

A chapter from

## **A Meeting Place**

# **The History of The American Association for Public Opinion Research**

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ISBN: 0-89089-479-5

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## *The Founding of AAPOR*

Paul B. Sheatsley

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The Central City conference established a momentum. At 12:05 p.m. on July 31, 1946, immediately following the closing session of that conference and within an hour of their election as a Continuing Committee to plan for a second conference in 1947, the five committee members sat down in Central City's Opera House to begin their work. The group included Lloyd Borg, Harry Field, George Gallup, Clyde Hart, and Julian Woodward. Their first action was to elect Harry Field as Chair. The brief minutes of this meeting, signed by Field, reveal attention to the first resolution passed by the Central City group (to arrange for a second conference in 1947), and to the fourth resolution (to appoint a committee to facilitate "the ultimate establishment of an international organization for the encouragement of opinion research on a world-wide scale").

No reference is made in those minutes to the second resolution ("creation of a national association of public opinion research organizations") or to the third resolution, referring to a Committee on Standards. That committee, consisting of Budd Wilson, Henry David, and Morris Hansen, was to operate on a separate track in the service of these two objectives.

It is apparent that the Continuing Committee took very seriously its mandate to plan on an international scale. The minutes note that "It was unanimously agreed that this First Conference on Public Opinion Research (Central City), and all ensuing ones, be in fact and in name international," and the proposed 1947 conference under discussion was named the Second International Conference on Public Opinion Research. Inevitably, this was later abbreviated to SICPOR. Stuart Dodd, George Gallup, Rensis Likert, and Wilfrid Sanders were formally elected by the Continuing Committee to serve on the International Committee responsible for planning a world organization for public opinion research, with Dodd and Gallup as co-chairmen. Consideration of a possible site for SICPOR centered on Montreal, and Field was asked to discuss this point with Sanders, then editorial director of the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion.

Field was also “delegated the responsibility of drafting a list of purposes for the Continuing Committee and for the International Committee” and asked to submit to both these committees suggestions for their future action. Finally, Field was asked to select a suitable date for the second meeting of the Continuing Committee.

The tragic and totally unexpected death of Harry Field in a plane crash in France little over one month later provided a severe setback to conference planning. Field, after all, had been the motivating force responsible for the success of the meeting at Central City, and it was he who was expected to provide leadership for SICPOR. It fell to Clyde Hart, who at the time of Central City was winding up his wartime work as special assistant to the administrator in the Office of Price Administration, to carry on the task. Hart had already been in touch with Field about a position with the National Opinion Research Center and he was the unanimous choice of the NORC Board of Trustees to succeed Field as director. Already a member of the Continuing Conference Committee, he also succeeded Field as chair of that group.

The committee, henceforth known as the SICPOR Executive Committee, held an informal meeting in New York on December 18, 1946, and then gathered for a third time at a luncheon meeting in the Hotel Roosevelt Grill in New York on January 28, 1947. At this meeting, Elmo (Budd) Wilson, research director for the Columbia Broadcasting System and formerly director of an overseas public opinion agency under the auspices of the Office of War Information, was appointed to the committee, and Paul Sheatsley, Eastern representative of NORC in New York, was designated as secretary. Both were in attendance at this third meeting.

In discussing the SICPOR conference location, Gallup quoted Wilfrid Sanders as reporting interest on the part of Laval University in Quebec, while Woodward reported on conversations he had had with Dartmouth and with Williams College. Woodward stated that President James Baxter of Williams was enthusiastic about having the conference in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Quebec offered the attractiveness of a foreign setting for the international conference, while Williamstown had the advantage of a cheaper cost and easier access. The secretary was asked to take an informal poll of probable conference attendees and to investigate the cost and availability of transportation to the two locales.

It had been proposed at the second meeting that NORC again act as host to the conference, but Hart noted that NORC had expended some \$5,000 of its own funds on unreimbursed conference expenses and

said he would have to consult his board before accepting the invitation. He now confirmed his board's appreciation and acceptance of the offer, with the expectation that a major share of the expense could be recouped through contributions, registration fees, and sales of the conference proceedings. He proposed, however, that some system of cosponsorship be worked out, with organizations such as the American and Canadian Institutes of Public Opinion, Elmo Roper, CBS, and Time Inc. sharing the expenses, and this suggestion was approved.

It was also agreed that a Sponsoring Committee be named for the conference, to include half a dozen outstanding research workers in foreign countries and approximately fifteen Americans, with half of the latter representative of the academic field. Various names were proposed for further discussion at the next meeting.

Stuart Rice, then Assistant Director of Statistical Standards at the U.S. Bureau of the Budget, who was that year making arrangements for a meeting of the World Statistical Congress to be held in Washington September 13-20, had invited SICPOR to meet at the same time in Washington. The committee preferred to maintain the independence of the public opinion research conference, but agreed to schedule SICPOR, wherever held, early in September in order to allow foreign delegates to combine both meetings in a single trip to the U.S. The chair was instructed to inform Rice of this decision and also of the committee's plan "on the final day of the conference to give attention to public opinion research on an international scale, and to receive and act upon plans for an international organization now under preparation by our sub-committee." The latter reference is to the International Committee chaired by Dodd and Gallup.

