Developing an Enhanced Propensity Index to Inform Respondent Incentive Escalation: An Early Look

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The Project

http://scf.norc.org/

The Project

- Survey of Consumer Finances (cont'd.)
  - Dual frame sample:
    - National area probability
    - List (including oversample of wealthy households)
  - Triennial survey
  - 2016 data collection underway

The Challenge

- The Survey of Consumer Finances:
  - Lengthy Instrument
  - Complex Financial Data
  - Privacy Concerns

The Problem

- Response rates for U.S. household surveys are declining
- SCF has maintained response rates

	1992	1995	1998	2001	2004	2007	2010	2013
Area Probability	68.0	66.3	65.9	68.1	68.7	67.8	68.6	66.1
List	31.1	31.0	28.3	29.4	29.4	34.0	32.5	32.9

Requiring extra time in the field required since 2004

Incentives

- Standard incentives used at start;

- Escalated incentives used later but not planned in advance

The Experiment

- Conducted during last quarter of 2014
- *Upper-income places* in NY, FL, and CA (n=600)
- Pre-incentives:
  - Advance letter prepayment of $0 or $5
- Post-incentives:
  - All received Initial incentive ($50 - $150; Phase I)
  - Some pre-selected for increase ($75 - $250; Phase II)

The Experiment (cont'd.)
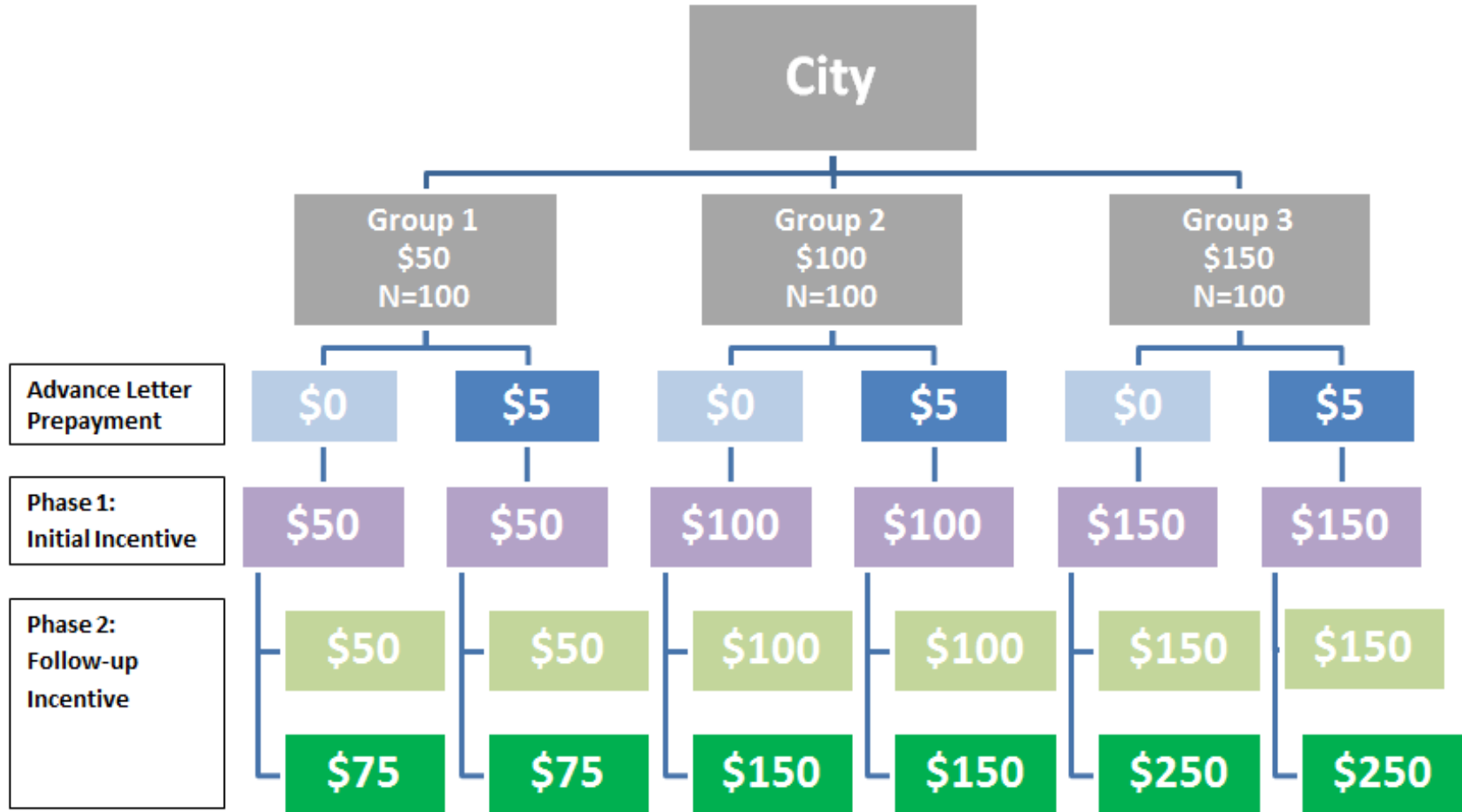
The Experiment: Findings

