consistent with contemporary theoretical developments which "privilege" the reactive audience as the focal point of analysis, such as in reception theory and in ritual studies, a half-dozen relatively recent concepts and hypotheses have been a frequent subject of academic research about how public opinion functions within society. A developing body of theory exists to explain from an integrated, interdisciplinary viewpoint of social-psychologists, political scientists, and communication researchers why individuals respond as they do to messages within discrete cultural borders, and how audiences respond to messages sent across cultural borders. The importance of each of the concepts below, then, lies in the shared assumptions about public opinion as a product of social groups — all assume that an individual's perception about others' opinions can trigger behavioral responses and that much of human social and political behavior is guided by perceptions of reality, assumptions about the communications environment and constructions of social and political events (Price and Roberts 1987, as cited in Perloff 1993: 168).

The Third-Person Effect

W.P. Davison. "The Third-Person Effect in Communication." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Vol. 47 (1983), pp. 1-15.

A.C. Gunther and P. Mundy. "Biased Optimism and the Third-Person Effect." *Journalism Quarterly*. Vol. 70 (1993), pp. 2-11.

The Third-Person Effect (Davison, 1983) is evident where messages advocate outcomes that are not perceived to be beneficial for the self or when messages make statements that give rise to the perception that "it is not smart to be influenced by that message." The Third Person Effect refers to how audiences absorb or react to messages, not events. Available evidence suggests that the effect may be limited to messages that have negative consequences and that the effect is "magnified when the issue is personally important to the respondent, when the source is perceived to be negatively biased, when the respondent is well-educated and when the hypothetical *others* are defined in broad and global terms" (Perloff 1993: 176).

Research by Gunther and Mundy (1993) argued that the third-person effect is most likely to occur when the messages contained negative information or were perceived to be biased. When the message contained beneficial or positive information, the third-person effect did not occur.

There is a greater discrepancy between perceived message effects on others and on the self when the source of the message is perceived to be negatively biased or when the audience perceives persuasive intent by the communicator. Inherent in the effect is the unpredictability of surrounding circumstances which govern the nuance of the receiver, including social distance:

Thus two individuals may be exposed to the

same message source, but, by virtue of their different perceptions of the sources's bias, be differentially susceptible to the third-person effect...one person (typically someone with a strong position on the issue in question) is convinced that the media are biased against his or her side and overestimates the extent of media effects, whereas another individual, who harbors a different set of beliefs and attributions about the world and a communicator's intentions, does not assume the media are quite so biased; the latter person is typically less inclined to assume that the media exert a disproportionate effect on others (Perloff 1993: 174).

Vincent Price and David Tewksbury (1996) have explored in two experimental studies how question order in public opinion surveys may contribute to building the impact of the third person effect on knowledge of news. In one study of 287 subjects who were questioned about media coverage of President Clinton's "Whitewater Affair," the Simpson murder trial, and Michael Jackson's child molestation charges, respondents were exposed to question-contrast effects, or self-serving comparisons triggered by back-to-back questions dealing with effects of the knowledge of news on oneself and on others. In two experiments, Price and Tewksbury showed that neither question order nor contrast effect questions altered the third-person effect: nor did they enhance the effect.

The first experiment found a significant interaction between political knowledge and question order; so a negative relationship existed between knowledge and perceived impact on oneself when the self question followed a question about perceived effects on others. The second experiment replicated the interaction.

Price and Tewksbury concluded that their studies strengthened earlier research concerning the third-person effect which showed that people tended to estimate they themselves would be influenced less by media than other people would. This research supported Gunther's (1995) findings that the differences typically observed in third-person effect studies cannot be diminished by considerations such as question order or to contrast effects in arrangement of the questions.

Pluralistic Ignorance

Ann Marie Major. "Pluralistic Ignorance and the Climate of Opinion in a Real-Time Disaster Prediction." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 9, No. 2 (1997), pp. 170-190.

Hubert J. O'Gorman. "The Discovery of Pluralistic Ignorance." *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*. Vol. 22 (1986), pp. 333-47.

Other concepts have been examined in the context of testing the efficacy of the Third-Person Effect. For example, *Pluralistic Ignorance* is the "shared misperceptions of the 'ideas, sentiments, and actions of others'" (O'Gorman 1986: 343, as quoted in Major, 1997: 171), and it "can be considered one measure of the adequacy of a person's surveillance of the environment regarding the climate of opinion about a particular issue" (O'Gorman, *loc. cit.*; see also, Katz and Allport 1931, Korte 1972, and O'Gorman and Garry 1976, all as cited in Perloff 1993). People engage in pluralistic ignorance when they assume everyone thinks as they do, because they restrict their conversations to those who agree with them.

The Looking Glass Effect and False Consensus

J. Fields and H. Schuman. "Public Beliefs about the Beliefs of the Public." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Vol. 40 (1976), pp. 427-428.

L. Ross, D. Greene, and P. House. "The 'False Consensus Effect': An Egocentric Bias in Social Perception and Attribution Processes." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. Vol. 13 (1977), pp. 279-301.

Similarly, the Looking Glass Effect is the idea that publics see their own ideas in others (Fields and Schuman 1976), and the False Consensus Theory (Ross et al. 1977) proposes that people overestimate the majority opinion because they believe everyone agrees with their views.

Unrealistic Optimism

Hans-Bernd Brosius and Dirk Engel. "The Causes of Third-Person Effects: Unrealistic Optimism, Impersonal Impact, or Generalized Negative Attitudes Towards Media Influence?" *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 8, No. 2 (1996), pp. 142-162.

Hans-Bernd Brosius and Dirk Engel recently (1996) explored the possibility of linking the

third-person effect to other phenomena such as *Unrealistic Optimism*, examining the psychological origins of the Third-Person Effect. Based on the research to date, Brosius and Engel used three mechanisms to distinguish what might cause the Effect. Unrealistic Optimism would suggest that negative predictions in the media would produce larger Third-Person Effects because individuals cling to a positive narrative for themselves, though they do not feel the same about others. If subjects are described as passively suffering media effects, the third-person effect will be diminished if media influences are described as a benefit or the audience appears to be in control.

The concept of *Impersonal Impact* suggests that the extent of the Effect varies with the psychological distance between the first and third person. If others are perceived as intimates, the Effect is diminished. The concept of *Generalized Negative Attitudes* toward media implies that the Effect will invariably exist because question wording will not significantly alter respondents' perceptions. Brosius and Engel conducted an experiment with 181 individuals and reached mixed results. They concluded that the Third-Person Effect is a persistent and stable phenomenon of public opinion. Its strength is highly dependent on a mix of psychological factors. Their most significant finding for the field may be that for TV news and radio music — genres which both have a high credibility and low persuasive intent — the third-person effect is clearly smaller than for genres with low credibility (TV commercials and campaign advertisements). The genre of the communication and the size of the Effect are demonstrably and significantly linked.

Pro-Censorship Attitudes

Hernando Rojas, Dhavan V. Shah and Ronald J. Faber. "For the Good of Others: Censorship and the Third-Person Effect." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 8, No. 2 (1996) pp. 163-186.

In an attempt to explain and analyze the growing trend toward censorship of the media, Hernando Rojas, Dhavan Shah and Ronald Faber examined the relationship between the Third-Person Effect and pro-censorship attitudes for the media in general, violence and pornography. Using a variety

of demographic and media variables, their findings suggest a correlation between the size of the gap perceived between the first and third person and a willingness to censor media (Rojas, et al. 1996).

Third Person Effect and the Spiral of Silence

Lars Willnat. "Mass Media and Political Outspokenness in Hong Kong: Linking the Third-Person Effect and the Spiral of Silence." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Vol. 8, No. 2 (1996), pp. 187-212.

Using the situation of political change in Hong Kong, Lars Willnat (1996) explores the relationship between the Third-Person Effect and the Spiral of Silence (explained below). Willnat conducted a telephone survey of 660 respondents in Hong Kong in November 1993. Consistent with the body of research in the field, the Effect was proven significant and more likely to intensify with higher levels of education. Similarly, Wallnat's study supported the body of research on the Spiral of Silence, where politically unconcerned respondents proved to be less willing to speak publicly about the British departure when they perceived that the majority opinion would not support their views. Willnat linked the two theories by showing that the Third-Person Effect influences the Spiral of Silence by influencing perceptions of public opinion.

The Spiral of Silence

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. "The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion." *Journal of Communication*. Vol. 24 (1974), pp. 43-51.

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. *Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion, Our Social Skin*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

W. Donsbach and R. L. Stevenson. *Challenges, Problems and Empirical Evidences of the Theory of the Spiral of Silence*. A paper presented to the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, in San Francisco, 1984.

M. A. Krassa. "Social Groups, Selective Perception, and Behavioral Contagion in Public Opinion." *Social Networks*, Vol. 10 (1988), pp. 109-136.

The Spiral of Silence, proposed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1974, and further elaborated in 1984, is the best known communication theory

about how public opinion is diffused through populations. It has been studied by numerous researchers including Donsbach and Stevenson (1984), Salmon and Kline (1985), and Glynn and McLeod (1984) (also as cited in Perloff, 1993). The Spiral of Silence has been variously regarded as a heuristic or descriptive model and as a predictive theory. A significant quantity of research has been generated over the past quarter-century concerning the concept: that ideas are articulated as majority opinions and diffused through populations or publics because they appear to be popular by virtue of repetitions and reiterations verbally and by media, and that those who object, dissent or have ideas counter to prevailing trends, therefore know themselves to be the minority viewpoint, and are "silenced" by the threat of social isolation.

