Perfect. Wonderful. Thank you so much. So, obviously, Nora Cate raised lots of issues having to do with interviewer behavior from many different perspectives and part of what she talked about was ways in which interviewers’ deviations don’t necessarily translate into consequences that are problematic and, in some cases, translate into interviewer variance.

And we’re going to shift gears here and hear from Hector Santa Cruz about a project that he has just completed, looking at interviewer deviations of a different sort, I think. And then, we will have a discussion with Nora Cate and questions and comments from everybody about all this stuff.

Okay. Since the 1940’s, the American National Election Studies has been interviewing representative national samples of American adults at the times of national elections to learn in depth about political thinking and action. For the primary studies, interviewers have orally conducted interviews in respondents’ homes.

In 2008, for the first time in the study’s history, the ANES made audio recordings of survey respondents’ answers to four open ended quiz questions assessing political knowledge. The four questions asked respondents to identify the job or political office that Nancy Pelosi, Dick Cheney, Gordon Brown and John Roberts held at the time. Interviewers were told that if respondents equivocated for any reason, he or she should be encouraged to provide a best guess. Questions like these have been part of the ANES questionnaires for decades and have been used by countless scholars to differentiate Americans into less versus more politically informed individuals.

When these questions have been asked in almost all past surveys, interviewers type transcripts of the answers while respondents were speaking. However, inspection of these transcripts revealed that interviewers usually did not follow their instructions to provide literal, word for word, verbatim transcriptions. Instead, interviewers routinely summarized what respondents said, often in cryptic terms. This created a challenge for human coders who later read the interviewers’ transcriptions in order to assign one or more numeric codes to each answer.

To address this potential problem, ANES made audio recordings of respondents’ oral answers in 2008 in order to see whether more exact transcriptions of respondents’ actual utterances might lead to more reliable and valid coding. When we listened to the audio
recordings and read typed transcripts of them, we were very surprised at what we found, as I’ll explain. Specifically, what I found were remarkable deviations by interviewers from what they were instructed to do when asking the questions; in many cases, invalidating the answers provided by the respondents.

I reviewed all 1,964 typed transcripts of the audio recordings of responses to the four officer conditioned questions and then listened to many of the original recordings. I identified all interviewer deviations from what should have occurred when asking the quiz questions and probing answers. I found what I’ll call positive interviewer deviations and negative interviewer deviations.

Positive deviations were attempts to help the respondent answer the question correctly. In general, positive deviations increase the likelihood that a respondent would answer correctly. By far, the most common positive deviation was giving hints. Thirty-eight percent of all deviations were hints. I have made minor edits to the following conversations to best illustrate the interviewer deviations. For example, the interviewer asked, “How about Gordon Brown?” The respondent answered, “I haven’t even heard that name.” The interviewer replied, “Yeah, you have and if you talk about who he replaced, you’ll know who he is. We just don’t know his name as much as the one he replaced. Think across the pond – Tony Blair.” The respondent asked, “He replaced Blair?” The interviewer confirmed, “Mmm hmmm, Gordon Brown.”

[Laughter]

Then the respondent stated, “Tony Blair. I think I know who Brown was.” The interviewer lastly asked, “So, what’s his title?” The respondent answered, “Um, Prime Minister.”

The next most common positive deviation was explicitly giving the respondent the answer, after which the respondent repeated it and was given credit for answering correctly. This was 13 percent of all deviations. This type of deviation clearly undermines the purpose of the measurement exercise since the interviewer answered for the respondent. For example, the interviewer asked, “What about Gordon Brown?” The respondent replied, “Gosh, you know, I don’t know who he is.” The interviewer then asked, “No? Do you want to try to give me an answer?” The respondent wondered, “Like?” “Like, he’s Prime Minister”, the interviewer replied. The respondent said, “Oh, he’s Prime Minister?” The interviewer answered, “Of England, yeah. He took Tony Blair’s
job. Do you want to put that?” The respondent then stated, “Prime Minister of England.” The interviewer replied, “But, don’t say I told you, okay?”

[Laughter]

The respondent insured the interviewer, “No, I won’t. You have my word on that.”

In one instance, an interviewer whispered the correct answer to the respondent to repeat audibly. The typed transcript of the conversation did not include the whispering, presumably because the transcriber could not hear it. But, careful listening to the audio recording revealed what happened. Presumably, the interviewer whispered the answer in an attempt to avoid being heard on the audio recordings. I heard of one instance of whispering like this, but there may have been other inaudible instances of this as well.