The chair asked that the committee consult with associates in the field regarding program content for SICPOR. "It was suggested that somewhat more attention be given to findings from public opinion research than was the case at Central City without, however, taking the emphasis off research methods, procedures, and standards." Finally, the secretary was asked to prepare a list of potential invitees to SICPOR, and the following paragraph from the minutes is of interest, in view of the open membership later decided on for AAPOR and the subsequent rivalry between academic and commercial interests within the Association:

It was the sense of the committee that academic representation should be built up somewhat and made more nearly representative of the research now in progress in universities throughout the country. It was also de-

cided to restrict the invitations to those persons or agencies that are doing public opinion research, and not to include straight market research personnel. Attendance at the conference should be by invitation only, and invitations should be carefully weighed by the sub-committee.

A fourth meeting of the committee followed quickly on February 13, and the conference began to assume its final shape. The secretary's informal poll of eighteen prospective attendees found preferences evenly divided between Williamstown and Quebec as the conference site, but Hart reported that his own inquiries of interested persons at federal agencies in Washington showed a unanimous preference for Williamstown because of expected difficulties in obtaining authorization for travel outside the United States. The committee then unanimously designated Williamstown as the conference location, and Budd Wilson was delegated to conduct final arrangements with President Baxter of Williams College.

Turning to conference dates, and the commitment to early September in order to oblige foreign delegates to the World Statistical Congress later that month, the committee decided to open proceedings Tuesday evening, September 2, and close at noon on Friday, September 5. September 1 was Labor Day in 1947 and it was noted that most transportation to Williamstown was scheduled for afternoon arrival; thus the Tuesday evening start. The Friday close was designed to allow the delegates a free weekend for their return home or for vacationing.

At this meeting, too, names of possible members of the proposed Sponsoring Committee were discussed and the following nominations were unanimously confirmed.

Rensis Likert	Hadley Cantril	Samuel Stouffer
Daniel Katz	Claude Robinson	Paul Lazarsfeld
Archibald Crossley	Elmo Roper	Arnold King
Frederick Stephan	Wilfrid Sanders	Stuart Dodd
Wahl Asmussen	Jean Stoetzel	Henry Durant
Guillaume Jacquemijns	Roy Morgan	Stephen Taylor

Of these, Stouffer was later appointed to the Executive Committee and Taylor was unable to serve, resulting in a sixteen-member Sponsoring Committee, six of them from outside the United States.

Discussion then turned to the content of the program. Hart noted that eight periods were available for meetings: Tuesday evening, three on Wednesday, three on Thursday, and Friday morning. There was tentative agreement that the opening session should feature a "big-name" speaker, that conflict between sessions should be avoided by trying to

schedule only one meeting per time period, and that the final time slot should be devoted to a business meeting of the conference participants.

Early consensus was achieved on the topical areas to be examined in the six substantive sessions: sampling problems, interviewing problems, problems of questionnaire construction; problems of coding, analysis, and presentation of data; standards in opinion research, and one time period devoted to several smaller sessions of more specialized interest. Suggestions for the opening guest speaker centered on prominent scientific figures such as Albert Einstein, Arthur Compton, James Conant, or J. Robert Oppenheimer to discuss problems of methodology in the physical and social sciences, and on political leaders such as Trygve Lie, George Marshall, or Anthony Eden to speak about the role of public opinion in the postwar world. The committee designated its Chair, Clyde Hart, to consider in more detail the content of the conference program and the role of the guest speaker, and to report back at the next meeting.

## Development of Final Preparations

Almost three months elapsed before the next meeting of the Executive Committee on May 9, 1947, when a quorum of Hart, Woodward, Wilson, and Sheatsley again gathered at the Hotel Roosevelt in New York. Work on the conference had been proceeding on a number of fronts, however, and a great deal of progress was reported. The time and place of the conference had been confirmed. President Baxter of Williams College would give an official welcome at the opening session on Tuesday evening, September 2, and he and Mrs. Baxter would host a reception for the participants at 5:30 the next afternoon. Professor David Truman of Williams was appointed to chair a committee on local arrangements.

The secretary reported that invitations had been sent to the eighteen persons nominated to the Sponsoring Committee and seventeen acceptances had been received. Simultaneous press releases had been issued from Denver and from Williams College on April 16, and conference letterheads were being printed in Denver. Samuel Stouffer was removed from the Sponsoring Committee and appointed to the Executive Committee to increase academic representation in the latter group.

Wilson reported on conversations he had had with Donald Young of the Rockefeller Foundation and expressed optimism that a grant of up

to \$7,500 might be obtained for the purpose of paying the transportation expenses of foreign delegates who would otherwise be unable to attend. He also described negotiations with International Business Machines for a cash contribution to SICPOR in exchange for permission to exhibit IBM tabulating equipment at the conference. Wilson was then formally appointed to head a finance committee, assisted by Lloyd Borg and Lucien Warner of *Life*, to prepare a budget for the conference, and to continue to canvass possible sources of funds.

The committee formally decided that admission to the conference would be by invitation only, and Sheatsley was named chair of an invitations committee that also included Jerome Bruner of Harvard University and Cornelius DuBois of *Life*. This committee was directed to prepare a list of individuals to whom invitations would be sent. It was tentatively decided that all conference delegates would pay an advance registration fee of \$10.

