8:15 - Attendees

* Steve Swinford – Montana State
* Ginny Lesser – Oregon State
* Glenn Israel – Florida
* Zhengyuan Zhu - Iowa State
* Kara Lyn Haberstock – Arizona
* Jessica Goldberger – Washington State
* Jessica Schad – Utah State
* Yanu Prasetyo – University of Missouri
* Chris Clemmons – Auburn
* Ashley Yopp—University of Georgia at Tifton - Friday
* Jason McKibben – West Virginia
* Carena VanRiper - University of Illinois
* Kenny Wallen - University of Idaho
* Todd Rockwood - University of Minnesota
* Shorna Allred – Cornell
* Katie Dentzman – University of Idaho
* Anton Beckerman - Montana State
* Don Dillman – Washington State
* Melissa Constantine - University of Minnesota

8:40 - Bookkeeping

* Pitching for the 18th-19th of February for the 2020 meeting
  + If not, the following week
* We pay $100/day for this meeting room
  + We will pass the hat and collect $ for the room
* Brief history of the committee
  + Ed Carpenter at UA started WERA ~1989
    - Coordinating committee for social scientists to discuss research methods
  + Gather multiple disciplines and bounce ideas off of each other
  + Consistent focus - staying a step ahead of the necessary changes in survey design and implementation
* Dinner planning
  + 5:30
  + Jim Christiansen at the Skyline Country Club
* Submission of publications that can be linked to the group
  + For inclusion in the edited minutes/report

8:54 - Don's Report

* Survey methods may be changing for multiple reasons
  + Internet surveying inexpensive, do-it-yourself
  + Telephone surveys plagued by spam trend
* Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations - 66 member organizations
  + 2 hours ~ to take a survey on changing surveys
  + Incentive - Don will give the keynote at their meeting
  + Surveyed one rep from each 66 organizations
  + What types of surveys are being done? Are survey rates increasing or decreasing? What's happening to response rates?
  + Results are *ideas for discussion* because it's very hard for respondents to provide exact numbers
  + 52% response rate (34 of 66 organizations)
  + Total of 2,742 surveys 2017-2019
    - Between 4 surveys per organization and 33
  + Request Mode
    - Internet only most common
    - Telephone only pretty close
    - Of multi-mode, web/mail most common
  + How have request modes changed over 5 years (proportion of survey organizations seeing an increase or decrease)
    - Telephone only has mostly decreased
    - Mail only has mostly decreased
    - Internet only mostly increased
  + Contact mode
    - Email most common
    - All multi-mode quite a bit less common
  + How have contact modes changed over 5 years (proportion of survey organizations seeing an increase or decrease)
    - Telephone only has mostly decreased
    - Mail only has decreased
      * Probably due to web pushes
    - Email only has mostly increased
    - All multimode have seen more increases than decreases
  + Email only most common response mode
  + Internet only and mixed mode now most common response modes
  + AASRO has found it challenging to understand and use all survey modes
  + How many surveys of specific populations?
    - General public, then establishment, then student, then faculty
  + How have response rates changed for these populations?
    - Faculty mostly the same
    - Student mostly the same, but about 1/3 report a decline
    - Business/establishment 60% report a decline
    - General public 74% report a decline
  + Number if surveys conducted 2015-19 has increased slightly, but response rates have overwhelmingly declined
  + Why have response rates decreased? (open ended, prelim analysis)
    - Many mentioned telephone rates specifically (spoof calls a potential culprit)
    - Respondent fatigue, less willingness to respond, populations over-surveyed, mistrust of survey source
  + Some University Administrations are trying to decrease student and faculty surveys
    - Students must be a target population, not just convenience
    - Managing quantity of surveys and sampling
  + Incentives
    - Slight decrease in post-incentives, slight increase in pre-incentives
  + 35% organizations increased multiple contact modes, 50% decreased (going to internet only?)
  + Surveying entire population
    - 18% organizations increased surveying the entire population - only 4% decreased
    - 69% said maybe/definitely a trend
    - 60% said somewhat/very likely leading to negative willingness to answer
  + Unified mode design (writing question same way when using multiple modes)
    - 25% said frequently, 42% said never
    - People requesting it don't have strong methodological knowledge, so don't ask
  + Impact of do-it-yourself software?
    - 10% said increasing, 40% said decreasing
    - 16 organizations said it's changing how they assist clients
    - Less programming, more templates, more technical consultation, more reviews of questionnaires (less creation), help with software, we program surveys for others to implement
  + Expectation from most organizations that their organization will grow in size
* Discussion
  + Issue raised by group - survey research centers are BUSINESSES
    - They are trying to make a profit
    - They are also trying to please clients
    - …and do good work, not over burden people