Although the interviewers were supposed to ask open ended questions and offer answer choices amongst which to select, nine percent of deviations involve the interview offering such choices. For example, “How about John Roberts? What job does he hold in the government now, President, Vice President, Senator, Congressman, dog catcher?” Of course, none of these was the correct answer, Chief Justice of the United States.

In other instances, the interviewer did offer the correct answer, in this case, about Nancy Pelosi. “Okay, do you have an idea what office she holds, like Senate or Congress or Speaker of the House or what?”

During the ANES interviews, other people were sometimes present in the room with the interviewer, such as family members. Interviewers should have prevented such people from helping the respondent, but five percent of the deviations involved interviewers allowing such people to answer or help the respondent. In almost half of these instances, the respondent did not repeat the answer that the other person gave, but their interviewer gave the responding credit for giving the correct answer. For example, the interviewer began by asking, “John Roberts, give me whatever comes to your mind.” The respondent replied, “I don’t know. Who is John Roberts? Tom, who’s John Roberts?” “I have no idea. John Roberts. Google lets me check real quick.” Another person answered, “Current Chief of Justice in the United States of America.” The interviewer responded, “My
God, well, thank you. He was very fast. Okay. What’s your answer?”

Sometimes, after a respondent made an incorrect guess, the interviewer corrected the respondent by giving the correct answer or offering a leading hint. This constituted about four percent of all deviations. For example, if the interviewer asked, “What job does Dick Cheney have?”, the respondent answered, “Isn’t he a Senator, Governor?” The interviewer questioned, “Dick Cheney?” The respondent replied, “I don’t know. Wasn’t he running for Presidency?” The interviewer then asked, “What’s the other one?” The respondent answered, “Mmmm, I don’t know, Secretary to the State.” The interviewer corrected the respondent, “No, no, no, what’s after President?” The respondent replied, “Vice President? He was the Vice President?”

In other instances, the interviewer gave the respondent the correct answer and the respondent did not repeat it, but here she was, nonetheless, giving credit for having given the correct answer almost three quarters of the time. This is about four percent of all deviations. For example, the interviewer began, “The first name is Nancy Pelosi. What job does she have or political office does she hold?” The respondent asked, “Is she in the education position?” The interviewer replied, “Nancy Pelosi? No, she’s Speaker of the House. What did you say, education?”

[Laughter]

“Did you want to stick with that or do you want to try to do better?”

[Laughter]

The respondent answered, “No, I’ll stick with that one.”

[Laughter]

The respondent never reported the answer and, in fact, wanted to keep the incorrect guess as a response, but the interviewer recorded, “Speaker of the House” as the final answer.

[Laughter]

All of these positive deviations were instances in which the interviewer led a respondent to be coded as giving the correct answer to the quiz question when he or she should not have been
given such credit. But, because of the way the interviewer broke the rules of question administration, we cannot know whether the respondent would have answered accurately if asked the question properly and probed properly.

Now, let’s turn to negative deviations. These are deviations that reduce the likelihood that a respondent would answer correctly. For example, an interviewer sometimes seriously mispronounced the name of the political figure or changed it completely. This type of negative deviation constituted 19 percent of all deviations. The most common mispronunciation of Nancy Pelosi’s name were Polosee, Peloski and Peloshy. Sometimes, Gordon Brown’s name was changed to George Brown or Gordon Smith.

[Laughter]

And John Roberts’ name was changed to John Brown or John Powers.

[Laughter]

Another type of negative deviation was failure to probe for a best guess, which constituted about three percent of deviations. This failure was sometimes an intentional effort by the interviewer to circumvent the fact that the interviewer’s computer did not permit recording don’t know responses. For example, one interviewer said, “I just put interviewer respondent does not even know he is, cannot guess.” Another interviewer said, “I’m going to put something down here ‘cau’se we can’t put ‘Don’t know.’ I’m going to put ‘Can’t recall’ ‘cau’se they won’t let me do the other thing.”

And encouraging ridiculous guesses constituted about two percent of deviations. In these instances, interviewers encouraged the respondent to say something silly if he or she did not know the correct answer.

