Survey Researchers Meet in Queretaro, Mexico

Contributed by Pablo Parás (Conference Co-Chair), Rodolfo Sarsfield (Conference Co-Chair), and Alejandro Moreno (Publications Chair)

The Third Latin American WAPOR Congress took place in the colonial city of Santiago de Queretaro, Mexico, on April 15-17. The final program included 114 papers and presentations distributed in one-and-a-half-day conference. The event had 123 registered participants, including 30 WAPOR members and 40 new additional members to our association! Participants were mostly but not exclusively from Latin America. We also had some members attending from the United States, Poland, Spain, and India… oh, yes, and Germany, as WAPOR President Thomas Petersen made the trip to this beautiful Mexican site. (He unfortunately was stranded in Mexico, as the volcano in Iceland closed the European airports for a few days, but rumors are that he had a nice forced holiday!).

The congress’ title, “Democracy, the Rule of Law, and Social Identities in Latin America”, covered different topics that are of particular relevance to Latin American societies, such as the quality of democracy, laws and institutions, and, of course, the bicentennial celebration of independence in various countries, including Mexico. The WAPOR President, representatives of the state government, the Federal Elections Institute, and the authorities of the State University of Queretaro (UAQ) participated in the opening ceremony. We were fortunate to have several sponsors for the event, including several polling firms, a market research association, a university, and the local government. The host institutions included ITAM (Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico), CIDE (Center for Economic Teaching and Research), UAQ, and Data OPM. Organizationally and financially, the event was a success. By the way, papers and presentations can be accessed at the conference web site, stayed tuned.

For the first time in a Latin American congress, awards were presented. The first Edgardo Catterberg award for best paper was given to Helcimara De Souza Telles and Tiago Prata (Conference continued on page 8)
Letter from the President

You can tell that a scientific discipline is getting on in years when the lineup of its founders starts to thin out. On March 25, 2010, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, the pioneer of public opinion research and empirical communication studies in Germany, the president of WAPOR from 1979-80, and—together with Seymour Martin Lipset and Robert Worcester—co-founder and co-editor of the International Journal of Public Opinion Research, passed away at the age of 93.

For me personally, having studied and worked with Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann as her research assistant for many years, her passing was a terrible blow—but it was hardly a less momentous loss for WAPOR. In the late 1970s, when WAPOR was on the brink of disbanding, it was Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann who used her boundless energy to breathe new life into the organization. Seymour Martin Lipset, Warren Mitofsky, and earlier this year Herta Herzog, who collaborated with Paul Lazarsfeld on their ground-breaking radio research studies in the 1940s: the list of deceased pioneers is growing. Gradually, we are being forced to say our thankful good-byes to the “grand old buffaloes” of survey research—as Wolfgang Donsbach once somewhat casually called them—whose presence made WAPOR so unique. It will not be easy for us to follow in their footsteps.

Nevertheless, there are several good reasons to be optimistic when it comes to the rest of the year 2010. First and foremost, I am thinking of our annual conference which was held in Chicago from May 11 – 13. We returned to a location that has been, and continues to be, so important for the development of our field. Aside from Columbia University in New York and the University of Michigan, there is probably no other institution—in the United States at least—that has had such a decisive influence on our field as the University of Chicago, where, to name just one name, Hans Zeisel taught from 1953 to 1992. I think it is especially fitting that WAPOR held this year’s conference on the “home turf” of Tom Smith, our current vice-president and president-elect, thus symbolically coming to “take him under our wing” before he officially assumes office at the start of the year 2011.

Internationally, there is probably only one other university that can be included in the ranks of the universities cited above: i.e. the University of Vienna, where Paul Lazarsfeld, Marie Jahoda and Hans Zeisel completed their pioneering studies in the 1920s and 1930s before emigrating to the United States. From July 1-3 of this year, we are going to gather in Vienna for a thematic seminar on “The Early Years of Survey Research and Their Importance Today,” which we are organizing together with the Universities of Vienna and Prague. You will find a registration form for the seminar on page 11 of this newsletter. Happily, this event has sparked considerable interest and we will be treated to many highly intriguing papers and presentations, including a special panel focusing on the Gallup Organization’s 75th anniversary. The panel session, which will have an array of top-notch participants, will give us a good opportunity to remember the achievements of the “grand old buffaloes.”