9:50 - Break for coffee

10:10 - Reconvene - continue discussion of Don's presentation

* Increasing concern about having a validated scale
  + Difficult to create own questions
* Historical trend of developing questions/scales/structures for telephone
  + Don't necessarily translate to internet
  + No new data saying whether you should ask a 'check all items' question
  + Smart phone issue - less screen space
    - Why not make this standard (hardest to accommodate) and then reverse engineer them to apply to laptops etc.
* Survey research centers need to catch up to survive
  + Get rid of telephone centers
  + Figure out a way to monetize services related to self-created surveys
  + Consider smartphones, text messaging as upcoming modes
* How do we interpret 'response rates'?
  + Do we have a role as 'watchdogs' for people (ex. Students) misusing response rate numbers
* Are we going to be left behind by industry?
  + Social media to reach people is becoming more and more popular
    - We're going to have to interact it
    - How do we make it the best we can? What are the best practices?
* What should/could we do next to really dig into these issues?

10:45 - Anton - Administrative Advisor

* Broad summary of federal level trends, future
* NIFA and ERS move to Kansas City
  + Creating challenges with funding, personnel (lost around 75-80% of people)
  + Reps for experiment stations aren't there anymore
  + Budgetary issues and delays
* HATCH funds (experiment station capacity funds) were around $240 mill/year - this year increased to $259 million. However likely to be cut again soon.
  + Funds can go to salary (creates vulnerability when funds change), operations, etc. depending on university
  + Formula used to allocate HATCH funds is being looked at
    - Based on rurality, population, productivity, etc.
    - May be changed and impact which states funds are going to.
    - Worrisome for universities with smaller populations
* Bad news :(
  + White House wants to have significant cuts/rearrangements of how USDA funding is re-appropriated
  + Cuts to all capacity funding, want to increase competitive funding (e.g. AFRI)
  + Changes in how funding is allocated, has been pushed for last 30 years
  + Universities worried that big universities will get way more funding, they will be left out
* FCC task force (part of 2018 Farm Bill)
  + Rural connectivity for broadband internet
  + 20 members to look at where gaps in connectivity exist (esp. in Western states)
* Ag Sec Sunny Perdue
  + Ag Innovation Agenda announced
  + Strategic plan for USDA - focus on several specific areas (priorities for funding)
    - Food Loss and Waste
    - Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Gases
    - Water Quality
    - Renewable Energy

