

IS ACQUIESCENCE AN EXPRESSION OF SOCIAL DEFERENCE?

ACQUIESCENCE AND INTERVIEWER EFFECTS
IN A SURVEY OF WHITE AND ETHNICALLY
DIVERSE LATINO RESPONDENTS

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

JULY 26TH, 2016

Acknowledgments

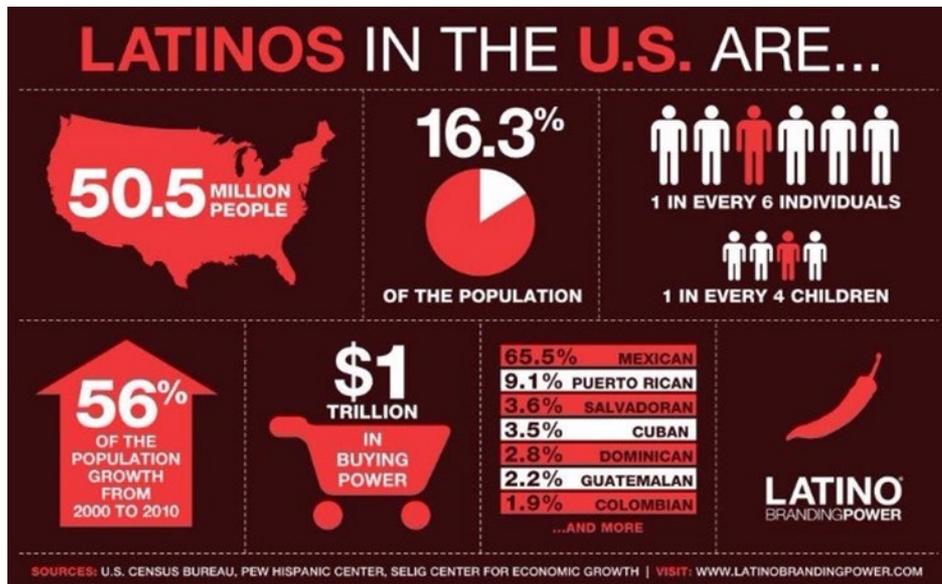
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- We are grateful to the National Cancer Institute, which has generously supported this research (R01CA172283)



Acquiescence

- **Acquiescence** = When survey respondents systematically agree with survey items, regardless of item content (Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 2001)
- Acquiescence threatens survey statistics, relationships among variables, and other aspects of data quality (Cheung & Rensvold, 2000; Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 2001)
- Acquiescence is believed to be particularly problematic for:
 - Attitude items
 - Items using numeric, Likert-style response scales with endpoint labels only that assess level of agreement with a statement

Latinos and Acquiescence



- Acquiescence differs across countries
- In the U.S., Latino survey respondents may be more likely to acquiesce than other racial and ethnic groups
- By 2050, it is estimated that 29% of the U.S. population will be Latino (Ennis et al., 2010)
- The Latino population is demographically and culturally diverse

Social Distance & Social Deference

- Respondent factors + contextual factors → acquiescence
- Interviewers may be an influential contextual factor
- **Perceived social distance** = The degree to which a person perceives themselves as sociodemographically similar or dissimilar to someone else
- **Social deference** = The degree to which a person is motivated to defer to another person due to perceived social distance
- Latino culture has been associated with a value for social hierarchy, as well as a value for smooth, pleasant, and agreeable social interactions

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- 5) **Cultural Context Hypothesis:** Cultural context, as evoked by language and ethnicity, will strengthen relationships between social distance, social deference, and acquiescence.
- 6) **Interviewer Experience Hypothesis:** Interviewer experience will weaken relationships between social distance, social deference, and acquiescence. (Katz, 1942)

Interviewer Effects

- We also evaluated the effects of the following actual interviewer characteristics (i.e., these were not based on respondent perceptions):
 - Simpatía
 - Personalismo
 - Respect for elders
 - Value for sincerity
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Education
 - Latino ethnicity (vs. not Latino)

Data Collection

- **Telephone survey respondents:**
 - 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 using a listed sample; small number of RDD calls
 - Eligibility criteria: Aged 18-90; spoke English or Spanish; self identified with one of the targeted ethnic groups
 - Interviews conducted in Spanish and English
- **Interviewers:**
 - 33 professional interviewers
 - 21 completed a self-administered interviewer survey, yielding interviewer survey data for 85.5% of the respondent interviews

Measures

- **Respondents and interviewers:**
 - Acculturation, language use, sociodemographics
- **Respondents only:**
 - **Acquiescence** = Proportion of 6 or 7 responses on 80 items using a 1-7 response scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”
 - Acquiescence items queried diverse topics
 - Perceptions of 4 interviewer characteristics: age, gender, education, Latino ethnicity
 - Social distance variable constructed as the sum of matches between respondent characteristics and perceived interviewer characteristics
- **Interviewers only:**
 - Simpatía, personalismo, respect for elders, value for sincerity

