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In This Issue:

AAPOR News: June 2012

Letter from the President

Recapping AAPOR's 67th Annual Conference

Upcoming AAPOR Webinars

67th Annual Conference Presidential Address

Transparency Initiative Update

Congratulations to the 2012 AAPOR Award Winners

AAPOR Endowment Committee Update

AAPOR Member News

AAPOR News: June 2012

Welcome to your June issue of AAPOR News offering timely and important association updates along with interesting news from the public opinion and survey research community.

This issue includes a letter from President Paul J. Lavrakas, information on AAPOR's Transparency Initiative, a recap of the successful 2012 Annual Conference and more.

Back to Top

Letter from the President

In the coming 2012-2013 year, AAPOR's Executive Council faces a number of important challenges as we strive to continue to serve our members and our professions. Most of these concern the pressures and admirable desires to "grow" AAPOR versus the myriad "costs" of doing so.

For those of you who were unable or chose not to attend the annual business meeting at the recent annual conference in Orlando, I would like you to be aware that a very important issue was raised by more than one member in attendance at that meeting.

The issue concerns the communication flow between AAPOR's Executive Council and the membership. The perceptions voiced were that AAPOR is governed with too much of a top-down approach and that the membership does not have enough ways to communicate easily to Council what is on their mind. As a psychologist, I also wondered if what was being implied was that AAPOR Council is not sincerely interested in what members think. If this latter is the perception of any member, I want to assure you that during my recent past years on Council, and those in the 1990s, that has never been true. Nor do I have any reason to believe it will be true in the coming year or ever. Council may not always agree with the some of the opinions expressed by members, but in each case it pays attention to those opinions and gives them reasonable deliberation.

However, this does not mean that AAPOR leadership always does as good of a job as it should in communicating our thoughts on matters that are brought to us by the members. To address this and other issues related to the communication flow between the membership and elected members of Council, I expect that very soon we will establish an ad hoc committee (made up of some members not on Council, as well as some on Council) chaired by AAPOR's Vice President Rob Santos. I would like this ad hoc committee to provide advice to Council by early fall, if not by later this summer, on additional modes of communication between members and Council that could be set up. In the interim, no member should hesitate to privately communicate her/his concerns, big or small, to me (pjlavrakas@hughes.net) or to other Council members and/or publicly via the AAPORnet listserv.

In addition to the above matter, we also have heard from some members who are concerned about the financial costs of membership and of conference attendance. I want to assure the membership that Council will be giving a fresh look into these matters in the coming months. Whether costs can be reduced will wait to be seen.

Personally, I am not sanguine that we will be able to make most members who find the cost of membership and conference attendance too high happy. At least not

unless we make trade-offs in (1) what membership in AAPOR provides to its members and/or in (2) how our conferences are implemented. But it is Council's responsibility to identify these potential trade-offs and to apprise the membership of them. (Please note that it is far too late to make changes to the essential organization of the 2013 conference in Boston, and that AAPOR already has major constraints with conference implementation choices through 2017. These longer-term choices were made because it was decided they would help hold down escalating costs to members for several years into the future.)

Apart from the above, I told those present at the business meeting in Orlando that I would like to make progress on each of the following in my 2012-2013 presidential year:

- The due diligence in which Council engages to well understand the cost implications of the various new programs (many of which are noble in their intent) being considered for implementation.
- The need to rethink the level of the paid staff (and its configuration) that AAPOR needs from our management company, The Sherwood Group. Based on my 25+ years directing and managing major organizations in the academic and private sector, I believe we currently are understaffed and that this deficiency will grow if we try to increase the value AAPOR provides to its members and our professions.
- In 2009, when serving as Councilor-at-Large, I started to voice the belief that more elected members on Council should serve three-year terms; (currently only the position of president-elect does). I came to this view in recognizing the complexity of what governing AAPOR has become (as opposed to when I was on Council in the 1990s) and that for most elected positions, a Council member ends her/his service just when s/he becomes expert in it. Our Governance Task Force in their March 2012 report suggested that we extend the length of service for the Treasurer/Secretary elected position to three years.
- We already have a stellar periodical, *Public Opinion Quarterly (POQ)*, and as has been announced, we expect to soon implement a new periodical, *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methods (JSSM)*, which I believe will reach "stardom" within 5-10 years. The next few months, as we negotiate contracts for the future of these two journals, will be key to making certain that *POQ* stays a flagship journal and that *JSSM* becomes one in the coming years.
- Much of what AAPOR does for members and our professions concerns "education" – very broadly construed. We can, and I believe we should, do more. But in investigating and deliberating about what additional educational programs we can and should implement, we must be certain we can support them financially.
- The 2013 annual conference in Boston will occupy a lot of Council's attention from now through next May. And this is exactly what should and will happen. Under Paul Beatty's and Susan Pinkus' leadership, I believe the 2013 conference will be as good for the attendees as any conference AAPOR has held.
- To my mind, AAPOR and the professional domains it addresses are greatly under-valued by the world at large, including by elite decision-makers in the private and public sectors. I would like to try to close this gap in part by expanding our relationship with other major professional organizations with whom our interests overlap.

