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Fourth Ouarter 2012

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# WAPOR Freedom to Publish Opinion Polls

Contributed by Robert Chung, HKUPOP and Liaison

The World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) and the Public Opinion Programme at The University of Hong Kong (HKUPOP) have released the results of the fifth worldwide study on the Freedom to Publish Opinion Poll Results. WAPOR has carried out cross-national studies of the freedom to publish poll results in 1984, 1992, 1996, 2002, and now in 2012. A record number of 85 different countries or regions participated in this year's study, up from 49 in 1984, 57 in 1992, 78 in 1996 and 66 in 2002. This is WAPOR's first collaboration with HKUPOP on the study.

While more and more countries are conducting surveys in general and preelection and exit polls in particular, major governmental impediments to the free flow of public opinion surveys remain common. For example in 2012, 46% of countries had blackout periods during which pre-election poll results could not be published, and there has been no overall improvement in the freedom to publish pre-election polls in the last decade. Additionally the

study found that among the 38 countries/regions that impose an embargo on publishing poll results before an election, a large majority enforce those restrictions through government agencies or election administration offices (87%) followed by independent agencies (5%) and broadcast/press regulatory agencies (3%).

As in previous studies, the main goals of the 2012 update were to assess:

- -Poll embargos prior to elections,
- -Restrictions for conducting and publishing exit polls,
- -Awareness and conformity to industry codes or guidelines,
- -Evaluation of overall poll quality and problems conducting polls.

(Freedom continued on page 7)

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66th Annual Conference May 14-16, 2013 Boston, MA, USA

# Letter from the President

There's an alleged Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times." These are certainly "interesting times" for survey research with both challenges and opportunities multiplying. Among the challenges are the decline in response rates in most countries, the difficulty of modifying traditional RDD, landline surveys to fully and accurately incorporate mobile phones, attacks by repressive governments, and attempts to supplant survey data with "big data" from Internet mining, administrative records, and other sources.



Tom W. Smith

Among the opportunities are the spread of survey research to more countries President and the inclusion of more societies in comparative studies like the Gallup World Poll, International Social Survey Program, the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, and various regional barometers; the augmenting of individual-level survey data with contextual data (e.a. for neighborhood and communities) from censuses and other geo-coded sources; and the promotion data quality and improved methodology through international guidelines and standards.

WAPOR seeks to fend off the threats. First, in <u>International Journal of Public Opinion Research</u> (IJPOR) articles, presentations at the annual conference and regional seminars, and collaborations with both ESOMAR and the American Association for Public Opinion Research, WAPOR is tackling the problems of declining response rates and the other components of total survey error. Second, WAPOR is encouraging research to optimize dual-sample designs using both landlines and mobiles. Third, WAPOR's new "Freedom to Public Poll Results" report documents some of the restrictions that governments impose on surveys and WAPOR has specifically helped to oppose political restriction on survey research in such countries as Mexico, Peru, and Ukraine. Fourth, as I argue in a forthcoming IJPOR article, "Survey Research Paradiams Old and New," data mining of the Internet and administrative records can be used on their own for some purposes, combined with survey data for other purposes, and are not useful compared to surveys for many other uses. Finally, WAPOR of course deals with many other challenges in a variety of ways.

WAPOR also seeks to seize the opportunities. First, WAPOR has encouraged the spread of survey research in general and of comparative research in particular. It has organized special sessions at its conferences and seminars by cross-national projects, has established its first regional chapter (LatinoWAPOR), and has reached out beyond Europe and North America with its first annual conference in Hong Kong in 2012. Second, WAPOR has promoted using multi-level, multi-source data in survey research by publishing in IJPOR in 2011 the report of the International Workshop on Using Multi-level Data from Sample Frames, Auxiliary Databases, Paradata and Related Sources to Detect and Adjust for Nonresponse Bias in Surveys. Third, WAPOR has encouraged improved standards by participating since 2004 with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) on "ISO 20252: Market, opinion and social research – Vocabulary and service requirements" and by collaborating with ESOMAR on guidelines on exit polls, cell/mobile surveys, and other matters. Finally, WAPOR continues to advance survey research around the globe through various other efforts and initiatives.

So through these interesting and challenging times, WAPOR strives to defend and advance the field of survey research.