[Laughter]

The interviewers wanted to stress that the respondent could answer anything. For example, one interviewer encouraged the respondent to say, “They clean toilets at the White House” or “They wipe off the blackboards in the school”, if the respondent did not know the job or political office of an individual. Another interviewer said that, “Pelosi could be Santa Claus”, prompting the respondent to give that as an answer. Similarly, one interviewer prompted
Superman as an answer to the Roberts question. Yet another interviewer encouraged the respondent to guess that, “She cleans the bathrooms at Disney World.” These type of statements discourage respondents from offering sensible and thoughtful best guesses.

In some instances, interviewers told respondents what answer to give, but offered incorrect answers. For example, in one instance, the interviewer told the respondent that Gordon Brown was a Chief Justice. When that respondent was later asked who John Roberts was, he or she was unlikely to correctly identify him as a Chief Justice since the interview had previously identified Gordon Brown as holding that title. When answering the question about Roberts, the respondent began by saying, “He was on the Supreme Court”, but was then discouraged by the interviewer, who said that, “Roberts was the Prime Minister of the U. K.” The respondent then said that she doesn’t know what political office Roberts held. Eventually, the interviewer realized that the two answers had been switched, the interviewer recorded Chief Justice for Roberts, even though the respondent had only said, “Supreme Court.”

Another case, the interviewer actually steered the respondent from the correct answer about Brown. The respondent asked, “Now, we’re talking about U.S. politics only?” The interviewer confirmed, “Uh-huh.” The respondent replied, “Okay, ’cause I was thinking about Brown over in England.” The interviewer asked, “You just don’t know?” The respondent answered, “I don’t know.”

The last type of negative deviation occurred when interviewers made derogatory comments about the question or the researchers. For example, before asking the quiz questions, one interviewer said, referring to the political figures, “I don’t know these people. I wonder if there’s somebody from another state and they have it, you know, plugged it in the wrong place.” In other words, the interviewer suggested to the respondent that the researchers made errors when typing the names into the CATI software. Such criticism could affect the respondents’ answer to the quiz questions, so just by suggesting to respondents in California that Nancy Pelosi was not from California. In addition, such a criticism by the interviewer could reduce the respondents’ seriousness about the task of answering the questions.

Another instance of this occurred when an interviewer told the respondent that the researchers probably meant to ask them about Gordon Smith instead of Gordon Brown.
About 10 percent of the respondents experienced at least one deviation by an interviewer. This is not an insignificant number, as this percentage should be at about zero. Of those effected by a deviation, about 80 percent of respondents experience deviations once, about 17 percent twice, and about four percent three times.

Of the 7,854 times when interviewers asked an office recognition question, a deviation occurred on about 3 percent of them consisting of 2 percent positive deviations and 1 percent negative deviations.

It is important to note, however, that all not deviations distorted the final measurement. If a positive deviation occurred and, yet, the respondent was coded as giving the wrong answer, then we can probably treat the final coding of the person as correct; but, in other cases, the deviation may have caused a distortion of the final answer. For example, a correct answer that falls a positive deviation or an incorrect answer after a negative deviation.

Other respondents who experienced a positive deviation, half eventually gave the correct answer; and of the respondents who experienced a negative deviation, about 75 percent were not able to answer correctly. Researchers should disregard this unreliable data since interviewer interferences invalidated the accuracy of the responses.

Each interviewer conducted multiple interviews, so it was possible that a few interviewers were responsible for the vast majority of deviations; or, perhaps, most interviewers committed at least a few deviations, so that interviewer behavior was spread across interviewers, rather than being concentrated among just a few. As it turns out, 43 percent of the interviewers deviated at least once. This implies that the inaccuracies stemmed from researcher instructions, rather than from a few deviant interviewers. Among deviating interviewers, about 24 percent of their interviews included at least 1 deviation. In addition, interviewers deviated on about seven percent of the occasions when they could have deviated. Note, however, that an interviewer would not have the opportunity to deviate if a respondent answered correctly right away. Thus, many interviewers affected the measurements made on many respondents.

Without the new audio recordings of the interviews, we would never have known about all the hints, mispronunciations and other interviewer deviations prevalent in the administration of the office
recognition questions. More importantly, these findings suggest that interview deviations may well have occurred in the administration of many other questions throughout the National Election Study interviews.