Best Regards,

Thomas Petersen

President
Conferences of Other Associations

2010

June 22-26, 2010:
60th Annual Conference
International Communication Association (ICA)
Singapore
http://www.icaahdq.org/conferences/index.asp

July 11-17, 2010:
17th World Congress of Sociology
International Sociological Association (ISA)
Gothenburg, Sweden
http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2010/

September 12-15, 2010
ESOMAR Congress
Odyssey 2010
Athens, Greece
http://www.esomar.org/index.php/events-congress-2010-overview.html

November 19-20, 2010
Midwest Association for Public Opinion Research
Consensus, Contrariness and Compromise in Public Opinion
Chicago, Illinois, USA

2011

February 16-19, 2011
International Political Science Association (IPSA) &
European Consortium of Political Research (ECPR)
Whatever Happened to North-South?
Sao Paulo, Brazil
http://saopaulo2011.ipsa.org/

July 18-22, 2011
European Survey Research Association (ESRA)
Lausanne, Switzerland
http://surveymethodology.eu/conferences/

WAPOR Press Release:

Proposed Right of Observation in Peru Hampers the Freedom to Conduct Opinion Polls

LINCOLN (Nebraska, USA). March 18, 2010. The World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) has learned that the Peruvian Congress is discussing a bill that proposes changes to regulations on election polling (“Proyecto de Ley 3781 / 2009 – CR”). One of these changes would establish the right of observation (“derecho de veeduría”) by third parties that are not directly related to the commercial relationship between researchers and their sponsors. This legal disposition, if approved, would grant political actors and others involved in the contents of a poll the right to exercise direct observation of the researchers’ work, including their methodology, questionnaires, fieldwork, data processing, and results. The other proposed change increases an existing list of requirements for minimal disclosure in the publication of poll results by adding the sponsor of the poll and the cost of the study.

WAPOR encourages the disclosure of those methodological and organizational aspects of a public poll that are fundamental for the ethical and solid practice of the polling profession. For example, establishing the sponsor’s name as a requirement for minimal disclosure of polls is in full agreement with WAPOR principles stated in the Association’s Code of Professional Ethics and Practices.

However, WAPOR finds that some of the proposed changes in Peruvian laws and regulations violate the Association’s principles, particularly the freedom to conduct polls and publish their results. The “derecho de veeduría,” vaguely described in the proposed law, presents both researchers and sponsors with a potentially high number of practical, methodological, and commercial problems. In practice, no organization can seriously carry out its work with third-party observers involved in the conduct of such work. Moreover, the right to directly observe an interview by third parties conflicts with the principle of anonymity that generally characterizes survey research. Thus the methodological and ethical issues involved in this proposal interfere with the best possible environment for conducting valid and reliable interviews, as well as the guarantee of anonymous and confidential responses.

Please let us know about your organization’s upcoming event(s).
We would be happy to publish them in upcoming issues of the newsletter.

Thank you!

(continued on page 7)
A Whirlwind
by Thomas Petersen, WAPOR President

One Tuesday morning 15 years ago, I unsuspectingly arrived at work at the Allensbach Institute, only to find a great commotion. Secretaries, the chief of operations, the women who run the switchboard—they all were running about like scared chickens looking for me. Where’s Thomas Petersen? Where’s Thomas Petersen? Confused, I took the telephone receiver someone had pressed in my hand. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann barked at me all the way from Salt Lake City: “Why aren’t you in America? Pack your bags! Your ticket is waiting for you; the hotel is all booked up, but that doesn’t matter, we’ll work it out. The conference starts tomorrow.” Why wasn’t I in America? Because I, as a new staff member at the Allensbach Institute, fresh out of the university, would never have dared to travel to America to attend the WAPOR annual conference without being asked first. Who would dream of just curtly telling his or her employer to spend a few thousand dollars so that he or she—a newcomer to the workforce still wet behind the ears—can travel around the world to attend a conference? And who would travel halfway around the world without knowing where he or she is going to find a place to stay? For Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, however, this sort of thing was par for the course. We never spoke about it, but I am sure she would have been unable to understand my qualms at all. The next day, when I arrived somewhat perplexed and bleary-eyed in Salt Lake City (having spent the whole night looking for my passport, which I had misplaced), she came down to meet me in the lobby of the conference hotel with a triumphant smile: “And here is the key to your room!” She had repeatedly pestered the management of the hopelessly overbooked hotel until they finally relinquished the last spare room just so she would leave them alone.

Everyone who worked together more closely with Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann probably can tell a number of stories like this. Her strong-mindedness, energy, and dazzling creativity were hard to resist. It was difficult to contradict her: not because she would not have tolerated any contradiction—in fact, she took such contradictions quite seriously—but because she simply steamrolled you.