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## U.S. Elections-2012

By Jennifer Agiesta and Trevor Tompson

News coverage of this year's United States presidential election featured a heavy focus on polling, with the nation's statistical gurus earning praise in the end for pegging President Barack Obama as the winner.

Obama won the election, held Nov. 6, with 51 percent of the vote nationally to Republican challenger Mitt Romney's 47 percent. Most polling showed the race even closer than that or even nationally, though the polls that did indicate a leader generally tilted in Obama's direction. While almost no polling pegged the exact result of the election, most final weekend polls were close to those results.

The strength of the pollsters' performances enabled the emergence of a new class of number-crunchers: The aggregators. These data analysts \_ including Nate Silver blogging for the New York Times, Mark Blumenthal and Simon Jackman with the Huffington Post, Nate Cohn of The New Republic, and others \_ used publicly available polling to compute weighted averages that they suggested better reflected the state of the race than did any one individual poll. Some, like Silver, also calculated the probability of particular electoral outcomes.

Silver's calculations, which gave Obama heavy odds of winning the presidency even as national polls showed a nearly-tied race, prompted howls of disapproval from Republican campaign operatives, but ultimately proved to correctly predict the winner in each state, except in Florida where his model found the race too close to predict a winner.

But pollsters' time in the spotlight was not all rosy. Over the course of the campaign, controversies bubbled around campaign polling, with criticisms of sampling and weighting techniques flying.

Even before lowa's Republican caucusgoers showed up on January 3, criticism of pollsters began. Those attempting to assess public opinion on political issues facing the country as a whole drew criticism from some corners for not limiting their samples to likely voters. And those trying to poll Republican primary voters found their likely voter models held up to sharp scrutiny.

In the fall, many pollsters came under criticism for the party identification makeup of their polling. Some Republican pollsters claimed that media and other pollsters were releasing polls composed of an unrealistic mix of partisans, projecting an electorate that looked too much like 2008 and not enough like 2010. Even those pollsters who typically eschew weighting by party faced questions.

One such critic went so far as to re-adjust public polling to the "correct" party ID, labeling those re-weighted results as "Unskewed Polls."

Likely voter models and sampling methods made frequent appearances as points of scrutiny for many pollsters, with those on the Democratic side claiming pollsters put too much emphasis on attention to politics in their likely voter screens, thereby unfairly excluding some younger and minority voters who would ultimately turn out to cast a ballot. And the debate over whether listed samples offered a better representation of voters than randomly selected samples raged anew.

The partisan pollsters on the Democratic side turned out to have a better night than the Republicans, come Election Day, as GOP models of the electorate's composition wound up not to match the portrait of the electorate that emerged from exit polls nationally and in the battleground states.

Some pollsters did their own lashing out, at the aggregators like Silver, Jackman and others, complaining that their work reaped

(Election continued on page 10)

#### Mexico Country Report

# Does Polling Need More Regulation?

Contributed by Alejandro Moreno and Pablo Parás

Mexican legislators, election administrators, polling professionals, and several curious observers have recently asked this question: Do election polls need more regulation to perform more effectively?

After the presidential election of July 2012, in which the majority of reputable polling organizations had foreseen a much wider margin of victory to what it ultimately was, legislators from left and right introduced different proposals in both chambers of Congress to modify the current regulations on polling. One of the main assumptions underlying the proposals was that several polls had been manipulated and used as propaganda in favor of a candidate.

The measures proposed go from a total ban to publication of poll results during the entire period of campaigns (the current regulation establishes a ban of three days prior to the elections and until the last polling booths close on Election Day), to a more complex structure of requirements to the polling profession (the current regulation already requires the delivery of full methodological reports to the election authorities, including the datasets).

As part of its mission to contribute to a better understanding of polls and to defend the right to conduct and publish opinion polls worldwide, WAPOR has taken action in this ongoing debate in Mexico. The first action was to create a special committee to review the regulation proposals and formulate a statement for the Association. The committee members included Claire Durand, Alejandro Moreno, Anne Niedermann, Pablo Parás, and Michael Traugott, and the statement was published on a press release on 13 November 2012, which is available at the WAPOR website.

(Mexico continued on page 9)

JOIN US AT DUR SETH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Revolutions in the Measurement
of World Public Opinion
14-16 May 2013

Boston, MA, USA

A joint meeting with the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)

The World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) will hold its 66 <sup>th</sup> annual conference on **May 14-16**, **2013 in Boston**, **Massachusetts**, **USA**. The conference space will be located on the campus of Boston University.

