

**EVALUATION OF THE 2003 ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF  
THE AMERICAN EVALUATION ASSOCIATION**

**FINAL REPORT  
APRIL 2004**

*Prepared for:*

The American Evaluation Association Board and Executive Leadership

*Prepared by:*

Elisabeth Barnett  
Tracie Costantino  
Lisa Hood  
Eunice E. Jang  
Kathrin C. Walker

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Evaluation Overview .....	9
Analyses Used in Data Reporting .....	14
Results by Evaluation Question .....	18
Questions 1.....	18
Question 2 .....	22
Question 3.....	27
Question 4 .....	31
Question 5 .....	33
Summary .....	36
Reflections on/Recommendations for the Evaluation.....	37
Appendix A Characteristics of Survey Respondents by Attendance Rate.....	40
Appendix B Characteristics of Survey Respondents by Employment Location .....	41
Appendix C Exploratory Factor Analyses of Overall Survey .....	42
Appendix D Descriptive Results for Overall Survey.....	45
Appendix E A Memo on Statistical Analysis .....	49
Appendix F Summary of Analysis of Variance Tests by Attendance Rate.....	50
Appendix G Summary of Plenary Sessions from Exit Surveys.....	51
Appendix H Descriptive Results by Plenary Session .....	53
Appendix I Descriptive Results of Presidential Strand Session Exit Survey .....	59

### List of Tables

Table 1	Evaluation Questions, Methods, and Samples .....	11
Table 2	Evaluation Instruments and Response Rates .....	12
Table 3	Description of Survey Respondents .....	13
Table 4	Attendance Rate Breakdowns of Note.....	15
Table 5	Place of Employment Breakdowns of Note .....	15
Table 6	Item Clusters and Variance Accounted for by the Extracted Factors..	17
Table 7	Open-ended Responses Regarding Conference Presentations .....	20
Table 8	Means on Composite Satisfaction Indices by Employment Location	21
Table 9	Means on Composite Satisfaction Indices by Attendance Rate .....	21
Table 10	Approximate Attendance at Plenary and Presidential Strand Sessions	24
Table 11	Reasons for Attending Plenary Sessions.....	24
Table 12	Importance and Quality of Plenary Sessions by Participant Type.....	25
Table 13	Overall Plenary Session Quality and Importance.....	25
Table 14	Willingness to Pay for Speakers.....	26
Table 15	Satisfaction with Computer Facility and Program Book, By Participant Type.....	31
Table 16	Extra Fees that Conferees Would Pay.....	33
Table 17	Intention to Return to AEA by Participant Type.....	36

## **Executive Summary**

The American Evaluation Association (AEA) contracted a team of graduate students from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) to evaluate their 2003 annual conference held November 5-8 in Reno, Nevada. The purpose of the evaluation was to provide information for guiding and improving conference decision making in future years. The evaluation was framed as an assessment of members' satisfaction with this conference, notably, how well it met the needs of conference attendees and what influenced attendees to return to the conference year after year. The evaluation focused on the key issues identified by our AEA clients – attendees' overall satisfaction with the conference; the perceived value and importance of the presidential strand, plenary sessions, and other targeted conference components; the perceived value and priority of select conference components with cost implications; and factors that influenced conference attendees' decisions to return to the conference.

### **Overall Satisfaction with the Conference**

The primary data source for determining satisfaction was the overall survey, distributed to all 1,635 conference attendees and responded to by approximately one third of attendees (n=592). Consistent with past years, Evaluation 2003 attendees reported a high degree of satisfaction with the conference. The vast majority agreed that they enjoyed the conference (90%), that it met their expectations (82%), and was worth the money (82%). Furthermore, most agreed that they found the program content relevant (85%) and that they learned things that will inform their practice (87%). The vast majority found the pre-conference registration process (79%), as well as the conference support staff (76%), and the conference information on the AEA website (72%) more than acceptable. Most reported that the quality of presentations (71%), and the preparation of presenters (71%) was more than acceptable. Finally, 58% reported

that moderation of sessions by chairs was more than acceptable. On average, survey respondents rated the quality of the pre-conference registration process higher than that of on-site conference registration. They were more satisfied with networking than with the strand sessions/theme. There were no statistically significant differences in overall satisfaction with the conference in terms of attendees' primary place of employment, and little difference in overall satisfaction between academic and non-academic conference attendees. Regular attendees tended to rate most of the components of the conference higher than those who were attending for the first time and those who have attended intermittently, suggesting that satisfaction with the conference grows as people return.

### **Plenary and Presidential Strand Sessions**

The value of these sessions to conference attendees was a key question for this evaluation. Questions about these sessions were asked on the overall survey, and those who attended the plenary or presidential stand sessions were asked to complete a brief exit survey. While respondents did not prefer these types of sessions over regular conference sessions, they valued their inclusion in the program and considered them to be relevant, instructive, and of high quality. Reasons for attending the plenary sessions varied according to the specific session, while the majority of exit survey respondents said they attended presidential strand sessions because of the topic (73%) or based on the speaker (18%). Overall, attendees tended to rate the quality of the plenary sessions relatively high, while their assessment of the relative importance of plenary sessions was more moderate. There were no significant differences in the perceived relative importance of the three plenary sessions, but there were substantial differences in ratings on the session quality by session. Attendees rated plenary number 300 (Dillman) highest and plenary number 500 (Scheper-Hughes) lowest among the three sessions. Not surprisingly, the

higher that attendees rated session quality and importance, the more willing they were to pay additional fees for plenary speakers.

### **Selected Conference Components**

Overall, the perception of the *professional development workshops* was very high. The three most important considerations for attending a workshop were the workshop topic, date and time of the workshop, and the description of the teaching and learning methods. A detailed report for each of the professional development workshops was presented to workshop facilitators.

An analysis of the computer logs showed that computers in the *computer facility* were used 1,276 times by 480 different users, though the number of “times of use” may be an underestimate. The largest group of users was academic professionals (n=452) and the smallest group of users was students (n=266). The overwhelming reason for using the computer room was to check email (86%). On the overall survey, 36% agreed or strongly agreed that the computer facility added value to the conference, while 36% of the respondents expressed “not enough information to judge.” On average, the respondents were not as satisfied with the computer facility as they were with other aspects of the conference.

On the overall survey conference attendees were asked about their perceptions regarding *program materials*. Of those responding, approximately 75% rated the printed program book as more than acceptable or excellent. However, 71 survey respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the program book in open-ended comments; most of the problems with the program book centered on confusing or misleading session titles, lack of abstracts, and difficulty in navigating the contents. Those who attended the conference for the first time appeared less satisfied with the program book than other attendees.

In response to the survey question, “Compared to other conferences you attend, how does the AEA conference rank according to the desirability of *conference location*,” 52% said the conference location was worse or somewhat worse (31% said worse). Survey respondents and journal respondents corroborated this result in their open-ended responses. Of 294 respondents, 213 made negative remarks about the location of the conference (e.g., the hotel was too isolated, they didn’t appreciate the casino, and Reno was too hard to fly into.). Seventy-two of 294 people made specific complaints about the smoke in the hotel and casino. The conference location and facility were the aspects of the conference with which participants were least satisfied.

*Affordability* of the conference and attendees’ willingness to pay more to cover possible improvements in the conference’s offerings was another issue for this evaluation. When compared with other conferences that they had attended, 39% of respondents rated this conference better on affordability of registration fees, while 40% rated it about the same. Eighty-two percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “the conference was worth the money,” and academics were somewhat more likely than non-academics to strongly agree that the conference was worth the money. When asked whether a change in conference fees could affect their likelihood of attending a future conference, 26% expected that it would have no effect, 63% thought that it might affect them in a given year depending on availability of funds, and 7% replied that they would be unable to attend if conference fees were higher.

### **Conference Components with Cost Implications**

When participants were asked whether they would be willing to pay an additional fee in order to bring nationally recognized speakers to the conference, half of the survey respondents (n=272) expressed willingness to pay an additional amount for this purpose, while half (n=273) were not willing to do so. When asked whether they would be willing to pay an additional fee to

insure the availability of a public computer facility, 43% were willing to pay more, 48% were not, while 9% did not respond. The amounts that people would pay for a computer facility were generally lower than for plenary speakers. Finally, conferees were asked about various formats in which the program abstracts might be made available to those attending the conference. Of those responding, 73% would like to access them online (at no cost), 20% would purchase a CD with the abstract if available (at a cost of \$1-2), and 18% expressed a preference for a supplemental conference book (at a cost of \$5-10).

### **Intention to Return to the Conference**

Eighty-eight percent agreed or strongly agreed that they plan to attend another AEA conference in the future. Furthermore, when asked to compare their experience at the 2003 AEA Conference with other conferences they attend, respondents rated AEA better than other conferences with respect to the opportunity to improve their skills (64%, n=372), to be a part of a professional community (60%, n=345), and to network with others in their field (55%, n=324). The vast majority of respondents on the overall survey (80%, n=275) agreed or strongly agreed that they had adequate opportunity for networking. One factor that distinguishes AEA from other conferences is its welcoming and intimate atmosphere. Most overall survey respondents (83%, n=492) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt welcomed at the conference. Regular attendees and those with academic affiliations appear to have a stronger intent to return to a future conference than the other groups.



## **Evaluation Overview**

### **Evaluation Plan, Purpose, and Audience**

This evaluation is designed to serve the AEA Board, Annual Conference Committee, Conference Evaluation Subcommittee, Professional Development Committee, present and upcoming AEA Presidents, and the AEA Manager, who all have responsibilities for making decisions regarding conference structure, content, themes, and services. The evaluation is primarily intended to provide these individuals and groups with information useful for guiding and improving conference decision making in future years. Toward these ends, the UIUC evaluation team worked in close cooperation with the Conference Evaluation Subcommittee and the AEA Manager. We developed an evaluation that reflects our understanding of priority information needs of the subcommittee and manager, as well as our understanding of the intended objectives of the various components of the conference. Our evaluation also reflects some of our own ideas about meaningful and useful evaluation.