Hart had drafted a rough outline of a conference program toward the end of April. This outline was now turned over to Woodward, with instructions to convert it into a specific program schedule, with sessions identified by title and suggested speakers for each topic. Woodward and Wilson were also asked by the committee to invite Walter Lippmann to give the opening address. If he was not available, they were asked to invite Archibald MacLeish, William Benton, or Chester Bowles.

Starting with a list of 167 names compiled by Sheatsley from the Central City roster and other sources, the Invitations Committee finally identified 362 individuals worthy of invitation to SICPOR. The invitation list was conveniently divided into the following groups:

Academics, university affiliated	92
U.S. government researchers	28
Public opinion polls	49
Advertising, market research, public relations	56
Newspapers, radio, magazines	52
Researchers outside U.S.	57
Misc.: foundations, interest groups	28
Total:	362

Pre-conference activities proceeded apace throughout the summer of 1947. At NORC's New York office, which served as the hub, a special SICPOR secretary, Emma Jane Krakauer, was hired to handle the conference mailings and correspondence. William Benton, Assistant Secretary of State, agreed to deliver the keynote address on "Public Opin-

ion and World Affairs” at the opening dinner of the conference on Tuesday evening, September 2. Invitations were sent out to the approved list with return postal cards enclosed on which to indicate intention to attend. Unsolicited inquiries from persons not on the list but who expressed a wish to attend were received favorably and no interested person was excluded. Woodward’s committee was busy translating the committee’s bare outline of program content into specific sessions with invited speakers. No further formal meetings of the Executive Committee were held until August 28, the week before the conference.

This final meeting of the committee was concerned mainly with such details as the order of events at the opening dinner, the agenda for the proposed Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning business meetings, and arrangements for press coverage and the reporting of meetings.

## The Williamstown Setting and Program

Although considerably more accessible than Central City, the Second International Conference on Public Opinion Research carried on what would become an AAPOR tradition of meeting in out-of-the-way places. A mailing describing transportation, accommodations, and facilities informed the reader that Williamstown was a four-hour drive from New York and that there were two trains daily from New York to North Adams, Massachusetts, and three to Albany, New York, from which points taxis, buses, or another train (once a day) would provide transportation to Williamstown.

Once there, the visitor was instructed to proceed to Jesup Hall on the Williams College campus and register for a dormitory room. The prices, however, could not be beat. Room and meals on the American Plan were \$7 per day: \$2.50 for the room, \$1 for breakfast, \$1.50 for lunch, and \$2 for dinner. For \$21 per person at the time of registration, registrants were covered for their accommodations and meals from Tuesday afternoon through Friday lunch. A few rooms for the more well-to-do were available at the Williams Inn. Again anticipating an AAPOR tradition, dress was described as “strictly informal” and the college swimming pool, tennis courts, and privileges of the Faculty House were all available to participants at no extra charge.

Located in the scenic northwestern corner of Massachusetts, Williamstown was (and still is) a charming New England community of



about 5,000. The Williams College campus is located on both sides of Main Street, so that the amenities of town life are easily accessible. Plenary meetings of the conference were held in Adams Memorial Theatre; smaller sessions met in the theatre studio and in Jesup Hall.

The conference attracted 194 registered participants. (Central City had hosted 73.) The program arranged by Julian Woodward and his committee opened with a dinner in Currier Hall on Tuesday evening, September 2. Clyde Hart chaired the proceedings, which included a welcoming address by James Baxter, president of Williams College; introductions by Budd Wilson of the fifteen foreign participants (four from England; two each from Mexico, Canada, and Czechoslovakia; and one each from Australia, Puerto Rico, Cuba, West Germany, and Switzerland), and the address by William Benton, which received extensive press coverage in the *New York Herald Tribune* thanks to Paul Tobenkin, a staff correspondent who attended the conference.

Wednesday was devoted to "round tables," two in the morning and two in the afternoon. The morning meetings were chaired by Rensis Likert of the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center on "Problems of Polling in Different Countries" and by Ralph Nafziger of the University of Minnesota on "Problems of State and Local Polling." Participating in the first round table were Herbert Hyman of NORC, R.J. Jessen of Iowa State College, and Jean Stoetzel of the French Institute of Public Opinion. The discussion of local polls was sparked by short papers by Alfred M. Lee of Wayne University, Jane Shepherd of *The Washington Post*, and Paul H. Trescott of the *Philadelphia Bulletin*. The afternoon meetings focused on "Measurements of Intensity and Information," chaired by Claude Robinson of Opinion Research Corporation and featuring papers by Stevens Stock (Opinion Research Corporation), Jerome Bruner (Harvard University), and William A. Lydgate (American Institute of Public Opinion); and on "Psychological Errors in Polling," chaired by Hadley Cantril of Princeton University and including papers by Daniel Katz (Survey Research Center, University of Michigan), Frederick Stephan (Princeton), and Don Cahalan (NORC).

