

# Questioning Identity: How a Diverse Set of Respondents Answer Standard Questions about Ethnicity and Race

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# Ethnoracial identity

- Groups delineated by “race” or “ethnicity” linked to ancestry, phenotype, culture
- Indexes location in social hierarchy

# Race and ethnicity as social constructs

- Groups and criteria for inclusion vary across time and place
  - Logics of classification shaped by both state (Mora 2014) and non-state actors (Schacter et al. 2021)
- Fluid within individuals
  - 20% of respondents shifted their self-identified ethnoracial identity over a 20-year period (Saperstein and Penner 2012)
  - More fluid among those who identify as Hispanic/Latina/o/x/e or mixed race (Croll and Gerteis 2019)
- Subjectively determined, objective determinants for well-being and life chances

# Measurement of race and ethnicity

- How people identify may not conform to standardized survey questions used to measure ethnicity and race
  - Census studies comparing response distributions of combined vs. separate race and ethnicity questions
  - Combined allows Latine respondents to select only that category
- Widespread use of separate race and ethnicity questions
  - Potential measurement error for researchers
  - Othering of respondents

# Interviewer-respondent interaction

- We know little about the response process that produces the survey measurement of ethnicity and race in interviewer-administered surveys
- Examining the interviewer-respondent interaction illustrates whether, when, how, and why issues with these questions emerge for respondents

# Research questions

We examine the following research questions in an ethn racially diverse sample of respondents:

- Are there behavioral indicators of interactional problems when respondents answer questions about ethnicity and race?
  - Do these vary across ethn racial groups?
- How do interviewers respond in the presence of these behavioral indicators of interactional problems?
  - In what ways are they (non)responsive?

# Data



- Telephone survey fielded in Wisconsin, 2013–2014
- Barriers and facilitators to participating in medical research among underrepresented racial/ethnic groups
- Number questions = 96
- Mean interview length = 25.21 minutes
- Quota sampling design
  - American Indian, Black, Latina/o/x/e, white respondents;
  - N=410 interviews
  - N=375 interviews with audio for transcription

# Questions

89. Are you Hispanic or Latino?

<1> Yes

<2> No

<d> Don't know

<r> Refused



90. Which one or more of the following would you say is your race: White, Black or African American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian, or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander?

(INTERVIEWER: ENTER ALL THAT APPLY and 'x' to EXIT SCREEN)

@1 WHITE

@2 BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN

@3 AMERICAN INDIAN

@4 ALASKA NATIVE

@5 ASIAN

@6 NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER

@7 OTHER (SPECIFY)

<d> Don't know

<r> Refused

# Interaction coding

- Question-answer sequence
  - Starts with reading of survey question by INT, ends with last utterance spoken by INT or R before INT reads next question

89-1 I: are you hispanic or latino?

89-2 R: no

90-1 I: and which one or more of the following would you say is your race white black or african a ah american

90-2 R: white

90-3 I: american indian ah and just keep in mind I am going to read the whole thing so everyone hears it the same but I'll keep your answer in mind so american indian alaska native asian or native hawaiian or other pacific islander and you said white is that correct?

