Thank you, I think we are perfectly on time here so we can welcome Eleanor up front. Thank you Kathy for that and Eleanor Singer is going to pick up on some themes that Randy Olson talked about yesterday and she will tell us about incentives.

Hi, it is my curse to be the last one before lunch always so I will try to keep that in mind and talk accordingly. I want to begin by reminding you that 20 years ago there was a consensus that incentives shouldn’t be used in surveys less than an hour in length and there was a great debate about whether the response rates were in fact declining or not.

Today there is no question that the response rates are declining. I think that incentives are used probably in most of the large national surveys that are being done today. I know this about 20 years ago because there was a symposium convened by COPAFS in the fall of 1992 for the benefit of OMB, which was a contemplating drafting guideline with respect to incentives. Norman Bradburn was a member of that panel and so was Dick Kulka and other luminaries. It was a very small group.

I wanted to get the exact citation right so I went back and I actually looked at the paper. I don’t know whether to laugh or cry, half of the recommendations for research that were made at the end of that report, I made independently in this presentation. I don’t know what that indicates about progress or the lack of it anyway, but I thought you should know this piece of information.

We know that incentives can increase response rates and we know that in the surveys that we are most concerned with here, most of the loss in response rates is due to refusals and it is refusals that incentives most impact. But we know very little still about the bias that is caused by this decline in response and increase in refusals.

I am going to try to do three things. I am going to begin by summarizing quickly what we think we know about the effect of incentives on various outcomes. Response rates, sample composition response quality, response distributions and the findings I am citing come from almost exclusively randomized experiments, preferably large ones, but not always.

I’m also going to suggest how we might think about using incentives to accomplish different kinds of goals other than increasing response rates and with a list of recommendations for research. Just to be clear what kind of surveys I am talking about, I am talking about large, usually national surveys done for
purposes related to social research. They are often longitudinal but not always. They are usually sponsored by government statistical agencies or research organizations are done with government grants. And intent is to generalize results to some defiant population, not necessarily a national one, but some defiant population. I am not talking about market research or customer satisfaction surveys or polls with a very short completion time.

So let me start by thinking about, we’re talking about why people respond to surveys. To begin with, I think all theories of action that I know about emphasize the role of incentives of some kind in motivating behavior. There have been not necessarily monetary incentives. And results from open ended questions on surveys suggest there are three kinds of reasons why people respond to surveys. One kind of altruistic motives, they want to help society or the researcher. A second category is egoistic reasons. This is a category that monetary incentives fall into. But, there are other things like I want to learn something. Or some people say, and you may not believe this, they like to do surveys.

There are also a lot of reasons that are associated with the aspect of surveys itself, the topic often, but sometimes the sponsor, often the organization that is doing the research, if there is a reputation good or bad associated with it. In other words, both theory and practice confirm the importance of some kind of incentive in motivating people to respond to surveys.

So, I am going to start with the effect on response rates and I think we could recite this in unison. Prepaid incentives yield higher response rates than promised incentives or no incentives. Monetary incentives are better than gifts and response rates increase with increasing amounts of money, but not necessarily in a linear fashion. There have been do analysis, churches in 1993 and another one by Edward and his colleagues in 2002 and with very few exceptions more recent experiments come up with exactly the same findings.

What about interviewer mediated surveys? Again, the initial med analysis found results very similar to those in mail surveys, although the effects of incentives in interviewer mediated surveys where generally smaller than mail surveys. When you stop and think about it, that’s going to be a finding that comes across various aspects of this. That is interviewers to some extent compensate for incentives.
There was a study by Cantor, O’Hare and Conner in 2008 of 23 RDD experiments and they found prepayment of $1.00 to $5.00 increased response rates from 2 to 12 percent points over no incentives. Larger incentives led to higher response rates, but at a decreasing rate. The effect of incentives had not declined over time. We found in 1995 the difference made by a $5.00 or $10.00 incentive was five percentage points. David found about the same size increase at a much later point in time. But the base had fallen in the meantime. There’s a steady decline in the base rate, incentives continue to make a difference, but they don’t compensate for the decline in the base.

Pre-paid incentives and refusal conversion, and this is an important finding, had about the same effect of those sent at initial contact, but at a lower cost. There are other things about that, and I will come back to it. Promised incentives up to $25.00 didn’t increase response rates, but larger incentives sometimes did.