At five o'clock there was a preliminary business meeting in Adams Memorial Theatre, followed at 5:30 by a reception by President and Mrs. Baxter at the Faculty House of the College. After dinner, the conference attended a session on "New Fields of Use for Public Opinion Research," chaired by Samuel A. Stouffer of Harvard. Here Louis Harris, then with Elmo Roper, discussed the use of surveys in economic prediction; Douglas Williams of Fred Rudge, Inc., discussed their use

in labor relations; and Bernard Berelson of the University of Chicago addressed their use in measuring the efficiency of communications media. Marie Jahoda of the American Jewish Committee looked at research on minority group prejudice.

The whole of Thursday morning was given over to the Business Meeting, at which the Standards Committee was to submit its plan for a national opinion research organization. The afternoon was devoted to two panel discussions, one on "Coding Validity and Reliability" with Albert B. Blankenship of National Analysts (chair), Angus Campbell (SRC, University of Michigan), Richard Crutchfield (Swarthmore College), and Hans Zeisel (McCann-Erickson, Inc.); the other on "What Is the Effective Public Opinion Universe?" chaired by former Census Bureau Acting Director Philip M. Hauser and including Henry David (Queens College), David B. Truman (Williams College), Richardson Wood, and Julian L. Woodward (Elmo Roper). The plenary evening session, chaired by Stuart Chase, featured an "all-star" panel of Archibald Crossley, George Gallup, Paul Lazarsfeld, and Elmo Roper in a discussion of "Polling and the Political Process."

The final day of the conference was concerned with international issues. At nine o'clock there was a discussion of "Surveys of World Opinion," led by Wilson of CBS and including remarks by Mark Abrams (Research Services Ltd., England), Stuart C. Dodd (American University, Beirut, Lebanon), S. Shepard Jones (U.S. Department of State), and Karel Naprstek (United Nations). At eleven o'clock there was an organization meeting for an international association, chaired by Gallup, at which Stuart Dodd, co-chairman with Gallup of the Committee on International Organization appointed at Central City, presented the committee's report. It was at this meeting that the "World Congress on Public Opinion Research" (subsequently changed to "World Association for Public Opinion Research," or WAPOR) was voted into existence, with Jean Stoetzel as its first President. At the close of this meeting, at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, September 5, the Williamstown conference adjourned.

## The Committee on Standards

To understand the genesis of the AAPOR constitution, its adoption at the Williamstown conference, and the ensuing tensions between academic and commercial constituents, one must go back to a historic panel at the 1946 Central City conference in which George Gallup, Ju-

lian Woodward, Clyde Hart (then Special Assistant to the Administrator, Office of Price Administration), and Harry Field discussed "Technical and Ethical Standards in Public Opinion Research." In a remarkably prescient presentation, Woodward outlined some of his expectations for the future of public opinion research. He foresaw an expansion in the role of polling in order to clarify public issues. Elections, he said, are infrequent and refer to candidates rather than issues. Polls will provide continuous feedback on public opinion concerning policy issues. He predicted a greatly increased level of polling by government agencies, as a result of the successful wartime use of public opinion research, and he foresaw an expansion of polling in the international field. Finally, he expected much greater use of polls on public knowledge in order to evaluate mass educational programs.

But parallel to this widespread expansion of polling activity, Woodward pointed out the increased dangers of misuse of public opinion surveys and survey results. Specifically, he warned of the possible manipulation of polling agencies to serve private ends and of the potential use of polling agencies results as a club over public servants ("This is what your constituents want. You must vote accordingly."). He expressed concern that pollsters might be satisfied with current technical standards, because improved techniques might add to survey costs, and he warned against "cut-throat" competition among private polls that would drive down their quality. In Woodward's opinion, polling was not a purely private activity, subject only to the laws of the marketplace, but partook of a "public utility," imbued with the public interest. Hence "polls must conduct themselves in such a way as to justify the responsibilities which will increasingly be theirs and to deserve the respect with which the public will regard them."

Woodward then referred to current attempts to formulate standards to meet these dangers and reported that "Gallup, Roper and Crossley have met and agreed to sponsor an association of public opinion reporters which would include agencies now engaged in reporting poll results through various media of communication." This association, he said, would include the nationwide polls, the state polls, and certain community polls. No articles for the association had yet been established, but he had some proposals for their consideration. Beyond working to extend the use of polling techniques and a public relations program to foster better understanding of the uses and limitations of polls, he urged the maintenance of high standards of technical competence and the promotion of research to this end.

Woodward gave special emphasis to the organization of a committee on standards that would ensure that no poll that did not live up to the standards agreed upon should have membership in the association. Such standards would include adequate sampling methods, competent interviewing staff, well-designed questionnaires, and the observance of certain ethical as well as technical standards. He called for a uniform reporting of poll results, including full disclosure of the dates of interviewing, the limits of precision of the statistics reported, the total number of interviews, and "the calculation of per cents only to whole numbers." The committee and association should also foster methodological experiments on such matters as the use of scales and batteries of questions as compared with single questions.