Inherently, Noelle-Neumann's model suggests that people consistently monitor climates of opinion to gauge whether or not it is safe to voice their viewpoint. The political culture application of the spiral of silence model is most easily demonstrated in revolutionary events such as Berlin and Tiananmen Square.

Spiral of Silence and Reference Groups

Subsequent communication scholars have modified the model in a number of directions, notably Krassa (1988), who suggested that people's immediate reference groups, those social units to which they subscribe, shape the perception of reality or dominance of one idea over another. This is clear when we regard radical fringe groups such as militants or fundamentalist militarists in "foreign" countries. Academics have lamented the lack of a statistical test of the model that can be replicated (Glynn and Park, 1997), yet such a failure seems to belie the fundamental assumption of the concept — though humans might have

Perspective

The field of public opinion research began as a qualitative social science, interpreting cultural custom, political habits, and the nuances of popular ideas about the identity of self, neighbor and enemy. Curiously, its main competition over much of the twentieth century has been the public

constant social antennae that trigger a "speak" or "be quiet" mode of thinking, the environment is in a constant state of flux, and one of the things which keep the climate of opinion volatile is the introduction of new voices, identities, new media to project or introject or interrupt what seems to be the prevailing public conversation.

Perceptual Components of Opinions

Theorists who have come after Noelle-Neumann, such as Glynn (1997), have emphasized the perceptual components of opinions, whether they be majority or minority. Fear of isolation is, after all, an individual determinant, linked to perceptions about language, to listening, even to hearing. Further, the intensity of an experience upon which the individual formulated the opinion, such as a threat of isolation, is culturally determined. Threats can be cultural when linked to an event received by the dominant party, who threatens isolation in retaliation for speech. Though perceived as the majority, they may not necessarily be reflective of the intensity of the opinion held by the minority. (cf., Glynn and Park 1997, and Krassa 1988).

Individuals must have some appreciation of the extent to which their ideas might be accepted before they risk verbalizing an opinion in public. Researchers have explored models of collective behavior that link individual verbalization and aggregate levels of response by the majority. How much support must be perceived before an individual acts as a "prophetic voice" is an independent variable, based the individual's aversion to or willingness to accept the risk of isolation that would keep them otherwise silent or on the periphery of an intensely verbal, interactive culture that makes isolation increasingly difficult.

relations industry, which perfected the business of propaganda for capitalism and for materialist culture. Though both "pollsters" and "PR practitioners" have unprecedented access to the new telecommunication technologies that have made public opinion measurement, reputation

management, and image engineering a more "exact science," there are ethical and ideological lines separating fact-finders from illusion-builders that remain critical to "quality" issues as defined by the public opinion research field.

It is the quality of research that enables public opinion measurement to stand apart from the mediated industries that "tell people what to think about." Professional researchers in public opinion are right to protest against the manipulators or "pollsters" working for the press or for clients. The former purvey opinion as fact, the latter as a commodity, with a market value fluctuating according to a constructed reality. On the contrary, the public opinion researcher works from the

premise that there is a reality, a collective consciousness and a corporate conscience that persists above and beyond the work of media, PR, or film, and plumbs a deeper level of the public mind.

The divide is philosophical. For if we as a Public are nothing more than the sum total of our impressions culled from publicity, there is a shallowness and abbreviated shelf-life to our ideas that pose a threat to democratic culture. The deeper questions about what the public believes, and how the political and consumer habits express such beliefs constitute the philosophical basis for the public opinion research field. In a sense, such research keeps the public honest.

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Afterword

By W. E. Biernatzki, SJ

Editor, *Communication Research Trends*

The methodology of public opinion research is dependent on statistical theory. Correctly designed, carried out and evaluated it can make significant contributions to our understanding of human behavior. As is the case with all statistical research, however, it presents many opportunities for error. Great care must be taken in sampling, in the ways questions are asked, in selection of statistical models by which to evaluate data, in drawing only those conclusions which are logically supported by the data, and in applying the findings to precisely the population that the sample validly represents, etc. The list of cautions could go on and on..

Those are only the mistakes that can be made by the pollsters. Even greater opportunities for mis-evaluation arise when the poll results are published. News media have been notorious, on occasion, for misinterpreting poll results. Even when they are correctly reported, the media audience is capable of reading things into polls that are not there, or in failing to grasp their valid implications. Vested interests and self-interest can skew interpretations of even the most valid and reliable survey results.

The dangers are compounded by the positivistic and empiricist leanings of our culture, which so often is dissatisfied with qualitative explanations and which demands quantitative descriptions and comparisons, even in situations where measurement is difficult or impossible. The conclusions that result from such pressures may be clearly stated, but they are almost sure to be wrong in many respects because they have been reached by inappropriate methods.

Furthermore, in countries where majority rule is enshrined as an inviolable political principle majority opinion can easily come to be misapplied outside the political arena as a quasi-universal norm for everything from aesthetics to morality and religion. Reason can be overwhelmed by

numbers, and the rights of the few trampled by the self-interested or ill-informed will of the many. The "tyranny of the majority" can be as oppressive as the tyranny of an individual dictator.

Even in the purely political area an overemphasis on the importance of the majority's opinions can give rise to "democratic excess." Quirk and Hinchliffe see this as a rising danger in American politics, a danger actually foreseen by the Founding Fathers, but which the authors argue has reached threatening proportions in the late twentieth century, a period in which "mass opinion has emerged as a hegemonic political force, the dominant influence in policy making" (Quirk and Hinchliffe 1998: 20). While increased participation of the public in establishing public policy can be a good thing, such as its role in inhibiting corrupt and unjust behavior by officials, it also can result in flawed legislation — such as popular tax breaks which escalate the national debt — and "it has sometimes reduced the influence of experts and specialists and, therefore, of careful thinking about policy problems" (*ibid.*, pg 43).

All that having been said, polling, correctly done, is now almost essential in order to have accurate knowledge of a complex society composed of millions of diverse people distributed over vast areas. While decisions based on the opinions of an ill-informed majority are fraught with peril, a government which fails to recognize that there is strong public opposition to particular policies can have little hope of smoothly implementing them.

The same thing is true of all large organizations, including the Church. It may be better able than government to gauge its members' attitudes through less formal and more personalistic means, but it cannot rely on the accuracy of those channels when decision-making requires accurate knowledge of the views of a large number of its people.

Social scientists frequently have difficulty getting the attention of bishops, who rightly believe that doctrinal correctness does not depend on the agreement of a majority. Nevertheless, failure to understand the drift of public opinion in the Church hinders communication and can lead to needless conflicts between religious leaders and their people. Many bishops and other decision makers do recognize this need. For example, the bishops of the American state of Indiana recently sponsored a survey of Catholics in their dioceses, supplemented by a U.S.-wide telephone survey, to ascertain Catholics' religious opinions and reported religious practices. The study was conducted by a team from Indiana and Purdue universities, both secular schools whose neutrality about controverted issues within the Church was unquestionable (Davidson 1997).

Such studies are expensive to carry out, and they must be repeated at relatively frequent intervals

and under varying circumstances to obtain data from a variety of sources and on changing attitudes, as well as to confirm and deepen knowledge obtained previously. Just as importantly, those who commission the surveys should take the time to read and thoroughly understand the reports. As the discussion above suggests, evaluating public opinion surveys may not be easy and is subject to many pitfalls, but if both pollsters and evaluators have done their work correctly the results can be a valuable tool for the successful operation of any organization.

References to Afterword:

Davidson, James L., et al. 1997. *The Search for Common Ground: What Unites and Divides Catholic Americans*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press.

Quirk, Paul J., and Joseph Hinchliffe. 1998. "The Rising Hegemony of Mass Opinion." *Journal of Policy History*. Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 18-50.

Current Research

(NB: In the listings below, "ICA" refers to the International Communication Association 1998 Conference scheduled to be held in Jerusalem July 20-24, 1998; and "AAPOR", "WAPOR" and "WAPOR/AAPOR" to the joint meeting of the World Association for Public Opinion Research and the American Association for Public Opinion Research, held in St. Louis May 12-17, 1998.)

World

The **World Association for Public Opinion Research** held its annual conference in conjunction with that of the American Association for Public Opinion Research in Saint Louis, Missouri, USA, May 12-16, 1998. The WAPOR Secretariat is located at the School of Journalism, The University of North Carolina, CB 3365, Howell Hall, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3365, USA. Tel: +1 (919) 962-6396; Fax: +1 (919) 962-4079; E-mail: kcole@email.unc.edu. Office Manager: **Katherine Cole**. (Papers cited below from that conference are indicated by either "WAPOR," "AAPOR," or "WAPOR/AAPOR," depending on the organization sponsoring the session in which they appeared.)

