

AAPOR News

Volume 34, Number 2

Spring 2007

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

Polls, Policy and Much, Much More

By Patricia Moy, Conference Chair

Each year, AAPOR's annual conference attracts attendees who come together to learn about the state of the art in public opinion and survey research, and to partake of the camaraderie that is so uniquely AAPOR. Our 62nd annual meeting in Anaheim will be no different. We have an intellectually stimulating, thought-provoking four-day program that is sure to change how we think

about our research and the world around us.

The theme of the 2007 conference, "Of Polls and Policy," is only one small part of the conference. Our Anaheim program includes distinct tracks spanning seven concurrent break-out sessions, educational short courses, and a number of opportunities to

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California, Here We Come!

By Nancy Whelchel, Conference Operations Chair and
Linda Dimitropoulos, Conference Operations Associate Chair



Our "Meeting Place" for 2007

After a 36-year absence, AAPOR's annual meeting is returning to sunny Southern California! (For those of us who were in rainy Montréal last year, this will be an especially welcome change...) Not since 1971, when the 26th Annual Conference met in Pasadena, have we made it out to the Golden State. The AAPOR Conference Operations team has been busily working with Program Chair Patricia Moy

and the staff at AMP to make our return a memorable one. While the outstanding program and short courses are reason enough to join us (and justification for a business expense), be sure to plan to take in the more casual and social side of the conference as well!

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Special points of interest:

- If you haven't yet registered for the conference, visit www.aapor.org to download the registration form and bring it with you to Anaheim.
- Check out the different things to do at the conference — professional or otherwise.

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interact with prominent AAPOR authors. We start with short courses the afternoon of Wednesday, May 16, and begin Thursday morning with a full repertoire of sessions on nonresponse, sampling, methodology, elections and voting, and much more!

Polls and Policy

Survey researchers and public opinion practitioners have played an increasingly critical role in influencing public policy. Who better to speak to how public opinion in its various guises has shaped policy and decision-making than political strategists and analysts?

Thursday afternoon's plenary session features three nationally prominent individuals who will speak to polls and the practice of politics. Dave Sackett, founding partner of The Tarrance Group, has served as pollster and strategic consultant to dozens of Republican politicians at all levels of government. He was a member of the



Dave Sackett

Bush-Cheney '04 polling team, and is the pollster for the Giuliani

for President campaign. Chief Executive Officer of The Mellman Group, Mark Mellman has played a key role in developing Democratic strategies on a number of issues, and the U.S. Departments of Justice, State, and Labor as well as the World Bank have drawn on his polling and consulting expertise. Named by the *National Journal* as one of the 25 most influential journalists in Washington, Ronald Brownstein is a longtime political correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times* who recently was named a columnist for its op-ed page. These three will share their perspectives and predictions on issues



Mark Mellman

near and dear to the AAPOR membership.

The plenary notwithstanding, sessions will address the interplay among polls, politicians and the public. A Thursday morning session featuring key political scientists and analysts – Lawrence Jacobs, David Moore, Benjamin Page, and Michael Traugott – will collectively examine how polling is used and misused by politicians, how politicians and the public can diverge greatly on issues, and how the public can interpret or misinterpret poll results. Kathleen Frankovic will serve as discussant.

Theme-related presenta-

tions punctuate the program, with researchers talking about policy development in the case of banking laws, tax cuts, and gambling



Ronald Brownstein

among youth. We'll also hear how survey research and public opinion can inform policy in places as close as California and Canada and as far as Afghanistan.

Cell Phone Surveying

This year's program is sure to bring conference attendees to the frontier of cell-phone surveying, thanks to the entrepreneurialism of Paul Lavrakas. Paul and a team of collaborators have spearheaded efforts to create a cell-phone track to help attendees identify and understand the impact of cell phones on survey research.

Beginning Thursday morning, attendees can attend two days of sessions dealing with coverage bias, cell phone users' attitudes and behaviors, weighting and sampling, alternative sampling frames and results from pilot studies. For those interested in cell phones and who have not yet booked their flights to California, consider arriving Wednesday early afternoon to take AAPOR's short course *Cell Phones and Survey Research*. This 3.5-hour course

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covers survey design, field operations, analytical issues and ethical and legal concerns related to cell phones and survey research.

Methodology and Nonresponse

There is no dearth of AAPOR sessions dealing with methodological issues. The 2007 conference program includes over 40 sessions related to measurement issues, sampling, questionnaire design, interviewer effects, web surveys and nonresponse, just to name a few. To highlight one or two particular sessions would be an injustice to the hundreds of individuals who constitute the pool of authors.

Because the landscape of survey research practices evolves each year, our sessions in Anaheim will introduce attendees to new ways of thinking about our work. Michael Schober and Frederick Conrad have organized a special panel on communication technologies and the survey interview process. Other technology-oriented papers speak to interactive voice response systems and audio personal digital assistants.