90-4 R: oh yes

# Respondents' behavioral indicators

## **Better Data Quality**

- Codable answer only

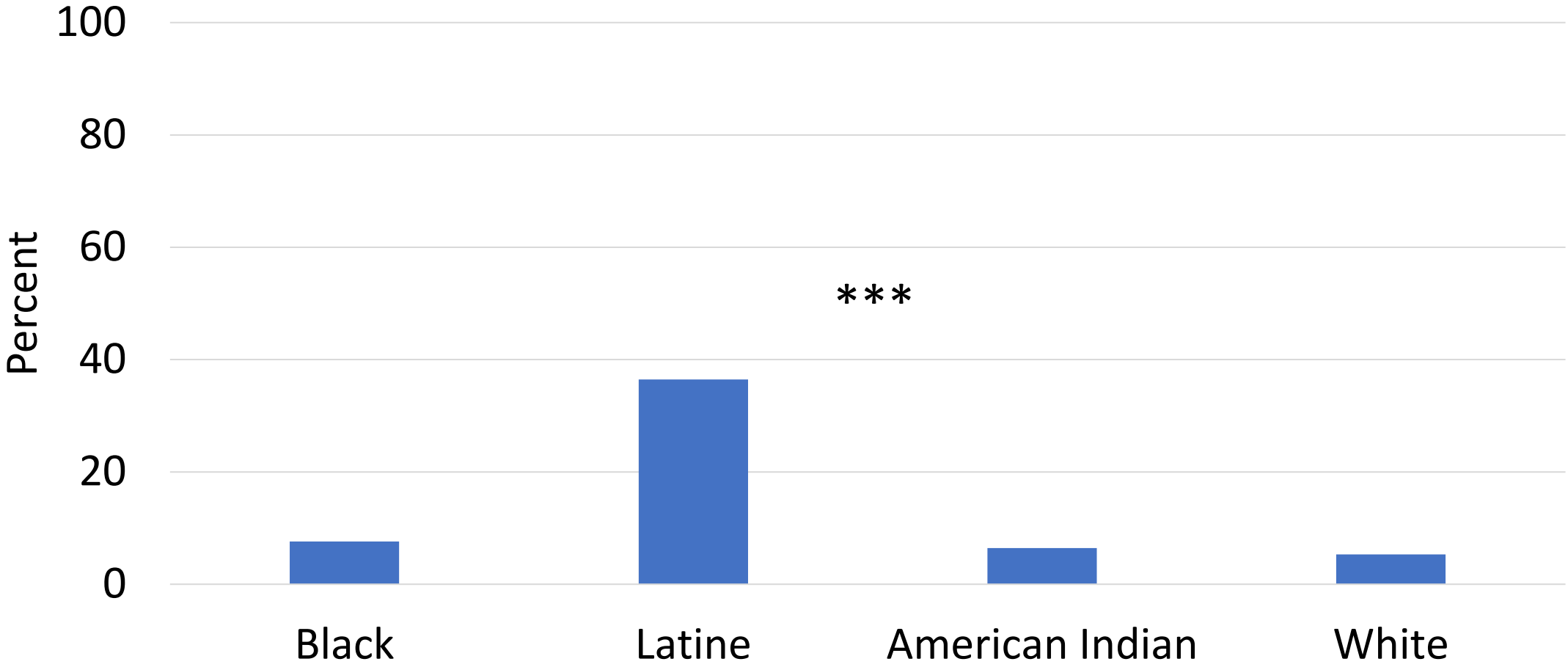
## **Worse Data Quality**

- Greater than 3 turns
- Interrupting question reading
- Elaboration
- Request clarification/repetition
- “Don’t know”
- Mitigating expressions (“I guess,” “probably”)
- Laughter or laugh tokens
- Speech disfluency: repairs
- Speech disfluency: tokens (“uh,” “um”)