Notice of paper decisions will be available at the end of January. In the meantime, please visit the <u>WAPOR</u> website for more information about the conference including information on hotels in the area. Registration information will be available soon. Please check the website for more information.

Fully completed papers that follow the APA guidelines will be due on May 1, 2013.

#### **Deadlines**

Paper Submission: November 12, 2012
Paper Decisions: January 31, 2013

Papers Due: May 1, 2013

#### **Contact Information**

Conference Co-chairs: Michael Elasmar (Elasmar@bu.edu) James Shanahan (Shanhan@bu.edu)

### **Dinerman Award Nominations**

The Helen Dinerman Award is presented annually in memory of Helen Dinerman's scientific achievements over three decades of public opinion research. The award, given since 1981, honors particularly significant contributions to survey research methodology. It will be awarded at WAPOR's annual conference in Boston May 14-16, 2013. Please send your nominations for the Dinerman Award to me by **February 6**th.

Tom W. Smith WAPOR Past President and Chair of WAPOR Awards Committee smitht@norc.uchicago.edu

## Janet A. Harkness Student Paper Award Fund

<u>WAPOR</u> and <u>AAPOR</u> will award the first annual Janet A. Harkness Student Paper Award in 2013. This award is given in memory of Dr. Harkness, internationally recognized for her contributions to cross-cultural survey methodology, who passed away earlier this year. The award is open both to current students (graduate or undergraduate) and to those who graduate during calendar year 2012. The award is the first ever joint WAPOR/AAPOR award, and the details for the award are available on both the WAPOR and AAPOR websites.

We encourage you or your organization to make a contribution to the Janet A. Harkness Student Paper Award Fund. Your entire contribution will be dedicated to the award fund and to recognizing emerging young scholars in the study of multi-national/multi-cultural/multi-lingual survey research (aka 3M survey research) through support of the winner's participation in the WAPOR/AAPOR Conference and a cash prize. WAPOR will provide the support associated with administering the award.

We hope that you will consider contributing to the Janet A. Harkness Award Fund, and to the future of 3M survey research. Please see the website for three easy ways to contribute.

### http://wapor.unl.edu/janet-a-harkness-student-paper-award/

The Call for Papers can be foundhere.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ms. Renae Reis at the WAPOR Secretariat (<u>renae@wapor.org</u>).

Janet A. Harkness Student Paper Award Committee

Allan McCutcheon, Chair (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)
Ashley Bowers (Indiana University)
Timothy Johnson (University of Illinois at Chicago)
Kristen Olson (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)
Beth-Ellen Pennell (University of Michigan)
Evi Scholz (GESIS – Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften)

## Public Diplomacy, International Broadcasting, and Public Opinion: New Media, New Tools, New Challenges

A Pre-Conference to the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) Annual Conference

Tuesday - May 14, 2013 Boston, Massachusetts

Over the last decade, mobile and internet usage has skyrocketed; global news channels have moved to the fore; and the events of the Arab Spring, the Green Revolution in Iran, the Global Occupy Movement, as well as many others have brought into question traditional ideas about the relationship between information flows and public opinion formation. These events suggest that a re-examination of the relationship between public diplomacy, international broadcasting, and public opinion is sorely needed. The idea is that, if mutually positive presentation of information occurs among well-intended countries, governments, NGOs, and other members of civil society, then the people of these countries would be less likely to support violent ways for managing any conflicts that might spontaneously emerge among their governments. New technologies and new information flows raise challenges for collecting accurate public opinion data relevant to the practice of international outreach at the same time that they provide new channels for international communication and for data collection about the successes and failures of that communication.

Bringing together academics, data collection experts, and public diplomacy and international broadcasting practitioners, this one-day pre-conference will explore these challenges in detail.

This preconference is designed as a meeting place for academics, polling professionals, and public diplomacy and international broadcasting practitioners to share their perspectives, formulate new ideas, and identify areas where further research is needed. While the preconference will incorporate various speakers and panels, it is designed as a continuing conversation in which all participants are encouraged to openly engage in dialogue and explore potential synergies and future collaborations.

More details about this preconference will be posted on the WAPOR website and WAPOR listsery soon.

