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# INCENTIVES FOR OFFENDER RESEARCH PARTICIPATION ARE BOTH ETHICAL AND PRACTICAL

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There is little consistency in policies concerning incentives for offenders to participate in research. With nonoffenders, incentives are routine; in contrast, many jurisdictions and granting agencies prohibit offenders from receiving any external benefits. The reasons for this prohibition are unclear. Consequently, the authors reviewed the ethical and practical concerns with providing incentives to offenders. They conclude that there are no ethical principles that would justify categorically denying incentives for offenders. Research with offenders, however, presents unique practical concerns that need to be considered when determining the magnitude and form of the incentives. In general, the incentives should not be so large as to compel participation of a vulnerable population or to undermine the goals of punishment and deterrence. The authors propose that incentives for offenders should be routinely permitted, provided that they are no larger than the rewards typically available for other socially valued activities (e.g., inmate pay, minimum wage).

**Keywords:** research ethics; incentives; offenders

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Informed consent is a central ethical principle for research with human participants. Although there are certain opportunities to advance knowledge using only public records, much can be learned through research that requires the willing cooperation of the participants. The motivation to volunteer for research is shaped by many factors, such as curiosity or a desire to contribute to the public good or simply for a break in routines. In many cases, researchers also provide external benefits, such as money, snacks, gift certificates, or contributions to charities. These external benefits are typically modest and are not intended to be a sufficient motivation for research participation. Instead, they are intended to acknowledge and express gratitude for the time and effort required and to compensate for the direct costs of participation (e.g., bus fare, babysitters, lost wages).

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Currently, many jurisdictions have different policies concerning research incentives depending on whether the participants are offenders or nonoffenders. Specifically, approximately half of the jurisdictions in the United States and Canada prohibit researchers from providing any external benefits to offenders (Matheson, Forrester, Brazil, Doherty, & Affleck, *in press*; Smoyer, Blankenship & Belt, 2009). Without incentives, it can be difficult to recruit offenders for studies that require significant personal sacrifice (e.g., longitudinal research, intrusive medical testing). The policy to prohibit incentives for offenders is without justification. We mean this in two ways. First, most jurisdictions do not have written justifications for their prohibition on incentives for research with offenders (Matheson et al., *in press*; Smoyer et al., 2009). Second, our review of the relevant ethical principles concludes that incentives are morally justified. In particular, we argue that research participation is a worthwhile activity that contributes to the public good and that it is reasonable to provide offenders incentives for research participation equivalent to the incentives that would normally be available to them for other socially valued activities (e.g., inmate pay). Although the ethical principles are the same for offenders and nonoffenders, there are unique pragmatic concerns (discussed later in the article) that must be addressed when providing incentives to individuals who are serving a sentence, either in institutions or in the community.

### **ETHICAL FRAMEWORKS GOVERNING INCENTIVES FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION**

Several regulatory policies have been developed that provide explicit guidelines on the use of incentives in the ethical conduct of research with human participants.

The 1979 Belmont Report on Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects Research is one noteworthy example (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). This report identifies three key ethical principles: (a) respect for persons (i.e., acknowledging the individual's autonomy to choose and providing protection of individuals with diminished autonomy), (b) beneficence (i.e., research activities that do no harm or maximize potential benefits while minimizing potential harms), and (c) justice (i.e., when receiving possible benefits of research and bearing its burdens, equal persons should be treated equally). In applying these principles to the conduct of research, the Belmont Report indicates that care needs to be exercised with the use of incentives, as these may have the potential to exert undue influence with vulnerable populations, a group to which offenders belong.

The World Medical Association's (2008) Declaration of Helsinki is also relevant in this regard, given that it is an international proclamation of ethical principles for conducting biomedical research with human participants. Embedded in the 35 principles composing the declaration's 2008 revision are provisions for conducting research with vulnerable persons and directives to have clear research protocols that describe the use of any incentives.

The U.S. Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CRF 46) specifically identifies "prisoners" as a group that is vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, given their circumstances of incarceration, which could limit their ability to make voluntary and uncoerced decisions to participate in research (Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Regarding the use of incentives in research with incarcerated populations, §46.305 (a) (2) notes that any possible advantages obtained from a prisoner's participation in

research cannot be so large in magnitude, compared to his or her usual quality of living conditions, food, medical care, or “opportunities for earnings,” to cloud that individual’s judgment in weighing the risks and benefits of participating.