Her entire life story is marked by countless incidents demonstrating this unbridled energy. As a ten-year-old, she announced to her parents that she was going to be a journalist—and she became a journalist. As a twenty-year-old university freshman, she decided on practically the first day at the university that she was going to spend a year abroad. At the office responsible for organizing student exchanges, the amused officials informed her that there were a total of six openings for thousands of applicants. She did not let that bother her. Subsequently, she did in fact receive a scholarship for a year abroad at the School of Journalism in Columbia, Missouri, where she first encountered the Gallup method and thus the main focus of her life. After returning to Germany, she brusquely informed her professor, Emil Dovifat, the renowned newspaper researcher who was supervising her dissertation in Berlin, that she was ditching the topic he had suggested for her dissertation and was instead going to write about the fascinating new method of mass surveys being employed in the United... (continued on page 5)
States. She did not give Dovifat any chance to contradict her. In combination with this seemingly limitless energy, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann was also characterized throughout her entire life by a peculiar naivété, which probably made it easier for her to make far-reaching decisions very quickly and light-heartedly and ultimately to achieve so much in life.

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s scholarly achievements can hardly be overestimated. Brian Gosschalk, past president of WAPOR, was probably not exaggerating when he remarked, on hearing the news of her death, that she was a “giant of the research world.” To mark its 50th anniversary in 1997, AAPOR compiled a list of the 50 best books on public opinion research written in the prior 50 years: the only book on the list that was not written in America was Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s main work, *The Spiral of Silence*. In Germany, she not only helped to introduce the representative survey method, but also single-handedly committed herself to establishing the field of modern empirical communication research via the foundation of the Institut für Publizistik at the University of Mainz in the 1960s. She also made major contributions in the areas of questionnaire design, field experiment methodology and election forecasting.

Of course, a person with such a powerful personal presence and clearly superior intellect will not only attract admirers, but also any number of enemies. The first attempts to defame her for allegedly being a Nazi were already made during her stay as an exchange student in Columbia, Missouri—and such attempts were repeated with reliable regularity up to the 1990s. Although her accusers in the United States did succeed, for a while at least, in damaging her reputation, corresponding attempts in Germany remained half-hearted and unsuccessful. Even her enemies found them to be too implausible. In Germany, therefore, the attacks were mainly aimed at the integrity of the Allensbach Institute, which was accused of manipulating its findings on behalf of the Christian Democratic Party and its leader, Helmut Kohl, who was one of Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s personal friends. Moreover, in the mid-1970s, she incurred the wrath of the powerful public television broadcasters in Germany when she demonstrated, based on a combination of survey findings and media content analyses, how the media influences the formation of political opinions, thus leading her to support the introduction of commercially operated television channels. From that moment onwards, she became a persona non grata throughout large swaths of the opinion-setting German media.

In all likelihood, however, the gravest attacks came over the course of several years in the early 1970s, when her opponents tried to drive her from her chair at the University of Mainz using organized psychological terror. She was profoundly effected by these attacks and was much more deeply injured than she let on in public. But Noelle-Neumann would not have been Noelle-Neumann had she not put these experiences to constructive use. Presumably, the spiral of silence theory would hardly have come into being had it not been for her traumatic experiences during the time of the student uprisings. The pressure of isolation and the fear of isolation, the fearful tendency to remain silent in view of the prevailing climate of opinion, the pillory, fearfully observing one’s environment—she keenly experienced all of these things over the course of these years. In the end, this is probably one of the theory’s great strengths: it is not simply the product of some intellectual exercises far removed from reality, but instead describes her own experiences in life. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann knew what she was talking about.
About ten years after my hasty trip to Salt Lake City, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann gradually began to feel the ravages of age. You could sense that her seemingly boundless energy was beginning to wane. She decided to pay a visit to the publisher of *The Spiral of Silence* in Munich and asked me to accompany her. She would not tell me why she wanted me to come along. In the publisher’s office, she smiled and announced: “You know, Mr. Fleissner, I am not going to live much longer. So, I am now going to tell Mr. Petersen my life story, he’ll write it down, and you will publish the book.” The publisher and I were flabbergasted. Could we object? Of course not. And that is how she got her way and achieved what she wanted. Almost to the very end.