#### Preconference Organizers:

Michael G. Elasmar, Ph.D. Associate Professor and Director Communication Research Center Boston University Amelia H. Arsenault, Ph.D. Assistant Professor Department of Communication Georgia State University (Freedom continued from page 1)

As stated in the constitution of WAPOR, "Public opinion is a critical force in shaping and transforming society. Properly conducted and disseminated survey research provides the public with a tool to measure opinions and attitudes in order to allow its voices to be heard." In light of this, WAPOR promotes the right to conduct and publish polls in each country around the world. The worldwide study is an important effort by WAPOR to keep the research industry and the public aware of restrictions that may impact access to this critical tool. As the world evolves, the task of safeguarding the freedom to publish opinion polls will remain as important as the development of codes of ethics and professional standards. With the knowledge gained through the study, WAPOR will continue working to expand the rights of researchers around the world to conduct surveys and to freely publicize their results.

Information on the findings can be found in the full report on our website: http://wapor.unl.edu/freedom/

WAPOR would like to express our gratitude to Robert Chung and the Public Opinion Programme at The University of Hong Kong for undertaking the study.

### **Polls Forward!**

Tom W. Smith

On October 24, 2012, WAPOR issued a statement about a challenge to polling in Ukraine that read in part...

"In the run-up to the Ukrainian Parliamentary elections on 28 October 2012, the political party "Ukraine – Forward!" has claimed that the results of a pre-election poll were deliberately distorted to reduce the share of the vote intention for that party. The poll was carried out by two reputable polling organizations, Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) and the Democratic Initiatives Foundation (DIF). KIIS is a member of ESOMAR. The poll results were in line with the trend in polls over the past couple of months, which have shown a gradual decline in support for "Ukraine – Forward!".

"Ukraine – Forward!" has now initiated a court case against the pollsters, asking the court to demand that the pollsters retract the poll findings, and declare that they were false. The case is to be heard on 25 October, just three days before the elections.

WAPOR is deeply concerned by these developments. Pre-election polls play an important role in democratic societies. The regular publication of reputable polls, and vigorous debate about the findings, are an integral part of a functional democracy. Bona fide pollsters should be free to publish their findings and the media should be free to report and discuss them. For this reason, WAPOR also encourages that the publication of polls meets minimal requirements of disclosure to the public. See the Rules of Practice Regarding Reports and Study Results in WAPOR's Code of Ethics at:

http://wapor.unl.edu/wapor-code-of-ethics/

We wish to express our solidarity with KIIS and DIF. We hope the Court recognizes the value of conducting and publishing poll results and takes no action to suppress polling in Ukraine."

We are pleased to announce that after several court continuances that Natalia Yuriivna Korolevska, the leader of the Ukraine – Forward! party, in late November decided to drop the case and indicated that she was misguided to have initiated it. In the election results and exit polls of KIIS, Ukraine – Forward! received less that 2% of the total vote. The KIIS pre-election poll that had been challenged by Korolevska had also put the party at less than 2%, while she had claimed that her true support was between 6-7%.

# East Asian Social Survey Meets in Xi'an

contributed by Jibum Kim, NORC

The East Asian Social Survey (EASS) held a general meeting in Xi'an, China, from November 15 to November 18, 2012. Located in the first capital city of China, which has the magnificent terracotta armies and horses, Xi'an jiaotong University (Yanjie Bian, Dean, School of Humanities and Social Science) graciously hosted the meeting. The EASS consists of China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. It has done the US General Social Survey type survey (Chinese General Social Survey, National Survey Research Center at the Renmin University of China, PI: Li Lulu; Japanese General Social Survey, JGSS Research Center at Osaka University of Commerce, PI: Noriko Iwai; Survey Research Center at Sungkyunkwan University, PI: Sang-Wook Kim; and Taiwan Social Change Survey, Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, PI: Ying-Hwa Chang).

Sixteen investigators (Yanjie Bian, Weidong Wang, Zhao Zhong, Xiaowen Zhu, Yixuan Wang, Chuntian Lu, Vivian Wang, Noriko Iwai, Takayuki Sasaki, Sang-Wook Kim, Jibum Kim, Seung-Bae Shin, Ying-Hwa Chang, Chinfen Chang, Zongrong Lee, Chiuling Chen) from these countries participated in the meeting to discuss the 2014 EASS module, Work Life. This module is the 5th module of the EASS, following the Family in 2006, Culture and Globalization in 2008, Health and Society in 2010, Network and Social Capital in 2012.

