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13 March 2008

Mr Thomas Wong
Research and Library Services Division (RLSD)
Hong Kong Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China

Dear Mr Wong,

Exit polls in Hong Kong

Thank you for your email of 25 February 2008 inviting me to submit my views on the operation of exit polls in Hong Kong. Thank you also for accommodating my overseas conference schedule, so that I can make my submissions beyond your proposed date. I hope my submission herewith would be useful to all Legislative Councillors in their deliberation on whether or not to "regulate" exit polls in Hong Kong, and if yes, how. I will begin by stating my general position, then give a historical treatise of the development of exit polls in Hong Kong, and then proceed to answer your specific questions.

My general position

- As with my other submissions to the Legislative Council at various times, I assume my submission would ultimately be placed in the public domain. To accelerate this process, I intend to publish my submission at our "HKU POP Site" at <http://hkupop.hku.hk/>, possibly in bilingual format, and through other media as well, as soon as my submission has been discussed.
- Although I am the Director of Public Opinion Programme (POP) at the University of Hong Kong, a current member *cum* former Secretary-Treasurer of the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR), my submission neither represents the views of the University of Hong Kong nor WAPOR. I have nevertheless informed the current and one former President of WAPOR of my submission, and they may write to you directly on this matter.
- I consider academic and press freedoms to be of utmost importance to our society, and any restriction on such freedoms must be exercised with extreme care and would only be introduced with the strongest justification. In this respect, we should set a good example for other Chinese and Asian societies.
- To me, academic and press freedoms could only be curtailed by internationally accepted professional standards, principles and ethics, upon balancing individual rights with public interest in light of local conditions. In the area of opinion research, including exit polling, the WAPOR standards should be our prevailing guide.

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- I am very much aware that there are ample cases of malpractice in Hong Kong, like the proliferation of sub-standard polls and partisan exit polls. Nevertheless, I believe the freedom of all persons and organizations concerned should be equally protected, so that professional polling can freely develop through proper civic education and professional advancement. I urge all persons and organizations concerned, including exit pollsters, to treasure this freedom and find ways to improve themselves/ourselves.

A historical treatise of exit polling in Hong Kong

(Please also read Annexes 1 and 2)

- Direct elections at the Legislative Council level first took place on 15 September 1991. On that same day, POP ran its first exit poll. The administration then was worried that chaos of some sort might arise if exit poll results could be broadcast throughout the election day. There was, however, no legal ground to ban exit poll, so a number of meetings were held among senior government officials, media company representatives and exit poll researchers (including myself) before the election. In the name of press freedom, media professionals refused to pledge non-disclosure, so government officials urged voters not to respond to exit poll interviews. Although consensus was not reached, the media exercised self-constraint and did not announce exit poll predictions before the close of poll.
- On 23 July 1993, the administration set up a three-member Boundary and Election Commission (BEC) to take charge of electoral matters. On 16 May 1994, BEC issued its first set of "Proposed Guidelines on Election-related Activities in respect of Geographical Constituency Elections for Public Consultation". One chapter of the Guidelines dealt with the conduct of exit polls and the announcement of exit poll results, and the Guidelines have since then become the legal tool for the administration to "regulate" exit polls.
- Due to the success of the early exit polls, credibility gradually built up around these polls. The explicit objective of BEC's exit poll guidelines was simply "to avoid unfair interference with the election process by unduly influencing electors". BEC only appealed to the media and organizations concerned "to refrain from announcing the results of exit polls or making specific remarks or predictions on individual candidate's performance until after the close of poll", and if any organization failed to comply, BEC would "make a denunciation or censure in a public statement." This means social pressure rather than legal sanction was the main tool.
- In 1995, BEC further required all exit poll researchers to register with the administration seven days before any election, otherwise their interviewers would not be allowed to conduct exit poll within the "no canvassing area" which usually covers many street blocks around the polling station. The media and researchers did not object to this new arrangement, because the Guidelines did not provide any vetting of application by the administration. Any researcher who gave seven days' notice would be allowed to conduct exit poll.

