

Designing Envelopes to Encourage Response

Considerations and Effects of Experimentation

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IFD & TC
May 21, 2012

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University of Wisconsin Survey Center



Participation Decision Points

Receiving the Envelope

Do I want or need to open this?

- Size, shape, and weight
- Sponsor
- Recipient
- Visual components



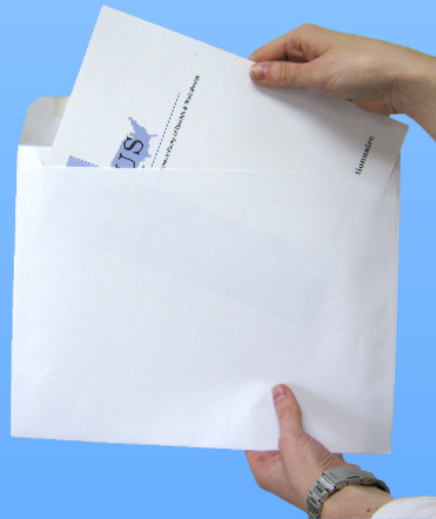
Intervention to increase salience sooner

- Little research conducted on visual clues (messaging and graphics)
- Trying to make incentive and appeal "work" earlier in decision process

Opening the Envelope

Do I want to participate in this?

- Incentive
- Cover Letter elements and appeal



Participating in study

Do I want to continue this?

- Questionnaire Design
- Questionnaire Length





Intervention to increase salience sooner

- Little research conducted on visual clues (messaging and graphics)
- Trying to make incentive and appeal "work" earlier in decision process

Wisconsin Longitudinal Study

Refusal Conversion Mailing

Experiment Design

- Refusal conversion mailing (N=2,361+)
- Simple random sample of 1st refusals
- Treatment group received sticker on envelope
- Control group received no message on envelope

Messaging:

- "Small"
 - Doesn't raise expectation too high
- "Thanks"
 - Doesn't raise expectation too high
 - Show gratitude in a short message
- Considered using "gift" in place of "thanks"
 - "Thanks" retain some sense of mystery
 - Without specifying, "gift" could sound like commercial marketing
- "Previous participation"
 - Draw on participants sense of membership
 - Distinguishes mailing from commercial marketing (Dillman et. al, 2009)

Visual elements:

- Sticker
 - Easy to implement, change, or add mid-project
 - Less expensive



*A small thanks for
your previous
participation is
enclosed*



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

332124
Jack Frost
6789 Cold Road
Freezing, WI 55555-5555



*A small thanks for
your previous
participation is
enclosed*



University of Wisconsin Survey Center
630 West Mifflin St. Room 174
Madison, Wisconsin 53703-2636

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

22222g

Jack Frost

6789 Cold Road

Freezing, WI 55555-5555

*A small thanks for
your previous
participation is
enclosed*

Experiment Results

- Study is ongoing
- We analyzed effect on first contact after mailing
- We found no difference in the outcome of the first contact