The meeting ended with plans to participate in the 2013 INSNA (http://www.insna.org/) in Xi'an, China, the EASS session at 2014 ISA (http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2014/) in Yokohama, Japan, and the next EASS draft meeting in Seoul, Korea.

For more information about the EASS, please see http://www.eassda.org.



Front to Back, Left to Right: Chinfen Chang, Sang-Wook Kim, Yanjie Bian, Ying-Hwa Chang, Noriko Iwai, Yue Wang, Yixuan Wang, Seung-Bae Shin, Takayuki Sasaki, Chiuling Chen, Zongrong Lee, Jibum Kim, Li Liming

(Mexico continued from page 4)

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A second action was to join Mexico's Federal Elections Institute, IFE, in the organization of a Seminar on election polls, which took place in Mexico City on 22-23 November 2012. Panels included journalists, election administrators, academics, legislators from different political parties, and members of the polling community. The main topics were whether the election polls' met the legal requirements in 2012, why the polls "go wrong", how their results are disseminated and discussed by the media, how polls are used by political parties and candidates, to what extent poll results influence voters, and what polling regulations

are necessary (if any).



Of particular interest were the views of legislators and political party representatives, which made it clear that the regulation proposals in Congress are controversial even within the parties that took the initiative to introduce them.

The IFE Seminar will derive on a document that summarizes the different views and conclusions and that serves Mexican representatives in Congress as a reference for further discussion.

The discussion may include specific topics such as how to make poll sponsorship more transparent, how to distinguish between independent media polls and

published partisan polls, how to evaluate the performance of polls and their accuracy, what needs to be regulated and what does not, and whether it is better to restrict more or to regulate less. Whatever direction the discussion takes, two general agreements were evident in the Seminar: one, that there is a credibility crisis of election polls in Mexico after the 2012 experience; and two, that polls have an important role to play in democratic elections. The question remains: Is more regulation necessary to help them fulfill that role?

Above photo, from left to right:

Pablo Parás (WAPOR national representative in Mexico), Ulises Beltrán (BGC Beltrán y Asociados), Hugo Venancio Castillo (Rafael Preciado Foundation, National Action Party, PAN), Héctor Muñiz Baeza (representative of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI), and congressman Guadalupe Acosta Naranjo (representative of the Party of Democratic Revolution, PRD).

(Election continued from page 3)

profits without contributing to the costs of gathering data. And critics argue the aggregators feed and promote the political junkie's obsession with the horse race at the expense of more thoughtful analysis. Some warned that the increasing attention paid to poll aggregators could lead some pollsters to exit the business, since there was little payoff in simply feeding an aggregation machine.

But the success of the aggregators depends on the success of pollsters. Chris Cillizza, the influential political blogger for the Washington Post, deemed polling one of electionnight's big winners, including both the neutral media pollsters and the strategists who used data to drive Obama's successful reelection.

And as Mark Blumenthal pointed out on his polling blog, "reason, data and, yes... the science of modern survey research," won a big victory this Election Day.

## WAPOR Elections Complete

The WAPOR election concluded on November 26. Voting was done online for the third consecutive year and participation continues to improve. The final totals indicate that 25.83% of eligible voters took the time to make their choices for Vice President/President-Elect and Chair of the Professional Standards Committee.

Patricia Moy (University of Washington, USA) was elected to the six-year term as Vice President-President Elect/President/Past President and Anne Niedermann (Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, Germany) was reelected as Standards Chair.

The official announcement is posted at: http://wapor.unl.edu/elections/

## Calendar

### 2013

#### February 6, 2013

Deadline for Dinerman Award Nominations See page 4

May 14, 2013

WAPOR Pre-Conference (Boston) See page 7

May 14-16, 2013

Annual Conference Boston, MA, USA See the website for the latest information

- •Do you have an idea for an article in the newsletter?
- •Is there an event happening in your part of the world?
- •Are you intersted in organizing a conference?
- •Do you have photos you'd like to contribute?
- •Do you have ideas on how to improve the website or newsletter?

If so, please contact the WAPOR office by sending an email to renae@wapor.org or to Trevor Tompson (Publications Chair) at tompson-trevor@norc.org.

Let us know your upcoming events.

Please note, the deadline date for the 1st quarter newsletter is March 15, 2013

The WAPOR Newsletter is published by the World Association for Public Opinion Research Please contact:

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