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- That year, on 17 September 1995, another Legislative Council election was held. Without proper consultation, BEC extended the polling hours for the Election Committee Constituency election from 10:30 pm to 12:00 midnight, but not the other elections held on the same day. A grey area was generated, and the media insisted on announcing the predictions of Geographical Constituency Elections at 10:30 pm. BEC proceeded to denounce three news media on 16 October 1995, but had never adopted inconsistent polling hours again.
- After the 1997 handover, BEC was also renamed as Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC). In 2004, it revised the Guidelines to say that upon receipt of an exit poll application, it “will consider the application and issue approval to the concerned person or organisation as appropriate”, meaning that it now has the right to reject applications, even though nothing in the Guidelines provides for any ground for rejecting applications. Up to now, as far as I am aware of, no such action has ever been taken. The 2004 Guidelines also provides for the public announcement of all organizations and interviewers allowed to conduct exit polls “prior to the polling day for the reference of the public and candidates and such a list will also be displayed at the respective polling stations”. It turns out that such information was also published online.
- Since the emergence of exit polls in Hong Kong more than 16 years ago, a consensus has gradually been formed, whereby the government would not legislate against the release of the exit poll results, while the media would not publish the predictions before the close of poll. This kind of consensus based on self-constraint and a mutual understanding of public justice should be treasured. Although the administration now has right to reject exit poll applications, it has not generated any opposition because there is not yet a case to be challenged, thanks to the prudence of many journalists and exit poll researchers. However, recent development of partisan exit polls conducted on enormous scales has seriously challenged the consensus reached between the administration and professional practitioners.
- It is no longer a secret that candidates and political parties in Hong Kong use exit polls for their election engineering. As early as 5 December 1993, I have seen a political party running a large-scale exit poll at a District Board by-election. During the municipal council elections of 5 March 1995, another academic researcher has recorded that about 60% of the candidates from one particular party conducted exit polls as part of their election engineering. The data collected was sent back to their headquarters for instant analysis and manpower deployment.
- In 2004, based on the information released by EAC at its website, in the Legislative Council elections held on 12 September 2004, a consortium of exit pollsters belonging to one political camp has deployed nearly 2,000 people to conduct exit polls at more than 300 polling stations. The human resource involved was about 20 times that of a media-sponsored non-partisan exit poll operation. Such partisan operations have grown even bigger in 2007. For the District Council elections held on 18 November 2007, the same consortium deployed about 2,200 people to conduct a partisan exit poll covering over 370 polling stations.
- The author wrote in 2004, “The author never objects any political parties or other agencies conducting exit polls... What the author opposes, is the research agencies’ use of dishonest

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means to gauge voters' opinions for their election engineering... The consensus reached between EAC and the media after so many years is that there will be no forecast of election results before the close of poll... if individual candidates are able to obtain... exit poll results to support their own appeals and vote allocation strategies, the guidelines set by EAC to prohibit the release of exit poll results will become meaningless." (Annexes 2 and 3)

- According to the WAPOR Guidelines for Exit Polls, "Exit polls can serve three different functions that are not mutually exclusive: predicting election results; describing patterns of voter support for parties, candidates, and issues; and supporting extensive academic research efforts... Exit polls conducted for public consumption should be impartial and non-partisan. Exit polls are scientific research designed to collect data and report information on electoral outcomes. They are not tools for partisan advocacy." (Annex 3)

Answers to specific questions

(Raised in Annex 1)

(a) Under the guidelines, exit polls may be conducted by any person or organization. Do you think persons or organizations conducting exit polls should be subject to certain eligibility requirements? For example, should exit polls be only conducted by academic institutions or registered members of certain internationally recognized organizations for conducting opinion polls?

- Any person or organization conducting exit polls within the "no canvassing areas" should (a) pledge to follow the WAPOR Guidelines for Exit Polls and Election Forecasts, adapted to suit local conditions, and (b) pledge not to use the data for election-day engineering. The Guidelines specifically stipulate, among other provisions, that "no statement about the outcome of an election based on exit polls should be published before all the polls in the contest have closed", that "exit polls should be impartial and non-partisan", that "they are not tools for partisan advocacy", and that "they should adhering to the standards of minimal disclosure". WAPOR noted that "political parties may sometimes make claims about private data", but these claims also require documentation, and any public statement referring to exit poll results should abide by these disclosure principles and requirements". (Annex 3)

(b) Do you think candidates and political parties should be prohibited from conducting or sponsoring exit polls?

- "Any person or organization" in my answer to Question (a) includes "any candidate or political party". Provided that the candidates and political parties concerned (a) pledge to follow the WAPOR Guidelines for Exit Polls and Election Forecasts, adapted to suit local conditions, and (b) pledge not to use the data for election-day engineering, they should be allowed to freely conduct or sponsor exit polls. In essence, that means they would not (a) use the data for election-day engineering, thereby creating unfairness to other candidates and political parties as well as defeating the purpose of setting up "no canvassing areas", and (b) mislead voters into believing that their poll is impartial and non-partisan.

(c) Under the guidelines, persons or organizations intending to conduct exit polls must make

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applications to the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) at the latest 7 days before the polling day; on the receipt of the application, REO will consider the application and issue approval to the concerned person or organization as appropriate. Do you think this requirement for application is reasonable?

- I think this is reasonable, provided that flexibility is allowed in the final selection of polling stations and deployment of interviewers, because these logistics have to be fine-tuned in the final stage of survey planning in light of campaign development. Provided that the persons or organizations concerned have made the pledges mentioned before, REO should not reject any application unless it has a very sound reason to do so, based on public interest. Up to this moment, I have not heard of any case of rejection. This is appreciated.

(d) Do you think persons or organizations which have conducted exit polls at a LegCo or District Council election should be required to submit a report to REO or the Electoral Affairs Commission on the results of exit polls, the use of the results and information on the conduct of exit polls (such as the names and addresses of sponsors of exit polls, the wordings of questions, sampling size and method and margin of error)?