Panel Sessions in the WAPOR meeting, with their moderators, were as follows: "Explaining Distrust of Government" (**Patricia Moy**, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Wisconsin, 5050 Vilas Hall, Madison, WI, USA 5370; Email: pmoy@ macc.wisc.edu);

"Advancing Theories in Public Opinion Research" (**Wayne Wanta**, School of Journalism and Communication, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, USA 97403-1275; Email: wanta@oregon.uoregon.edu); "How Photojournalists Report Public Opinion" with two conjoined exhibits of photos (**Julianne Newton**, Department of Journalism, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA 78712; Email: jhn@uts.cc.utexas.edu); "Media Framing and Public Opinion" (**Bradley J. Hamm**, Department of Journalism and Communication, Elon College, Elon College, NC, USA 27244; Email: hammbr@numen.elon.edu); "Advancing Methods in Public Opinion Research" (**Brian Gosschalk**, MORI International, 95 Southward St., London, UK SE1 0HX; Email: bgosschalk@mori.com); and "Surveying Attitudes and Behaviors on Hot Topics" (**Dominic L. Lasorsa**, Department of Journalism, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA 78712; Email: lasorsa@mail.utexas.edu).

A "Seven Country Modes Experiment in the 1996 International Social Survey Programme" was reported on at a joint session of WAPOR/AAPOR by **Janet Harkness**, **Alan Frizzell**, **Knut Kalgraff Skjak**, **Brina Malnar**, **Peter Mohler** and **Matild Sagi** (all of ZUMA, Mannheim, Germany; E-mail contact: harkness@zuma-mannheim.de) and **Tom Smith** (National Opinion Research Center).

Argentina

Roxana Morduchowicz (Faculty of Communication, University of Buenos Aires), with **Hernan Galperin** and **Steven Chaffee**, both of Stanford University, have conducted a large-scale study, "Education for Democracy in Argentina: Effects of a Newspaper-in-School Program in Argentina," published in the *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Winter 1997), pp. 313-335. (Contact: Chaffee at Dept. of Communication, Building 120, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-2050, USA; E-mail: chaffee@leland.stanford.edu)

María Braun (MORI Argentina, Paraguay 1270 P.B. "1", Buenos Aires; Tel: +54 1 816-2170; Fax: +54 1 815-4316) attended WAPOR.

Belgium

Geert Loosveldt (Department of Sociology, University of Leuven, E. Van Evenstraat 2B, 3000 Leuven; Tel: +32 16 323154; Fax: +32 16 323365; E-mail: geert_loosvelt@soc.kuleuven.ac.be) focuses his research on research methodology, especially the evaluation of survey data quality. A research note by him in the *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Winter 1997), pp. 386-394, dealt with "Interaction Characteristics of the Difficult-to-Interview Respondent."

Chile

Marta Lagos (MORI Chile, Galvarino Gallardo 1791, Providencia-Santiago; Tel: +56 2 235-0574; Fax: +56 2 236-2101; E-mail: mlagos@mailnet.rdc.cl) attended WAPOR.

China

Yongning Li (Harvard University/GASS, Cambridge, MA, USA; Tel: +1 617 547-2076; Fax: +1 617 497-8031; Email: lia@fas.harvard.edu) presented a paper, "Public Opinion Research in South China" at WAPOR.

Weiwu Zhang and **Hua-Hsian** (both at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI, USA; E-mail contact: wzhang7@students.wisc.edu) presented a paper, "Takeover? Handover? Reversion? Return? A Comparative Content Analysis of Media Coverage of the Transfer of Hong Kong to China" at a poster session of AAPOR.

Finland

Pertti Suhonen (Dept. of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Tampere, PO Box 607, Fin-33101, Tampere; Tel: +358 3 215-6111; Fax: +358 3 215-6248; E-mail: tipesu@uta.fi (or) jour@uta.fi) has studied the role of public opinion polls in the functioning of the media and the political process in Finland.

Germany

Wolfgang Donsbach (Institut für Kommunikations-wissenschaft, Technische Universität Dresden, D-01062 Dresden; Tel: +49 351 463-3308; Fax: +49 351 463-7067; E-mail: donsbach@geisresw.rmhs1.tu.dresden.d400.de) recently published an analysis of how the news media shape the political process, stressing the media's role as political actors and using content analysis and survey data to distinguish possible media effects. He also presented a paper on "Cynical News: Why is There So Much Negativism?" at WAPOR, and co-authored another, "Big Davids and Small Goliaths: The German News Media as Vehicle for the Public Scandalization of a Multinational Company by New Social Movements," with **Dietmar Gattwinkel** of the same department, also presented at WAPOR.

Juergen H. P. Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik (ZUMA, B2. 1, PF 12 21 55. 68072, Mannheim; Tel: +49 621 12460; Fax: +49 621 124 6100; Email: [34 - CRT Vol 17 \(1997\) No. 3](mailto:hoffmeyer-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

zlotnik@zuma-mannaheim.de) presented a paper, "The Comparison of Demographical Variables in International/Intercultural Research" at a WAPOR/AAPOR joint session.

Dagmar Krebs (E-mail: dagmar.krebs@sowi.uni-giessen.de) delivered a paper on "Direction of Question Wording Effects in Attitude Items" at AAPOR.

Allan L. McCutcheon (Gallup Research Center/ University of Nebraska at Lincoln, 200 N. 11th St., Lincoln, NE, USA 68588-0241; Email: amccutch@unlinfo.unl.edu) presented a paper on "Attitudes Toward Legalized Abortion: A Continuing Divide Between East and West Germany" at WAPOR/AAPOR.

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (Institut für Demoskopie, Allensbach, Radolfzeller Str. 8, 78472 Allensbach; Tel: +49 7533-8050; Fax: +49 7533-3048) published an article on rational and irrational elements in public opinion about science and technology (*Rationale und irrationale Elemente der öffentlichen Meinung zu Wissenschaft und Technik*) in *Publizistik*, 42. Jg. (1997) Heft 4 (December 1997), pp. 439-455. **Noelle-Neumann** and **Thomas Petersen** of the same Institute also presented a paper at WAPOR on "The Questionnaire Conference and the Necessity of Translating Research Questions into Test Questions or Indicator Questions."

Karl-Heinz Reuband (E-mail: reuband@phil-fak.uni.duesseldorf.de) delivered a paper, "Stability of Opinions On Capital Punishment: How Different Stimuli Elicit Different Results," at AAPOR.

India

Prakash Nijhara (MORI-India Private Limited, Mamta D Building, A P Marathe Road, Prabhadevi, Bombay 400025; Tel: +91 22 430-7022; Fax: +91 22 436-2391) attended WAPOR.

Israel

Eytan Gilboa (Holon Institute of Technology, P. O. Box 305, Holon 58102, Israel; E-mail:

gilboa@barley.cteh.ac.il) presented a paper, "Public Opinion and Arab-Israeli Peacemaking" at ICA.

Tamar Liebes (Hebrew University, Jerusalem) acted as respondent for a session titled, "All Things Considered: The Conundrum of Measuring Opinion Quality" at ICA.

Chava E. Tidhar (35 Sheshet Hayamin St., Ramat Hasharon 47247; Fax: +972 3 549 6579) coordinated the WAPOR Regional Seminar, "Beyond the Routine of Rating Evaluation: Updated Approaches and Methods in the Study of the Media and its Publics" held at Eilat, Israel, November 27-30, 1997.

Gabriel Weimann (Department of Communication, Haifa University, Haifa 31905; E-mail: RSS0343@UVM.HAIFA.AC.IL) published a paper, "Can a Spiral Be a Bridge? On Noelle-Neumann's Work as Bridging Micro-Macro Levels of Analysis," in *Publizistik*, 42. Jg, Heft 1 (March 1997), pp. 97-103.

Korea

Young I. Chun (University of Maryland, USA) reported on "The First Survey in North Korea: Lessons from a Nutritional Study" at WAPOR/AAPOR.

Aie-Rie Lee (Department of Political Science, Texas Tech University, P.O. Box 4349, Lubbock, TX 79409, USA) has studied the sources of student activism in South Korea, in collaboration with the Korean Institute for Social Studies. A report appeared as, "Exploration of the Sources of Student Activism: The Case of South Korea," in the *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 48-65.

Moo-Ik Park (Korea Gallup, 208, Sajik-dong, Chongro-ku, Seoul; Tel: +82 2 3702-2119, Fax: +82 2 3702-2635) and **Mee-Eun Kang** (Department of Communication Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA) presented a paper, "Forecasting the Outcome of the 1997 Korean Presidential Election" at WAPOR.

Mexico

Alejandro Moreno (Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico; Tel: +52-5-628-4000; Email: amoreno@eniac.rhon.itam.mx) presented a paper on "Measuring Campaign Awareness in Mexican Politics" at WAPOR/AAPOR.

New Zealand

Janet Hoek (J.A.Hoek@massey.ac.nz), **Philip Gendall** and **Natalie Erceg** (all of Massey University, Palmerston North, NZ; Tel: +646-350-5583), presented a paper on "Beliefs and Behavior: The Use of Survey Evidence in Deceptive Advertising Cases" at WAPOR/AAPOR.

Spain

Esteban López Escobar (University of Navarra, Dept. of Public Communication, 31080 Pamplona; Tel +34 4842 5600; Fax: +34 4842 5636; E-mail: elef@unav.es) attended WAPOR.

Sweden

Gosta Forsman (E-mail: lilli.japoc@scb.se) delivered a paper, "Interviewer Strategies: How Do Interviewers Schedule Their Call Attempts," at AAPOR.