We view the conference as a ‘service product’ provided by AEA to its members. From this perspective, our evaluation is framed as an assessment of members’ satisfaction with this product, notably, how well it meets the needs of conference attendees and what importantly influences members to return to the conference year after year. Within this broad assessment of member satisfaction, our evaluation focuses on the key issues identified by our AEA clients – attendees’ overall satisfaction with the conference; the perceived value and importance of the presidential strand, plenary sessions, and other targeted conference components; the perceived value and priority of select conference components with cost implications; and factors that influence conference attendees’ decisions to return to the conference. These key issues are all reflected in our specific evaluation questions shown in Table 1 which provided the primary

orientation for generating and interpreting the types of data discussed in the report that follows. According to registration information, 1,635 people attended the 2003 AEA conference. Approximately one third of conferees (n=592) responded to the overall survey. Because conferees attended multiple plenary and presidential strand sessions, the number of attendees for those sessions is not the same as the number of conferees (see table 2). Table 3 presents an overview of the characteristics of respondents to the conference survey.

**Table 1. Evaluation Questions, Methods, and Sample**

Evaluation Question	Data Generation Method	Sample
1. How satisfied were participants with the overall conference and for what reasons?	Overall survey*  Journals	All conference attendees  Purposive sample of 10 attendees
2. Were participants aware of and did they react in a positive way to the existence, structure, and character of the overall conference theme, as represented in the presidential strand and plenary sessions?	Overall survey  Session exit survey* Brief descriptive observations  Session attendance counts	All conference attendees  All attendees at selected presidential strand and all three plenary sessions  All presidential strand and plenary sessions
3. What were the participants' perceptions and experiences of the following components of the conference? a. Professional Development Workshops  b. Computer facility  c. Program materials  d. Conference location and facilities  e. What factors, attributes (e.g., frequency of attendance at the conference, employment category, etc.) are associated with positive and negative evaluations of these conference components?	a. Professional Development Workshop survey*  b. Overall survey* Computer user logs  c. Overall survey * (+ materials review) d. Overall survey*  e. All of the above except materials review	a. All workshop attendees  b. All conference attendees All users of computer facility  c. All conference attendees  d. All conference attendees  e. Same as above
4. What value and priority do conference attendees place on existing and proposed conference components (e.g., plenary speakers with high fees, computer facility, printed program abstracts)?	Overall survey*  Hallway interviews  Journals	All conference attendees  20 attendees  Purposive sample of 10 attendees
5. What reasons do participants give for attending and returning to AEA conferences?	Hallway interviews*  Overall survey  Journals	20 attendees  All conference attendees  Purposive sample of 10 attendees

\* primary data source for each question

**Table 2. Evaluation Instruments and Response Rates**

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Overall Survey	A paper copy of the survey instrument was distributed to all conference attendees as part of the registration packet. An electronic version was sent out shortly after the conference to all attendees, requesting that those who did not complete the survey on site do so electronically.	592 (36% of the 1635 attendees) responded to the overall survey, 473 filled out survey on-site, and 119 filled out survey online.
Plenary and Presidential Strand Session Surveys and Observations	Short exit surveys were administered at all three of the plenary sessions and a sample (n = 11) of 15 presidential strand sessions. The purpose was to understand who attends the sessions and how they value the sessions. At these same sessions, evaluators recorded brief observational notes to capture the character of the session and record an attendance count.	734 responded to the three plenary exit surveys (out of approximately 1,850 plenary session attendees), and 389 responded to the 11 presidential strand session exit surveys (out of approximately 1,165 presidential session attendees).
Journal	Select participants were invited to keep a journal of thoughts, feelings and reactions about the conference. The sample represented different types of people attending the conference, with an emphasis on non-academic professionals, first time and 2-4 year attendees, and presenters and attendees only.	A purposeful sample of 10 participants including two academic professionals, five nonacademic professionals, and three students. Five respondents were first time attendees, and five had been attending the conference for 2-4 years. Five respondents presented at the conference and five were attendees only.
Hallway Interviews	These interviews, about 5 minutes in length, focused on key issues related to participants' reasons for attending and returning to the conference, as well as the value and priority they place on various conference components.	20 brief individual interviews were conducted with a demographically diverse sample of conference participants during the conference.
Professional Development Workshops Surveys	Surveys were distributed to all workshop attendees and facilitators at the end of each workshop.	871 workshop attendees completed surveys from the 38 workshops.
Computer User Log	All computer users were asked to complete the computer log in order to determine who used the computer facility, how often, and for what purposes.	The computers were reported to be used 1,276 times by 480 different users. 43% of users were academic, 36% were non-academics, and 21% were students.

**Table 3. Description of Survey Respondents**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Responding (%)</b>
Membership status	Professional member	77
	Student member	13
	Non-member	9
	<i>Missing</i>	1
Rate of attendance	First time	40
	Intermittent	17
	Regular	43
	<i>Missing</i>	3
Primary place of employment	College/University	41
	Government Agency	15
	Community/Non-profit	14
	Independent Consultant	12
	K-12 Schools	3
	Foundation	2
	Other	10
<i>Missing</i>	3	
Primary field of interest	Education	38
	Social Services	17
	Health	15
	Business and Industry	5
	Environment/Agriculture	4
	Criminal Justice	1
	Other	16
<i>Missing</i>	4	
Primary source of funding to attend conference	Employer	54
	Self	24
	Grant	14
	Other	6
	<i>Missing</i>	2
Self-assessment of evaluation knowledge and skills	No Background	1
	Novice	16
	Intermediate	38
	Advanced	31
	Expert	13
	<i>Missing</i>	1
Presenter/non-presenter	Presenter	50
	Non-presenter	48
	<i>Missing</i>	2

## **Analyses Used in Data Reporting**

In order to more meaningfully and parsimoniously analyze data generated from the overall survey on attendee's perceptions of and satisfaction with the conference, we focused on two key dimensions of "participant type" as major analytic categories—rate of AEA conference attendance and type of work setting—and reduced the satisfaction items on the evaluation surveys to several composite indices via factor analyses. These analyses are presented in this section.

### **“Participant Types” of Survey Respondents**

Two key demographic characteristics of respondents were used in generating participant type variables for better understanding the factors associated with conference perceptions and satisfaction.

#### 1. Rate of AEA Conference Attendance

Attendance at AEA conferences was defined in three categories: first-time attendees (n=230 or 40% of overall survey respondents), intermittent attendees (n=98 or 17%), and regular attendees (n=246 or 43%). (This breakdown and all subsequent analyses by attendance rate exclude the 18 survey respondents who did not answer this question on the overall survey.)

#### 2. Academic or Non-academic Work Setting

Of the respondents to the overall survey, close to half (n=244 or 43%) reported that they work in academic settings (colleges or universities), and a similar number (n=272 or 48%) reported that they work in non-academic settings, notably non-profit agencies, foundations, and government offices. An additional 10% of respondents (n=57) did not specify a work setting. (This breakdown and all subsequent analyses by work setting exclude the 19 survey respondents who left this question blank.)

Table 4 presents key differences of note among attendance rate groups, and Table 5 presents notable comparisons between respondents in terms of their place of employment. The full set of cross-tabulation results by attendance rate and place of employment is presented in Appendix A and B.

**Table 4. Attendance Rate Breakdowns of Note**

<b>Attendance rate group (n=574)</b>	<b>Are AEA members %</b>	<b>Presented at AEA 2003 %</b>	<b>Rated themselves as “novice” evaluators %</b>	<b>Rated themselves as “advanced” or “expert” evaluators %</b>
First-time attendees (n=230)	59	34	33	20
Intermittent attendees (n=98)	85	41	9	50
Regular attendees (n=246)	89	68	3	63

**Table 5. Place of Employment Breakdowns of Note**

<b>Place of employment (n=573)</b>	<b>Funded their own attendance at AEA 2003 %</b>	<b>Were funded by employer to attend AEA 2003 %</b>	<b>Were funded by a grant to attend AEA 2003 %</b>	<b>Presented at AEA 2003 %</b>
Academic (n=244)	19	47	25	58
Non-academic (n=272)	27	65	4	42
Unspecified (n=57)	30	46	16	46

As would be expected, a higher proportion of both intermittent and regular attendees reported that they are AEA members and that they presented at AEA 2003, compared to first-time attendees (Table 4). Also not surprisingly, self-ratings of evaluation expertise increased with the regularity of AEA conference attendance. Otherwise, attendance rate groups were quite similar to one another on the characteristics surveyed (see Appendix A). In Table 5, one can see

notable differences among respondents on the primary funding source of their funding to attend the conference: A larger proportion of non-academics, compared to academics, reported that their primary funding source was either their employer or themselves; while relatively more academics, compared to non-academics, funded their conference attendance from grant funds. A slightly higher proportion of academics presented at AEA 2003 compared to the other work setting groups. Furthermore, over half of the academic group (53%) reported that their primary field of interest was education, compared to only one-fourth (26%) of the non-academic group, while close to half of the non-academic group (40%) reported that their primary field of interest was health or social services, compared to 25% of the academic group (see Appendix B).

### **Satisfaction Clusters and Composite Indices**

Three sets of conference quality and satisfaction items were factor analyzed in order to generate a compact set of composite indices for analytic and reporting purposes. The first set included the 8 items assessing perceived conference quality on the overall survey (items #1A to #1H); the second set included the 12 items assessing conference satisfaction on the overall survey (items #2A to #2L); and, the third set combined the 8 items assessing perceived quality of plenary sessions from responses to items #5 to #12 on the survey. Table 6 displays the clusters resulting from the three factor analyses. Some clusters (factors) consist of an individual item. These were retained in our analyses because they all represented issues of priority evaluative importance to the AEA conference leadership. Technical details of the factor analyses are provided in Appendices C and E.