- No, adhering to the WAPOR standard of “minimal disclosure” should be enough. Items for minimal disclosure includes name of the sponsor, researcher, whether the data collector has any business or personal ties to political parties, candidates, political organizations or governmental bodies, the sampling method, whether the interviews are conducted at polling places, at homes, by phone, and so on. While a report to REO or EAC is not necessary, all persons and organizations intending to conduct exit polls should supply their names and addresses to REO or EAC for publication. An explicit statement on the purpose of their exit poll should also be encouraged. Any such statement submitted should also be published for public reference.

(e) Under the guidelines, the Electoral Affairs Commission appeals to the media and organizations concerned to refrain from announcing the results of exit polls or making specific remarks or predictions on the performance of individual candidate or geographical constituency list until after the close of poll. Do you think this appeal should be turned into a statutory requirement?

- No. The current system of appealing to the media and organizations concerned for cooperation and making “a denunciation or censure in a public statement” if any organization fails to comply has worked well for over 16 years. Our media and researchers have *de facto* followed the WAPOR standard in this aspect, and we should be proud of ourselves. According to the WAPOR Guidelines, “WAPOR and ESOMAR oppose regulation of the conduct and reporting of polls in principle. However, no statement about the outcome of an election based on exit polls should be published before all the polls in the contest have closed... Descriptive information other than voting behaviour may be published before the polls have closed.” It would be nice if the media and organizations concerned would voluntarily pledge themselves to follow the WAPOR standard.

(f) Do you think persons or organizations conducting exit polls should not be permitted to provide

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exit poll data to candidates or political organizations for their use before the close of poll?

- Agreed. The whole idea of setting up “no canvassing areas” is to prevent candidates from gaining undue advantage over other candidates in the vicinity of the polling station on polling day. Allowing partisan exit polls within the “no canvassing areas” defeats the purpose. Also, very so often in the middle of an election day, some candidates or political parties would claim that they are in crisis because exit poll reveals that they are trailing behind. According to the WAPOR Guidelines, such claims also require documentation and disclosure of essential items, in order to prove that they are not spreading false information.

(g) Do you think exit polls should be banned on polling day in Hong Kong?

- Definitely not. We must treasure our freedoms of information and academic inquiry. No poll of any sort should be banned or restricted in its conduct or publication – be it pre-election poll, exit poll, or any other type of poll, whether it is impartial or partisan, and whether it is professionally done or not. Sub-standard polls should only be regulated by the academia and the industry themselves according to international professional standards.

(h) Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the existing arrangements for exit polls under the guidelines?

- EAC should continue to announce for public reference a list “of such persons or organisations allowed to conduct exit poll” (a) via its website prior to the polling day, and (b) at the respective polling stations on polling day. In some recent elections, such a list was not displayed in some polling stations where exit polls were conducted. Moreover, if a candidate or political party commissions a polling organization to conduct exit polls and uses the results for election-day engineering, the cost of the service involved should be counted as an election expense for the candidate or political party concerned.

I hope my submissions together with the three annexes would be useful to all Legislative Councillors in their deliberation on the future development of exit polls in Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,



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Director of Public Opinion Programme at the University of Hong Kong

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Annex 1

An article written and published by Robert Chung on 6 October 2004
on the Professional Ethics of Exit Polling (Chinese version)

「票站調查完結篇：專業操守不可無」

*Note: This was the last article of the "Legislative Council Election Exit Poll Analysis Article Series" written by Robert Chung, with key passages highlighted in **bold red**. The Chinese version of the article was published by the Hong Kong Economic Journal and the "HKUPOP Site" at <http://hkupop.hku.hk/> on 6 October 2004.*

筆者聯同民意研究計劃的同事，寫了一連六篇關於立法會選舉票站調查的分析文章，其實已經可以擱筆。但鑑於社會上仍然有不少人士誤會我們的工作，甚至把我們的調查與政黨的選舉工程混為一談，因此，筆者希望討論幾個關於票站調查的基本問題，作為本系列文章的總結。

本文引用的資料，除了關乎香港大學的民意研究計劃和學生研究隊者外，一律取自公開資料，筆者沒有向任何政黨或候選人打探他們的選舉作業。筆者關心的，是民意調查的專業發展。

1991 年香港進行首次立法局分區直選前，應否容許傳媒整天報導票站調查的結果，很快變成政府與電子傳媒間的爭論焦點。作為調查機構的代表，筆者在當年亦有參加一些高層會議。當時，政府沒有法律基礎禁止票站調查，但個別官員就曾經勸喻市民無須作答。感謝當時的傳媒機構，保著了香港的資訊自由。