11:00 - Ginny Lesser

* Oregon State Report
* Increase in web-based data from non-probability samples
  + Are there differences in how people respond via paper vs. web in a probability survey
  + Same for a non-probability survey
* AAPOR Task Force
  + Transitions from Telephone Surveys to Self-Administered and Mixed-Mode Surveys - Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology to publish soon, report on AAPOR website
* Activity 1
  + Survey response differences between mail and web
  + Two general population surveys for DOT
    - Same survey each year Mail and Web/Mail (with some internal variations) used both years
    - 7,500 sample size - split mode
    - Mail questionnaire only works better than 'mail with web link followed by mail with paper option'
    - Low differences in how questions were answered between mail and web respondents
    - First mailing good for mail surveys, low for web push
  + Specialized population - boat owners
    - Mail and Web/Mail
    - 2,530 to 4,400 sample size (2009, 2013, 2017)
    - Response rates - Mail only consistently performed better
    - First mailing good for mail surveys, low for web push
    - Differences in reported gallons of gas used by mail respondents and web-push respondents
      * Disappears when you remove respondents who answered zero (because they didn't use their boat)
    - COMMENT: Differences in age for mail vs. web-push respondents? Boat ownership maybe not the best population to test this on
  + General population - minor differences in web vs. mail - but disappear when comparing mail and web/mail
  + Boat owners - some differences, but can be controlled for through mode/describing the study better
  + Don - add $2 to every envelope to help push more people to web in the first mailing
    - Will decrease your costs because you'll end up sending fewer pieces of mail (aka reminders)

11:35 - Lunch

1:00 Katie, Kenny, and Abbey

* Diary experiment – survey burden
* Perception of lower response rates, try to determine if it is actually occurring.  Essentially, are we being over-surveyed?  In the end, developed a diary experiment.  People kept a diary in an excel file of all survey requests they received.
* How frequently are people being queried?  Variety in topics?  Mode?  Do people answer them?
* 23 WERA members participated.  A few slides of the type of data collected.  Discussion of the setup of the spreadsheet used to track information from participants.  Most submitted through Google Sheets.
* Discussion of issues – what counts as a survey?  Not everyone shares the same definition.  In the future clarification for this…which leads to the need for a typology to assist in this decision-making process.  A draft typology has been developed.  Coded for the types: scholarly, marketing, administrative, political, and undefined.
* Results reported in a slide – overall
* Mode – 82% email or internet most common.  On receipts was the second most common mode.  Unit of analysis is “request you know about”…which will ignore unknown contact requests.  Discussion of implications of filtering (either known or not known).
* Completion variable – not at all, partial, fully completed.  Group gave no response in about 68% of the requests.
* Distribution of survey types
* Marketing accounted for largest share (47%).  The scholarly ones in this group were infrequent.  Highest non-response was for marketing surveys. Scholarly did the best, along with administrative ones.
* Question – did not track whether or not there was an incentive…and what it was.  Common in receipt surveys.
* Prompt in future to look at multiple email addresses because people could have more than one.
* They shifted their language to “contact request” instead of “survey request”
* Results – the scholarly and admin surveys were more likely to be completed.  Also, more behavior/life and opinion type questions were more likely to be completed.  Contact mode – highest were in-person (rare method by the way) and mail contacts.
* Takeaways and moving forward: adjust methodology, very clearly define what a survey is, dropped by survey host, how to deal with reminders.  Expand or contract response mode options.   Responded to admin ones, not the marketing ones.
* How to deal with reminders?  A new contact to complete.
* Discussion of questions…survey seasons/peak periods.
* Demographics - who gets what surveys and who responds to what surveys
* Add incentives, length, burden
* Lots of discussion on what counts as a survey
  + Does perception count more?
    - What is actual burden - is it what the respondent perceives?
    - Does a survey count whenever someone perceives it as a survey
  + Is any request for information a survey?
    - Is it when you willingly provide information in response to a direct request for information?
  + Do we need to put parameters on it - i.e. limit the study to email, internet, and mail surveys?
  + What are our real research questions?
  + Add box to check if it was a reminder
  + Remove survey host column