Arne Modig (Demoskop, Box 26 141, S-10041 Stockholm, Sweden; Email: arne.modig@demoskop.se) presented a paper, "Attitudes Towards Residential Segregation in Stockholm" at WAPOR.

Taiwan

Lu Luo and Shih Jian Bin published an article reporting on their survey, conducted in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, "Sources of Happiness: A Qualitative Approach," in *The Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 137, No. 2 (1997), pp. 181-187.

Turkey

Selim A. Oktar (STRATEJI/MORI Research and Planning; Ruhi Bagdadi Sok No. 5, Balmumcu 80700, Istanbul 12; tel: 90 212 275-4393; Fax: +90 212 211-3252) attended WAPOR.

United Kingdom

Jaime Bermudez (St. Antony's College, Oxford

OX2 6JF, UK; Email: jaime.bermudez@st_anthonys.oxford.ac.uk) presented a paper, "The Communication of Political Scandal: Contextualizing the Public Debate" at WAPOR.

Gordon Heald (The Opinion Research Business, 9-13 Curistor St., London EC4A 1LL; Tel: +44 171 430-0216, Fax: +44 1717 430-0658) presented a paper on "Public Perceptions of the Link between Screen Violence and Pornography" at WAPOR.

Sandi Mann (University of Salford, Manchester) presented a paper, "Communicating Emotions Across the Customer-Organization Boundary: What do Customers really Expect? An Israeli-American Comparative Study" at ICA.

Robert M. Worcester (Market and Opinion Research International [MORI, 32 Old Queen St., London SW1H 9JP] and London School of Economics and Political Science, London; Email: rmw@mori.com [or] worc@worc.demon.co.uk) presented a paper, "What Does the World Values Survey Say About Trust in Government?" at WAPOR, and another, "This Thing Called ... Public Opinion? Issues Raised by the World Reaction to the Death of Princess Diana," at AAPOR.

United States

The American Association for Public Opinion Research held the following short courses and workshops during its 53rd Annual Conference in St. Louis, May 14-17, 1998:

"Market Segmentation and Segmentation Analysis" - **Lynd D. Bacon** (Lynd Bacon and Associates, Ltd.) and **Tony Babinec** (Director, Advanced Products Marketing, SPSS [Statistical Package for the Social Sciences], Inc.).

"Designing Good Questions" - **John Krosnick** (Ohio State University).

"Nonresponse in Household Interview Surveys" - **Robert M. Groves** (Survey Research Center, University of Michigan).

"Collaborative Workshop on Pretesting Techniques" - **Jennifer Rothgeb** (U.S. Bureau of the Census; Email: jennifer.m.rothgeb@ccmail.census.gov), **Barbara Forsyth** (Westat,

ccmail.census.gov), **Barbara Forsyth** (Westat, Inc.), and **Jim Esposito** (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).

George Bishop (University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH) reported on "Public Beliefs and Opinions about Creationism and Human Evolution" at AAPOR.

Steven Chaffee and **Hernan Galperin**, both of Stanford University — see Argentina, above.

Hyunyi Cho (Mass Media Program, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48823; Email: chohyuny @pilot.msu.edu) presented a paper, "Public Opinion as Personal Cultivation: An East Asian Perspective of Public Opinion and Its Enduring Influence" at WAPOR.

Robert P. Daves (The Minnesota Poll) chaired a panel on "Pummeling the Pollsters: Case Studies of How Politicians Attempt to Tar the Messengers" at AAPOR. Participants represented CBS News, the Minnesota Poll, the Eagleton Poll and the Gallup Organization

James D. Davidson, Andrea S. Williams, Richard A. Lamanna, Jan Stenftenagel, Kathleen Maas Weigert, William J. Whalen, and Patricia Wittberg, SC (University of Indiana/Purdue University) recently completed an extensive study of polarized religious opinions among American Catholics (see References to the "Afterword," above).

Alex Edelstein (University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195; E-mail: aedel@u.washington.edu) recently published a book, *Total Propaganda: From Mass Culture to Popular Culture*, (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997) exploring how new media technologies redefine and reconceptualize propaganda. See review in the "Book Reviews" section, below.

Elihu Katz (Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, 3620 Walnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104-6220, USA; Fax: +1 (215) 898-2024) presented a paper on "The Importance of Considered Opinion in Mass

Democracies" at ICA.

Scott Keeter (Virginia Commonwealth University, 910 W. Franklin St., Richmond, VA 23284) chaired a panel to discuss "The Pew Research Center Study of Survey Nonresponse" at AAPOR.

Jon Krosnick (Ohio State University, Columbus, OH) has written a book, scheduled for 1999 publication by Oxford University Press, *The Handbook of Questionnaire Design*.

Kurt Lang and **Gladys Lang** (both of the University of Washington) chaired separate panels on public opinion theory at AAPOR.

Frank Newport (The Gallup Organization) presented a paper, "Half Empty or Half Full? Summarizing and Interpreting Publicly Released Survey Data," at AAPOR.

Vincent Price (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109) presented a paper on "Deliberative Polls: Toward Improved Measures of Public Opinion" at ICA.

Paul J. Quirk and **Joseph Hinchliffe** (Department of Political Science and the Institute of Public Affairs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) have been studying the distorting effect of an increasing influence of public opinion on U.S. government policy-making. (See the references to "Afterword," above.)

John P. Robinson (University of Maryland) chaired a panel that discussed "Measuring Political Attitudes and Behavior: How Well Are We Doing?" at AAPOR.

Tom W. Smith (National Opinion Research Center) presented a paper on "The Religious Right: Faith, Politics, Traditional Values and Tolerance" at AAPOR.

Mads Stenbjerre (Department of Communication, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA; Email: mads@leland.stanford.edu) and **Patricia Moy** (School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706;

Email: pmoy@macc.wisc.edu) presented a paper on "Polls, Publicness, and Personal Traits: Situational and Individual Differences in the Spiral of Silence" at WAPOR.

Michael Traugott (University of Michigan, PO Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI 48106; Tel: +1 734 763-1347, Fax: +1 734 764-3341) organized and chaired a panel on "Current Research on the Impact of Polls on Public Opinion" at AAPOR.

Acknowledgments

Rob Anderson (St. Louis)
Katherine Cole (Chapel Hill, NC)

Walter Ong, SJ (St. Louis)
John Pauly (St. Louis)

Book Reviews

Anderson, Rob, and Kenneth N. Cissna. *The Martin Buber - Carl Rogers Dialogue: A New Transcript with Commentary.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997. Pp. xii, 138. ISBN 0 7914 3437 0 (hb.) n.p.; 0 7914 3438 9 (pb.) \$9.95.

Some skeptics argue that in the contemporary world dialogue is "impossible given the nature of human cultural experience and today's complex media environment" (pg. ix). Anderson, of Saint Louis University, and Cissna, of the University of South Florida, wish to address the need for understanding, and if necessary for trying to revivify dialogue by focusing "on an actual historical meeting at the intellectual junction of the *philosophical* and the *practical*" (*ibid.*). They found material for such a study in recordings of a "1957 meeting of philosopher Martin Buber and psychologist Carl Rogers at a University of Michigan conference celebrating Buber's thought" (*ibid.*). "...the Buber Rogers dialogue, because it explicitly focused on the nature of dialogue, formed perhaps our richest available touchstone text for examining the philosophical in light of the practical, and the practical dimensions of dialogue in their conceptual context" ((pg. x). The hour and a half dialogue, on "the nature of man as revealed in inter personal relationship," offered such revealing insights into the thought of the two that it has served as the basis of many studies (pg. 3).

An introduction outlines the history of studies of the dialogue and of efforts to establish a definitive transcription of it. Pages 13 through 108 contain the new transcription and, in a parallel column, the authors' commentary on the transcription and on the dialogical interactions between Buber and Rogers.

Moderator Maurice Friedman, who had a role in initiating the dialogue, notes the similarities in the thought of the two principals, who approached personal relations and personal becoming from the directions of theology and philosophy, on the one hand, and psychiatry, on the other.

The editors have divided the dialogue into sections, whose titles reveal something of the content of the interaction: Mutuality and Therapy, Inner Meeting and Problems of Terminology, Human Nature as Positive or Polar, Acceptance and Confirmation, and Within and Between.

A concluding chapter by the authors emphasizes the values of the new transcript for scholars, who continue to use the Buber Rogers dialogue as an example of the high level that honest, direct, and mutually respectful intellectual dialogue can attain.

References are grouped at the end (pp. 121-129).

— WEB

Brungs, Robert, SJ, and Marianne Postiglione, RSM (eds.). *Patenting of Biological Entities: Proceedings of the ITEST Workshop, October 1996.* Saint Louis: ITEST Faith/Science Press, 1997. Pp. iii, 260. ISBN 1 885583 05 2 (pb.) \$15.95 (and)

Brungs, Robert, SJ, and Marianne Postiglione, RSM (eds.). *Creation and Evolution: Proceedings of the ITEST Workshop, October, 1997.* Saint Louis: ITEST Faith/Science Press, 1998. Pp. iv, 264. ISBN 1 885583 06 0 (pb.) \$15.95.