當年選舉過後，筆者發表論文，詳細討論美國票站調查的經驗，和檢視票站調查對選民投票行為的影響。在美國，東西岸存在時差，東岸公佈票站調查結果時，西岸選民仍在投票。但是基於憲法賦予的言論自由，聯邦法院仍然否決任何限制進行或發放票站調查的措施。不過，美國的傳媒基於專業自律，仍然不會在個別選區的投票結束前，發表當區的票站調查預測。

經過多年的實踐，香港的傳媒機構與政府之間逐漸出現共識，是政府不會立法禁止全日發放票站調查結果，但傳媒機構亦不會在投票結束前預測賽果。倘若傳媒不守規則，選舉管理委

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員會可以公開譴責。這種訴諸道德輿論力量多於刑法禁制的做法，與美國的制度看齊，我們應該好好珍惜。

根據選管會發出的選舉活動指引，有意進行票站調查的機構，只要在選舉前七日，向選舉事務處呈交負責人及訪問員的個人資料及所選票站，便可以在選舉日在票站附近進行調查，但在禁止拉票區以外的活動，則不在限制之列。選管會今年增加透明度，在其網頁內公佈全部報請進行票站調查的機構名稱和工作人員姓名。就是由於多了這些公開資料，筆者得以在此分析一些鮮為人知的數字。

除了由筆者主持的香港大學民意研究計劃、和筆者協助推動的香港大學學生研究隊外，根據選管會公開的資料，還有 5 間機構在選舉日進行票站調查，分別是香港政策研究所、荃灣青年議會、香港社會及經濟研究所、香港青年協進會、和公共事務研究學會。筆者在去年區議會選舉前，與香港政策研究所負責策劃票站調查的主管，交流過票站調查的心得，其餘機構，則未有接觸。

筆者根據選管會網頁上的資料，再核對兩支香港大學研究隊的內部資料，整理出一個人力資源數表。由於選管會的資料有不少重疊之處，筆者只能盡量精確。數表顯示，七支研究隊中，公共事務研究學會最人強馬壯，其次是香港社會及經濟研究所，再其次是香港青年協進會，合共派出接近二千人在超過三百個票站進行調查。再細察三大機構所選的票站，區域分明，就算其中兩個機構在九龍東同時出現，選址亦無一重疊。筆者沒有考究該等機構的背景，但所動用的資源，的確令人咋舌。

香港大學民意研究計劃 13 年來進行的票站調查，都是為了結合學術研究與傳媒報導的需要。因此，我們使用的問卷都是比較複雜和長篇的，並會把結果全面公開。我們一向主張採用科學的抽樣方法，減少對被訪者和其他調查機構的干擾。就以今次的選舉為例，我們只派出了 107 名工作人員，在 101 個站外進行訪問，涉及的人力資源只及三大機構約 20 分之一。

為了絕對保持中立，筆者從來不會在投票結束前，把結果通傳給參選人士。就算是贊助票站調查的傳媒機構，亦只會在晚上九時左右，才得悉選舉結果的初步預測。贊助機構亦承諾不會在選舉結束前公佈結果。有見近年來參選人士經常在選舉後半天，引用票站調查顯示選情告急，民意研究計劃特意在今年 9 月 10 日發出新聞公報，聲明一切類似口號與我們無關。

不過，選舉過後，由於民主派在港島區配票失敗，傳媒還是不斷揣測，我們有沒有把票站調查結果，及早通知民主黨。一篇專欄文章說：「到晚上七時記者致電羅致光報料，即使他認為這是民建聯放出的『山埃』，也應有好奇心想知道馬丁的選情，為何不打一個電話，去問

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一問正在做票站調查的港大鍾庭耀……」

民主黨的李柱銘，後來在其專欄中公開解釋民主黨沒有進行票站調查，而何秀蘭選情不穩的消息，是得自傳媒朋友透露的民建聯票站調查結果。那邊廂，民建聯的葉國謙，亦在選舉翌日公開承認民建聯曾經進行票站調查，並且在投票日下午四時半左右，透過票站調查得知李柱銘已經拋離蔡素玉。兩人的公開談話，總算給筆者還了一個公道。

筆者從不反對政黨或其他機構進行票站調查。相反，能夠把政策平台和選舉工程建立在科學數據之上，是社會的進步。筆者反對的，是調查機構以不誠實的手法套取選民的意見，秘密地用作選舉工程。事實上，任何有意進行有關研究的機構，不論是智囊機構及政治團體，筆者一律願意分享經驗。須知道，惡性競爭最後只會浪費資源和干擾選民，甚至破壞選舉制度的公平性。

選舉委員會與傳媒機構多年來的共識，是投票結束前不會預測結果。雖然不少傳媒學者也會質疑這樣的安排會否鉗制資訊自由，但這個「香港模式」仍然運作良好。不過，如果個別參選人仕能夠透過某些渠道，取得這些寶貴的資訊。又或者，參選一方或雙方不斷地宣傳自己的票站調查結果，來支持自己的告急或分票策略。那末，選管會定下來禁止發放票站預測的指引，是不是變得毫無意義？