We have audio recordings of answers to other open ended questions asked in 2008 and plan to analyze them, but we do not have audio recordings of the administration of closed-ended questions. Fortunately, the PIs running the 2012 ANES made the decision to audio record the entire interviews, so we will learn from that the full extent of interviewer deviations.

While recording interviews to identify the deviations that led to inaccurate results is the first step, the next step is to stop improper behavior. One suggestion is to make the interviewer instructions more clear and precise. The current instructions tell interviewers to probe the respondents for a best guess, if respondents answer that they do not know the answer. It is not difficult to see how an interview can misconstrue this task. This vague instruction could lead a respondent to offer a hint because it could help a respondent recollect the correct answer. Another proposal is to make sure that, during training, every interviewer knows how to pronounce the politicians’ names.

It is my hope that the observations I have made in these four questions will result in higher scrutiny of other political knowledge questions to pursue the most accurate election study results. Thank you.

**Jon Krosnick:** Okay. Thank you, Hector. So, we can have a discussion with Nora Cate and Hector now. Questions? Comments? Okay, I’ll call on people. Richard?

**Richard Freeman:** Yes. Thank you. So, we know now there are real problems with the three or four percent or some fraction of the interviewers. If we had given people a paper questionnaire or something and where there was no interviewer, what do we know about that? That document comes to me and I go to the lady over here and I say, you know, “She’s in my household.” I say, “What’s the answer to this?” or I look it up on the – now, I do Google things. So, there must be similar or, maybe, a bigger problem through some other mechanism. But, then, I was struck by the notion, that’s what people will do nowadays. They’ll go to their cell phone and they’ll Google. And it is that they have – if they know where to look, you know, I don’t know how you want to define what information means. You know, Sherlock Holmes used to say he would forget
everything as quick as he could ‘cause it filled his brain with too much unless he needed it for a case. And maybe there’s something like that. I’m not voting in the U. K. and I’m not thinking about Britain. I don’t know who Gordon Brown is. But, then, I quickly check. It suddenly becomes important to me or to America or for some reason. So, that’s –

_Jon Krosnick:_ Let’s see, we lost Nora Cate’s picture. Nora Cate, did you want to comment on that at all or –?

_Nora Cate Schaeffer:_ No, I – I thought it was just a really interesting presentation and one of the things that it made me think about was, again, I mean, this – just the kind of situation that we present interviewers and respondents with when we’re doing testing, right, because it’s kind of interactional problem. The respondent knows that they’re being tested and that the interviewer knows the right answer. And it puts the interviewer under a certain kind of pressure that results, then, in the kinds of behaviors or deviations that Hector described in that very nice analysis, which isn’t – I’m not excusing the interviewers. I’m just saying that when we do cognitive testing of respondents, for example, in the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study, and you look at the interaction that happens right after the test, you can see the effects of that tension in the role because the respondents will make, kind of – they’ll refer to their performance and whether – and want some reassurance about how they did. The interviewers, because of that, the client wanted the interviewers to provide some reassurance because of dealing with the motivational issue.

So, I guess I’ve talked way – a whole comment.

_Jon Krosnick:_ So, I’ll just comment quickly, Richard, that two things. One is that the way the question is phrased in these surveys, it begins by saying, “We’re interested in finding out how much news coverage there’s been of various people to find out how much Americans have heard of them.” So, it’s actually, kind of, blaming news coverage. “If you don’t know the answer, it’s the news media’s fault, not yours.” So, the intention there was to eliminate or minimize the respondent – the interviewer feeling of pressure to help the respondent. And I think you raise two really interesting points. I’m sorry that Skip Lupia is not with us ‘cause he’s written extensively on exactly what you raised and if people don’t know Dan Wegner’s paper – you probably do know Dan Wegner’s paper in science, of maybe nine months ago that got tremendous press around the country, showing that people are – memory is actually getting worse for things that people know they can get out of
Google and that we don’t need to keep it, so we’re all being Sherlock Holmes. And so, there – Skip’s argument is that these – there really are two different things you can measure. One is what’s already in people’s heads; and the second is, do they know how to find it someplace? And you do get different results. I think the purpose here of these items is to find out what’s already in their heads. And so, the interviewers were not told, “Don’t let them look and Google” and they probably should be told that. They should probably be told not to let them ask other people for help in order to achieve the purpose of the question.