1:40 - Ginny Activity 2 and 3 Report

* Probability versus non-probability samples
* Calculated cost per completed survey for different modes
  + Various assumptions about length of questionnaire, response rates, printing costs, etc
  + Web/Mail combo was the lowest cost in 2016 and 2018
* 2016
  + Sample in first draw - 57% panel estimates outside confidence limits of probability sample
* 2018
  + Sample in first draw - 44% of panel estimates outside confidence limits of probability sample
* Non-probability sample
  + Lowest cost
  + Differences in responses still present between prob and non-prob samples even after weighting based on demographics
* Activity 3
  + DOT surveys since 1994
    - 68% response rate in 95 to 25% response rate now
  + Pre-letter versus 3 mailing (response rate down)
  + Move to checkbox - .2% increase in response rate
  + Green vs ivory - not enough difference to justify cost of green
  + All mail higher response rate than web/mail
  + All mail vs option - option gave higher response rate
  + Highest response rates from oldest group, lowest from youngest
  + Next up - another probability versus non-probability panel survey
    - Possibly with Dynata
    - Work on blending the two
  + Next up also - another study looking at Web/Mail and All Mail

2:10 - Carena

* Evaluating non-response bias
  + Mixed mode survey of rural landowners
    - Actual a census
    - 2007 - 50% response rate
    - 2017 - 33% response rate
      * Even with more steps to increase response rate
  + 5 points of contact
    - Pre-letter (actually a postcard)
    - Questionnaire
    - Postcard
    - Questionnaire
    - Postcard
  + Follow-up phone call
  + Lots of personalization
  + Advertising in local newspapers
  + Tested for bias in demographics, attitudes, land-use
    - Potential concerns related to age, relevance, anti-intellectualism
    - More women answered phone surveys
    - Similar to Census of Ag on multiple measures (but older)
    - Possible undersampling of Amish farmers
* Incentives Experiment
  + Evaluate rural landowner's tradeoffs
  + Effect of $2 bills vs two $1 bills
  + Address based, multiple contacts, personalization
  + Key result: Two $1 bills had a significantly higher response rate in both Illinois and Iowa
  + Question: What was the rationale for the money experiment?
    - Thought $2 bills would be more novel
    - Was it too novel so they didn't consider it money?
    - Did getting two actual bills help?
  + Ginny - in the year 2000 they did 12 studies on incentives
    - One in Iowa - 3 groups
      * $0 (something terribly low)
      * 2 $1 (70%)
      * 1 $2 bills (72%)
    - In Don's 2009 book
* Current Interests
  + Survey of anglers and risk of spreading invasive species in Great Lakes Region
  + Experiment to test the effects of values framing on response rate
  + Mixed mode, 5 points of contact
  + Response rates
    - Mailback 25.6%
    - On-site survey 16.5%
    - Online 10.6%
    - Overall 16.3%
  + Two treatments across an intro letter and two cover letters
    - Control
    - Communitarian
      * Groups, families
      * Preserving fishing, protecting for future generations, make opportunities open for everyone
    - Individualist
      * Voice your opinions, achieve fishing goals, ensure we are meeting your needs
    - Glenn suggests mixing both values approaches
      * Determine which one you should bring up first, provide a complementary one in a later contact
      * Anton - for the experiment randomize the configurations. Then down the road you know an effective pattern
      * Values treatment is in third paragraph of letter - think about moving it up so the effect doesn't get lost

3:50 - Todd

* Bladder health survey
* Qualtrics panel n~1000
* Wording
  + Accidents, leaked, and lost
    - 7% increase when wording 'accident' was used
  + Yes/No versus multiple levels of yes (sometimes, etc.)
    - Providing levels of yes increases number of people endorsing
  + De-personalizing terminology aka 'accident' helps with embarrassing behavior
  + Level of activity question
    - None at all to Severe
    - None at all to 'Can't do it at all' with word options between
    - None at all to 'Can't do it at all' with number options between
    - Results - 'Can't do it at all' does have some impact, but need more analysis
  + Serial order location of 'I hardly ever think about my bladder' option (first option or last option)
    - First option - 32% select
    - Last option - only 21% select it
  + Do you think about your bladder
    - What kind of response options are given
      * Hours, Days, etc.
      * Controlling for location of 'hardly ever' option
      * Shorter time period gets higher reporting
        + You're thinking of peeing instances
* Multiple items versus single items
  + Ex pro-life vs pro-choice dichotomous yes/no
    - Or nine situations in which it's acceptable to have an abortion
    - Can also do Likert scale for each of nine situations
  + For a single item, you can use analogies for each potential response option
    - Mix sports, shopping, etc metaphors
    - End up getting a more normal curve than with a Likert scale
* Wording prompts for cognitive framing
  + Specify 'time in your life'
  + Specify 'no matter how minor'
  + …no significant differences
  + Specify 'even if for just a short period of time'
  + Now there's a significant difference! More people shift to saying their bladder interferes more often
* History of sports participation and injury for individuals reporting to spring training for an MLB team
  + How do you package the data matters
    - Impacts rejection/acceptance at journals