曾幾何時，香港的投票站外總是吵吵鬧鬧的。有人認為木人巷式的拉票活動可以製造氣氛，增加投票意欲。今時今日，這種想法已經落伍，一般選民都希望安靜地進入票站，投下神聖的一票。現在，不少人在提議設立選舉冷靜期，目的就是要建立一套和平理性的選舉文化，與先進社會看齊。

在筆者認識的民主國家之中，甚少政黨會在選舉當日進行票站調查，以配合最後一刻的選舉工程。如果一個社會的選舉結果，全繫於選民最後關頭的情緒反應（如槍擊案），或最後半天的選舉工程（如告急牌），那會是多麼的不幸！

希望我們的社會能夠自我完善，去蕪存菁，自我揚棄有損專業精神而無助民智成長的不良活動。

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數表：票站調查機構的人力資源分析

		港大民意 研究計劃	港大學生 研究隊	香港政策 研究所	荃灣青年 議會	香港社會及 經濟研究所	香港青年 協進會	公共事務 研究學會
香港島	選取票站數目	20	7	5	0	33	0	0
	固定訪員人數	20	14	12	0	375	0	0
	浮動訪員人數	全港 6 人	全港 9 人	0	0	港島 73 人	0	0
九龍東	選取票站數目	16	5	6	0	7	13	0
	固定訪員人數	16	11	13	0	21	60	0
	浮動訪員人數	全港 6 人	全港 9 人	0	0	0	九龍 7 人	0
九龍西	選取票站數目	13	4	2	0	0	14	0
	固定訪員人數	13	8	4	0	0	100	0
	浮動訪員人數	全港 6 人	全港 9 人	0	0	0	九龍 7 人	0
新界東	選取票站數目	24	10	13	0	0	0	118
	固定訪員人數	24	18	30	0	0	0	545
	浮動訪員人數	全港 6 人	全港 9 人	0	0	0	0	0
新界西	選取票站數目	28	5	4	9	0	0	121
	固定訪員人數	28	11	9	29	0	0	741
	浮動訪員人數	全港 6 人	全港 9 人	0	0	0	0	0
合計	選取票站數目	101	31	30	9	40	27	239
	工作人員數目	107	71	68	29	469	167	1,286

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Annex 2

An article written and published by Robert Chung on 6 October 2004 on the Professional Ethics of Exit Polling (English version translated by Carmen Chan)

“Legislative Council Election Exit Poll Analysis: Professional Ethics Indispensable”

*Note: This was the last article of the "Legislative Council Election Exit Poll Analysis Article Series" written by Robert Chung, with key passages highlighted in **bold red**. The Chinese version of the article (Annex 2) was published by the Hong Kong Economic Journal and the “HKUPOP Site” at <http://hkupop.hku.hk/> on 6 October 2004.*

The author, together with the colleagues of the Public Opinion Programme, has written a series of 6 articles on the analysis of the Legislative Council election and in fact we can stop at this point. Yet, since there are still some people in the society who have misunderstood our work, and even confused our survey with the election engineering of the political parties, the author thus would like to have a discussion on a few basic questions concerning the exit polls as a conclusion of this series of articles.

Except for information concerning the HKU Public Opinion Programme and the Student Research Team, all other information quoted in this article were extracted from open information. The author had not inquired about any news from any political parties or candidates. What concerns the author most is the professional development of the public opinion polls.

Before the introduction of the Legislative Council geographical direct election in 1991, whether the media should be allowed to report the exit poll during the whole election day had soon become the focus of argument between the government and the electronic media. As the representative of the research agency, the author also participated in some top-level meetings at that time. At that time, the government had no legal basis to ban exit polls, but individual officials had urged the citizens not to respond to those exit polls. Thanks to the media bodies at that time, the freedom of information was preserved in Hong Kong.

After the election then, the author had written an article to discuss the experiences from the exit polls in the United States and examine their effect to the electoral behaviour of the voters. As there is a time lag between the Eastern and the Western coasts in the United States, when the exit poll result is released in the Eastern coast, voting is still going on in the Western coast. However, as the freedom of speech is granted by the constitution, the Federal Court still vetoes any measures which will limit the conduct of exit polls and the release of the their results. Nevertheless, due to the media's professionalism and self-control, they will not release the exit polls' forecast of that state before the close of voting in individual states.

After many years' practice, a consensus has been formed gradually between the media bodies and the government in Hong Kong. The government will not legislate to ban the release of the exit poll result for the whole day, while the media bodies would not publish the

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predictions before the close of poll. If the media fails to observe the regulations, the Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC) can condemn it publicly. **This practice, which seeks to resort to the moral and public power instead of the legal ban, is the same as the system in the United States. We should treasure this.**

According to the guidelines issued by the EAC, for organizations intended to conduct exit polls, they only need to submit the personal information of the person-in-charge and the interviewers, as well as the selected stations, to the EAC 7 days before the election, then they can conduct exit polls around the polling stations on the election day, while activities beyond the “No Canvassing Zone” are not limited. This year, the EAC has raised its transparency and released all the names of organizations and workers involved which have applied for conducting exit polls. With the help of these additional public information, the author could analyze some rarely noticed figures here.