There are some exceptions, or not exceptions but specific findings for larger surveys, those done by Brick and his colleges for example, who found that the most economical design for large screening survey for instance might involved pre-paid refusal conversion payments only plus some sampling of refusals. I don’t remember who made it, but there was a comment about cell phone response and notification yesterday. And experiment by Brick found that a promised incentive of $10.00 produced a higher screener response rate than $5.00 or no incentive, but advance notification, as I recall, this was a JPSM survey I believe, advance notification of the survey and the incentive had no effect. Maybe there is some more research to be done on notification via cell phones.

What about longitudinal studies? These are generalizations so there may be exceptions that I am not dealing with. But as in cross sectional studies, incentives increase response rates usually by reducing refusals, but sometimes reducing non-contact. So a study by McGrath shows they help to reduce non-context. Some studies suggest that the initial payment continues to motivate response in later waves, and I cite them there. It’s not always clear whether respondents think of these later waves as part of one study or whether they think of them as discreet surveys. Obviously the timing between waves can contribute to that and some other things as well.

Pre-paid incentives in longitudinal studies appear to increase response among those who have previously refused, but not among
those who have previously cooperated. That is based on this one rather small study, but it is consistent with some findings in other context and about other uses of incentives. It suggests that there may be a ceiling effect to the use of incentives and I will come back to that too.

Jäckle and Lynn found payments – they were looking at the methodology panel of a large longitudinal survey, and they found that payments in multiple waves reduced attrition in all waves, but they do so proportionately among different sub-groups. So they did not do anything about attrition bias. They sustained the response rate, they did not address bias. The effect of the incentives decreased among cross waves. It continued to have some effect, but at a lower rate and that is a pretty consistent finding also.

And this is the only study I believe, at least it is the only one I have come across that finds there was actually a reduction in item response or an increase in item non-response across waves. There was an increase in unit response, but a decrease in item response. That as I say is the only study to have reported a finding like that.

Moving on to the effective incentives of response quality, most studies have measured it with a couple of indicators, one if item non-response and the other is the length of responses to open ended surveys and other measures would clearly be desirable. There are two alternative hypothesis about the effect of incentives on response quality. One is that you paid me some money and I am going to do this damn survey, but I am not going to work very hard at it. Another is, you’ve given me all this money, or you’ve given me some money and I have an obligation to do my best to answer it correctly.

David Cantor and his colleagues suggest that these hypothesis really need to be tested in a context that controls a whole bunch of factors. They haven’t been, in fact there have been very few studies altogether. But those that have been done have generally found no effect. No effect can conceal conflicting effects and that is what that suggestion about controlling a lot of things comes from.

But, just in time for this report, Becca Medway, who has finished a doctoral dissertation, she is a JPSM student with some really, I think very good findings with respect to the effective incentives of response quality as part of an experimental JPSM survey and she looked at a large pool of measures of quality. So, item non-
response, length of open-ended responses, but also straight lining, interview length, underreporting to filter questions and so on. The vehicle, as I said, was an experiment embedded in a JPSM practicum survey with an overall response rate of about 16 percent, half of whom received a $5.00 incentive and half none. The results, interestingly enough were that the response rate was about 22 percent with the incentive and 11 percent without the incentive so the usual 10 percent to 12 percent increase. The cost to complete, which is also not often reported, was lower with the incentive than without the incentive.

I see Charlie nodding his head, we have anecdotal reports in this and the fact that it reduces cost, reduces call back efforts and so on. You rarely get the reports of the actual, you know, actual cost with and without.

She found a significant effect of the incentive on only two indicators, reduced item non-response, so that’s a good thing, and less time to complete the survey, which might be a bad thing but since none of the other indicators of quality showed a significant difference, shorter length is also good. However, with controls on cognitive ability and on respondent conscientiousness, even those two effects disappeared so essentially this is a study, which shows no effect of incentives on response quality.

She also looked at the interaction of a bunch of demographic characteristics with the incentive to see if some groups were more likely to show such effects than others and she found no significant interactions. I didn’t calculate just how big through groups were and she may not have been powered enough to find the effects. The findings are in accord with other reports of this in the literature.

One question that occurred to me as I was reading it, and it is in line with what I said before about incentives and interview is whether you would find these effects in interviewer mediated surveys. Jäckle and Lynn found greater effects of incentives on both unit and item non-response in mail than in phone surveys. Again suggesting that the incentives have a greater impact where there is no interviewer to somehow mediate between the survey and the respondent.