2/21/20

8:30 - Bookkeeping, dealing with the ceiling leak

8:35 - Shorna

* Center for Conservation Social Sciences
* Concern about declining response rates
  + Longitudinal analysis of 191 mail surveys between 1971 and 2007
  + Four wave mailing, separate cover letter with questionnaire, first class postage with business return, similar content of cover letter and time intervals for all studies over time
  + Natural resource topics
  + Mostly in the Northeastern US
  + Coded for
    - Saliency/specificity
      * Strongest predictor, increased response rate
    - Questionnaire length
    - Month of mailing
    - Complexity of questions
      * Decreased response rate (esp if hypothetical questions)
    - All of the above ended up being significant
  + Decline of .76% in average response rate per year
  + 35% over the time period
  + Average response rates in 1970s was 77%, 2010's was down to 43%
  + 2030's projected to be down to 23%
  + Recent surveys with response rate over 70% targeted specific populations on highly salient issues
  + Lowest response rates (20%) focused on Great Lakes area anglers
    - Less specific (about entire region)
  + Urban areas had lower response rates
* Discussion
  + Assumption that the trend is linear - is there a floor? Does response rate bottom out at a certain level?
  + Don's concern - Cornell has not really changed how it does these surveys over time. Needs to start adjusting.

9:10 - Jessica - Utah and South Dakota Update

* Testing common best practice wisdom for surveying Mid-Western ag producers
* Penn State - Kathy Braiser is starting a group looking at the over burden of farmers in particular
* Based on 3 surveys
  + Survey 1
    - Winter 2018
    - Corn and Soybean Farmers
    - South Dakota
    - Sampling frame: Producers who had received some kind of government funding in a certain time period
    - 3000 farmers
    - Pre-letter with web push and incentive, then two survey copies
    - Half sample received $2 incentive
    - Response rate 30%
  + Survey 2
    - Summer 2019
    - Livestock producers grazing cattle on pasture land
    - Half FSA, half from Farm Market ID
      * No significant differences in response rates, no significant differences in # of people not qualified, fewer bad addresses
    - 2 Experiments
    - Half sample got NRCS logo on contact material
      * No difference in terms of response rate
      * Potential complications - lots of other logos
    - Half of Farm Market ID sample received two email augmentations
      * Made no difference in response rates (bumped up a little but not significant)
    - Response rate 27%
  + Survey 3
    - Summer 2019
    - Nutrient management
    - ~Half received email augmentations
      * No difference in response rates
    - One response option at a time OR multiple
      * Higher response rate for multiple response options at once
    - Response rate 18%
* Some people loved the $2 bill, some hated it
* Mail is still predominantly best for farmers

10:00 - Yanu

* Drop-off/Pick-up surveys
* What happens to community resilience when Walmart stores close?
* Cluster sample
* Two small towns where Walmart closed, three where it did not
* Pre-survey focus group with $15 incentive
  + Community leaders
  + High school students paid $3 per questionnaire that they handed out and returned
* 67.27% completion rate
* Lots of advertising in local papers, library etc.
* Important to have African American surveyors for African American respondents
* Anger and disappointment
* A big strength of the DOPU method was the face-to-face interaction
  + Especially because it was high schoolers from the community
  + And an issue that was highly relevant to them
* Any ethical concerns?

