**WERA 1010 Meeting Notes**

Tucson, AZ. February 15th-16th, 2024.

**Welcome**

The Chair - Katie Dentzman opened proceedings for the meeting and selected a new secretary (Joe Hollis). An update on the WERA 1010 renewal process was provided.

**Renewal Process Update**

* Application to renew the WERA 1010 project will be reviewed in late March. A decision should be reached between early-mid April.
* Objectives were outlined for the renewal period (2024-2029). These included assuring the quality of surveys, exploring, and researching how surveys are evolving, examining the use of big-data and non-probability procedures. Investigating changes in measuring rural populations and writing and publishing joint research and disseminating findings to extension and teaching appointments.
* New institutions to join the project include: The University of Vermont, University of Massachusetts, Clemson, and Michigan State. Need to consider how we reinvigorate members who do not actively participate.
* Suggestions for future meetings: should private sector participants be invited? Useful for examining crossover between marketing surveys and academic research surveys.
* Should we establish presence at the following conferences: AAPOR, International Association for Society & Natural Resources, NC1190, Food & Nutrition Expo – Minneapolis.
* Discussion for a shared resource list of the places, conferences, and summer schools that this group should monitor, become active with. Can we create a shared Google drive/Dropbox?
* Which other land grants can we reach out to? How do we raise the profile of the group? Good idea to try and put together a panel at RSS. Special issues for JLS, or Journal of Rural Social Sciences.

**Oregon State Report**

**Ginny Lesser**

* Work included exploring differences between panel and probability sampling. Finalized report from National Academies of Science on Native Seeds (National Seed Strategy Keystone Initiative received $18m form Biden administration to expand capacity for native seed). And work with Oregon Department of Transportation and Oregon State Survey Research Centre to analyze transportation issues, administrative procedures etc.
* Oregon DOT work used probability-based surveys between 2006-2022. Nonprobability panel added in 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022.
* 1 panel received two modes – web, then mail 2 weeks later. 2nd panel received all mail. comparison between two modes, and data quality. Since 2020, web+mail has a higher response rate.
* Response rate for non-probability panel low in 2018, higher in 2020, data not available for 2022.
* Highlighted the issue of panels bought from private companies. Assumption that they are pre-screened, yet respondents are sometimes not qualified. Problem with weighted and un-weighted data. Some companies not as good at providing criteria, weighting info, and response time. Bogus responses to surveys. Problem with ChatGPT being used for AI/fraudulent responses - 80% in some cases.
* Response to this is to determine time-lapses, keystrokes can be monitored, IP address checked when possible.
* Age of panel younger than those completing mail surveys. In Oregon, higher educated (BS or above) are filling out surveys. In 2022, 64% of panel estimates were outside of 95% CI.
* Differences in data? No answer slightly higher in probability sample. There was not much difference between non-probability panel and probability survey for don’t knows.
* Continuing work – Examine methods to account for bias, and lower mean square error. Continuing experiment and collection data on the panel. Katie McLaughlin will take over as Director of the Survey Research Centre.

**Katie McLaughlin**

* Research and recent projects include - accounting for non-probability sampling biases, improving sample surveys for rural areas, and development. Improving collection from hidden populations that are hard to contact through conventional sampling techniques (migrants, displaced persons, sex workers). Finding ways to engage these members through workshops that help capacity building and resource allocation.
* One method is Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS). Use of social networks, and restricted snowball/chain referrals. Helps model inclusion probability. However, relies on strong social network, willingness to identify and recruit others, trust, rapport, safe survey sites, protection of information.
* The method is used by the CDC and WHO to sample hidden pops with high risk of HIV/Aids. Sample frame and data collection is iterative.
* Other work includes the TRACE-COVID19 project that informed campus reopening plans, and testing. TRACE Community – door to door surveys in 6 communities between April 2020 – June 2021. Helped estimate point in time prevalence and inform pandemic strategies. (Response rate in April 2020 likely higher due to novelty of testing).
* TRACE received $1m NSF grant and is part of the Predictive Intelligence for Pandemic Prevention (PIPP) initiative.
* Has led to work with Pandemic Resilient Cities – uses predictive intelligence with adaptive responses to engineer pandemic resilient cities and strategies.
* Healthier Oregon Program (HOP).
* Statewide crop load project – estimating climate models and determining impacts on productivity of vineyards, fruit composition, and wine quality.

