



AAPOR

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

May 18-21, 2017

Sheraton New Orleans
New Orleans, Louisiana

72nd
Annual
Conference

Abstract Book

Embracing Change and
Diversity in Public Opinion
and Social Research

www.aapor.org/conference

   #AAPOR

May 20th, 2017
8:00 AM - 9:30 AM
Concurrent Session F

The Election, Polls and the Media

Diminished Voices: Polling, the Press, and the Representation of Minority Perspectives in Political Discourse

Shakari Byerly *University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)*

This paper will explore the use of polling by print news outlets and the representation of minority interests in their reporting of mass opinions. Pioneers of polling such as George Gallup, Elmo Roper, and Hadley Cantril envisioned polls as a mechanism for conveying the popular will. However, the emphasis on state and national polls shifts the focus towards majority populations. This is in contrast to the Madisonian vision of democracy, which emphasizes the importance of the opinions of political minorities. Much of the research on the role of polling in the democratic process focuses on how public opinion is measured, whether it can be measured, how the publication of polling results impacts electoral outcomes, or how it is utilized by interest groups and political campaigns to manipulate public opinion and advance the self-interest of the entities sponsoring the research. Much less attention has been given to how polling as a component of the political process impacts representation, or how it is utilized by the press within the political context, particularly as it relates to the attention given to reporting on minority interests. Data comes from the Los Angeles Times poll, which dates back to 1977, as well as content analysis of news coverage of ballot initiative and candidate campaigns associated with these polls. It will examine trends in the sampling of minorities, including sampling methodologies, and explore correlations between subgroup sample sizes, majority-minority attitudinal polarization, and news coverage of the opinions of racial and ethnic minorities. This study will also include discussion of the methodological approach employed in the 2016 LA Times Day Break Poll, which made headlines for its unconventional weighting scheme and reputation as one of the few polls that had President-elect Donald Trump in the lead over the course of the campaign.