Today, we can only look back in gratitude and pay our respects to the whirlwind that was Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. The world is a poorer place without her—and even worse: it is more boring.
Remembering Herta Herzog
Contributed by Elihu Katz

Surfing the web for “Herta Herzog” (1910-2010), one is reminded, yet again, how dazzling was the group that coalesced around Paul Lazarsfeld first in Vienna (in the ‘20s) and next in New York (in the ‘40s). Ties—strong and weak—intersected to produce marriages (and separations), two pioneering institutes of social science, alliances with other groups of émigré intellectuals, and the American empire of empirical communications research.

Herta Herzog starred in all these. She was the queen of radio research, academic and commercial. At The University of Vienna, she completed a doctoral thesis on radio “voices” as part of what was probably the first-ever study of radio listening. She followed Lazarsfeld to New York in 1935 and soon became a partner to Hadley Cantril and Hazel Gaudet in their famous study of the virtual Invasion from Mars. She documented the institutional transition of radio from wartime to peace, and was a full partner in the celebrated series of audience studies of the Bureau of Applied Social Research. In the mid-‘40s, she left the Bureau to head the International and Radio divisions of McCann-Erickson, the worldwide advertising agency.

Even while the Bureau was finding its fame in Lazarsfeld’s studies of the role of the media in decision-making, Herzog chose to explore the motivations that attracted and maintained listener interest in the radio. Her studies of the audiences for soap operas and quiz programs established a parallel tradition of “gratifications” research that shifted attention to what is now called “reception,” that is, to the balance of power between media and audiences. Much later, she returned to this problem in her cross-cultural study of audience decodings of the nighttime soap, Dallas, in Germany and the United States. Much of this work was qualitative, and in the course of it, she refined methods of depth-interviewing, focus-group research, and content analysis—and imported Freudian perspectives into her thinking.

Herta Herzog returned to Middle Europe after a second marriage and years of retirement, still meditating, apparently—in her late studies of anti-Semitism and xenophobia in Austria—on how it all could have happened.

--Elihu Katz

(Author’s Note: Professor Elizabeth M. Perse has written beautifully of Herta Herzog in a brief biography (together with major bibliographical references) in Nancy D. Signorelli, ed., Women in Communication: A Biographical Source Book. I have drawn on this essay.)

(continued from page 3)

In addition, “derecho de veeduría” has a political component that could be very problematic. Since the right of observation would be granted mainly, if not exclusively, to political actors with a direct interest in the poll, it would limit researchers’ freedom to conduct and publish polls, and could hinder the establishment of commercial relationships between researchers and sponsors. Moreover, the requirement to disclose the cost of the study conflicts with Rule No. 11 in the WAPOR Code of Professional Ethics and Practices, regarding the responsibilities of researchers: “All information and material supplied by the sponsor for the research must remain confidential unless otherwise agreed between them”. The cost of the study may be part of this confidential information.

Public opinion polls are an important part of citizens’ information in a democracy and during election campaigns. WAPOR defends the freedom to conduct and publish public opinion polls and opposes attempts and actions that hinder this freedom. At the same time, WAPOR encourages good polling practices and promotes the ethical principles and norms that serve as the basis for high-quality survey research. WAPOR’s Executive Council believes that the proposed “derecho de veeduría” undermines the profession’s best practices and obstructs researcher-sponsor relations, potentially restricting the freedom and practice of conducting and publishing public opinion polls. WAPOR also is concerned that approval of these changes would set a precedent in Latin America that ultimately will increase restrictions in election-polling regulations.
Lopes Stomi for their article “Desvios e similitudes: Ideologias, atitudes e decisão de voto em eleitores de direita e de esquerda”. Miguel Basáñez, a former WAPOR President and a pioneer of polling in Mexico, received the second WAPOR-Mexico award for significant contribution to survey research in that country.

As Conference organizers, we are very grateful foremost to Latin American WAPOR members for the opportunity they gave the city of Queretaro to host this important event, to all committee members for their help in defining the conference program and other organizational details, and to several UAQ students who were always eager to make sure that everything was in place and functioning properly. This entire event was a very challenging but joyful experience that we shall treasure. Thank you all very much.

Now, we take the opportunity once again to pass the baton to our colleagues from Brazil, who will be in charge of organizing the Fourth Latin American WAPOR congress in Belo Horizonte. The best of success!
Almost a century has passed since the British statistician Arthur Bowley conducted the first survey in the social sciences that was based on a random sample or since pioneers like Max Weber and Adolf Levenstein organized the first scientifically designed mass surveys. 80 years have passed since the first study was conducted among radio listeners and it was more than 70 years ago that the first election forecasts by George Gallup, Elmo Roper and Archibald Crossley led to the breakthrough of the modern survey method. Yet even these events do not represent the very beginnings of our profession. The oldest questionnaire still in existence today, which can be viewed as the first known tool of opinion research—if we use the term a bit loosely—dates back to the year 811.