**Table 6. Item Clusters and Variance Accounted for by the Extracted Factors\***

Items	Item clusters	% of Variance
Overall survey Q1: Perceived Conference Quality	<p><b>Cluster 1: Perceived quality of pre-conference process</b>            C. Conference support staff            A. Pre-conference registration process            B. On-site registration            D. Conference information on AEA website</p> <p><b>Cluster 2: Perceived quality of conference presentations</b>            F. Preparation of presenters            G. Quality of presentations            E. Moderation of sessions by chairs</p> <p><b>Cluster 3: Perceived quality of the printed program book</b>            H. Printed program book</p>	62.8%
Overall survey Q2: Satisfaction with Conference	<p><b>Cluster 1: Overall satisfaction</b>            C. The conference was worth the money            B. Evaluation 2003 met my expectations            K. Overall, I enjoyed the conference            F. I learned things that will inform my practice            D. I found the program content relevant</p> <p><b>Cluster 2: Satisfaction with strand sessions and theme</b>            I. The presidential strand sessions added value to the conference            G. The plenary sessions added value to the conference for me            H. The conference theme (Methodology) added value to the conference for me</p> <p><b>Cluster 3: Satisfaction with networking</b>            E. I had adequate opportunity for networking            A. I felt welcomed at the conference</p> <p><b>Cluster 4: Satisfaction with computer facility</b>            J. The computer facility added value to the conference for me</p> <p><b>Cluster 5; Intentions to return to AEA conference</b>            L. I plan to attend an AEA conference in the future</p>	70.4%
Plenary exit survey: Perceived Quality of Session	<p><b>Cluster 1: Perceived quality of plenary sessions</b>            7. The knowledge and/or skills I learned will be useful to me            9. The quality of this session was high            6. The session improved my understanding of the topic...            8. I would attend another session on this topic            5. The topic was relevant to my interests            12. The content of this session was consistent with its advertisement</p> <p><b>Cluster 2: Perceived relative importance of plenary sessions</b>            11. The Plenary sessions are not any more important than any other sessions            10. The Plenary sessions are my favorite sessions of the conference</p> <p><b>Cluster 3: Willingness to pay additional fee for plenary speakers</b>            11. Should AEA allocate more funds for plenary speakers even if conference fees increase?</p>	63.6%

\*Principal components analysis with varimax rotation

## Results by Evaluation Question

### **Evaluation Question 1. How satisfied were participants with the overall conference and for what reasons?**

We defined satisfaction broadly, in alignment with existing questions on the survey instrument, and report those who responded with a 4 or 5 on a five-point scale (where 1 = needs improvement or strongly disagree, 3 = acceptable or neither agree or disagree, and 5 = excellent or strongly agree) as “more than acceptable” or “agree.” The overall survey asked about three broad areas of satisfaction: overall satisfaction, quality of pre-conference process, and quality of conference presentations. See Appendix D for a full set of the overall survey results and Appendix E for a description of statistical analysis.

#### Overall satisfaction

Consistent with past years, Evaluation 2003 attendees reported a high degree of satisfaction with the conference. The vast majority agreed that they enjoyed the conference (90%), it met their expectations (82%), and was worth the money (82%). As one journaler wrote, “*AEA is the best evaluation conference that I have attended; it is so well organized, the topics are contemporary and timely, and the people are so wonderful.*”

Furthermore, most agreed that they found the program content relevant (85%) and that they learned things that will inform their practice (87%). Compared to other conferences they attend, 64% reported that AEA is better in terms of the opportunity to improve their skills. Based on the hallway interviews, improving skills was the most frequent reason given for attending and returning to AEA (n=10). When asked on the overall survey about the “single best part of your experience attending Evaluation 2003,” 55 responses were about gaining skills and ideas.

### Perceived quality of pre-conference process

Conference attendees were highly satisfied with the pre-conference process. The vast majority found the pre-conference registration more than acceptable (79%), as well as the conference support staff (76%), and the conference information on the AEA website (72%). It appears that many attendees did not use onsite registration (34% or n=201 reported not having enough information to judge when asked about the on-site registration process on the overall survey), yet 92% (n=331) of those who used onsite registration reported that it was more than acceptable. On the overall survey, 19 positive comments were offered regarding the pre-conference process, and no negative comments were shared.

### Perceived quality of conference presentations

Most reported that the quality of presentations was more than acceptable (71%), and that preparation of presenters was more than acceptable (71%). Finally, 58% reported that moderation of sessions by chairs was more than acceptable. On the overall survey, 297 open-ended comments were offered regarding perceived quality of conference presentations; 116 were positive, 172 were negative, and 9 were suggestions (see Table 7). The largest proportion of comments was favorable regarding session quality and variety, for example: *"The breadth of material offered. It was rare to find a time slot during which there were not at least two workshops in which I was interested and was confident of their relevance to my work."* Five respondents suggested session topics for next year, three suggested fewer sessions, and one suggested more sessions.

**Table 7. Open-ended Responses Regarding Conference Presentations**

Positive Comments	Frequency	Negative Comments	Frequency
Session quality and variety	73	Session quality and variety	67
Specific sessions	23	Session length/timing/number	34
Types of sessions	17	Poor presenter preparation	19
International participation	3	Insufficient handouts	18
		Poor AV/visual aids	17
		No shows	8
		Poor moderators	5
		Specific sessions	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>

*Perceived quality of /satisfaction with conference components by participation type*

*By primary place of employment (Academic vs Non-academic):* As shown in Table 8, overall, survey respondents rated the quality of pre-conference process, on the average, higher than that of on-site conference presentations. Attendees also appeared to be more satisfied, on the average, with networking than with strand sessions/theme. There were no statistically significant differences in ratings on any of these satisfaction composites by primary place of employment. The academic group did show a slightly higher degree of satisfaction with networking than the non-academic group, [ $F(2, 568) = 2.63, p=.07$ ]. The academic group appeared to differ from the unspecified group in the degree of satisfaction about strand sessions/theme [ $F(2, 556) = 2.41, p=.09$ ], but these differences were not statistically significant. In sum, there appears to be no

significant differences between academic and non-academic conference attendees in their perceived satisfaction with the clustered conference components.

**Table 8. Means on Composite Satisfaction Indices by Employment Location**

Place of employment	Perceived quality of pre-conference process	Perceived quality of conference presentations	Overall satisfaction	Satisfaction with strand sessions and theme	Satisfaction with networking
Academic (n=244)	4.36	3.86	4.31	4.00	4.33
Non-academic (n=272)	4.37	3.78	4.23	3.90	4.20
Unspecified (n=57)	4.42	3.92	4.16	3.71	4.17
Total	4.37	3.83	4.26	3.91	4.25

Missing n=19

*By attendance rate:* We further examined if attendance rate was associated with perceived conference quality and satisfaction as captured by our composite variables. The results are displayed in Table 9. Regular attendees tended to rate most of the components of the conference higher than those who were attending for the first time and those who have attended intermittently.

**Table 9. Means on Composite Satisfaction Indices by Attendance Rate**

Rate of attendance	Perceived quality of pre-conference process	Perceived quality of conference presentations	Overall satisfaction	Satisfaction with strand sessions and theme	Satisfaction with networking
First time (n=230)	4.21	3.78	4.20	3.92	4.06
Intermittent (n=98)	4.36	3.85	4.17	3.92	4.19
Regular (n=46)	4.51	3.86	4.34	3.90	4.44
Total	4.36	3.82	4.25	3.91	4.24

Missing n=18

As Appendix F shows, group mean differences between regular attendees and first-time and intermittent attendees were statistically significant in ratings on overall satisfaction [ $F(2, 570)=3.39, p=.034$ ], networking, [ $F(2, 569)=19.92, p=.00$ ], pre-conference process quality, [ $F(2, 568)=11.84, p=.00$ ].

This suggests that satisfaction with the conference grows as people return. It also suggests that conference planners may well want to track a sample of first-time attendees to see if their evaluation of the conference changes as they attend more and more conferences.

**Evaluation Question 2. Were participants aware of and did they react in a positive way to the existence, structure, and character of the overall conference theme, as represented in the presidential strand and plenary sessions?**

*Participants' valuing of these sessions*

The value of the plenary and presidential strand sessions to conference attendees was a key question for this evaluation. Respondents to the overall survey agreed that both the plenary and presidential strand sessions added value to the conference, although there was slightly higher agreement about the value of the plenary sessions (mean of 4.06) and the conference theme (mean of 3.91) than the presidential strand (mean of 3.82, see Appendix D). One respondent on the overall survey remarked, *“The theme devoted to methods made this conference extremely valuable. I learned more from this conference than in past years or from other professional conferences such as AERA or ASA.”*

Those conference attendees who attended the plenary or presidential strand sessions and responded to the exit survey were neutral (i.e., they neither agreed nor disagreed) with respect to whether these sessions were their favorite of the conference (average mean across all three plenary sessions was 3.19; average mean across the sample of presidential strand sessions was 3.14). They responded similarly when asked whether these sessions were any more important

than other sessions at the conference (average mean of 3.11 for plenary sessions; average mean of 3.14 for presidential strand sessions). The respondents did agree about the overall quality of the plenary and presidential strand sessions:

- The sessions were of high quality (average mean of 4.31 and 3.83 respectively).
- The topics were relevant (average mean of 4.24 and 4.27 respectively).
- The session improved my understanding of the topic (average mean of 4.33 and 3.98 respectively).