10:45 - Jason

* Position of Requester and Gender
* Ag educators respond better if survey request was from students
  + Interested in prior relationship and gender effects
* Letter from male student/faculty, female student/faculty, male faculty, or female faculty
  + Using gender normative names
  + No significant difference
* Make student sign off promoted female educator early response

11:00 - Zhengyuan

* CSSM survey research lab at Iowa State
* Conducted telephone poll before Iowa Caucus
* Examples of poor samples
* Forecasting elections with non-representative polls
  + Ex survey through Xbox gaming platform
  + Estimates were actually in line with forecasts from leading poll analysts!
* Nutrient Reduction Management Survey
  + Ask about how survey was received, other questions directly related to the actual survey
  + Will send the survey to our team
* Ohio Agriculture Conservation Initiative
  + Establish baseline of current adoption of ag best management practices
* Iowa BMP Mapping
  + GIS catalog of Best Management Practices
* Integrating Social and Biophysical Indicators
  + Compile publically available data sources looking at watershed project efforts and outcomes
* Lots of ongoing future research

11:50 - Ashley

* Include gender and sexual orientation questions increase/decrease response rates?
  + For rural/urban respondents?
  + Randomized which question block they got
    - Wanted to ask if they identified as transgender
      * Dean of college said no :(
    - Not forced response
  + Survey A - 4 events in Georgia
  + Survey B - multiple events in Texas
  + Survey C - Qualtrics panel in Georgia
  + 1.23% of respondents (from all surveys) identified as non-binary, self-described, or preferred not to say
    - Some self-described said idiotic bigoted things
      * White males under 30 from rural Georgia
    - From rural and urban areas
  + Glenn - in-person methodology in some surveys may have decreased reporting of non-traditional gender identities
  + Concerns about misidentifying
  + Argument that it's the ethical thing to do
    - vs. what are we getting from it, is it useful, is it harmful to response rate
  + Project idea - is a question about sexuality on a survey of farmers going to make response rates drop

12:15 - Glenn

* Response rates by contact information and response modes
* Smartphone/Tablet response mode is increasing (in particular for email only contact modes)
* Thinking of changing survey protocol
  + Looking for advice from WERA members
  + Particularly related to response rates from Black and Hispanic populations
    - Directly say in cover letter that not getting enough responses from this group, if you are in this group please respond!
    - Also say that we need to make decisions that are relevant to you, esp related to extension programming
    - Glenn does have about 90% info on race/ethnicity - can tailor the letters specifically to them
* Gratuitous bird photo
* Effect of question format and clarifying instructions on behavior frequency questions
* Close ended questions cut down on item non-response
* Being specific about time period - years - helps increase item response
* For 2020
  + Repeat 2019 2x2 experiment
  + Consider alternative wording of instructions and questions
* How to promote careful and accurate recall of events over past years
  + Instructions at the point of asking the question
* Gratuitous bird photo
* New survey proposal
  + General population - support for climate change adaptation/mitigation policies
  + Re-thinking communication strategies
    - Social exchange theory as foundation
    - Considering values orientation in messages in sequencing contact content
    - Moral foundations theory
      * Eco-centric-utilitarian vs altruistic
      * Pre-suasion theory (are you a helpful person?)
      * Pleasant aromas on envelopes (lavender, ocean)
        + Allergies??
        + Maybe in a sealed packet?
      * Ginny got one with a packet of native seeds
    - Can we learn from spam/industry? Are we/how do we stay one step ahead of them?
* Gratuitous bird photo

12:10 - Melissa

* Pre-letter to address-based sample, $2 bill, pamphlet, request for email
  + Mail back email address
* Getting participants to provide email helps response rates
* How can we increase people providing their email?
  + Also…are people who give out their email just the kind of people who are more likely to answer a survey anyway?
  + Incentives as an option - thank you letter for providing email with $5? Offer to send them money if they send their email, since it will save a lot of printing costs
  + Make sure to promise that it will not be sold, used for any other purposes