The American Psychological Association’s (2010) ethical code Standard 8.06 (Offering Inducements for Research Participation) also permits the use of financial or other inducements for research participation but similarly stipulates that reasonable efforts are made that these are not excessive or inappropriate “when such inducements are likely to coerce participation” (Standard 8.06, [a]).

In Canada, the ethics framework regulating all academic research is the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010). This policy statement permits incentives. It does, however, place the onus on the researcher to justify their use in any specific study. As with the other guidelines, the Tri-Council policy stipulates that incentives “should not be so large or attractive as to encourage reckless disregard of risks” and that research ethics boards should be sensitive to “the economic circumstances of those in the pool of prospective participants” (p. 29).

Ward and Willis (2010) argue that research with offenders requires ethical reflection given the obvious concerns with coercion and undue influence (Edens, Epstein, Styles, & Poythress, 2011). In their view, the guiding principle should be respect for human dignity, based on the inherent moral worthy of all persons—including those serving a sentence. Incarcerated persons should receive equal considerations in matters directly concerning their core interests, given that they are human and thus possess equal moral status to non-incarcerated individuals.

In summary, all foremost research ethics guidelines explicitly permit the use of incentives. In particular, these frameworks direct researchers to use incentives in a manner that does not undermine personal autonomy yet respects fair and equal treatment of persons. None prohibits the use of incentives with offenders, although offenders are not always explicitly mentioned. Certain frameworks make specific reference to prisoners, but these frameworks make little conceptual distinction between incarcerated individuals and those with other types of sentences (e.g., probation, parole). When mentioned, offenders are viewed as a vulnerable population, requiring special attention to issues of coercion and undue influence.

## **POLICIES CONCERNING INCENTIVES FOR OFFENDER RESEARCH PARTICIPATION**

Whereas major ethical guidelines consistently permit the use of incentives with offenders, such is not the case for institutional policies that govern prisoners, probationers, and parolees. Instead, policies pertaining to participant payments are diverse even within geographically close or demographically similar settings. In a review of U.S. prison policies, Smoyer et al. (2009) reported that 21 states had policies permitting offender prisoner research compensation, whereas 25 states, the District of Columbia, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons categorically prohibited research payments (data were unavailable for 4 states). Written policies, whether permitting or prohibiting participant payments, were available in fewer than half of the sampled jurisdictions, and the absence of formal written policies was

variously interpreted by corrections personnel as indicating prohibition of such payments or as indicating that payment requests should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Indeed, in most states where payments were permitted, wardens or other oversight staff made final decisions on whether an individual study could include compensation. Smoyer and colleagues discussed the application of payment policies with a convenience sample of 13 researchers in states that permitted payments and found that payments were sometimes prohibited.

Matheson et al. (in press) conducted a similar survey with the Canadian provincial ( $n = 10$ ) and territorial ( $n = 3$ ) correctional systems as well as with the federal Correctional Service of Canada (CSC; responsible for sentences of 2 years or more). Written policies concerning research payments were available in just two departments (14%). Specifically, CSC and the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Corrections Services policies explicitly prohibit research payments to offenders. In the absence of written policies, about half of the departments had unwritten policies prohibiting payments or discouraging their use, whereas the other half permitted participant payments on a case-by-case basis. One department (Alberta Correctional Services) indicated that payments would be considered for community-based offenders but not for prisoners.

In addition to reviewing these two national surveys, we asked 17 experts (between December 2010, and November 2011) about incentive policies in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. These experts were all directly and currently involved in research with correctional populations, either as researchers or as research managers (e.g., director of research for a national, provincial, or state correctional service). These informants generally reported that bias against participant payments was the norm in these settings. England and Wales prohibit inmate payments, although formal documentation for this policy could not be located (R. Mann, National Offender Management Service, personal communication, March 17, 2011). Western Australia likewise prohibits offender payments, also in the absence of identifiable written policy (A. Paul, Corrective Services, Western Australia, personal communication, April 7, 2011). The CSC similarly prohibits offenders from being compensated for research and was one of the few services for which that prohibition existed in writing (CSC, 2004, § 19).

## REASONS FOR PROHIBITIONS ON INCENTIVES FOR OFFENDERS

Given consistent support for participant payments across ethical guidelines, readers would expect that policies prohibiting such payments should be accompanied by explicit rationales for those decisions. This is not the case. Our contacts with the international experts (mentioned above) identified implicit and explicit prohibitions, but none of the policy statements was accompanied by written justifications for the prohibition. Although it is likely that relevant documentation exists somewhere, it is not well known to the international community of correctional researchers. Consequently, one objective of this article was to focus attention on an important decision that has largely been hidden from explicit debate among correctional decision makers, researchers, and the public at large.