Figure 1.1 First Contact with Respondent by Treatment

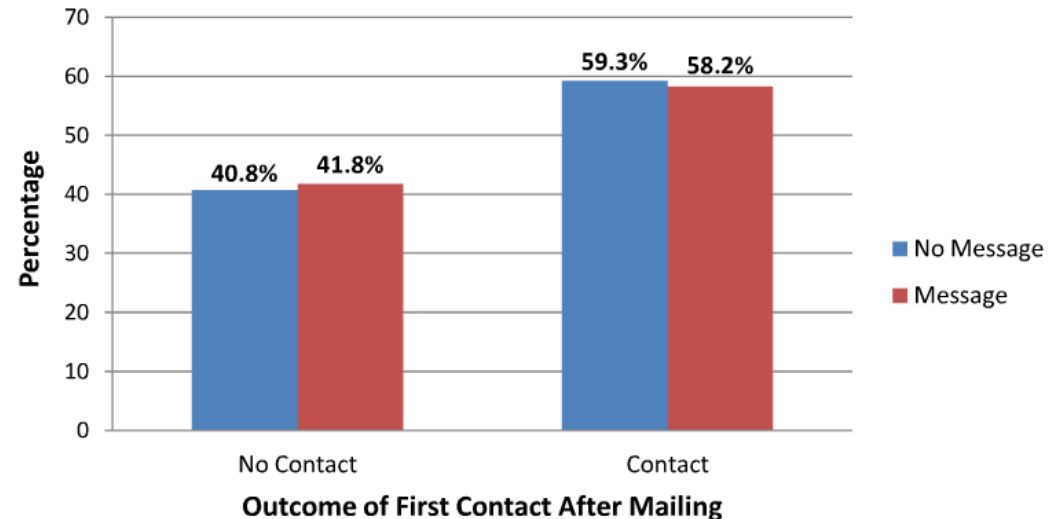
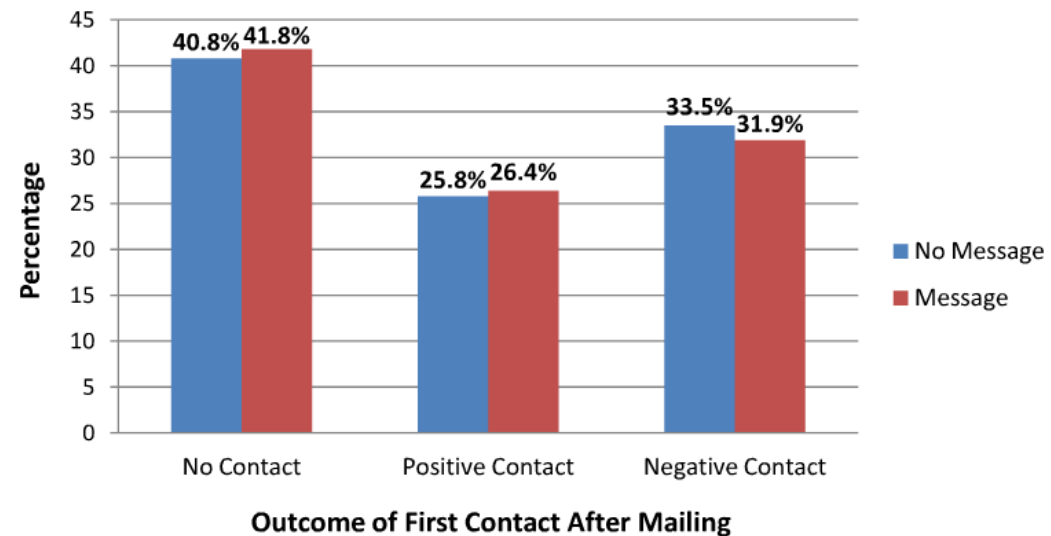


Figure 1.2 First Contact By Type of Treatment



Survey of the Health of Wisconsin

La Crosse & Wood County Mail Survey

Experiment 1

Experiment Design

- Mail Survey (N=2,608)
- Random address based sample
- First mailing:
 - received \$2 vs. \$5
 - received no message vs. message
- Second mailing:
 - received \$0 vs. \$2
 - received no message vs. message
- 8 balanced treatment groups per county

Messaging:

- One appeal
 - Monetary appeal
- Brings incentive "work" in earlier
- Explicitly mention "cash" to reduce number of throw-aways

Thank You!
A cash gift is enclosed.



UWSC
630 West Mifflin Street, Room B174
Madison, WI 53703

Do Not Forward

Thank You!
A cash gift is enclosed.

2222
Jack Frost
8709 Cold Road
Potosi, WI 53555-5555



UWSC
630 West Mifflin Street, Room B174
Madison, WI 53703

Do Not Forward

*Thank You!
A cash gift is enclosed.*

22222
Jack Frost
6789 Cold Road
Freezing, WI 55555-5555

Experiment Results

- Envelope message had no effect
- The additional \$2 incentive had no effect
- The \$5 pre-incentive performed significantly better than the \$2 pre-incentive.