- With increased incentives, during a short period, we interviewed higher percentages of respondents who were:
  - male,
  - college-educated,
  - wealthy

Current Goals

Design and implement an incentive escalation strategy for the 2016 SCF that:

1. Is both responsive and adaptive
2. Shortens the field period

Assumptions

1. There are similarities in the characteristics of households *beyond income* that are clustered geographically
2. These characteristics may influence a given household's probability of participating in the SCF
3. Knowing more about the geographic location in which a household resides will allow us to make more effective use of respondent incentives

Research Questions

- How well does response propensity at the block group level for another survey (in this case, the ACS/2010 Census) help predict response propensity for the 2013 SCF?

- How well does aggregated case management data from the SCF help predict household-level response propensity for the 2013 SCF?

- How can these influential factors be used to identify households that should be considered for incentive escalation early in the 2016 SCF field period?

Data Source #1: Census Planning Database

- Compilation of housing, demographic, socioeconomic, and census operational data to inform survey and census planning
- Includes select decennial Census and select American Community Survey (ACS) estimates
- Tract and block-level data available

Data Source #1: Census Planning Database (cont'.d)

- Key variables:
  - Low_Response_Score –Indicator of likely nonresponse – higher is LESS likely to respond
  - Mail_Return_Rate_CEN_2010 - Actual mail return rate for Census 2010 – higher is MORE likely to respond
  - Pct_vacant_units_cen_2010: % of all 2010 Census housing units w/ no regular occupants on Census Day
  - Pct_Census_UAA_CEN_2010: % of addresses in a 2010 Census Mailout_Mailback area where the initial mail form was returned to the Census marked "Undeliverable as Addressed"

Data Source #2: 2013 SCF

- Aggregated from past round:
  - % locked building/gated community
  - % multi-unit building
  - # of contact attempts in past round
  - % completed in last third of field period
  - Sent special mailing offering escalated incentive
  - Paid escalated incentive

Data Source #3: 2016 SCF

- Current round data:
  - Past 2 months into data collection (>06/16/16)
  - At least 4 contact attempts
  - RR for that region
  - FI experience level
  - Mentioned receiving the $5
  - Ever refused
  - Interviewer assessment of probability of survey completion

The Plan

2016 SCF Respondent Incentive Plan

Figure 1. 2016 SCF Respondent Incentive Subgroups

GROUP	Treatment				Control1				Control2			
INSTRUCTION IN CMS	OKAY TO INCREASE				DO NOT INCREASE				[NO INFORMATION]			
INCENTIVE ACTION TAKEN BY FI	Offered		Not offered		Offered*		Not offered		Offered		Not offered	
INTERVIEW OUTCOME	Complete	Not complete	Complete	Not complete	Complete	Not complete	Complete	Not complete	Complete	Not complete	Complete	Not complete
PERCENTAGE OF SAMPLE	80%				10%				10%			

*Expect a small number due to human error and/or exceptional circumstances

Next Steps

1. In progress: Develop algorithms using 2013 SCF data (responsive)

2. Implement the 2016 Incentive Escalation Plan beginning in approx. June

3. Revise algorithms as needed during 2016 field period (adaptive)