Correctional policy decisions are not made in a vacuum. To understand these decisions, it is necessary to consider popular moral discourse concerning the rights and responsibilities of offenders. It is also important to appreciate the practical concerns of correctional

administrators, as they have considerable authority concerning the extent to which researchers have access to offender populations.

The next section reviews the various arguments that have been used to justify prohibiting incentives for offender research participation. To the extent that research is necessary for effective, evidenced-based practices, then participation in research is a socially valuable activity. This social value of research participation remains whether the participants are offenders or nonoffenders. The value of the research is determined by its goals and methods, not by the legal status of its participants. Consequently, blanket prohibitions on incentives for offenders need to demonstrate that the negative consequences inherent in the incentives are greater than the expected benefits of the research. The arguments presented in the next section raise important issues that need to be addressed when considering incentives with offenders. In our view, however, none of these arguments is sufficient to justify a categorical prohibition on offender incentives for research participation.

#### **INCENTIVES ALLOW OFFENDERS TO PROFIT FROM THEIR CRIMES**

Contemporary Western correctional practices seek to achieve the general goals of deterrence and offender rehabilitation. Some have suggested that providing incentives for research participation allows offenders to profit from their crimes and thereby reduces the deterrent effects of the justice system (Smoyer et al., 2009; Tetley, 2007). We believe they are mistaken. As we have previously stated, the size of the incentives matters. The view that incentives necessarily undermine deterrence fails to distinguish between the modest sums that can be ethically justified for research participation and the large payments received by certain notorious offenders for books and/or films.

Deterrence can be subdivided into two aspects, general and specific deterrence. General deterrence prescribes that the punishments for certain offenses should be sufficiently unpleasant that ordinary persons, knowing of the potential punishments, would be disinclined to engage in the behavior. In colloquial language, this is where the court “makes an example” by handing down a particular sentence for a particular crime—the goal being to send a message to the populace that this sort of behavior will not be tolerated. Specific deterrence is directed at the individual offender who has committed the crime and is intended to dissuade him or her from ever engaging in this behavior again. To achieve specific deterrence, the court must examine the offender’s criminal history and current conduct and assess a sentence that will cause the offender to reconsider engaging in similar behavior in the future.

Both general and specific deterrence goals are served by perceptions that correctional services environments are less pleasant than normal community living conditions. The loss of liberty imposed by these environments is the intended punishment, although other conditions (e.g., poor food quality, limited leisure activities) also contribute to this perception. Indeed, members of the community become upset when they hear of conditions of life in prison that are equal to, or better than, conditions for other law-abiding citizens (e.g., high-quality diets, access to postsecondary education, satellite television, treatment services, etc.). General and specific deterrence goals also are served by the perception that “crime doesn’t pay.” Consequently, citizens are rightly concerned when they observe offenders to be profiting directly or indirectly from their criminal actions, as this is perceived as being at odds with the intents of punishment and deterrence.

Consequently, it is not surprising that reimbursement for research participation, particularly for incarcerated offenders, can trigger concerns that such opportunities (a) diminish the unpleasantness of correctional services environments by providing offenders with unique opportunities and (b) reward offenders for their crimes. Although we agree that these effects, if realized, would be undesirable, we disagree that incentives necessarily (or even typically) are perceived by offenders as reducing the unpleasantness of the punishments or as rewarding their criminal activities. It is hard to argue that the potential of a few hours of research participation at the level of inmate pay or minimum wage would either substantially improve the pleasantness of correctional services environments or would be part of the cost-benefit analysis of individuals considering committing crimes. Just as offenders, including incarcerated offenders, are routinely rewarded for participating in other socially worthwhile activities (jobs, treatment programs), it is reasonable to provide incentives for participation in research. The incentives, however, should not be so large as to undermine the deterrence goals of the criminal justice system. Potential guidelines for reasonable payment could include the amount that nonoffenders would receive for similar research participation and the amounts available to offenders for other types of socially worthwhile activities (e.g., inmate pay).