Okay, sample composition. Very few studies, almost all show no effects but there are a few that do show such effects on specific characteristics. These are for the most part post-facto findings. They are not, with one exception, the results of experiments. So a
study by Berlin, which was a study of literacy, found that you had higher education, lower education with incentives than without because you attracted more low SES students into the sample. Merkle and Colleagues found more Democrats in their sample when they offered a pen with the news organizations logo on it. MAC, I think this was a Census Bureau study, found lower SES inclusion, so did Martin and Colleagues. Groves and Colleagues found a higher proportion of people with lower civic duty in the portion of the sample that received incentives than in the portion of the sample that did not. That was an experimental finding, the others I saw were exposed facto interpretations.

However, specific attempts to bring into the sample groups who are less disposed to respond because of the lower topic interest have received only qualified support. So those are again experiments by Groves, Presser and Dipko one of them and Groves and a team of thousands and the other, half of whom are here probably. And again it was a question of seeding the sample with people who are assumed to be interested in a particular topic and then looking at the effect of incentives in reducing bias in the composition of the sample and potentially in the response distributions.

Essentially what they found was that the incentives were successful in inducing people who had less topic interest to participate in the survey, but not enough to have significant effects on the sample composition or the non-response bias. If I am wrong in reporting this, some of the other people here are welcome to correct me.

Effective response distributions, we were looking at sample composition, the real concern is not so much with the composition of the sample because you can obviously use adjustment and weighing procedures of various kinds to compensate for that. What you are concerned about is, are you getting different responses from those you would get if you were able to eliminate non-response bias?

There are both direct and indirect ways in which sample composition could affect response distributions. One of them is the direct effect of incentives on attitudes. There is only one study, as far as I could tell, that seems to have tested that affect. So, do incentives directly affect the distribution of responses? They found no effects. This was a study of people who had been mental patients and this was a survey a year later of whether or not of their appraisal of the treatment they had received, some got incentives
and some did not and there was no effect of the incentive on the evaluation of the treatment facility. You would expect to find this effect in customer satisfaction surveys I think, but I don’t know of any studies that have looked at this.

So the results here too are both reassuring and disappointing. On the one hand you don’t have to be afraid to use incentives, you’re not going to bias the responses directly or as far as we know indirectly. But we don’t know enough about how to use them in order to counteract whatever non-response bias might exist in the same.

Okay, how about internet surveys? Comparisons are difficult because the terminology is different but in those places where you can make comparable comparisons, the findings from other modes generally seem to apply to internet modes as well. Money has been more effective than gift, prepaid incentives are better than promised incentives.

Much of the published experimental work has been done by a woman named Goritz who finds that incentives both increase the number of invitees who start the survey and the number who completed. Over non-incentive group, lotteries are the most often used incentives. But, specific tests of lotteries among other incentives almost invariably show that lotteries are no more effective in web surveys than in other kinds of surveys. Goritz therefore concludes that you don’t need to use lotteries at all, you don’t need incentives at all because you don’t do better without an incentive and another conclusion might be that you ought to be using other incentives instead of lotteries. But in any case, those are the findings.

Incentives didn’t affect item non-response or sample composition in any of the studies that looked at these effects and that is about all I have to say on internet surveys at this point.

I want to talk a little bit about differential incentives and by differential incentives I mean primarily refusal conversion payments. So there are two arguments in favor of differential, that is refusal conversion payments. First is that they’re more economical than pre-paid incentives and secondly they are believed to be more effective in reducing bias.

There is an argument that they are really not unfair to respondents because people who refuse find the survey more burdensome and therefore they are entitled to a differential incentive because it’s a
more burdensome task. On the other hand, if you turn it around, it isn’t that people who find it more burdensome refuse, but people who have more civic duty are more likely to respond than the unfairness argument gets turned on its head. You are rewarding people who are uncooperative instead of the ones who are nice enough to – sorry, okay.

It turns out that most respondents do think of refusal payments, differential incentives as unfair. I should put my hands in my pockets as I was taught to do as a child, yes. If you ask them hypothetically, they think these things are unfair. At the same time they say they would answer another survey by the same organization, even though they’ve just been told that the survey is using refusal conversion payments. And in fact they do, you go back a year later, although with an ostensibly different survey organization and they do respond to that survey irrespective of whether or not they got an incentive the last time or whether they said it was unfair to pay people who refused incentives.

My personal recommendation for best practice in this area is to pay a small incentive up front to everybody as an acknowledgement of their effort and our gratitude for it and then to use differential incentives for refusal conversion in order to try to counter direct bias. And by the way, I don’t know if there is a lot of research whether refusal conversion payments actually do counteract bias, but maybe Mike can say something about that later, or Dave, I don’t know.