Mollyann Brodie, chair of AAPOR's Education Committee

Mark Morgan has organized a roundtable on the challenges of conducting establishment surveys, and Tom W. Smith has coordinated a special session on how the International Standards Organization's (ISO) new ethical, technical, disclosure and performance standards implicate the qualitative and quantitative work AAPOR members conduct.

This year, in response to feedback from AAPOR members, we are experimenting with a new type of session called "Methodological Briefs."

Research presented in these sessions is based on smaller studies, one or two hypotheses, or a key finding. These sessions are our way of accommodating more parties in our ongoing research conversations, and we hope that fruitful discussions will arise from seven Methodological Briefs sessions in Anaheim. So regardless of whether you're interested in incentives, sampling, mode effects, or another methodological issue, you're sure to find stimulating sessions to attend!

Public Opinion

The P and the O in AAPOR do stand for public opinion! Our public opinion track in Anaheim spans an impressive array of topics, including health care, the environment, gay marriage, racial attitudes, politics, the Iraq war, stem cell research, and immigration. Hear late-breaking figures on the latest controversies. Hear findings from the Pew Research Center's first-ever national telephone survey of Muslim Americans. Hear how political attitudes are shaped by media, interpersonal discussions, and the information environment in general.



Elections and Voting

Last, but certainly not least, researchers in our elections and voting track will present remarkable data sets related to the 2006 midterm elections as well as elections in other countries. We'll hear about the gender gap, partisanship, and ideological influences on the vote. Scholars and practitioners will speak to mixed-mode effects in election polling, and we'll learn about the challenges of improving estimates among minority voters. Of course, our meeting in Anaheim would break with tradition if the program did not include papers on exit polling issues. This track, which includes Floyd Ciruli's roundtable on the western battleground states, has incredibly broad appeal and is sure to resonate with the politically avid and those who eagerly anticipate the campaign season that lies before us.

AAPOR's annual conference includes a wealth of cutting-edge research sessions, but much is to be gained from the numerous education and development opportunities offered outside of the sessions.

Short Courses

Mollyann Brodie, chair of the Education Committee, has organized a wide range of short courses designed for the beginning

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survey researcher as well as the seasoned practitioner. We begin Wednesday afternoon with two concurrent offerings: John Hall, Linda Piekarski, Mario Callegaro, and Donna Gillin will lead the aforementioned course on cell phones and survey research, while Karol Krotki and Sunghee Lee will head up a second course on propensity score adjustment.

Thursday morning, conference attendees can choose between Martin Frankel and Michael Link's course on multimode data collection and Nora Cate Schaeffer's Introduction to Writing Survey Questions. And Friday morning, Colm O'Muircheartaigh will offer his introductory non-mathematical course on survey sampling.

Priced at \$120 each and taught by specialists with more than two centuries of combined expertise, these five short courses offer a great return on one's investment. The Pew Research Center will be underwriting half the short-course fees for 40 full-time students, so we encourage students to register for these courses!

Professional Development

Outside of these short courses, AAPOR will be offering two professional development breakfasts Saturday morning. The first breakfast is organized around the concept of communicating poll results and survey research to journalists, clients, and non-scientists. Attendees will interact with and learn from the experiences of: Nancy Belden, partner at Belden Russonello and Stewart; Mike Mokrzycki, director of polling at the Associated Press; and Rich Morin, formerly director of polling

for the *Washington Post* and now senior editor at the Pew Research Center.

The second professional development breakfast concerns multilingual issues in surveys, including questionnaire translation, the use of interpreters, and managing international and/or multilingual data collection projects. Lauren Doerr of NORC and Brad Edwards of Westat wish to



Courtesy of AOCVCB

bring these issues to the fore, so interested parties should contact them for additional information.

Three poster sessions allow conference attendees to mingle with each other more informally. During these poster sessions, attendees can take time out to meet a number of authors whose recently published books add to the growing literature on public opinion and survey research.

Meet the Author

Book exhibits coordinator Michael Xenos has arranged for Benjamin Page and David Moore to appear in Thursday afternoon's Meet the Author session. Ben will be chatting with attendees about his book with Marshall Mouton, *The Foreign Policy Disconnect: What Americans Want from Our Leaders but Don't Get*. David, in another part of the exhibits hall, will be discussing *How to Steal an Election: The Inside Story of How George Bush's Brother and FOX Network Miscalculated the 2000 Election and Changed the Course of History*. Friday afternoon's MTA session will highlight Patricia Gwartney's *The Telephone Interviewer's Handbook: How to Conduct Standardized Conversations* and Cliff Zukin, Scott Keeter, Molly Andolina, Krista Jenkins and Michael X. Delli Carpini's *A New Engagement? Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen*. Delli Carpini and Keeter, authors of *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters*, will be doing another MTA session Saturday afternoon as the recipients of this year's AAPOR Book Award. Also scheduled for Saturday afternoon's session is Lance Bennett who, with Regina Lawrence and Steve Livingston, will have just published *When the Press Fails: Political Power and the News Media from Iraq to Katrina*. As always, copies of the books will be available at these sessions.

With everything that our conference in Anaheim has to offer, register now and join us at that meeting place called AAPOR!