It is not unusual, however, for policies and public opinion to be shaped by atypical (but troubling) cases of offenders living lavish lifestyles in prison or benefiting financially from their crimes. “Boss Tweed,” a New York congressman incarcerated in the 1800s, is a famous historical example of an offender who was able to live better in prison than most citizens (including a velvet sofa in his cell; Office of the Clerk, 2012). There was considerable moral outrage when the Canadian public learned that the family of serial killer Clifford Olson received \$100,000 after he identified the locations of 11 child murder victims (“Serial Killer,” 2011). Similarly, the infamous Son of Sam case spurred legislation limiting offenders’ access to royalties or other income based on their stories (Annucci, 2004). Such high-profile cases have not typically involved research or researchers; however, in the absence of written correctional policies explaining the rationale and guidelines for research payments, corrections personnel might find it difficult to counter public consternation about research incentives. Specifically, they might interpret laws and policies designed to limit the opportunities for offenders to profit from their crimes as extending to even the modest (often token) incentives offered by legitimate researchers. The extent to which correctional administrators’ decisions actually have been influenced by such extreme cases is unknown; as noted earlier, correctional jurisdictions that prohibit incentives rarely provide any justification for their decisions (Matheson et al., *in press*; Smoyer et al., 2009).

### **MORAL OUTRAGE**

Although rational analysis may conclude that the incentives for offenders are morally justified, rationality is weak compared to the force of moral outrage. Given the dearth of explicit justification, it is quite likely that many decision makers, when presented with the option of providing incentives, simply felt that it was wrong to pay offenders. Humans have a built-in desire to punish wrongdoers (de Quervain et al., 2004), which could lead us in directions that may or may not be consistent with our own rational analysis of right conduct.

Consequently, it is not surprising that offender payments can raise the ire of corrections personnel, other stakeholder groups, and citizens in general who might perceive that these

payments diminish punishment, reward offending, or provide opportunities to offenders that are unavailable to nonoffenders. Research payments to sex offenders appear to cause much stronger negative reactions, engendered perhaps by moral outrage, a “retributive concern” involving negative reactions to moral-norm violations (Salerno et al., 2010, p. 60).

Moral outrage toward sex offenders is stoked by the media, and this is true even in the context of research payments. In 2007, researchers were interviewed about a funded project examining the sexual age preferences of paroled sex offenders. The reporter chose to focus on the fact that volunteers were compensated with payments and titled the article “Pedophile Payout” (Tetley, 2007). A victims’ rights advocate was quoted as saying that research participation by sex offenders should be compulsory and that it was “offensive” to offer sex offenders payments. For this advocate, arguments for participant payments based on need (e.g., that payments are often necessary for recruiting valid samples of study participants), cost of participating (e.g., lost wages, bus fare), ethical principles (e.g., payments are fair if made to all participants and unfair if withheld from a group of participants), or “the greater good” (e.g., the need for research in understudied areas) might be difficult to consider. Indeed, such arguments were made by the investigators and other scientists interviewed for the article. Nevertheless, approval for the study was ultimately withdrawn (M. Seto, co-investigator, personal communication, February 4, 2011).

The arguments in this article may similarly be dismissed by those led by their instinctive reactions, particularly when considering participant payments in the midst of a crisis (e.g., in response to media requests for interviews or public outrage regarding specific research projects). Even decision makers who have carefully considered the issues and who personally believe that incentives are justified may be disinclined to challenge opposing views, particularly when they are presented by individuals with whom they have deep sympathy. In particular, decision makers may determine that addressing the concerns of victims is more important than the potential contributions of incentives to advancing research knowledge. Denying or withdrawing incentives, however, slows the development of the very knowledge needed to reduce criminal victimization. We encourage decision makers to take time to examine the pros and cons of allowing incentives for offender research participation. We believe that careful reflection will lead many administrators to reconsider categorical bans on such incentives.

#### INCENTIVES DEPRIVE OFFENDERS OF AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ATONEMENT

Another argument against incentives is that they deprive offenders of the opportunity to give back to society or atone for their transgressions. This argument is sometimes stated as a directive, such that research participation should be part of the offender’s sentence. We disagree. Compelling offenders to participate in research violates the basic tenets of all research ethical guidelines and brings to mind the serious human rights abuses originally responsible for the development of research ethics guidelines (e.g., the Nuremberg trials; Schüklenk, 2000).