Okay, so I think I can actually skip most of this except to say there isn’t any good evidence – well, there is no good evidence for how big an incentive should be. It’s all over the place and I don’t know what to tell you. There have been some Census Bureau surveys that have experimented with different sized incentives and they generally find that bigger ones are better, although sometimes there is no difference between $40.00 and $20.00. I cannot generalize. I think this changes year to year with the value of the dollar and God knows what else. I am sorry, I don’t know.

Secondly, there is no evidence that incentives reduce response rate. I have sometimes heard that said, but there isn’t any good evidence for that either. There may however be ceiling effects. As I have said before, they seem to have greater effects on people who are less inclined to respond and in surveys where the initial response rate is low. In other words, they have an impact on people where there is some resistance to doing the survey. Relatively few
studies have examined the cost effectiveness of incentives and that’s an area that is in need of some further research I think.

I will go to best practices and some recommendations. There are very few best practices. I mean, I’ve given you the findings, those are not necessarily the best practices, there is a difference between the two. On best practices I would say really just four things and one of them goes counter to what everyone else is saying, so be it. I think we need to spend more money. I think we have to recognize that if the aim is to do good surveys in this environment, I think we have to spend more money and I don’t mean on higher incentives, I just mean we need better interviewer training, we need more pre-testing.

I think I may have skipped, sorry, I should have started with spend more money. More training, more pre-testing, more monitoring of the quality of the interviewing etc, etc. These things cost money and they cost more money every year because that is the trend in pricing. Yesterday there was a lot of talk about tradeoffs. I think you can do some tradeoffs, but I think in the end you have to be prepared to do more things and spend more money doing them.

Secondly I think what we need is to get used to using more theory instead of basing practice on past practice. I don’t discount past practice, but I think it is better to have some theoretical justification for what you are doing in addition. Because otherwise you are sort of flying by the seat of your pants. This may work this time and you don’t know why it’s working and the only way you can count on it working the next time is if everything is exactly the same as it was before. Usually we don’t know what the factors are, all the relevant, important factors so more theory.

And then pre-test. I know that’s always been a recommended best practice. I think first of all its observed in the breech more often, whatever that saying is, we don’t do it that often. Secondly, I think we need to pre-test more things. I think we need to pre-test the different the effectiveness of different combinations of introductory materials and the appeals in those materials. Because different populations have different combinations of motives depending on what the survey is. I think, especially in a large survey, you need to find out with a small quantitative pre-test what works and what doesn’t work. Usually we invent it, we make it up, we think this thing is going to be a good introduction, it is going to make people want to participate in this survey. I think we can’t rely on our hunches anymore. I think we need to test these things including how much money to pay and how that will work.
Finally, I think we need to investigate respondents and non-respondents perceptions of costs and benefits of survey participation. I think the goal of that research would be to develop empirically based efforts to improve the survey experience for respondents. Again, what is it they hate, what is it they like? Do they like anything? Yeah, some of them do. I think this kind of study we ought to invest in would be a benefit to us in the long run.

Here are some recommendations for research, and as I say they are not necessarily new but I made them up independently. First of all, we need more research on how to reduce non-response bias for the most important dependent variables in a survey. And since almost all or all prior studies have used prepaid incentives, one recommendation would be to focus research on targeted refusal conversions and see what they actually accomplish. I think that they probably do.

Secondly, I’m suggesting using address based sampling rather than RDD as the first step, not necessarily in order to do a mail survey, but as a first step in a telephone survey. I know that the match rate isn’t any better than if you go the other way around and you probably end up with the same people, but suppose you use that address as a means of contacting the respondent and you invite the respondent with a pre-paid incentive, okay you have an address. You invite the respondent to call you back or you invite them to give you a telephone number so you can call them. You don’t send the questionnaire in the envelope, you send simply an advanced letter with a prepaid incentive and you see what it fetches you.

What it fetches you at least, hopefully, is the ability to target further payments to people who aren’t willing to take that first step or who refuse at a later step, people whose characteristics differ from those of a listed sample. That’s the crucial difference. Because when you simply use either pre-paid incentives or either refusal conversion payments to the people whose addresses you can get you essentially bring in to your sample more people with the same characteristics as those who responded initially. That is okay, it increases sample size, but it doesn’t address the issue of non-response bias. This recommendation would be to see whether something like this can get at a different group of people who you can then target with specific conversion efforts.