There was less agreement, although still positive, about whether they learned something that was applicable to their job, especially concerning the plenary sessions (average mean of 3.8 and 3.63 respectively). Therefore, while respondents did not prefer these types of sessions over regular conference sessions, they valued their inclusion in the program and considered them to be relevant, instructive, and of high quality. (See Appendices G, H, and I for the full descriptive information about the exit survey results.) One journal respondent remarked about the plenary sessions, *“Plenaries are a useful place for stretching beyond familiar territory, but can’t replace more directly relevant conversations.”* A respondent writing about the presidential strand explained, *“With one or two exceptions, I found these sessions very worthwhile. When some of the best evaluators speak about their specialties, it is well worth listening. Labeling these strands is a useful way of signaling their quality to attendees.”* Table 10 gives an overview of attendance at plenary and presidential strand sessions.

#### Motivations for attending

Reasons for attending the plenary sessions varied according to the specific session (see Table 11). For plenary number 300 (Dillman) respondents were almost evenly split about whether they attended for the topic, the speaker, or because it was a plenary session, while most

attendees at plenary number 500 (Scheper-Hughes) attended because it was a plenary session, and the majority of attendees at plenary number 700 (Patton) were interested in the topic.

**Table 10. Approximate Attendance at Plenary and Presidential Strand Sessions**

<b>Session #</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>501</b>
Attendance	600	*	700	35	200	40	150	650	65
<b>Session #</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>551</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>727</b>	<b>774</b>
Attendance	25	70	45	50	*	600	50	85	50

Note: Attendance estimates were derived from session observations conducted by evaluation team; an asterisk (\*) indicates session was not observed by the team.

**Table 11. Reasons for Attending Plenary Sessions (question 4 on exit survey)**

<b>Reason for Attending</b>	<b>Session 300 Dillman</b>	<b>Session 500 Scheper-Hughes</b>	<b>Session 700 Patton</b>
Topic	29%	30%	33%
Speaker	32%	15%	20%
Because plenary	29%	43%	31%
Other	2%	2%	2%

Note: Percentage of respondents citing each reason on the exit survey.

*By participant type*

Analysis of the plenary exit survey data by participant type revealed no noticeable group differences in either plenary session attendees' perceived importance of the plenary sessions or their ratings of the session quality. Table 12 shows means of the composites for each group. Overall, attendees tended to rate the quality of the plenary sessions relatively high, while their assessment of the relative importance of plenary sessions was more moderate.

*By session type*

There were no significant differences in the perceived relative importance of the plenary sessions, but there were substantial differences in ratings on the session quality by session [ $F(2, 710) = 36.71, p = .00$ ] (Table 12). Table 13 shows that the attendees rated the



Thursday plenary session (#300, Dillman) highest, and the Friday plenary session (#500, Scheper-Hughes) was rated the lowest among the three sessions.

**Table 12. Importance and Quality of Plenary Sessions by Participant Type**

Composite	Attendance rate			Location of employment		
	First time	Intermittent	Regular	Academic	Non-academic	Unspecified
Perceived quality of plenary sessions	4.16	4.22	4.13	4.23	4.11	4.14
Perceived relative importance of plenary sessions	3.10	3.06	2.99	3.01	3.09	3.01

Note: Numbers in cells are group means.

**Table 13. Overall Plenary Session Quality and Importance**

Composite	Plenary Sessions		
	300 (Dillman) Means	500 (Scheper-Hughes) Means	700 (Patton) Means
Perceived quality of plenary sessions	4.39	3.88	4.11
Perceived relative importance of plenary sessions	3.07	3.05	3.01

Note: Numbers in cells are group means.

A journal respondent offered this view on the difference among these sessions:

*The morning session with the anthropologist was emotionally loaded, which was very different than the tone set by Don Dillman yesterday. I found the session fascinating and it made me reflect on lots of methodological issues like objectivity, advocacy, evaluator's roles, etc. However, when I talked about the session with multiple colleagues, the overwhelming response was that while the session was interesting, they could not find any application to their work nor could they take away any skills from the presentation. I found this interesting since I thought this session had more applicable content than Michael Patton's session—but many of my colleagues did not see it that way.*

Numerous exit survey open-ended comments about plenary 500 (Scheper-Hughes) expressed an interest in the speaker’s research and the topic, but participants wanted more discussion of her methodology or methodological applications to evaluation.

Willingness to pay for speakers

Further, we were interested in whether the attendees’ response to the overall survey question, “Should AEA allocate more funds for plenary speakers even if conference fees increase?” was associated with ratings of quality and importance.

**Table 14. Willingness to pay for speakers**

	<b>Should AEA allocate more funds for plenary speakers even if conference fees increase?</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b><i>t</i></b>	<b>n</b>
<b>Perceived quality of plenary sessions</b>	No	2.79	-4.52**	269
	Yes	3.19		318
<b>Perceived relative importance of plenary sessions</b>	No	3.99	-6.74**	274
	Yes	4.26		330

\*\*  $p=.00$

As we see in Table 14, perhaps not surprisingly, the higher the ratings of the session quality and importance, the more willing one is to pay additional fees for plenary speakers. Obviously, the attendees’ positive attitude toward plenary sessions also influenced positively their response to this budget question.

Looking at the presidential strand sessions as a group, the majority of exit survey respondents said that they attended these sessions because of the topic (73%), and then the speaker (18%). The fact that the session is part of the presidential strand motivated only two percent of respondents. There were no significant differences in motivation to attend the presidential strand by participant type.

### Structure of sessions

Open ended responses on the plenary and presidential strand exit surveys, the overall survey, and in the journals pointed especially to the lack of handouts for these presentations. One journal respondent explained that, “*The lack of any handouts limited my comprehension.*” A respondent on an exit survey recommended that LCD projectors be used in large sessions. In general, respondents recommended that the AEA arrange for technical assistance to ensure that technology complications are minimized, such as microphone malfunctions, an assistant to manage overheads for the speaker, and so on.

### **Evaluation Question 3. What were participants’ perceptions and experiences of the following components of the conference: Professional Development Workshops, Computer Facility, Program Materials, and Conference Location and Facilities?**

#### Professional Development Workshops

Overall, the perception of the professional development workshops was very high. The average aggregated mean for responses on the professional development workshop surveys was 4.18 on a satisfaction scale from 1-5. The range of means across all questions was 3.97-4.67. Attendees reported that the highest rated workshop feature this year was “the facilitator seemed knowledgeable about this topic” (4.67). The lowest rated feature was “the workshop improved my ability to utilize skills related to the topic” (3.97). The three most important considerations for attending a workshop were the workshop topic, date and time of the workshop, and the description of the teaching and learning methods. Approximately 39% of respondents reported that the 2003 AEA workshops were “somewhat better” or “better” than other conferences. However, an equal percentage (39%) of respondents indicated they did not have enough experience to judge. A detailed report for each of the professional development workshops has been written and presented to workshop facilitators. These reports are available upon request.

### Computer facility

An analysis of the computer logs showed that computers in the computer room were used 1,276 times by 480 different users. However, these numbers are not very precise because computer room monitors did not use the log when the room was not busy. Thus, the number of “times of use” may be an underestimate. The largest group of users was academic professionals (n=452) and the smallest group of users was students (n=266). The numbers of user groups do add up to 480 because some users marked multiple affiliations and uses.

The overwhelming reason for using the computer room was to check email with approximately 86% of users indicating this reason (n=1,163). This quote from a journaler is a good representation of conference attendees’ thoughts about the computer facility:

*I appreciated the availability of the computer room, and generally used it at least once a day to check my email. I especially appreciated the grad student volunteers who enforced the 15 minute limit.*

On the overall survey, 36% agreed or strongly agreed that the computer facility added value to the conference, while 36% of the respondents expressed “not enough information to judge.” However, 21 of 32 respondents indicated that increasing access to computers in a computer facility during the conference would be an improvement. This journaler’s quote expresses this sentiment:

*Though I had time available during sessions today, it was still impossible to get into the computer room without waiting in line. After I had sorted through my email and sent out a message or two, I was tapped on the shoulder and encouraged to wrap up. This brings up again the issue of insufficient resources for the computer room. I was not simply loitering or killing time on the computer, I had serious matters to handle as I am certain many other people had.*

The other 11 respondents requested computer access in hotel rooms and access to wireless networks.

### Program materials

On the overall survey conference attendees were asked about their perceptions regarding program materials. Of those responding, approximately 75% rated the printed program book as more than acceptable or excellent. However, 71 survey respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the program book and some gave suggestions for improvements. One suggested this, “*Clustering topic areas in the program book to provide user a more friendly, quick referral to areas of interest.*” Forty-four of these 71 respondents lamented the unavailability of abstracts and confusing session titles. These respondents said because there were no abstracts and the session titles did not accurately represent session content, they did a lot of “session hopping.” Finally, several other respondents gave layout recommendations. Here’s what one respondent suggested:

*Please, please create a one double-page overview of all sessions both inside the back cover and as a separate sheet to carry around. SIOP does this with a similar size program, so it can be done.*

### Conference location and facilities

In response to the survey question, “Compared to other conferences you attend, how does the AEA conference rank according to the desirability of conference location,” 52% said the conference location was worse or somewhat worse (31% said worse). Survey respondents and journalers corroborated this result in their open-ended responses. Of 294 respondents, 213 made negative remarks about the location of the conference (e.g., the hotel was too isolated, they didn’t appreciate the casino, and Reno was too hard to fly into.). Seventy-two of 294 people made specific complaints about the smoke in the hotel and casino. Here are a few quotes to demonstrate respondents’ disapproval of Reno and the hotel:

*The smoke-filled environment was detrimental to my learning and my health. Please avoid smoke-filled facilities in the future.*

*The location was intolerable. First, it is wholly unprofessional to have chosen a casino for many reasons. Worst still I felt as though I was sitting in an ashtray and had no non-smoking havens. Does AEA support gambling?*

*The hotel had a bad environment, bad location, bad food, and inaccessible to other things within walking distance from the hotel.*

#### Analysis by participant type

Since the evaluation focused on attendees' opinions about the computer facility and the printed program book, we examined these components independently. On average, the respondents were not as satisfied with the computer facility as they were with the other aspects of the conference.