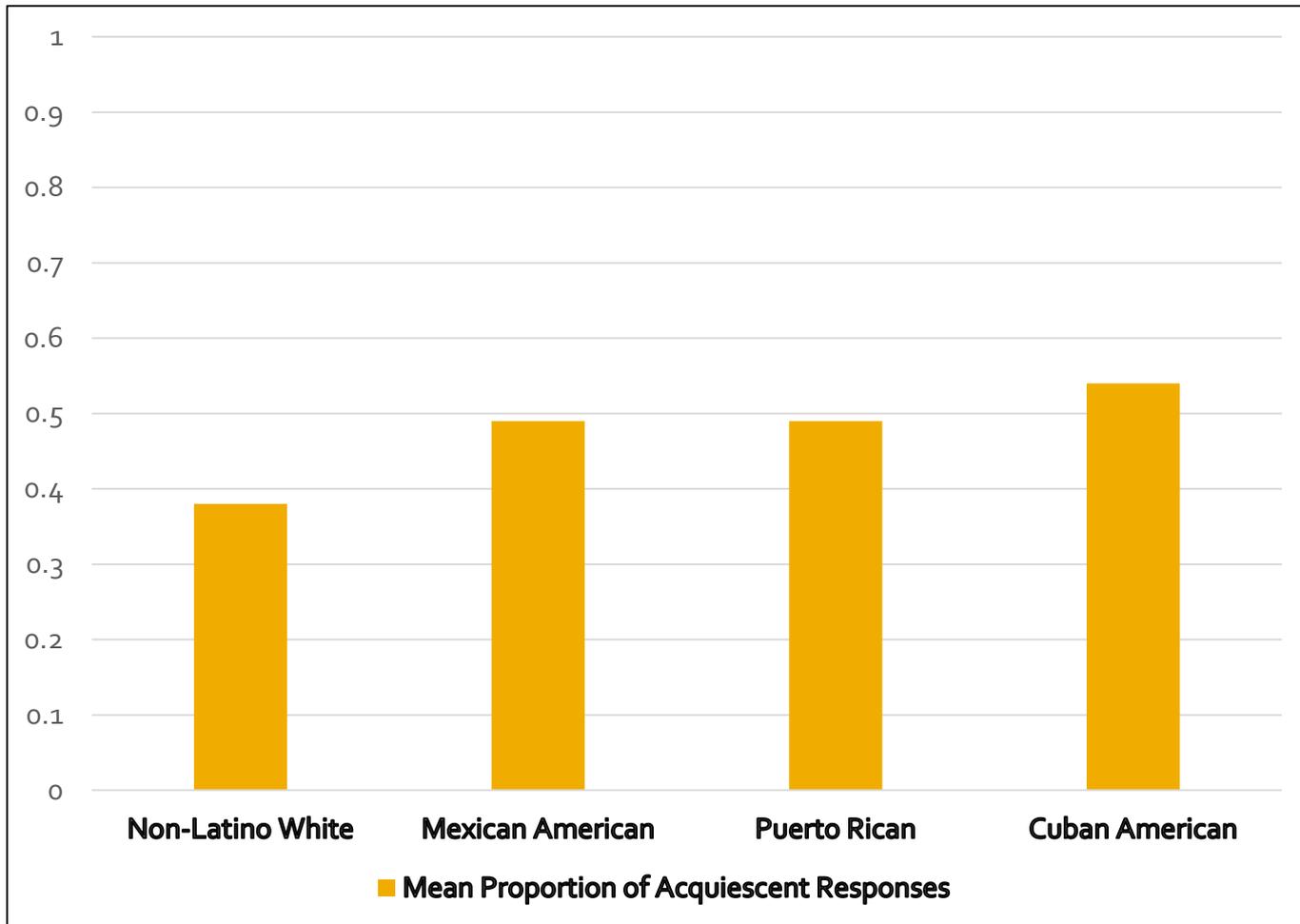
Participant Characteristics

	Respondents (n=401)	Interviewers (n=21)
Mean age (years)	50.9	35.1
Gender (% female)	69.6	76.2
Education (%):		
High school or less	49.4	38.1
More than a high school-level education	50.6	61.9
Ethnicity (n):		
Non-Latino White	99	0
Mexican American	100	14
Puerto Rican	101	0
Cuban American	101	0
Other Central or South American	0	7

