

A Knowledge Production Community

Sung Kyum Cho, President ANPOR

Thank you for reading the first issue of the *Asian Journal for Public Opinion Research* (AJPor), the journal of the Asian Network for Public Opinion Research (ANPOR). As the president of ANPOR, I am very proud and pleased that just one year after the founding of our organization; we are publishing the first issue. For those of you who may be less familiar with our organization, you may be wondering about our purpose.

Why do we need the Asian Journal of Public Opinion Research? Why do we even need an Asian Network for Public Opinion Research? After all, there are already international organizations, such as the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR). There are also country specific organizations with their own journals and conferences.

While international organizations allow us to meet and share research with those in other Asian countries, it does not seem logical that we should have to go so far to do so. I live in South Korea. If I want to share my research with or hear about the research of a scholar from, say, Japan or China, why should we both travel halfway around the world to do so? It certainly is not convenient for either of us.

At the 2012 WAPOR conference (which was in Hong Kong – the first time in its history that it was in an Asian country), several of us asked ourselves why most years there was no way for us to stay in Asia and share our experiences with each other. Of course, with the internet, we could easily submit our papers to international journals, but even though it doesn't take our papers long to arrive, sending our papers to a faraway publisher feels difficult psychologically.

ANPOR solves the problem of distance, both physical and psychological, that Asians often feel when submitting papers to large international conferences or journals. In addition to the first issue of this journal, our first annual conference also takes place in November 2013. Here, in the conference and journal, is our platform for sharing our experiences with each other.

What about the content of the journal and of the conference? Is this research really something that you can't find anywhere else? Yes, we hope so. While there are international journals and national journals, those of us who founded ANPOR felt that there was a third category: regional research. Many papers may not be of interest to the world as a whole, but may be interesting to those with cultural similarities in nearby countries. While scholars from Europe or North America may not often be interested in problems that only affect Asia, scholars in Asia need a way to communicate about these issues with their peers in other Asian countries.

What differences might we expect to find between Asia and other parts of the world? To start with, we can expect the cultural factors to be different. The USA is a very multi-cultural society, which includes members of many races and religions. Most Asian countries are not so diverse. We do not have to look hard to find Asian countries with families that have lived in the same area for centuries or to find countries where the dominant religion is Islam or Buddhism, which are both minority religions in the West. Culture and background necessarily influences public opinion and cannot be ignored as we conduct our research. Because we have more similarities to each other, our experiences may also be similar.

To solve the social problems of one country, we may need to build on experiences from other countries, but the answer to our problems may not be universal. By seeing what others have done in similar circumstances and modifying their actions to fit our own societies, we can better address our problems.

As of now, our reliance on international journals has created an imbalanced production of knowledge. Some parts of the world seem to be over-represented and others under-represented. Of course, there are reasons for this. Not every country routinely uses methodology that has become standard in other parts of the world, making international publication a particular challenge. Some countries may not be producing many papers of interest to the world as a whole. They may be publishing papers in national journals instead, but in most cases, those are written in the native languages of their respective countries, making it difficult for us to learn from their experience.

We are a platform for understanding between Asian scholars, a meeting of cultures, so to speak, but we are also a meeting of disciplines. Public opinion research is not confined to one field; it draws from and is utilized by many fields – statistics, communication, politics, health, and science, to name a few.

This makes AJPOR the perfect place for what we in Korea like to call convergence research. It is not enough to confine ourselves to a single discipline when knowledge from other fields can be applied to the work we are trying to do. In today's world, we need research teams with members from more than one field. We also need to understand our colleagues' fields in order to fully utilize the collected knowledge of several fields as we seek novel solutions.

Conducting convergence research can be time consuming and challenging, in part because there is often not an ideal place to publish that kind of research. If a paper truly uses two disciplines, which discipline's journal should publish it? How will scholars from the other discipline find it? Journals that regularly address more than one field may be the ideal place for this kind of work, and we will find some of it here. It is my hope that the peer reviewers for our papers will be from multiple fields and countries as often as possible. This reflects the spirit of cooperation between disciplines and countries that we are trying to foster, while at the same time encourages our authors to write as clearly as possible so that the maximum number of people can understand and learn from them.

We are very fortunate that the articles in our first issue already reflect some of these ideals. For example, Shingo Hamanaka's paper, which considers how revolutions in Egypt or Tunisia affect public opinion in Palestine, explains the political situation in the region to give the proper background for the surveys and then explains the survey and analysis methods used.

Of course, we also publish papers dealing primarily with survey methodology. We may take on cultural and societal issues that affect response or the application of new technology and methods. The next paper in this issue deals with the usage of mobile phones in surveys in South Korea. Of course, other papers have dealt with

similar technology, but the conclusions reached in the USA and elsewhere do not always match the Korean experience, as you will read.

One more important element of our journal is introducing public opinion research as it exists in various countries in Asia. In this issue, we can read about the history and current status of surveys in Japan. I hope that this will be the first in a series introducing survey research in Asia.

We also provide a section that we're calling Introduction to Recent Research where we profile excellent and interesting research recently published in an Asian language journal. We hope that this service will enable our members and other readers to build off of each other's knowledge. In this issue, we will read about the new electoral system in Taiwan and people's reactions to it.

So, in short, what is the purpose of a journal, a conference, or a network of scholars and professionals? We are a knowledge production community, with work reviewed by our peers. With this kind of community, we can address head on the problems of society and make a better future. I hope you will agree with me that this is a worthwhile mission.

If you do, I'd like to ask you to join us. How can you help? Read this journal. Submit your own work. Join ANPOR. With you, I know our community will grow larger and stronger. That's what will enable us to make this a worthwhile endeavor.

Biographical Note

Sung Kyum CHO is a professor in the Department of Communication at Chungnam National University, South Korea. He has been the president of the Asian Network for Public Opinion Research (ANPOR) since 2012 and the subcommittee chair of the Statistics Korea (KOSTAT) self-evaluation committee since 2011. He was the president of the Korean Association for Survey Research (KASR) from 2010 to 2012. Before that, he was the chair of the editorial board of their official journal, *Survey Research*. He earned his Ph.D. in 1990 from Seoul National University. He worked as a member of the advisory committee on nine major election polls of the KBS, the biggest TV network in Korea, from 1997 to 2010. He has produced numerous papers and books on survey methodology, public opinion and science communication. He received the DRM International Award for Science Communication in 2013. He can be reached at: skcho99@gmail.com