**Penn State Report**

**Anil Kumar Chaudhary**

* Report on survey experiment with a PhD student to understand influence of theory driven strategies on survey response rates.
* Outlined the challenges of creating good mail survey lists, reaching farmers with web surveys, and the limited research on effectiveness of communication strategies influencing response rates.
* US Gov funded survey with farmers to understand various factors that influence farmer conservation program and participation decisions. Random sample of 1,223 farmers purchased from DTN – a private ag company maintaining list of farmers across the US (Doesn’t include small farmers/hobby farmers).
* Four contacts – pre-notification, first packet, first reminder, second reminder. Prepaid envelopes, blank surveys only.
* Cover letters were designed generally, using pre-suasion formats, and social exchange formats. Respondents randomly assigned all three conditions.
* Overall response rate was 13.2% (162/1233). Social exchange theory backed content had the highest response rate (15.2%) Pre-suasion had lowest (11.8%). However, not much difference across all modes.
* More research is needed to enhance communication strategies.
* Using NASS for sampling frame can be an option, but red tape exists, and they control delivery. Some lists were biased, farmers also questioned why they had been contacted and how their information had been made available.
* To reach Amish and Mennonite community – strategies included incentives of testing water and distributing survey, then went back to report water sample results, and to collect surveys. RR among them was almost 50%.

**Utah State Report**

**Jessica Schad**

* The presentation included looking at how to incorporate survey research into teaching and work on Utah People and Environment Poll (UPEP) and Utah Producer Soil Health Survey.
* UPEP - statewide survey (mail+web, 4 waves using probability sampling). 2nd iteration coming in fall 2024.
* Important to understand how people respond/and their attitudes to issues such as the drying up of the Great Salt Lake.
* Utah Producer Soil and Health Survey – statewide survey conducted early 2024. Mail + Online modes. 4 waves.
* Sample frame of 3000. 2000 purchased from DTN, and 1000 acquired through Extension lists.
* Addition of experiment – issue of sending cash to people during legislative session. Utah influenced stickers (donated for $1) were sent out to 1/3 of 1st wave. 2/3 of wave 1 received $2 bill. Aimed to test whether cash is more meaningful than other incentives.
* For UPEP – working with 13 grad students who are able to get hands-on experience with survey prep (stamping envelopes, sampling plan, Qualtrics), data collection (response tracking, data entry), and dissemination of research (policy briefs, dissertation chapters, peer reviewed papers)
* Working with key stakeholders such as policymakers, academics, Utahns news orgs. Etc.

**Washington State Report**

**Jessica Goldberger**

* Outlined upcoming survey activities for feedback from group. Project 1: Improving end of life management of plastic mulch in strawberry systems (SUDA-SCRI grant)
* Looking at individual, sociocultural, and structural influences on decisions regarding plastic mulch end of life management.
* Mixed-methods approach – survey of California strawberry growers, and in-depth qualitative data collection.
* Questions included – how to put together a good sampling list for this, what incentives to use when budgets are tight. How to increase the likelihood of people opening cold emails from certain institutions/out of state entities.
* Project 2: Agricultural plastics project. Assessing public awareness of agricultural plastic use, disposal, and impacts.
* Aims to measure public awareness and determine the relative factors on public awareness and perceptions of agricultural plastics. What role can the public play?
* IPSOS knowledge pan sample frame. 1000 completed surveys in English/Spanish. $35,000 budget.
* Questions: can you make generalizable conclusions on this sample size from 3 states. Alter numbers based on population size?
* Good company to buy the list from may be Marketing Services Group (MSG) – claim to have 99% of US addresses. Stratify to county level, and then administer survey yourself.
* Mailroom workers could be a source for sample lists. How about problems with delivery in rural areas?
* Project 3: enhancing integrated pest management strategies for US potato production systems. ($6m grant)
* Corporations are concerned about neonicotinoids – not just the federal government. What will potato growers do if neonicotinoids are banned?
* Question on what to do when advisory board of non-survey specialists are giving advice on how to do surveys? How do you communicate in a way that corresponds with how non-survey specialists think.

**University of Minnesota Report**

**Todd Rockwood**

* Project 1 - discussed building and maintaining panels in topics investigating youth sports participation, injury, and injury resolution associated with sports participation.
* Methodology: 20-year panel data. National probability sample, with intentional recruitment via collaboration with local sports leagues. Formation of a baseline survey, with quarterly follow-ups.
* Questions arise around how panel is populated? How does information collected evolve, how does it affect risk facts etc.
* Panel is asked for contact info, sport played (only 5 allowed for up to 3 teams). Injury / location/nature of injury, date occurred, sport limitation, closure, misc data (household info). For baseline survey, 346 fields built in can be re-surveyed over time.
* Benefit of panel survey is that you can maintain information that can be assessed over time – however, panels reflect different things now (i.e. non-probability panel).
* Project 2: Investigating health service deserts, and the assessment of the need for a hospital in a region in Somalia. Internal strife, admin, and infrastructure means that nearest hospital (Mogadishu) could take up to 2 days.
* How do you sample a population where there is no mail infrastructure, regional tensions, and tribal administrations. How much bias is there?