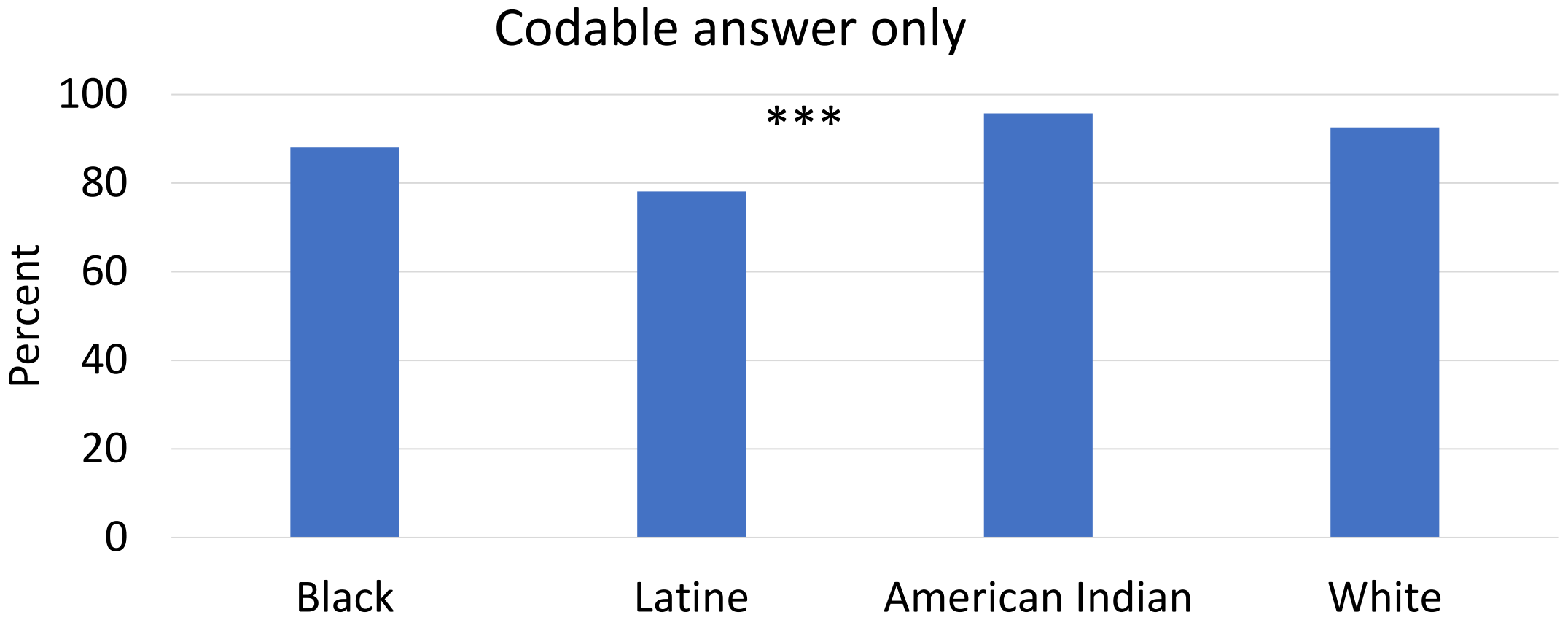
# Results

# Are you Hispanic or Latino?

Greater than 3 Turns



# Are you Hispanic or Latino?



# Are you Hispanic or Latino?

I: are you hispanic or latino?

R: hispanic

I: so you would say yes is that correct?

R: oh yes sorry {L}

I: that's ok

I: are you hispanic or latino?

R: uh I think both are the same aren't they?

I: I'm sorry what was that?

R: are they both the same?

I: are they the same?

R: yes

I: um you know I'm not sure but um it's the question is whatever it means to you if you consider yourself either of those