Third, I think we should measure the long-term effect of incentives on the public’s willingness to participate in research going forward by adding questions about expectations for incentives to a sample...
of existing cross sectional surveys like the GSS or the consumer expenditure surveys. I cannot believe that some of the resistance to surveys and the declining response rates is not due to this. I am not saying all of it, but some of it is due to some expectation that if you’re really serious about this, you ought to be paying me.

The existing evidence does not support that, but it has all been done on fairly short periods of time, not a long trend of changing practices. I think we also for the same reason ought to measure interviewer expectations about the use of incentives. Because there I think there is a much clearer indication of a potential effect. Not an indication, I shouldn’t have said that, a clearer reason to think it might have an effect on response rates. That is to the extent that interviewers are aware that an organization is using incentives regularly, they may come to use that as a crutch. It would be useful to measure interview expectations over time and correlate those expectations with their response rates.

I also think that it would be useful to do some research into reasons for responding and not responding, the public’s reasons for responding and not responding. Do motives change over time? I know Mike showed at the last such symposium, you showed us a slide indicating that the relative order of reasons hadn’t changed, but you didn’t show the percentage giving each of those reasons. And the coding wasn’t exactly the same and so on. I think it would be useful to see whether the motives for participating or not participating are changing over time and whether they differ by different demographic categories. So, are altruistic motives declining in general?

Okay, I’ve said this before, more generally we need research on perceptions of benefits and costs by respondents or potential respondents. I think it would be interesting to look into this notion of ceiling effects on incentives, why aren’t they simple additives? In other words, why doesn’t offering an incentive to people increase, even if they’re motivated to respond, why don’t you get an additional boost from the incentive?

It’s as if there is a certain limit in the study by Groves and Amy Corning and myself, the leverage salient’s paper. The finding was that the total response rate did not go up, it shifted. You had more people who hadn’t responded before but not anymore of the ones. It went up a little bit, but the people who were already motivated to respond by civic duty did not get an equal size boost from money. Why not? Maybe I am not thinking about it properly but I don’t get it, and one other study found the same kind of thing.
Relatively few studies have evaluated the effective incentives on quality of response and most have found no effects. I think we need research that varies the size of the incentive over a much wider range and other variables like topic and mode and we ought to be looking at things like reliability and validity of responses. Becca Midway did have one indicator of accuracy and she found no effect on that in her study. I think again, we need better evidence from different kinds of indicators.

Are incentives coercive? Our IRBs often ask this question. There are a couple of studies that suggest they are not, neither in biomedical nor in social research, but again they have looked at this over a very narrow range of incentives, sizes and over a narrow slice of risks. So that’s an area I think that would be worth and wouldn’t be that hard to do. There was Paul I think I spoke to and said you have a perfect vehicle and I wish you’d do it.

Then we need more research on cost effectiveness of incentives. If you like, look back at the 1993 recommendations for research and look at those that haven’t been included on this list and you will get some more ideas. I have an exclamation point, but the thank you is on the same slide.

*Jon Krosnick:* Thank you Eleanor. Before we do questions and comments, I would like to invite comments from three people. Matt DeBell if you would be willing to come to the microphone and just describe for people what I know I suspect Eleanor doesn’t know about the studies of incentives you did as part of the national exercise.

*Matt DeBell:* In 2008 and 2009 the ANES did a panel study on the internet where we did a customer crew with Knowledge Networks. And we interviewed people once a month for 21 months; to avoid beating them to death with politics we asked them about a variety of topics. But the purpose of the study was to learn about politics. In order to recover panelists who, we were losing to attrition, we did an experiment to offer increased incentives for them to come back. The general offer that everybody got at the beginning of the study was $10.00 per month for every month that they did.

As Eleanor noted, there isn’t a clear guidance in the literature about what the clear amount is to pay for incentives. We wanted to figure out what is going to be a cost effective amount to offer. So we did an experiment where we identified the people who were lost to attrition as to the particular point in time and finding who is lost at a given point is actually more complicated than it might
seem at first. We set some criteria - this was three years ago so my apologizes. I think it was that people had not done two consecutive surveys we consider that they were effectively lost.

And so we did an experiment where we offered people $35.00 or $50.00 to come back. And this was not just one time, it was every month, and at this point it was a year, we will pay you $30.00 or $35.00 - $30.00 or $35.00 was the bottom end and $50.00 was the top end. And we wanted to look at two criteria for the effectiveness in the incentive in the panel context. One was the initial yield, how many people would come back and do the survey after the invitation? And the other was the effect on longer term retention. This being a panel study we didn’t just want them to come do it once, we wanted them to stick with it for the rest of the panel.