Table 15 shows no group differences in ratings of the computer facility. As to the printed program book, those who attended the conference for the first time appeared less satisfied with it compared to the other two groups. This group mean difference was statistically significant [ $F(2, 563) = 4.51, p = .011$ ]. Most of the problems with the program book centered on confusing or misleading session titles, lack of abstracts, and difficulty in navigating the contents. It may be that these problems were more salient for first-timers because they lacked experience with the conference. No noticeable group differences were found in satisfaction with the printed program book between academics and non-academics. Overall, their ratings on the printed program book were relatively high.

**Table 15. Satisfaction with Computer Facility and Program Book, by Participant Type**

Component	Attendance rate			Location of employment		
	First time	Intermittent	Regular	Academic	Non-academic	unspecified
<b>Satisfaction with computer facility</b>	3.57	3.38	3.63	3.62	3.64	3.03
<b>Perceived quality of printed program book</b>	3.85	4.16	4.12	4.07	3.96	4.07

Note: Numbers in cells are group means.

**Evaluation Question 4. What value and priority do conference attendees place on existing and proposed conference components (e.g., plenary speakers with high fees, computer facility, printed program abstracts)?**

Conference attendees were asked questions on the overall survey related to the overall affordability of the conference and their willingness to pay more to cover possible improvements in the conference's offerings.

Overall affordability and value

- Of those responding to the survey, 24% paid their own way, 54% were funded by employers, 14% were able to attend through grant funds, and 6% had other sources of financing.
- When compared with other conferences that they had attended, 39% of respondents rated this conference better on affordability of registration fees, while 40% rated it about the same.
- Eighty-two percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “the conference was worth the money.” People working in colleges and universities were somewhat more likely to strongly agree on average that the conference was worth the money. The

conference was worth the money for 80% of first-timers, 76% of intermittent, and 87% of regular attendees.

- When asked about whether a change in conference fees could affect their likelihood of attending a future conference, 26% expected that it would have no effect, while 63% thought that it might affect them in a given year, depending on availability of funds.

Seven percent replied that they would be unable to attend if conference fees were higher.

#### *Cost implications of conference features*

*Nationally recognized plenary speakers:* Respondents to the overall conference evaluation survey were asked whether they would be willing to pay an additional fee in order to bring nationally recognized speakers to the conference. Overall, half (n=272) expressed willingness to pay an additional amount for this purpose, while half (n=273) would not be willing. Regarding the additional amount that they would be willing to pay, if any, see Table 16.

Their responses were also analyzed according to place of work. Respondents in “other” settings were significantly more likely than those in both academic and non-academic settings to support paying fees for speakers. Likewise, first time and intermittent attendees were more likely to support paying for speakers than were regular attendees. Further, non-AEA members were more likely to support these additional fees than were professional or student members. There were no significant differences in the amount that each of these groups would be willing to pay. Those attending plenary sessions were also asked whether AEA should allocate more funds for plenary speakers even if conference fees increase. A number of individual comments on various evaluation forms indicated that those not wanting to pay extra believed that there were highly qualified speakers within the AEA, making it unnecessary to invite high-priced speakers from the outside.



**Table 16. Extra Fees that Conferees Would Pay (if willing to pay additional fees)**

Conference feature	\$5-9	\$10-19	\$20-29	\$30-39
<b>Nationally-recognized plenary speakers with high speaker fees (N= 302)</b>	33%	39%	17%	11%
<b>Public computer facility (N=286)</b>	57%	30%	8%	5%

*Computer facility:* Respondents to the overall conference evaluation survey were asked whether they would be willing to pay an additional fee to insure the availability of a public computer facility. Of the total, 43% were willing to pay more, 48% were not, while 9% did not respond. As Table 16 shows, 286 respondents responded to the question about the increased amount that they would pay for computer facility. The amounts that people would pay for a computer facility were generally lower than for plenary speakers. Willingness to pay additional fees did not vary according to whether respondents were also presenters, or according to attendance patterns (first time, intermittent, regular). Those interviewed in hallway intercepts tended to be enthusiastic about the computer facility, with most considering it an important asset and many believing that it would be worth paying extra for.

*Printed program abstracts:* Conferees were also asked on the overall survey about various formats in which the program abstracts might be made available to those attending the conference. Of those responding, 73% would like to access them online (at no cost), 20% would purchase a CD with the abstract if available (at a cost of \$1-2), and 18% expressed a preference for a supplemental conference book (at a cost of \$5-10).

**Evaluation Question 5. What reasons do participants give for attending and returning to AEA conferences?**

*Intention to return to AEA*

When asked on overall survey about their intention to return to AEA, 88% agreed or strongly agreed that they plan to attend another AEA conference in the future. Furthermore,

when asked to compare their experience at the 2003 AEA Conference with other conferences they attend, respondents rated AEA *better* than other conferences with respect to the opportunity to improve their skills (64%, n=372), to be a part of a professional community (60%, n=345), and to network with others in their field (55%, n=324).

*Satisfaction with networking*

The vast majority of respondents on the overall survey (80%, n=275) agreed or strongly agreed that they had adequate opportunity for networking. According to one representative journal comment:

*There are a number of things that were very satisfying to me at the conference, but if I had to pick just one I would say that was the opportunity to network with people who are knowledgeable and understanding about evaluation. I met some wonderful people again this year, they are so friendly, so helpful and interested in others both professional and personally.*

Of the 195 open-ended responses on the overall survey regarding networking, the vast majority (n=173) were positive. Likewise, based on hallway interviews and journal entries, a primary reason for returning to AEA is the opportunity to network and be a part of a professional community:

*This is exactly why I come back—seeing friends, reconnecting with colleagues, learning new approaches, and reflecting on my evaluation practices. Here are people that I have enough shared understanding with that I don't have to explain what evaluators do. The shared jokes, evaluation humor, using or saying just a few words and having others understand immediately...it's good to be around other evaluators.*

*There is certainly a stronger sense of community here at AEA than at other professional conferences I have attended (Educause and TechEd, for example). That being the case, there are more opportunities for those valuable after-session experiences to occur.*

One factor that distinguishes AEA from other conferences is its welcoming and intimate atmosphere. Most overall survey respondents (83%, n=492) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt welcomed at the conference. As one newcomer wrote in her journal:

*I would have to say that AEA somehow manages to actually be as welcoming and inclusive as they represented themselves to be during the conference orientation. I spoke with a number of the “ambassadors,” and only one seemed to be talking to me because he had to. Even some of the apparently “big names” in AEA were approachable and friendly.*

A nonacademic who's been a member of AEA for two-four years wrote:

*All of these conferences share something in common. They share knowledge and content. However, the thing that stands out at AEA is that this conference really works hard to meet the changing needs of participants. The atmosphere is VERY friendly. People, from graduate students to the biggest names in the field, are friendly, respectful, civil, and approachable. It's a “safe” place to learn and contribute.*

Based on hallway interviews and journal entries, other reasons mentioned for attending and returning included the accessibility of leaders in the field and the friendly tone of the conference:

*I noted (and appreciated) the involvement and participation of the “big name” people in the sessions. At many professional conferences, when people reach a certain status level, they hold themselves apart from the general populace and rarely show up to sessions unless they are a presenter or respondent. In several sessions I attended I later learned that one or more people in the room were considered to be leaders in AEA or in the field relating to the session. And these same individuals participated in a very positive manner in the sessions.*

*I don't know any other organization or place where I would be exposed to this kind of information or professional development. I like the atmosphere at the conference. People are generally positive and upbeat and don't whine about the downfall of the profession or how we are misunderstood. My institution is also generally respected and admired by my evaluation peers and I enjoy hearing the feedback on our resources and leadership in the profession. I like the pace of the conference. It moves along but not too quickly. It's well organized and things start and end on time. In many ways it's low-key and I enjoy that for a change. It doesn't feel like we're trying to do too much in the time available.*

As noted in the factor analysis, one of the satisfaction items, “I plan to attend an AEA conference in the future”, did not cluster with any items and so was further analyzed independently and the results are presented in Table 17.

**Table 17. Intention to Return to AEA by Participant Type**

Participant type	Attendance rate			Location of employment		
	First time	Intermittent	Regular	Academic	Non-academic	Unspecified
Return to conference	4.21	4.36	4.74	4.55	4.39	4.43

The regular attendees reported a significantly stronger intent to return to an AEA conference in the future than the other groups [ $F(2, 554) = 27.475, p = .00$ ]. Those who worked in academic environments showed a stronger intent to return to a future conference than those who worked in non-academic environments, although the difference was not statistically significant ( $p = .089$ ). In sum, the regular attendees and those with academic affiliations appear to have a stronger intent to return to a future conference than the other groups.

### Summary

In conclusion, Evaluation 2003 attendees reported a high degree of satisfaction with the conference. While respondents did not prefer plenary and presidential strand sessions over regular conference sessions, they valued their inclusion in the program and considered them to be relevant, instructive, and of high quality. Overall, the perception of the professional development workshops was very high, and the majority rated the printed program book as more than acceptable or excellent. On average, respondents were not as satisfied with the computer facility as they were with the other aspects of the conference, perhaps because a large proportion did not use the computer facility. By far, participants were least satisfied with the conference location and facility. Participants were divided in terms of the perceived value and priority of

select conference components with cost implications. Approximately half of respondents expressed a willingness to pay additional fees for nationally recognized speakers and to insure the availability of a public computer facility, and the majority would like to access program abstracts online at no additional cost. Finally, the majority of participants stated that they plan to attend another AEA conference in the future. Compared with other conferences they attend, respondents rated AEA better than other conferences with respect to the opportunity to improve their skills, to be a part of a professional community, and to network with others in their field. One factor that distinguishes AEA from other conferences is its welcoming and intimate atmosphere.