**Survey Diary Project**

**Abbey Hammell, Ken Wallen, Katie Dentzman, Don Dillman**

* Web based surveys have increased as low cost, low sample size alternatives to mail/phone surveys. However, is this causing a sense of survey burden, overuse, or fatigue. How many surveys do people receive now?
* Aim – to empirically describe/track the state of the survey commons. Are we surveying to the point where neither surveyor or surveyed benefits?
* Survey diary 1 (2019) Excel diary – record information on survey they were invited to over a month period. 7 questions asked. 23/33 WERA 1010 members participated. The average survey received per person was 14. Standard Deviation was 8.77. Minimum was 1, maximum number was 33.
* Digital contact and response to requests dominated. Discovered emerging typologies i.e. “market surveys”, “academic”, “administrative surveys” (societies or employer internal requests) and “political surveys”.
* Survey Diary 2(2023) 17 WERA participants.
* Additional questions asked based on survey 1 findings including info on survey sponsor, perceived impact of survey on both self and society, and rating of survey design.
* Appeared to be a relationship between completion rate and typologies. Academic surveys have a higher RR than marketing and political surveys. (does this related to perception of survey impact?).
* 176 survey invites and reminders. Mean = 10.35 invites per person. Mean = 9.45 survey reminders per person. Most experienced invite format was email (71%) and internet (pop-up surveys) was 9.1%
* Survey response mode – 88.6% asked to respond through the internet. 5.1% through email, and 2.8% kiosk.
* Most people had a neutral outlook on whether the survey invites were beneficial to society based on initial contact. Most were neutral on whether completion would be beneficial to them.
* Results:similarity between project 1 and 2 that email is dominant contact mode followed b internet, and receipts. Internet is the most dominant mode for response requests increasing from 76% in 2019 to 89% in 2023 (pandemic impacts?).
* Marketing surveys most frequently experienced. Also had the widest variety of contact and response modes.
* Differences – less participants in 2023, less survey requests in 2023 (time of year busier in 2019 because of thanksgiving/elections etc.). No mail invites in 2023.
* Takeaways:Continued support for increasing number of surveys in digital landscape. Perceived survey impact strongly related to survey completion. Most surveys perceived as having a neutral impact on both “you” and society.
* However, need to consider biases. Respondents were mainly survey methodologists.
* Going forward – desire to form subgroup of WERA members who can commit to further iterations of survey diary. More data from outside of group = possibility of applying for grants.
* What does the private sector care about? What do other researchers care about? How do we define impact? Private companies do not push surveys in the same way that academic surveys do. What do the public think a survey is?
* Risk losing leadership in survey development if we do not react to the changing landscape i.e. experience surveys, one question surveys.

**Idaho State Report and Psychometric Analysis**

**Ken Wallen**

* Research at University of Idaho includes looking at wildlife coexistence, and campus sustainability measures. Also collaborating with Idaho Department of Fish and Game to undertake hunter opinion surveys, customer opinion surveys etc.
* Also, part of policy analysis group – investigating outdoor recreation activity and access.
* Teaching and Education – teaching courses on research design methods, social research methods etc.
* Helping to produce and deliver workshops at state and regional conferences with Idaho Department of Fish and Game.
* Visiting agency meetings, providing expertise on research methods to help those groups not using survey specialists.
* Writing textbooks on Human Dimensions of Natural Resources, HD of Wildlife Management.
* Psychometric analysis - investigating attitudes toward surveys. Based on Edith de Leeuw et al (2019) paper. Highlights the problem with survey-climate and effect on non-response, and that validity and reliability cannot be assessed based on a single survey.
* 3 separate surveys, 2 target populations, pooled together. Scale includes variables such as enjoyment, value, and burden. Email contact, online response.

Findings reflect what was expected – those who have higher enjoyment, have higher responses. Higher value, higher responses etc.

* Similar results to de Leeuw – hoping to do more work on this in future.

