

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SIXTY-FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) held its sixty-fourth annual conference on May 14–17, 2009, at the Westin Diplomat Convention Center in Hollywood, Florida. The venue for this year's conference was one of the most beautiful spots in the United States—Southern Florida. For many, the annual conference is a chance to connect with old friends, meet new colleagues, share research insights, and hopefully learn a bit in the process. For those new to the association, this was an opportunity to become involved with one of the world's leading public opinion organizations in a congenial and intimate setting. This year's conference attracted 834 attendees. There were more than 80 sessions and panels involving over 450 papers, methodological briefs, demonstrations, and poster sessions.

At the heart of the annual gathering were the dialogs and discussions AAPOR conference attendees held on critical issues facing the discipline, the profession, and society as a whole. The conference focused on the theme "Public Choices in Changing Times." Change is evident in many aspects of our professional (and personal) lives from the economic downturn and global challenges to major transformations in society and communication, the ways in which we obtain information, and our understanding of the world around us. Capturing this theme, the conference program featured an array of discussions and research debates. There was a strong emphasis on the emerging area of address-based sampling (ABS) as applied to general population surveys; political polling and election-related research in the wake of the 2008 presidential election; and some of the challenges faced in conducting multiple-mode surveys. From a topical perspective, the research efforts covered a wide range of opinions, attitudes, and behaviors, including science and society, religion, social attitudes, health concerns, exit polling, and the image of America abroad. The program also highlighted work on some of the methodological choices facing the industry, their potential to change survey research, and the implications of that change. The latest research was also presented on topics such as the continuing growth of cell phone usage, conducting online surveys, and fielding cross-cultural studies, as well as more traditional topics related to questionnaire design, mode effects, sampling, and nonresponse. Additionally, reports from two AAPOR committees/task forces were discussed, one from the AAPOR Ad

Hoc Committee on the 2008 Presidential Primary Polling and the other from the AAPOR Online Panel Task Force.

The Thursday evening plenary session was both engaging and provocative. Entitled, "The Role of Traditional Survey Research in a World of Electronic Measurement and Changing Information Needs," the session focused on the extent and rapidity of change in the fields of survey measurement and public opinion research, reflecting on the potential implications of these trends for self-reported data collection and AAPOR itself. The keynote speakers included Kenneth Prewitt, Carnegie Professor of Public Affairs at Columbia University and former director of the U.S. Census Bureau, and Paul Donato, Executive Vice President and Chief Research Officer at the Nielsen Company. While presenting somewhat contrasting views of the future, both speakers agreed that the discipline of survey research is in the midst of a major transformational era in terms of approach and emphasis and that great collaboration in research between the public and private sectors is needed now more than ever.

Throughout the conference, the Exhibit Hall was transformed into an "AAPOR village," with a host of activities including new technology/software demonstration sessions, research poster presentations, a book exhibit, "Meet the Author" sessions, and a wide range of vendors and exhibitors.

For those looking for more a formal educational experience, AAPOR sponsored six short courses, including "To Mix or Not to Mix Survey Modes" (Don Dillman), "Address-Based Sampling: Merits, Design & Implementation" (Mansour Fahimi), "Practical Tools for Nonresponse Bias Studies" (Michael Brick and Kristen Olson), "Introduction to Questionnaire Design" (Nora Cate Schaeffer), "Weighting Survey Data" (Karol Krotki), and "Calendar and Time Diary Data Collection Methods" (Robert Belli, Mario Callegaro, and Polly Phipps).

The 2009 conference marked AAPOR's first foray into social networking including the establishment of AAPOR pages prior to the conference on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube. These sites were used in a number of ways to promote the conference, provide inside details on program planning and the conference venue, and for informal blogging from the conference itself.

Finally, attendees celebrated major achievements in the field of polling and survey research. Elizabeth Martin was honored with the AAPOR Award for Exceptionally Distinguished Achievement. The Warren J. Mitofsky Innovators Award was presented to two teams for their contributions to the field: Stephen Blumberg, Julian Luke, and Marcie Cynamon for their work in providing the field of survey research with timely data on changing telephony patterns in the United States and Vasja Vehovar and Katja Lozar Manfreda for their work in creating and fostering the WebSM portal. The AAPOR Book Award was presented to Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder, *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Two honorees were recognized for the Seymour Sudman Student Paper Award: Philip Brenner, University of Wisconsin-Madison, "Overreporting of Socially Desirable Behavior on Surveys: A Cross-National

Examination of Religious Service Attendance,” and Brady West, University of Michigan, “A Simulation Study of Alternative Weighting Class Adjustments for Nonresponse when Estimating a Population Mean from Complex Sample Survey Data.” As part of the banquet entertainment, AAPOR also presented a faux award to the Onion News Network for “Memorable if not Distinguished Election Poll Reporting”—AAPOR thanks the Onion News Network for the use of their video during this segment.

Despite the economic challenges faced by many of the attendees and their organizations during this period of downturn, the 2009 AAPOR Conference was one of the best on record. This is a tribute to the importance of the annual forum and the dedication of AAPOR members. The 2010 conference moves to Chicago along the Magnificent Mile, May 13–16, 2010, at the Chicago Marriott Downtown. Additional information about the AAPOR 2009 conference can be found in the conference program included in an online appendix to this issue of *Public Opinion Quarterly*.

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