Exploring Drivers of Acquiescent Responding among Ethnically Diverse Latino Telephone Survey Respondents

SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SURVEY METHODS IN MULTINATIONAL, MULTIREGIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL CONTEXTS (3MC), CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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Acknowledgments

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Understanding Acquiescence

- 5-year study to better understand acquiescent responding among Latino survey respondents:
  - Why does this response style appear to be more prevalent among Latinos than other racial and ethnic groups?
  - What factors influence the use of acquiescence?
  - What meaning is conveyed by the use of acquiescence in the survey interaction?

Defining Acquiescence

- Definition of acquiescence:
  - A pattern of agreement without regard for the content or directionality of the items
- Pretesting:
  - 205 cognitive interviews with Latino and non-Latino White survey respondents → acquiescence used inconsistently
- Question:
  - Could the current definition of acquiescence be wrong???

Study 1: Hypotheses

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2) Offering a "don't know" response option will reduce acquiescence.

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2) Offering a "don't know" response option will reduce acquiescence.
3) Acquiescence will be inversely associated with numeracy.

Study 1: Methods

- Telephone survey conducted February-April 2015
- 120 Latino participants via a purchased list of landline and cell phone numbers in the Eastern and Central U.S.
- Stratified by:
  - Ethnicity (Mexican American/Puerto Rican/Cuban American)
  - Language use (Spanish/English)
  - Education level (high school level or less/more than high school)
- Eligibility criteria:
  - Aged 18-90; spoke English or Spanish; self identified with one of the targeted ethnic groups; met quota needs
- Interviews conducted in Spanish and English

Response Scale Direction

- 20 items assessing simpatía:
  - E.g., "When talking with people I don't know well, it is important to me that they think I am friendly."
- 6 items assessing high- vs. low-context culture:
  - E.g., "How someone says something is more important than the words they use to say it."
- Randomization:
  - 50% of respondents within each ethnicity/language cell: 7-point response scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"
  - 50% of respondents within each ethnicity/language cell: 7-point response scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"
- Acquiescence:
  - The proportion of 6 and 7 (disagree → agree) or 1 and 2 (agree → disagree) responses

"Don't Know" Response

- 10 items that were difficult to impossible to answer:
  - E.g., "The U.S. should limit the import of fotams."
  - E.g., "I agree with the political views of the Independent Citizens Movement."
  - 7-point, "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" response scale
- Randomization:
  - 50% of respondents within each ethnicity/language cell were explicitly offered a "don't know" response option
  - 50% of respondents within each ethnicity/language cell were not explicitly offered a "don't know" response option; however, this response was accepted if provided by the respondent
- Acquiescence:
  - The proportion of 6 and 7 responses

Numeracy

- 3 items from the Subjective Numeracy Scale:
  - E.g., "How difficult would it be for you to figure out how much a shirt will cost if the price is reduced by 25%? Would you say very easy, somewhat easy, neither easy nor difficult, somewhat difficult, or very difficult?"
- Acquiescence:
  - The proportion of 6 and 7 responses on a 10-item, balanced scale (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale)
  - This scale had 5 items scaled in each direction and used a 7-point, "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" response scale

Study 1: Participant Characteristics

	Respondents (n=120)
Mean age (years)	42.0
Gender (% female)	65.0
Education (%):	
1-6 years	7.5
7-12 years, GED, or equivalent	41.7
Some college or technical/vocational degree	25.8
College degree	19.2
Graduate degree	5.8
Income (%):	
$40K or less per year	53.0
More than $40 K per year	47.0

Study 1: Participant Characteristics

	Respondents (n=120)
Ethnicity (n):	
Mexican American	48
Puerto Rican	37
Cuban American	35
Acculturation (Latino participants only, %):	
Mostly Latino (high Latino/low or medium NLW)	14.2
Bicultural (various combinations)	84.1
Mostly NLW (low or medium Latino/high NLW)	1.7
Interview conducted in Spanish (%)	54.2

Findings: Response Scale Direction

Simpatía Scale: Response Scale Direction	Mean Proportion of Acquiescent Responses (SE)[1]	t	p-value
Strongly disagree → strongly agree	0.55 (.03)	2.709	0.008
Strongly agree → strongly disagree	0.37 (.06)		

