

Timely vs. Evergreen Research

John Kennedy

Editor-in-Chief

The three papers in this issue are what I term “topical” or “timely.” They can be compared to what I term “evergreen.” Topical or timely research helps us to understand current social, political, public health, education, and other conditions. Evergreen research is less time-bound. Both are important to the development of the social sciences.

This issue has two papers on fake news in India. Both articles are topical and timely. Both cover the fake news in India and substantially overlap in their data sources. The *AJPOR* reviewers and editors determined the research and analysis in both papers was sound. Yet, each looked at the topic somewhat differently. Both papers examined fake news from December 2019 to February 2020, but one paper further examined March and April 2020, the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The longer period changed the data and the analysis. These papers illustrate the value of topical research to understanding current cultural conditions, but the challenge is demonstrating that the research is not limited to specific cultural and temporal conditions.

Over my career as the director of a survey research center, I designed and conducted scores of surveys. Despite my strong belief that carefully conducted surveys yield good scientific data, I also believe that researchers should be wary of the results of just one survey. Not only do surveys experience some biases and random error, they often reflect the conditions of a very short historical period. The paper on similarities and differences in political attitudes of citizens of mainland China and Taiwan may also be just a snapshot of current conditions, and similar research conducted five years from now might come to different conclusions. The surveys I managed, the mainland China/Taiwan paper, and the fake news papers should be interpreted as a snapshot of a limited time period but nevertheless contribute to the growth of social science research.

The three papers in this issue are important because of the quality of the research, the topics, and the focus on Asian countries. When I began as editor-in-chief of *AJPOR*, I hoped to encourage more “evergreen” research. However, I now think *AJPOR*’s long term contribution to social science in Asia will be its development of good science that focuses on the important issues facing Asian countries. Many issues will continue for many years. These articles may not be evergreen but they will continue to serve Asian researchers because they will provide multinational and topical research that can be used by later researchers to help understand change.

Biographical Note

John Kennedy directed the Indiana University Center for Survey Research for 24 years. He also directed the University of Hartford Institute of Social Research for two years and was employed at the US Census Bureau for four years. He earned a PhD in sociology from the Pennsylvania State University. He has been involved in the development of a number of professional journals and was the founding editor of *Survey Practice*, an e-journal published by the American Association for Public Opinion Research. He has also been actively involved in professional research ethics including chairing Indiana University Social Behavioral IRB for 12 years and he served on two committees that revised the American Sociological Associations Code of Ethics. He teaches a graduate course in Survey Design.

He can be reached at Smith Research Center 123, 2805 E 10th St, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47408, USA or by e-mail at kennedyj@indiana.edu.