Speaking as a user of public opinion research in his role at the Office of Price Administration, Hart indicated his strong agreement with Woodward's conception of polls as a "public utility." Consequently, he said, the polling industry must either impose standards on itself or must submit to the imposition of standards from outside the field. "Such standards are particularly needed in view of the increasing number of fly-by-night polls which can bring disrepute upon the entire industry." Hart illustrated his point by citing two instances in which he said the status of OPA had been adversely affected by the reporting of invalid survey results based on biased samples and biased questions. Although their data were injected into public discussion, the polling organizations involved were unwilling to present their original sampling data and tabulations, which were needed to evaluate the results. Incidents of this type, in his view, would damage the entire research profession and "effective policing is imperative." "Unless (a public opinion research organization) is set up and standards made explicit and amenable to enforcement, the polling industry will face a difficult future and will fail to make the contribution of which it is potentially capable."

Gallup then reported "the suggestions made at the original sponsoring meeting for such an association, formed by himself, Roper, and Crossley, and including Harry Field of NORC, and the various state and city polls." No final action had been taken, said Gallup, but an "auditing committee" had been recommended, with authority to investigate all the activities of organizations having membership. Among the duties of this auditing committee would be to evaluate the various election predictions "and determine the most accurate poll in order to eliminate the welter of confusing claims." Gallup's view was to limit

the association to public opinion organizations because “they have a greater responsibility to the public for the truth of their reports.” Market research organizations, he said, might want to establish their own committee to serve their particular purposes.

Field offered additional suggestions. He favored a seal of approval by the association that would be carried on the press releases of all member polling organizations. Releases would be examined after publication and if they were not up to standard the polling agency would be warned. Repeated violations would be grounds for removing the stamp of approval. Field urged a public relations campaign to convince editors and the public of the meaning of the seal. He further suggested that the auditing committee include one or more well-known persons outside the field in order to provide additional prestige to the committee’s findings. He asked finally that a tentative committee be established at the Central City Conference “to bring in a professional report on the suggestions by this panel.”

In the following discussion, John Maloney (*Reader’s Digest*) noted that polling agencies often did market research as well, that the two were associated in the public mind, and that “the aura of bad market research would spread to affect the well-being of polling organizations.” He accordingly suggested that the proposed organization should include market research companies. Lucien Warner (*Life*) generally concurred with Maloney, but proposed that market research be included in the purview of the auditing committee only in instances in which the use of such results affected the public welfare. There followed some discussion of how the media could be prevented from distorting the findings of polls in their presentation. Gallup expressed a consensus that minimum reporting requirements should be established that would require at least the publication of the actual wording of the question and the type and size of sample.

It was in response to this panel discussion, in which four of the major participants at Central City unanimously called for a public opinion research organization that would formulate and enforce standards of research, that Resolutions 2 and 3 were adopted at the closing session of the conference. Resolution 2 favored “the creation of a national association of opinion research organizations, dedicated to the improvement of research standards and to the wider employment of opinion research techniques” and Resolution 3 said, “This conference delegates to the Committee on Standards the responsibility of representing it in working with the nucleus committee.” A footnote to the proceedings of the Central City conference reads: “Named to the Committee on

Standards were Morris H. Hansen, Dr. Henry David, and Elmo C. Wilson. The nucleus committee referred to consists of Dr. Henry David, Elmo Roper, and Archibald Crossley, who have announced plans for organizing an association of polling agencies.”

One may wonder, in view of the many fundamental and specific issues involved in the setting and enforcement of research standards, why nobody rose at Central City to ask such questions as: Do we know enough to write specific standards for the various aspects of public opinion research? Might such standards not represent a minimum level of effort that would discourage more innovative or costly research? Do we seriously intend to establish a minimum sample size for every kind of survey? Will standards be imposed by majority votes of an unknown group of association members?

That no such questions were asked probably reflects the particular time and makeup of the Central City conference. It was a conference on public opinion research and there were very few private market research practitioners in attendance. Almost all of those in the audience were concerned with publicly reported polls and surveys, and not with confidential reports to private clients. It was clear that the postwar years would bring a rapid expansion of public opinion research and it was equally clear, as all four panel members emphasized, that the field should be subject to some sort of review in the public interest. The conference, too, did not come to grips with the difficult practical and philosophical problems of formulating specific standards, nor did it have to. It was merely expressing a general concern and taking some very general steps to meet that concern.

It was in such a climate that the Committee on Standards took up its task of “working with the nucleus committee” on “the creation of a national association of opinion research organizations.”

## Drafting the AAPOR Constitution

The work of the Committee on Standards and its relations with the so-called “nucleus committee” are shrouded in some mystery. Henry David, later to have a distinguished career as director of the National Manpower Council at Columbia University, as president of the New School for Social Research, and as director of the Assembly of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the National Academy of Sciences, was at the time adviser on American Affairs to the British Broadcasting Corporation and assistant professor of history at Queens College. Budd

Wilson, after his wartime years in research for the Office of War Information, was research director of the Columbia Broadcasting System. Morris Hansen was statistical assistant to the director of the Bureau of the Census. This was indeed a distinguished trio, but in retrospect it seems strange that the Central City conference did not appoint a larger and more representative committee to draft a constitution for the proposed association.