ITEST, the Institute for Theological Encounter with

Science and Technology, reports in these two volumes on its annual autumn workshops for 1996 and 1997, respectively. As in previous workshops, the members of ITEST met to discuss selected topics where the domains of theology, on the one hand, and science and technology, on the other, each have both interest and, in their own ways, competence. The topics are potentially controversial, but ITEST works on the assumption that the respective claims of Christian theology and science are always compatible, if both theologians and scientists respect each others' disciplines and refrain from overstepping the proper limits of their own.

The 1996 workshop was concerned with the issue of the patenting of "genetically engineered animals and human genes, cells, organs, tissues and embryos" (pg.i). Previous ITEST workshops on this topic had been held in 1981 and 1987, both of which called for continuing attention to it, since both scientific discoveries and relevant laws make it an area of constant change (*ibid*). An immediate "precipitating event" for the workshop was a 1995 statement by representatives of United Methodist, Southern Baptist, Jewish and Muslim organizations calling for a moratorium on the issuing of such patents (pp. i and 9).

Thirty four participants discussed questions raised by five papers, presented by a physicist, a theologian, an ethicist, a patent attorney, and a genetist medical doctor. Lutherans and Baptists were represented as well as Catholics. The attorney, David Saliwanchik, described the current status of American law regarding the patenting of biological entities. He concluded that the arguments against patenting "do not provide any compelling basis for denying intellectual property protection to the fruits of biotechnology research" (pg. 13).

A Baptist professor of Christian Ethics, Dr. C. Ben Mitchell, noted that the 1995 statement had been intended "to initiate a discussion about ways to preserve the therapeutic goals of genetic intervention without collapsing the important non economic values of living organisms into crass market values" (pg. 24).

Robert Brungs, SJ, physicist and director of ITEST, expressed regret that the 200 or so signers of the call for a moratorium had focused on a peripheral issue and had neglected to refer to some "far more substantial theological work in this area...", but at least the petition had turned "attention to the mystery of our bodily life and our relation to the rest of the physical universe" (pg. 54).

Donald J. Keefe, SJ, Professor of Dogmatic Theology at St Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, New York,

commented that "the prospects which the Human Genome Project and DNA engineering have opened up do not differ in essence from those attending any other of the technological advances which have changed the face of the globe over the past five centuries." Although "such 'devices' as human cleverness may contrive are not finally salvific; at the same time, it must be said, neither are they damnific" (pg. 57). Both theology and good sense, however, demand prudence and humility in decision making about these issues, since, "should we choose badly" we cannot be confident "that the opportunity once more to choose will be afforded us" (pg. 92).

The 1997 workshop addressed the subject matter of one of the longest running controversies at the interface of science and religion: creation vs. evolution. Sister Joan Gormley, PhD, Professor of New Testament Studies at Mount Saint Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, remarks that even apart from the fundamentalists' insistence on promoting their "flawed" interpretation of Scripture (pg. 70), the question of creation and evolution must be given serious attention because of "the crucial importance of the issue of human and cosmic origins," its implications, and the "ramifications they have for the whole social order" (pg. 50).

Michael J. Behe, Professor of Biochemistry at Lehigh University, said that although "after more than a century and a half of investigation, scientists have explained much of how life works... But trouble is brewing. We know something about how life works, yet we remain largely ignorant of how life came to be... These and many more such questions have not yet been given a solution and seem to be getting more urgent" (pg. 2). He notes that many have adhered to a theory of chance in evolution which rules out design, but he concludes

that when we put irreducibly complex biochemical systems in the context of science as a whole, the conclusion of intelligent design is not that surprising. The design of the basis of life, far from being an anomaly, fits neatly into the picture of physical reality that is also being drawn by other branches of modern science. In several separate areas, highly improbable interactive conditions — unexplained by natural law alone, although not violating natural law — are necessary for life. (pg. 24).

Other essayists in the 1997 workshop were a Franciscan biologist, Lazarus Walter Macior, OFM, on "Critical Scientific Concepts in the Creation/Evolution Controversy," Lutheran theologian/aerospace engineer

Steven C. Kuhl, on "Darwin's Dangerous Idea...and St. Paul's: God, Humanity, Responsibility, Meaning in the Light of Evolutionary Findings," and theologian Monsignor Paul Langsfeld on his studies in the relationship of faith with science, culture and reason. Besides the five speakers, fifty four other participants attended the workshop.

The last half of each book summarizes the discussion sessions in which the other participants responded to the speakers' remarks. — WEB

Dickie, John. *The Boys on the Bongo Bus: The Media and Travelling Diplomacy.* Luton, UK: John Libbey Media/University of Luton Press, 1997. Pp. xii, 212. ISBN 1 86020 543 7 (hb.) £25.00; 1 8620 534 8 (pb.) £15.00.

John Dickie covered the travels of British Foreign Secretaries for thirty years for the London *Daily Mail*. The "Bongo Bus," in the title, refers to the less than first class transportation often grudgingly supplied for the press contingent in the otherwise posh motorcades provided for visiting Foreign Secretaries.

Dickie presents his credentials for writing this book in his Preface:

Over the three decades from the first visit of George Brown with the Press in his plane to Moscow in November 1966 until the travels of Douglas Hurd only one diplomatic correspondent accompanied every minister. As that unique witness on the Bongo Bus I have been persuaded to draw upon the disclosures made to me over the years and reveal what really happened on the major excursions undertaken abroad by Foreign Secretaries. (pg. xi)

In reviewing the travels of thirty years, covering 10 Foreign Secretaries, Dickie refreshed and supplemented his memories by conducting over 120 off the record interviews with ministers, ambassadors, private secretaries, and others with inside knowledge of those trips.

Some of the evaluations are quite frank. For example, near the end of Chapter One, on the author's, and others' experiences with Foreign Secretary George Brown, in 1966 67, Dickie says,

The pluses about his record as Foreign Secretary — his passionate defense of Britain's interests in Europe, strengthening the transatlantic alliance, and tabling a framework for peace in the Middle East —

were often outweighed by the minuses due to his outbursts and the cruel treatment of people, especially those on whose loyalty he relied. In his 18 months as Foreign Secretary he probably caused more havoc to the Diplomatic Service than any other holder of the office in the past century. There are many who still shudder at the mention of days travelling with him in the plane. (pg. 20)

Sir Alec Douglas Home's visit to the People's Republic of China, in 1972, was a diplomatic breakthrough, and he was highly esteemed in the Foreign Office (pg. 39), but when Lady Home learned that her husband was being allowed by the Russian train crew to drive a Moscow under ground train on which she was riding, she pleaded, "Let me get off!" (pg. 39).

Dickie also gives high marks to the Royal Air Force, as "the finest airline in the world," at least in its role as "the Flying Foreign Office" (pp. 41 57).

In his summing up chapter, the author notes a "decline in the status of the Diplomatic Correspondent in the British media towards the end of the 20th century." Among the causes of this he remarks that "the hesitancy and inconsistency of Ministers in setting out Britain's position on world issues left correspondents bewildered on the sidelines, unable to provide a coherent commentary on the ever changing international scene." Another factor in that decline is the "increasing preference by editors for 'on the spot action reports' instead of political analysis, ..." (pg. 204). — WEB

Edelstein, Alex. *Total Propaganda: From Mass Culture to Popular Culture.* Mahwah, NJ/London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997. Pp. xv, 345. ISBN 0 8058 0891 4 (hb.) \$79.95; 0 8058 0892 2 (pb.) \$29.95.

The author begins by distinguishing between "old propaganda" and "new propaganda" according to their linkages to popular culture: "If the propaganda enhances the functioning of the popular culture it is new propaganda; if it inhibits it, it is the old propaganda" (pg. 2). Or, as Katharine E. Heintz Knowles describes the new propaganda, in her Foreword, "it targets a younger, more media savvy (if not necessarily media literate) generation who are more likely to be participants in the messages than members of any previous generation" (pg. xi).

The "Total Propaganda" of the book's title is "the

synergies of propagandas and the energies that these produce," energies that, in effect, constitute much of our contemporary cultural milieu (pg. 2). In summary, the old propaganda might be characterized as anything hierarchical or imposed, and therefore *ipso facto* "bad," and the new propaganda as participatory, "liberating," functional for the individual, and therefore *ipso facto* "good." Edelstein hopes that the new propaganda will come to dominate culture more and more, chiefly through the medium of Cyber communication; although the latter is now the carrier and voice of both propagandas (pg. 2).

He ranges through contemporary society, culture and politics, classifying aspects of it under different headings — Filmprop, Adprop, MTVprop, Sportsprop, etc. — according to their particular synergy of newprop and oldprop. "Trinityprop," not surprisingly, lumps together under one heading the propagandas Edelstein sees operating in racism, the pro life movement, and religion, although he distinguishes the varying mixes of old and new in each (pp. 241 258).

Most relevant to the topic of this issue of *Trends* is the last chapter, "Pollprop: Court of Last Resort." Polls are potentially good, in the author's value system, "quintessentially newprop" (pg. 330), since they can express the needs of popular culture.

When *pollprop* is intrusive and creates agendas that are responsive only to exclusive interests, it is producing oldprop. However, when it responds to diversity and is sensitive to nuances in values and perspectives, it enables the popular culture to communicate its problems clearly, and this is newprop. (pg. 321)

Both kinds of propaganda are subject to manipulation and co optation by the forces of the all consuming commercialism of modern society. The author is fully aware of this process in regard to oldprop, but he seems only sporadically conscious of how intrinsic it is to the very nature of newprop. — WEB

Gauntlett, David. *Video Critical: Children, the Environment and Media Power.* Luton, UK: John Libbey Media/University of Luton Press, 1996. Pp. x, 176. ISBN 1 86020 513 5 (pb.) £18.00, \$29.00.

