President’s Message

Welcome to our inaugural Chapter newsletter, intended to update you on our activities as we look forward to the year ahead. I want to thank Missy Mosher and Patrick Madden for taking the time and effort to create this newsletter and for their dedication to the discipline of survey methodology and public opinion research.

Let me begin with a brief self-introduction, my name is Spencer Kimball. I studied survey research under David Paleologos at Suffolk University over 15 years ago and then honed my polling skills, working mostly on political campaigns around the country. Since 2012, I have been the Director of the Emerson College Poll.

I joined New England AAPOR when it was re-incorporated under the leadership of Steve Koczela (The MassINC Polling Group) in 2013, and have had the opportunity to work with past Presidents Philip Brenner, Gillian Steel Fisher and Tami Buhr. At our events, I have met some of the veterans, like Dr. Chase Harrison, a pioneer in the earlier period of NEAAPOR.

2017-2018 witnessed NEAAPOR building on previous event successes, like the Winter Mixer, and creating new events at a highly successful student poster symposium at Emerson College. Last year, we had 12 excellent student entries from 3 Colleges/Universities, and this year we plan to expand the participation, moving the event to the end of the spring. Currently, we are looking at firming up a location.

NEAAPOR also collaborated with the University of Connecticut in hosting a free panel discussion and networking event, “Increasing Survey Response with Alternative Fielding Methods: Results from the Field.” This provocative event included experts Stephanie Marken, Chief Methodologist at Gallup, Nicole Mitchell, Knowledge Specialist at RN SSI, and Tami Buhr, Vice President at Opinion Dynamics.

In addition to these engaging activities, I am proud to report that New England is the home of 7 of Nate Silver’s top 55 pollsters, a feat we can all be proud of. (https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/pollster-ratings/).

Given this impressive record of achievement, I know all of us look forward to getting together this fall to share insights and perspectives on the upcoming midterm elections. Enjoy your summer respite and reserve your energy for what all of us know will an exciting and invigorating fall for pollsters!

Best,
Spencer Kimball
NEAAPOR was well represented at the 73rd Annual AAPOR Conference in Denver this May. We hope everyone who attended the conference had an opportunity to stop by our table during the chapter reception and pick up some maple candy from Pieces of Vermont. We also congratulate the randomly selected winner of our Stonewall Kitchen breakfast basket giveaway, Eric Jodts of Westat. A number of NEAAPOR members presented at the AAPOR conference, including executive council members Brian Robertson, Patrick Madden, Philip Brenner and Missy Mosher. NEAAPOR was also a proud sponsor for PAPOR’s game night event, at the ViewHouse in Denver.
2017-18 Year in Review

NEAAPOR sponsored multiple events during the past year which included professional development, networking and a student poster competition.

**Anybody Home?? A Panel Discussion on Increasing Survey Response**

NEAAPOR and the University of Connecticut co-sponsored a free panel discussion and networking event, "Increasing Survey Response with Alternative Fielding Methods: Results from the Field." Experts Stephanie Marken, Chief Methodologist at Gallup, Nicole Mitchell, Knowledge Specialist at RN SSI and Tami Buhr, Vice President at Opinion Dynamics presented results from real world applications to increase respondent participation and representativeness in survey research.

Speakers:

- Nicole Mitchell, Knowledge Specialist at RN SSI - “Common Questionnaire Design Errors That Impact Respondent Experience & Results”

- Stephanie Marken, Chief Methodologist, the Gallup Poll presented on “When Push Comes to Shove: Identifying the Optimal Mail and Web ABS Design”

- Tami Buhr, Vice President at Opinion Dynamics presented on the “Use of the Census Low Response Score and Survey Incentives to Oversample Hard-to-Reach Survey Respondents”

Moderator:

- Jennifer Dineen, Program Director, Graduate Program in Survey Research at UConn

**NEAAPOR’s Second Annual Winter Mixer**

NEAAPOR hosted a fun social/networking event at Meadhall in Cambridge the evening of Thursday, January 18th, 2018. The event was free and open to both members and non-members in the Boston area and was attended by approximately 20 people. Food was provided by NEAAPOR. Look forward to our invite for this year’s winter event!

**Inaugural Student Research Poster Symposium**

This past fall NEAAPOR was proud to sponsor an Inaugural Student Research Poster Symposium and Reception as part of the Emerson College Global Election Retrospective. This event celebrated student passion for public opinion research and invited students to present their original research results to industry professionals, academics and practitioners.
A total of twelve students from several universities in New England participated in the event presenting their posters to a panel of judges. Student posters covered a range of interesting topics related to public opinion research including racial inequality, poverty, gender bias, politics, questionnaire design and data collection.