Although both Gallup and Woodward (representing Elmo Roper) had referred at Central City to a proposed association of public opinion reporting agencies, the AAPOR History Committee has failed to turn up any memory or any hard evidence of these plans. Indeed, in a telephone conversation in March 1984, Archibald Crossley (who did not attend Central City) denied any knowledge of a “nucleus committee” at that time. His first serious contacts with Gallup on this subject, he stated, did not take place until the late 1960s and these eventuated in the National Council on Public Polls. We may surmise that Gallup, Roper, Crossley, Field, Woodward and probably others may have had occasional informal discussions about forming an association, but the reference in the Central City minutes to “the original sponsoring meeting for such an association” appears to have been an exaggeration.

The Committee on Standards worked independently, and probably quite informally. It did not report to the Executive Committee and there is no record of any minutes or other account of its activities. We must assume that the Standards Committee members made efforts to contact the “nucleus committee” but that these came to naught. They probably discovered that there was no organized group or committee with whom they could work and that little or no help could be expected from that quarter in time to have a constitution ready for the 1947 conference. The definition and imposition of research standards would obviously have to be addressed by an organization operating under a constitution, so the three members of the Committee on Standards assumed as their major (and only) task the drafting of a proposed constitution for what would become AAPOR. It is known that David, the historian, took primary responsibility for this work. It may be assumed that he conferred with Wilson in New York from time to time and that Hansen in Washington was kept informed by telephone and mail. There exists a rough draft of a constitution for an “Association for Public Opinion Research” dated March 1947, probably drafted by David for review by his peers.

This draft, which consists of two and a half pages of single-spaced typing, is headed “ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC OPINION RE-

SEARCH.” Section 1 is one line only: “Name: The Association for Public Opinion Research.” Section 2 is called “Purposes of the Organization” and lists five “basic purposes.” Section 3 on “Membership” includes twenty-two paragraphs that describe the criteria for membership, call for annual conferences, and provide for an Executive Council that shall meet at least twice a year. The Council would consist of an elected president, vice president, secretary-treasurer, editor, “the chairmen of the three Boards of the Association” (but only two are listed: the Conference Board and the Board on Standards), and two council members elected at large. The “elected Boards” are each to have seven members who will then designate their own chairman. The draft also mentions three standing committees, chosen by the council: a Committee on Publications, a Committee on By-Laws, and a Committee on Public Relations.

Perhaps the most striking thing about this first cut at a constitution is its flouting of the Central City resolution to “create a national association of public opinion organizations.” The first paragraph under “Membership” states unequivocally that “Membership in the Association for Public Opinion Research is open to all persons, without regard to race, color, creed, or national origin, who reside in the United States and its territorial possessions.” This fundamental change in the concept of the proposed organization, from an association of agencies to one of individuals, had vast implications for the future of AAPOR, but there is no documentation and we can only speculate about the reasons for the change.

It seems highly unlikely that Henry David made this decision on his own when he started to draft the constitution. It is more probable that the Committee on Standards, after attempting to make contact with the “nucleus committee” that was supposedly forming an association of polling organizations, began to question the feasibility and wisdom of this idea. Judging from the list of participants at the Central City conference, it is indeed difficult to understand just which “public opinion organizations” might have been enrolled in an incipient AAPOR. Aside from NORC and the three poll-takers, the only national research agencies that sent representatives to Central City were two highly regarded market research companies: Opinion Research Corporation and National Analysts. Three state polls and a number of local research companies were represented, but most participants were individuals who were sponsors, users, or teachers of public opinion research: research directors of corporate, government or non-profit agencies, university professors, and media representatives.



Something of this line of thought was conveyed in a letter from Clyde Hart to Rensis Likert in August 1947. Likert was a member of the Gallup-Dodd International Committee charged with planning a world organization for public opinion research, and Hart's letter urges Likert to press for an association of individuals rather than of agencies. He refers to "a ruling made by the Gallup (international) affiliates in their May meeting, which prohibits any one of the affiliates from joining an international organization (as agencies)" and continues, "Gallup himself is very much opposed to an international organization of agencies. Stuart Dodd, however, had just such an organization in mind, and has already prepared a suggested constitution, complete down to Article N, Section C, Paragraph J." Hart expresses pessimism that the competitive interests of research companies will permit them to function effectively in an association, but adds: "However, I do think that an international professional organization of individuals who are doing attitude and opinion research, whether academic or commercial, would be a very good thing."

Much the same reasoning must have taken place in the Committee on Standards, and agreement was reached no later than March that the association be composed of individuals rather than agencies. Succeeding drafts of the proposed constitution contained much the same language; there is nothing in the written files available to indicate any dissent, and nobody challenged the concept at the floor discussion of the constitution at the Williamstown conference.

An undated "Draft Constitution for the AAPOR" seems to be a revision of David's March draft. The original version has been closely edited and condensed, and some of the language "toned down." For example, whereas the first draft listed as a purpose of the association "to facilitate the dissemination and critical appraisal of opinion research methods, techniques and findings," the revision deleted the words "and critical appraisal." Another purpose, "to promote the proper utilization of public opinion research as an effective democratic policy-forming instrument," was changed to "to promote the utilization of public opinion research in democratic policy formulation." Other changes were also relatively minor. The third board, missing from the original draft, turns out to be a Nominations Board, charged with preparing a slate of nominations each year, and the Committee on By-Laws is dropped, leaving only two standing committees, on Publications and on Public Relations. A third council member at-large position was created, each of these serving for three years, with one elected

each year. This draft also divided David's original notes into nine articles of constitution, with appropriate sections within each.