Despite this longstanding tradition, it sometimes seems as if public opinion research is only concerned with the present. The historical development of the field is hardly ever mentioned, neither at conferences nor in contemporary publications. Public opinion research is neglecting its past.

On the one hand, this is understandable, since a scientific field that deals with ascertaining the opinions of people today naturally tends to look more to the future than the past. At the same time, however, it means that we are failing to make use of a lot of important resources. This is probably why much of the methodological debate today bears a bit of resemblance to the movie “Groundhog Day,” in which the main character gets caught in a time loop and keeps on experiencing the same day over and over again. Instead of building on the insights gained by previous generations of researchers, we all too often find the same questions being posed again and again, the same debates being initiated as if from scratch—and often with no knowledge of what was already said or discovered about the issue in question 30, 50 or even 70 years ago.

The purpose of this thematical seminar, therefore, is to help shake our field out of its tendency towards historical amnesia. And what better place to do so than in Vienna, the city in which Paul Lazarsfeld, Marie Jahoda and Hans Zeisel completed their first trailblazing studies. It was here that they founded the “Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle,” it was here that they launched the first studies among listeners of the Austrian radio broadcasting company only a few years after it was founded—work that Lazarsfeld would continue with the “Office of Radio Research” after emigrating to America a few years later. And it was here, in the small town of Marienthal located not far from Vienna, that the first empirical study on the consequences of unemployment was conducted.

Together with the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Vienna and the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Charles University in Prague, we want to retrace the roots of our profession and explore the question of what they mean for survey research today.

Online registration, program and travel information can be found on the conference website:

http://www.univie.ac.at/publizistik/wapor2010/index.html

We are pleased to offer online registration for this event. If you are unable to register online, please use the form on the following page.
Calendar

May 31–June 1, 2010
WAPOR office closed for U.S. holiday

June 15, 2010
Newsletter content deadline

July 1, 2010
Launch of new WAPOR website

July 1-3, 2010
WAPOR Thematical Seminar
The Early Days of Survey Research and Their Importance Today
Vienna, Austria

Notes

• If you have moved or changed jobs recently, please check our online membership directory (http://www.unl.edu/wapor/membership_directory.html) to be sure we have your up-to-date information. If not, please send a message to renae@wapor.org to update the directory.

Thank you!

WAPOR Dues

Final WAPOR dues will be e-mailed the early part of June. If you have any questions regarding your membership, please feel free to contact the WAPOR office by sending an email to renae@wapor.org.

We would also like to take this opportunity to ask you to encourage your colleagues to join WAPOR. If you have any questions about membership, you can find all of the information you need at www.wapor.org.

Did you notice...

WAPOR has a new logo. While in the process of updating the website, Council thought it would be a good idea to update the WAPOR logo as well. After a number of drafts and many good ideas, the logo on the front page of this newsletter is the winner.

WAPOR will be transitioning to this new logo as quickly as possible. All of our electronic communications will have the new logo in place immediately, but it may take some time to transition away from the former logo on any printed materials.

We hope you feel that this change is a positive one.

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REGISTRATION FORM

WAPOR Thematical Seminar
"The Early Days of Survey Research and Their Importance Today"

Please only use this registration form
if you cannot access the registration link:


Please fill out the registration information below.

Note: Fields indicated by a red asterisk are required, and must be completed in order to proceed.

Registration fees:*

☐ Members (WAPOR, University of Vienna or Charles University, Prague) – EUR 110,00
☐ Non-members – EUR 160,00
☐ Accompanying Person – EUR 80,00

Name(s) of Accompanying Person(s):

Get-together (Dinner included):

I will attend the get-together - July, 1, 2010, 7 pm "Heuriger Am Pfarrplatz": ☐

Number of persons: 

First Name, Last Name:*
Organisation*
Address*
Address (Line 2):
City:*
Postal Code:*
Country:*
E-Mail Address:*
Telephone number:*

If you have any questions regarding the program please contact the congress organizers:
Mag. Katharina Lobinger phone: +43 1 4277 49324 email: katharina.lobinger@univie.ac.at.

Please email or fax the registration form to:
katharina.lobinger@univie.ac.at or 0043 1 4277 9493

You will then receive a confirmation email including the invoice with payment details.