



Presentation Title: Does Interviewer Ethnicity Impact Telephone-Administered Surveys Among African Americans?

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Abstract: African Americans are extremely heterogeneous in their ethnic orientations, and many stereotypes exist among African Americans about others considered to be “too White” or “too Black.” These dynamics may affect feelings of trust, rapport, respect, and comfort during interactions between African American interviewers and respondents, resulting in further influence upon survey responses. However, interviewer race has received little scientific evaluation in telephone-administered surveys with African Americans, and the impact of African American ethnicity on telephone-administered surveys has never been explored. This lack of knowledge begs the following questions: How is “race” expressed by African Americans in a standardized telephone interaction? Do the ethnic orientations of African American interviewers and respondents affect the survey process? Do African American interviewers vary their use of culturally associated speech patterns when interacting with different types of African American respondents? Do variations in interviewer speech, if present, increase interviewer-respondent rapport? And, do the ethnic orientations of African American interviewers and respondents or the use of culturally affiliated speech patterns impact survey data? This study uses ethnic identity typing of African American interviewers and respondents and linguistic coding of African American interviewers’ speech to explore the impact of both ethnic identity and linguistically expressed social identities on

survey data and interviewer-respondent rapport. This study draws on data from four sources: (1) self-administered surveys from 15 interviewers; (2) linguistic coding of digitally recorded telephone interviews conducted by 15 interviewers with each of three standardized respondents with varying ethnic identity types and speech patterns; (3) baseline telephone surveys administered to 625 participants in a health intervention study; and (4) validation telephone surveys administered to 543 of the 625 participants in the same health intervention study. Interviewers were recruited from Detroit and Seattle, while health intervention study participants were drawn from Detroit and Atlanta. This presentation will describe results from linear mixed modeling analyses of study data and discuss the implications of cultural heterogeneity on the administration of telephone surveys with African Americans.