R: um hispanic

I: ok

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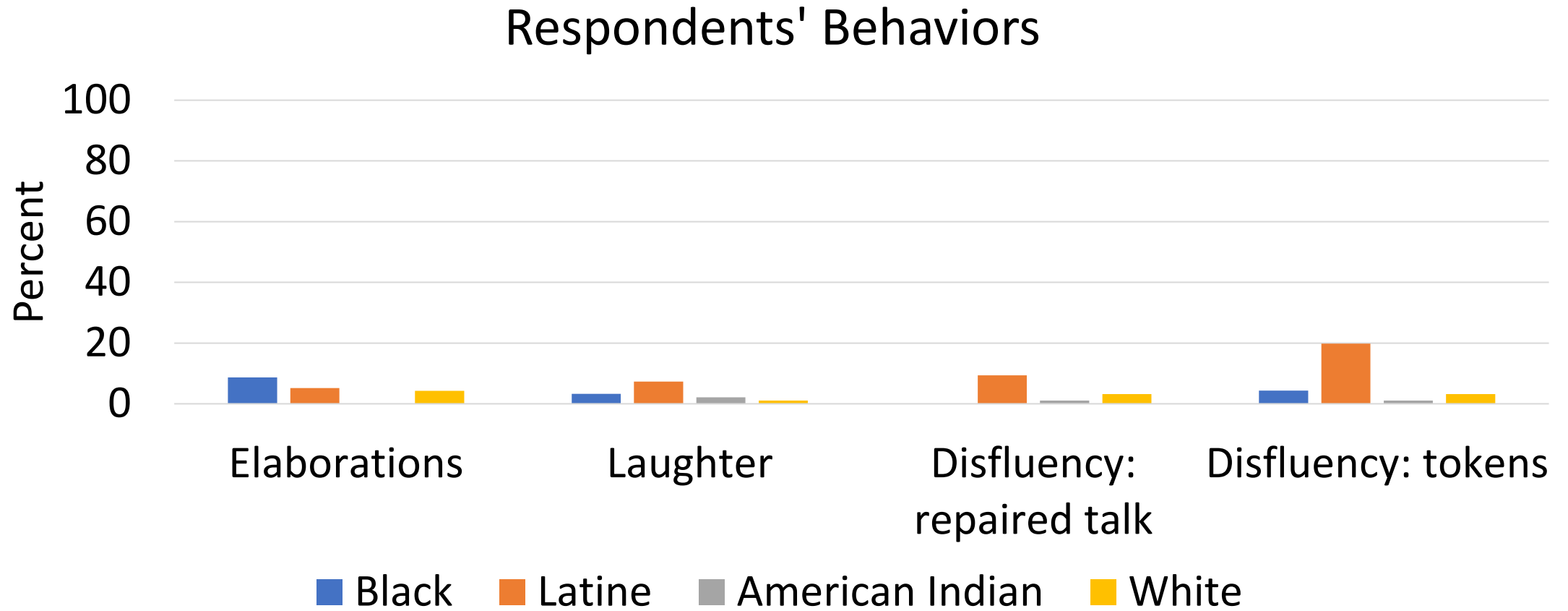
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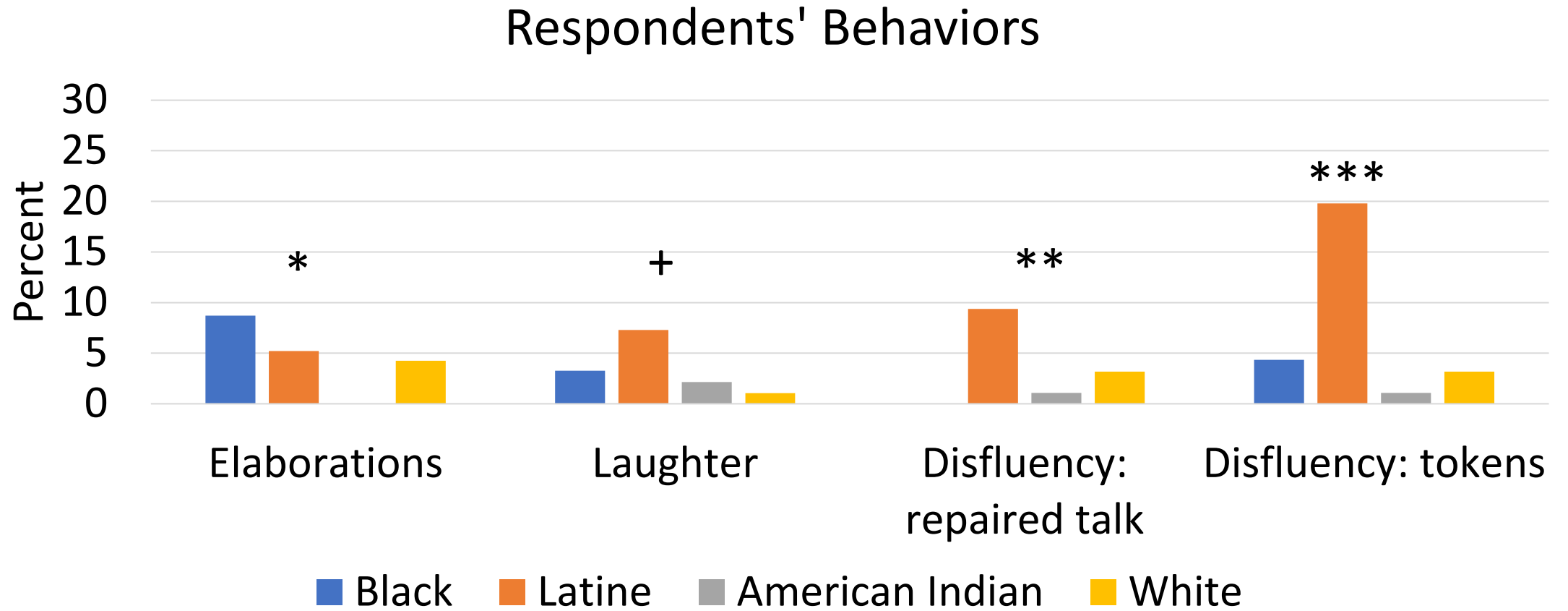
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# Are you Hispanic or Latino?