The rise of environmental consciousness in the mass media has given the author a field in which to reexamine the always problematic question of media

effects and to take issue with the individualistic reductionism which often dominates the efforts of psychologists to study those effects. Although some studies have indicated a rising awareness of the environment and its fragility among both children and adults, Gauntlett notes that "the amount of research on the impact of mass media environmental material upon the audience has been extremely limited," with research focusing, instead, "on how environmental lobby and campaign groups have sought to have their messages relayed in news and non fictional media formats, thereby ignoring large areas of media content and, even more centrally, the people who receive the media" (pg. 5).

An additional factor in studying effects in the area of environmental communication is that the environment is relatively ethnically neutral and gender neutral, and children's responses to it are therefore less likely than their responses to some other topics to be contaminated by either racism or gender related conflicts or hangups learned from parents or others (pp. 5 6).

Chapter two, "The Bigger Picture: Critical Questions About Mass Media and Society," initiates the author's attack on "the psychological, individualistic cause effect paradigm," which he feels "remains the magnetic core of public discussion about the impact of the mass media, drawing all debate within its restricted terrain" (pg. 11). He feels that the inherent defects in that methodology have had an ideological impact in supporting the erroneous view "that there is no justifiable need to be concerned about the role of the mass media in society." He argues, instead, "that the impact of the mass media is *not* an isolatable 'problem' *in itself*," since "the mass media obviously *do* matter, and cannot fail to contribute massively to social life and understandings" (pg. 12).

Chapter three asks the fundamental, but surprisingly pertinent question, "What is a *child*?" Gauntlett remarks that

the filter of discourse about children wholly shapes how they emerge in the debates, such that they can become a cipher within cross paradigm dialogues which make impossible any common definition of what children are, or even what our related research concerns about them might be. (pg. 39)

Prejudices about what constitutes a "child" have, in the author's opinion, vitiated most effects research based on psychological approaches. Research should, he feels, focus on "the way in which content is processed and interpreted by the viewer," which "is almost precisely the area which conspicuous

psychologists in this field have generally failed to address in a manner of any quality" (pg. 48).

Chapter four, notes the "limited scope of scholarship produced to date on environmental issues and the mass media" (pg. 49). Some programs with environmental themes on British media are discussed, with the observation that they have been "notably reticent to apportion *blame* for anti environmental events," fearing, among other things, legal complications (pg. 71).

The remaining chapters discuss the methodology and conduct of the research project and its conclusions, together with some of its implications. "The most obvious and clear cut finding of the study is that the children demonstrated a high level of media literacy in all age groups" (pg. 143). For example, one part of the study involved the children making a video, an activity which

...came naturally to them. In their few years of experience as media *consumers* the children — some as young as seven — had learned elements of genre and presentation, as well as acquiring a lively awareness of the way in which things could be represented and misrepresented on camera. (*ibid.*)

Although the children "generally demonstrated a reasonably high level of concern about environmental issues...their actual everyday behavior in many cases, as they came to admit, was not entirely consistent with these eco friendly views" (pg. 144). Furthermore, "the conflicting messages from mass media coverage of the environment seem to have produced, if anything, a kind of paralysis." The pro environmental activities in which they are asked to engage are small scale, and seem meaningless when compared to the massive global problems reported by the media (pg. 145).

Gauntlett feels that a "hegemonic bending of environmental problem interpretations" has placed individual actions at the center of interpretations of children's accounts of environmental damage and solutions, and has deflected attention from the role of "organized adult activity" (pg. 149).

The references, at the end of the book, constitute a sizeable bibliography (pp. 155 168). — WEB

Jones, Daniel E. (ed.). *Esport i mitjans de comunicació a Catalunya* (Sport and communications media in Catalonia). Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, Centre d'Investigació de la Comunicació/Centre d'Estudis Olímpics i de

l'Esport/Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1996. Pp. 168. ISBN 84 490 0710 0 (pb.), n. p. [In Catalan].

As Miquel de Moragas Spà points out in chapter one, the "marriage" between the mass media and sports has become "profound" and extremely complicated. Sports, even amateur sports, have become an integral part of the "culture industries," with the consequent invasion of commercial interests into the realm of pure athletic competition. De Moragas Spà directs attention to the ethical dimension of the relation between communication and sport. He feels that a correct relationship between the two demands a certain independence from each other, not only to preserve the purity of sport but also to preserve the critical function of the media in their sports reporting (pg. 18).

The role of each of the three media most concerned with sports is dealt with in turn. Daniel E. Jones and Jaume Baró i Queralt deal with the press, first on the international level, then in Spain, and finally in Catalonia. Maria Gutiérrez García concentrates more on Spanish and Catalan programming in her discussion of radio. Elisabet García Altadill, reporting on television, begins with finances, which play a basic role in the interaction of that medium with sports. Since televised sport, especially European and Latin American football, cannot easily be defined by international boundaries, the international character of sports on television in Catalonia is especially noteworthy (pp. 85 111); although local teams still attract the largest TV audiences, except during World Cup competition in June and July (pg. 110).

Marc Carroggio Guerin addresses the crux of the question in his chapter on advertising and sponsorship (*La publicitat i el patrocini*, Ch. 5, pp. 113 149). An epilog, by Josep Maria Artells (pp. 150 153), comments on the role of sports reporting in creating a new kind of journalism: "militant journalism" (*el periodisme militant*).

An eleven page bibliography contains Catalan, Spanish, English, French, and Italian references.

An appendix gives brief biographies of the authors.

— WEB

Kiesler, Sara (ed.). *Culture of the Internet*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997. Pp. xvi, 463. ISBN 0 8058 1635 6 (hb.) \$99.95; 0 8058 1636 4 (pb.) \$39.95.

At the beginning of her Preface, Kiesler remarks that

computer communication networks have developed with surprising rapidity in the 1990s, but, "yet at this writing only a minority of U.S. families are connected to the Internet, and just a tiny percentage of the world's population has been online even once" (pg. ix).

Although this shows that "the Internet lives in imagination more than in reality" (*ibid.*), it nevertheless has become an influential and "special" part of contemporary life. "What makes the Internet special is not the technology per se but the social interactions it is inspiring" (pg. x), in the editor's view. The Internet is not only a new way of communicating but a new way of forming social groups — groups that may have traditional forms, but that also may assume new and very different forms as they are shaped by this new cultural influence.

Kiesler says the book is intended for those who want to study "the 'people' side of electronic communication" (pg. xi). For that audience it has three purposes:

- (a) to illustrate how scientists are thinking about evolving social behavior on the Internet, (b) to encourage research based contributions to current debates on design, applications, and policies, and (c) to suggest, by example, how studies of electronic communication can contribute to social science itself. (pg. xi)

The 19 chapters and 3 boxes are by 40 authors from various disciplines, who have different goals. As the editor describes them:

For some, the emergence and use of new technologies represent a new perspective on questions of longstanding interest in their disciplines. Others want to draw on social science theories to understand technology. A third group holds to a more activist program, seeking guidance through research to improve social interventions using technology in domains such as education, mental health, and work productivity... Diversity really characterizes this domain of research, and should be reflected in these chapters. (pg. xi)

Part I, "The Net as it Was and Might Become," contains four chapters on "...a cyberspace construction boomtown...", "atheism, sex, and databases...", "pornography in cyberspace...", "psychotherapy in cyberspace," and a box on "erotica on the Internet..."

Part II, "Electronic Groups," deals with soap opera fans, multi user dungeons ("MUDs"), parents in electronic support groups, and social network analysis

of electronic groups.

Part III, "Power and Influence," has two chapters, "A Brave New World or a New World Order," and "Conflict on the Internet," in addition to a box on "Coordination, Control, and the Internet."

Part IV, "Computer Supported Cooperative Work," has chapters on "electronic brainstorming" about science and technology, and "Email overload," plus a box on "the attentional economics of Internet use."

Part V, on "Networked Organizations," discusses electronic weak ties for technical advice, the use of electronic mail by a global corporation, digital library use, and the Internet in schools.

Finally, Part VI, "Differences in Access and Usage," talks about computer networks and scientific work and about current trends in computers and connectivity.

An appendix gives not only brief biographies of the authors but also their addresses, including Email addresses. Seven of the authors are based in Canada and the rest in the United States. — WEB

Kramer, Eric Mark. *Modern/Postmodern: Off the Beaten Path of Antimodernism.* Westport, CT/London: Praeger (Greenwood Publishing Group), 1997. Pp. xxv, 222. ISBN 0 275 95758 6 (hb.) \$59.95.

According to the author, an Assistant Professor of Communication at the University of Oklahoma, "this book presents a theory of social interaction/communication which suggests that as dimensional awareness accrues, so too dissociation increases" (pg. xiii). The "dimensions" of which we gradually become more aware are, fundamentally space and time, but also "mood" which consists of "variances in style of communicating and comportment — in a word, attitude or feel" (pg. ix).