According to the EAC's information, apart from the HKU Public Opinion Programme and the HKU Student Research Team, which are headed and supported by the author respectively, 5 more organizations conducted exit poll on the election day. They were the Hong Kong Policy Research Institute, Tsuen Wan Youth Council, Hong Kong Social and Economic Research Centre, Hong Kong Youths Unified Association, and Public Affairs Research Society. Before the District Council election last year, the author has exchanged ideas with the person responsible for exit polls in the Hong Kong Policy Research Institute. For the other organizations, the author has not got in touch with them.

Basing on the information on the website of the EAC, together with the internal information of the 2 research teams in HKU, we come up with a frequency table on human resources. Since there are quite a lot of overlaps in the EAC's information, the author could only be as accurate as possible. The table shows that, among the 7 research teams, the Public Affairs Research Society had the largest manpower. The Hong Kong Social and Economic Research Centre, and then Hong Kong Youths Unified Association followed. Nearly 2,000 people had been sent out from these 3 organizations to over 300 stations to conduct exit polls. When one takes a careful look at the selected stations of these 3 organizations, their district distribution was clear-cut. Even though 2 organizations were found in Kowloon East at the same time, there was completely no overlap of selected stations. The author had not investigated the background of these organizations, but their resources deployed were really surprising.

The exit polls conducted by the HKU Public Opinion Programme over these 13 years aimed at meeting the needs of both the academic research and media coverage. Therefore, the questionnaire we used was relatively complex and long, and the result would be fully published. We have all along advocated a scientific sampling method, so as to minimize the disturbance to the respondents and the other research agencies. Take this election as an example, we have only sent 107 workers and conducted interviews in 101 polling stations. The human resource involved was only one-twentieth of the 3 main organizations'.

To maintain absolute neutrality, **the author has never released the result to the candidates before the close of the election. Even the media bodies which have sponsored the exit polls would only know the preliminary forecast of the election result at around 9:00 pm.** The

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sponsors have also promised not to release the result before the close of the election. In view of the candidates' appeal to the voters basing on the exit poll result after half of the election day these years, the HKU Public Opinion Programme deliberately issued press release on September 10 this year to state that all similar slogans were irrelevant to us.

However, after the election, since the democratic camp experienced a failure in the vote allocation on Hong Kong Island, the media has kept on suspecting whether we have informed the Democratic Party the exit poll result. One column article said, "At 7:00 pm the reporter phoned Law Chi-Kwong to inform him the news. Even though he thought this was the fake news released by the DAB, he should be curious to know Martin Lee's situation. Why didn't he make a call to ask Robert Chung in HKU who was conducting the exit poll..."

Later, Martin Lee of the Democratic Party openly explained in this column article that the Democratic Party did not conduct exit polls, and the critical situation of Cyd Ho was only known from the DAB's exit poll result released by his friends working in the media. On the other side, on the day after the election, Yip Kwok-Him of the DAB publicly admitted that the DAB has conducted exit polls and has known from the exit poll result that Martin Lee was greatly ahead of Choy So-Yuk at about 4:30 pm on the election day. The public speeches of the 2 people have eventually done justice to the author.

The author never objects any political parties or other agencies conducting exit polls. On the contrary, being able to base policy platforms and election engineering on scientific figures is the advancement of the society. What the author opposes, is the research agencies' use of dishonest means to gauge voters' opinions for their election engineering secretly. As a matter of fact, the author would like to share his experiences with any agencies, whether think-tanks or political organizations, which are interested in conducting these researches. One should know, vicious competition will only lead to waste of resources and annoyance to voters, and even ruin the fairness of the election system.

The consensus reached between EAC and the media after so many years is that there will be no forecast of election results before the close of poll. Although some media academics have suspected whether this kind of arrangement will limit the freedom of information, this kind of "Hong Kong model" works well so far. However, **if individual candidates are able to obtain some valuable information through some channels, or one side or both sides keep on using the exit poll results to support their own appeals and vote allocation strategies, the guidelines set by EAC to prohibit the release of exit poll results will become meaningless.**

Some time ago, there were always noises and crowds outside the polling stations in Hong Kong. Some people believe that this kind of polling activity can create the atmosphere and raise people's intention to vote. Nowadays, this kind of thought has become out-dated. Voters generally want to enter the polling stations silently to cast their sacred votes. At present, some people advocate setting a "cool-down" period for the election, aiming at establishing a set of peaceful and rational electoral culture so as to be in line with the advanced society.

Among the democratic countries which the author knows, the political parties will rarely conduct

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exit polls on the election day to match their last-minute election engineering. If a society's election result completely hinges on the voters' emotional response in the last stage (such as a shooting case), or the last 12 hours' election engineering (such as candidates' appeals to voters with their critical situation), that will be a great misfortune.