### **Reflections on/Recommendations for the Evaluation**

We enjoyed and benefited from the opportunity to design and conduct this evaluation for the association. Throughout the course of the evaluation, we set aside time for critical consideration of both the process and instrumentation. Based on these discussions, we offer the following reflections for consideration.

(1) *Consider a Two-fold Evaluation Process.* We spent considerable time wrestling with the administration and analysis of the rather lengthy overall survey while also trying to address the specific agenda for the evaluation that was given to us by the Conference Subcommittee. We identified problems in the design of the overall survey that we did not have the authority to correct, and we found it very difficult to address the specific agenda set for us via the overall survey because adding questions to that survey made it unwieldy. AEA might make better use of the student evaluation team if it considered adopting two simultaneous strands or approaches to the conference evaluation. One strand would consist of a short, standard survey routinely administered every year by conference staff to conference attendees (alternatively, this survey

could be administered each year by the student evaluation team—assuming the survey is considerably shorter—see item 2 below). To make this feasible, the survey would consist of a small core set of questions on satisfaction with ‘standard’ conference features, e.g., registration process, conference location, affordability of registration fees, etc., along with improved questions about demographics of attendees. The survey would serve as a way of monitoring or ‘taking the pulse’ of the conference in the same way each year. A second strand would consist of hiring a student team to design and conduct an evaluation that focused specifically on a targeted set of issues (selected by the Conference Evaluation Subcommittee and the AEA Board of Directors) for a given year. Dividing the tasks in this way would allow the student evaluation team to be more creative and innovative in its approach to addressing issues.

(2) *Redesign the Overall Survey.* The current survey could be scrutinized to determine if it is addressing the right questions for regular monitoring of the conference. For example, the question about the quality of the pre-registration process has received the following means over the past four years—4.37 (2000), 4.27 (2001), 4.34 (2002), and 4.47 (2003). This result shows that the pre-registration process appears to be stabilized. And, if so, then perhaps it need no longer appear on the survey. An analysis of this kind may reveal other items with similar response patterns. If a new and smaller core set of questions could be established for the ‘monitoring’ part of a survey, then there would be space on the overall survey, so to speak, for the student evaluation team to design and add questions that specifically addressed the special agenda for the evaluation in a given year. In addition to examining substantive questions, a review should also consider the relevance and accuracy of survey items that seek demographic information. New, more mutually exclusive and exhaustive descriptive categories, related to variables such as place and type of employment, as well as frequency of attending the

conference, could be designed to facilitate more meaningful comparisons among subgroups of attendees. A shorter survey might also help increase on-site response rates.

## Appendix A

### Characteristics of Survey Respondents by Attendance Rate

Total n=592, Valid n=574, Missing for attendance rate =18. Numbers in cells are column per cents, allowing comparisons across attendance rate groups, and numbers in parentheses are observed cell frequencies.

Characteristics	Category	First-time attendees	Intermittent attendees	Regular attendees	
		% (n)			Total % (n)
		40 (230)	17 (98)	43 (246)	100 (574)
Current AEA membership	Professional member	59	85	89	77 (439)
	Student member	22	7	8	13 (77)
	Non-member	17	8	2	9 (53)
	<i>Missing</i>	1	0	.8	1 (5)
Place of employment	Academic	45	34	44	43 (240)
	Non-academic	44	55	47	47 (265)
	Unspecified	10	10	10	10 (57)
	<i>Missing</i>	2	2	2	2 (12)
Primary source of funding for conference attendance	Self	20	29	26	24 (137)
	Employer	54	55	57	54 (316)
	Grant	18	12	10	14 (79)
	Other	7	3	6	6 (33)
	<i>Missing</i>	1	1	2	2 (9)
Presentation at AEA 2003?	Yes	34	41	68	50 (286)
	No	64	57	31	48 (277)
	<i>Missing</i>	3	2	1	2 (11)
Field of interest	Business & Industry	7	5	4	5 (30)
	Criminal Justice	1	1	2	1 (7)
	Education	36	46	37	38 (218)
	Environmental/Agriculture	3	1	5	4 (21)
	Health	19	10	14	15 (88)
	Social Services	17	16	18	17 (99)
	Other	15	19	17	17 (95)
	<i>Missing</i>	4	1	3	3 (16)
Evaluation knowledge and skills	No background	3	0	0	1 (7)
	Novice	33	9	3	16 (93)
	Intermediate	43	41	33	38 (218)
	Advanced	17	35	43	31 (178)
	Expert	3	15	20	13 (72)
	<i>Missing</i>	2	0	1	1 (6)



## Appendix B

### Characteristics of Survey Respondents by Employment Location

Total n=592, Valid n=573, Missing for work setting =19. Numbers in cells are column percents, allowing for comparisons across employment setting groups, and numbers in parentheses are observed cell frequencies.

Characteristics	Category	Work in Academic setting	Work in Non-academic setting	Unspecified	
		% (n)			Total % (n)
		43 (244)	48 (272)	10 (57)	100 (573)
Current AEA membership	Professional member	71	81	77	76 (437)
	Student member	21	6	18	13 (77)
	Non-member	7	13	5	9 (54)
	<i>Missing</i>	2	0	0	1 (5)
Primary source of funding for conference attendance	Self	19	27	30	24 (135)
	Employer	47	65	46	54 (316)
	Grant	25	4	16	14 (80)
	Other	8	3	7	6 (33)
	<i>Missing</i>	1	2	2	2 (9)
Presentation at AEA 2003?	Yes	58	42	46	49 (282)
	No	40	56	49	49 (279)
	<i>Missing</i>	2	2	5	2 (12)
Field of interest	Business & Industry	5	3	14	5 (29)
	Criminal Justice	1	2	2	1 (7)
	Education	53	26	32	38 (219)
	Environmental/Agriculture	1	6	2	4 (21)
	Health	10	20	16	15 (87)
	Social Services	15	20	18	18 (100)
	Other	12	21	16	17 (96)
	<i>Missing</i>	3	3	2	2 (14)
Evaluation knowledge and skills	No background	2	1	0	1 (7)
	Novice	18	15	14	16 (94)
	Intermediate	38	39	35	38 (218)
	Advanced	29	35	25	31 (180)
	Expert	12	9	26	12 (70)
	<i>Missing</i>	0	1	0	1 (4)

### Appendix C

#### Exploratory Factor Analyses of Overall Survey:

#### Q1. The Quality of the Conference Components

Item		Communality ( $h^2$ )
Q1A	Pre-conference registration process	.670
Q1B	On-site registration	.650
Q1C	Conference support staff	.703
Q1D	Conference information on website	.455
Q1E	Moderation of sessions by chairs	.552
Q1F	Preparation of presenters	.853
Q1G	Quality of presentations	.804
Q1H	Printed program book	.337

Factor <sup>1</sup>	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative % of Variance
1	3.195	39.93	39.93
2	1.830	22.87	62.81

Rotated Factor Matrix		
Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
Q1C	.838	
Q1A	.814	
Q1B	.806	
Q1D	.646	
Q1H	.414	.406
Q1F		.924
Q1G		.896
Q1E		.600

<sup>1</sup> The criterion of eigenvalues greater than one from principal components extraction with Varimax rotation method was used. Coefficients less than .4 were suppressed.

## Appendix C (continued)

## Q2. Satisfaction about the Conference Components

Item	Communality (h <sup>2</sup> )	Item	Communality (h <sup>2</sup> )
Q2A	.580	Q2G	.674
Q2B	.763	Q2H	.596
Q2C	.791	Q2I	.713
Q2D	.653	Q2J	.847
Q2E	.809	Q2K	.789
Q2F	.629	Q2L	.599

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative % of Variance
1	4.931	41.09	41.09
2	1.341	11.18	52.27
3	1.149	9.58	61.85
4	1.020	8.50	70.35

## Rotated Factor Matrix

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Q2C Conference was worth the money	.851			
Q2B Conf' 2003 met my expectations	.837			
Q2K I enjoyed the conf'	.799			
Q2F I learned things informing practice	.754			
Q2D I found the program content relevant	.739			
Q2I Presidential sessions added value		.816		
Q2G Plenary sessions added value		.779		
Q2H Theme added value		.736		
Q2E I had opportunity for networking			.891	
Q2A I felt welcomed at the conf'	.442		.612	
Q2J Computer facility added value				.912
Q2L I plan to attend future conf'	.487			.501

**Appendix C (continued)**  
**Aggregated Plenary Exit Survey**

<b>Item</b>		<b>Communality (<math>h^2</math>)</b>
Q5	Topic was relevant to my interests	.533
Q6	Session improved understanding of topic	.634
Q7	Knowledge and skills were useful	.690
Q8	I would attend another session on this topic	.658
Q9	Quality of this session was high	.674
Q10 <sup>2</sup>	Plenary sessions are not more important than other sessions	.685
Q11	Plenary sessions are my favorite sessions	.719
Q12	Content of session was consistent with advertisement	.494

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Eigenvalue</b>	<b>% of Variance</b>	<b>Cumulative % of Variance</b>
1	3.82	47.69	47.69
2	1.27	15.90	63.59

<b>Rotated Factor Matrix</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Factor 1</b>	<b>Factor 2</b>
7	.823	
9	.804	
6	.787	
8	.786	
5	.723	
12	.700	
11		.848
10		.804

**Item 13 is excluded in this factor analysis.<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>2</sup> This item was recoded due to its negative statement.