So in the experiment we found that the difference between, and I hesitate to be too specific, I should have looked this up before now. The difference between the $35.00 and $50.00 incentives was not that large. It looked like it was a little bit more effective to pay the higher amount in terms of the effect we were going to get over a longer term and we only had two or three months in the experiment to see what effect that it would have. Since we had enough money we were able to offer everyone who was remaining in the panel the $50.00.

At this point we can go back, although we haven’t had the time to do this yet, but we can go back and look and see what the effects on longer term attrition were since we had those incentives we were continuing to pay over many months. The key finding was the difference between $35.00 and $50.00, there was a difference, $50.00 was more effective but it didn’t look like there was a huge difference.

Eleanor Singer: Did you pay them the $35.00 ahead of time? You said we will pay you the $35.00 if you agree to come back?

Matt DeBell: These are all promised incentives. They are all promises to people who we had paid to in the past so hopefully promises with good credibility, but still promises.

Eleanor Singer: But you explicitly said, we will offer you this for a year’s participation?
Matt DeBell: No, we said we will pay you $35.00 for every survey you complete and we want you to do one every month for the next however many months were left in the study.

Jon Krosnick: So this is provocative to you so maybe you could comment on that.

Eleanor Singer: I thought you were offering them $35.00 to stay in for a year, I didn’t think it was for one month’s participation. I was surprised at the amount. The initial offer isn’t for that much money, is it?

Matt DeBell: The initial offer was $10.00 per survey, but since we were several months into the panel and these people were, as we put it to them, they were priceless to us because we couldn’t replace them so we thought it was worth the $35.00 or $50.00 if we can get them back.

Jon Krosnick: Is David Cantor down there, I can’t see? David, do you have some comments you would like to add to this discussion?

David Cantor: Mostly to endorse what Eleanor said. I think to me, the quandary about incentives is we don’t have very much information on what it really does for us from a point of view for bias and how much it improves our data quality. I can’t emphasize that more than anything else. I think there are a lot of things we don’t know about incentives. From my point of view, when we’re talking to a client about introducing incentives, we will say, we will increase the response rate, but behind the scenes we can’t really say very much about whether it’s really going to improve the estimates. I think that’s a very important question we need to look at both across mail surveys and in person surveys.

Second, I think there are a couple of gaps in the current literature that really haven’t been looked at very much. One of which is pre-paid incentives for in person interviews. The idea of sending a pre-notification letter with a small incentive, $2.00, how does that effect our ability to get a response first of all, even if it is just a screening interview? And what is the cost effectiveness of that because things get very experience in an in-person interview? Most of the incentive work that’s been done with in-person interviews is a quasi-prepaid, I am not sure what to call it when the interviewer shows up with a checkbook in his hand or her hand and says, do you want to do this for $35.00? It’s really sort of a combination of a pre-paid and promised incentive. I think that is a piece that needs to be looked at.

Another gap I think, which we have never really talked about very much, is incentives in the context of organizational surveys. In
some context they are used fairly regularly, maybe not in monetary incentives, but providing schools with gifts so they will cooperate, provider surveys, especially with doctors. There is not very much literature on that and I think we don’t know very much about what the right levels of incentives are and what it can do to the data quality.

And then finally I think, you know, Eleanor’s idea of pre-testing is a good one. We’ve had some experience doing that on small scales, especially in an RDD survey where it isn’t very expensive to do a bunch of screening calls bearing the introduction and the incentives. I think that really is a great idea. I would highly recommend that kind of research over pre-testing in the cognitive lab, asking people whether this particular sentence would make you do the survey or if I gave you $20.00 to do this, would you do it? I think those are really false leads that really have no – the quality of that kind of information is really negligible, it is almost misleading.

**Jon Krosnick:** And lastly before we do open it up, do the PSID folks have anything to say about incentive experiments, since Randy is not with us anymore.

**Kate McGonagle:** I am Kate McGonagle. Randy has not conducted an incentive experiment. What we have done since 1968 since the first wave is we have tried to pay – well actually we started off by paying $5.00 but in recent waves we try to pay $1.00 per minute of interview content and we typically keep the incentive the same for two waves and sort of, you know, inexplicitly go up by $5.00 after two waves. I think some kind of an incentive experiment would be interesting.