Figure 2.1 Response Rates for Message vs. No Message

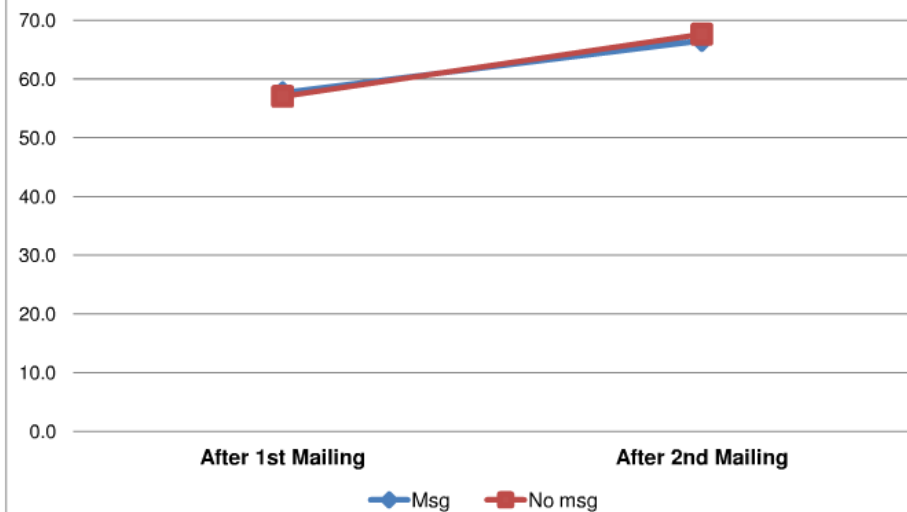
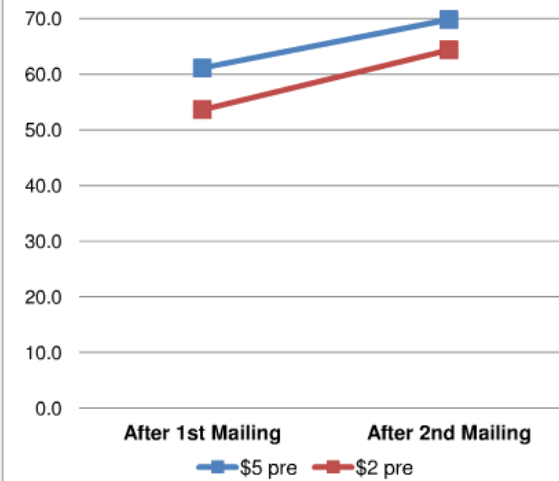


Figure 2.2 Response Rates for Incentive Amount



Survey of the Health of Wisconsin

La Crosse & Wood County Mail Survey

Experiment 2

Experiment Design

- Mail Survey (N=2,616)
- Random address based sample
- First mailing:
 - received \$2
 - received no message vs. money message vs. health message
- Second mailing:
 - received \$0 vs. \$5
 - received no message vs. money message vs. health message
- 6 treatment groups per county

Messaging:

- Two appeals:
 - Monetary appeal
 - Health-related appeal

Visual elements:

- More noticeable graphic components
- Striking, attention-getting, attractive
- Considered using color county logo
 - Felt that color would draw attention away from graphic and message

Monetary Appeal

We've included a small cash gift to thank you for your participation!

Health-Related Appeal

Your participation is needed to build a healthier Wood County!



UNWSC
Sterling Hall, Room 7
475 N. Charter Street
Madison, WI 53706-1507
Do Not Forward

2019
Jodi Piro
608-784-1144
jpiro@lccwi.org

We've included a small cash gift to thank you for your participation!



UWSC
Sterling Hall, B607
475 N. Charter Street
Madison, WI 53706-1507

Do Not Forward

22222
Jack Frost
6789 Cold Road
Freezing, WI 55555-5555

**We've included a
small cash gift to
thank you for your
participation!**

- Considered using color county logo
- Felt that color would draw attention away from graphic and message

thank you for your participation!

64

Alternative Designs



- Self-selection (into or out of study)
 - What other images could serve better to signify "health?"
- Bias in responses to survey questions
 - How will images of active people effect responses? (Toepoel & Couper, 2011)
- Logistics of design
 - Positioning of graphics so not to interfere with post office procedures



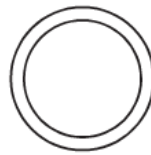
- Self-selection (into or out of study)
 - Bright colors and hands geared more toward children and youth
- Ambiguous and/or conflicting visual clues
 - Charity or youth "feel"



- Legibility
 - Too difficult to see that the graphic is cash
- Experimental Design
 - Does this design differ enough from Experiment 1?
 - Might not have had enough graphic "oomph"



- Self-selection (into or out of study)
 - All white, youthful hands
- Experimental Design:
 - Does this design differ too much from Experiment 1?
 - Might have too much graphic "oomph"



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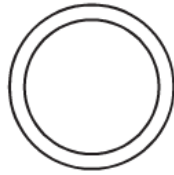
Do Not Forward

22222
Jack Frost
6789 Cold Road
Freezing, WI 55555-5555

You can help build a healthier Wisconsin!



- Self-selection (into or out of study)
 - What other images could serve better to signify "health?"
- Bias in responses to survey questions
 - How will images of active people effect responses?
(Toepoel & Couper, 2011)
- Logistics of design
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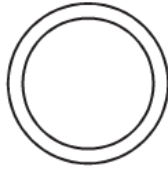


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Do Not Forward



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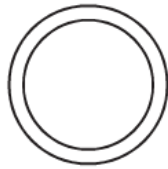
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475 N. Charter Street
Madison, WI 53706

Do Not Forward

22222
Jack Frost
6789 Cold Road
Freezing, WI 55555-5555

Thank you!
Your cash gift is enclosed!