In closing, I would like to try to make certain no one misunderstand my concerns about costs. As a direct result of the leadership of Council and the considerable effort of its member volunteers and its staff, AAPOR has sound financial management, does not have budget deficits, and has built excellent reserves. But this is not to suggest that we have the amount of resources that will be required to implement many of the growth initiatives that Council believes will benefit our members and professions. Granted, AAPOR is not in business to make a profit, but without continued sound financial management, including finding new sources of revenue, I do not believe we will be able serve our members' aspirations well.

The greatest assets that AAPOR has are its members and their collective intellects. We have an abundance of great ideas, many of which have yet to be formally pursued, but unless we stay financially strong we will either need to severely rein in our ambitions or we will fall far short of our potential to accomplish "good."

Paul J. Lavrakas
AAPOR President 2012-2013
pjlavrakas@hughes.net

Back to Top

Recapping AAPOR's 67th Annual Conference

By Dan Merkle, 2012 Conference Chair

AAPOR's 67th Annual Conference, held May 17-20, in Orlando, attracted 1,026 attendees. This is the highest attendance for a year without a joint WAPOR conference and the second highest attendance for an AAPOR conference ever. The program featured more than 90 sessions and panels involving over 500 papers, methodological briefs, demonstrations and poster presentations.

A number of the sessions focused on the conference theme, "Evaluating New Frontiers in Public Opinion and Social Research." These included sessions on using interactive and gaming techniques to improve surveys, advances in web surveys, innovations in the use of mobile devices in survey research, and using social media to measure public opinion and behavior.

The program also included numerous sessions on a diverse range of topics of interest to our profession including substantive studies of public opinion on social, economic and political issues, political polling and elections, cross-national and comparative research, the impact of the media, and methodological research on cell phones, address-based sampling, questionnaire design, nonresponse, sampling, weighting, and mixed-mode data collection.

The conference was kicked off with the plenary session, "Examining the Value of Non-Probability Sampling in Social Research." Douglas Rivers and George Terhanian presented the case for the value of non-probability sampling, and Robert Groves and Elizabeth Stasny were the discussants.

The session was moderated by Nancy Mathiowetz.

For those who missed this session, in the coming weeks the video of the plenary, as well as the speakers' presentations will be posted on the AAPOR website for members and conference attendees to access. Other presentations from the rest of the sessions at the conference will be posted on the website and available to AAPOR members and conference attendees later in the summer.

The conference also featured six stellar short courses for those interested in more in-depth methodological training: "Single and Multi-Mode Surveys Using Address-Based Sampling" (Colm O'Muircheartaigh and Ned English), "Unlocking the Potential of Conjoint Analysis/Discrete Choice Modeling and MaxDiff Scaling in Public Opinion Research" (Joseph Curry), "Maximizing the Accuracy of Online Surveys: Comparisons of Methods and Recommendations of Optimal Procedures" (Jon Krosnick), "Improving

Surveys with Paradata: Making Use of Process Information" (Frauke Kreuter), "Designing Web Questionnaires" (Mick Couper), "The Role of New Technologies in Powering, Augmenting, or Replacing Traditional Surveys" (Michael Link and Trent Buskirk).

The tradition of AAPOR as a "meeting place" was on display throughout the conference as attendees mingled and networked during the group meals, the New Member and All-Chapter Reception, the President's Reception, the dessert receptions, and refreshment breaks. Attendees also gathered in the exhibit hall which included demonstration sessions, poster presentations, meet the author sessions, the book exhibit, and a diverse range of exhibitors and vendors. On the last night of the conference, attendees enjoyed the post-banquet party featuring live acoustic music and complementary mojitos.

Other conference activities, organized by the Conference Support Committee led by Deborah Rexrode (Chair) and Mandy Sha (Associate Chair), included the docent program for first-time attendees, two speed networking sessions, the golf outing, the fun run/walk, and applied probability.

Mark your calendars for AAPOR's 68th Annual Conference on May 16-19, 2013 in Boston, Massachusetts at the Seaport Boston Hotel and World Trade Center.

Back to Top

Upcoming AAPOR Webinars

Mark your calendar for these must-attend AAPOR webinars!

Population-Based Survey Experiments:
How to Do Them and What They're Good For
Presented by Diana Mutz, University of Pennsylvania
August 30, 2012

Weighting Approaches for Dual Frame RDD Surveys
Presented by Courtney Kennedy, Abt SRBI
October 11, 2012

Leveraging New Technologies: What We Know So Far
Presented by Michael Link, The Nielsen Company
December 5, 2012

67th Annual Conference Presidential Address

Read the Presidential Address delivered by Scott Keeter at AAPOR's 67th Annual Conference on the AAPOR website.

Back to Top

Transparency Initiative Update – June 2012

By Tim Johnson, Transparency Initiative Coordinating Chair

There have been a number of important activities related to AAPOR's Transparency Initiative (TI) that have taken place during the first half of 2012.

