This article's starting point is that institutions of opinion claim to speak for 'the people' and their results are very powerful, whereas the voice of 'the people' is not really heard in those results. So again an apparent crisis in public opinion research is being addressed (see the short review of POQ 69/5), but now the crisis is caused by the methodology of polls and surveys themselves.

Opinions are produced in a particular situation, rather than existing entities that can be elicited and aggregated at any given moment in time. As an example, Myer critically discusses the wording of some survey questions on attitudes towards nuclear energy, and also discusses the transcription of a focus group interview about the same issue. He claims that public opinion research is inherently circular: surveys ask about issues that are news, and their results then become news. Survey questions use 'commonplaces', textual instances of shared identities which are rather unstable in their meanings. He supports the idea of deliberative democracy, in which public opinion is not viewed as the sum of individual opinions, but as the result of a dialogue. It is unclear however, which sort of forum could provide a podium for public dialogue, neither has there been much academic study of actual public dialogues. And that is where applied linguists come in. Detailed studies of talk about opinions show the ambivalences in attitudes people hold towards an attitude object, and the relations between those attitudes and other aspects of people's thinking or people's lives.

(Bregje Holleman)

Framing

P.R. Brewer, K. Gross (2005). **Values, Framing and Citizens' Thoughts about Policy Issues: Effects on Content and Quality.** *Political Psychology, 26* (6), 929–948.

Political issues are often framed or defined in terms of values that are widely appreciated by the public, such as equality. This article examines the impact of framing on how people think about policy issues: to what extent can counter-framing limit the direction in which the opinion is being influenced? And how does framing influence the nature and number of people's thoughts about an issue? If framing influences how citizens think about an issue, this may have consequences for the depth and breadth of public deliberation about the issue – which in turn influences the quality of a deliberative democracy.

The issue that is framed in this research, is about school vouchers. One frame advocates vouchers as promoting equality, whereas the anti-school vouchers frame criticizes vouchers as undermining equality. Four conditions were compared: a pro-voucher equality frame, an anti-voucher equality frame, both frames and no frame.

In line with previous research, exposure to a frame does turn out to influence the direction of subjects' opinions. Also, it led them to express fewer overall thoughts about the issue. Counter-framing did not neutralize the effect of framing, neither on the content, nor on the quantity of thought. This suggests that framing can help to promote shared frames of reference for understanding and discussing issues, but it also means that framing

discourages more extensive thought, and would thus not contribute to a deliberative democracy. More research is needed to draw strong conclusions, e.g. research using a more heterogeneous sample of subjects, and focusing on more types of dependent variables, such as the argument repertoire – perhaps in focus groups in stead of in open-ended survey questions.

(Bregje Holleman)

Crisis Communication

M. Taylor, & C. D. Perry (2005). **Diffusion of traditional and new media tactics in crisis communication.** *Public Relations Review, 31* (2), 209–217.

The Internet has become one of the most important communication tools for organisations in the communication with journalists and the public. In this article Taylor and Perry examine how organisations are adopting the Internet into their crisis response. The goal of the study was to collect baseline data about Internet usage during different types of crisis and to trace the diffusion of certain tactics overtime, i.e. between 1998 and 2003.

In total 92 crises were identified in this study related to a significant disruption to a business, social environment or an organisation. The results show that 54% of the organisations adopted the Internet into their crisis response. However, the diffusion of the Internet into crisis response is not increasing over the 5-year period but the number of organisations adopting new tactics into their Internet communication grew from a low 42% to 100% over the course of the study. Especially, the

integration of dialogic communication (e.g. to respond to an issue via the Internet), including connecting links (e.g. to present relevant information on other websites), and multimedia effects (e.g. to offer live video or high-resolution photography). Real time monitoring, on the other hand, that provides updated information to monitor a crisis hour-by-hour is hardly used. However, the description of examples of good practices (e.g. Microsoft or Fisher Price) shows that these tactics might be effective in rebuilding consumer trust in the affected organisation.

(Luuk van Waes)

Y. Huang, Y. Lin, S. Su (2005). **Crisis communicative strategies in Taiwan: Category, continuum, and cultural implication.** *Public Relations Review, 31* (2), 229–238.

Crisis communicative strategies (CCSs) have intensively been studied, but little of the existing CCSs research has been used outside of Western culture. The purpose of this paper is twofold: (1) to investigate CCSs in a Chinese context, and (2) to develop a model integrating the measures and categories of CCS. A survey of public relations and public affairs managers from Taiwan's top-500 companies was undertaken to examine actual experiences of handling crises.

The researchers conducted a carefully quantitative analysis of their data. The five strategies that resulted from the factor analysis were: concession, justification, excuse, denial, and – a new factor – diversion. They accounted for 62.88% of the variances. These results confirm the Western literature on the use of CCSs to a large extent. However, some divergent findings are reported. For instance, Chinese communication favors a low-contextual style, indirectness, orientation to the future and eternity, and larger contextual concerns.