Participant Characteristics

	Respondents (n=401)	Interviewers (n=21)
Acculturation (Latino participants only, %):		
Mostly Latino (high Latino/low or medium NLW)	60.3	23.8
Mostly NLW (low or medium Latino/high NLW)	16.6	28.6
Interview conducted in Spanish (%)	51.4	
Perceived social distance, directionality (%):		
Lower social status than interviewer	58.5	
Same social status as interviewer	8.3	
Higher social status than interviewer	33.2	
Mean sum of perceived social distance matching variables (higher score → more similar to interviewer)	1.7	

Acquiescence by Ethnicity



Respondent Hypothesis

<i>Dependent Variable: Proportion of Acquiescence</i>	Model 1: Latinos Only (n=297)	Model 2: Latinos and NLWs (n=391)
Respondent acculturation (mostly NLW = 0):		
Low bicultural (medium Latino/medium NLW)	0.02 (.03)	
High bicultural (high Latino/high NLW)	0.07 (.03)*	
Mostly Latino (high Latino/low NLW)	0.06 (.03)**	
Respondent age	0.00 (.00)**	0.00 (.00)**
Respondent education (less than 7 th grade = 0):		
7 th through 12 th grade, no diploma	-0.01 (.03)	-0.02 (.03)
High school graduate or equivalent	-0.05 (.03)	-0.07 (.03)*
Some college or technical/vocational school	-0.11 (.03)***	-0.12 (.03)***
4-year college degree	-0.15 (.03)***	-0.15 (.03)***
Graduate degree	-0.16 (.04)***	-0.15 (.03)***
Respondent gender (male = 0)	0.03 (.02)	0.03 (.02)*
Respondent ethnicity (Cuban American = 0):		
Mexican American	-0.05 (.02)*	
Puerto Rican	-0.04 (.02)*	
Respondent ethnicity (NLW = 0):		
Mexican American		0.07 (.02)***
Puerto Rican		0.08 (.02)***
Cuban American		0.12 (.02)***

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Some college or technical/vocational school	-0.11 (.03)***	-0.12 (.03)***
4-year college degree	-0.15 (.03)***	-0.15 (.03)***
Graduate degree	-0.16 (.04)***	-0.15 (.03)***
Respondent gender (male = 0)	0.03 (.02)	0.03 (.02)*
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High school graduate or equivalent	-0.05 (.03)	-0.07 (.03)*
Some college or technical/vocational school	-0.11 (.03)***	-0.12 (.03)***
4-year college degree	-0.15 (.03)***	-0.15 (.03)***
Graduate degree	-0.16 (.04)***	-0.15 (.03)***
Respondent gender (male = 0)	0.03 (.02)	0.03 (.02)*
Respondent ethnicity (Cuban American = 0):		
Mexican American	-0.05 (.02)*	
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4-year college degree	-0.15 (.03)***	-0.15 (.03)***
Graduate degree	-0.16 (.04)***	-0.15 (.03)***
Respondent gender (male = 0)	0.03 (.02)	0.03 (.02)*
Respondent ethnicity (Cuban American = 0):		
Mexican American	-0.05 (.02)*	
Puerto Rican	-0.04 (.02)*	
Respondent ethnicity (NLW = 0):		
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Linear Hypothesis

Dependent Variable: Proportion of Acquiescence

Social distance (less distance → more distance)	0.01 (.01)
Respondent age	0.00 (.00)***
Respondent education	-0.04 (.01)***
Respondent gender (male = 0)	0.03 (.02)
Respondent ethnicity (NLW = 0):	
Mexican American	0.07 (.02)**
Puerto Rican	0.08 (.02)***
Cuban American	0.11 (.02)***

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Curvilinear Hypothesis

Dependent Variable: Proportion of Acquiescence

Social distance (less distance → more distance)	-0.01 (.03)
Social distance ²	0.01 (.01)
Respondent age	0.00 (.00)***
Respondent education	-0.04 (.01)***
Respondent gender (male = 0)	0.03 (.02)
Respondent ethnicity (NLW = 0):	
Mexican American	0.07 (.02)**
Puerto Rican	0.08 (.02)***
Cuban American	0.11 (.02)***

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Deference Hypothesis

Dependent Variable: Proportion of Acquiescence

Social deference (same social status = 0):

Respondent lower social status than interviewer	-0.04 (.03)
Respondent higher social status than interviewer	-0.03 (.03)
Respondent age	0.00 (.00)***
Respondent education	-0.04 (.01)***
Respondent gender (male = 0)	0.03 (.02)
Respondent ethnicity (NLW = 0):	
Mexican American	0.07 (.02)***
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Cultural Context Hypothesis