Hopefully our society can seek self-improvement and get rid of those unhealthy activities which are detrimental to the professionalism and unhelpful to the growth of civic wisdom.

Table: Manpower allocation for different exit poll organizations

		Code of Researchers**						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
HKI	No. of stations	20	7	5	0	33	0	0
	Fixed interviewers	20	14	12	0	375	0	0
	Floating interviewers	6*	9*	0	0	73(HKI)	0	0
KLE	No. of stations	16	5	6	0	7	13	0
	Fixed interviewers	16	11	13	0	21	60	0
	Floating interviewers	6*	9*	0	0	0	7(Kln)	0
KLW	No. of stations	13	4	2	0	0	14	0
	Fixed interviewers	13	8	4	0	0	100	0
	Floating interviewers	6*	9*	0	0	0	7(Kln)	0
NTE	No. of stations	24	10	13	0	0	0	118
	Fixed interviewers	24	18	30	0	0	0	545
	Floating interviewers	6*	9*	0	0	0	0	0
NTW	No. of stations	28	5	4	9	0	0	121
	Fixed interviewers	28	11	9	29	0	0	741
	Floating interviewers	6*	9*	0	0	0	0	0
Total	No. of stations	101	31	30	9	40	27	239
	No. of workers	107	71	68	29	469	167	1,286

* mobile across the whole territory

**Code of researchers:

1 = HKU Public Opinion Programme (香港大學民意研究計劃); 2 = HKU Student Research Team (香港大學學生研究隊); 3 = Hong Kong Policy Research Institute (香港政策研究所); 4 = Tsuen Wan Youth Council (荃灣青年議會); 5 = Hong Kong Social and Economic Research Centre (香港社會及經濟研究所); 6 = Hong Kong Youths Unified Association (香港青年協進會); 7 = Public Affairs Research Society (公共事務研究學會)

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Annex 3

Guidelines for Exit Polls and Election Forecasts issued by World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR), 10 December 2006

WAPOR Guidelines for Exit Polls and Election Forecasts

Note: Key passages most relevant to Hong Kong have been highlighted in bold red by Robert Chung, who was WAPOR's Secretary-Treasurer between 2006-07.

Written by WAPOR Exit Poll Committee
Approved by WAPOR Council, 10/12/2006

Public opinion is a critical force in shaping and transforming society. Properly conducted and disseminated, survey research provides the public with information from the measurement of opinions and attitudes and allows its voices to be heard. This document provides guidelines for conducting exit polls and making election forecasts on election days.

EVALUATING EXIT POLLS AND ELECTION FORECASTS

Exit polls are polls of voters, interviewed after they have voted, and no later than election day. They may include the interviewing before election day of postal, absentee and other early voters. In some countries election day polls cannot be conducted at the polling place, but in most cases, interviewing takes place at the polling location.

Exit polls can serve three different functions that are not mutually exclusive: predicting election results; describing patterns of voter support for parties, candidates, and issues; and supporting extensive academic research efforts. The main difference between these may be the speed with which the results are formulated and disseminated.

Exit polls used for projections should be reported as soon after the polls close as practical. Any delay in disseminating the results will inevitably raise questions about the legitimacy of the effort, especially with regard to estimating the outcome of the election. If analysis is the only purpose of the exit poll, prompt release is less important.

In some countries, election laws prohibit the publication of exit poll data until after the polls have closed. **WAPOR and ESOMAR oppose regulation of the conduct and reporting of polls in principle. However, no statement about the outcome of an election based on exit polls should be published before all the polls in the contest have closed. In national elections, this means polls relating to election results for elections in smaller voting units can be reported when all the polling places have closed in those locations, rather than waiting until all polling places used for voting that day have closed. Descriptive information other than voting behaviour may be published before the polls have closed.**

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ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Survey researchers in general and those conducting exit polls in particular need to follow certain broad principles in conducting their research:

1. **Exit polls conducted for public consumption should be impartial and non-partisan. Exit polls are scientific research designed to collect data and report information on electoral outcomes. They are not tools for partisan advocacy.**
2. **Methods should be transparent, public, and well-documented.** These goals can be achieved by publicly describing the methods prior to conducting the exit poll and by **adhering to the standards of minimal disclosure** delineated in this document. It is also recommended that when the exit poll is used for analysis, the data set (without individual identifiers) along with appropriate survey documentation be deposited in public archives and/or on web sites for general access.
3. Data collectors must adopt study designs for their exit polls that are suitable for producing accurate and reliable results and that follow specific procedural and technical standards stipulated in this document.
4. When reporting results from exit polls, data collectors and analysts must be careful to keep their interpretations and statements fully consistent with the data. Speculation and commentary should not be labeled as data-based reporting. Limitations and weaknesses in the design of an exit poll, its execution, and the results must be noted in all reports and analysis. **Results should be released to the public and other interested parties through the general media and simultaneously made accessible to all.**
5. The identity of respondents in exit polls must be protected. No identifying information (e.g. name, address, or other IDs) should be maintained with the voter-level records, and the data set should not allow deductive disclosure of respondents' identity. To limit the chances of deductive disclosure, small-area geographic details such as the specific polling place in which votes were cast should not be revealed.