_Paul Biemer:_ I had a question for Nora Cate. Do you find that in doing flexible interviewing, that you need more training of the interviewers, first of all, in case they need to clarify the meaning of the question, that they know what the question’s asking? Also, do you also find that the skill level of the interviewer needs to be a little higher than the standardized interviewer in order to be able to execute that properly without unduly influencing respondents? Because if it’s – it becomes a cost issue also, you know, how much training you need to do to be able to implement that properly and if you have to go from, say, $10.00 an hour to $15.00 an hour or something like that to get the right skill level. These are all important if you’re going to hire 1,200 interviewers to do a survey.

_Nora Cate Schaeffer:_ I, you know, I don’t – I would say that we – I don’t have an answer to that question. So, the kind of interviewing that I was describing for our project, we actually were trying to be as standardized as possible. I mean, we’re very strongly attached in a lot of ways to standardized interviewing for exactly the reasons that you’re suggesting. And our interviewers wanted clear guidance about exactly, you know, what the rules for interacting with respondents are supposed to be because they know that, you know, they want to, you know, sort of, be able to do a good job and know what that job is. So, we haven’t – I think we have to analyze the interviews before we really can say – give an answer to your question. But, I suspect that we’ll find some fairly complicated situations that were difficult for the interviewers to handle with their skill level. And in the particular interview that we did, the interviewers had to be fairly skilled ‘cause they had to manage the technology. And some of them found it rather daunting ‘cause there was a Bluetooth connection between the laptop and the iPad that had the dynamic display. So, it was – and the instrument itself was fairly
complicated because they could enter information in a fairly flexible way. So, it was, kind of – we were trying to design an instrument where the instrument would be standardized, but we could let the answers be less standardized. But, I think if we had a kind of flexible interviewing of the kind that Schober and Conrad talk about where you were training interviewers extensively on a lot of definitions, that’s a very different kind of flexible interviewing than the, kind of, collaborative standardization that we were working on. But, I think both require, probably, a higher level of skill than, say, a CATI interview for a fairly straightforward thing that’s very well supervised and monitored.

We also, I think, don’t yet know how to train interviewers to do the kind of interview we were trying to do.

*Jon Krosnick:* An opportunity for future research. Jen?

*Nora Cate Schaeffer:* I hope so.

*Jennifer Dykema:* I just wanted to go back and create some – a bridge, maybe, with the earlier presentation by Mark. I still think interviewers are going to continue to play a huge role in collecting survey data, especially different kinds of the data that Nora was talking about; but, also, another application of using deviations that interviewers make to help us improve the measurement of survey questions. So, I think there’s a lot there. But, transcribing interviews and coding the interaction is time consuming and expensive. And so, thinking about different ways to do that more systematically. For example, we’ve been trying to code some of our transcripts directly in **STATA** by looking for certain kinds of behaviors. So, we know that mitigators, for example, are associated with decreased accuracy in reporting in certain kinds of validation studies where we’ve been able to look at that. And so, looking for mitigators and the interaction between the respondent and the interviewer, where respondents say things like “Just” and “I guess”, “I think”, “I believe” and things like that. So, I think there could be, definitely, some applications of using more systematic and computerized ways of analyzing some of that interaction to learn more about it.

*Jon Krosnick:* Charlie?

*Charlie Brown:* [Inaudible].

*Jon Krosnick:* Can you come to a microphone?
Charlie Brown: So, listening to these, I was trying to think of what’s motivating the interviewers? And one thing, obviously, that’s motivating the interviewers is to try to do a good job. And so, I would guess that some of the behaviors would be more or less common, depending on what interviewers were told constitutes a good job and how much that’s drilled into them. And then, the other thing they, presumably, have in mind is making their own life easy, quiet. And so, the incentives and the monitoring that they face is kind of important. Just one example that we’re finding increasingly an issue is people breaking off the interview, okay? Now, that can be costly to interviewers in a number of ways. I mean, first of all, calling somebody back who’s broken off is not fun. Secondly, even if we’re not monitoring the interview, we record the incidents of break off rates and that could be used as a black mark against the interview. And you’re asking these questions that the kid – the person, obviously, doesn’t know the answer to. And it’s gotta dawn at you at some point, you know, “If I keep stumping the stars here, they’re just going to hang up and then, I’m in trouble.” And so, I think, sometimes, the incentives that we give are really different from the ones that we – I mean, it’s not a new – it’s the application of a very obvious principle to this particular context, that many times the incentives that we give are not the ones that we intend. And so, for example, we want interviewers to, you know, do what it takes to not have a break off. But, we don’t want them to give the people the answer in order to minimize the probability of a break off. And if we’re not sitting there listening, it’s, kind of, very hard to get the behaviors that we want without these collateral damage behaviors that were very nicely illustrated by the second paper.