During February and March of this year, the first pilot test of proposed TI procedures for implementing a first version of the TI took place. Eight volunteer

organizations participated in the pilot test, which was followed by a focus group session with these volunteers to better understand what worked and did not work during the pilot. In response to these findings, the Transparency Initiative Steering Committee (TISC), which oversaw the development of TI processes during the 2011-12 Council Year, recommended to Council that it be disbanded and be replaced with the standing Transparency Initiative Coordinating Committee (TICC). This proposal was approved by Council and the TICC was appointed in May 2012.

At this year's AAPOR Annual Conference, a session was held to provide an overview to membership of the past year's activities and plans moving forward. By the end of June, the TICC has met three times and is now moving forward with its mission to reconceptualize the Transparency Initiative and begin laying the groundwork for another pilot, which we hope will take place during the second half of 2012.

One of the key pieces of feedback our new coordinating committee has received, from several sources, is the need for greater transparency of the processes by which the Transparency Initiative is developed and tested. We have clearly heard this message and will be providing monthly updates on AAPOR's website of our activities.

Your thoughts and suggestions are always welcome and we would appreciate hearing directly from you at transparency@aapor.org.

Back to Top

Congratulations to the 2012 AAPOR Award Winners

AAPOR expresses sincere congratulations to the following 2012 award winners:

AAPOR Award for Exceptionally Distinguished Achievement

The Association's highest honor, this award recognizes lifetime achievement and outstanding contributions to the field of public opinion research.

Daniel Yankelovich

Read his award acceptance remarks on the AAPOR website.

AAPOR Book Award

This award was established to recognize influential books that have stimulated theoretical and scientific research in public opinion, and/or influenced our understanding or application of survey research methodology.

Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman and Henry E. Brady
Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics
(Harvard University Press, 1995)

AAPOR Policy Impact Award

This award recognizes outstanding research that has had a clear impact on improving policy decisions, practice or discourse, either in the public or private sectors.

State Health Access Data Assistance Center (SHADAC)
at the University of Minnesota

Seymour Sudman Student Paper Award

This award recognizes excellence in the study of public opinion, broadly defined, or the theory and methods of survey research, including statistical techniques used in such research.

WINNER:
Christopher J. Ojeda, The Pennsylvania State University

HONORABLE MENTION:
Rebekah Young, The Pennsylvania State University

Burns "Bud" Roper Fellows

The Burns "Bud" Roper AAPOR Fund was established to help early-career individuals working in

survey research or public opinion research. Awards are used to help recipients with the cost of travel and registration fees to attend the AAPOR annual conference and/or participate in short courses.

Matthew Anderson, *Mathematica Policy Research*
Wojciech Jablonski, *University of Lodz, Poland*
Su Li, *University of California, Berkeley*
Jessie Kemmick Pintor, *University of Minnesota*
Christopher Werner, *University of South Carolina*
Lindsay Wood, *Mathematica Policy Research*

Back to Top

AAPOR Endowment Committee Update

By Barbara O'Hare, Endowment Committee Chair

The Endowment Committee is responsible for the distribution of funds for our current endowment programs, for developing new initiatives to address AAPOR interests, and for raising funds to support these efforts. The Roper Fellows awards and the Sudman student paper award have many successful years of recognizing AAPOR members at the early stages of their careers. Both of these funds are sustained primarily through the generous gifts of beneficiaries in memory of Bud Roper and Seymour Sudman. The Heritage Fund, currently ably led by Mike Mokrzycki, was established a few years ago to direct funds to preserve the legacy of AAPOR through electronically archiving our documents and interviewing key AAPOR leaders, including past and current presidents.

The current endowment committee is committed to expanding the funding of students to help them become more involved in AAPOR – an ongoing interest of a number of members. This year we established the Student Travel Awards to fund eight graduate students with $500 gifts to attend the annual conference. The committee is pursuing suggestions from the business meeting to look for ways to expand the financial support of students, and will report back to the membership.

With AAPOR financially strong, you may wonder why fundraising for endowment funds is important. Endowment funds are directed toward initiatives outside the operating budget of the growing AAPOR organization. The successes of the Roper, Sudman, and Heritage funds are good examples of donations at work. While large donations can fund a new initiative, we want to broaden our base of givers, and encourage gifts at all levels. We hope this will develop a shared commitment to supporting our members and expanding the benefits of our collegial organization.

If you have any questions or are interested in volunteering to work with the Endowment Committee, please email me at barboh5@gmail.com. Thanks for your support!

Back to Top

AAPOR Member News

If you have news you would like shared in the Member News column of the newsletter, please send information to Lindsay Arends.

Former AAPOR President Peter V. Miller of the U.S. Census Bureau was honored by the New York American Association for Public Opinion Research (NYAAPOR) with the Harry O'Neill Outstanding Achievement Award. Visit the NYAAPOR website to see photos from the award ceremony and reception.

Back to Top

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