In the pre modern, "magical" period, the word and its referent were identified — a statue of a god was thought actually to be the god. In modernization, the thing and the word dissociated: the statue only stood for the god, rather than being identical. The "modern" became synonymous with "Western," as myth came to be treated ideologically or metaphysically, and rationality imposed order. Interestingly, "Western," for Kramer, seems to include not only "Soviet and Chinese systems of centralized planning," but even the "Confucian heavenly justification for order, or purpose oriented progress" (pg. 95).

The process of dissociation proceeds even further in postmodernity, in which all relationships tend to

become relativized, like an "aperspectival physics," in which "what a thing is depends on how one looks at it. Matter cannot be measured as such, but instead is articulated as a wave function which integrates time to produce a non Euclidean space time fluxing (or warping)" (pg. 123). For Kramer,

the prefix 'post' connotes modern temporal anxiety and linearity. It also privileges whatever word that follows it, making of it the central concern. Thus, postmodernism must presume and centralize modernity as the source of its differentiation. Insofar as postmodernism means anything, it is as it differs from modernism. (pg. 129)

He prefers a "postmodernity" which is "aperspectival."

...Postmodernism, via its two valued, diacritical 'play,' is nothing without modernity. In this way, postmodernists privilege modernity. Aperspectivity does not obsess in this way. There is no drive to 'deconstruct' anything. Instead, appreciation of differences is promoted without any discursive engineering. (pp. 129 130)

He goes on to define aperspectivity more fully and to trace the implications of its radical relativism:

Aperspectivity does not condemn, deny, or deconstructively verse, and reverse, modern dualities. Aperspectivity is an integrating awareness that the sense of modernity is recognizable only through the other modes of awaring. The very magics and mythologies which modernity seeks to exterminate are necessary conditions for its existence. (pg. 130)

For Kramer, aperspectivity is a more adequate way of understanding human knowledge than is the systematizing, "scalar," "perspectival" approach privileged by modernity. "From the perspectival worldview, nonscalar 'knowledge' is discredited ignorance. The consequence is that there cannot, by definition, be any truth in art, literature, drama, myth, and so forth. According to modernity, only moderns can know when they know" (pg. 131). Some implications of the author's views oppose some of the more sacrosanct assumptions of modernism. For example, he says,

Scientific laws are all unproven and fundamentally unprovable. Their validity is only as good as the next

observation. Science falsely claims that unlike the narrative production of truth, no social bond is necessary. However, hermeneutics is presumed, for a scientific community must share a language in order to be able to debate and agree. (pg. 153)

The final chapter, "Integrum," sums up the author's conclusions through "an awareness yielded not by systematic arrangement,... Rather, integrum is the articulation of synaeresis ... an aspatial, acategorical realization of the constitutive viability of systemic signality, magic symbiotic idolatry, and mythic symbolism" (pg. 173). "Synaeretically, valid means discernible within the parameters of a particular way of thinking. Thus, validity and reliability exist 'by definition.' They are creations" (pg. 180). The chapter's closing sentences are another sharp blow at one of the hallowed negativities of late modernity: "Meta-physics is power. Those who deny meta-physics are either delusional or cynically attempting to avoid their own responsibility" (pg. 188).

In addition to references at the end of each chapter, they are collected at the end of the book (pp. 193 203).

— WEB

Mackin, James A., Jr. *Community over Chaos: An Ecological Perspective on Communication Ethics*. Tuscaloosa/London: The University of Alabama Press, 1997. Pp. x, 272. ISBN 0 8173 0860 1 (hb.) \$34.95.

Mackin's thesis is that ethical considerations must always take account of the larger community, the communicational "ecosystem" into which both the individual and smaller communities must integrate in order to establish an ethical base for responsible communicative activity. He takes a dim view of both modernism and postmodernism, which together, he feels, have destroyed our "ethical roots." As Kenneth Burke observed, modernism cut our links with the past. Post-modernism, in turn, attacked even the new foundations which modernism had built, bringing about an ethical crisis (pp. 1 2). Mackin, an associate professor of speech communication at Tulane University, attempts "to show that a critical use of common sense and a reconsideration of some classical concepts in light of the modern and postmodern critique will provide us with a common ground for ethical judgment" (pg. 3). That common ground is to be based, in his view, on "the principle of ecological reciprocity, our obligation to support the ecosystem

that supports us" (pg. 2).

The author devotes his first chapter to an explanation of the theories of several of the most prominent postmodernists — especially Lyotard, Derrida, and Foucault — to show how they have destroyed the foundations of ethics not only through their excessive skepticism but especially through diminishing our ability to make the practical judgments which are central to ethical decision making.

Mackin turns to the American pragmatist philosophers, especially Charles S. Peirce in his effort to reconstruct ethics. Peirce's pragmatism, or "critical common sensism," is seen as a self critical and self correcting approach which helps us to avoid wandering very far from lived experience (pg. 31).

Developing his view of pragmatic realism, in chapter two, the author rejects the determinism implicit in the postmodernist view that "we are simply caught in a chain of signifiers that can lead to no ecological truths ..." and that "our semiotic codes shape us, manipulate us, and write our destiny" (pg. 69).

In chapter three Mackin uses Aristotle and others to develop an understanding of three key terms in an ethical system: community, virtue and truth. But he is reminded, at the end of the chapter, that "all uses of traditions must be critical" (pg. 106). In chapter four, he outlines "the cardinal virtues of the communicative ecosystem," drawing again on Aristotle, frequently as filtered through the thought of Kenneth Burke. He ends the chapter by stressing that virtue is communicated in society by actions and example, rather than by words. "If we want better communities, we must accept our responsibility to mediate the ideals of justice by our habits of action that are the concrete signs of justice to others" (pg. 147).

Chapters five, six, and seven "deal with specific levels of our communicative ecosystem" (pg. 148), namely interpersonal communication, organizational ecology, and "the politics of representation." To illustrate the latter, Mackin quotes Will Rogers' wry commentary on an American election: "The promising season ends next Tuesday [Election Day], and at about 8 o'clock that same night, the alibi season opens, and lasts for the next four years" (pg. 192).

The penultimate chapter is a review and summation of the author's argument. It stresses that "all our prudential decisions have potential impact on our ecosystem." Consequently ethical judgments cannot be made only in consideration of a narrow range of factors, but "other levels of community should always be part of our decisions" (pg. 222).

In conclusion, he cites the example of the information superhighway as a part of our

communicational ecosystem with wide spreading ramifications and implications.

A bibliography is appended (pp. 255 265). — WEB

Mortensen, C. David, and Carter M. Ayres. *Miscommunication*. Thousand Oaks/London/New Delhi: Sage, 1997. Pp. x, 267. ISBN 0 8039 7375 6 (hb.) \$55.00; 0 8039 7376 4 (pb.) \$25.95.

That humans communicate is an established fact, but how they are able to do so remains, in many ways, a mystery. Given the many obstacles which can hinder or prevent communication, the wonder often seems to be that we can communicate at all.

Mortensen emphasizes that successful communication takes effort and persistence, as well as skill in choosing the effective forms of communication and avoiding the faulty forms. Interpersonal communication is a drama. "At the center of the drama is the core issue of how mutually accessible clusters or networks of individuals manage to move into or out of varying states, degrees, or gradations of difficulty and perplexity with one another" (pg. vii).

The author faces a dilemma at the outset: "The concept of *miscommunication* is very tricky to define. How can one describe (to someone else) what proves so difficult to figure out in the first place?" (pg. viii). He starts with a description of what happens in communication that seems to be successful: "By this standard, acts or episodes of effective human encounter occur *whenever* some-one (observer) interprets what someone else (participant) expresses in a clear, cogent, and coherent manner" (*ibid.*).

He then categorizes the complex factors favoring or disfavoring communication under seven headings (and in seven chapters): implication, distortion, disruption, confusion, agreement/disagreement, understanding/misunderstanding, and personal transformation. After describing "implication" as "any unspoken or unstated urge, desire, or intention that serves to color or skew the way we see specific and concrete things in the context of our subsequent encounters with other human beings" (pg. ix), he examines factors in "*metacommunication* — in which the subject of communication is transformed into both the subject and the object of what takes place at the same time" (*ibid.*).

Those factors can be categorized as distortion, disruption, or confusion — the latter, for example, encompassing such things as conflict, ambiguity, equivocation, vagueness, misdirection, paradox, and

contradiction. The combined effects of those varying influences create states of more or less agreement or disagreement, which are dealt with in chapter five, and of understanding or misunderstanding, treated in chapter six.

The final chapter, on personal transformation, notes that "the capacity and willingness to encounter others as directly as possible is risky business. It takes conscious effort to put individual egos on hold and withdraw the presumption that someone else is largely responsible for whatever has gone wrong" (pg. 203). Successful adjustment to the fullest possible level of communication requires becoming "as sensitive to the effects of our own behavior on others as we are to the effects of others' behavior on ourselves" (*ibid.*). This requires a big shift in priorities and acquiring a new view of oneself as well as of others. Mortensen emphasizes that "there is no guarantee that sheer persistence will do the trick" (pg. 222). Experience helps, but is no substitute for "deliberate efforts to improve" in meeting the demands of an ever changing communication environment (*ibid.*).

The references form an extensive bibliography (pp. 224-250).