A more benign version of this argument is that voluntary research participation without compensation is a means by which offenders can “come clean” by giving back to society. Some researchers who share this view refuse to offer compensation even in settings that permit offender payments (Smoyer et al., 2009). All research study participants are free to refuse incentives, and it is not uncommon for some to do so; however, when researchers

make this decision for participants, they, too, violate ethical principles, particularly, the principle of autonomy. Here, researchers substitute their own moral judgment about atonement for that of offenders. This practice is paternalistic, limits the choices of offenders to engage in research (e.g., less affluent offenders might be unable to “donate” their time), and is self-serving by freeing up funds that ordinarily would go toward covering the expense of participant payments. It is also unfair to withhold compensation from some research participants and not others (according to the ethical principle of beneficence), especially on the basis of personal characteristics, such as offense history (according to the ethical principle of jurisprudence).

#### INCENTIVES UNDERMINE THE CONSENT OF VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Perhaps the most commonly cited concerns about the use of financial incentives for research participants is that incentives are coercive or provide an undue inducement for participation, especially for vulnerable populations (Grady, 2005; Halpern, 2011; Hutt, 2003; Macklin, 1981; McGregor, 2005; McNeill, 1997). As Halpern (2011) points out, however, terminology is critical in looking at this argument. Coercion has been described as requiring a credible threat for not acting (Wertheimer & Miller, 2008) or involving a threat of physical, psychological, or social harm to compel an individual to do something, such as participating in research (Faden & Beauchamp, 1986). With this definition, financial incentives cannot be coercive (Halpern, 2011). To quote Grady (2005), “money for research participation is an offer or an opportunity and not a threat” (p. 1683). Consequently, there is no justification for considering participant payment for research participation as coercive, regardless of the value of the payment or the vulnerability of the population.

In contrast, there is a genuine concern that participant payment could provide an undue inducement for participation in research. Specifically, the offer of payment may alter individuals’ perception of the risks associated with research participation (Fry, Hall, Ritter, & Jenkinson, 2006; Halpern, 2011), or the monetary incentive may influence individuals to participate in research that they would not participate in without the incentives (Grady, 2005). The available, although limited, research appears to indicate that monetary incentives do not influence assessment of risk (Bentley & Thacker, 2004; Fry et al., 2006; Grady, 2005; Halpern, 2011; Singer & Bossarte, 2006). In fact, Cryder, London, Volpp, and Lowenstein (2010) found that increased levels of incentives led to more scrutiny of the likely risks of participation, not less. All of the reviews of the literature on participant payment come to the same conclusion: that the decision to participate in research is based on multiple factors, of which monetary gain is but one element (Fry et al., 2006; Groth, 2010; Singer & Bossarte, 2006; Wilkinson & Moore, 1997).

Even though there is consensus that incentives are morally acceptable, institutional review board (IRB) members are extremely sensitive to this issue. In a survey of 1,380 human participant protection professionals in the United States, Largent, Grady, Miller, and Wertheimer (2012) found that only 33.6% were “not concerned” about even token payments. The human participant protection professionals agreed with offering money to compensate for time, effort, inconvenience, or direct expenses (e.g., bus fare, babysitting). They were divided, however, on whether money should be used as an “incentive,” that is, large enough to figure in the cost-benefit analysis of potential participants. If payment was the deciding factor (individuals would not have participated without it), a surprising 65%

of the survey respondents considered it coercion, and 81% considered it undue influence. Largent et al. (2012) did not believe that this concern was justified:

The excessively expansive and inconsistent views about coercion and undue influence held by IRB members and human subject professionals may interfere with the recruitment of research participants by needlessly limiting the payments offered to them and may thereby impede valuable research without true cause. (p. 6)

Given the sensitivity to incentives when the participants are healthy volunteers, it is not surprising that IRB members can be particularly concerned when the participants are prisoners or are serving a sentence in the community. Vulnerability does not preclude offender incentives, but it does caution researchers to consider the value of incentives that would not exert undue influence. Consistent with the U.S. Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects and the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement, we believe that a useful guiding principle is that researchers and ethics review boards should consider the participants' usual living standards and that incentives should not meaningfully exceed other opportunities for earnings.