<sup>3</sup> The item asking about willingness to pay additional fee for plenary speakers was not included in this factor analysis because it was a binary item (Yes/No) whereas the other items were 5-point scale. However, we included it in further analysis of group difference as an independent variable.

## Appendix D

### Descriptive Results for Overall Survey (n=592)

**1. Please rate the following Evaluation 2003 conference components:**

1 = Needs improvement    3 = Acceptable    5 = Excellent  
9 = Not enough information to judge

Question	Frequency (%)						Miss- ing (%)	Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5	9			
a. Pre-conference registration process	3 (.5)	10 (2)	59 (10)	126 (21)	346 (58)	33 (6)	15 (3)	4.47	.80
b. On-site registration	3 (.5)	2 (.3)	30 (5)	90 (15)	241 (41)	201 (34)	25 (4)	4.54	.74
c. Conference support staff	2 (.3)	5 (.8)	51 (9)	116 (20)	332 (56)	71 (12)	15 (3)	4.52	.74
d. Conference information on AEA website	15 (3)	26 (4)	96 (16)	189 (32)	236 (40)	20 (3)	10 (2)	4.08	1.01
e. Moderation of sessions by chairs	17 (3)	22 (4)	160 (27)	235 (40)	106 (18)	39 (7)	13 (2)	3.72	.93
f. Preparation of presenters	3 (.5)	28 (5)	123 (21)	283 (48)	134 (23)	11 (2)	10 (2)	3.91	.83
g. Quality of presentations	8 (1)	31 (5)	121 (20)	299 (51)	118 (20)	8 (1)	7 (1)	3.85	.86
h. Printed program book	26 (4)	37 (6)	78 (13)	202 (34)	240 (41)	2 (.3)	7 (1)	4.02	1.10

Total n =592

## Appendix D (continued)

## 2. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following:

1 = Strongly Disagree	3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
9 = Not enough experience to judge		

Question	Frequency (%)						Miss- ing (%)	Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5	9			
a. I felt welcomed at the conference.	0 (.0)	20 (3)	74 (13)	198 (33)	294 (50)	0	6 (1)	4.31	.82
b. Evaluation 2003 met my expectations.	7 (1)	32 (5)	57 (10)	245 (41)	240 (41)	4 (.7)	7 (1)	4.17	.90
c. The conference was worth the money.	8 (1)	28 (5)	65 (11)	205 (35)	276 (47)	5 (.8)	5 (.8)	4.23	.92
d. I found the program content relevant.	5 (.8)	19 (3)	56 (10)	247 (42)	257 (43)	2 (.3)	6 (1)	4.25	.83
e. I had adequate opportunity for networking.	2 (.3)	21 (4)	73 (12)	244 (41)	31 (39)	13 (2)	8 (1)	4.19	.82
f. I learned things that will inform my practice.	3 (.5)	19 (3)	40 (7)	255 (43)	263 (44)	5 (.8)	7 (1)	4.30	.78
g. The plenary sessions added value to the conference for me.	5 (.8)	23 (4)	76 (13)	186 (31)	165 (28)	122 (21)	15 (3)	4.06	.91
h. The conference theme, Methodology, added value to the conference for me.	6 (1)	57 (10)	132 (22)	159 (27)	211 (36)	20 (3)	7 (1)	3.91	1.05
i. The presidential strand sessions added value to the conference for me.	5 (.8)	29 (5)	111 (18)	182 (24)	106 (18)	141 (24)	18 (3)	3.82	.92
j. The computer facility added value to the conference for me.	48 (8)	36 (6)	73 (12)	82 (14)	127 (22)	215 (36)	11 (2)	3.56	1.39
k. Overall, I enjoyed the conference.	9 (2)	8 (3)	26 (4)	247 (42)	284 (48)	1 (.2)	7 (1)	4.33	.83
l. I plan to attend an AEA conference in the future.	8 (1)	10 (2)	47 (8)	159 (27)	349 (59)	7 (1)	12 (2)	4.45	.83

Total n =592.

## Appendix D (continued)

**3. Several conference features have cost implications. Would you be willing to pay an additional amount in conference fees in order to have the following features?**

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)	Missing (%)	Amount of fee if Yes (%) <sup>1</sup>				Missing (%)
				\$5-9	\$10-19	\$20-29	\$30-39	
a. Nationally-recognized plenary speakers with high speaker fees	272 (46)	273 (46)	47 (8)	99 (33)	118 (39)	52 (17)	33 (11)	290 (49)
b. Public computer facility	253 (43)	286 (48)	53 (9)	163 (57)	86 (15)	24 (4)	13 (2)	306 (52)

n=592. <sup>1</sup> Percent is valid percent.

**4. How would you prefer to access program abstracts?**

	Online- no cost (%)	CD-Rom- Estimated cost \$5-10 (%)	Supplemental conference book-Estimated cost \$5-10 (%)
Frequency	433	117	106
(%)	(73)	(20)	(18)

Total N=592. Note: People selected more than one.

**5. Many factors influence one's decision to attend the conference. How would an increase in conference fees affect your likelihood of attending a future conference?**

Response Option	Frequency (%)
No effect	152 (26)
It might affect me in any given year, depending on funds available for me to attend	371 (63)
I would be unable to attend the conference. A low registration fee is very important to me	43 (7)

N=566, Missing=26

**Appendix D (continued)**

**6. Compared to other conferences you attend, how does the 2003 AEA conference rank in terms of the following features:**

1 = Worse   3 = About the same   5 = Better 9 = Not enough experience to judge
---

Question	Frequency (%)						Missing	Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5	9			
a. Opportunity to improve my skills	9 (2)	30 (5)	130 (22)	156 (27)	216 (37)	33 (6)	18 (3)	4.0	1.01
b. Opportunity to network with others in my field	11 (2)	41 (7)	156 (27)	136 (23)	188 (32)	37 (6)	23 (4)	3.84	1.06
c. Opportunity to be a part of a professional community	3 (.5)	16 (3)	170 (29)	155 (26)	190 (32)	37 (6)	21 (4)	3.96	.92
d. Opportunity to explore employment opportunities	9 (2)	38 (6)	111 (18)	81 (14)	63 (11)	251 (42)	34 (6)	3.50	1.05
e. Desirability of conference location	186 (31)	120 (20)	135 (23)	62 (11)	29 (5)	34 (6)	26 (4)	2.30	1.21
f. Affordability of registration fees	16 (3)	46 (8)	234 (40)	138 (23)	97 (16)	36 (6)	25 (4)	3.48	.99
g. Quality of professional development workshops	8 (1)	25 (4)	75 (13)	109 (18)	119 (20)	233 (39)	23 (4)	3.91	1.04

Total N=592.



## Appendix E

### A Memo on Statistical Analysis

#### *Missing cases*

We scrutinized the number of missing cases per survey item and made sure there was no systematic pattern in missing cases. We excluded scale 9, *Not sufficient information to judge*, from further analysis and all percentages provided in this report were based on valid percent and observed frequencies if not explained. All statistical information was obtained by running SPSS 11.01 Window version.

#### *Exploratory factor analysis*

In addition to descriptive statistics, we performed exploratory factor analyses using the principal component factoring method with *varimax* rotation. We conducted the factor analysis independently on the items in three sub-questions: perceived quality of the conference components in question 1 of the overall survey, perceived satisfaction about various conference components in question 2 of the overall survey, and perceived quality of the plenary sessions on the plenary exit survey. All item clusters were retained because we were more interested in grouping the items for an efficient analysis to examine any difference by participant type rather than data reduction. As Table 6 showed, the amounts of variance accounted for by the identified item clusters were relatively high and these item clusters did not differ greatly from our substantive item content analysis. Accordingly, we decided to group the items and use a set of composite variables each comprised of the identified item clusters. The items which failed to cluster were used as a single variable.

#### *Multiple Analysis of Variance tests*

We created composite variables on basis of the mean of the clustered items (Note that item 11 of the plenary exit survey was recorded due to its negative statement for this analysis.). Multiple ANOVA tests were performed at .05 significance level to examine attributes (e.g., participant profiles) influencing attendees' assessment of various conference components. If any group mean difference was statistically significant, a *Tukey* post-hoc test followed to examine where the difference would lie. Missing cases were excluded analysis by analysis.

## Appendix F

### Summary of Analysis of Variance Tests by Attendance Rate

#### ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Satisfaction of strand sessions/theme	Between Groups	.108	2	.054	.076	.927
	Within Groups	394.043	558	.706		
	Total	394.151	560			
Overall satisfaction	Between Groups	3.492	2	1.746	3.391	.034
	Within Groups	293.489	570	.515		
	Total	296.981	572			
Satisfaction of networking	Between Groups	17.473	2	8.737	18.919	.000
	Within Groups	262.761	569	.462		
	Total	280.234	571			
Quality of pre-conference process	Between Groups	10.501	2	5.250	11.836	.000
	Within Groups	251.957	568	.444		
	Total	262.458	570			
Quality of conference presentation	Between Groups	.722	2	.361	.662	.516
	Within Groups	307.666	564	.546		
	Total	308.388	566			

## Appendix G

### Summary of Plenary Sessions from Exit Surveys

#### Session Participants

Question	Category	Number of survey respondents (%)	Missing
Session	300	307 (42)	
	500	231 (32)	
	700	196 (27)	
Principle Identity	Academic professional	253 (35)	16
	Nonacademic professional	409 (56)	
	Student	56 (8)	
Primary Field of Interest	Business & Industry	29 (4)	36
	Criminal Justice	8 (1)	
	Education	276 (38)	
	Environment/Agriculture	21 (3)	
	Health	107 (15)	
	Social Services	120 (16)	
	Other	137 (19)	
Attendance Rate	First-time attendee	296 (40)	19
	Intermittent attendee	166 (23)	
	Regular attendee	253 (35)	
Reasons for attending session	Topic	223 (30)	73
	Speaker	173 (24)	
	Because it's a plenary session	250 (34)	
	Other	15 (2)	
Allocation of more fund for plenary speakers	Yes	330 (45)	126
	No	278 (38)	

Total survey responses=734. Three separate plenary session exit survey data sets were aggregated for this analysis.