— WEB

Ralph, Sue, Jo Langham Brown, and Tim Lees (eds.). *Tune In or Buy In? Papers from the 27th University of Manchester Broadcasting Symposium, 1996* (Current Debates in Broadcasting 6). Luton, UK: John Libbey Media/University of Luton Press, 1997. Pp. viii, 168. ISBN 1 86020 528 3 (ISSN 0963 6544) (pb.) £16.00; \$26.00.

The editors note, in their foreword, two ways in which the 1996 Manchester Broadcasting Symposium differed from its twenty six predecessors: a declining role for the BBC, in response to an "increasingly multi channel environment" in British broadcasting, and an increased role for academics, who previously had stood on the sidelines after organizing this forum for broadcasting practitioners to talk to each other (pg. vii).

The topics of the papers included in the book range over a broad spectrum of UK domestic broadcasting.

The keynote address by Jack Cunningham, M.P. (Labour), then Shadow Secretary of State for National Heritage, under the same title as that of the book, stresses the rapidity of changes affecting Britain's broadcasters, both in terms of technology and in terms of the regulatory mechanisms necessary to deal both

with the European Union and with transnational media enterprises (pp. 1 6).

Sonia Livingstone and George Gaskell take up the question they feel should be central to future research on children and television: "the broader concept of involvement or engagement with the media" (pg. 7). They say that "media effects" research "has, to be blunt, absorbed a lot of effort for rather little return" (*ibid.*). they intend to carry out research which "adopts an integrated framework concerning everyday practices and habits, the socially constructed meanings which children and adults attach to different media/ activities, the importance of media in socialization processes, and questions of impact or change following the introduction of new media forms" (pp. 7 8). They describe their research design for a study with both national (UK) and "a comparative international perspective," using both quantitative and qualitative methods" (pp. 7 24).

A panel with members from both the BBC and independent producers discussed "the future of production," with emphasis on funding, in Britain's mixed public/commercial television industry.

Other chapters address broadcasting as community service, the audience of the future, regulation of digital broadcasting, a panel discussion on the future of radio in the UK, recruitment of new broadcasting practitioners, TV and feminism, non formal radio campaigns, the impact of new technologies on newscasting, issues of consumer influence on television, policy affecting local broadcasting agenda setting, the effect of multi media technologies on citizenship and freedom, and, finally, a review of the presented papers by Manuel Alvarado, citing points of special significance.

Discussion after Alvarado's presentation noted a lack of communication between academics and broadcasters in Britain, in contrast to frequently close relations between U.S. university communication departments and local broadcasters — especially PBS, whose studios often are located on campuses.

An appendix contains a paper on "key issues" by Tony Lennon, President of the Broadcasting Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU), which outlines the union's views on "key issues" (pp. 165 168). The union is especially concerned with problems arising from the switchover from analogue to digital terrestrial broadcasting (DTB), and it advocates tight controls on cross media ownership and concentrations of media ownership, as well as expressing opposition "to the sell off, on any basis, of BBC Transmission" (pg. 168). The union also advocates the abolition of the Broadcasting Standards

Salwen, Michael B., and Don W. Stacks (eds.). *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996. Pp. xiii, 600. ISBN 0 8058 1630 5 (hb.) \$89.95; 0 8058 1631 3 (pb.) \$39.95.

"Integrated," in the title of this reader in both communication theory and communication research, emphasizes that the two should always be linked. The editors refer to the need for this linkage when they state the book's purpose in the first paragraph of their Preface: "Despite the obviousness of this statement, it comments on our field that a volume such as this that links communication theory and research in the same chapters is needed" (pg. xi).

They amplify this, saying,

Our purpose in editing this volume is to provide both seasoned scholars and beginning students unfamiliar with the state of theory and research in various areas of communication studies with a taste, a sampler if you will, of current theory *and* research in communication. (*ibid.*)

Each author, an expert in his or her field, was asked to present samples of research — published, unpublished, or hypothetical — to illustrate how theory and research can be integrated in their own field (*ibid.*).

Thirty four papers, by a total of fifty five authors all of whom are based in the United States, are grouped into five sections. Part I, "Studying 'Theory' — Doing 'Research'," contains four papers; Part II, "Mass Communication Approaches and Concerns," ten papers; Part III, "Human Communication Approaches and Concerns," ten papers; Part IV, "Integrated Approaches to Communication," eight papers; and Part V, "Future of Theory and Research in Communication," two papers.

The editors, Don W. Stacks and Michael B. Salwen, in Chapter One, "Integrating Theory and Research: Starting with Questions," further outline the deficiencies in the field that the book is designed to help correct. They note that graduate students forced to integrate theory and research on a topic in their dissertations "often find this task daunting — and sometimes irrelevant," and are inclined to revert to a "common sense" interpretation of the world and their disciplines. The authors wish to counter this tendency

by showing that accurate knowledge demands the use of the tools provided by good theory and research methodology (pp. 3 4). They also emphasize that careful attention to the questions being asked in a particular research project is necessary to fully evaluate that project and to locate it in its field: "...we believe that a basic understanding of the major questions being asked by communication researchers should provide the impetus to better understand where the communication discipline is and where it may be going" (pg. 13).

Subfields dealt with in the various chapters broadly represent most of those commonly considered to be "communication studies." They include mass media topics such as gate keeping, agenda setting, and advertising, as well as more "human" approaches, such as rhetoric, interpersonal and intrapersonal communication, and organizational communication.

Of special relevance for the theme of this issue of *Communication Research Trends*, "public opinion," is Chapter Eleven, "Spiral of Silence: Communication and Public Opinion as Social Control," by Charles T. Salmon and Carroll J. Glynn. They cite several authorities who have viewed public opinion as a kind of "unwritten law," or social control mechanism, but they concentrate on the ways this conceptualization is manifested in Elisabeth Noelle Neumann's model, the Spiral of Silence (pg. 166). Salmon and Glynn review some of Noelle Neumann's research and other studies that have used the model. They also cite studies which have questioned the model and raise the methodological questions, among others, "of whether the silencing phenomenon can be adequately observed and studied in cultures other than Germany" (pg. 172), and whether "Noelle Neumann overstated the ubiquity of conformity and majority influence," since about two thirds of the subjects in some research projects based on the Spiral of Silence model "in fact do not conform" (pg. 173).

The authors in Part IV are concerned with questions such as the false dichotomy of feedback versus lack of feedback, which are often used to distinguish interpersonal and mass communication, respectively. This falsity is becoming increasingly obvious in the new communications media and organizational structures (pg. 399). Other chapters in that section are concerned with diffusion of innovation, credibility, political communication, public relations, health communication, feminist approaches, and communication ethics.

— WEB

Tonna, Benjamin. *Sign Sense: Report on the*

Signs of the Times 1996. Floriana, Valetta, Malta: Discern Institute, 1996. Pp. vii, 203. ISBN 99909 2 008 7 (pb.). n.p.

This volume continues the annual "Signs of the Times" series, reporting on and evaluating each year's events in Maltese society chiefly from the perspective of cultural, moral and religious values. This 1996 report is concerned with the events of 1995. Tonna begins chapter one with a look backwards at the series and a comment about some innovations in the 1996 edition:

Signs of the times make sense when they help us take our bearings on our journey through history. They are the signposts on our way through life.

At *Discern* we try to capture them by following events that touch the daily lives of our people.

Our enterprise began to make sense when we identified the first batch of signs. That was in 1992, when we followed the passage of the people of Malta through the Twentieth Century and shared our discoveries in our first annual report. Later we narrowed the scope of our inquiry to one year and published two other reports on our findings.

The present report is different because it explores new paths to arrive at the signposts. It is the result of a discernment exercise on the uses people made (or did not make) of our reports. It attempts to narrow the gap between what the reports offered and what readers made of them. (pg. 3)

Previous reports were more quantitative in their content, while this analysis of 1995 shifts to a more qualitative outlook; although chapter two continues the quantitative methodology of the earlier reports to ensure continuity with them. Events of 1995, as reported in a major Maltese newspaper, are categorized

according to season, cultural framework, topic and value and compared with previous years to discover trends. For example, a decline in tourism and refugee influx led to reduced concern about adverse effects on the quality of local life from those sources. At the same time, individualism and consumerism showed signs of increasing and employment moved in the direction of service industries. Nevertheless, people "were concerned that economic growth was usurping the place of the common good as the first priority of their government"; and while they welcomed the welfare state and participated more intensively in local and international politics they had increasing misgivings about rising taxes and increased government control over various aspects of their lives (pp. 31 33). Traditional solidarities, based on family and school, were loosening, achieved status was gradually replacing ascribed status, and increasing interest in the media, arts, and religion was noted (pg. 34). In general, the people of Malta were sharing in the general thrust of globalization, individualization and commercialization common to the rest of Western Europe (pg. 35).

Subsequent chapters are devoted to methodological changes in the way *Discern's* studies are conducted, and to case studies of a new marriage law, labor justice questions regarding the Maltese Drydocks, documents issued by political parties in a generally calm political year, a study of the social and religious implications of a census of Sunday Mass attendance, and a chapter summing up, from a religious as well as a socio logical point of view, all the "signs" the study had revealed. Appendices define 125 value terms (pp. 183 196) used in the text, according to the list proposed by Brian Hall (*Values Shift*. Rockport, 1994), Hall's "values map" (pp. 197 199), and a "values map" based on Gospel values (pp. 201 203).

— WEB