**DAY 2**

**Iowa State Report**

**Sam Mindes**

* Project 1: Exploring survey burden with methods students – experiment with pictures of different surveys. Ask students to rate how likely they are to respond to survey (5 scale, extremely unlikely – extremely likely)
* Open-ended question for comments on what they thought when prompted with survey.
* Classic research style survey had the highest rating for most likely to be responded to. The lowest rating was one question bathroom survey, and video feedback request.
* What effect do push polls, sugging, and frugging have on research surveys? The effect of bad data; people losing trust in science?
* Future work – ask students to design what the first page of a survey looks like at the start and end of semester to see what changes. How does perception of what a survey is alter formats etc.?
* Project 2: Regional housing survey with the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD).
* How do we alleviate suspect data in responses, and issues with data quality from Qualtrics surveys? Build in some data quality checks.
* Project 3: Farmer survey – Iowa Soybean Association
* Having difficulties contacting list – how do you get around organizational structures that make this difficult?
* Potential for blinding the list? Emphasize the logistical issues with not having access to lists etc.

**Joe Hollis**

* Project on Mesotunnels and their ability to improve management and security against pests, weeds, and climate for organic fruits and vegetables.
* Multi-state team funded by USDA OREI with different objectives (farm research trials, social science, extension + outreach, economics)
* Social science team is looking to conduct a national survey among organic growers.
* Potential to attain list from DTN. MSG may be useful, but the area may be too specific for that list. Based on experience, Organic Integrity Database not a good option. List is not useful, and missing data.
* Reaching out to extension and organic associations may be a good idea – also for delivery/contact could be a good option. Assist in that rapport/trust element of who the survey is coming from.
* Experiments – stickers may increase RR as expected when compared to other incentives. Although organic farmers may buy into sentiments so could be something to think about.
* Sending out postcards to those who do not respond asking for them to provide their opinion on why they didn’t respond.
* Also, what about asking people in survey the reasons why they responded to the survey?

**Zhengyuan Zhu**

* Outlining work by the Iowa State Centre for Survey Statistics and Methodology (CSSM)
* Project 1: CSSM working with Iowa Nutrient Research and Education Council (INREC) to collect data on field nutrient management and conservation practices. Need a practice-based measurement approach to track progress.
* Project is a two-stage cluster sample design. INREC hires independent contractors to conduct surveys in winter, following crop year. CSSM completes data analysis with weighting, estimations, and uncertainty qualifications.
* Project 2: Spatial temporal dynamic of farmers conservation adoption behaviors – 5-year survey of Iowa farmers 2015-19
* Sampling frame bought from commercial vendor – 18,728 farmers contacted, 9367 responded.
* Project 3: Data commons for Iowa small and rural towns project – develop tools to help small and shrinking communities before population shrinkage affects quality of life.
* Integrates data from surveys, census, geo-spatial database to build scalable models for quality-of-life measures.
* Promising preliminary results – how to access individuals? Social media? Other methods?
* Other projects: Combining data from NRI survey and remote-sensing data to help update sampling design. PEMA funded project to measure firefighter hands and to do a survey that will help design glove types specific for firefighters. Sub-group DID to evaluate effects of place specific USDA ERS rural broadband programs on internet speed.

**University of Vermont Report**

**Anaka Aiyar**

* Work includes exploring how to improve health and food security in India, and policies associated with this. Looking at how to expand this to USA context.
* Project 1: develop metrics for measuring sustainability of local food systems in the north-east and plant-based proteins.
* Project 2: Assessing the effects of broadband and internet access on rural health outcomes.
* Areas with less broadband are related to poverty. Government is trying to expand access. A driver of this is that tele-medicine is seen as a cost-effective alternative for health services in rural areas, however, not everyone has coverage.
* Also, just because there is availability, does not mean there is quality. Has an impact on remote working and learning.
* Methods – create a national panel dataset that captures broadband access, mobile access, and speeds. Also create a panel that captures health access.
* Multi-method survey approach to evaluate SNAP programs (drivers of demand, broadband enabled tech constrains, where can broadband tech be leveraged to reach Nevada’s left-behind group.
* Nevada Center for Survey Evaluation and Statistics involved – random sample of 600 rural Nevada residents (~$96k budget).
* 10-20 mins bilingual survey on desired metrics? 40 questions too many? (depends on what the questions are, how long are the stems, how much complexity on each item).
* Big issue – asking people to fill out online on a subject where broadband connectivity is an issue.

**Concluding remarks**

* Discussion around change of venue. Technology in the hotel is not adequate for presentations/accessibility etc. No opposition to changing hotels, but pricing will influence this.
* Could arrange meeting at the University of Arizona – if no UofA faculty present, would have to pay for meeting room, and this could be difficult logistically with classes in session.
* Suggestions of a $50 registration fee to offset costs for a better venue.

**Meeting adjourned**