

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIFTIETH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

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The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) held its fiftieth-anniversary conference May 18–21, 1995, at the Bonaventure Resort and Spa in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Official registration was 569, making the fiftieth conference the largest that AAPOR has ever held on its own. It surpassed by 14.3 percent the previous record of 498 for an exclusively AAPOR-sponsored conference, set in 1993, and by 5.4 percent the AAPOR registration of 540 at last year's conference, held jointly with the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR). Official registration for the fiftieth conference distributed as follows:

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	Members	Nonmembers	Totals
Returnees	366	21	387 (68.0%)
First-timers	90	36	126 (22.1%)
Students	43	13	56 (9.8%)
Totals	499 (87.7%)	70 (12.3%)	569 (100.0%)

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The fiftieth conference program included 54 sessions: 39 contributed paper sessions (including 166 papers), 10 panels (some with formal paper presentations), two poster sessions (with a total of 29 presentations), two didactic sessions, and one plenary session. Acceptance rate for contributed papers was 85 percent. Some 430 individuals appear on the official program as session organizers, chairs, authors of papers, poster presenters, panelists, and discussants; every session had a formal chair, and all paper sessions and all panels with formal presentations had at least one discussant.

For a nominal charge, copies of the Fiftieth Conference Program can be obtained from the AAPOR Secretariat, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1248. Abstracts of almost all conference papers, as well as selected papers in their entirety, can be found at the Fiftieth-Anniversary Conference Website, <http://www.csu.edu.au/special/conference/AAPOR>.

Two concurrent 3-hour didactic sessions opened the conference at 2:00 P.M. Thursday, May 18. A total of 134 people attended one of the two didactics, up from 106 in 1994 and approximately 60 in 1993. Nancy A. Mathiowetz, deputy director of the Division of Statistics and Research Methodology, Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, taught "The Current Art of Questionnaire Design," which drew 72 participants. "Public Opinion Resources on the Internet," attended by 62, was jointly taught by Tom W. Smith, director of the General Social Survey (GSS) at the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, and Project Manager of the GSS Data and Information Retrieval System, a World Wide Web server, and Scott L. Althaus, a doctoral candidate in political science at Northwestern University (and 1994 AAPOR Student Paper Award winner), Manager of the American Politics Gopher, a clearinghouse for some 800 Internet resources.

While the two didactic sessions were in progress, a historic gathering convened nearby in the Bonaventure: the first meeting of the Directors of Academic Survey Research Organizations, a group suggested by the Conference Committee and organized by John M. Kennedy, Center for Survey Research, Indiana University. Approximately 30 people attended this first meeting; topics discussed included electronic information sharing and issues related to attracting and keeping professional staff. According to John Kennedy, the ASRO directors decided to continue to maintain contact and to arrange for another meeting at next year's conference.

The full conference opened with dinner Thursday night in the Bonaventure's Grand Ballroom, followed by a plenary session, "Surveys and Sex: Science, Politics, and Response to the National Health and Social Life Survey," devoted to the past year's most publicized and debated national survey results. Organized and chaired by Tom W. Smith, the session included presentations by two researchers who played key roles in bringing the National Health and Social Life Survey to completion: Edward O. Laumann, Department of Sociology, University of Chicago, and Stuart Michaels, National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. Ronald W. Wilson, National Center for Health Statistics, and Sandra H. Berry, director of the RAND Corporation's Survey Research Group, served as discussants.

Because the AAPOR Executive Council in 1992 designated the fiftieth conference as the first of two fiftieth-anniversary conferences (the second, a joint AAPOR/WAPOR meeting, will be held May 15-19, 1996, at the Red Lion Inn in Salt Lake City, Utah), several sessions were devoted to historical topics. These included two panel sessions on AAPOR's history, videotaped for the AAPOR archives; a panel on AAPOR and the early state polls, organized by Robert P. Daves, the Minnesota Poll and *Minneapolis Star Tribune*; a panel on the changing

shape of the public opinion industry, organized by Norman M. Bradburn, National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago; and three contributed paper sessions: "How Americans View History and Public Opinion," "Systematic Historical Studies of Culture and Values," and "Chapters in the History of Public Opinion Research." Several poster session presentations and papers also treated historical topics.