- Legibility
 - Too difficult to see that the graphic is cash
- Experimental Design
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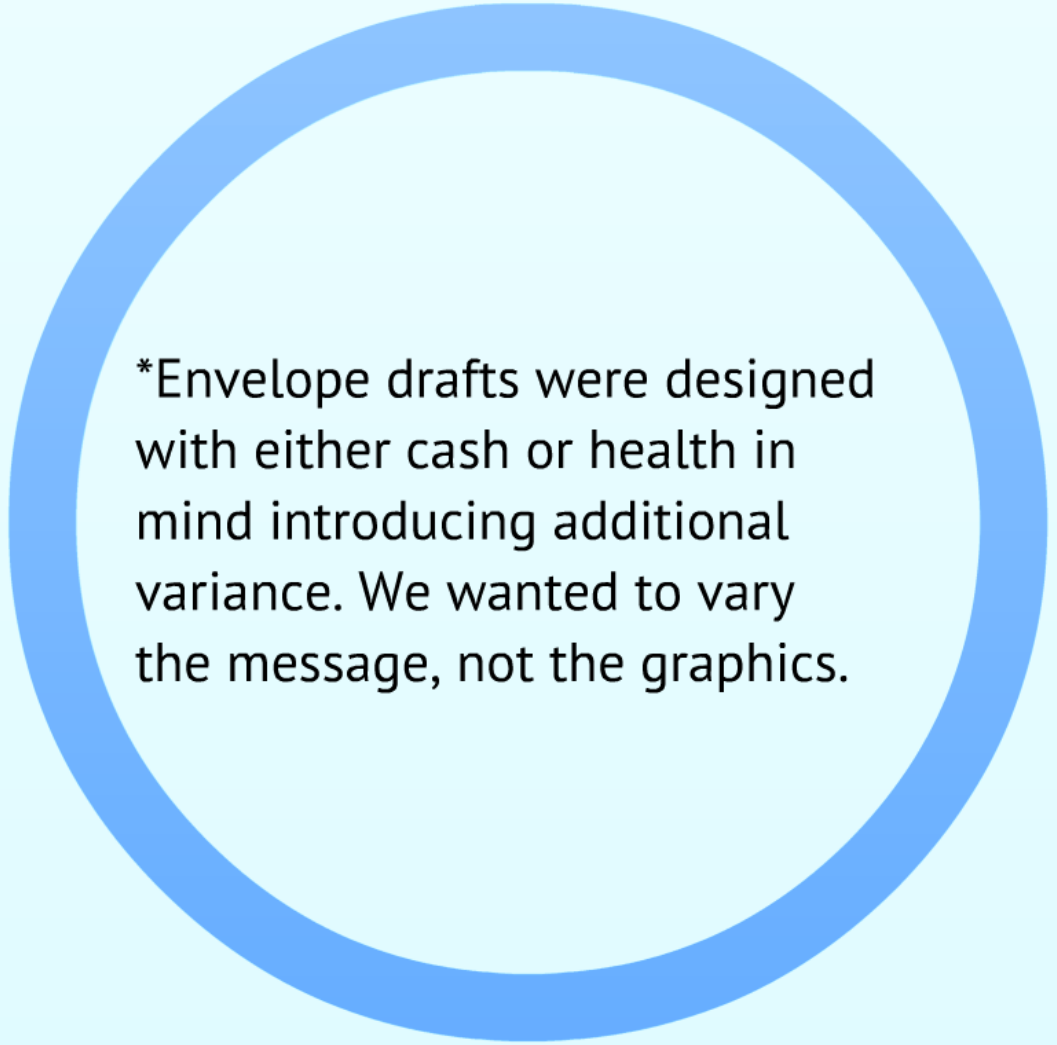


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Do Not Forward



- Self-selection (into or out of study)
 - All white, youthful hands
- Experimental Design:
 - Does this design differ too much from Experiment 1?
 - Might have too much graphic "oomph"



*Envelope drafts were designed with either cash or health in mind introducing additional variance. We wanted to vary the message, not the graphics.