High- vs. Low-Context Culture Scale: Response Scale Direction	Mean Proportion of Acquiescent Responses (SE)[1]	t	p-value
Strongly disagree → strongly agree	0.30 (.03)	-4.726	0.000
Strongly agree → strongly disagree	0.50 (.03)		

[1] = The mean proportion of 6 and 7 (disagree → agree) or 1 and 2 (agree → disagree) responses

Findings: "Don't Know" Response

Response Options	Mean Proportion of "Don't Know" Responses	t	p-value
"Don't know" response offered	0.35 (.03)	-3.798	0.000
"Don't know" response not offered	0.17 (.03)		

Response Option	Mean Proportion of Acquiescent Responses (SE)[1]	t	p-value
"Don't know" response offered	0.37 (.04)	-3.837	0.000
"Don't know" response not offered	0.18 (.03)		

[1] = The mean proportion of 6 and 7 responses

Findings: Numeracy

Dependent Variable: Proportion of Acquiescence

Numeracy	-0.01 (.06)
Age	0.00 (.00)
Education (some college or more = 0)	0.08 (.09)
Gender (male = 0)	0.03 (.10)
Marital status (married/living with partner = 0)	-0.06 (.09)
Acculturation (non-Latino White orientation = 0)	0.17 (.14)
Interview language (English = 0)	0.30 (.10)**
Ethnicity (Puerto Rican = 0):	
Mexican American	-0.21 (.10)*
Cuban American	-0.04 (.11)

$* p < .05$ $** p < .01$ $*** p < .001$

Study 2: Item Attributes

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- **Opinions and knowledge:**
  - Will respondents will be more likely to acquiescence to opinion items than to items that they do not have the knowledge to answer?

Study 2: Methods

- Telephone survey conducted November 2015-January 2016
- 401 respondents (response rate: 8.3%)
- Stratified by ethnicity:
  - Non-Latino White, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban American
- Targeted lower education, lower income respondents in the five largest U.S. markets for the targeted Latino ethnic groups
- Eligibility criteria:
  - Aged 18-90; spoke English or Spanish; self-identified with one of the targeted ethnic groups
- Interviews conducted in Spanish and English

Study 2: Measures

- 100 items
- Response scale ranged from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree")
- Acquiescence:
  - The proportion of 6 and 7 responses
- Highly varied content
- Items independently coded for different attributes by two of the authors, with a third author serving as a tie-breaker
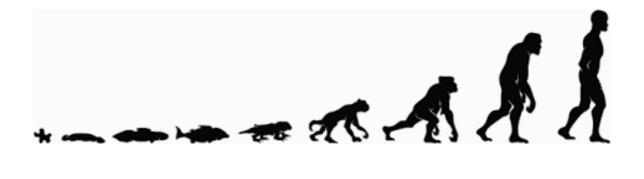
Social Desirability

- Social desirability strength:
  - Low: "People should be knowledgeable about important events in our country."
  - Medium: "It is sometimes necessary to discipline a child with a good spanking."
  - High: "Divorce should be avoided unless it is an extreme situation."
- Social desirability direction:
  - Clear: "I feel that I have a number of good qualities."
  - Unclear: "Chocolate is healthier than vanilla."

Effort

- The effort it would take to comprehend and form a response to an item:
  - Low: "A wise person forgives but does not forget."
  - Medium: "Children should help out around the house without expecting to be paid."
  - High: "Humans have existed in their present form since the beginning of time."

Wording Type

- Wording type:
  - Negative wording: "Gay marriage should not be legal."
  - Conditional wording or comparison statements: "In general, it is good for our society when mothers of young children work outside the home."
  - Other (i.e., does not contain negative wording, conditional wording, or comparison statements): "Money can solve almost any problem."

Opinions and Knowledge

- Opinions and knowledge:
  - Opinion item: "The U.S. spends too much money on scientific research."
  - No knowledge (e.g., fake issues or obscure wording): "I trust social movements."
  - Unclear (i.e., unclear whether or not respondents would interpret as an opinion or knowledge question): "Dramatic events unfold in unforeseen ways."