#### INCENTIVES CREATE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS FOR CORRECTIONS ADMINISTRATION

Even if there are no moral objections, correctional administrators may be disinclined to allow incentives on purely practical grounds. If incentives are allowed, then administrators need to direct their attention and resources to questions that could easily be avoided by categorically denying incentives. To start, how much is appropriate? Should incentives be different for offenders in the community versus those in institutions? Then there are the questions about how payments should be made (cash, check, credit card, online transfers?), maintained (in individual inmate accounts, in general funds accounts, by relatives?), and distributed (to the individual while incarcerated, only after release, to inmate groups, or to representatives for group purchases?). Most institutions prohibit cash, preferring electronic accounts. Even with electronic accounts, however, complications can arise, such as when an inmate is transferred prior to receiving payment (Smoyer et al., 2009). Simply serving coffee and donuts at research venues can raise security concerns, as those objects could be used to transport contraband (e.g., weapons, drugs).

Correctional administrators may also be concerned that incentives are illegal, violating laws that prohibit offenders from benefiting from their crimes. Although the Son of Sam laws discussed earlier were never intended to apply to modest compensations for worthwhile activities (even if uniquely available to offenders), the very existence of such laws creates a risk that correctional administrators must assess and manage. All procedures for providing incentives require some attention from correctional staff, thereby demanding resources that may already be stretched thin. Consequently, it is not surprising that some correctional administrators respond with a categorical prohibition on offender incentives for research participation.

The practical concerns are most obvious in secure settings in which offenders would not normally have possession of even the modest sums of money (or other goods) that researchers can routinely offer to nonoffenders. Providing incentives to offenders who are serving a sentence in the community, however, can also raise practical concerns. In certain cases, the conditions of community supervision place restrictions on the amount of cash that the

offender can access at one time. For example, certain offenders may be restricted to an allowance because they spend all their cash in hand on alcohol or drugs. In such cases, incentives could interfere with a functioning case management plan. Even if such cases are rare, effort and attention are required to determine whether incentives could be detrimental to certain cases. It is easier to simply deny incentives for everybody.

A related concern is that correctional administrators may perceive offenders' willingness to participate in research as a resource to be managed. Many correctional systems routinely collect information from offenders to guide evidence-based practices. Some of the information collection would be part of the offenders' responsibilities as individuals serving sentences; however, other data collection would be more appropriately considered "research," for which informed consent is required. Providing incentives increases the cost of collecting information from offenders. Offenders could start to feel entitled to incentives and limit their participation to the projects with the greatest personal benefits.

The above rationale was explicitly mentioned by a senior research administrator for CSC when asked why CSC does not allow external researchers to provide incentives (B. Grant, personal communication, June 7, 2011). CSC's prohibition is not complete, however; when participation requires absence from usual work, those hours will be compensated at the rate of inmate pay regardless of whether the research is conducted internally or externally (CSC, 2004, § 19). CSC does not have a corresponding mechanism for providing compensation for offenders in the community, which results in the curious practice of prohibiting incentives for offenders in the community while allowing incentives (albeit modest) for offenders while they are incarcerated. This difference is driven by practical (not ethical) concerns and is currently under review by CSC officials (CSC, 2011; B. Grant, personal communication, June 7, 2011).

Our view is that practical concerns about the method and amount of incentives are real but are not insurmountable. The experience of many researchers who have been permitted to make participant payments is that after a system has been established, it functions smoothly (Smoyer et al., 2009). The fact that nearly half of all U.S. states have policies permitting inmate payments attests to their feasibility. One possible guideline for determining the magnitude of the incentives is that compensation should be commensurate with other opportunities for income or benefits. In the case of incarcerated offenders, a reasonable guideline would be inmate pay.

The practical concerns for community offenders are less pressing but would still need to be considered by researchers and correctional administrators. In general, incentives are more important for community-based research than for research in institutions. Given the competing opportunities for income, entertainment, and atonement, community-based research often has difficulty attracting and maintaining participants. Without incentives, certain types of community research are extremely difficult (e.g., multiwave follow-up studies). In general, policies concerning research incentives for offenders in the community should be the same as those for nonoffenders. The only exception is when incentives interfere with the offender's correctional case management plan. Because offenders are serving a sentence, it is possible for the state to limit the offenders' choices in ways that would not be permitted of nonoffenders. Direct interference in the offenders' choices for research participation, however, should be rare. Expecting offenders to make sacrifices for the public good that we would not expect of nonoffenders is unrealistic and without ethical foundation.

## RISK AND BENEFITS OF INCENTIVES FOR SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY

Given that there is a cost to providing incentives (administrative costs and the costs of the incentives themselves), there must be benefits to justify them. The most obvious benefit for researchers is increased ease of participant recruitment. Incentives are part of the cost-benefit analysis for potential participants; furthermore, to the extent that incentives contribute to making the experience pleasant (e.g., respect, dignity), those who have already participated would encourage others (e.g., "I did it and it was OK").