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Do Not Forward

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Freezing, WI 55555-5555

**We've included a
small cash gift to
thank you for your
participation!**

Experiment Results

- The message made little difference on response rate
- Envelopes with no message had slightly higher response rates than envelopes with messages
- Overall, the additional incentive increased response rates from 64% to 69%

Figure 3.1 Response Rates After First Mailing

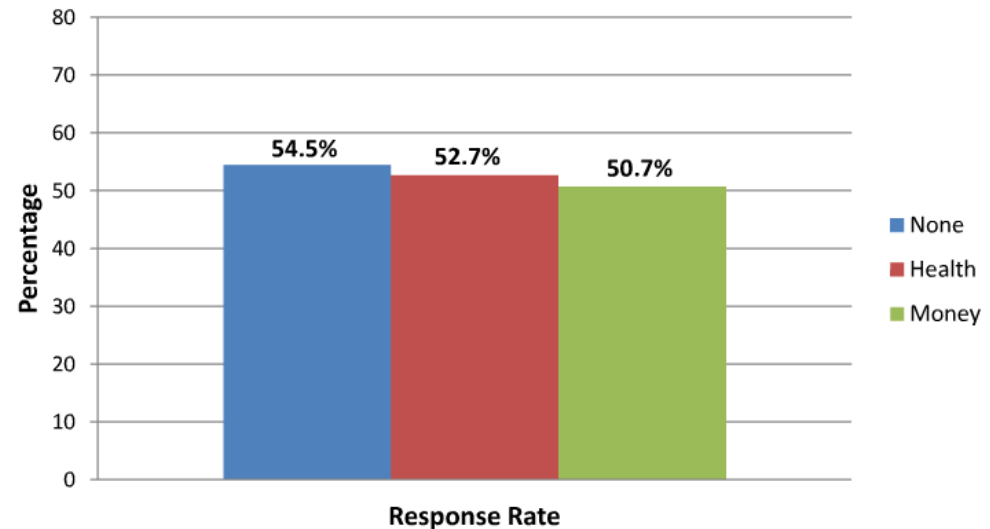
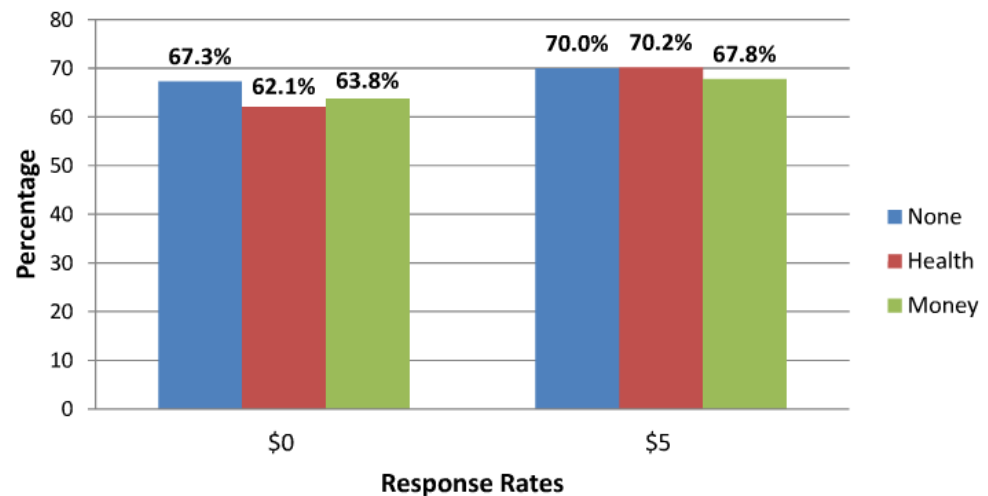


Figure 3.2 Final Response Rates by Incentive Amount



Summary

Using envelope messaging in the field:

- Carefully consider if messaging is appropriate for your study
- In general we found no effect but have reason to believe that the effect could be negative

Finn et. al (2004)

- Found no significant effect but response rates with the message were 39.2% compared to 45.6% without the message.

Why we think we found no effect:

- Interaction with other elements on the envelope
 - SHOW: Seal from local government
 - WLS: Familiarity with study
- Sample
 - SHOW: Highly compliant
 - WLS: Longitudinal refusals

Things we want to try in the future:

- More diverse sample/more studies
 - Non-governmental
- Look at non-response bias
 - Could we be bringing in different people?
- Varying the graphic
 - Bolder graphic
 - Graphic with no text
 - Phrasing of appeals

Thanks to our UWSC Experiment Team:

Ken Croes
Kristen Cyffka
Kerryann DiLoreto
Jen Dykema
Kelly Elver
John Stevenson



UWSC University of Wisconsin Survey Center



Thank You!

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