

Developing a Measure of Perceived Discrimination for Latinos: Results from Qualitative In-depth and Cognitive Interviews

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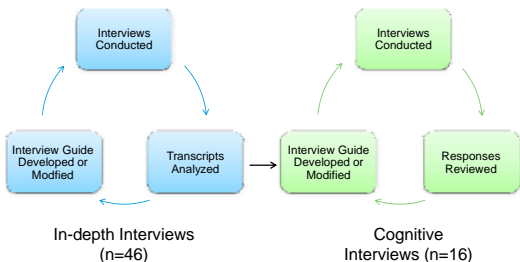
Background

- Existing measures of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination have been developed primarily among African-American populations
- These measures may not be valid for Latino populations which face unique aspects of discrimination based on language and legal status
- We sought to develop a more valid measure through qualitative in-depth and cognitive interviews

Methods

- Participants were recruited by community organizations serving Latinos in the Lower Yakima Valley and Seattle, Washington.
- Study design used iterative process (Figure 1).
- Interview guides were developed based on theory and previous literature and were informed by ongoing analysis.
- After obtaining informed consent, interviews conducted in the participants' preferred language (English/Spanish).
- In-depth interviews were recorded and transcribed in the language in which they occurred. Verbatim transcripts were coded using *Atlas.ti* based on coding scheme by at least two trained bilingual coders.
- Analysis of in-depth interviews revealed most salient domains and settings in which discrimination occurred, as well as emotional and coping responses.
- These results informed adaption of existing measures which were then tested in cognitive interviews. New measure based on:
 - Perceptions of Racism in Children and Youth (Pachter)
 - California Health Interview Survey Discrimination Module (Shariff-Marco)
- Three rounds of cognitive interviews were conducted to refine the instrument.

Figure 1. Study Design and Data Collection Process



Results

Study Participants (N=62)

| | N | % |
|---------------------------|----|----|
| Gender | | |
| Female | 36 | 58 |
| Male | 26 | 42 |
| Age | | |
| 18 - 30 | 21 | 34 |
| 31 - 50 | 22 | 35 |
| Over 50 | 19 | 31 |
| Education | | |
| None | 6 | 10 |
| Primary/Secondary | 32 | 52 |
| High School Graduate | 24 | 39 |
| Preferred Language | | |
| Spanish | 34 | 65 |
| English | 18 | 35 |
| Country of origin | | |
| US | 16 | 26 |
| Mexico | 33 | 53 |
| Central/South America | 13 | 21 |
| Length of residence in US | | |
| 10 years or less | 20 | 32 |
| More than 10 years | 25 | 40 |
| US born | 17 | 28 |
| Site | | |
| Seattle | 33 | 53 |
| Lower Yakima Valley | 29 | 47 |

Cognitive Interviews

- Comprehension varied by education level and preferred language of participant.

For example, "etnia" was not well understood by Spanish speakers with low levels of education, but "ethnicity" was often preferred by English speakers with higher education levels.

- Participants distinguished between discrimination based on:
 - Skin color
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Country of origin
 - Language or accent
 - Perceived legal status

- Participants perceived some questions aimed at identifying different types of discrimination as overlapping.

For example, "Been called an insulting name?" and "Had someone be rude to you?"

- Questions with long lists of response options were cumbersome and many were rarely or never chosen.
- Participants had both negative and positive emotional responses to discrimination.
- A question about whether Latinos in their community were treated unfairly was useful in eliciting perceptions of institutional racism.
- Participants were able to evaluate how stressful unfair treatment was for them

In-depth Interviews

Through the in-depth interviews we identified the most salient types of discrimination, settings in which discrimination occurred and responses to discrimination.

It's everywhere, everywhere. Just taking the bus, you can feel contempt (towards you). Yes, it's everywhere. You can tell they think you are less.

- 40 year old, Spanish

Sometimes you do know a word, but just because you don't pronounce a letter right, you don't say it right, they treat you like, "You don't know" With their looks they seem to say "You don't know, you'd better not speak at all"

-20 year old, Spanish speaking woman

Types of Discrimination

- Chronic stressors (getting looks, racist jokes)
- Traumatic one-time events (being fired unfairly)
- Language related
- Legal status related

Settings

- Restaurants and stores
- Public transportation
- Work
- School

Responses to Discrimination

- Emotional responses included: anger, humiliation, sadness, and loneliness.
- Avoidant coping strategies were common: trying to ignore it; forget about it; and, distraction.
- Active coping strategies were less common: talking to someone; praying; getting out of the house; and, walking.
- Discrimination can be avoided if one "behaves" or doesn't get into trouble, or by limiting contact with places or people that are unwelcome towards Latinos.

I don't want problems. I don't look for problems. I try to stay on the margin. For me that's the best thing I can do. Arrive and stay in my case

-42 year old, Spanish speaking woman

Discussion

- Existing measures of discrimination and racism may miss important domains such as language and legal status.
- Measures may need to include more than one term when being used with diverse Latino populations.
- Interviewer administered surveys are often more appropriate for populations with low education levels. However, this approach requires limiting the number of response options to hold participants' attention and reduce response burden.
- Our measure was able to capture a full range of experiences in terms of type, frequency, and setting.

Proposed Measure

The following are sample items from the measure that were developed based on our findings from both the in-depth and cognitive interviews. We recommend that these items be further tested for reliability and validity in Latino populations.

When people are racially discriminated against, they are treated badly, not given respect, or are considered inferior because of the color of their skin, because they speak a different language, or have an accent, or because they come from a different country or culture.

For each of the follow situations, think whether you have ever in your life felt discriminated against because of the color of your skin, language or accent, or because of your culture or country of origin.

- Been watched closely or followed by security guards or store clerks at a store or mall?
- Been treated unfairly by an authority figure such as a police officer, immigration officer, etc.?
- Gotten poor or slow service at a restaurant or food store?
- Had someone make a bad or insulting remark about your race, country or language?
- Had people think you're not smart or intelligent?
- Had people criticize your accent or the way you speak?
- Felt like you were not heard, being ignored or looked down on by someone?

If YES, each of these is followed by the following series of questions:

- How often has this happened?
- Why did you think it happened?

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Once | My race/ethnicity |
| Twice | The color of my skin |
| About once a year | My country or culture |
| About once a month | The language I speak or my accent |
| Weekly | Because they thought I was undocumented |
| Daily | |
| 3. How did it make you feel? | 4. How did you deal with it? |
| Angry | Ignored it |
| Hurt | Spoke up |
| Frustrated | Tried to forget it |
| Sad | Prayed |
| Ashamed | Worked hard to prove them wrong |
| Strengthened | Talked to someone about it |
| Other | Walked away or left |
| | Other |