Field and laboratory research has consistently found that incentives increase participation, particularly when they are expected (Cobanoglu & Cobanoglu, 2003; Festinger, Marlowe, Dugosh, Croft & Arabia, 2008; Reynolds, Fisher, Cagle, & Johnson, 1999; Sharp, Pelletier, & Lévesque, 2006). Sharp et al. (2006), for instance, found that providing course credit for research participation at a university that did not ordinarily provide such credit resulted in much higher participation rates (72%) than when credit was not provided as per the norm (36%). Participation was extremely low (4%) when credit was withheld at a university that ordinarily provided course credit for research participation.

Increased participation is of no value, however, if the wrong people are attracted by incentives. For example, it is possible to imagine an offender signing up for the perks and then carelessly completing the tasks assigned. The available research, however, suggests that such risks are minimal. Some studies have found the opposite effect, namely, that paid participants had a slight but significant performance advantage compared to unpaid volunteers on various tasks, such as math problems (Brase, Fiddick, & Harries, 2006), sustained attention, and recognition memory (Tomporowski, Simpson, & Hager, 1993).

Nevertheless, participants who volunteer for unpaid research would be expected to differ psychologically from those who volunteer for research offering incentives (Rush, Phillips, & Panek, 1978; Sharp et al., 2006). For example, Rush et al. (1978) found that female university undergraduates who volunteered for an "unpaid" research study were more interpersonally oriented, were less impulsive, and had lower levels of dominance and aggression than those volunteering for the paid study. This pattern of results is not surprising and suggests that policies prohibiting incentives for offenders bias participant selection toward the most prosocial. No method of voluntary recruitment will be completely unbiased, and chronically uncooperative individuals will always be the most difficult to recruit. In the context of offender research, incentives would be expected to increase the participation of these chronically oppositional individuals, thereby increasing the representativeness of research samples of offenders (Singer & Bossarte, 2006). Similarly, payment for research participation should be particularly attractive to those in financial need, a demographic that would also be disinclined to volunteer without incentives (Grady, 2005; Wilkinson & Moore, 1997, 1999).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Free and informed consent is a primary principle guiding the recruitment of research participants. Participating in research requires time and effort, and people are more likely to volunteer if they perceive the research activity to be worthwhile. The perceived value of

research is partially determined by altruistic goals, such as contributions to the public good, but it is also influenced by the extent to which the activities are perceived as personally rewarding, interesting, or enjoyable. Incentives are one of the small things that researchers routinely use to encourage research participation.

It is not unusual, however, for this option to be categorically denied to researchers working with offender populations. We were unable to find any ethical principles that would justify such a policy. Making the conditions of research participation more aversive for offenders than for nonoffenders limits recruitment, and it also risks re-creating the coercive practices that were responsible for the development of the original research ethics codes. Offenders should be given the same basic opportunities and choices for research participation as nonoffenders.

There are, however, practical concerns with providing incentives to offenders. Correctional administrators must attend to incentives provided by researchers to ensure that they are consistent with case management plans and with policies concerning the flow of goods within institutions. This requires additional work from the correctional staff; however, we believe that this small amount of additional effort is more than justified by the contribution of research to improving evidenced-based practices.

The magnitude of the incentives is also an important issue. In general, incentives for offenders should be consistent with other opportunities for earnings and not be so large as to compel participation of a vulnerable population or to undermine the goals of punishment and deterrence. As a guideline, we recommend that the incentives for offenders in institutions (inmates) are comparable to the benefits provided for participating in other socially worthwhile activities (e.g., inmate pay). For offenders in the community, the incentives should be comparable to the incentives available for nonoffenders participating in similar studies. Minimum wage is a useful benchmark for monetary incentives for offenders in the community, although higher rates could be justified, particularly when the risks of attribution are high or the tasks are onerous (e.g., intrusive medical testing).

Permission to provide incentives does not imply an obligation. Researchers may decide that little or no external incentives are needed to attract the number and type of participants required. Similarly, offenders may decline to accept incentives that have been offered. Our view, however, is that the option of providing incentives is an effective means of communicating respect for participants, regardless of their legal status. Research often requires participants to make special efforts, and incentives are a clear signal that the participants' sacrifices are recognized and appreciated.

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