# Are you Hispanic or Latino?



# Are you Hispanic or Latino?

I: are you hispanic or latino?

R: no um african american

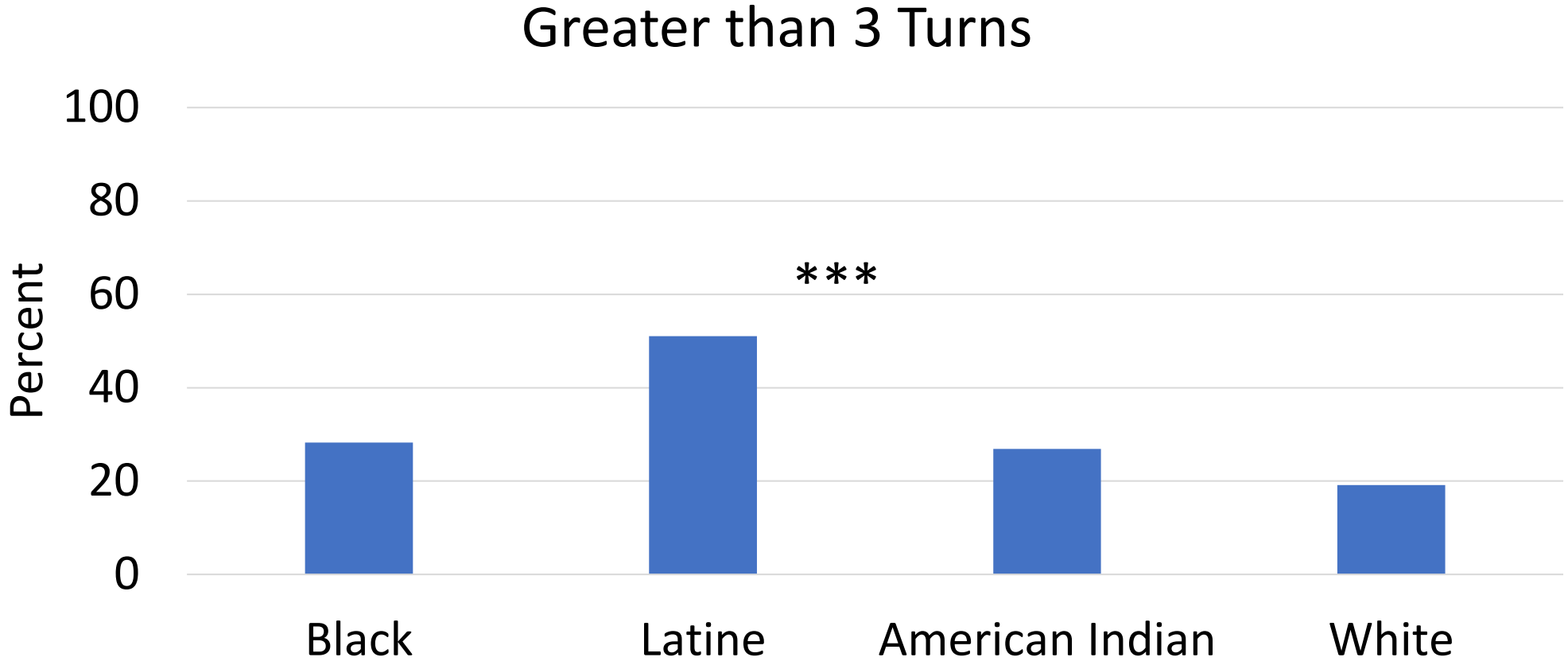
I: uh thank you

I: are you hispanic or latina?

R: no african american

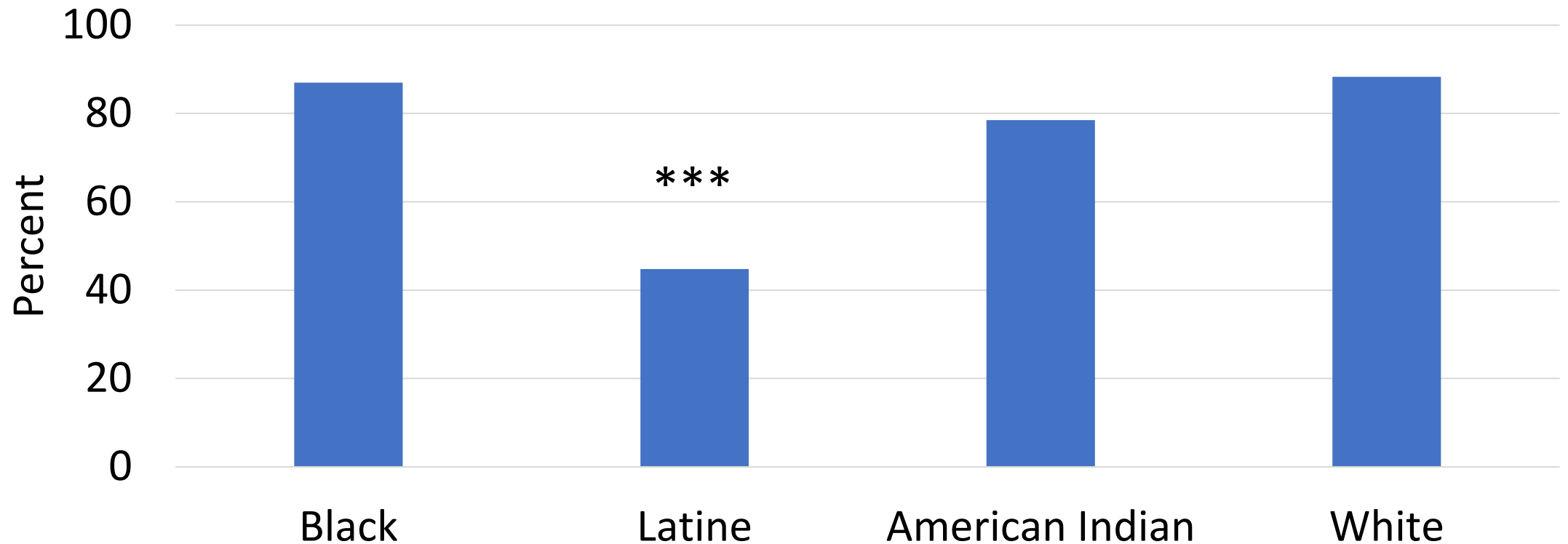
I: alright this next question's going to ask about that again I do have to read the whole thing so bear with me but I will keep your answer in mind

# Which one or more of the following would you say is your race?



# Which one or more of the following would you say is your race?

Codable answer only



I: which one or more of the following would you say is your race white black or african american american indian alaska native asian or native hawaiian or other pacific islander?