Our hands are a bit tied again because I mean I think we can’t pay our families less, they would question that. It would be hard to kind of implement a random assignment of incentive amounts in the context of this ongoing study.

**Eleanor Singer:** All you would be able to do is experiment with paying more.

**Kate McGonagle:** Right and we pay about as much as the budget allows.

**Audience Member:** We did do one experiment with getting people to return their postcards, which is one form. Why don’t you talk about that for a minute?
Kate McGonagle: Yeah we did do that, I forgot about that. We did do a between wave – so every wave before we start production we send our families a contact update form, we want to have the best information before we go into the field. And we usually get about half of our families to return that information. We did a little experiment where re randomly assigned our families to either receive $10.00, which is the status quo, they get a promised $10.00 incentive if they return it, nothing or $20.00.

What we found was these are conditions, cooperative families and even the families who got the zero dollar incentive still returned the card at the same rate as the families who got the $10.00. I think about 10 percent more returned it in the $20.00 condition. There was not a huge effect for getting double the incentive for PSID.

I guess what I am kind of wondering is what is going to happen next wave? The people who got zero, that is where we will find a lower response rate. The people who got $20.00, they are going back to getting $10.00, somehow that is going to introduce unhappiness. I guess we have to be a little careful.

Eleanor Singer: Did you do the experiment on the whole sample?

Kate McGonagle: We did so we have pretty good statically power to look at these issues.

Eleanor Singer: No, I mean, if you had done it with just a subsample maybe you wouldn’t risk –

Kim McGonagle: So the zero group, that was only 10 percent of the whole sample so we were mindful about that.

Mike Brick: We do quite a bit of experimental work on incentives so one of the topics I am interested in is in multi-stage surveys whether the escalation or reduction in incentives could have an impact. And then also the amount of the incentive, does it have a – what is the perceived burden that is associated with certain levels of incentives, especially in multi-wave surveys? I think it is a little different if you’re doing the same thing every time from wave to wave, but if you have different surveys, you have a screener survey at one point and you pay a certain amount at that point and then pay a different amount for the full survey, the amount of money that you pay them at different times I think does convey some information about how much work it’s going to be.
Also, I would encourage some additional experimentation on timing of incentives. What we have found in the past is early money really helps a lot. We gave some money right after we talked to people on the telephone. We actually talk about it on the telephone, we thought it would help with consent rate by saying for doing the survey you will get $5.00. It actually had its impact later on downstream with returning of a seven-day listening diary. I think we should be thinking about how does that money, especially in multi-stage surveys have impacts down the road?

One other interesting thing I saw, on lotteries in particular, which are used a lot with online surveys, we have done some experimentation and we found that offering a lottery had a big impact on the data that we actually collected so there was response effect. It worked very well with our passive measurement. We have a service that works with passive measurement; it has no impact on that obviously because they can’t do anything different. When we’re offered a lottery as part of something where they had to write down their radio listening, they wrote down considerably more radio listening when they were offered a lottery. My colleague called it the Publishers Clearing House effect. I think that is actually relevant to web surveys, we may want to look additionally at that and be aware that there may be some bias introduced there.

And then the last thing is we’ve done a lot with the combination of pre and post paid incentives in combination with one another, not independently. I do think there is some potential for that in the future. I think paying a small amount up front does legitimize other post-paid incentives later, especially when you have multi-wave surveys. It is more cost effective than sending large incentives at the later waves.

\textit{Eleanor Singer:} I assume these are experiments you’re talking about?

\textit{Mike Brick:} Yeah, these are all experiments.

\textit{Eleanor Singer:} I think that the pre and the post, you know, is something that I think is what I am suggesting too. You are saying there is actually some evidence for its effectiveness. Mike.

\textit{Mike Brick:} So we recently did an experiment that Daifeng Han reported on at the JSM meeting this summer. It was a two-phase mail survey. The first phase we did an experiment, they either got $2.00 or $5.00. The second phase, if they were eligible, if they had a child who was eligible for the survey, the parent was asked to do a 20-
page survey and we offered $0.00, $5.00, $10.00, $15.00 or $20.00 experimentally. One of the interesting effects was there was no interaction between the screener and the extended interview even though they followed pretty closely, much more closely than they do in longitudinal studies.