Jon Krosnick: Nora Cate, any comments?

Nora Cate Schaeffer: No. I think it’s a very good comment.

Charlie Brown: I was particularly interested, Nora Cate, in your work on showing the display to the respondent simultaneously with the interviewer seeing it. I feel, in a very bad respondent, I want to know always, you know, how long the interview’s going to be, what question are we at, what are you writing down, what comes next? I mean, I feel this need to know and I feel other people probably share this concern and interviewers are very bad, generally, at telling respondents what the whole process – how the whole process is going. You know, have you tested this or you just know it’s right
or what? I mean, I know it’s right, so I’m not concerned about other people. I’m wondering if you know it’s right or –

*Nora Cate Schaeffer:* I – tested in the sense of an experiment? No. Tested in the sense of we’ve tried it out in the field for a bunch of interviews, 200 or so? Yes. But, we haven’t –

*Charlie Brown:* Good.

*Nora Cate Schaeffer:* And we have recordings of the interviews, but we haven’t done any systematic study of them yet. So, but, the reason we wanted to develop it to begin with is that we had – we were going to be asking people for such repetitive information and such complicated information about their households, and we wanted to try. And working with a fairly low income population, and we wanted to try to reduce the burden for the respondent by giving them an overview of the structure of the task and also give them the opportunity to check about the accuracy of the recording that the interviewer had done, particularly for family relationships. So, we thought we needed some kind of visual display for that. And so, this is what the staff came up with.

*Charlie Brown:* I notice you –

*Nora Cate Schaeffer:* But, we haven’t – but, we didn’t test in the sense of, you know, do an experiment comparing it to some other kind of –

*Charlie Brown:* I –

*Nora Cate Schaeffer:* Did I answer your question? I don’t think I did.

*Charlie Brown:* No, I’m convinced anyway. I didn’t need affirmation. I did notice, however, that you said that you developed it partly because the sample was less educated or lower class or something like that. I mean, do you think there’s a difference in you think the more educated don’t need the same communication?

*Nora Cate Schaeffer:* No. No.

*Hector Santa Cruz:* I agree with you, too.
Question: And myself, of course.

Nora Cate Schaeffer: I mean, I would like to have it.

Jon Krosnick: Allan?

Allan McCutcheon: A question for Hector is going to following up on the comments from Charlie. Have you looked at the context? Since there were four questions in a row, my guess is, and just the hypothesis, that they’re less likely to do it on the first one. But, if the person fails on the first one, right, then that ups the likelihood that they’ll do it and they’ll help in the second; and if they’ll fail the second one, it up again, they’re trying to find, you know, some way positive, even if they’ve been told, “This has to do with, you know, news coverage”, the person’s starting to feel social evaluation going on here. So, you know, my hypothesis would be that if they get the first two right, that lowers the probability of positive help on the third one, right? But, if they get the first two wrong, that probably ups the probability. Have you looked at it within context?

Allan McCutcheon: The problem is the interviewer doesn’t know if they got ‘em right.

Hector Santa Cruz: So, one thing I did notice, though, was the last two questions. The first question was Pelosi, then Cheney, then Brown and then, Roberts. The Brown and Roberts questions were harder or fewer respondents answered that correctly. So, the way it started was for Dick Cheney and Nancy Pelosi, if they answer right away, they didn’t have the opportunity to probe – to offer the hints or anything like that. With Gordon Brown, they had to probe more. John Roberts, they had to probe more. So, I don’t know if it’s the order. I wonder if we put the Brown and Roberts question at first anyway, they will still give that hint because more people were getting it wrong. But, with the Dick Cheney and Nancy Pelosi, then more people were getting it right. They had fewer opportunities to deviate.

Allan McCutcheon: Okay. I was thinking in terms of, in a sense that primes, that the interviewer, that it’s really not an issue of the respondent. It’s the interviewer. The interviewer is sitting thinking, “Jeez, they didn’t get the first two right. This person may be getting ready to break off”, kind of following up on what Charlie was saying, that it – so, it might actually increase the likelihood that the interviewer now starts to feel some pressure to help the respondent; whereas, if they get the first two right, it kind of lowers, you know, even though they’re more difficult. You see the idea here?
Hector Santa Cruz: Yeah.