EXIT POLL METHODS AND THEIR DISCLOSURE

Poll methods must be generally accepted as good survey practice and must be disclosed in advance of the conduct of the exit poll, as well as with any projection or analysis or subsequent public release of the dataset.

Items for Minimal Disclosure: These items should be disclosed with any exit poll report or when any projection is made. Good practice would be to disclose as much of the methodology in advance as possible, particularly those items marked with an asterisk, which should be disclosed before Election Day.

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***Sponsor of the exit poll**

***Name of the polling company or principal researcher; prior experience (if any) in exit polling; and whether the data collector has any business or personal ties to political parties, candidates, political organizations or governmental bodies.**

***Name of the organization responsible for analysis and projections, if different.**

Number of interviews

***Number of sampling points**

***Sampling frame**

***Geographic dispersion and coverage**

***How sampling points are selected**

***Where interviews are conducted: at polling places, in person at homes, by phone, etc.**

***Any legal limits on data collection that might affect polling accuracy (e.g., minimum distance of interviewers from the polling place)**

Time of day of interviewing

Whether interviewers are part of a permanent field staff or hired for the occasion

***How respondent anonymity is guaranteed (paper questionnaires, etc.)**

The interview schedule or questionnaire and instructions

Which results are based on parts of the sample, rather than the whole sample

A description of the precision of the findings, including estimates of sampling error

Monitoring and validation procedures (if any)

Weighting procedures

Response rates (using one of the definitions in the AAPOR/WAPOR “**Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys**”) and item non-response on vote questions

Any known nonresponse bias

General description of how estimates are made and the kinds of variables that are being used, and whether adjustments for nonresponse have been made

Known design effects

Political parties may sometimes make claims about private data. These claims also require

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documentation. Any public statement referring to exit poll results should abide by these disclosure principles and requirements.

Good Practices: Those conducting exit polls should always use generally accepted scientific methods. However, there are a number of good practices that apply specifically to exit polls.

Exit polls typically employ clustering in their sample designs. Because of the possibilities that various groups might attempt to influence voters and/or exit poll respondents, exit poll researchers are not expected to disclose the actual sample points or locations.

Exit polls should collect information across the whole of the polling day. Probability sampling (or full census) for interviews conducted at the polling place is the only acceptable selection method. Quotas are not appropriate for sampling at the polling place.

A national exit poll should represent the entire country, with 95% of the target population included in the sampling frame. If the sampling frame covers less than 95% of the target population, there should be an explanation for that decision.

Exit pollsters should keep in mind the relationship between small units for which the votes are tabulated and that can also serve as clusters for exit poll interviews. One way to evaluate an exit poll is to compare the actual election results and the estimates derived from the exit poll interviews for these same units. This comparison of small unit accuracy, typically at the precinct or polling place level is one of the best ways to understand the exit poll's success. But there are situations where this will not be possible, either because no tabulations are reported at the smallest voting unit level or because the sampling units do not coincide with voting units.

ELECTION PROJECTION METHODS AND THEIR DISCLOSURE

Election projections can be made in other ways than by interviewing voters as they exit the polling place. While most projections are based on interviews with voters after they have voted at a polling place, other forecasting models may include:

- interviews in person, by telephone, or by other means of communication with voters after or before having cast their votes
- counts of official votes in a sample of precincts, often known as quick counts
- a mix of methods

A projection is an estimate that leads to a conclusion about the outcome of an election in a jurisdiction such as a nation, a state or a district. This may occur in two different situations:

- If the winner is based on the popular vote for an office or a party, then a projection of the division of that vote is a projection of the outcome in the jurisdiction.

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- If the winner is based on the vote in multiple jurisdictions, such as election of a Parliament where votes are cast in districts or of a President where votes are accumulated based on victories won in many jurisdictions, a conclusion about which party has a plurality of seats in the new Parliament or which presidential candidate has a winning number of votes is a national projection.

The projection need not reach a conclusion about each sub-jurisdiction. It need only reach a conclusion about the jurisdiction outcome.

The objective of any projection is a conclusion about an election for some jurisdiction. A sample of that jurisdiction must be adequate to reach an unbiased conclusion with sufficient/appropriate confidence in the estimate. A national projection typically requires the coverage of the entire country, with at least 95% of the target population in the sampling frame.

There will be times that a subset of the country will be used (for example, only competitive districts). But if a sampling frame is used that includes something less than the entire voting population of a jurisdiction then the pollster should define what is and is not included in the sampling frame in a disclosure statement. The pollster also must publish a rationale to justify the pollster's ability to make an unbiased conclusion about the election outcome based upon collecting information from a subset of all jurisdictions.

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