The history of AAPOR, and the history of public opinion research and scholarship, could also be found in the Bonaventure Key West, the fiftieth-anniversary exhibit room. Exhibits included a selection of photographs, documents, and mementos from the first AAPOR conference, organized beginning in 1945 by Harry H. Field, director of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), then at the University of Denver, and held July 29–31, 1946, in Central City, Colorado. The Central City materials, from the AAPOR Archives at the University of Chicago, were selected and arranged by Tom W. Smith, a current employee of NORC, now relocated in Chicago. Also in the exhibit room was a large poster of the 50 most influential books in the history of public opinion research, as selected by a seven-person committee headed by Albert E. Gollin.

In order to capture the flavor of AAPOR's origins in the mid-1940s, the Conference Committee decided to break a half-century AAPOR tradition, ironically enough, by shifting the annual Saturday night awards banquet to Friday night, thereby freeing Saturday night for a formal dinner dance in the style of the 1940s. At Friday night's banquet, the AAPOR award for exceptionally distinguished achievement went to the first person listed in AAPOR's Directory of Members, Herbert I. Abelson, associate director of the Survey Research Center at Princeton University, AAPOR President for 1974–75, and a member of this year's Conference Committee. One of Herb's more recent distinguished achievements was to organize the two fiftieth conference panel sessions on AAPOR's history.

Also honored at Friday night's banquet were the joint winners of AAPOR's Twenty-Ninth Annual Student Paper Competition: Mollyann Brodie, School of Public Health, Harvard University, author of "Sensitization Effects in a Study of the Impact of a Nationally Broadcast Special on Health Care Reform," and Damarys Canache, Department of Political Science, University of Pittsburgh, author of "Looking Out My Back Door: The Neighborhood Context and Perceptions of Relative Deprivation."

This year's "Call for the AAPOR Student Paper Competition," which the Conference Committee posted to 15 Internet lists with a total of 12,487 subscribers, brought in 32 papers from seven countries, including 15 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. This record number of submissions demanded AAPOR's very best to chair the

Student Paper Award Committee, which we had in Eleanor Singer, Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, who presented the awards at Friday night's banquet. Eleanor's committee included Mick P. Couper, Diana C. Mutz, Nora Cate Schaeffer, Howard Schuman, Robert Y. Shapiro, Tom W. Smith, and Seymour Sudman.

Friday night's banquet concluded, in the spirit of a fiftieth-anniversary celebration, with a recounting of favorite AAPOR "war stories" organized by Albert E. Gollin. Raconteurs, in order, were Bud Roper, Merv Field, and Hal Mendelsohn. All three agreed that Al had been wise to schedule Hal last, and almost everyone left the banquet reassured that more than enough good war stories remain for several future AAPOR conferences.

Saturday night's formal dinner dance featured the Gene Krupa Band and the sights and sounds of 1945. While the Krupa music made many older AAPOR members recall lyrics and associated memories and stories from conferences past, the dance floor was crowded with both old and young—from the 7:30 opening number to the midnight finale. All of us who found this night special are especially indebted to Robert Eisinger for negotiating the contract with the Krupa Band, to Hal Glatzer for his expert advice on the styles and customs of the 1940s, and to Charles D. Cowan, both for offering a crash course in jitterbugging Saturday afternoon and for his awe-inspiring exhibitions of his prizewinning dancing—with various partners—on Saturday night.

Staging any conference depends on the selfless work of countless people whose contributions are mostly unseen and too little appreciated. For AAPOR's fiftieth conference, such people included Karen Goldenberg, site selection and arrangements; Marlene Bednarz, AAPOR secretariat; Phyllis M. Endreny, book exhibit and sales, assisted by Pat Bova; Robert S. Lee, technology exhibits; Jenna Powell, audiovisual arrangements; Jennifer Dykema, Fun Run/Walk, slogan contest, and T-shirt sales; Warren Mitofsky, chair of the Fiftieth-Anniversary Committee; Murray Edelman and Michael W. Traugott, fiftieth-anniversary commemorative section of the program, assisted by Kylo Hart, Lubo Li, and Elizabeth Powers; and Sandy Tse, for volunteering to establish the Fiftieth Conference Website (see below).

Final thanks must go to the 430 individuals actually listed in the formal program, without whose intellectual efforts all the rest of the fiftieth conference would not have been worth staging, and whose contributions—many of which I expect to see published or cited here in the pages of *POQ*—should help to guide the collective enterprise that is AAPOR well into our second half century.

JAMES R. BENIGER  
*Conference Chair*