Examining Acquiescent and Extreme Response Styles Between Face-to-Face and Web Surveys

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Background: Response Style

- Response style describes the phenomenon that, rather than responding to the specific survey question, the respondent gives an answer that is based on some content irrelevant criteria (Paulhus 1991)
### Background: Response Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acquiescent</strong></td>
<td>⬧</td>
<td>⬧</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disacquiescent</strong></td>
<td>⬠</td>
<td>⬠</td>
<td>⬠</td>
<td>⬧</td>
<td>⬧</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extreme</strong></td>
<td>⬧</td>
<td>⬧</td>
<td>⬧</td>
<td></td>
<td>⬧</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle</strong></td>
<td>⬠</td>
<td>⬠</td>
<td>⬧</td>
<td>⬧</td>
<td>⬠</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mild</strong></td>
<td>⬠</td>
<td>⬧</td>
<td>⬧</td>
<td>⬧</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Background: Mode Effect

- **Acquiescent response style**
  - Impression management (Leary and Kowalski 1990)
  - Fear of potential negative judgment from interviewer
  - More ARS in face-to-face

- **Extreme response style**
  - Extreme responses more sincere than nonextreme responses (Marín, Gamba, and Marín 1992; Bachman and O’Malley 1984; Bachman and O’Malley 2013)
  - The middle of the scale often indicates a lack of opinion, insufficient knowledge to answer the question, or an ambiguous opinion
  - The more interpretable extreme opinions better promote social harmony, and create a polite, agreeable, likeable, and respectful interpersonal interaction atmosphere
  - More ERS in face-to-face as a sign of politeness when interacting with an interviewer
Data and Measures

- **2012 American National Election Studies (ANES)**
  - Face-to-face and Web
  - $n_{\text{face-to-face}} = 1929$, $n_{\text{Web}} = 3581$
  - $RR_{\text{face-to-face}} = 38\%$, $RR_{\text{Web}} = 2\%$ (AAPOR RR1)
  - Re-interviewer rate$_{\text{face-to-face}} = 94\%$, Re-interviewer rate$_{\text{web}} = 93\%$
  - Sampling
    - Face-to-face: an address-based, stratified, multi-stage cluster sample
    - Web: GfK KnowledgePanel, address-based sampling or random-digit dialing
Data and Measures

- **Likert Scales**
  - 3 scales, 14 items
  - Moral traditionalism (4), position of blacks in society (4), and equalitarianism (6)
  - 5-point
    - Disagree strongly (1)-Disagree (2)-Neither agree nor disagree (3)-Agree (4)-Agree strongly (5)
Data and Measures

Figure 1. Latent class factor analysis model of acquiescent response style (ARS), extreme response style (ERS), and latent content factors ($F_1$, $F_2$, $F_3$), with covariates. For clarity of presentation, the plot only shows the response style factors regressed on the covariates. In the analysis model, three content factors are regressed on the covariates as well.
Findings

• Both ARS and ERS are present in the responses to three sets of Likert scale questions asking about “Moral traditionalism,” “Position of blacks in society,” and “Equalitarianism”.

• Face-to-face respondents demonstrate more ARS and ERS than Web respondents.

• The mode effect on ERS is larger for black respondents than for white and Hispanic respondents.
Figure 2. Interaction effects between mode and race/ethnicity on extreme response style, for a 60-69-year-old male respondent with high school or lower education, and whose household income is set at the sample mean.
Thank you!

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