At a preliminary business meeting held at five o'clock Wednesday afternoon and chaired by Clyde Hart, the Williamstown conference participants heard reports from Sheatsley on the work of the Executive Committee, from Wilson on the activities of the Committee on Standards, and from Dodd on the International Committee. Wilson announced that copies of a proposed constitution for a national association of individuals interested in public opinion research would be circulated to conference members that evening and, on his motion, it was voted that action on this constitution be made the first order of business at the regular business meeting on the following day. When it was observed from the floor that if the proposed constitution were adopted, some mechanism should be in place to provide nominations for the various offices required, the chair was authorized to appoint a five-person Nominating Committee. This committee was chaired by Cornelius DuBois and included Daniel Katz, William Lydgate, John Riley, and Henry Kroeger.

The History Committee has been unable to find a copy of the constitution that was circulated to the conference that evening, but the floor discussion next morning indicated few changes from the draft we described earlier. It is apparent that the name of the organization had been changed to American Association for Public Opinion Research, but other changes appear to have been minor.

## The Founding of AAPOR

The entire conference, almost two hundred people, entered the Adams Memorial Theatre at nine o'clock Thursday morning, September 4, to attend the "Organization Meeting on a National Association of Individuals Interested in Public Opinion Research." Clyde Hart again chaired the meeting and the first order of business, as decided at the preliminary business meeting the preceding afternoon, was action on the constitution that had been distributed to conference participants the evening before. Henry David started the proceedings by moving adoption of the document and his motion was seconded by his colleague on the Committee on Standards, Budd Wilson.

It is noteworthy that no one at this point questioned the concept of an association for public opinion research and no one argued for an

association of public opinion research agencies rather than individuals. What debate occurred was focused on the issue of standards. Actually, the references to standards in the proposed constitution were as vague as they were benign. Article II listed as one of the five purposes of the association “to encourage the development of the highest professional standards in public opinion research.” Article VI, Section 4, in describing the proposed “Standards Board,” said merely that “it shall be concerned with fulfilling the declared purpose of the Association to contribute to the elevation of professional standards.” And that was all.

Though the protagonists in the debate generally represented commercial versus academic researchers, the lines were not fixed and the argument that proceeded was quite low key. Many in the academic camp were doubtful of the ability of any organization to formulate specific standards for survey research, while many market researchers would have welcomed the association’s help in curbing survey abuses. In general, the commercial researchers, who were at a numerical disadvantage, were on guard against any attempts by academics or others to restrict their research freedom.

Thus, as soon as David’s motion was seconded, Claude Robinson, president of Opinion Research Corporation, moved that it be tabled until there had been a thorough discussion of the proposed Board of Standards described in the constitution. His motion was promptly seconded by Albert Blankenship of National Analysts, Inc., but was defeated on a standing vote. Stuart Dodd then proposed that the question of standards be made the first point of discussion under David’s motion, and Robinson asked the Standards Committee to describe its thinking on the subject.

In response, David recalled that his committee had been established to meet the issue of standards and had merely set up a mechanism within the proposed organization to deal with the problem. He emphasized that under the proposed constitution the Standards Board itself would have no power to impose standards on members. Wilson concurred, adding that the Standards Board would simply provide an instrument for thorough discussion of the problem. Robinson replied that higher professional standards should come about through free debate and that the proposal for a Standards Board was “authoritarian” because it gave opportunity for a small group to assume authority for the associations’ total membership. He warned that attempts to impose standards upon members might cause disruption of the organization.

Alfred Watson of Curtis Publishing Co. requested clarification of what the Standards Board would do, and David replied that it would attempt to codify the underlying principles governing scientific method in opinion research and to submit these principles to the membership. Dodd said that some mechanism was needed to encourage debate on standards, Alfred Lee of Wayne University said some such agency was needed to “do the spadework” on the problem, and Julian Woodward of Elmo Roper and Herbert Stember of NORC expressed the belief that free debate could be achieved through the proposed board. Cornelius DuBois of Time Inc., however, pointed out that the American Marketing Association’s committee on standards could never agree, and Norman Meier of the University of Iowa and William Yoell of a New York market research agency both noted that the “underlying principles” of opinion research, mentioned by David, were still largely unknown and subject to investigation and experimentation.

William Lydgate of the Gallup Poll then moved that the entire Section 4 of Article VI of the proposed constitution, dealing with the Standards Board, be deleted, and his motion was seconded by Watson. John Riley of Rutgers University pointed out that Lydgate’s motion was a far-reaching one, that the question of standards was basic to the association’s declared purpose of encouraging the development of the field of public opinion research, and that a vote against the Standards Board would be tantamount to a vote against the entire association. Wilson concurred, stating that any omission of the question of standards would be a step backward. He emphasized that his committee had been constituted as a “Committee on Standards” and that to ignore the problem of standards would be to invite unfavorable reaction from critics of opinion research. On a standing vote, Lydgate’s motion was defeated.