Study 2: Participant Characteristics

	Respondents (n=401)
Mean age (years)	50.9
Gender (% female)	69.6
Education (%):	
1-6 years	9.7
7-12 years, GED, or equivalent	39.7
Some college or technical/vocational degree	21.2
College degree	18.7
Graduate degree	10.7
Income (%):	
$40K or less per year	60.4
More than $40 K per year	39.6

Study 2: Participant Characteristics

	Respondents (n=401)
Ethnicity (n):	
Non-Latino White (NLW)	99
Mexican American	100
Puerto Rican	101
Cuban American	101
Acculturation (Latino participants only, %):	
Mostly Latino (high Latino/low or medium NLW)	60.3
Bicultural (various combinations)	23.1
Mostly NLW (low or medium Latino/high NLW)	16.6
Interview conducted in Spanish (%)	51.4

Findings: Acquiescence

	Mean (SE)	95% CL for Mean	
Proportion of acquiescence on 100 items [1]	0.45 (.02)	0.40923	0.49630

[1] = Calculated as the proportion of 6 and 7 responses on 7-point response scales

Item Attributes	Mean Proportion of Acquiescence (SE)	p-value
Social desirability strength:		
Low	0.46 (.04)	.33
Medium	0.44 (.03)	.48
High (= reference)	0.45 (.05)	
Social desirability direction:		
Unclear	0.39 (.02)	.002
Clear (= reference)	0.53 (.04)	
Effort:		
Low	0.54 (.04)	.04
Medium	0.37 (.04)	.85
High (= reference)	0.39 (.02)	
Wording type:		
Negative wording	0.29 (.03)	<.0001
Conditional wording and comparison statements	0.48 (.06)	.75
Other (= reference)	0.50 (.03)	
Opinions and knowledge:		
No knowledge	0.39 (.04)	.06
Unclear knowledge	0.36 (.04)	.09
Opinion item (= reference)	0.50 (.03)	

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Summary

- Response scale direction appears to influence acquiescence, but the direction is unclear
- The following item-level factors appear to increase acquiescence:
    - Offering a "don't know" response option
    - Clear social desirability direction
    - Low demand of effort
    - No negative wording
    - Opinion items (possibly)
- Numeracy, social desirability strength, conditional wording, and comparison statements are not associated with acquiescence

Implications

- Further research is needed
- Too soon to answer the question "Does the definition of acquiescence need to be changed?"
- But, these preliminary findings do suggest that item content and directionality play a role
- Next steps: Refine coding scheme; code with a larger group of coders; re-analyze
- Additional future analyses:
  - Explore influence of ethnicity and other respondent characteristics
  - Explore interactions among item attributes
- Ideas for additional coding???

Questions?
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Images

- http://quoteaddicts.com/topic/agree-to-disagree/
- https://www.dreamstime.com/stock-illustration-discount-sale-d-icon-white-background-off-five-ten-fifteen-twenty-percent-image-clipping-path-image42578477
- http://www.rescake.com/post_dc-cupcakes-chocolate-cupcake-recipe_224459/
- http://www.faradayschools.com/re-topics/science-year-10-11/evolution-explained/
- http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/4829-gay-marriage-small-business.html
- http://blog.gettimely.com/thank-you-for-an-amazing-year/

Findings: Item Attributes

Dependent Variable: Proportion of Acquiescence

Social desirability strength (high = 0):	
Low	0.05 (.05)
Medium	0.04 (.05)
Social desirability direction (clear = 0):	
Unclear	-0.13 (.04)**
Effort (high = 0):	
Low	0.10 (.05)*
Medium	-0.01 (.05)
Wording type (other = 0):	
Negative wording	-0.23 (.05)***
Conditional wording/comparison statements	-0.02 (.05)
Opinions and knowledge (opinion item = 0):	
No knowledge	-0.10 (.05)
Unclear knowledge	-0.09 (.05)

R^2 = 0.41; Model: p <.0001

p < .05   ** *p* < .01   *** *p* < .001