Numbers of session attendees based on observations are 700 for Session 300, 650 for Session 500, and 600 for Session 700.

**Appendix G (continued)**

**Q 5-12. Please respond to the following statements indicating your level of agreement:**

1: Strongly Disagree  
4: Agree

2: Disagree  
5: Strongly Agree

3: Neither Disagree nor Agree

Question	Frequency					Mean	SD	Miss- ing
	(%)							
	1	2	3	4	5			
5. The topic was relevant to my interests	6 (.8)	33 (5)	73 (10)	282 (38)	333 (46)	4.24	.87	7
6. The session improved my understanding of the topic.	8 (1)	17 (2)	50 (7)	303 (41)	347 (47)	4.33	.80	9
7. The knowledge and/or skills I learned will be useful to me in my job.	25 (3)	65 (9)	152 (21)	267 (37)	214 (29)	3.80	1.07	11
8. I would attend another session on this topic.	15 (2)	53 (7)	88 (12)	277 (38)	289 (39)	4.07	1.0	12
9. The quality of this session was high.	8 (1)	25 (3)	66 (9)	249 (34)	357 (49)	4.31	.87	29
10. The plenary strand sessions are my favorite sessions.	13 (2)	74 (10)	417 (57)	126 (17)	53 (7)	3.19	.80	51
11. The plenary strand sessions are not any more important than any other sessions.	23 (3)	150 (20)	274 (37)	197 (27)	36 (5)	3.11	.92	54
12. The content of this session was consistent with its advertisement.	7 (1)	37 (5)	71 (10)	297 (41)	298 (41)	4.19	.89	24

Total survey responses=734.

## Appendix H

### Descriptive Results by Plenary Session

#### Plenary Session 300 Whither Survey Methodology: The Challenges of Our Changing Times

Number attended	700
Number responded	307
Principle Identity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Academic professional: 97 (32%)</li> <li>2. Nonacademic professional: 182 (59%)</li> <li>3. Student: 23 (8%)</li> </ol>
Primary field of practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Business &amp; Industry: 10 (3%)</li> <li>2. Criminal Justice: 3 (1%)</li> <li>3. Education: 110 (36%)</li> <li>4. Environment/Agriculture: 8 (3%)</li> <li>5. Health: 47 (15%)</li> <li>6. Social Science: 46 (15%)</li> <li>7 Other: 68 (22%)</li> </ol>
Attendance rate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. First time attendees: 126 (41%)</li> <li>2. Intermittent attendees: 72 (24%)</li> <li>3. Regular: 103 (34%)</li> </ol>
Reasons for attending	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Topic: 90 (29%)</li> <li>2. Speakers: 99 (32%)</li> <li>3. Because it's one of the plenary sessions: 89 (29%)</li> <li>4. Other: 6 (2%)</li> </ol>
Should AEA allocate more funds for plenary speakers even if conference fees increase?	<p>Yes: 142 (43%)</p> <p>No: 110 (36%)</p> <p>Missing: 55 (18%)</p>

**Appendix H (continued)**

**Q 5-12. Please respond to the following statements indicating your level of agreement:**

1: Strongly Disagree

2: Disagree

3: Neither Disagree nor Agree

4: Agree

5: Strongly Agree

Question	Mean	SD
5. The topic was relevant to my interests	4.55	.65
6. The session improved my understanding of the topic.	4.46	.65
7. The knowledge and/or skills I learned will be useful to me in my job.	4.29	.78
8. I would attend another session on this topic.	4.20	.91
9. The quality of this session was high.	4.52	.68
10. The plenary strand sessions are my favorite sessions.	3.21	.75
11. The plenary strand sessions are not any more important than any other sessions.	3.05	.90
12. The content of this session was consistent with its advertisement.	4.35	.82

Total responses=307.

**Appendix H (continued)**  
**Plenary Session 500**  
**Parts Unknown: Ways of Militant Anthropologist**

Number attended	650
Number responded	231
Principle Identity	1. Academic professional: 85 (37%) 2. Nonacademic professional: 122 (53%) 3. Student: 18 (8%)
Primary field of practice	1. Business & Industry: 9 (4%) 2. Criminal Justice: 3 (1%) 3. Education: 83 (36%) 4. Environment/Agriculture: 7 (3%) 5. Health: 36 (16%) 6. Social Science: 40 (17%) 7 Other: 39 (17%)
Attendance rate	1. First time attendees: 88 (38%) 2. Intermittent attendees: 54 (24%) 3. Regular: 80 (35%)
Reasons for attending	1. Topic: 69 (30%) 2. Speakers: 35 (15%) 3. Because it's one of the plenary sessions: 100 (43%) 4. Other: 5 (2%)
Should AEA allocate more funds for plenary speakers even if conference fees increase?	Yes: 107 (37%) No: 86 (46%) Missing: 38 (17%)

**Appendix H (continued)**

**Q 5-12. Please respond to the following statements indicating your level of agreement:**

1: Strongly Disagree

2: Disagree

3: Neither Disagree nor Agree

4: Agree

5: Strongly Agree

Question	Mean	SD
5. The topic was relevant to my interests	3.86	1.01
6. The session improved my understanding of the topic.	4.24	.89
7. The knowledge and/or skills I learned will be useful to me in my job.	3.13	1.12
8. I would attend another session on this topic.	3.90	1.12
9. The quality of this session was high.	4.15	.99
10. The plenary strand sessions are my favorite sessions.	3.19	.82
11. The plenary strand sessions are not any more important than any other sessions.	3.10	.95
12. The content of this session was consistent with its advertisement.	4.04	.91

Total responses=231.



**Appendix H (continued)**

**Plenary Session 700  
Innovation and Emergence in Qualitative Evaluation**

Number attended	600
Number responded	196
Principle Identity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Academic professional: 71 (36%)</li> <li>2. Nonacademic professional: 105 (54%)</li> <li>3. Student: 15 (8%)</li> </ol>
Primary field of practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Business &amp; Industry: 10 (5%)</li> <li>2. Criminal Justice: 2 (1%)</li> <li>3. Education: 83 (42%)</li> <li>4. Environment/Agriculture: 6 (3%)</li> <li>5. Health: 24 (12%)</li> <li>6. Social Science: 34 (17%)</li> <li>7 Other: 30 (15%)</li> </ol>
Attendance rate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. First time attendees: 82 (42%)</li> <li>2. Intermittent attendees: 40 (20%)</li> <li>3. Regular: 70 (36%)</li> </ol>
Reasons for attending	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Topic: 64 (33%)</li> <li>2. Speakers: 39 (20%)</li> <li>3. Because it's one of the plenary sessions: 61 (31%)</li> <li>4. Other: 4 (2%)</li> </ol>
Should AEA allocate more funds for plenary speakers even if conference fees increase?	<p>Yes: 81 (41%)</p> <p>No: 82 (42%)</p> <p>Missing: 33 (17%)</p>

**Appendix H (continued)**

**Q 5-12. Please respond to the following statements indicating your level of agreement:**

1: Strongly Disagree  
4: Agree

2: Disagree  
5: Strongly Agree

3: Neither Disagree nor Agree

Question	Mean	SD
5. The topic was relevant to my interests	4.21	.81
6. The session improved my understanding of the topic.	4.23	.86
7. The knowledge and/or skills I learned will be useful to me in my job.	3.82	.98
8. I would attend another session on this topic.	4.05	.96
9. The quality of this session was high.	4.16	.91
10. The plenary strand sessions are my favorite sessions.	3.17	.86
11. The plenary strand sessions are not any more important than any other sessions.	3.20	.92
12. The content of this session was consistent with its advertisement.	4.10	.92

Total responses=196.

## Appendix I

### Descriptive Results of Presidential Strand Session Exit Survey

Question	Category	Number of survey respondents (%)
Session <sup>4</sup>	101	20
	326	84
	352	23
	377	84
	526	24
	551	1
	577	21
	602	38
	627	12
	701	1
	725	37
	774	18
	Total	363
Principle Identity	Academic professional	141 (39)
	Nonacademic professional	183 (50)
	Student	36 (10)
	Missing	3 (.8)
Primary Field of Interest	Business & Industry	7 (2)
	Criminal Justice	2 (.6)
	Education	184 (51)
	Environment/Agriculture	7 (2)
	Health	35 (10)
	Social Services	45 (12)
	Other	59 (16)
	Missing	24 (7)
Attendance Rate	First-time attendee	156 (43)
	Intermittent attendee	83 (23)
	Regular attendee	116 (32)
	Missing	8 (2)
Reasons for attending session	Topic	235 (65)
	Speaker	89 (25)
	Because it's a plenary session	8 (2)
	Other	7 (2)
	Missing	24 (7)

<sup>4</sup> Descriptive information about individual sessions is available upon request.

**Appendix I (continued)**

**Q 5-12. Please respond to the following statements indicating your level of agreement:**

1: Strongly Disagree  
4: Agree

2: Disagree  
5: Strongly Agree

3: Neither Disagree nor Agree

Question	Mean	SD
5. The topic was relevant to my interests	4.27	.80
6. The session improved my understanding of the topic.	3.98	.98
7. The knowledge and/or skills I learned will be useful to me in my job.	3.63	.98
8. I would attend another session on this topic.	3.93	.99
9. The quality of this session was high.	3.83	.96
10. The presidential strand sessions are my favorite sessions.	3.14	.82
11. The presidential strand sessions are not any more important than any other sessions.	3.14	.82
12. The content of this session was consistent with its advertisement.	3.96	.98

Total responses=363