R: uh no

I: or you could say other

R: I'm other

I: ok and then could you specify for me please?

R: I'm mexican (speaks to child in spanish)

I: which one or more of the following would you say is your race white black or african american american indian alaska native asian or native hawaiian or other pacific islander?

R: none of those

I: and you would say other is that correct?

R: other correct

I: and what would you say for other?

R: uh mexican

I: you said mexican is that correct?

R: yes

I: which one or more of the following would you say is your race I know we just kind of asked but um white black or african american american indian alaska native or excuse me or native hawaiian or other pacific islander?

R: no it's spanish

I: so none of those is that correct?

R: yeah

I: and did you say spanish?

R: yeah

I: thank you ma'am

R: mhmm

I: and which one or more of the following would you say is your race white black or african american american indian alaska native asian or native hawaiian or other pacific islander?

R: mm none of them latino yeah

I: and you said latino is that correct?

R: yes

I: thank you sir



# Respondents' behavioral indicators

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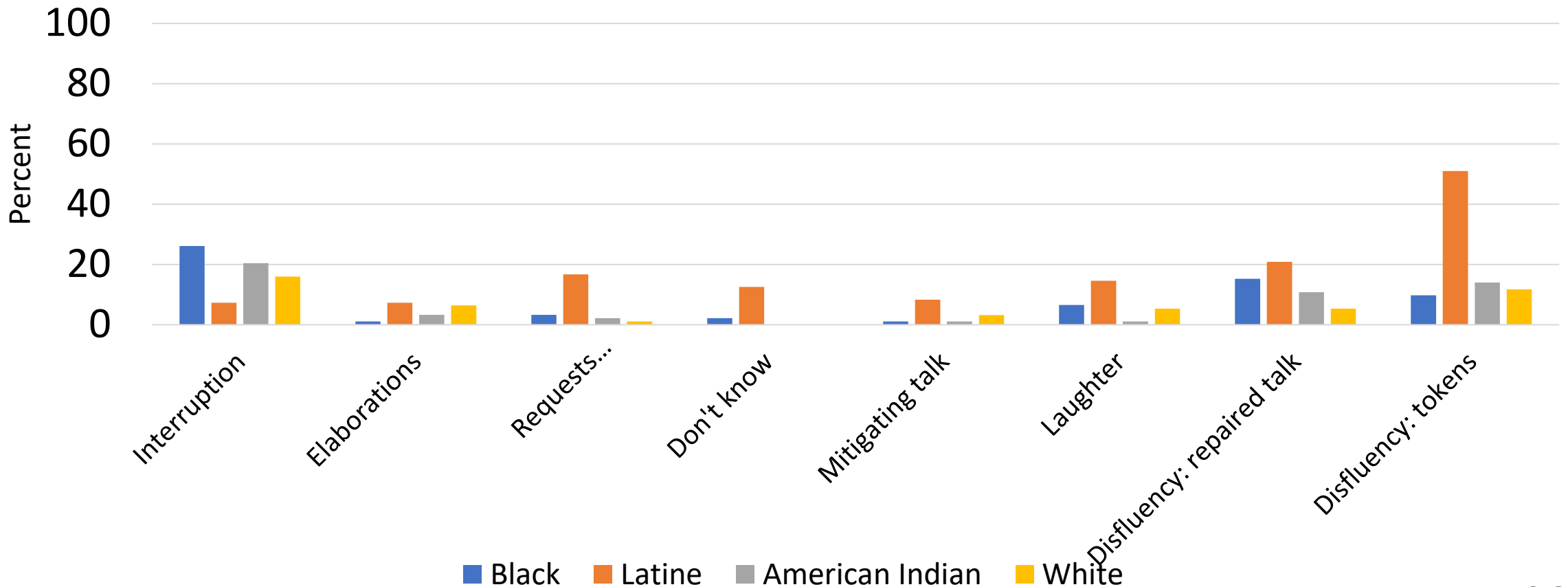
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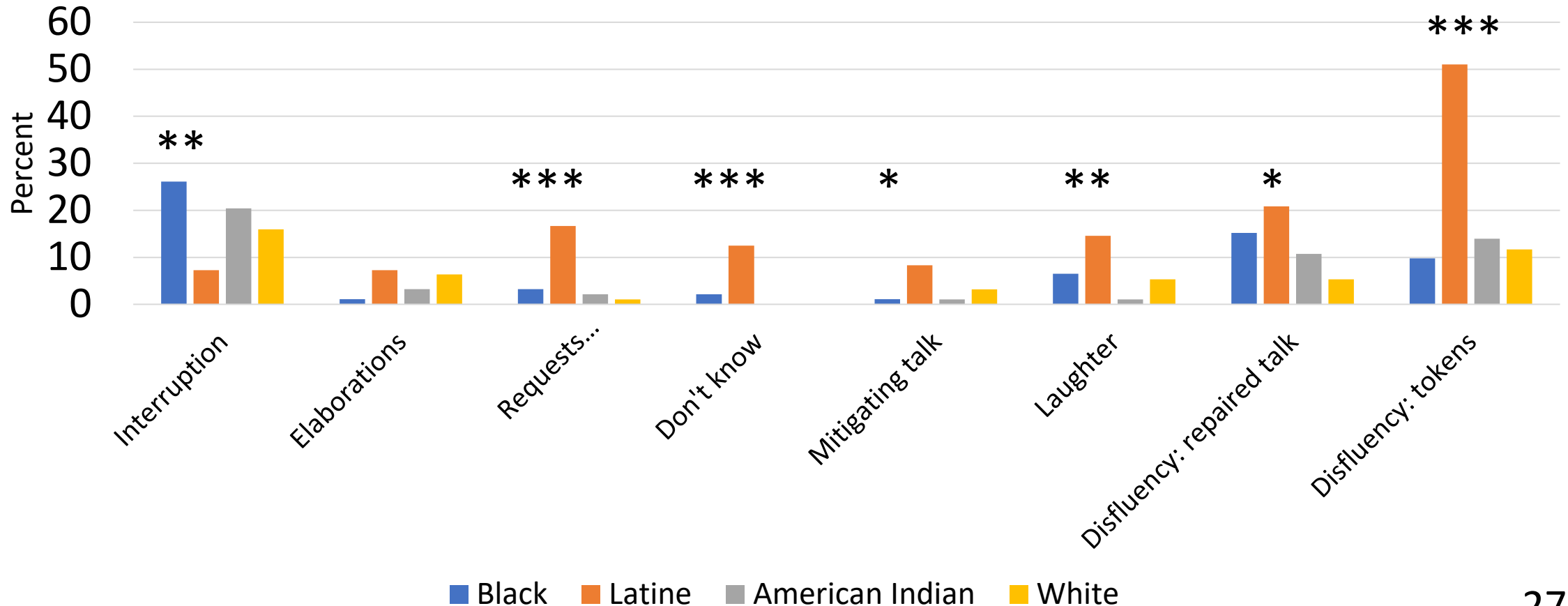
# Which one or more of the following would you say is your race?

Respondents' Behavior



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Respondents' Behavior



# Summary

- How a diverse set of respondents answer questions about ethnoracial identity in interviewer administered surveys
- Results support the recommendation from Census reports for combined rather than separate ethnoracial questions
- Issue of data quality and cost: interaction is expensive
- Next steps
  - Analysis of interviewers' follow up behaviors
- Limitations
  - Nonprobability sample may limit generalizability of results
  - Very labor/time intensive to transcribe and code

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# Thank you!

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