After hearing oral presentations from all the students, judges voted on and selected a top 3. There was also a “fan favorite” selection that was chosen by all attendees collectively. NEAAPOR would like to thank all of the students who participated in this event and helped make it a success and congratulations to those selected as winners!

We look forward to hosting our 2nd Annual Student Research Poster Symposium in the Spring of 2019. More information on that event will be available soon.
Student Spotlight

Get to know one of the student winners of last Fall’s Inaugural Student Research Poster Symposium!

Name: Rose Warren

Hails from: Sharon, MA

Student Status: Political Communication major at Emerson College

NEAAPOR: Rose, tell us a little bit about how you became interested in social research?

Rose: I started getting involved with political and public opinion polling as a sophomore while taking a course with Professor Spencer Kimball. The class was during the Fall of 2016, so the presidential election was in high gear and so was Emerson Polling. Many of the students in this class got involved with the polling society and we learned and implemented every step of the polling process. I am still very involved with Emerson Polling and am looking forward to next semester with the 2018 Midterms! I find polling exciting and super interesting. Emerson is great because there are a lot of political nerds who also fall asleep at night dreaming about Nate Silver. Having our work nationally broadcasted and considered is also always fun to see.

NEAAPOR: I’m sure Nate would love to hear that he is inspiring young researchers! Can you tell us about your winning poster topic and why you chose it?

Rose: My cohort, Rahul Thayil, and I conducted research into gender bias in women's studies. The survey we created was recorded with both a male and female voice operator plus an online poll as control. The goal of the project was to understand if gender of the voice operator affected response. The poll found a significant bias was present.

Any little factor can shift response in a survey, so doing more research into these effects is something I find important and intriguing. Gender is a more nuanced factor that has underlying implications of sexism and stereotypes that Rahul and I wanted to explore more. A question about repealing Roe v Wade was our main research point. As we expected, women who spoke to women were the most likely to say "no" to repealing the 1973 Supreme Court decision.
The only anomaly in the data was male participants who spoke to female voice operators. Men who answered "yes" to repealing Roe v Wade were much more likely to do so if they were talking to a woman. More research is necessary to understand why this happened.

**NEAAPOR:** That is interesting! Tell us how you found out about the NEAAPOR Student Poster symposium and what made you decide to participate?

**Rose:** I heard of the NEAAPOR Poster Symposium from Professor Spencer Kimball. Spencer encouraged many of us in his Advanced Polling course to conduct research and partake in the event. I had worked on many polls, but had never presented one myself. At the Symposium, I was able to refine my presentation skills with a group of professionals who were also interested in public opinion. My favorite part of the Poster Symposium was being able to see the research done by other students at Emerson and throughout New England. Everyone had clean, interesting and advanced polling to showcase. It was an invigorating environment.

**NEAAPOR:** Thank you so much for your time today and we look forward to seeing more research from you and your colleagues in the future!

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**GENDER BIAS IN WOMEN'S STUDIES**

**opinions on abortion**

**executive analysis:** From November 2015 to 2016, we conducted a poll in Virginia to understand the relationship between the participant and the voice operator. The survey was recorded by both a male and female, to see if there would be a significant difference in the response to a question on abortion based on sex bias gender of the voice operator. The poll found a significant bias was present.

**introduction & background research**
In Virginia, the two candidates for the governor race differing strongly on issues related to abortion. Leigh Northam (D-VA) favors the issue, while his opponent, Ed Gillespie (R-VA), does not. We conducted a survey to understand differences in attitudes toward women's rights.

**methodology**
The Virginia poll was conducted on November 2-3 through November 4, 2015, in both English and Spanish. The sample consisted of 800 self-reported adults who are likely to vote in the November election. The data was weighted for age, gender, party affiliation, and education level by the state. After the poll, we calculated the margin of error for the survey using the standard formula for margin of error.

**research questions**
- What is the difference in the perception of abortion between men and women?
- Is there a correlation between the sex of the voice operator and the response to abortion questions?
- How does gender bias manifest in polling about abortion?

**conclusion**
The results of this poll are important because they reveal a phenomenon known as social bias of the respondent toward the voice operator polling the data. Our data suggests that people are more likely to agree with male and female voice operators and a majority if they were talking to this. Results are consistent with research on other states, and the methodology used here justifies its use.
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Become a Member of NEAAPOR!

We encourage you to join the New England chapter of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (NEAAPOR). We host a series of compelling workshops, lectures and panel discussions throughout the year. We are sure you will find NEAAPOR membership to be a valuable part of your experience in the New England survey research community.

And if you are a student, membership is free!

Email Missy Mosher at missy.mosher@surveysampling.com for more information about how to become a member or visit www.neaapor.org/membership to find out how.
Envisioning the Future of Research

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