And thus ended the debate on standards at AAPOR’s organization meeting. The outcome reflected the wisdom of David, Wilson, and Hansen in muting the divisive issue of standards in their draft of a constitution. Their primary aim was to get an organization established, drawing its membership from the widest possible range of individuals concerned with survey research, and thus to provide a broad-based forum for discussion of standards in years to come. Despite Robinson’s warnings of “authoritarianism,” very few of the conference participants could discern any possible threat to their activities in the mild language proposed by the committee, and the great majority applauded its purpose. Issues of survey standards have continued to con-

cern AAPOR all through the forty years that have passed since Williamstown, but these issues have been freely debated and the Association has always adopted a very cautious stance in dealing with them.

The meeting then proceeded to discuss the draft constitution item by item, with the chair calling for a vote on each article. The name of the organization in Article 1 had been changed to the "American Association for Public Opinion Research" and two motions proposed substitution of the word "International" and deletion of the word "American." Following assurances that an international association was to be formed the next morning, both motions were defeated. Article II, listing the five purposes of the organization, was adopted as written. These purposes were

to stimulate creative research and study in the public opinion field; to encourage the development of the highest professional standards in public opinion research; to facilitate the dissemination of opinion research methods, techniques and findings through annual conferences and an official journal and other publications; to promote the utilization of public opinion research in democratic policy formation; and to serve as a representative national organization in international opinion research meetings and associations.

The early drafts of Article III of the constitution, dealing with membership, declared that "all persons, without regard to race, color, creed or national origin, who reside in the United States and its possessions may become active members of the Association," and Section 3 of this article stated that persons not resident in the U.S. and its possessions may become members on invitation of the Executive Council and shall be exempt from dues. The draft circulated at the conference apparently had been changed to "all persons . . . who reside in the United States . . . and who are professionally engaged in the field of public opinion research may become active members . . ." This article was now amended after floor discussion and vote. The reference to United States residence was deleted, as was Section 3 dealing with nonresidents. And the wording of Section 1 was changed to "all persons professionally engaged in the field of public opinion research or teaching in the field of public opinion . . . may become active members of the Association."

It will be recalled that the draft constitution called for three "boards"—Nominations, Conference, and Standards—with elected membership, the chairman of each to serve on the Executive Council.

The draft also called for two Standing Committees, on Publications and on Public Relations, these to be appointed by the Executive Council, with no representation on the Council. Questioned about this distinction, David explained that his committee regarded Nominations, Conference, and Standards as potentially powerful groups who should be subject to election by the membership, while the two committees would simply execute policies set by the Executive Council.

DuBois, Chair of the Conference Nominating Committee appointed by Hart at the preliminary business meeting on Wednesday, said his group felt it was unduly cumbersome to have contested elections for five members of the Nominations Board, seven members of the Conference Board, and seven members of the Standards Board. He urged that only the chairs of the boards be elected by members, with the remainder of each board appointed by Council. There were also questions about the role of the editor, who was to be elected by the membership and hold a seat on the Council.

After much floor discussion, Articles IV and V, dealing with the officers and Executive Council of the Association, and Articles VI and VII, concerning the boards and standing committees, were amended as follows. All references to "boards" were changed to "committees" and Article VII was combined with Article VI to cover the "five standing committees of the Association." Chairmen of the Nominations, Conference, and Standards Committee were to be elected by the membership, with other members of these committees appointed by Council. All members of the Publications and Public Relations Committees, including the chairs, were to be appointed by Council. The Executive Council would include ten voting members: the president, vice president, and secretary-treasurer; the nominations, conference, and standards chairmen; the three Council members elected at large on staggered three-year terms; and the retiring president. It would also include three non-voting members: the editor and the chairmen of publications and public relations. The editor would be "elected" by Council rather than by the membership. The remaining articles of the draft constitution were adopted without change and the constitution as a whole was then adopted as amended.

DuBois, reporting for the Nominating Committee, then presented two nominees for each office except that of President. For the office of president the committee nominated only Clyde Hart and Hart was elected by acclamation. Voting then proceeded by secret ballot, with the following results:

Vice president	Elmo Wilson
Secretary-treasurer	Julian Woodward
Chair, Nominations	Daniel Katz
Chair, Conference	Hadley Cantril
Chair, Standards	Philip Hauser
At-large, three-year term	Rensis Likert
At-large, two-year term	Paul Lazarsfeld
At-large, one-year term	George Gallup

Lucien Warner of *Life* offered a resolution calling for the chair to appoint a committee to study personnel problems in the field of public opinion research. The resolution was carried and Warner was named chairman. The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Only a little over a year after Harry Field had invited persons concerned with public opinion research to attend a conference in Central City, AAPOR had become a reality. Before Central City, the event would have been difficult to foresee. That such a diverse assembly—college and university faculty members; federal government officials; public opinion “pollsters;” advertising, market research, and public relations people; media representatives from newspapers, radio, and magazines; foundation officials; and representatives of various public and private interest groups—would all recognize their common interest in public opinion research, and would be willing, even eager, to engage in formal discussions of their common or disparate concerns—this was as surprising as it was unprecedented. As the record shows, there were lingering doubts, rivalries, and mistrust, and indeed throughout its history AAPOR has had to be attentive to the diverse interests of its various membership in its nominations for office and in the content of the program at its annual conferences. The kinds of problems that AAPOR came to face and the nature of its response over the years provide the content of the chapters that follow.