<i>Dependent Variable: Proportion of Acquiescence</i>	Model 1: (n=368)	Model 2: (n=368)
Interview language (English = 0)	0.06 (.02)**	
First language learned as a child (English = 0)	0.04 (.03)	
Interview language * first language learned as a child (English interview/English learned first = 0):		
English interview/Spanish learned first		0.04 (.03)
Spanish interview/English learned first		0.08 (.05)
Spanish interview/Spanish learned first		0.09 (.02)***
Respondent age	0.00 (.00)**	0.00 (.00)**
Respondent education	-0.04 (.01)***	-0.04 (.01)***
Respondent gender (male = 0)	0.03 (.02)	0.03 (.02)
Respondent ethnicity (NLW = 0):		
Mexican American	0.02 (.03)	0.02 (.03)
Puerto Rican	0.02 (.03)	0.02 (.03)
Cuban American	0.06 (.03)*	0.06 (.03)

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Spanish interview/Spanish learned first		0.09 (.02)***
Respondent age	0.00 (.00)**	0.00 (.00)**
Respondent education	-0.04 (.01)***	-0.04 (.01)***
Respondent gender (male = 0)	0.03 (.02)	0.03 (.02)
Respondent ethnicity (NLW = 0):		
Mexican American	0.02 (.03)	0.02 (.03)
Puerto Rican	0.02 (.03)	0.02 (.03)
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Respondent ethnicity (NLW = 0):		
Mexican American	0.02 (.03)	0.02 (.03)
Puerto Rican	0.02 (.03)	0.02 (.03)
Cuban American	0.06 (.03)*	0.06 (.03)

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Interviewer Experience Hypothesis

<i>Dependent Variable: Proportion of Acquiescence</i>	Model 1: (n=309)	Model 2: (n=309)
Interviewer experience (years only)	-0.00 (.00)	
Interviewer experience index (years, hours, other job)		0.00 (.00)
Respondent age	0.00 (.00)***	0.00 (.00)***
Respondent education	-0.04 (.01)***	-0.04 (.01)***
Respondent gender (male = 0)	0.03 (.02)	0.03 (.02)
Respondent ethnicity (NLW = 0):		
Mexican American	0.09 (.02)***	0.09 (.02)***
Puerto Rican	0.09 (.02)***	0.09 (.02)***
Cuban American	0.12 (.02)***	0.12 (.02)***

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Interviewer Effects

<i>Dependent Variable: Proportion of Acquiescence</i>	Model 1: Interviewer Characteristics Only (n=314)	Model 2: Respondent and Interviewer Characteristics (n=307)
Interviewer simpatía	-0.01 (.03)	0.03 (.03)
Interviewer personalismo	-0.05 (.03)	-0.01 (.02)
Interviewer respect for elders	0.04 (.04)	0.02 (.03)
Interviewer value for sincerity	0.07 (.03)*	0.03 (.03)
Interviewer acculturation (mostly NLW = 0):		
Low bicultural (medium Latino/medium NLW)	-0.09 (.05)	-0.05 (.05)
High bicultural (high Latino/high NLW)	0.03 (.03)	0.03 (.03)
Mostly Latino (high Latino/low NLW)	-0.08 (.05)	-0.02 (.05)
Interviewer age	0.03 (.01)*	0.01 (.01)
Interviewer education	-0.01 (.01)	0.01 (.01)
Interviewer gender (male = 0)	0.05 (.04)	0.01 (.04)
Interviewer Latino ethnicity (not Latino = 0)	0.03 (.02)	0.01 (.02)
Respondent age		0.00 (.00)***
Respondent education		-0.04 (.01)***
Respondent gender (male = 0)		0.03 (.02)
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Accuracy of Respondent Perceptions of Interviewer Characteristics

Respondent perceptions of interviewer characteristics	Accuracy of respondent perceptions (%)
Interviewer gender	99.4
Interviewer Latino ethnicity (vs. not Latino)	73.8
Interviewer age ¹	41.8
Interviewer Latino ethnic heritage (e.g., Mexican American) ²	26.3
Interviewer education	22.9

¹ = For this calculation, age was grouped into: 18-29 years; 30-39 years; 40-49 years; and 50 years or older.

² = This perception was only assessed if the respondent thought that the interviewer was Latino. All interviewers described themselves as Latino.

Summary

- Respondent factors appear to be more influential than interviewer factors in encouraging acquiescence
- No support for social distance, social deference, or interviewer characteristics
- Most influential respondent factors:
 - Education
 - Age
 - Ethnicity
 - Acculturation
 - Language use
- Latino subgroups may differ in their tendency to acquiesce

Future Directions

- Deeper understanding of how specific respondent factors influence acquiescence
- Research to explain associations between ethnicity and acquiescence
- Investigation of other interviewer characteristics
- Exploration of other types of context effects





Thank You

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