The people that got $5.00 and $0.00 did just the same as the people that got $2.00 and $0.00. the $5.00 was the best performing at the extended the response rate for $5.00, $10.00, $15.00, $20.00 were all virtually the same, but the characteristics of the $5.00 was much more similar to benchmark characteristics from CPS and HIS on the range of characteristics suggesting – I agree wholeheartedly with your small token and the theoretical model of the social exchange theory providing. Because once you move up to $20.00 or higher amounts, you’re evoking different principals perhaps. I think this is one of the few I have actually seen that actually shows some effect of that nature.

**Eleanor Singer:** It seems to me you found something like that earlier in the screening survey too. I didn’t hear that paper, I don’t know it actually. I thought you were saying there was no carryover of the screening incentive to the extended. As if, you know, this is a different task, right?

**Mike Brick:** That’s correct.

**Eleanor Singer:** So they didn’t interpret it as one in the same survey.

**Mike Brick:** You know, even though I came from the same organization, I look the same, there wasn’t a carry over with respect to the incentive. From talking to people, despite the fact that we said on the questionnaire, if you’re eligible we’re going to come back to you, had no clue. Even after we asked them to read that out loud to us in cognitive interviews, they still said, this is, I am done here. There was really a disconnect.

I think in long-term surveys, PSID, I don’t think there is a disconnect. I think you can lower and test zero. I think you could because in a lot of these longitudinal surveys, they become part of the family after a while. They are not doing this for the money, maybe you have the money up high enough so they are doing it for the money, but I think there is some of that going on too.

**Eleanor Singer:** There is one experiment, maybe you know this Charlie because it was quite a while ago, and it was done in the HRS and it was an Juster and Suzman paper I think. They were trying to get into the
sample. HRS is a panel survey, right? They were trying to persuade very high income respondents who had refused to come back in one wave, it wasn’t the next wave. They were offering very high refusal conversion payments, $100 a person or $200 a couple and this was back in 1994.

And they found that it did, I think I might have cited that but skipped over it in the presentation. They found that it did bring in people who had not responded to a smaller incentive earlier.

Then there was concern about what would these people do in the next wave, would they come back for the usual $40 a person, $80 a couple or would they hold out for the $100 or $200? What they report is people who had gotten the out size incentives did not refuse any higher rate than people who had been converted using, you know, more moderate methods or people who had not refused - I am not sure about that last sentence – they did not refuse at a higher rate, that I am sure of, than the people who had received the very large incentives. That’s a very small study, there were not a whole lot of those people so I don’t know what we make of it.

There was someone I spoke with yesterday, I think it was Freeman, Vicki, didn’t she say something about people who had gotten $40.00 and not gotten it at the next wave? I think she was saying someone who had remembered getting something before and wasn’t getting it the next time and they essentially were saying where is my money?

Audience Member: [Inaudible]… has also experimented with that. I think they found similar things to what you are reporting for HRS. I have never actually found that HRS report for that so if anybody has that, I would love to see that.

Eleanor Singer: There is a citation so I think at one point I did find it. It is a published report but it wasn’t a whole lot of people. I don’t think it affected the non-response bias for the whole study. It obviously did bring into the sample people whom they were missing, respondents in a SES category that they were short on and they did get different reports. Again, you really have to have a large number of these people to move the entire sample.

Jon Krosnick: In the interest of time, I am going to mention one quick story since Eleanor hasn’t mentioned my favorite incentive study at all yet. But before I do, Steve Kosslyn is presenting after lunch. Steve is a psychologist who is chair of psychology at Harvard for a long time and is now running the Center for Advanced Study at Stanford. He
is going to talk about the principals of visual display and visual navigation. I think that is going to be a particularly interesting presentation for all of us because he is not in the survey world at all and we don’t know the literature he knows. I just wanted you to know that. Because he is presenting remotely from California we have to start right at 1:20 so if you could plan to come back at 1:15 so you don’t miss that, that would be a good thing.

To end before lunch, which is out in the hall here, I will just mention my favorite study which I think is from the 1970s, Eleanor must know it. There were three experimental conditions, one where no incentive was offered with the paper self-administered mail questionnaire. Another one where a quarter was included with the paper self-administered questionnaire, which did increase response rates. But, the response rate was increased considerably more when the paper questionnaire was sent with the quarter and an apology saying of course, this is a measly token that is not at all approximating what your time is worth but it is our way of showing we want to thank you and it is all our limited budget will permit. The apology of course cost the investigators nothing and significantly enhanced the impact of the quarter.

_Eleanor Singer:_ I didn’t know the story, thank you very much.

_Jon Krosnick:_ Okay, have a nice lunch and please, quarter after.