Allan McCutcheon: It’d just be, kind of, an interesting question to look at.

Allan McCutcheon: Question about the training of the interviewers for something like this. Do you – you may have mentioned this and I missed it, but recognizing the training that there are going to be these situations and there’s going to be this need or temptation to try to do things to keep the respondent going and to provide alternative strategies for the interviewers and to talk with ‘em, you know, just straightforward. You know, “We know, you know, this is going to be a problem or we’ve seen from past surveys, this is a problem for this. And we don’t want you to do these kinds of things, but here, in these situations, are some kinds of strategies you can use to keep the person on, whether it’s repeating that the focus is on the news media or some other strategy.” But, if you give the respon – or, excuse me, the interviewer, something to use in those situations and, you know, that’s really a big part of the training, I would think that, you know, you would get some reduction in those behaviors.

Hector Santa Cruz: I think there’s wisdom in what you’re saying. The Q by Q instructions the interviewers got in writing and the oral training that I did with them, they knew what the purpose of these items was. They knew that the purpose was to find out whether the respondent knew it or not. So, every one of these – I mean, the mispronunciations is different, but the – in giving hints and all that sort of stuff, they knew that they were doing what they shouldn’t be doing. But, you’re – I think you’re putting together, kind of, you know, you’re kind of taking to the next step other peoples’ comments about, “Well, it’s sort of understandable the interviewers would feel the pressure to do this.” And if we were to tell them in advance, “Now, you’re going to probably feel this pressure. I’m just saying.” Especially, Allen’s, you know, “After they get two wrong answers, you’re going to feel bad for them. You’re going to want to help them get the right answer in the third and fourth. Don’t do that. If you do, we will electrocute you.” And then, you know?

[Laughter]

Allan McCutcheon: And making it a part of role playing in the training so that, you know, they practice, you know, having situations like that where they’ve got a mock respondent who’s, you know, giving signals that they’re going to break off or that they’re getting fed up with being tested or whatever, and having them, you know, be able to
improvise, respond with whatever instructions. But, to give them something to, you know, [Inaudible] recognize the problem that they’re going to have or that they may have and giving ‘em some help as to how to deal with it.

Hector Santa Cruz: Yeah, but –

Jon Krosnick: Paul, you were going to say something?

Paul Biemer: Yeah.

Paul Biemer: Can I just – Paul, can I just follow up on that? Because it just seemed to me the key point, I feel like, my take away from Johnny is not simply to tell them, “Don’t do X”, but rather, to say, “Instead, do Y” and to equip them with some Ys.

Hector Santa Cruz: I’m a little doubtful about that approach because what we find is that the interviewers forget their training once they leave, okay? So, but we had a similar problem in a survey that I work on is National Childhood. It’s a national survey of child and adolescent well-being where we, through CARI recordings, we determined, we found out that interviewers were helping children answer the questions because they were struggling and they wanted to help them. So, when we discovered that, what we did is we, you know, corrected the behavior, basically, and started to monitor those interviewers more frequently, give ‘em feedback saying, “You know, we heard you again doing this. You can’t do that” and just constantly monitor, as Nora Cate, said and reinforce that; let them know that you’re listening to them will correct the behavior and we were able to stop it, but it, you know, it’s not like we didn’t train them on that. They knew better.

Paul Biemer: I’m wondering whether we’re not asking interviewers to carry too heavy a burden here. The jobs are very complex on a lot of these surveys. They’re two hour surveys. I think the one earlier this morning and the ANES was 164 minutes. A training can’t do that. Either you have to write the questionnaires in such a way that anybody can read ‘em or you put the interviewers in the position that they’re forced to interpret what they think you told them you’re doing. And it gets – probably, the ANES is probably an easier one than some of the medical expenditure surveys and the health surveys where you have terms that the interviewer has never heard in their life and, yet, we’re beating them to the word that has – takes up the full line to do this and if they don’t do it right, we penalize them. So, I think we need to think about what we’re
asking an interviewer to do and how that affects the quality of the survey.

*Jon Krosnick:* Absolutely. Okay. Nora Cate, thank you so much. Hector, thank you.

*Nora Cate Schaeffer:* Thank you all.